



ROYAL DANISH DEFENCE COLLEGE



Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism: **Sharing Experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan**

By Thomas Galasz Nielsen, Mahroona Hussain Syed & David Vestenskov



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2015

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Foreword

Considering the nature and gravity of the events related to 9/11, the counterinsurgency efforts followed by the U.S./NATO drawdown in Afghanistan and Pakistan's ongoing war against domestic militancy and terrorism, the states involved in these colossal efforts stand enriched with varied experiences and deeper insights into issues that confronted all stakeholders in the Post 9/11 period till 2014. Therefore, a need was felt in Denmark and in Pakistan to share such experiences in collaboration, for the benefit of our two countries as well as for others in the international community. Consequently, researchers from both the RDDC and NDU have collaborated to bring forth the book at hand.

Priority within both of our institutions has been given to this academic, research-based book, in order to share the experiences gained by people from the two countries who have been and are carrying out Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism operations in their respective areas of responsibility and operations in an open, frank and comprehensive manner. As was hoped for, the interviewees offered candid views, while expounding upon their experiences, concerns and suggestions, which led to many shared lessons identified all throughout the process. We extend our profound gratitude to all the respondents, who offered insightful viewpoints for this research. It is hoped that people from different segments of both societies, especially governmental, political and military leadership circles, think tanks, universities, media and other stakeholders will find this book to be a first drop of rain that opens further avenues for joint cooperation amongst countries, especially when it comes to exploring opportunities in the field of academic research.

The objective of this book has been twofold. First, the project upon which this book is founded was initiated in order to create and develop academic connections between Danish and Pakistani research institutions and establish common ground for joint research within the area of security studies. Second, this book analyses Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to identify lessons that might potentially be implemented in future operations, on both the Danish and the Pakistani sides, and thereby have a strategic impact on the political level, as well as in a military operational context.

The first objective was reached by connecting the National Defence University in Pakistan to the Royal Danish Defence College and the Danish

Institute for International Studies in the spring of 2014. Researchers from the three institutions had earlier met in November 2013 and drew up the research guidelines for this book, which was approved by the National Defence University Pakistan and the Royal Danish Defence College and also from the Danish Ministry of Defence, and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which have jointly funded the project. The second objective to be reached with the book at hand, and our hope, is that the book will not only add to the field of security studies but also promote joint research projects for sharing experiences between academic military institutions across borders, regions, and continents.

In the end, we feel that there is a need to critically analyse the emerging situation in this region and discover proactive approaches to forestall issues that could generate the menaces of internal strife, terrorism, militancy, and insurgency.

The lessons identified by the authors are many, but whether they will be internalised will be up to political and military decision makers. However, we are convinced that the results, as well as the cooperative process, are of such a character that they should be addressed when future strategies of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism are developed, be it domestically or internationally.

Dean Ole Kværnø, RDDC &
Major General Noel I. Khokhar HI(M), NDU

Abbreviations

3D:	Deterrence, Dialogue, and Development
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP:	Afghan National Police
ANSF:	Afghan National Security Forces
AO:	Area of Operations
ARTF:	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CIMIC	Civil-Military Cooperation
COIN:	Counterinsurgency
CT:	Counterterrorism
CM:	Counter-militancy
DDR:	Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration
DIIS:	Danish Institute for International Studies
EU:	European Union
FATA:	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FC:	Frontier Corps
FOB	Forward Operating Base
HTA:	Human Terrain Analysis
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HQ:	Headquarters
IDP:	Internally Displaced Person
IED:	Improvised explosive device
ISAF:	International Security Assistance Force
IS:	Islamic State
ISI:	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan's premiere intelligence service)
ISIS:	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JPEL	Joint Prioritized Effects List
LoC:	Line of Control
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU:	National Defence University
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NW:	North Waziristan
OEF:	Operation Enduring Freedom
RC SW:	Regional Command South West
PRT:	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RDDC:	Royal Danish Defence College
TTP:	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban)

Abbreviations

UK:	United Kingdom
UN:	United Nations
UNAMA:	United Nation Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMOG:	United Nations Military Observers Group
UNSCR:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
U.S.:	United States (United States of America)
USA:	United States of America

Introduction

The era launched by the declaration of the Global War on Terror¹ by America and its allies saw great instability and turmoil in the Central and South Asian regions due to increases in militant and insurgent activities. Consequently, all the regional actors had to develop new strategies to deal with uprisings, unrest, and instability. An elusive and unpredictable enemy, difficult geographical terrain, politico-diplomatic upheavals, and public resentment over governments' decisions to engage in asymmetric warfare – counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT) – haunted the states with bleak prospects of everlasting military engagement at home or abroad.

When the Danish parliament chose to join the American-led Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, it was greatly motivated by NATO's core principle² of coming to the aid of an alliance partner under attack; in this case, one that had suffered an attack by the terrorist network al-Qaeda, which hijacked four planes and used them as weapons on U.S. soil in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 (9/11). Logically, both the strategic and the operational planning were left to the United States, which relied on a classic Clausewitzian centre-of-gravity approach³ and engaged itself and its allies in the so-called *War on Terror*. This resulted in large-scale military operations against the enemy's strongholds – primarily the city of Kabul.⁴ At this point, the primary objective for the military operation was to overthrow a regime that sheltered the al-Qaeda terrorist leader responsible for 9/11. The secondary objective was to prevent future terrorist networks from training and operating on Afghan soil.⁵ Though capacity building of both civilian and military institutions was carried out concurrently, the offensive operations against the insurgent groups remained a core element in the strategy throughout the entire International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) campaign in Afghanistan.

(1) 'Text of George Bush's Speech | U.S. News | The Guardian' <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa13>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

(2) Article 5 in: NATO, 'NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty', 1949.

(3) Antulio Joseph Echevarria and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute, 'Clausewitz's Center of Gravity Changing Our Warfighting Doctrine-- Again!', 2002 <<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS23661>>.

(4) 'Operation Enduring Freedom' ([Arlington, Va.] : U.S. Army, 2001).

(5) Catherine Dale, 'War in Afghanistan Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress' ([Washington, D.C.] : Congressional Research Service, 2009).

Prior to, and alongside with, the development in Afghanistan, Pakistan faced similar problems with religious extremism and militant groups. Given its status as a key regional actor, the development in Afghanistan created a new situation for Pakistan's security matrix. Afghanistan and its population faced its third big war in four decades. Previous wars, the Soviet Union's 1979-89 intervention, and the 1992-96 civil war, had had a devastating effects in terms of refugees and spill-over to the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, with Pakistan experiencing the greatest impact by far. This has had massive negative consequences for Pakistani society, especially in relation to its economy and domestic security. While the country has struggled with these consequences, it is important to remember that positive and stable development in Afghanistan will, conversely, have a massive positive effect on all levels of Pakistani society.

It has been argued from many NATO countries that the Afghan insurgency groups have been, and still are being, sustained through their connections into Pakistan and their ability to cross the border and obtain safe havens on Pakistani soil. Adding to the problem is, of course, the continued external funding for religious madrassas in the remote areas of the country where government outreach in relation to education, health care, and other civil services is sparse. The lack of governmental outreach presents an opportune environment for establishing and developing insurgencies and terrorist groups.

However, a new turn has seemed to take root in Pakistan, and since June 2014 the Pakistani army has been very active in the *Federal Administrated Tribal Areas* (FATA) in counter-militancy, including CT operations. This turn was underlined by the tragic events in December 2014, when terrorists affiliated with the *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP)⁶ killed 132 school children and 9 teachers in an attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. While claiming responsibility for the dastardly act, the terrorists afterwards stated that the attack was a reaction to the operations conducted by the Pakistani Military in FATA.

(6) Also named as *Pakistani Taliban*

Project outline and study objective

Initially, the outline of this project⁷ was limited to a research paper, but after conducting interviews in Pakistan and in Denmark, about the two countries' engagement in CT and COIN, it became evident that the data collected provided a sound foundation for expanding the research paper into book format. Thus, it was decided that the aim of this project would be altered slightly in order to facilitate the writing of the book. In this context the authors also decided to include the interview data in transcript form in order to offer an opportunity for other researchers to utilize the data for future research within the field. However, over the course of writing the book, it became evident that such a project, combining three institutions with different strategic cultures, is not without difficulties. To circumvent the difficulties the authors decided that the two analytical chapters about Danish lessons identified in Afghanistan and Pakistani lessons identified in Pakistan should be written jointly, followed by a jointly written conclusion, whereas the two background chapters about Afghanistan and Pakistan were written separately, with the author of each chapter named explicitly. In this regard, it is very important to stress that the views and conclusions presented in these chapters are not necessarily shared by all three authors, and responsibility for the content in the two chapters lies solely with the named author(s).

An important priority for the authors has been the two analytical chapters, along with the data collection, which was conducted jointly, as this particular part of the book is based on the core objective of attempting to locate lessons identified, without a bias to personal preferences or perceptions. In our view this has been attained not only in the two analytical chapters but also in the concluding chapter. In addition, the adopted path could further improve, and serve as a trailblazer for, future joint projects between the institutions in Pakistan and Denmark.

The second objective was to prove that the perception of what COIN and CT signify differs in the eyes of both the interviewees, as well as in the literature. The analyses and conclusions in this book are in no manner an attempt to impose one or the other side's perception but is foremost an attempt to view the end, ways, and means of whatever strategy the two countries used, have been using, and plan to use in order to extract valuable lessons for future

(7) A special acknowledgement from all authors goes to Lt. Col. Lars Cramer-Larsen in relation to assist in the initial development of the research design and being part of the team conducting the interviews in Pakistan.

strategies on COIN and CT. This was combined with the interviewees' personal perceptions of finding areas where lessons could be identified. Also, we used the questionnaire to find areas where personal experiences collided with or supported the more official perception of what were the objectives in the two countries' strategies and how tools at the tactical level were used to reach the objectives. This approach did give us the possibility of finding lessons identified at the strategic level while at the same time analysing the reasoning behind these findings. Surprisingly, interviewees from Pakistan and Denmark shared a lot of the same lessons identified despite the two countries' very different strategic starting points and geographical challenges, and despite the labelling of their different approaches to counter the enemies, be they defined as insurgents, terrorists, or simply as militants. As suspected from the start of the project, labelling an enemy is not that important at the operational and tactical levels because the tools implemented to reach the strategy's objectives are much the same in any case, in spite of the political level's need to create a narrative about whom or what the strategy is addressing. That is especially the case if the strategy is supposed to address multiple objectives in a comprehensive and coherent manner with a focus on a strategic end state.

We do not deny that the quantity of our harvested data is limited, but the selected number of interviews follows the accepted norms in social science research methodology for what provides for significant results. As there are so many identical lessons identified, it is our conviction that we have only scratched the surface of sharing experiences between the two countries' approaches toward improving security and peace building in the region. However, this scratch can prove to be of vital importance in understanding the dynamics behind strategy making and subsequent implementation of strategy. This may help make it possible to counter security-related problems for both Denmark and Pakistan and, for that matter, others in the international community who are pre-occupied with internal conflict situations, especially countering insurgents or terrorists.

We hope that our findings, which apparently have some commonalities across the span of combating opponents or the so-called anti-state elements, will serve as a basis for future strategy makers when strategies are developed and - more importantly - are implemented.

Analytical framework

In the wake of the era of the War on Terror, the experiences gained by different countries in dealing with asymmetrical warfare, there is a need to assess and analyse these experiences with a view to developing best-practice for future engagements. Sharing experiences by Pakistan and Denmark based on lessons learned in COIN and CT/CM strategies and operations will add richness to this field of research and support the cooperation toward regional stability between the international community and the regional actors.

This particular project seeks to identify lessons and share experiences between Pakistan and Denmark in relation to asymmetrical warfare (COIN and CT).

In order to guide the study to a common analytical ground, two secondary objectives were initially developed:

- 1) To identify points of convergence and divergence between the perceptions of Denmark and Pakistan regarding COIN and CT, through the sharing of experiences.
- 2) To build sound foundations for further research in the field of COIN and CT between Pakistan and Denmark.

The project faced some limitations and caveats, and among the limitations of the study is, as mentioned above, an imbalance in terms of adding transcripts and disclosing names of interviewees from Pakistan versus the data collected in Denmark. However, this condition of declaring anonymity, put forward by half of the Pakistani respondents, was acceptable for the researchers, as the primary objective of the research was being served in any case, namely, to ensure that experiences of the best qualified and most relevant persons are included in the book in accordance with the scope of the study.

Another set of limitations may arise out of the fact that security conditions are very different in Pakistan and Denmark. Policies on COIN and CT are therefore based on a different set of political preferences, with Denmark conducting external operations abroad and Pakistan conducting domestic operations. However, this is also an advantage of the study, as the strategic frame of the Danish COIN operations had a domestic dimension. This has proven to be an important common denominator for sharing experiences and lessons in order to support the common objective of stability in the

Central Asian region. In order to contribute to this objective, the aim of the study is to share perceptions on insurgencies and terrorist groups, as well as perceptions on successes and failures in countering threats from these. It is hoped that sharing these experiences between Pakistan and Denmark will prove to be a useful analytical tool for both of the countries, as well as other states engaged in the region, and help shape future COIN and CT operations to serve the overall purpose of sustainable regional peace building.

This project was initiated and the study is being undertaken as the first ever joint research project between defence institutions in Denmark and Pakistan. Given the development in international security politics in the last few years, it is fair to argue that both Denmark and Pakistan are at a point where future security challenges require a development of policies and strategies. The roles of Denmark and Pakistan respectively are different in nature, as Danish operations are conducted internationally, as what can be determined as expeditionary COIN, and Pakistani operations are a matter of what can be determined as domestic COIN or CT. Despite this difference in the character of operations, there are quite a few common denominators in relation to perceptions of the enemy and, therefore, also in approaches to countering the enemy.

Methodology and criteria for selecting respondents for data collection

The project relied on qualitative research methodology based on data collection from Pakistan and Denmark through interviews. In general, the interviews consisted of six basic and open-ended questions that were developed in order to stress the importance of perceptions of countering insurgents and terrorists.⁸

The target group of the interviews included persons within the sectors of Foreign Affairs/Defence Ministry, Defence Command officers (with the rank of colonels and above), active duty or retired, who have taken part in COIN and CT operations, civilian representatives, scholars and researchers of think tanks and educational institutions. The data collection consists of 23 interviews in total – from 10 Pakistani and 14 Danish respondents. The ratio for Pakistan was three civilian interviewees and seven from the Pakistani military, while for Denmark the ratio was seven civilian interviewees and six from the Danish military. Respondents were carefully chosen in relation to their background and experience with COIN operations in Afghanistan or

(8) See appendix 2.

CT and CM operations in Pakistan. The time period was chosen due to the strategic shift in Afghanistan toward COIN in late 2006, and though Pakistan already joined the War on Terror in 2001, the period for Pakistani CT operations was chosen in order to ease the aspect of a comparative analysis. However, since Pakistan is still involved in carrying out anti-militancy and terrorism operations, there are frequent references to its current scenario.

Furthermore the respondents' present positions and work area also affected the selection. The length of each interview varied from 50 to 65 minutes, and interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on their answers according to preference, which was naturally closely linked to their field of experience, and in many cases the interviews provided insightful additions to existing knowledge. This has proven to cause an imbalance, as interviewees from Denmark had no inhibitions regarding being named in the project. The Pakistani interviewees in some cases chose to be anonymous, which relates to general security concerns and also to the fact that some of the respondents are still actively participating in the Pakistani army's Operation Zarb-e-Azb⁹ in FATA, which was a necessary precondition for being interviewed in the first place. This wish has of course been respected, and their identities have been protected, albeit their identity is known to the authors. Even though it creates a methodological imbalance, it is important to stress that their ranks/titles are mentioned and that, in a process of lessons learned and sharing experiences, this does not affect the basis of a sound data-analysis in this project. In fact, titles/ranks and background experiences are the most important parameters when processing this type of data.

In general, of course, this requires methodological discipline in the analytical process and, in order to have a common ground of analysis, this book used the questions as a structural guide. Thus some of the data has been left unprocessed, but the data has not been closed to other researchers, since transcriptions of a majority of the interviews have been added as source material to this volume. Submission of transcriptions of course depends on approval from the individual interviewee, which is why the source collection will not count all 24 interviews.

Contextual and analytical scope

The study is divided into two main parts with a contextual and analytical scope respectively. Two contextual chapters on Pakistan and Afghanistan are

(9) The scope and objective of the operation will be explained in a following chapter.

presented in order to frame the subsequent analysis. The chapters include a brief introduction to COIN principles and laws that served as the foundation for the campaign in Afghanistan and the basics of CT/CM approach in North Waziristan and FATA, before outlining the security situation in both countries prior to and during the operations. As the chapter on Afghanistan relates to the Danish COIN experience in the country, it briefly explains the history prior to the ISAF mission and then moves on to focus on the period from the initial attempt to implement COIN as a strategy in 2006 to 2012, when transition of security responsibility along with the exit strategy became the focal point in the ISAF mission. The chapter was composed and written from a Danish point of view by the authors Thomas Galasz Nielsen and David Vestenskov. The chapter describing the Pakistani context, which serves as the starting point for sharing experiences on COIN and CT, was written by the author Mahroona Hussain Syed. The chapter focuses both on the domestic situation in Pakistan and how the conflict in Afghanistan is viewed from the Pakistani side of the frontier.

In the analytical chapters, the data material collected from Pakistani and Danish respondents is processed in order to extract lessons identified in approaches to both COIN and CT. Priority has been given to this extraction, more so than to actual solutions and policy recommendations, which are left for others to explore. However, the lessons identified present a sound stepping stone for future decision-making and hopefully these lessons will be taken into consideration when future COIN and CT strategies are decided, formed, and implemented at both the strategic and operational levels.

The final chapter gathers the most important and significant lessons identified, and by concluding on the processed data, focus areas for future operations are concluded by the authors. Though the conclusions cannot be designated as specific policy recommendations, these could certainly be utilized in this context, but above all, their purpose is to serve and guide in the process of developing recommendations for political as well as military decision makers.

Entering Afghanistan: Historical overview, the stages of the ISAF mission, and understanding the basics of COIN and the opponent

By Thomas Galasz Nielsen & David Vestenskov

Abstract

In 2001 the Taliban government in Afghanistan was removed from power by United States of America's Operation Enduring Freedom. The reason for the U.S. operation was the Taliban's support for the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda, which had carried out the terrorist attack in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, by using hijacked commercial airliners against the World Trade Center and Pentagon, killing almost 3,000 civilians. Within a few months, the Taliban organisation was almost completely destroyed. Despite being almost defeated, the Taliban was able to re-emerge by using rural areas in Afghanistan characterised by weak governmental and ISAF outreach. Their operational bases were primarily in the south-eastern part of Afghanistan, near Kandahar and in Helmand, and FATA in Pakistan, and served as safe havens for recruitment, training, and logistics. The Taliban's re-emergence became a destabilizing factor in fragile Afghanistan and affected – and still affects – the security situation established by ISAF and the Afghanistan Security Force, the stability of which was a precondition for ISAF to terminate its mission in 2014. The situation is not yet settled, and though the Afghan government is pursuing a political peace settlement with the Taliban, it will at best be a fragile peace due to the fragmented structure of the Taliban organization. Sustainable peace building can only be reached if the Afghan Security Forces can successfully address the root causes of the rising insurgency in the provinces, supported by governmental outreach, development, and prospects of long-term security.

This chapter outlines the background for Denmark's military involvement in Afghanistan through ISAF since 2002, focusing on Danish counterinsurgency operations in the Helmand province from 2006 to 2014.

Preface

Shortly after the al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush declared that, "no nation can negotiate with terrorists."¹⁰ As al-Qaeda took responsibility for the at-

(10) Gabriella Blum, 'Laws, Outlaws, and Terrorists Lessons from the War on Terrorism' (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010).

tacks, the U.S. demanded that the Afghan government hand over named terrorist leaders from Afghanistan, release all foreign prisoners, close all al-Qaeda training camps on Afghan soil, and give the U.S. free access to the training facilities. Even though there were some initial signs of Taliban willingness to negotiate, American demands were eventually refused and the U.S. removed Taliban from power shortly after, in 2001.¹¹ A new transitional government was installed in Kabul under President Hamid Karzai, and the United Nations (UN) sanctioned an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), tasked training the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and assisting the Afghan government in rebuilding key government institutions.¹² Initially, ISAF concentrated on Kabul, but in 2003 the UN Security Council unanimously voted to expand ISAF to the whole of Afghanistan.¹³ NATO took command of ISAF and subsequently began a four-stage plan to expand its mission, which concluded in October 2006, when the whole of Afghanistan was included into NATO's area of responsibility.¹⁴

Recent history of Afghanistan's government

Afghanistan has historically been a troubled country, suffering different invasions from various empires and countries. But to understand the period when ISAF was present in Afghanistan, we have to at least cover the period after the Soviet Union's withdrawal in 1989. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the U.S. and Pakistan backed the Mujahedeen's continued fight against the Afghan regime, led by President Mohammad Najibullah. He was elected with Soviet support in 1986 and viewed by the Mujahedeen as a puppet. In 1992 the Mujahedeen and other groups succeeded in storming Kabul and expelling Mohammad Najibullah from power. The Mujahedeen formed an Islamic state with Burhannudin Rabbani as president. However, the Mujahedeen began to fragment, as not all factions supported the installed government, and apparently the U.S. lost interest in the Mujahedeen, leaving different warlords to fight for control over parts of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the U.S. refused to recognize the installed government, as did most other countries in the world. Pakistan did recognize the government, together

(11) 'Blair Warns Taliban / Tough Talk from Britain's Leader Makes Attack Look Likely Soon - SFGate' <<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Blair-warns-Taliban-Tough-talk-from-Britain-s-2872139.php>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(12) United Nation Security Council, 'Security Council Resolution No. 1386: On the Situation in Afghanistan', 2001 <<http://goo.gl/Hc6SAi>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(13) United Nation Security Council, 'Security Council Resolution No. 1510: On the Situation in Afghanistan', 2003 <<http://goo.gl/vhtOh0>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(14) 'NATO - ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)' <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm> [accessed 17 September 2015].

with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In this chaotic situation, the Taliban evolved as an Islamic militia promising peace and respect for traditional Islamic values. But in the northern part of Afghanistan, a Northern Alliance, under the former Mujahedeen Ahmad Shah Masood, fought for control over Afghanistan. The same was happening in the southern part of Afghanistan, where ethnic groups, supported by Hamid Karzai, from his exile in Pakistan, were fighting the Taliban.¹⁵

Because the Taliban allowed al-Qaeda to have training camps in Afghanistan, which allegedly was behind the bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, the Taliban became more and more internationally isolated, and in 2000 the United Nations implemented a sanctions regime against Afghanistan, restricting trade. After September 2001 and the airplane attacks on the World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon, and an airplane crash on a field in Pennsylvania, the U.S. demanded that the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, among other leaders, be handed over to face trial in the U.S. The Taliban did not answer the demand, and the U.S., with the United Kingdom, started bombing targets in Afghanistan, hitting al-Qaeda bases and Taliban military facilities. After a few weeks of fighting, the Northern Alliance entered Kabul and the Taliban fled to the southern part of Afghanistan near Kandahar. In December 2001, the last province in Afghanistan still under Taliban control, the province of Zabul, surrendered. On 2 December 2001, Hamid Karzai was appointed leader of an interim government in Afghanistan during a UN-sponsored conference. The interim government was to function for six months, until a permanent government could be elected. The U.S. supported Hamid Karzai in the process. At the same time, ISAF was established to assist the Karzai administration and provide basic security, primarily around Kabul.¹⁶

In June 2002, a conference was held in Kabul, called Loya Jirga, or Grand Council, and Hamid Karzai was re-elected to form a government that was to lead the country until national elections could be held in 2004.¹⁷ In January 2004, the Loya Jirga adopted a new constitution for Afghanistan, with input from all over Afghanistan, and national elections were held in October

(15) For more history, see Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

(16) Homepage for the Office of the President 'Biography - Office of the President' <<http://president.gov.af/en/page/1043>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(17) UN about the Loya Jirga process, UN, 'The Emergency Loya Jirga Process', 2002 <<http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/concept.pdf>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

2004. More than 10 million Afghans voted, choosing between 18 candidates. Hamid Karzai was elected president with a majority of 55% of the vote. As the Taliban regrouped along Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas, more and more coalition forces entered Afghanistan in support of the government but had troubles defeating the Taliban insurgency. In 2009 The Taliban began to form shadow governments in several parts of the country, and the U.S. deployed 30,000 additional soldiers from 2010 to 2012 to turn the tide.¹⁸

In January 2010, a major UN conference about Afghanistan was held in London, gathering some 70 countries and organizations. During the conference, Hamid Karzai reached out to the Taliban and invited the Taliban leadership to take part in a Loya Jirga and seek peace. The Taliban declined to participate as long as there were foreign forces in Afghanistan.¹⁹ In May 2011, the al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, was killed in a U.S. Special Forces operation in Pakistan, where he was living. This initiated large-scale attacks from the Haqqani network across Afghanistan, from their safe havens in Pakistan. The U.S. warned the Pakistani government about possible U.S. attacks into FATA if the Pakistanis did not deal with the Haqqani network. The U.S. blamed the Pakistan Army and the Inter-Service Intelligence for supporting the network, an allegation which the Pakistani government denied.²⁰ After the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attack in Peshawar, Pakistan, in the 2014 school attack, the network was finally banned in Pakistan by the Pakistani government.²¹

In 2014, full responsibility for Afghanistan was handed over to the Afghan government and the ISAF mission was terminated. Still, there remain a number of NATO soldiers in Afghanistan, but their task is now to support training of the Afghan Security Forces. As the Afghan constitution does not allow a president to be elected for more than two terms, Hamid Karzai left the office in 2014, and a new president, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, was elected.²²

(18) 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan | The White House.'

(19) 'Taliban Say Not Involved in Kabul Peace Talks | Reuters' <<http://goo.gl/6xtNMg>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(20) 'Pakistan Condemns U.S. Comments about Spy Agency - Yahoo News' <<http://goo.gl/YWjl6>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(21) 'Pakistan Bans Haqqani Network after Security Talks with Kerry | Reuters' <<http://goo.gl/gMRgHy>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(22) Homepage for the Office of the President 'Biography - Office of the President.'

Juridical foundation for the missions in Afghanistan

Although several countries became involved in Afghanistan after 9/11, under the umbrella of the U.S. approach to fighting al-Qaeda and removing the Taliban from power, there were a number of different organizations and thus a number of different approaches in Afghanistan to securing peace and stability while maintaining support for economic and social development in Afghanistan. However, the many approaches were based on different juridical foundations, which did not facilitate a comprehensive approach on the part of the international community.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), initiated by the U.S. to fight terrorists threatening the U.S. and its allies, was conducted under the UN Charter's Article 51,²³ concerning the right to self-defence, and supported by other NATO countries under NATO's Article 5,²⁴ also known as the Musketeer Oath.²⁵ The article regards an attack on any NATO member state as an attack on all and thus allows for the right of self-defence under the UN Charter, as defined in Article 51, although the military operation was not specifically mandated by the UN Security Council.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), initiated by the UN as a stability support to the Afghan government under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 (2001) and the UN Charter, Chapter VII, which concerns measures that the UN Security Council can initiate to counter threats against peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. The ISAF mission was later expanded to the whole of Afghanistan in UNSCR 1510 (2003)²⁶ as NATO took over the responsibility for the mission.

United Nation Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), yet another mission in Afghanistan, which is a political mission requested by the Afghan Government to assist in peace building and development under UNSCR

(23) Arabella Smith, Ben & Thorp, 'The Legal Basis for Invading Afghanistan', 2010, p. 3 <Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace> [accessed 21 August 2015] 'The legal basis for invading Afghanistan'.

(24) 'NATO Topics - NATO and the Scourge of Terrorism' <<http://www.nato.int/terrorism/five.htm>> [accessed 17 September 2015].

(25) I.e. the French Musketeer Motto 'Un pour tous, tous pour un' ('One for all – all for one') Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*, 1844.

(26) United Nation Security Council, 'Security Council Resolution No. 1510: On the Situation in Afghanistan.'

1401 (2002)²⁷ in rebuilding the country and delivering relief support. A later UNSCR 2096 (2013)²⁸ widened the UNAMA mission within the areas of security, governance, rule of law, economic and social development, counter narcotics, and coordination of civil-military cooperation, human rights activities, and the establishment of rule of law institutions.

Adding to these international missions, there were several governmental and non-governmental organizations working in Afghanistan, supporting different agendas, including relief support, education, medical assistance, and other more or less specific issues. Several of these organizations do not need a juridical foundation from the UN but provide assistance directly in Afghanistan in relation to their own mission or through Afghan sister-organizations with approval from the local, regional, and/or governmental authorities.

Through the years 2001 to 2014, the relationship between the OEF, ISAF, and UNAMA has changed with adjustment of the legal foundation, or for practical reasons through coordination efforts. Especially the development of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in each region, where the military and civilian efforts were coordinated with a civilian leader in command, changed the approaches and the possibilities as the military and civilian organizations were included in a comprehensive approach. This also had an impact on the strategies and plans issued by the countries in the ISAF mission and from ISAF. It is possible to identify four different stages in the changing approaches:

2001 to 2002: The first period with focus on counterterrorism in all parts of Afghanistan and peace building in and around Kabul.

2003 to 2008: The enlargement to include peace building in all parts of Afghanistan, with a focus on reconstruction and stabilization through the PRTs.

2009 to 2012: The surge, with a focus on counterinsurgency operations and state building.

(27) United Nation Security Council, 'Security Council Resolution No. 1401', 2002 <<http://goo.gl/3l1tZP>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(28) United Nation Security Council, 'Security Council Resolution No. 2096', 2013 <<http://goo.gl/g44Jlu>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

2012 to 2014: The transition, with a focus on security development and an exit strategy for ISAF.

These four distinct periods contained different strategies, especially on the part of ISAF's member countries, with different objectives ranging from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency, from peace building to peace support, and from nation building to state building,²⁹ including different lines of operations leading to those objectives. But as strategies changed, the tactical level faced many challenges in relation to implementing the changing political directions in a trustworthy manner in the eyes of the local population, and even the governmental institutions of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the countries behind ISAF had to gain and maintain their own public support for the mission and faced a rather new and untested approach to stability operations, trying to harvest lessons learned from Iraq. The effect of this was, in the Danish case, a lack of an overarching national strategy toward Afghanistan and a military 'trial-and-error' approach in the application of counterinsurgency and peace stability operations, which are the focal point in the following and serve as a contextual frame for the analyses in this book.

The Danish troop contribution in Helmand

Denmark, as a member country of NATO, was already in Afghanistan from 2002, in the northern part of the country. But in 2006, Denmark attached a battalion-size unit, a battle group, to the United Kingdom's brigade headquarters in the Helmand Province, bringing Denmark's troop contribution up to approximately 360 soldiers in total.³⁰ Later, in 2007, the Danish contribution was enlarged to approximately 550 soldiers.³¹ Danish engagement in the Helmand Province ended in 2014, when the gradually diminished Danish battle group left after handing over all security tasks and its area of responsibility to the ANSF.

(29) State building is defined as creating the foundation for a state, i.e., institutions and government, while nation building is creating cohesion among the citizens in a state.

(30) 'Folketinget - B 64 - 2005-06 (oversigt): Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Udvidelse Af Det Danske Bidrag Til Den Internationale Sikkerhedsstyrke ISAF I Afghanistan.' <<http://goo.gl/zch6Jm>> [accessed 17 September 2015].

(31) 'Folketinget - B 161 - 2006-07 (oversigt): Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Styrkelse Af Det Danske Bidrag Til Den Internationale Sikkerhedsstyrke ISAF I Afghanistan.' <<http://goo.gl/xwx5ZM>> [accessed 17 September 2015].



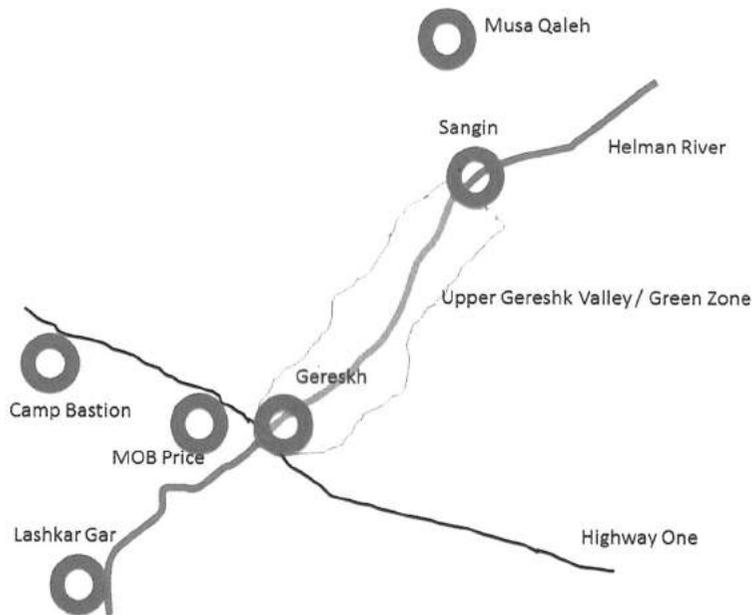
Map 1: Afghanistan with Helmand province highlighted

The so-called "exit strategy" was implemented through a series of Afghanistan and Helmand plans and an Afghanistan Strategy issued by the Danish Parliament from 2008 to 2013. The plans and strategies were not strategies per se in the classical understanding of a strategy, i.e., tools for describing the desired end state, issuing achievable, coordinated, and resourced objectives with priorities ready for the various agencies to transfer to operations at the tactical level. On the contrary, the plans and strategies were more like a list of focus areas and a status of progress (in the plans described as benchmarks) and some few unclear words about the way ahead. At the time of writing, the Danish force contribution consists of up to 160 personnel, mostly around Kabul and in the northern parts of Afghanistan, focusing on training, advisory and support tasks to ANSF under NATO's Resolute Support Mission, which replaced ISAF in January 2015.³²

(32) 'Folketinget - B 25 - 2014-15 (1. Samling) (oversigt): Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om et Dansk Militært Bidrag Til NATO's Resolute Support Mission I Afghanistan.' <<http://goo.gl/RVKZ2Z>> [accessed 17 September 2015].

Danish tasks in Helmand

Pre-2008 – In the period from 2001 to 2008, Denmark had no overarching Afghanistan Strategy or Afghanistan Plan but relied on the Danish Parliament's decisions and cooperation with the NATO partner countries and the Afghan government. This resulted in the support of the Afghan government's development programs and by fighting insurgents and training the ANSF. The main objective in this period was to ensure that Afghanistan would not again become a safe haven for terrorists.³³



Map 2: Danish area of operations in Helmand until 2012

2008-2012 – The Afghanistan Strategy. From 2008 the main objective for the Danish engagement was to contribute to national, regional, and global security by supporting ISAF. Further, Denmark also supported the Afghan government in the democratic development of the country with respect to human rights. It was expected that the military engagement could be increased over the course of the period but should be decreased toward its end,

(33) Udenrigsministeriet og Forsvarsministeriet, 'Danmark I Afghanistan: Hvorfor, Hvordan Og Hvor Længe?', 2010 <<http://goo.gl/ZpPt5R>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

as the ANSF took over responsibility. Finally, Denmark would support the Afghan government's authority in the most important parts of the province, and there support the exercise of civilian Afghan authority by increasing the support to civilian society and governmental outreach.³⁴

2011-2012 – The Helmand Plan. The aim for the Danish engagement in 2011 and 2012 was to shift focus away from combat and toward increased training and education of the ANSF. The Danish efforts were focused around the town of Gereshk. Danish military efforts were planned to end in 2014, in close cooperation with the British Government. The Danish civilian effort was boosted in this period with particular focus on state building, improvement of living conditions and education, and resulted in Afghanistan becoming the second-largest recipient of Danish development assistance.³⁵

2013-2014 – The Afghanistan Plan. In this plan, the main objective for the Danish engagement was a continued focus on transition: train, advise, and assist – until the end of 2014, when the Afghans themselves had to take over responsibility. Any further Danish military contribution would have to be negotiated in the Danish Parliament and primarily consist of advisors. The civilian effort was again enhanced to support the international community in its effort to support Afghanistan's political, social, and economic development.³⁶

Post 2014 – The Afghanistan Strategy. After 2014 the Afghan government would be in control of all aspects of the country and the Danish engagement would thus focus on supporting further development of Afghanistan with civilian means. Still, the situation could suffer setbacks, and Denmark declared itself ready to adjust the engagement in that respect, even, perhaps, to the extent of including smaller military units, primarily as support for further

(34) Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Defence, 'Denmark's Engagement in Afghanistan 2008-2012: Executive Summary of the Government's Strategy for Denmark's Political, Civilian, and Military Efforts', 2008 <<http://goo.gl/9aEopZ>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(35) Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Defence, 'The Danish Helmand Plan 2011-2012: And Report on the Danish Engagement in Afghanistan in 2010', 2010 <<http://goo.gl/8dWTvr>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(36) Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Defence, 'The Afghanistan Plan 2013-2014: Towards Full Afghan Responsibility', 2013 <<http://goo.gl/jXvhGi>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

training and education of the ANSF.³⁷ In order to comprehend COIN as a strategy, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the term and the foundation on which it was sought implemented.

Understanding the basics of countering insurgents and terrorists

The analysis will identify lessons and perceptions of COIN and CT respectively. Whereas CT in most cases lacks a civil dimension and is enemy-centric, the implementation of COIN in Afghanistan pursued a more population-centric approach. In order to understand the lessons identified in the analysis, it is important to have an understanding of the basis of COIN strategy, which was suddenly reinvented in 2006. The strategy was derived from the United States' *Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24)* in 2006, and though the field manual was originally designed for Iraq, it was applied to Afghanistan also. The field manual drew heavily on British and French COIN experiences from Malaya and Algeria respectively, which in both cases concerned COIN strategy in a domestic frame, as the two colonial powers at the time had no intention of relinquishing their colonies.

In December 2006, the U.S. military attempted to implement this strategy change in Afghanistan, going from an enemy-centric focus to a population-centric focus. The Counterinsurgency Doctrine was described in a U.S. military field manual,³⁸ in which work performed by a French officer four decades earlier suddenly appeared in several references. This marked the beginning of a revelation of the late French colonel David Galula and his thoughts on the strategy of counterinsurgency (COIN).

The characteristics of the defined enemy in Afghanistan by the Danish side and, domestically, by the Pakistani side, in both cases, include a strong narrative of religious Islamic extremism. There are also structural commonalities in relation to the insurgency/terrorists as their command structure is based on a relatively small ideologically and power focused leadership that exploits instability and poor living conditions to gain direct or indirect support from the civilian population. The latter can be referred to as the neutral majority, which will be elaborated on later.

(37) Udenrigsministeriet og Forsvarsministeriet, 'Afghanistanstrategien 2015-2017', 2014 <<http://goo.gl/ZpPt5R>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(38) United States, Department of the Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual [2006]* (New York: Cosimo Reports, 2010).

COIN principles and laws

The main principles of Galula's COIN theory focus on the population, which the theory divides into three main groups: 1) the friendly minority, 2) the neutral majority, and 3) the hostile minority. According to the theory, both minority groups will seek to gain the support of the neutral majority, in that this group is the decisive factor for victory or defeat. From a COIN perspective, keeping groups two and three apart is a key ingredient in the recipe for victory, and the opposite is true for the insurgency. Furthermore, as civilian casualties should be avoided, the COIN forces will have to accept the limitations of conventional warfare and the fact that they cannot adapt the strategy of the insurgency as its aims are to create disorder whereas the COIN forces will be measured on their ability to provide security and maintain order.³⁹

According to Galula, the guiding principle should be that COIN approaches be based on four laws that are centred on the previously described support of the neutral majority of a population. Firstly, the support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgency as it is for the insurgency. Controlling an area and preventing the development of political insurgency cells requires the support and active participation of the population. Secondly, support is gained through the active minority. All conflicts have a minority that supports the cause, which the COIN forces need to localize and organize in order to mobilize the neutral majority. Thirdly, it is important to emphasize that the support of the population is conditional.⁴⁰ Finally, intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential. Consequently, the focus of the COIN force should be local and intense rather than national and fragile. During the implementation of the laws, it is very important to show the population that the situation will improve when supporting the COIN forces - and that the COIN cause is better - than the insurgency's. This is another key principle.⁴¹

Using Galula's theories in a contemporary conflict – countering insurgents

A very important question is, of course, whether Galula's theory can be used in a contemporary conflict, almost four decades after it was conceived.

(39) David Galula and John A Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006).

(40) Galula deduces four principles from this law: a) effective use and show of force, politically as well as militarily, b) political and economic reforms are useless if offered in areas where the insurgency still operates, c) an early and convincing demonstration of will, means and ability to win, d) joining negotiations from a position of strength only. Galula and Nagl, pp. 54–55.

(41) Galula and Nagl.

The fact that Galula's theory was written for a COIN force fighting to stay is the opposite of Afghanistan where the foreign COIN force (ISAF) is fighting to leave, following the proclamation of the exit date,⁴² which leads to another problem, namely the timeframe. Galula points out that a COIN force needs to "stay to the very end", which is difficult when the war is optional and depends on domestic political support. According to the COIN principles, the population needs to be convinced that the COIN forces will succeed in the end. When an exit date is proclaimed, the mission's focus changes from reaching objectives that lead to progress to focusing on time, which undermines the basics of COIN theory.

In the case of Afghanistan, unification of Afghan society has proven to be highly complex, and finding a single political cause is probably not possible, which is perhaps not that unique to a country in a state of war between different political factions and warlords. However, the Afghan history of the last four decades is filled with different wars that terrorized the civilian population and created extreme conditions in terms of both security and political stability.⁴³ The nature of the propaganda aspect, and hence the possibility of controlling information and winning over the neutral majority, has also been completely changed by the evolution of the Internet and the cell phone, making unification far more complex.

Finally, there is the issue of safe havens. In Algeria, the French dealt with this by effectively sealing the border to Tunisia, which eliminated the threat from safe havens and prevented arms smuggling to the insurgency.⁴⁴ However, due to geography, it is not possible to seal the Afghan-Pakistani border completely.

With these caveats in mind, the theory still has a variety of elements with relevance to the contemporary conflict in Afghanistan and the mentioning of a COIN Doctrine in the American Field Manual provides an opportu-

(42) 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan | The White House.'

(43) Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan : A Modern History : Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? : The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Artemy Kalinovsky and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *The Blind Leading the Blind: Soviet Advisors, Counter-Insurgency and Nation-Building in Afghanistan* ([Washington, D.C.]: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2010); Mohammad Yousaf, *The Bear Trap : Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London: L. Cooper, 1992).

(44) David Galula, 'Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958' (Santa Monica, CA : RAND Corp., 2006).

nity to view the operational framework through the “Galula perspective.” The following analysis has two parts: focusing on the ISAF operation in the Helmand Province in Afghanistan and further illuminating the fact that, while a COIN approach was found to be relevant and its implementation was pursued, the actual events proved that the ideas of Galula were not tested as a strategy in Afghanistan.

Operational framework: The eight steps

In its description of a stepwise framework, Galula’s theory stresses that the execution of these steps be conducted sequentially and that analysis of each individual step should not be undertaken until the step in question has been successfully completed.⁴⁵ Looking at the ISAF operation through the perspective of Galula could give an impression of how the implementation of the COIN theory at the strategic level influenced actual operations.

- The first step is the destruction, or expulsion, of the insurgency forces. This objective is achieved when static units are able to garrison the area.
- The second step is the deployment of a static unit to establish a protected area with a view to allowing political and economic development.
- The third step is contact with and control of the population.⁴⁶ Here, it is vital that COIN authority is established and that the insurgency is isolated from the population.
- The fourth step deals with the destruction of the political organization of the insurgents by expelling their political sympathizers.
- The fifth step deals with local elections and the installation of local leaders in positions of responsibility and power. In this phase, it is vital that COIN forces prove their ability to maintain security in order to gain the trust and support of the population.
- The sixth step tests the local leaders, although this of course requires that step five – the holding of elections – was successful.

(45) All eight steps are described sequentially by Galula and in the following analysis this chapter is the point of reference. Galula and Nagl

(46) Control should be linked to the ability to protect.

- The seventh step involves organizing a political party based on national consensus on at least a number of points in terms of how political visions and problems should be addressed. In this context, unifying the local leaders in one party or several parties is essential to sustaining the peace.
- The final step is defined by winning over or suppressing the last insurgents and should be accompanied by an offer of amnesty to the remaining insurgents.

The steps are broad in scope as they constitute the foundation for the application of a COIN strategy in Afghanistan, where Galula's theory was used as a key focal point in the strategic development. The use of COIN as a term in this study includes a foundation of the eight steps as inclusive elements in the analytical interpretation of successes and failures.

In this context, examination of the opponent (the insurgency), is a prerequisite. While the objective of an insurgency-driven campaign can be generalized, the nature and means vary from conflict to conflict. In this case, the Afghan Taliban movement represented the enemy, and therefore the following brief introduction deals with how the perception of the Taliban evolved from 2001-2014.

The insurgency: The Taliban from 2001 to 2005

Removed from power after OEF in 2001, the Taliban aligned itself with the already existing thinking on Jihad in the Middle East, in order to attract and use whatever financial possibilities were at hand. Greed among local warlords was accepted if they paid tribute and supported the Taliban.⁴⁷ The production of opium puppies became a primary source of income, even though the Taliban had previously banned the crop as Haram.⁴⁸ Mullah Omar succeeded in transforming the Taliban from a strict Islamic organisation into a movement in which the end justified the means. But he achieved this at the cost of its strict Islamic agenda to counter wrongdoings and crime. The transformation had a slow start but gained momentum as the U.S. focused on Iraq and left the new president, Hamid Karzai, with limited support from 2002 to 2005. Further, the U.S. prevented President Hamid Karzai from

(47) Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan : A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 327–329.

(48) An Arabic term meaning sinful.

negotiating a peace with the Taliban by threatening to end all support if he did.⁴⁹ This resulted in an Afghan government where the Taliban as a political actor was ignored, even though the organisation still had scattered support in parts of the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. However, though this support increased in some areas, this was not necessarily based on local support for the Taliban cause - whatever that was - but often through intimidation, bribery, and other criminal activities. It must be added, though, that the Taliban – after its removal from power in 2001 – was never a coherent entity with a firm command structure and leadership, making it difficult for the government to negotiate and reach agreements with the movement.

In an environment of marginalization, the Taliban could gain momentum in their transformation by intimidating and influencing the local politicians and power structures in the southern and eastern provinces.⁵⁰ In fact, the U.S. focus on Iraq from 2002 to 2005 became almost an operational pause for the Taliban leadership, offering the possibility to re-think its political strategy and work on gaining support from the provinces far removed from the Afghan government's outreach. President Hamid Karzai, aware of the problem, tried in 2004 to negotiate with the more moderate parts of the Taliban – despite U.S. opposition. But as NATO took over ISAF and started its operations, the government's new willingness to negotiate could only be interpreted by the Taliban as the efforts of a western marionette clinging to power - and the Taliban declined.⁵¹ While NATO took over ISAF, the Taliban succeeded in channelling resistance toward NATO and the Afghan Government into support for the Taliban's fight, even though the Taliban was targeted by ISAF and lost leaders in large numbers.

The Taliban from 2005 to 2014

Although the regenerated Taliban has a robust hierarchy and a central planning organisation, it is not the monolithic movement that most believe it to be. The Taliban has developed into an umbrella organisation with different groupings, goals, and tactics, loosely connected through ideology, religion, and cultural factors. The leadership has ideological motivations, but the ordinary Taliban supporter is often driven by more pragmatic causes like the possibility of having a career, disappointment over development and

(49) Brian Jenkins, "The Long Shadow of 9 11 America's Response to Terrorism" (Santa Monica, CA : RAND, 2011), p. 30.

(50) Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop : The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan, 2002-7* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 19–21.

(51) Giustozzi, pp. 134–136.

outside support, resistance against foreign troops in Afghanistan, and sheer criminality. The weakness in the Taliban organisation is its diversity, which could lead to the dissolution of the organisation if the leadership is not careful in their political machinations, or if they frustrate a decentralized part in pursuing its own objectives. On the other hand, a strongly decentralized organisation, where the top leadership is not necessary for retaining power, is also an advantage. Further, the Taliban's ability to extend far and wide and channel anger and disappointment over living conditions, future prospects, and the lacking security provided by the Afghan government adds to the Taliban's strength. The Taliban is becoming more popular, even though United Nations estimates indicate that the Taliban was behind 74% of the civilian Afghan casualties in 2014.⁵²

In a report from 2013, approximately 1/3 of the Afghan population thinks that Taliban must be included in Afghanistan's political future.⁵³ Probably, this outcome is caused by the fact that the Afghan government and ISAF have been unable to provide security in all parts of Afghanistan. The Taliban are not in power due to broad public support but by intimidating the local population to an extent, where the local population just want peace and stability, at any cost – even accepting the Taliban and letting the intimidator join local and national politics.

ISAF challenges with Taliban

The ability to counter Taliban was, of course, deeply dependent of the ANSF's ability to maintain security in whole of the country, supported by ISAF, and later on its own. Thus, in 2003, the UN initiated a disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process (DDR-process) with the objective of disarming different insurgency groupings and giving them an alternative to fighting the government and ISAF by giving them money, influence, and work in exchange. The process focused on the militant leaders in a top-down process. However, this had the drawback of not securing work and careers for the ordinary Taliban fighter when he showed up at the local government after having been disarmed and demobilized.⁵⁴ Without money and job op-

(52) UNAMA, 'Press Release 9. July 2014', 2014, p. 2 <<http://goo.gl/gfsvkj>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(53) Asian Foundation, 'Afghanistan in 2013: A Survey of the Afghan Population', 2013, p. 7 <<http://goo.gl/gfsvkj>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(54) Peter Dahl Thruelsen, *From Soldier to Civilian : Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration in Afghanistan* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006), p. 36.

portunities, the former fighters were easily re-recruited by the Taliban. And the numbers of possible recruits were high, either through intimidation or through embracing marginalised parts of the civil population. The Taliban could use them all – even if they did not support the Taliban’s political objectives – as long as they would fight the government and ISAF.⁵⁵ Although official numbers do not exist, it is estimated that the Afghan Army, before 2001, consisted of roughly 30-35,000 personnel, with up to 60,000 personnel in different paramilitary units, formed during the Soviet period.⁵⁶ As the new Afghan Security Force in 2001 consisted of only approximately 1,750 personnel, around 80-90,000 former fighters were left without a job and were therefore potential recruits for the Taliban and other insurgencies or locally based militias.⁵⁷ How many former fighters were in reality recruited by Taliban is difficult to assess exactly, but up to 36,000 fighters were estimated to be in the Taliban forces in 2010, although in loose affiliation with the central parts of the Taliban.⁵⁸

(55) 'Afghan Leaders Move toward Reconciliation with "Ten Dollar" Taliban amidst U.S. Offensive' <<http://alturl.com/rqoia>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(56) William Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2007), p. 50.

(57) 'Afghan Army Graduates Fifth Battalion' <<http://alturl.com/5gn3r>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

(58) Barrons was, from 2009 to 2010, commander of a NATO reintegration unit, which tried to convince Taliban leaders to give up fighting and take up designated jobs. 'Major-General Richard Barrons Puts Taleban Fighter Numbers at 36,000 | The Times' <<http://goo.gl/OjJfTZ>> [accessed 15 June 2015].

Counter-militancy operations in Pakistan: Through the prism of COIN and CT

By Mahroona Hussain Syed

Abstract

This chapter deals with the experiences that Pakistan gained while fighting against challenges posed by militancy, extremism, and terrorism. Duly pointing to the theoretical anomalies existing in the current COIN and CT discourses, which have caused further ambiguities in the official discourse on the subject issue, this chapter suggests that a better term to describe Pakistan's efforts is "Counter-militancy". In the Pakistani context this denotes the fight against the menace in FATA and areas adjacent to the Pakistan-Afghan border. Picking up a few threads from the past, the chapter discusses all these within the context/ realm of the geo-political situation faced by Pakistan, making it easier for the reader to understand the divergent and convergent experiences of Pakistan in its fight against militancy.

Preface

Pakistan, an ideological nation-state born out of a poet's (Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, R.A) dream and an astute lawyer's (Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah) leadership, is today a progressive democracy, yet one that is entrapped in a quagmire of internal security challenges, quite often propelled by global and regional geo-strategic compulsions. Fighting militancy, sometimes carrying undertones of an insurgency-like situation but most frequently coupled with terrorism, is the worst threat, to say the least. However, the saga of Pakistan's fight against militancy and terrorism at home is not divorced from the geostrategic and historical context that led to this stage in the first place.

Explaining the context: Pakistan's geostrategic compulsions

To further explain what was hinted in the introductory chapter of this book, Pakistan, the home of around 200 million people, inherited many geo-strategic and economic complexities arising simply by virtue of its geo-strategic location, which added further complications into the threat matrix laid out before it. The genesis of the issue of terrorism and militancy can be traced to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 — Pakistan's next-door neighbour, with whom it shares an approx. 2,500-km-long border. Afghanistan, and the FATA areas in Pakistan, prior to the independence of the subcontinent, served for the most part as a buffer state between Czarist

Russia and the British Raj, which again affected the social fabric of the people of this region. A political vacuum, in the absence of a stable political system, had nonetheless existed for ages. This political vacuum lingered and provided space for the Mullahs to fill, once the Soviet-Afghan war started in 1979. In the case of Pakistan, another reason for the lingering political vacuum in the FATA areas, especially, was the state's continued failure to accord these areas their due position and integrate them into the general political system of the country, even *incrementally* over the decades, if not in one go, despite the fact that these areas were given recognition according to the Constitution of Pakistan.⁵⁹ Most commonly it was known as "Ilaqa Ghair" by the general public.

At that time, the narrative of Jihad (Holy War) was built to attract men from all over the world to fight in the newly set battleground against the Russians, all trained and equipped by U.S. and Pakistani forces in Pakistani border areas close to Afghanistan. Besides siding with the liberal democracies' effort to stop the spread of communism, the decision also helped allay Pakistan's own fears of a Soviet invasion of Pakistan as a next step to reach warm waters. The Holy War lasted many years, until the ouster of the Russian troops from Afghanistan. After this feat, the once-celebrated Holy Warriors or the Mujahedeen and war heroes of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, who were hailed as freedom fighters in the White House by the American president⁶⁰, were abandoned, having no sense of purpose or any knowledge of any other way of life than war fighting. These were left to fend for themselves in the rugged terrain and harsh weather of FATA and Balochistan, along with their suffering families on both sides of the border.

Reeling from the aftermath of the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s, Pakistan then became a shelter for more than 3 million Afghan refugees⁶¹, and even today hosts about 1.5 million (registered) Afghan refugees.⁶² Pakistan's country profile for 2015, issued by the UNHCR, shows that Pakistanis host the

(59) 'The Frontier Crimes Regulation, 1901 Regulation III of 1901, as Modified Upto 31st October, 1971.' (Peshawar : Government Stationery and Print. Dept., 1973).

(60) President Reagan meeting with Afghan Freedom Fighters to Discuss Soviet Atrocities in Afghanistan. 'Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, National Archives and Records Administration' <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/photographs/atwork.html>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

(61) The UNHCR has facilitated repatriation of about 3.8 million Afghan refugees (registered) from Pakistan to Afghanistan since 2002. 'UNHCR - Pakistan' <<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487016.html>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

(62) Unregistered numbers are thought to be far higher than this figure.

world's largest protracted refugee population. The refugee influx has meant that Pakistan will be providing jobs, healthcare, land, schooling, and even birth certificates (around 800,000) to children from the refugee families. The sheer number of the refugees may as well be unimaginable for any country to host, even by Western standards where countries enjoy much more stable economies and long established governance structures with almost no home-grown unrest. Yet a developing Pakistan, itself embroiled in a socio-economic development paradox, is still hosting a massive number of refugees from Afghanistan. Former U.S. Defense Secretary Mrs Hilary Clinton has, albeit belatedly, pointed out that the U.S. had a role in the problems that plague Pakistan today.⁶³ Pointing at the disparity in the cost of the war on terror and aid provided by the U.S. to the coalition support fund, the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2010-11 indicated that the cost of war on terror had skyrocketed to five times the level of aid received by Pakistan.⁶⁴

In addition to the above, the war brought a new, foreign brand of militant Islam to a society which followed largely Sufi saints, who spread the message of peace, hope, universal love and brotherhood of mankind. Sectarianism and militancy were largely unknown to Pakistani society prior to the Soviet invasion, or the Iranian revolution of 1979, which coincidentally occurred around the same time. Even today, the 96.4%-large Muslim portion of Pakistan's population is comprised of 85-90% Sunni and 10-15% Shia,⁶⁵ who live in harmony.⁶⁶ Just to underscore this point, anyone can observe that in Pakistan's elections, being Shia or Sunni does not affect the popularity or pool of votes of a candidate for any seat, from prime minister to any member of parliament. The same has been and is the case amongst the highest ranking officers in both civilian and military cadres. With the start of the Afghan war in the 1980s, Pakistan became a battleground for proxy wars of sectarianism between Sunnis and Shias also, each having militant factions under some

(63) 'U.S. Created Taliban and Abandoned Pakistan, Says Hillary - DAWN.COM' <<http://goo.gl/2mVYoY>> [accessed 16 September 2015].

(64) Shahbaz Rana quotes the Economic Affairs Division, Government of Pakistan. 'Myth vs Reality: U.S. Aid to Pakistan Dwarfed by Economic Cost of War' <<http://goo.gl/c94qiZ>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

(65) 'Pakistan Demographics Profile 2014' <http://www.indexmundi.com/pakistan/demographics_profile.html> [accessed 4 September 2015].

(66) One may or may not fully agree of the whole, but even a 2014 report by United States Institute of Peace, written by Michael Kalin and Niloufer Siddiqui, recognizes that prior to 1979 the Sunni-Shia relations were non-violent in Pakistan. The report entitled Michael Kalin, 'Religious Authority and the Promotion of Sectarian Tolerance in Pakistan', 2014.

name and funded by other countries. Successive governments in Pakistan could not amend the earlier laxities shown in this regard and the divide is a little more pronounced than before, although not as bad as some critics of the country would like to portray.

Enter 9/11, Pakistan found itself caught between the devil and deep sea. The "with us or against us" threat issued to Pakistan by the Bush administration left it no other choice, and it was forced to take a very unpopular decision of joining hands with the international community. Interestingly, the same government of Pakistan who faced international sanctions for being non-democratic,⁶⁷ all of a sudden became a vital ally of the Bush administration. The region became a hotbed of all sorts of conspiracy theories and international ploys for Pakistan, with key global players on one side and an enraged Taliban on the other.



Map 3: Map of Pakistan

(67) For example, Pakistan's membership of the Commonwealth was suspended in 1999 due to the same reason. 'Pakistan Suspended from the Commonwealth | The Commonwealth' <<http://thecommonwealth.org/history-of-the-commonwealth/pakistan-suspended-commonwealth-0>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

The map shows the neighbourhood of Pakistan. 9/11 altered the geostrategic complexities for Pakistan with prospects of a two-front scenario. Not only did the U.S., NATO, China, Russia, Iran and Middle Eastern countries have stakes in the Afghan situation, but 2001 brought yet another military standoff for Pakistan when India began deploying its forces on Pakistan's eastern border. The War on Terror had become a Gordian knot for Pakistan, amidst these competing interests of major players in the region. At home, the internal issues of governance and political instability, often ignited by topsy-turvy civil-military relations, rampant corruption of the ruling elite (also evident from their continued reluctance to pay taxes), and the ensuing widening gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, amidst socio-economic deprivation of major segments of Pakistani society, could not be wished away either. So the list of grievances for people living in the far-flung areas of FATA, specifically, was multi-dimensional.

Pakistan's share in the war on Terror

Many repercussions followed the West's dismantling of the Afghan Taliban government and its allies, despite oft-repeated advice given by Pakistani authorities about:

- 1) not lumping the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda together,⁶⁸ since the former was an established government in Afghanistan (recognized by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and UAE), while al-Qaeda was a non-state militant actor;
- 2) ample time was not given to the Afghan Taliban for negotiations to hand over Osama Bin Laden.

The American invasion of Afghanistan was seen by the Pakistani population mostly as an act of aggression undertaken with indecent haste, which made it difficult for the government of Pakistan to justify the American war for people at home. The international rubric of dismantling the Afghan Taliban government was not bought by the local public, as far as hearts and minds of the local population were concerned, since the Taliban were largely known to the people living in the Pakistan-Afghan region, along with their methods

(68) After more than a decade of devastation in Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani finally felt the need to say sorry to at least some Taliban for the wrongs done by the U.S. against them. 'Afghan President Says Need to Find Way to Say "Sorry" to Taliban | Reuters' <<http://goo.gl/tiq65h>> [accessed 7 September 2015].

and beliefs as well. To local populations in these areas, the Taliban, although they may have been seen as harsh in their methods, were also positively perceived due to the provision of good governance, effective control, and the maintenance of law and order⁶⁹. In addition, they had brought opium cultivation almost to a complete halt in the Afghan Taliban-controlled areas, where some of their key initiatives earned them a lot of respect and attracted many a man from adjacent bordering areas into their fold. It is also interesting to note that Mullah Omar's government, during 1996-2001 surprisingly was not a problem for anyone, neither was the Afghan Taliban's treatment of women and children enough of a top-priority issue to cause an invasion. For the government of Pakistan it was a difficult situation, back then, to fight the conspiracy theories in circulation: for example, the theory that the Taliban government was toppled to restore the narcotics trade -- a local source of revenue generation for some international agencies' covert operations in the region, as poppy cultivation was banned under the Taliban government and its production was halted, up to around 90% (Opium production skyrocketed once U.S.-backed Afghan President Karzai took power.⁷⁰ The decision of the government of Pakistan resulted in public resentment because Pakistanis, though they shared the shock and grief of international community over the 9/11 terrorist attack (many Pakistanis also died in the Twin Towers)⁷¹, could not fathom the logic of invading Afghanistan since many rogue elements, even proclaimed murderers and criminals, and money launderers from Pakistan are given political asylum in Western countries. This was perceived as a double standard and was not taken kindly by the local population, just like their increasing discomfort with their own state's inadequacies and failures.

Consequently, unrest was initially observed in many parts of the country in the shape of small protests, which grew in magnitude in the areas near

(69) For example, see Pamela Constable's article, 'As Crime Increases in Kabul, So Does Nostalgia for Taliban' <<http://goo.gl/8wS8PY>> [accessed 7 September 2015].

(70) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014, Cultivation and Production, indicates trends from 1994 to 2014, with Helmand province, registering a three per cent increase in cultivation, remained Afghanistan's leading crop grower (taking 46 per cent of the national total), followed by Kandahar, Farah, and Nangarhar, UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014, Cultivation and Production*, 2014 <<http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>>.

(71) Six Pakistanis died in the Twin Towers incident. 'Remembering the Muslims Who Were Killed in the 9/11 Attacks' <<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/11/166286.html>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

the Pak –Afghan border. The major source of this unrest lay in the largely unpopular paradigm shift of the state's policy towards Afghanistan in joining the Global War on Terror (GWOt), or the American led war on terror. This provided the *raison d'être* for miscreants and terrorists to permeate into the mainland and wage a bloody war against the state's ideological shift.

Thus the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was born. Initially seen as a by-product of the Afghan Taliban resistance movement, it was soon joined by local disgruntled elements. However, although it acquired the brand name of TTP, in reality it was hardly a monolithic whole. The single label for the many disparate parties that constitute the phenomenon of TTP is actually more of a misnomer. In fact, as years progressed, it into turned more of a crazy concoction of ideologically-driven, power-hungry warmongers, miscreants, religious demagogues, terrorists, semi-literate militants, criminal gangs, extortionists, kidnappers, etc. However, one might say that, even more than other typical insurgencies, the TTP was organized and adopted a much more robust and systematic approach, where their sub-units would largely operate independently. No direct command and control was visible in most cases, but guidance from the Taliban Shura was discernible. Decentralization in this case proved to be more effective as a matter of strategy. Although in theory, the TTP professed allegiance to the Afghan Taliban, headed by Mullah Omar, and even inherited or carried the same narrative as the Afghan Taliban in a bid to convince the general public, the TTP could not hold on to one particular omnipresent set of agenda points during all negotiations. This created an impression of non-seriousness and warmongering of the TTP in the eyes of the public instead. The TTP strategy to launch suicide attacks on holy places across religions and faiths, along with attacks on sensitive state installations and military bases, only further complicated the situation. The government was left with no other choice but to go all out against the terrorist dens by launching Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan and other counterterrorism operations in the rest of the country

Pakistan's approach seen through the prism of COIN

The above contextualization of the problem being confronted by Pakistan is neither exhaustive, i.e., covering all possible angles, because it is only meant to apprise the reader of the broader contours of issues from a Pakistani point of view, nor does it preclude a debate on defining the nature of the conflict faced by Pakistan and its approach towards dealing with the opponent from a more theoretical perspective.

The very notion of "Insurgency", in terms of how it is seen in most of the related literature, may not be the right idea to describe all conflict situations confronted by states across the world. Given the fact that available definitions of "Insurgency" in the available literature are mostly written by scholars and practitioners from the U.S. and Europe, Pakistan finds it difficult to accurately classify the situation. The same goes for the situation once Pakistan tries to describe its effort to control militancy. The one less-identified lacuna in existing literature, as highlighted in a Master in Philosophy research project at the NDU, is the need for a distinction to be made in identifying the opponent according to the state party facing it. The ineptness of a sovereign state to address the cause of unrest within its population leads to an insurgency, whereas in an occupied state (or colony for that matter), it is actually a resistance against foreign occupation which is largely a movement for *self-determination*. The resolutions to both situations, i.e., unrest in a sovereign and an occupied state, are altogether different, due to the difference in the cause of the problem.⁷² The author's suggested definition of an insurgency, as seen in this context, is:

"[...] the situation nurtured in a state of deprivation, where part of a population in a society considers itself to be ideologically, politically, administratively and socially wronged by a state or coercive power. The step-by-step armed struggle undertaken by the distressed party aimed at overthrowing the existing power in order to obtain its perception of justice is an insurgency."

[The citation has been slightly modified for linguistic clarity];⁷³ hence the need for developing an indigenous strategy for dealing with internal unrest, according to the author.⁷⁴ However, the above-suggested definition of insurgency, and even those proffered by U.S. and U.K. manuals on insurgency and COIN, is sufficient proof that the present situation in Pakistan is not akin to an insurgency. The key reason being that the population has not taken up arms against the state, nor has there been a demand for a separate homeland or the overthrow of the existing government; rather only some militant factions among the TTP demand this; nor has the TTP narrative received mass acceptance. Their horrific and brutal tactics of instilling fear

(72) Asim Ahmed, 'Rethinking a Nuclear Pakistan's Military Strategy for COIN Operations - A Comparative Analysis Using Regional Analogies' (National Defence University, Islamabad, 2015).

(73) Ahmed.

(74) Ahmed.

through bombing and the killing of innocent civilians, especially children, in cold blood, kidnapping for ransom, extortion of money, involvement in major heists, destroying education and health facilities in remote areas on flimsy pretexts have made them highly unpopular and stopped their movement from turning into an insurgency in the classical sense.

On the other hand, it is difficult to define it purely as terrorism because of the abovementioned factors, including the genuine grievances of local people, public sympathy for some of the earlier narratives offered by the Taliban to introduce a just, equitable Islamic system. The fact that the opponent was very organized, with a sizeable majority that blended into the local population, mostly due to familial ties, and had a clear agenda of introducing an alternative political and social order to the existing one, challenged the constitution and writ of the state. Taking due cognizance of the role of other non-state actors, foreign intelligence agencies' operatives, the objective of the TTP has largely never been the creation of a new state but the introduction of their brand/interpretation of Islamic Sharia and ideology. This ideology, however, was not shared by the common people in Pakistan. A further objective was stopping the government of Pakistan from siding with the Western invaders in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The fact that Taliban did not take up arms against the government of Pakistan until the Government, under international pressure, launched an operation against them in 2003, is to be noted in this connection. Until today, quite a few TTP factions have not undertaken anti-state activities, and due to this, the government of Pakistan has time and again entered into negotiations with all segments.

Considering the above, therefore, it is much closer to reality on the ground to call the opponent a militant, someone taking up arms and seeking redress of grievances, also joined later by criminal and terrorist networks. Further, the terms "militant" and "militancy" have somehow been more frequently used in the Pakistani context, both by international and local media. Explaining militancy as the major reason of unrest in FATA, Shuja Nawaz, in his research identified that out of the seven agencies of FATA in Pakistan, *militancy* is present in five, whereas the remaining two agencies are affected by tribal conflict.⁷⁵ Accordingly, Hasan Khan recommends that the *militancy*

(75) Shuja Nawaz, *FATA--a Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2009), p. 12.

in FATA should be addressed on ideological and political fronts.⁷⁶ RAND⁷⁷ and Christine Fair⁷⁸ also use the term “militancy”, albeit negatively, to comment that it has been used as a Pakistani policy tool and that there is a need to take remedial measures by Pakistan in order to address the issue of militancy. Notwithstanding the arguments put forth by the writers, the term *militancy* has been excessively used by international and local scholars and practitioners to describe unrest in FATA areas of Pakistan. *Militant* originally denotes a person “engaged in warfare” or “serving as a soldier” in the Late Middle English and Old French languages.⁷⁹ In contrast, in the common lexicon *militancy* is referred to favouring confrontational or violent methods in support of a political or social cause.⁸⁰

Two other definitions of militancy are also quoted here to explain the concept more comprehensively. Dr. Jatin Kumar Mohanty quoted George Houghton’s definition of “militancy,” to explain that militancy

“...springs from one’s values, is expressed as an attitude, and results in certain behaviour. One’s values are those things in which one strongly believes. They are what one believes to be fundamentally important and true. From this comes an attitude which is unwilling to tolerate any divergence from these fundamentally important truths and which seeks to defend them. It results in behaviour which speaks when these truths are attacked or diluted and which refuses to cooperate with any activity which would minimize their importance.”⁸¹

(76) Hasan Khan, ‘Counterinsurgency (COIN) Strategy and Protracted Insurgency in Pakistan’s Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)’, *TIGAH, A JOURNAL OF PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT*, II, p. 106 <<http://frc.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/71.pdf>>.

(77) See Seth G. Jones and Christine Fair, Seth Jones, ‘Counterinsurgency in Pakistan’ (Santa Monica, CA : RAND, 2010), p. 44.

(78) See Christine C, ‘The Militant Challenge in Pakistan’ (National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011).

(79) ‘Militant - Definition of Militant in English from the Oxford Dictionary’ <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/militant>> [accessed 7 September 2015].

(80) ‘Militant - Definition of Militant in English from the Oxford Dictionary’

(81) Jatin Kumar Mohanty, *Terrorism and Militancy in Central Asia* (Gyan Books, 2006), p. 53.

Another interesting description has been given by Kiran Firdous who states that

“A militant engages in violence as part of a claimed struggle against oppression. But the word is sometimes used to describe anyone with strongly-held views (e.g., militant Christian, militant Atheist). Popular usage sometimes sees “militant” as synonymous with “terrorist”. In other words, a militant person is a confrontational person regardless of physical violence or pacifistic methods. The term militant can describe those who aggressively and violently promote a political philosophy in the name of a movement (and sometimes have an extreme solution for their goal).”⁸²

”Militant extremism can be defined as zealous adherence to a set of beliefs and values, with a combination of two key features: (a) advocacy of measures beyond the norm (i.e., extremism), and (b) intention and willingness to resort to violence (i.e., militancy). Of most interest, of course, is violent militant extremism, which includes not just intended but actual violence, violence that arguably (without sufficient long-term redeeming value) violates human moral codes in multiple ways by imposing harm, violating human rights, causing chaos, and stimulating a reaction of shock and disgust.”⁸³

Thus, this makes the term *militancy* to be more in conformity with the present situation in FATA, as insurgency is more related to situation where the population is demanding right of self-determination, whereas terrorism is more of a tool of insurgents or militants or external power to undermine the writ of any state.

Coming to the state response to such a situation, a lot of ambiguity on this subject can be observed in the official discourse in Pakistan. Both terms “Counterinsurgency” and “Counterterrorism” are used, at times even interchangeably, which is theoretically inappropriate on various grounds. Counterinsurgency is, however, used very rarely. Another term has been used more often, once the idea of countering militants in NW and FATA

(82) Kiran Firdous, ‘Militancy in Pakistan’ (Islamabad: Strategic Institute of Strategic Studies), p. 112 <www.issi.org.pk/publication-files/1299825170_97247252.pdf>.

(83) Firdous

was consensually agreed upon. Since the main focus of this chapter is not an academic debate of both the theories COIN and CT, or Counter-militancy, for that matter, and the purpose is merely to attempt to contextualize and define Pakistan's approach to handling militancy and violent extremism, only key divergences between terms like COIN and CT are pointed out below.

The COIN approach is essentially a conventional campaign to address an insurgency in which the political, economic, and diplomatic tools take precedence over the military campaign. The U.K. manual, for example, defines COIN as:

“Those military, law enforcement, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency, while addressing the root causes. Successful counterinsurgency requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the political, economic, social, cultural and security dimensions of the unrest.”⁸⁴

The military should theoretically be only one of several tools according to some existing manuals on COIN. If undertaken, modern COIN efforts have to be population-centric and all above-mentioned tools should be employed more or less simultaneously. The military tool, once utilized, will largely be a conventional military campaign. The caveat, theoretically speaking, lies in identifying the opponent as an insurgent in the classical sense, which, as a necessary corollary, implicitly grants a certain degree of legitimacy to the opponent. Also, the complicity of the host population is expected in case of an insurgency, in the form of sympathisers support for active participants.

The problem with the existing manuals on COIN, developed by the U.S., U.K. or NATO, seems to be that of an overreliance on the assumption that the target population will possess the same value system, understanding and interpretation of events, actions, and phenomena⁸⁵ because of a presupposed superiority of Western ideals and socio-political institutions. This leads to

(84) British Army, *British Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2009), pp. 1–5 <<http://goo.gl/RT2DE>>.

(85) For example see Frank G. Hoffman, 'Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency', *Parameters*, Summer (2007), 71–87 <<http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/#fragment-2>> Hoffman discusses how the western assumption of economic inducements to supersede faith is wrong and how cost-benefit calculi may differ in other civilizations apart from that in the United States. Hoffman was a member of the writing team for the U.S. FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency.

the inference that Western intervention is required, although the population may actually only be demanding swift delivery of justice and good governance, regardless of which form of government prevails, i.e. whether justice be delivered by democratic institutions, tribal heads or other forms of authoritarian rule. Also, the discussions on extremism in the latest COIN manuals do not mention root causes stemming from acts of aggression and interference by foreign invaders; the overt and covert support of corrupt puppet regimes; the dismantling of established governments; the seizure of control of indigenous resources causing injustices to locals. These grievances somehow skip the discussion altogether. The overarching theme of studies on global insurgencies and COIN at the same time reflects a focus on identifying the phenomena in relation to Islam or Islamists.⁸⁶

The Counterterrorism approach, on the other hand, is basically an enemy-centric approach, based on the idea of target elimination, swift targeted operations in rural or urban areas, instead of a conventional campaign with less or no concern for improvement of governance, infrastructure or overall living conditions, redress of grievances and rehabilitation of the population living in the AO. CT is a civilian-led strategy, i.e., spearheaded by the police and civilian law enforcement agencies. It saves the government from the critical issue of identifying the opponent as an insurgent, denying him the human feel and a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the public, thereby allowing the government the right to eliminate him, instead of turning to negotiations.

Considering this, in Pakistan's case, the governmental approach has been state-centric, with security of the state having an overwhelming precedence over issues of human security. No wonder that Pakistan's strategy, as a result, turned out to be enemy-centric, based on conventional warfare concepts and without active involvement of civilian police or law enforcement agencies. One could, however, argue or hypothesize that, given the governance issues and the large population, a more population-centric approach might have reduced the costs and duration of the campaign and loss of men and materiel, compared to enemy-centric approaches focusing specifically on eliminating the enemy. Here, one may also argue that fighting an insurgency, or the like, on one's own soil introduces an entirely new set of complexities and variety of dynamics. These may or may not subscribe, or fit into, the Western theories conceived about the subject, since Western theories are largely based

(86) See for example David J. Kilcullen, 'Countering Global Insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28 (2005), 597-617 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390500300956>>.

on experiences of fighting insurgencies in colonies, which others may easily classify as independence movements against foreign occupants, as mentioned earlier. Fighting an insurgency on home ground and as the host nation alone is an entirely new game.

Thus in the case of Pakistan, a definite approach to handling militancy was a long time in the making, because of administrative and political issues coupled with economic woes and pressures from the international community. And its approach remained ambiguous as far as definitions are concerned. Pakistan kept oscillating between ideas like CT and COIN, never quite completely adopting either one as a thoroughly comprehensive concept, as is evident from the means and lines of effort that are most often used in Pakistan for dealing with such situations. Due to these, many a times did Pakistan take the risk of increasing tangible support for the insurgents/militants amidst these ambiguities.

In an attempt to define the nature of efforts in Pakistan, the notion of asymmetric warfare, which has become a definition applying to many different situations, has engendered the term "counter-militancy", which validly caters to all perspectives and types of opponents involved in the asymmetric conflict that Pakistan has had to deal with. Just as the term "*militant*" is far more accurate in describing the opponent in Pakistan, it is far more accurate to use the term *counter-militancy* for Pakistani campaigns against the militants, since Pakistan used a carrot-and-stick policy with regular bouts of negotiation rounds, in which failures were usually followed by military operations. Because of the lack of theoretical grounding of this term, combined with obvious ambiguities in the official discourse on the internal conflict situation in FATA, "counter-militancy" was used only in statements and speeches, while a uniform, consensually constructed narrative containing this term has not been officially constructed to date. For the same reason, the book at hand originally based its argumentation and ensuing data collection on using the prism of the available popular theories for dealing with internal conflict, namely, COIN and CT, even though neither theory suits nor explains Pakistan's case comprehensively. Probably due to cognizance of complex situations faced by the state, there is an increasing trend toward using the term "Counter-militancy", which refers to measures taken to check the militancy in a society. However, a caveat may lie in the fact that the term "militancy"

might be used incorrectly by a few to undermine the indigenous struggle of population groups seeking the right of self-determination.⁸⁷

Much literature is available on the details of Pakistan's operations in different areas of unrest, the issue of Afghanistan, the TTP etc., and without getting into details regarding the history of negotiations, suffice it to say that Pakistani military forces have come a long way, to a point where they are edging towards defeating the miscreants and terrorists through Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan. They have learnt how to fight the menace of militancy and terrorism. The experience varied in its nature from policy to the strategic and tactical levels. Pakistan, as a state, has over the decades been focusing on conventional and traditional warfare with a conventional enemy, primarily due to threats from its eastern borders. Sub-conventional warfare was initially not its forte. It had to re-equip and re-orientate its armed forces to confront the opponent, but with far fewer resources than many developed countries. Ironically, Pakistan was a key ally in the War on Terror for the West, but it constantly received cries of "DO More" from its international peers, who disregarded the immense constraints on its financial resources given its huge population. Given the herculean task that Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence agencies faced, if one looks at the military expenditures of the country, Pakistan never made into the list of top 15 military spenders of the world for almost through the first decade of the 2000s⁸⁸. In fact, many countries on the Top-15 list, according to SIPRI estimates, are neither facing insurgencies/law and order situations at home (e.g., Brazil, France, Italy, etc.), nor are they active allies in the War on Terror, nor are they rich countries (e.g., India) at all.⁸⁹ Another irony is that the cost of fighting an insurgency in Afghanistan was found to be huge by many in Europe, even though these were shared by more than 27 countries, along with the U.S., but Pakistan alone had to deal with the TTP in fighting the war. The claimed foreign aid

(87) For example in the case of Indian-held Kashmir, the Indian ex-Chief of Army Staff used the term militancy instead of insurgency to portray a false impression about the struggle, although the Kashmiris' right for self-determination had been determined by several UN resolutions. See General (Ret.) V.P. Malik, former Chief of Army Staff, 'Raging Debate on Armed Forces Special Powers Act in J&K - SP's MAI' <<http://goo.gl/Q3t8cD>> [accessed 6 September 2015].

(88) This author's own study discusses this aspect in detail. See Mahroona Hussain Syed, 'Economic Growth and Military Effectiveness: An Empirical Study of Pakistan's Military from 1991-2010' (National Defence University, Islamabad, 2013).

(89) For details see 'Sipri: The 15 Countries with the Highest Military Expenditure 2014' <http://www.sipri.org/googlemaps/milex_top_15_2014_exp_map.html> [accessed 7 September 2015].

to help Pakistan in fighting the war was never commensurate with the task performed or the costs borne by the entire Pakistani society. However, the sacrifices made by specifically the Pakistan Army in carrying out these operations, ever since the U.S. War on Terror started, outnumber the casualty rate of NATO/ISAF and the U.S. combined.⁹⁰

Pakistan decides to eliminate terrorism and militancy from its soil

Pakistan is finally witnessing a new, and desirable, phase of historical transition after more than a decade of the War on Terror being fought in the region. The people of FATA had to bear irreparable losses of life and property. The entire area has remained infested with fear, extremism and militancy and inhabited by a population taken hostage by a hydra-headed enemy for more than a decade. The prime minister of Pakistan thus announced determination to eliminate the menace from Pakistan's soil. This brought a sigh of relief to many a person because earlier the government efforts to give peace a chance were "rendered fruitless", as the PM pointed out, on 16 June 2014, when speaking on the floor of the National Assembly.⁹¹ Subsequent to the state's decision to launch Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the armed forces started a full-scale operation to root out terrorist havens from the tribal belt of Pakistan in 2014.

The operation is unique in many ways. It has been initiated with a national consensus built amongst all key civil-military leadership, in particular, and the nation, in general, upon a clarion call of a civilian elected government; this time with a resolve even greater than in the case of the Swat operation in 2008. It is strongly backed by the first-ever National Internal Security Policy (NISP) in the country's history. It is also simultaneously backed by targeted operations in other areas infested with terrorism, including Karachi. And it is an across-the-board operation that does not make distinctions between "good" or "bad" Taliban militants, which to some extent has been the case in the recent past. Equally important is the fact that the entire government policy and ensuing strategy has been ratified by the Parliament through a constitutional amendment (the 21st Amendment) and the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance. The Supreme Court has recently backed this amendment and the changes made in the Army Act etc. in the wake of the special circumstances being faced by Pakistan. In fact, this is one lesson learned from

(90) '80,000 Pakistanis Killed in U.S. "War on Terror": Report' <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/860790/80000-pakistanis-killed-in-us-war-on-terror-report/>> [accessed 7 September 2015].

(91) 'PM Nawaz Takes Parliament into Confidence over NWA Operation' <<http://goo.gl/FPN3G4>> [accessed 4 September 2015].

Pakistani experience: that once fighting an internal conflict, the local judicial system and laws must be brought in accordance with the challenges faced by the country; and legal lacunas, if any, must be removed simultaneously, in order to facilitate the executive branch in the execution of its functions and tasks. In a similar vein, to deal with the challenge of controlling the flow of finances, Pakistan developed a proper system to check the flow of money to terrorist organizations and monitor communication networks by bringing in appropriate laws in order to deny the militants what Kilcullen called the "manoeuvre space".⁹²

Seeing the success of the indigenous innovation achieved by the armed forces during the Swat Operation in 2008, the government has this time adopted the same strategy of evacuating the entire population from the Area of Operations (AO) and then launching a full-blown conventional attack in the AO. The evacuees, commonly known as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), were settled in temporary arrangements made in urban areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK. However, this strategy had its own challenges, particularly the huge influx of IDPs, the sheer number of who was difficult to manage, in terms of providing housing, food, security, schooling, employment etc. The number of IDPs according to different sources varied between 1-3 million, which was enormous by any standards. The government released money for helping the people of FATA and launched relief funds in which — true to their fame — Pakistanis had very generously donated. This time the national resolve was all the more evident through long queues of women donating their jewellery, and schoolchildren giving up the pocket money, which bears testimony to the resilience of this nation of 200 million people. Interestingly, if religion had a role to play in defeating militants, it played that role here because the Pakistanis, according to their religion, believe in hospitality and charity, which helped in generating huge funds for the IDPs' rehabilitation. The process of rehabilitation has been in process since March 2015.⁹³ The strategy of evacuating an entire population reaped advantages for the government in the sense that the civil and military casualties, although tragically quite a few, were fewer than ever before. However, there were negative impacts from displacing the people from the AO as forces destroyed houses without consideration for collateral damage,

(92) David Kilcullen, 'Globalisation and the Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 17 (2006), 44–64 (p. 59) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592310500431521>>.

(93) See related information in, for example, 'The Final Stretch: Rehabilitation of IDPs in Full Swing' <<http://goo.gl/laAUjw>> [accessed 9 September 2015] from august 21 2015.

which further alienated the local population from the state, and the state could not provide adequate housing, education and health-care facilities to the IDPs. Rehabilitation itself will remain a costly affair for the state and the displaced people. The long term psycho-social impact on the society will be another area requiring thorough research.

It is pertinent to point out here that there is a need to understand the cultural ethos of Pakistani society, especially in the case of the Madrassa system of schooling in Pakistan, which is one of the very few opportunities available for poor children to enrol and receive free education, food, boarding and lodging. The community living in surrounding areas contributes willingly toward this purpose. Since most madrassas are registered with the Wafaq-ul-Madaris (state institution responsible for registering and monitoring madrassas), the curriculum and funding issues are monitored by the Government.⁹⁴

Pakistan's drive for counter-militancy operations against the militant groups, especially Operation Zarb-e-Azb, would not have been possible without extremely crucial and successful intelligence operations also, undertaken by Pakistan's premier intelligence agencies, mainly the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) etc.⁹⁵ although they mostly remained unsung heroes in this war. Another issue Pakistan had to deal with is that of small arms proliferation and the dreaded narcotics trade. The general reluctance in the international arena to trace the origins of the small arms manufactured by some countries, but which nevertheless make their way into the hands of the militants or which are found/captured in third world countries, has become a huge challenge for local intelligence agencies.

Considering threats to metropolitan cities in the country, urban warfare is an increasingly important dimension in the evolving nature of conflict since human terrain in urban centres offers a much more lucrative hideout and an immense resource base, as is evident in Karachi. For this purpose, the comparatively lesser reliance on police institutions in Pakistan, which could provide better human intelligence all across the country, should have received

(94) Azam Khan quotes Interior Minister of Pakistan, 'Reforms Plan: Seminaries Pledge Support to Govt in War against Terror' <<http://goo.gl/n3WdMo>> [accessed 14 August 2015].

(95) After one year since the start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, about 9000 IBOs had already been undertaken till 13 June 2015 according to DG ISPR Maj Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa . '2,763 Terrorists Killed, 347 Officers Martyred in 1 Year of Zarb-E-Azb: DG ISPR -'

more attention. Also, an apolitical systemic overhaul was required because of the use of conventional forces to do policing jobs and civic duties. This may have been expedient earlier, but such exigencies should no longer make the policymakers presume this to be the military's job. A very interesting concept of citizen-police liaising, well-suited for Karachi's context, was started by Mr. Fakhar-ud-din Ibrahim, until, unfortunately, political manipulations were given in to. Nonetheless, it is still playing a useful role of a bridge between police and citizens, thereby not only insulating the police from politics but also enhancing their professionalism.

However, challenges abound in Pakistan's continued efforts in counter-militancy and CT. Stability in Afghanistan, through broad-based engagement promoting reconciliation amongst different ethnic groups and the resistance will be necessary. Also, normalization of relations with India leading to conflict resolution and leveraging trade for the common benefit and eradicating terrorism, not only from FATA but the entire length and breadth of the country, will be needed. Effective border control measures on both sides of the border, undertaken with the Afghan government, would have to be instituted to control daily movement and to keep smuggling in check. While the government is endeavouring to firmly establish its writ through Operation Zarb-e-Azb,⁹⁶ it appears that military action has been perceived by some as the panacea for all troubles in the region. The situation in FATA is as much an issue of mal-governance and inconsistent government policies since the ages, as it is an issue of terrorism, which have aggravated the plight of the people of FATA. The grievances of the people of FATA on this count are real and require immediate redress because, at the end of the day, there needs to be not a single- but a multi-pronged wholesome/comprehensive approach to the resolution of the issues for the people of FATA.

Internationally, incidents of burning the Holy Quran in many parts of the world, especially the desecration of Holy Quran at the hands of American soldiers in Afghanistan,⁹⁷ gory images released from the Guantanamo Bay prison, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Raymond Davis case,⁹⁸ the Salala

(96) Details are given at '2,763 Terrorists Killed, 347 Officers Martyred in 1 Year of Zarb-E-Azb: DG ISPR -'.

(97) 'Desecration of Holy Quran Widely Condemned' <<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-7-94497-Desecration-of-Holy-Quran-widely-condemned>> [accessed 14 August 2015].

(98) See 'How Raymond Davis Helped Turn Pakistan Against the United States' <<http://goo.gl/65z9kx>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

check post incident,⁹⁹ cartoons of Holy Prophet of the Muslims (P.B.U.H), the massively disliked drone attacks (whether or not with governmental approval) and terms like "collateral damage"¹⁰⁰ did not win hearts and minds in Pakistan. Rather these produced public resentment and anti-American/NATO feelings among the public who were already not prepared to accept the justifications portended by who were perceived as the "intruders". At this point, the Taliban narrative was strong and had no equal match in the government circles. Either the government was ill-prepared, or it simply did not foresee the mass appeal that the narrative all-so-suddenly enjoyed. Especially the narrative of fighting against foreign occupiers in a brotherly country, opened vistas of opportunities for already disgruntled elements within society who were tired of the status quo. This did not only prove counterproductive to efforts by the government of Pakistan, many people started volunteering genuinely to fight against the foreign invaders and the ANSF in Afghanistan, providing men and materiel. Many even thought that Osama bin Laden was the U.S.'s next bogeyman, serving as a pretext for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. On top of this, come grievances such as the unresolved Kashmir dispute, the admission of Indian Prime Minister Modi concerning India's subversive activities in East Pakistan in 1971,¹⁰¹ and an Indian minister's penchant to carrying out surgical attacks in line with American ideas like Hot Pursuit,¹⁰² constant firing by Indian soldiers¹⁰³ and

(99) See 'Pakistan Outrage after "NATO Attack Kills Soldiers"' <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15901363>> [accessed 9 September 2015]. Later after many months of the incident where the NATO raid on Mohmand Agency checkpoint 'Salala' killed 24 and injured 12 Pakistani soldiers, the U.S. apologized to Pakistan, but it was too late since this stoked anti-American and anti-NATO feelings in Pakistan and made Pakistan review its alliance with the U.S./NATO. See for example, 'Salala Air Raid: United States Says Sorry - Finally' <<http://goo.gl/6y6eRG>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

(100) See for example 'Drones and Collateral Damage' <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/azeem-ibrahim/drone-strikes-pakistan_b_1648681.html> [accessed 9 April 2015].

(101) 'Modi's Remarks in Bangladesh Aimed at Fanning Hatred against Pakistan' <<http://goo.gl/7zjtBm>> [accessed 27 June 2015].

(102) On June 15, Indian Minister threatened to carry similar surgical strikes on its western border like the one carried out by them in Myanmar. 'India Will Carry out Military Strikes at Any "Place and Time", Says Minister' <<http://goo.gl/78iLDF>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

(103) A Former U.S. ambassador recently termed Pakistani concerns in this regard as legitimate. See 'Pakistan's Concerns over Indian Ceasefire Violations Are Legitimate, Says Former U.S. Ambassador' <<http://goo.gl/UYzm61>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

killings of Pakistani civilians¹⁰⁴ on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control (LoC),¹⁰⁵ with only Pakistan alone allowing the United Nations Military Observers Group (UNMOG) to monitor Pakistan's side of the LoC.¹⁰⁶ These are all incidents that prove that the Two-Front scenario is a real threat to which Pakistan cannot turn a blind eye.

Concluding remarks

Whether one agrees or not, all nations, developed or developing, have inalienable and (ideally) equal rights to safeguard their sovereign interests. Furthermore, they have ambitions for their progress and earn what they perceive as their rightful place in the comity of nations. The self-righteous and self-assured hubris of some members in the international community makes them treat some cultures as inferior and therefore in need of proactive military intervention to bring stability through some far-fetched, foreign, alien cultural values meant to replace the existing system; this is not only unfair, it is most commonly suicidal, because in the modern era, the whole world has to deal with the aftermath of such an excursion, not just one country.

As of today, without sounding apocalyptic, the spectre of internal rift amongst the Taliban factions, as apparent after proclaimed death of both Mullah Omar and Jallaluddin Haqqani, has prolonged delays in talks with the Taliban (the Taliban talks were cancelled recently in Pakistan after the news of Mullah Omar's death broke), along with the introduction of the ISIS factor¹⁰⁷ - or

(104) About 20 citizens were killed in unprovoked firing by India along with 97 injured in single month of August 2015. 'Pakistan Urges UN to Take Notice of Ceasefire Violations' <<http://goo.gl/TvseRD>> [accessed 5 September 2015].

(105) Pakistan has taken up the case with the UNSC in September 2015. Details can be seen in '80,000 Pakistanis Killed in U.S. "War on Terror": Report: Pakistan Takes up Indian Firing at LoC, Working Boundary with UNSC' <<http://goo.gl/9dHZzA>> [accessed 6 September 2015].

(106) See Interview with a BBC journalist at 'Sound Byte: "India Doesn't Allow UN Observers near LoC' <<http://goo.gl/1n3eED>> [accessed 1 January 2015]. Also, see, 'UN Team Visits LoC Areas Affected by Indian Firing' <<http://goo.gl/1unVHt>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

(107) The Afghan President has recently told the American Congress that "Daesh (Islamic State) is already sending advance guards to southern and western Afghanistan to test for vulnerabilities;," 'New Afghan President Warns of "Terrible Threat" from Islamic State' <<http://goo.gl/lGLxD>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

as is it also called: Daesh - into the Afghan arena,¹⁰⁸ and socio-economic instability in Afghanistan all haunt Pakistan with the looming shadows of yet another *déjà vu* of the Post-Afghan War scenario that followed the demise of the Soviet Union. Embroiled in its own conflict, Pakistan fears that the long-term efficacy of this achievement will still be a challenge since the terrorist TTP's chief Mullah Fazlullah, along with other key leaders, lives in Afghanistan¹⁰⁹ (mainly Kunar and Nuristan).

Considering the above, no matter what the outcome, durability, timings, duration of CT and counter-militancy efforts, civilian capacity and capability to deal with problems of governance and socio-economic development will be the *sine qua non* for future operations. One needs no nirvana to realize that pure reliance on conventional campaigns at the expense of introducing governance-related reforms will prove to be anathema to any efforts at finding long-term solutions to this issue.

(108) Gen. John Campbell, U.S. and NATO Commander in Afghanistan has declared the ISIS threat to have gone from 'nascent' to 'operationally emergent' in Afghanistan. See details at Sean O'Melveny, 'Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan Says ISIS Threat May Delay Withdrawal' (Sean O'Melveny) <<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/07/20/top-us-commander-afghanistan-isis-threat-may-delay-withdrawal.html>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

(109) A Washington Post report confirmed and also revealed that Fazlullah, the TTP head, who was also the mastermind behind the shooting of Nobel prize winner Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, is hiding in Afghanistan and not being apprehended by the U.S. or the Afghan government on the grounds that he does not pose a danger to Afghanistan or the U.S., and is therefore not a priority. Strangely, had the same reasons been given by a third world country like Pakistan vis-à-vis the Afghan Taliban, it would not have been accepted. See the news article in 'Pakistani Militants Hiding in Afghanistan' <<https://goo.gl/fybEmq>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

Counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan

Abstract

This chapter analyses experiences and perceptions gained from Danish COIN operations and strategy in the period 2006-2014 by Danish officials from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Danish Ministry of Defence, the Danish Defence Command, high-ranking officers, scholars, and other counterinsurgency practitioners.¹¹⁰ The objective of the analysis is to grasp the lessons identified in the Danish counterinsurgency operations in Helmand, Afghanistan at the strategic level and how this, in turn, influenced operations. To some extent the operative level was crowded out because of ISAF's organizational structure, in which the Danish contribution was included in the British Task Force and thus operated under British command. That gave the Danish contribution two sets of overall structural interests to work under; the British Task Force and the Danish national structures under three Danish agencies: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence and the Danish Army Command. The composition of this control system influenced the operations on the tactical level and, in turn, the feedback to the strategic level. One of the negative side effects of this system was that it caused strategic objectives to diverge, which led to a lack of credibility in the eyes of the local Afghan population in Helmand. It caused great concern in the Danish battle group, as it made it virtually impossible to win "hearts and minds" - a fundamental element in counterinsurgency operations.

Perception of counterinsurgency

While it would have been easier for the Danish politicians to classify the opponent as an insurgent, which proved to be the case during the interviews, definitions of the nature of an insurgent and a terrorist, respectively, were far from uniform. A majority of interviewees tended to classify the opponents an insurgent, especially army officers who had experienced from the operational theatre in Afghanistan and had dealt with the opponent, but the term terrorism was recurrently mentioned as part of the opponent's tool kit in almost every interview.¹¹¹ However, many other points within the answer to that question were raised, which showed that many complexities were involved in classifying the opponent in a distinct manner.

(110) See transcriptions of interviews.

(111) Ibid.

First was the reality that the Taliban were actually a patchwork of different groups consisting of criminals, insurgents, terrorists, extremists, politically influenced groups and unemployed farmers who, having nothing else to do, therefore turned into mercenaries; nonetheless, all these helped create narratives that foreigners and foreign forces were infidels and invaders.¹¹² Along the scale from insurgent to terrorist, the different variants of the group known as "Taliban" would often be combinations of the different types of members mentioned above. One interviewee likened the phenomena to that of President Hamid Karzai's half-brother, who was cited as a classic example of a multifaceted personality, because he was simultaneously involved in politics and crime yet would also cooperate with ISAF.¹¹³ The Taliban represented the same trend, as they could also be farmers and landlords who then turned into powerbrokers under the single banner of insurgency.

However, some basic differences between the insurgents and the terrorists were pointed at during the interviews. The terrorists were usually thought to be small groups, fighting for small issues,¹¹⁴ according to one view. One reason given for not plainly calling the opponent a terrorist was that the ultimate goal of the opponent was not terrorism itself;¹¹⁵ rather the goal of a terrorist is personal short-term gains that do not have the same legitimacy as do those of an insurgent. But in Afghanistan's case, according to this perception, the opponent enjoyed some legitimacy by providing a legal foundation (Sharia) to the local population in areas where there was none and, for the most part, was not looking for mere short term gains. Here, one may argue that terrorism itself may not be a short-term phenomenon, nor do goals necessarily have to be personal for someone to be classified as a terrorist.

On the other hand, in the eyes of other respondents, insurgency is sort of a vehicle for political organization which uses terrorism as a tool. One interviewee pointed out that mere grievances in themselves do not lead to an organized insurgency; there is always someone to organize and galvanize the aggrieved people into taking up insurgency. In such a situation, there

(112) Interview 22, 'Hilton, Thor, Defence Attache - Royal Danish Embassy in Islamabad; Former Strategic Planner on Afghanistan Issues at Defence Command Denmark.' (Pakistan: June 30, 2015).

(113) Interview 16, 'Kværnø, Ole, Former Chef Governance in Helmand' (Denmark: June 9, 2015).

(114) Interview 10, 'Niels Klingenberg Vistisen, Former Advisor to the Government in Helmand and ISAF HQ in Kabul' (Denmark: June 2, 2015).

(115) Interview 18, 'Lønborg, Jens, Colonel and Commander Danish Battle Group Team 5 (2007)' (Denmark: June 10, 2015).

would be some leaders who would manipulate and exploit the situation using narratives of nationalism, ethnicity or religion.¹¹⁶ Terrorists, on the other hand, originally do not have major political goals – although they may later align themselves with other anti-government elements to become part of a broader political framework depending on the location and space available to them.¹¹⁷ Considering the vagueness or absence of a well-defined line between an insurgent and a terrorist, according to one opinion, it is much more preferable to call the opponent a "militant" or at the most an "insurgent", since both may be seen in the same continuum.¹¹⁸

For some, the classification was not important at all.¹¹⁹ The more important issue was to know the enemy well in order to conduct operations against him – in spite of the label he received.¹²⁰ According to this view, getting into the debate on labels distracts focus from devising effective tools and measures to tackle the issue. A narrow definition of a problem may lead one to miss arriving at the right conclusion.¹²¹ An interesting view put forward was that confusions and ambiguities were caused when the corporal in the area of responsibility tried to think in strategic terms while the politician far away from the same area attempted to engage in tactical level decision-making – by trying to understand and define the issue too narrowly and deterministically.¹²²

From a different point of view, for the Danish teams who set foot for the first time in Afghanistan, the classification was not important because they were there to achieve certain specified objectives, i.e., to eliminate the enemy in order to secure the area of responsibility. Thus the enemy was treated as a classical enemy, who also fought battles in very much a conventional way when the first armoured Danish battalion encountered them.¹²³ This suggests

(116) Interview 11, 'Trautner, Jeppe Plenge, Associate Professor, Institute for Military Historie and War Studies' (Denmark: June 2, 2015).

(117) Interview 11.

(118) Interview 11.

(119) Interview 19, 'Riis-Vestergaard, Jens, Lieutenant Colonel, Commander Danish Battle Group Team 11 (2011)' (Denmark: June 10, 2015).

(120) Interview 10.

(121) Interview 12, 'Mellbin, Franz-Michael, EU Ambassador to Afghanistan' (Denmark: June 2, 2015).

(122) Interview 10.

(123) Interview 17, 'Rahbek, Hans Christian Mads, Lieutenant Colonel, Deputy Danish Group Team 4 (2007)' (Denmark: June 10, 2015).

a mind-set with an enemy-centric approach at the beginning of the Danish engagement in Afghanistan.

One of the reasons for fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan was that it tried to uproot or change the existing political system in Afghanistan.¹²⁴ Thus, one of the primary concerns on the Danish side was force protection and security in their area of responsibility, in order to allow the existing system of governance to put down firm roots. This reflects a bias in the Danish policy circles towards the notion that development-related efforts can only be undertaken once security and stability in an area of responsibility has been provided and ensured for the duration. Here, a similarity of thought process exists between the Danish and Pakistani politicians, since the Pakistani Government used the same approach in dealing with its areas of responsibility. Initiation of development-related efforts and building of infrastructure was thought to be dependent on and, by necessity, preceded by peace, stability, and security in the concerned area.

▲ Lesson identified: Provision of security and stability in the area of conflict is a necessary precondition for starting development-related efforts.

In this sense, the Danish experience was that the need to label groups, as either friends or foes, or even as neutral actors, did not facilitate the handling of the issue but rather complicated it.¹²⁵ In general, it is hard to differentiate between insurgents and terrorists, but the major problem with labelling an organization as a terrorist organization is that such a view shuts down the possibility for political action. When labelling an organization as "insurgent", the window for political options is kept open at all times. One benefit of keeping the political option open, often exercised in a process of negotiations, is that it in many situations may preclude the need for force-heavy responses.

▲ Lesson identified: In a conflict situation, it is very important that governments keep the political options and doors to negotiations open, which may allow them to avoid employing force-heavy responses.

(124) Interview 10.

(125) Interview 23, 'Nygaard, Lars, Defence Attache Royal Danish Embassy in Kabul, Former Subject Matter Expert on COIN at Royal Danish Defence College and Subject Matter Expert on Afghanistan in Ministry of Defence.' (Denmark: July 1, 2015).

However, a contrary argument, given by a respondent, was that labelling the opponent as an insurgent entails a risk of strategists and policymakers drawing wrong conclusions and thus devising flawed strategies.¹²⁶ This idea does not reflect a very population-centric approach, though. For example, one may argue that a population-centric approach would take history and culture into account. Labelling the opponent as an insurgent, without taking history into account, may do more harm in the long run. This might have been one of the key reasons that the EU, on account of all such complexities, preferred to call the opponents 'anti-government forces' instead of labelling them as either terrorists or insurgents. This term is more comprehensive and includes different kinds of forces involved in violence against the government in Afghanistan, according to one respondent.¹²⁷ Use of this term shows an acceptance and cognizance of the local realities, keeping in view all the dimensions of the conflict.

Regarding the design of COIN strategies, some interviewees also stated that the situation was even more complicated due to the Taliban having connections and safe havens outside of Afghanistan. The challenge in this regard is the geographic circumstances on the long border frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan. As most of the outside support to the Afghan Taliban has its origins in Pakistan – along with the safe havens – according to the Danish perception, the problem is that the outside support cannot be shut down. Therefore, the usual COIN tools could not be fully employed to isolate and handle the insurgency.¹²⁸ COIN theory itself, in this view, is not developed sufficiently enough to be universally understood, with all its complexities, to be uniformly applied to any particular situation.¹²⁹ The outcome of such deficiencies in the theory's development is the ability of movements like al-Qaeda to continue activities in Yemen, Somalia, and Afghanistan. There is a need for more research into building firm COIN theories to help states handle internal conflicts at home and abroad in accordance with the contemporary environment and emerging/evolving realities.

A different perspective came from civilian officials, who saw the issue not in terms of insurgency or terrorism but rather as an issue of instability and internal strife, caused by rival groups and factions, albeit 'insurgency' was

(126) Interview 10.

(127) Interview 12.

(128) Interview 13, 'Andersen, Lars Erslev, Senior Resescher at Danish Institute of International Studies' (Denmark: June 3, 2015).

(129) Interview 13.

still their most frequently used term.¹³⁰ The difference in perspective from the interviewees from the Danish Defence probably has to do with the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' approach to Afghanistan focuses on developing the country, whereas the Ministry of Defence has to address the security situation, both in terms of handling the enemy as well as protecting own forces. Another point, which may cause divergence, could be that countries fighting an opponent at home were more likely to state that the opponent was a terrorist while other countries would classify the same as an insurgent.¹³¹ This indicates that conflict situations are interpreted differently by different countries, and often a commonly agreed upon definition is hard to achieve.

▲ Lesson identified: The difficulties between countries and organizations with labelling the opponent in Afghanistan influenced the means in the various strategies among the actors involved. This has not made coordination between the countries involved easier and possibly may have influenced the effectiveness of the tools implemented. There is a need to develop a more commonly shared understanding of what the opponent is and how the overarching strategy should address him.

In terms of classifications, the issue of legitimacy was also raised by the respondents. One view was that the difficulty in classifying the opponent as an "insurgent" lies in the fact that it is tantamount to granting the opponent legitimacy. Once some entity becomes legitimized as an "opponent" and is nominated as an anti-state element by the government, the general reaction of the state apparatuses is to shift the entire focus of efforts to learning about the tactics and ways of that opponent, with the sole objective of eliminating him, instead of opting for political options and negotiation.¹³² This observation offers a clue as to how and why the initial response of states facing insurgencies is biased toward adopting enemy-centric approaches. Once the adverse law and order situation arises, there is a tendency amongst governments for knee-jerk reactions focusing on eliminating the enemy.

(130) Interview 14, 'Mariegaard, Louise, & Dueholm, Pernille, Team Afghanistan & Pakistan, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (Denmark: June 3, 2015).

(131) Interview 20, 'Hjelmager, Jan, Commander Lessons Learned Cell (Danish Army Staff)' (Denmark: June 10, 2015).

(132) Interview 11.

Also, in classical theory, an insurgent rises against a legitimate government, but the problem lies in how legitimacy is being defined. For example, ISAF was fighting on behalf of the Afghan government against an insurgency because they had taken up arms against the government. But it is very questionable whether President Karzai's government did in fact enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of a majority of the Afghan population. According to one interviewee, he did not.¹³³ Therefore, the insurgents' premise, or reason for fighting against ISAF, to some extent, among parts of the Afghan population, could be legitimate in the eyes of that particular population segment in that time period.

▲ Lesson identified: Classifying the opponent as an insurgent widens a government's range of possible approaches but at the same time adds legitimacy to the opponent.

This meant that the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration process (DDR) and the prolonged process of building of a new Afghan Army could actually add to the problem among parts of the Afghan population, because of the foreigners (ISAF) who were training and supporting a government that lacked legitimacy. Adding to the problem, this gave a legitimate excuse to fight ISAF as they could be seen as intruders supporting an illegitimate government.¹³⁴

Insurgency motivations

As far as the motivation(s) were concerned, the common opinion was that different groupings had different motivations. For example, poor people in Afghanistan would get involved in placing improvised explosive devices in return for money from the Taliban and others to ensure their survival. Furthermore, criminals wanted a share in the opium and smuggling trades. At the same time, there was a power struggle between local tribal leaders, and they did not want any international community interference in their local powerbases. The main motivation for the Taliban, according to several interviewees, was thus power and resources, and the ISAF and local government's operations were seen as a hindrance to these activities.¹³⁵ This

(133) Interview 21, 'Pedersen, Uffe G., Lieutenant Colonel, Deputy Danish Battle Group (2012)' (Denmark: June 10, 2015).

(134) Interview 21.

(135) See transcriptions of interviews.

hindrance was unwanted by the Taliban because their way of living was, of course, threatened when ISAF and the local government moved in.¹³⁶

However, there were also the classical insurgents who were fighting a religious war against infidels.¹³⁷ In the mind of one interviewee, the Taliban could be divided into a small ideological core, the local powerbrokers, and a large portion of ordinary soldiers.¹³⁸ However, according to other interviewees, religion was not the main motivation;¹³⁹ rather it was a good way to control the narrative and an effective tool for recruiting fighters. In day-to-day interaction, religion never posed an obstacle in dealing with all parties to the conflict. As one interviewee described his experience regarding his dealings with Afghans, both the local leaders and ISAF respected on another's religions and values during day-to-day interactions in the negotiation processes. Religion, at least, did not stop anyone from doing business or entering into dialogue with one another.¹⁴⁰ Other interviewees described the major motivation as being a mix of fear generation for the future and even attention-seeking by the Taliban,¹⁴¹ yet others again added that some of the opponents also simply included brainwashed fanatics.¹⁴²

For other respondents, the Taliban insurgency was ideologically motivated to re-establish the Afghan Emirate. However, the general perception amongst ISAF was that of the Taliban being unintelligent and beyond reason or logic, which later turned out to be a misperception. The Taliban were not only intelligent and able to reform their ideas, but with the passage of time they have become modernistic in their approach, becoming well-versed with technology, especially in terms of using modern communication to promote their nationalistic beliefs on the basis of religion.¹⁴³

△ Lesson identified: It is problematic if there is a common belief among strategy makers and strategy practitioners that the opponent is unintelligent. This creates a risk of flavouring the operations against him: thus impeding the possibility of reaching a desired

(136) Interview 19.

(137) Interview 22.

(138) Interview 23.

(139) See transcriptions of interviews.

(140) Interview 22.

(141) Interview 23.

(142) Interview 20.

(143) Interview 13.

objective and augmenting the likelihood of being drawn into an endless asymmetrical battle against an opponent that does not react as anticipated.

However, it was stated by one of the interviewees that, prior to Iraq war, the situation in Afghanistan was becoming stable after the dismantling of the Taliban Government. The Iraq War changed everything because the war pulled resources and political focus away from Afghanistan, which then caused a power vacuum to occur. This vacuum was used advantageously by insurgency groups, criminal gangs, and other local power brokers. Many disgruntled and dissatisfied persons among the general population saw the rigid Taliban¹⁴⁴ as a means for changing the unpopular government at home, subsequent to the invasion of Iraq. It could be due to the fact that the disgruntled elements felt emboldened by the coercive toppling of the Iraq regime by the U.S. to think that it was politically legitimate and also feasible to overthrow governments. Also the massive resentment in connection with a Muslim country being invaded by outsiders could be a cause. After that, radicalism through religious ideology enhanced the use of religion as a source of motivation; also the government's adaptation of Western ideas in governance created further opposition to the government.¹⁴⁵ This points to the perception that Western-supported attempts to introduce a democratic system in an ethnic and tribal society, at the cost of dismantling the centuries-old traditional Jirga system, may not have been the best idea, since it created a negative image of Western ideas in the Afghan population.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, the rampant government corruption alienated parts of local population as the Taliban were effectively trying to create a narrative about the government and its forces as being exploitative criminals in uniform.¹⁴⁷ Widespread crime influenced the situation, and crime was part of all activities going on at the local and even state levels. This threatened to undermine the trust in the judges, the judicial system, and the police. In some provinces the Taliban was able to install its own versions of governance without the government being able to muster a countermove. The distrust in the corrupt Afghan government became a motivating factor for ordinary people to join the insurgency. The local population saw the government as coming only to

(144) Interview 17.

(145) Interview 21.

(146) Interview 22.

(147) See transcriptions of interviews.

extract “taxes” for lining their own pockets but without delivering security, healthcare, and so on. The social contract was therefore never effectively established. Even though corruption at least was not “introduced” by the Karzai government, and has historically been a part of how Afghanistan functioned, the Taliban, nevertheless, succeeded in blaming the government for being more corrupt than was the case during their own time in power.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the host nation government enjoy legitimacy among a majority of the civil population and that its outreach in the local areas do more to secure a certain level of legitimacy in the eyes of the civil population.

Due to widespread socio-political deprivation and related grievances in strife-torn Afghanistan, according to one interviewee, at least 80% of the motivation for insurgency activity arose out of local grievances in relation to protection of poppy farming, in the absence of options to ensure a sustainable livelihood for the impoverished local populace.¹⁴⁸ The remaining 20% was, to some extent, connected to a wider form of insurgency with ties to the Taliban.¹⁴⁹ The locals saw themselves as fighters/warriors against intruders and as the founders of a Caliphate with a national narrative and context. Here, the role of other regional interests also influenced the situation, as the Pashtun wanted autonomy in some areas in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰ Unwittingly, ISAF became part of the local poppy production in its attempts to stop local fighting.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the COIN forces not be perceived as a party to local internal conflicts and maintain an image of neutrality in the eyes of the population.

Thus, all types of ingredients were part of this recipe for insurgency, with peculiar connections even leading to the government actions as contributory factors for aggravating public grievances.

Counterinsurgency tools

Counterinsurgency tools are a mixture of sub-tactical ways for military units to conduct operations: for how the units integrate into the Afghan

(148) Interview 15, ‘Tygesen, Christian Bayer, Ph.d. and Subject Matter Expert on Afghanistan’ (Denmark: June 4, 2015).

(149) Interview 10.

(150) Interview 16.

security and governmental system; and for how the units seek to influence public opinion through cooperation with Afghan authorities. Tools can be physical means such as money, building infrastructure, and issuing medical equipment, but they can also take the form of providing security to the local population by eradicating or removing insurgents; securing an area against exploitation by insurgents; and supporting governmental outreach. A tool can even be how the composition of the contribution is managed and what objectives are prioritized. With this array of tools, several of the interviewed high-ranking officers and counterinsurgency practitioners expressed different opinions of what should be in focus and which tools were to be utilised. The interviews showed discrepancies between the various Danish battle group teams. This is interesting, as it points out problems with the interpretation of the strategic levels' plans and strategies. Ideally, the military force would shape the battlefield and then fight the insurgents and remove them from an area. Security having been established for the local population, civilian organisations can then start to rebuild the area. Over time, control and political power are transferred to the local authorities, and the foreign support will be scaled down and eventually completely removed.

The above are key elements in a COIN strategy on a theoretical level, but the application, in practice, is of course very challenging. This is due to the difficulties of communicating the political decisions and their rationales to a marginalised population, who is faced with communications from both the government and the insurgency. Intervening governments must also communicate the political ambitions and will to their own populations in order to get support for the mission in the first place. This demands the application of a positive narrative about the political decisions and then the convincing the population that the decisions were justified and represented the right way to react. One way of supporting the positive narrative is issuing statements and reports showing progress and improvement in the situation in the area targeted by the strategy because of the political decisions. But this is not a one-time effort. Every time the situation changes on the ground, the mission, or the overarching strategy is altered for some reason, the politicians must address the reason and communicate it to their populations and the COIN forces as well. This need for 'selling the COIN mission to the population' has resulted in a growing need for milestones within the strategy in order to measure success and gain an idea of the level of progress toward the end-state.¹⁵¹ These milestones and their fulfilment tend to re-focus the strategy

(151) Interview 16.

over time in a way that the milestones become more important than the objectives in the strategy. One battle group commander expressed it like this:

“It was problematic that the Danish politicians did not understand that the mission was not a Danish mission but a multinational mission. They tried to steer the Danish efforts without really coordinating with our counterparts. The Helmand Plan was full of dates and tasks ...but without coordination with the British Task Force or the Afghan Security Forces, we, the battle group, ran out of options.”¹⁵²

The interviewees in this case had the impression that they had to develop their own approach, which was not necessarily in sync with the milestones in the Helmand plans. Until 2008, while fighting insurgents, they were mostly muddling through, trying to reach the objectives that supported the British military headquarters' plans and, although distant, the ISAF strategy. In 2008 the Danish Afghanistan Strategy, and later the Danish Helmand Plan, was seen by some of the interviewees as a political plan with no real link to the situation in Helmand.¹⁵³ Additionally, ISAF changed its initial strategy from an enemy-centric approach - where fighting off the Taliban was in focus - to a population-centric approach with nation and state building objectives aimed at securing the population from Taliban exploitation and focusing on winning the "hearts and minds" of the neutral majority of the population. The first ISAF strategy with a firm end state was developed in 2010, and it was an exit strategy with different milestones leading up to a withdrawal of international kinetic forces by the end of 2014, only leaving support forces in relation to training and education. The objectives were to support the Afghan Government and to educate and enhance the Afghan Security Forces in order for them to take over responsibility for security as quickly as possible. With an absent Danish political strategy from the start and later a strategy development, which was seen as partly irrelevant because it was badly coordinated with the Danish military realities on the ground, the Danish battle groups continued as they saw fit, without paying much attention to the actual Danish political strategy.

▲ Lesson identified: As one battle group stands on the shoulders of the previous battle group, a rudimentary national political stra-

(152) Interview 19.

(153) Interview 21.

tegy must be issued before deployment of military and civilian resources. As quickly as possible, this rudimentary strategy must be developed into a long-term strategy coordinated with coalition partners, taking the situation on the ground into consideration. Even the local and national government's political ambitions and thus objectives must be included in an overarching strategy, still leaving some room for the COIN forces to make tactical adaptations, in order for them to implement the strategy and carry it out in an ever-changing environment. From 2001 to 2008, Denmark had no overarching political Afghanistan Strategy, which led the military to create its own goals in support of the British Task Force's tactical plans. As the British plans shifted over time from an enemy-centric to a population-centric approach, so did the Danish military goals, which was counterproductive to a consistent Danish strategy. To some extent, the Danish battle groups then neglected the Danish Helmand Plan and Afghanistan Strategy, as these were seen as irrelevant to the situation on the ground and products of a remote desktop in Copenhagen, made to suit Danish political purposes rather than progress on the ground in Afghanistan.

As late as in 2012, there were many inconsistencies between the official Helmand Plan 2011-2012 and what was actually going on at the tactical level in Helmand. This also seems to be the case during most of the years from 2006 to 2011, when the Danish battle groups made their own directives on how to conduct operations before coming to Helmand, the so-called Direction of Operations. The Helmand Plans and Afghanistan Strategies issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, indicated that the political level's knowledge of the situation on the ground was scant and that the operational level was apparently weak or even absent in the making of strategy. There appeared to be no operational-level input available to translate the political vision into obtainable objectives at the tactical level. The ministry level (or the operational level in strategy making) in reality just issued the political vision to the various underlying agencies, which then had to fulfil them. It quickly became a problem for the forces on the ground to translate the political vision into military and even civilian operations on the ground level, and they thus had to rely on the individual military commanders and, later on, attached stabilisation advisors to develop operations in support of the vision.

Of course, that led to various and, to some extent, uncoordinated and short-sighted operations as different commanders tried to fulfil what they thought was the best way to support the political vision. The Danish military tried to circumvent the lack of consistency by letting returning battle groups transfer their lessons learned and best practice to the next incoming battle group.¹⁵⁴ But due to the principle of six-month rotations, this transferred knowledge was at least six months old and at least one battle group experienced that their developed Directive of Operations was completely wrong because the situation in Helmand had changed severely during the period. Battle Group Team 8 in their Directive of Operations focused on stabilizing the situation in Upper Gereshk Valley, just as their tutors from Battle Group Team 6 told them to, but in 2009 the Battle Group in Helmand was ordered by the British Headquarters in Lashkar Gah to focus more on the area south of Gereshk. When Battle Group Team 8 came to Helmand its Directive of Operations was completely the opposite of what the British Task Force had instructed the Danish Battle Group Team 7 to do. The British Task Force wanted the Danish battle group to take up stationary positions in the southern part of its Area of Responsibility instead of the mobile approach in the Danish directive. The directive was written by Battle Group Team 8, based on lessons learned a year earlier by Battle Group Team 6, and included the tactical traditions of a reconnaissance unit, which made up the bigger mobile part of Battle Group Team 8.¹⁵⁵

The authors of this book have no evidence of the rotation system having influenced the reporting regime in the Danish military, but shortly after 2009 the current system of the written End of Tour Report from each battle group returning to Denmark was cancelled, and the transferred knowledge was no longer surveyed by the Army Command and the Defence Command but left entirely in the hands of the brigade responsible for training the next battle group.¹⁵⁶

(154) Interview 19.

(155) The operational directive from the Danish Team 8 is still classified – as are the directives from all teams – and the knowledge contained in this commentary relies on the interviews.

(156) Interview 7, 'Anonymous High-Ranking Officer from Inter Service Intelligence Pakistan' (Pakistan: March 26, 2014) Anonymous high ranking officer's opinion: The cancellation of the End of Tour Report was apparently due to possible public access to the documents and the fear of public focus on goals not reached or lack of success.

⚠ Lesson identified: In order to develop a consistent strategy that can lead to the desired end state, a comprehensive, relevant strategy must be developed. This strategy must be able to withstand the test of time while still being flexible enough to adapt to changes on the ground. Most importantly, the political objectives must be firm and last for the entirety of the mission, in order to facilitate the operational and tactical levels that have to transform the objectives into achievable goals and tactical operations. The strategy must be coordinated with strategic partners and comply with the overarching strategy for the international mission, as well as that of the government in the country. This strategy must be broken down into achievable objectives at the operative level (various agencies and ministries) and, thus, prioritized and resourced before forces on the ground can create supporting tactical goals, which can be attained by applying tools from counterinsurgency warfare.

So the various battle groups from 2006 and until 2011 wrote their own Directive of Operations in relation to what *they* saw fit. However, this had a great influence on the tools that the various battle groups used in Helmand. Some, especially the early battle groups, saw their task mainly as a military solution solving the insurgency problem in an enemy-centric manner. They preferred hard- power tools in the form of fighting the insurgents through an enemy-centric approach. Battle Group Team 4 was the Danish battle group that, of all Danish battle groups in Helmand throughout the period, faced the heaviest kinetic action from the insurgency. Initially, the battle group had prepared a Directive of Operations in which the tools directed against the insurgents in Upper Gereshk Valley were intended to protect the city of Gereshk.¹⁵⁷ Their military objective was to clear Upper Gereshk Valley of insurgents and hold the area until the local government could step up and take over responsibility for security. However, the local government had no means for taking over this responsibility, and the Danish military plans were never coordinated with the local authorities.

⚠ Lesson identified: The Defence Command must, in cooperation with the Army Command, issue a Directive of Operations closely connected to the Danish strategy in order to create a continuous pattern of operations. This will improve the momentum of the Danish strategy and pre-empt issues of counterproductive opera-

(157) Interview 17.

tions from battle group to battle group – and more importantly, strengthen the credibility of the Danish operations in the eyes of the local population, thus making it possible to win hearts and minds in the long run.

Depending on the level, there seems to be an agreement among those interviewed that tools in counterinsurgency operations should be used along with a cultural awareness of the operative environment in order to work, regardless of the tools used.¹⁵⁸ Some high-ranking officers stated that they were properly educated in cultural awareness before coming to Afghanistan, while others stated a lack of preparation in this area.¹⁵⁹ The reason for this discrepancy can be traced back to the fact that incoming Danish battle groups were responsible for their own education in cultural awareness and, because of lack of time, relied on a few seminars with Afghans living in Denmark to provide the small amount of education. The ordinary soldiers were primarily educated in cultural awareness during the last field exercise in Denmark. During this exercise, Danish soldiers from the brigade acted as a local population, who either supported the battalion's operations, or not, and gave the possibility of setting up local meetings to negotiate with an artificial local population. When in theatre, the soldiers had to rely on the cultural awareness of local and Danish military interpreters when talking to the local population or when negotiating with local authorities. This proved to be difficult, and several of those interviewed stated that lack of this awareness and knowledge prevented the battle groups from using some of the most suitable tools when conducting counterinsurgency operations.¹⁶⁰

The interviews provided a variation of opinions regarding the need for more cultural awareness. Interviewees from the early battle groups and the very late battle groups stated that they could have benefited somewhat from better knowledge of the cultural situation but that they knew enough to get the job done.¹⁶¹ This is most likely connected to the perception of their tasks and how the goals were developed. The early battle groups saw their task as enemy-centric and fought the insurgents in a rather ordinary military manner, not very different from their basic training in "Clearing" and "Holding" an area, while the later battle groups concentrated on education and cooperation

(158) Interview 18; Interview 10.

(159) Interview 21.

(160) Interview 17; Interview 21; Interview 16.

(161) Interview 17; Interview 19.

with the Afghan Security Forces and thus had to rely more on their cultural knowledge. However, the battle groups in between, with a population-centric approach, did suffer for the lack of cultural awareness and expressed a lack of understanding of how local political power structures functioned in Afghan society. To circumvent this problem, the battle groups tried to build databases on patterns of life and power structures in order to understand the situation. But even with a focus on intelligence, this proved to be insufficient.

△ Lesson identified: Cultural awareness is a key element when relating to a local population and in environments necessitating a population-centric strategy. It is necessary to streamline the education in cultural awareness from top to bottom – and from team to team, in a dynamic way taking the development in the situation on the ground into consideration in connection with the overarching objectives. A way could be to amplify the connection between intelligence and education in cultural awareness in order to understand the local population, its situation, and how things are done in the area, including understanding the power structures. However, this is a Sisyphean task as power structures change over time, so the cultural awareness education must be centralized and conducted in a learning environment in order to stay relevant. It is probably necessary for such a centralized education unit to have a small element attached to each battle group to enable feedback of how things change on the ground and what is necessary to be taught back home.

The most important tool, according to the interviewees, was to create security for the local population, with the objective to allow the local population to continue their normal way of life, which, again, would legitimize the counterinsurgency operations and strengthen the credibility of the military forces, be they foreign forces or local security forces. Also, a secure environment would support the development of an area and thus create possibilities for education and much needed employment. However, different countries in ISAF had different focuses, and even these changed over time.¹⁶² Also, the local populations' desires changed over time, and the tools had to be re-evaluated continuously as the local populations' main priorities may change. In 2001, insecurity was labelled as the main priority among a majority of the Afghans, while labour and education came in second and third, respectively.

(162) Interview 14.

In 2015, it is the other way around, with education as the top priority for the local population.¹⁶³ This shows that the tools utilized by the counterinsurgency force must be in connection to and in understanding of the needs of the public, thus emphasising the need for situational awareness. Luckily, for a foreign force, situational awareness is easier achieved and understood than cultural awareness because knowledge of what is going on through intelligence gathering provides situational awareness. Some counterinsurgency practitioners confuse the two and think they have cultural awareness when they, in fact, only have situational awareness.¹⁶⁴

⚠ Lesson identified: Two situations on the battleground are never identical; thus, the appropriate counterinsurgency tools will change from operation to operation, as well as over time. The tools utilized must be in line with the local population's needs, which will change along with a change in the environment. If the wrong tools are applied, they will at best be wasted and at worst be counterproductive to the strategic end state objectives. A change in tools must rely on or at least include the local population's perception of the security level in order to obtain the desired effect.

The Danish battle groups tried to implement an ink-spot approach, in which selected communities were secured and developed in order to make show-cases for other communities. The interviewees had different opinions on the success of this approach. Some stated that it was successful and particularly so if the local authorities quickly supported the achieved goals and took over responsibility for initiating the BUILD process.¹⁶⁵ Others stated that the so-called ink-spot approach¹⁶⁶ demanded far too many resources in order to be successful, and therefore it could not achieve success.¹⁶⁷ This discrepancy seems to be rooted in the different experiences that the interviewees have. One of the respondents expressed it like this:

(163) Interview 14.

(164) Interview 10.

(165) Interview 20.

(166) The ink-spot approach is an attempt to create small, safe, and developing areas in a troubled region and turn them into beacons for how things could be if the counterinsurgency forces win, thus winning hearts and minds of the local population.

(167) Interview 21.

*We always had too few forces; we were under a 1,000 soldiers in a city of 100,000 people.*¹⁶⁸

It is noteworthy that the Lessons Learned element in the Army Staff supported the ink-spot approach while former battle groups did not.

△ Lesson identified: There seem to be different opinions, between the battle groups and the Army Command, concerning which tools work and which do not. Some of the discrepancy can stem from the fact that the battle groups wrote their own Directive of Operations and that that directive was approved without comments from the Army's Lessons Learned Element. This was the case because the element either deemed it unimportant in operational matters or because the decision process in the Army Command takes place in a closed environment due to security. It could also be because the Army Command is focused on lessons learned at the operative level, whereas the Lessons Learned Element focuses on the sub-tactical level – or best practice lessons – in cooperation with the Army's different branches. In order to integrate lessons learned into the battle groups operations, the Army Command could emphasise the importance of lessons learned by setting up a structure where lessons learned at the operational level are harvested, qualified, and implemented in a centrally developed, maintained, and issued Directive of Operations.

Tools crowded out

When applying tools there is a risk that some tools crowd out others. Even tools at the different levels can crowd out each other or be counterproductive. Some tools were apparently crowded out because of the different schools of thought on how to deal with counterinsurgency.¹⁶⁹ Initially, some countries, from the beginning of the ISAF-mission in 2003 until late 2005, applied strict enemy-centric focuses in the COIN approach, shaping the operations in a direction of counterterrorism rather than COIN. The lack of a population-centric focus thus hampered the overall COIN approach.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the insurgents represented by Taliban, until 2008, still believed that a military victory could be reached, which gave them no reason to engage in

(168) Interview 18.

(169) Interview 11.

(170) Interview 14.

negotiations with either ISAF or the Afghan government. However, during the influx of U.S. soldiers into the Helmand province from 2010, the Taliban in Regional Command South suffered severe casualties and started becoming interested in negotiations with ISAF.¹⁷¹

⚠ Lesson identified: Even if a COIN approach includes negotiations with the insurgents, it is not necessarily possible to follow-up on that approach from the start. First, the insurgents must have the impression that a military victory is not achievable. This could emphasise the need for the overarching strategy to be enemy-centric from the start and gradually turn population-centric, depending on the insurgent's willingness to negotiate.

At the local level, ISAF conducted operations without trying to support the local government because ISAF was looking for a measurement of output and spending money became a driver in itself. Indeed, Some ISAF-countries had too much money; thus, the initial incentive to spend them as fast as possible, which naturally ended up being counterproductive. A better way of conducting operations was to support the local governor, and the District Delivery Program¹⁷² should have been used for this purpose.¹⁷³ Although difficult, more could have been done for the civilian side according to a battle group commander.¹⁷⁴ However, there was always a lack of civilian advisors and specialists in the battle groups and with all the tasks at hand, the civilian advisors had to prioritize their work:

“Ten civilian specialists could have a bigger positive influence than a platoon of 30 people... but it is not a smart career move for a civilian in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in the Ministry of Development to go to Helmand and work.”¹⁷⁵

(171) Interview 11.

(172) For more about the District Delivery Program and what it was intended to do by supporting the COIN efforts, see ‘The District Delivery Program in Afghanistan: A Case Study in Organizational Challenges | Small Wars Journal’ <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrn/art/the-district-delivery-program-in-afghanistan-a-case-study-in-organizational-challenges>> [accessed 16 September 2015].

(173) Interview 16 The District Delivery Program represents an approach to ensure that the reach of the Afghan central government extends to the districts.

(174) Interview 18.

(175) Interview 18.

Generally speaking, the civilian side was never geared to match the military side, and military operations thus received the main focus, as the civilian side was not able to deliver what was needed.¹⁷⁶ In that respect, the military operations focused on clearing areas of insurgents, without reaching a lasting and widespread security level in which the civilian side could support stability by initiating the build phase and support the Afghan communities.¹⁷⁷ This resulted in too many secure areas, where the civilian side was absent because of lack of resources. Furthermore, the areas cleared also required a standing security force, which could remain in each area and which demanded more soldiers than were available. In many cases cleared areas were therefore left without a standing security force, and after a certain time period the insurgents could easily regain control of the area. Needless to say this had a devastating effect on one of the key elements in the COIN strategy: Convincing the civil population that the COIN forces are the strongest party in the conflict.

Some battle groups tried to include the civilian side in the operations or at least cooperate with the civilian stabilisation officer, but from the beginning there was a very heavy focus on kinetic operations and an understanding that the civilian side could be sorted out later.¹⁷⁸

⚠ Lesson identified: The civilian side in COIN operations must be strong enough to support the civilian authorities and the local population after the military side has provided security. If this does not happen, the military side will crowd out the civilian side. The military operations should rather be scaled down in cooperation with what is possible on the civilian side: rather do a lot in a small area than only some in a large area. Also, the tendency to think in parallel tracks between the military side and the civilian side must be countered by including the civilian side in the military decision-making process, thereby overcoming the different chains of command where the military side only reports and is directed by the Army Command, while the civilian side only reports and is directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(176) Interview 15.

(177) Interview 15.

(178) Interview 17.

Other battle group commanders point out that, in their perception, no tools were actually crowded out in the bigger picture. It was a matter of prioritization and development in the situation. All tools are effective on their own, but they work with different effectiveness over time. The task is to get them to work in the right direction over time.¹⁷⁹ However, the Danish rotation system, with six months per battle group in Helmand, caused a short-term focus on successes with less notice being paid to long-term implications.¹⁸⁰

⚠ Lesson identified: There is no consistency in whether tools are crowded out or not, but it seems to be agreed that some tools are more effective than others, but that this effectiveness can change over time. That calls for an overarching strategy flexible enough in order to apply different tools at different times but at the same time provide a focus on the long-term effects of tools utilized. The flip-side of this flexibility is the risk of focusing on short-term successes to give an impression of progress.

Counterproductive effects

Counterproductive effects and tools being crowded out are closely connected. Often when tools are crowded out the successful tool can be counterproductive, as it disables the tool that is crowded out from supporting its part of the strategy. But some effects are counterproductive to other effects, and that must receive focus in order to circumvent the unwanted effects - even if the cause of the unwanted effect cannot be countered. At the strategic level, the EU ambassador to Afghanistan points out that Iran supports parts of the Taliban with education and weapons as a strategy for influencing the situation. The Iranians have observed Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and are trying to balance the situation by securing some influence on the Taliban groups that could promote Iranian interests in Afghanistan, especially in the case of a potential political peace. That, of course, undermines the joint international (and especially regional) efforts for establishing peace in Afghanistan and thus becomes a problem for the Afghan government. The same is the case with Pakistan's role.¹⁸¹ This unwanted effect is outside the Danish battle group's area of control and even that of the British headquarters, but this shows that countering an insurgency is not just a question of eradicating the insurgents

(179) Interview 21.

(180) Interview 19.

(181) Interview 12.

at hand. Rather, the politicians must include political and diplomatic tools in a strategy that try to handle outside support for the insurgents.

⚠ Lesson identified: Even the best COIN operations cannot solve problems that come from outside the area of operations if the strategy does not include a political track including all regional actors. COIN operations are best conducted successfully if they can be limited to a geographical area that is isolated from the outside world. As this is virtually impossible to achieve, an overarching strategy must address this dilemma in order to create coherence between the strategic and operational level, thereby supporting the COIN operations at the tactical level.

Most of the interviewees point to corruption as a counterproductive effect. Denmark tries to circumvent corruption by following the money given to the central authorities and overseeing plan, how they progress, and are funded.¹⁸² If a project funded with Danish means is deemed (too) corrupt, the project is shut down. However, corruption is a fact of life in Afghan society, and it is not easy to circumvent, and there is a risk of undermining governmental authority when projects are closed down. The most effective tool to counter corruption was described to be a "local leader" strong enough to minimize it to an acceptable level. Such a leader would earn legitimacy and could convince others to behave and act according to the law.¹⁸³ But such leaders were rare in Helmand.

⚠ Lesson identified: Although corruption should in principle not be tolerated, support must be given in an environment of cultural awareness so as not to undermine governmental authority. At the tactical level, corruption could be minimized by supporting the most progressive – or perhaps the best available and least corrupt – leader and let that serve as a kind of ink-spot approach. At the strategic level corruption could be minimized by following the money from the top level all the way down in order to assure that money is actually spent in a project relevant to the strategy. However, a balance is needed, as too strict an approach could result in further bureaucratic resources like funding, manpower, and political interest being withdrawn from the projects. This implies that

(182) Interview 14.

(183) Interview 16.

there is a need for developing new cost-efficient tools of monitoring projects. Another counterproductive effect is a strategy's benchmarking system for measuring successes. It can pollute the strategy because one tends to get more of what is measured. There are examples of benchmarks influencing the strategy, as everybody focuses on doing things that create short-term success. But, according to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the countries behind ISAF have become better at handling this undesired effect by coordinating efforts across organizations and countries and focusing less on benchmarks.¹⁸⁴

Also, the credibility in the eyes of the local population is an important area, and if the wrong COIN tools are applied, they will often result in counterproductive effects. As one battle group stands on the shoulders of the previous battle groups' operations, it is necessary to keep the promises that the different battle groups have given to the local population. The local population remembers.¹⁸⁵ However, the problem was that ISAF consisted of so many different approaches to counterinsurgency and conducted operations that were not sufficiently coordinated. Special Operation Forces, operating outside the chain of command and in secrecy, were counterproductive because they on some occasions killed the very people that the battle groups needed to negotiate with. The killed individuals were probably legitimate targets in one context, but in another context they were necessary for the peace and security process because of their influence in the local community. Especially the targeting of mid-level leaders proved in several cases to be counterproductive.¹⁸⁶ Needless to say, civilian casualties are always to be avoided, but Afghans actually do have an understanding of collateral damage because they are used to living in an environment of war. However, they lacked appreciation of how the foreign soldiers behave in close contact with the daily Afghan life according to one interviewee.¹⁸⁷ Apparently, the Afghan population cannot understand why foreign soldiers have a hard time separating normal civilian life from how the insurgents are operating. One of those interviewed expressed it like this:

(184) Interview 14.

(185) Interview 18.

(186) Interview 10.

(187) Interview 21.

“What they [the Afghans] do not understand is why guards are shooting after vehicles coming too close to their check points. That “small” problem is actually quite a big problem for the local population.”¹⁸⁸

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In order to maintain credibility in the eyes of the local population the battle group have to operate in accordance with the overarching strategy without changing priorities and focus, in order to serve short-term objectives. That calls for a centrally written Directive of Operations, as well as a structured hand-over process from one battle group to the next, supervised by the Army Command to ensure that lessons learned be implemented. If the strategy changes over time, the battle groups must invest time and effort in explaining to the local population why a change is necessary and how it will influence the local population. It is important for the battle groups not to promise more than what can be delivered.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Units operating outside of the chain of command (Special Forces) must be included in that chain, or at the least a minimum of coordination with ground holding units must take place. Ground holding units must be given the possibility to intervene in a Kill/Capture mission, especially if the mission targets mid-level leaders who are deemed necessary for the stability and development in the specific area.

(188) Interview 10.

Counterterror operations in Pakistan

Abstract

This chapter analyses experiences from counterterror operations gained by Pakistani officials from the Army Command, high-ranking officers, scholars, and other counterterror practitioners.¹⁸⁹ The aim with this chapter is to glean the lessons identified with Pakistani counterterror operations at the strategic level and how this has influenced operations at the tactical level. One of the key lessons identified was the lack of a state narrative and a uniformity or consensus on how to address the more general problems in the areas of operations. Pakistan kept trying various options and, as far as counterinsurgency theory is concerned, the Pakistani strategy had less to do with counterinsurgency and focused more on using tools of counterterrorism, which may not have been the best way to counter the opponent in North Waziristan and FATA in the first place. The role of governance failure in elevating local grievances to the level that non-state actors, in league with foreign elements, could exploit these cannot be overemphasized.

Perception of the opponent

When classifying the opponent, a common issue observed in Pakistan was the ambiguities in defining or classifying the opponent within a certain category. One interviewee argued that getting into classifications is no more than an academic approach to dealing with an issue, since classification may not be as important as a state's overall response is.¹⁹⁰ In response, a counterargument could be that: once a state is not clear as to what and who the enemy exactly is, its response will be in grave danger of devising a flawed strategy to deal with said enemy. Even if this danger is not borne out, then the lack of clarity at least raises the possibility that a majority of the civil population will not understand the government's actions in clear terms. Furthermore, there will be an increased risk of the civilian population not being on board with the government's strategy, due to ambiguities in the national narrative, most likely resulting in pitfalls of its own. The government's consistent inability to clearly identify and define the opponent may have been another reason why ambiguity remains present in the state narrative to date. The classification, or consensually constructed description, of who exactly the anti-government

(189) See transcription of interviews.

(190) Interview 4, 'Ahmed, Nadeem, Lieutenant General (retired), Former Corps Commander' (Pakistan: March 21, 2014).

forces were may not have been considered important or politically feasible enough at the time of decision-making in Pakistan.

In this regard, all the interviewees were asked whether they would classify the opponent or anti-government elements in North Waziristan (NW), specifically, and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), in general, as insurgents or terrorists. The trend was to classify the opponent neither purely as a terrorist nor as an insurgent. However, a majority of the interviewees preferred to label the opponents as terrorists. One interviewee chose to use the term militant instead. It appeared that those who had not directly dealt with the opponent on the ground were more likely to call him a terrorist. Those who handled the opponent on the ground, the practitioners, or those who have actually dealt with the opponent at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, tend to avoid clear description/classification into either of the two terms mentioned in the question (insurgent or terrorist)¹⁹¹, and only if prompted more specifically would choose the term ‘terrorist’.

The ambiguity or confusion among different levels on the issue of classification of the opponent, along with the anomalies between counterinsurgency and counterterrorist theory, on the one hand, and the current practice in Pakistan, on the other hand, later served as inspiration for one of the authors of this book, who introduced the term “militancy” and “Counter-militancy” in the chapter on Pakistan. Though these terms were originally not part of the questions asked of the interviewees from Pakistan, the book at hand offered an excellent opportunity to introduce these terms in an effort to help shape narratives within Pakistani circles.

⚠ Lesson identified: The perception of how to label the opponent differs among those interviewed. While this is no surprise, among different countries it can cause problems at the tactical level if strategy makers cannot agree upon how to label the opponent, and thus what tools should be employed to counter the opponent. An unclear definition of the enemy increases the risk of leading to an unwanted narrative and the formulation of an end state that is not achievable.

There could be multiple reasons behind the lack of clarity in the thought process in Pakistani circles. The problem with recognizing the opponent

(191) Interview 9, ‘Ramday, Javed Iqbal, Lieutenant General, President NDU’ (Pakistan: March 26, 2014).

as an insurgent is that it grants him a certain degree of legitimacy, which a state would prefer to avoid. The implication would be that some part of the population might start swinging towards the insurgents and develop feelings of sympathy. This would also, in the eyes of the government, constitute a recourse to the negotiating table, which it may not want to allow the insurgents/opponents.

⚠ Lesson identified: Labelling an opponent as an insurgent might lead to expectations among the local population that the opponent be negotiated with, as the opponent possesses some kind of legitimacy. It is usually equally politically suicidal for the government and policymakers to classify the opponent as an insurgent, as opposed to a terrorist. If the opponent is classified as a terrorist, it implies an enemy-centric strategy and a corresponding official narrative, which the government of the day will feel less hesitant to apply and implement.

Also, by using the label “terrorist”, the government will not have to worry about how the rest of the population in the country might react. Civil liberties can be more easily curtailed, as a pretext is readily available, i.e., since the opponent is a terrorist and aims at destroying peace and infrastructure, he needs to be eliminated at all costs, which necessitates curtailment of some of civil liberties to facilitate such measures. Although Pakistan did not largely choose the option of curtailing civil liberties in any supra-constitutional way¹⁹², a force-heavy response became a natural solution in such a case.

Nonetheless, a commonly shared view by some of the interviewees was that the opponent carries broad contours of both insurgency and terrorism, although leaning more towards terrorism using a narrative of insurgency. The purpose of opponents was to show their might and power, since they knew very well that they lacked the capacity, ability, and resources, including public support, to topple the state. Therefore, terrorism was more of an attention-gaining (from both at home and abroad) tactic than a goal in and of itself.¹⁹³ However, it was mentioned that the Taliban in Pakistan (TTP) did use some

(192) The President of Pakistan promulgated the Pakistan Protection Ordinance, followed by the 21st Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, passed by the Parliament (National Assembly and the Senate). The move was further validated by the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

(193) Interview 3, ‘Ahmed, Asim, Lieutenant Colonel, Former Unit Commander and Deputy Director ISSRA, NDU’ (Pakistan: March 21, 2014).

of the techniques of the classical insurgents, but their motivations, causes, and reasons for taking up arms transcend classical definitions of insurgents.¹⁹⁴

Some interviewees identified the anti-state elements according to the nature of their activities in different regions in Pakistan: First, one set, or type, of anti-state elements comes from the grievances and deprivation-led, low-intensity, insurgency-like situation in a couple of districts of Balochistan.¹⁹⁵ In this case, a small group belonging to a couple of Baloch political parties used tactics of ethnic cleansing of non-Baloch elements, attacked state infrastructure and the armed forces. The situation improved over the last couple of years once a special financial package was announced for Balochistan and dialogue was initiated with the Baloch nationalist parties, along with effective counterterrorism operations.

Second, a set of anti-state elements is ethnically divided militant wings of different political parties operating in Karachi, who cannot be defined according to any particular existing definition. They have, over the years, turned into very effective extortionists, successfully eliminating opponents and successfully getting hold of key public positions through organized electoral fraud and violence. So this type can be classified as organized political violence for political targets.¹⁹⁶ Finally, Taliban in FATA are the third type, but they have, however, earned the repute of militants and terrorists, although the word Taliban itself does not portend a terrorist mind-set; in fact, the word means ‘the one who seeks knowledge.’¹⁹⁷

▲ Lesson identified: There seem to be three types of anti-state elements. First, there are grievances and deprivation-led, low-intensity, insurgency-like situations leading to tactics of ethnic cleansing. Second, there are ethnically divided militant wings of different political parties. Third, there is the Taliban, which have a more cohesive approach to overthrowing the governmental institutions in FATA.

(194) Interview 9.

(195) There are 32 Districts in Balochistan.

(196) Interview 1, ‘Rais, Dr. Rasul Bakhsh, Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad’ (Pakistan: March 20, 2014).

(197) Interview 7.

Many interviewees referred to the events related to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in order to explain the description of Taliban.¹⁹⁸ E.g., the Mujahedeen were mentioned, which consisted of various armed groupings that took part in the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union and were trained in Pakistan's border regions. There they enjoyed a high degree of respect in the eyes of the local public and were equally eulogized in many Western democracies to the extent that people of the FATA region took pride in establishing relations with the war heroes, especially since it was declared Jihad to fight against the Soviet Union's aggression and the communist Afghan government. At that time this all suited the interests of the U.S. and its allies - including Pakistan - because the rise of communism was seen by all as an emerging threat that had to be contained. However, the same Mujahedeen were mostly abandoned when the Soviet Union left Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹ Once the Soviet Union had left Afghanistan, and civil war broke out in the country amongst different segments of society, some groups of Mujahedeen gradually turned into Taliban.²⁰⁰

▲ Lesson identified: A problem related to internal conflict cannot be addressed adequately without knowing the history of the country and people. Also, it is important to gain knowledge on cultural and political structures in local areas and regions of the same country. Anyone denied basic necessities, or anyone deprived of basic human rights, can become a terrorist or an insurgent.²⁰¹

Here, a very interesting comment came from officers who, as practitioners, had extensive experience with operations in the FATA areas. They were of the view that both the governmental elements and the anti-government forces can display extremism. According to them, it is wrong to assume that extremist tendencies can only be displayed by anti-state elements.²⁰² Undue interference with local cultural norms and traditions is equally interpreted as an act of extremism by the aggrieved population, just like the state interprets taking up arms against the state structures as an act of extremism, even if that may be only to force the government to address the local grievances.

(198) See transcripts of interviews.

(199) Ibid.

(200) See the chapter about Afghanistan.

(201) Interview 5, 'Ahmadzeb, Mussarat, Member of Pakistan Parliament & Daughter-in Law Og of Wali-E Swat' (Pakistan: Marchs 21, 2014).

(202) Interview 5.

For example, in case of a multi-ethnic society (as in Pakistan), if the state tries to enforce the culture or cultural values of the general society on a specific ethnic group which has its own distinct culture, on the presupposition that the rest of society's cultural values and traditions are somehow better or even superior to the values and traditions of the subculture of said society, this can lead to an extremist backlash from the population in question. The population then sees the act of the government as extremism in its own right. To some extent, the population in FATA has most likely experienced this.

⚠ Lesson identified: Displays of extremism can be bi-directional. It is wrong to assume that only ordinary members of society can resort to extremism; states may also equally be perceived by the people to be indulging in extremism.

⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the COIN forces should not try to impose their own cultural ideals and preferences on the population they are trying to help and whose hearts & minds they are trying to win.

An explanation of this argument is found in the fact that voices were raised at the federal government's level to disarm the society of FATA, since it is unlawful to keep weapons at home in the rest of the country unless proper licenses are obtained. The different set of rules applicable in FATA, in comparison with the other areas of Pakistan, could be one cause of this anomaly, although this arrangement was made with the FATA tribal Jirga at the time when Pakistan gained independence. Here the Jirga unanimously chose to join Pakistan but preserved some of its unique culture and centuries-old traditions. Could this be explained by the region's rugged terrain, the presence of wild animals, or the fact that it was a favourite hideout for criminal elements and an equally favoured route for invaders, who, throughout the ages, have set their sights on the Asian Subcontinent, comprising Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India? In any case, carrying weapons is a normal way of life within the tribal society of FATA.^{203,204} It is part of the male identity in the rural culture.²⁰⁵ In fact, not carrying weapons would be abnormal in the society of that region, and women actually force their husbands to carry weapons

(203) The same is also the case with Balochistan and some parts of the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan.

(204) Interview 3.

(205) Interview 6, 'Bajwa, Asim Saleem, Major General, Director General Inter Services Public Relations' (Pakistan: March 25, 2014).

once they move outside the house.²⁰⁶ However, once the government began to consider disarming the area, it caused resentment and was perceived as undue interference aimed at changing the norms of the society. It may also have been interpreted as an attempt to change symbols of masculine identity in that culture. This was a fact that had to be taken into consideration during the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process. The FATA society was otherwise not known for law and order issues prior to the wars in Afghanistan.

▲ Lesson identified: It is important for the government forces to understand that there can be no single "silver bullet" solution uniformly applicable to all cases/conflict situations of similar nature, nor will all laws be interpreted and implemented in all areas in a similar way and to the same extent.

Another difference between insurgents and terrorists was pointed out to be that the insurgent typically does not attack the non-combatants because he needs to win the hearts and minds of the local population.²⁰⁷ His utmost desire would then be to win the local population's sympathy as much as possible to increase his support base. He will have political goals, especially the goal of establishing a free state.

▲ Lesson identified: In the battle for winning the hearts and minds of the local population, it is imperative that the government forces avoid civilian casualties and "collateral damage". Otherwise, it will risk being seen as worse than the insurgents, who are already more likely to build a narrative around the grievances of the local people.

The insurgents typically target the state and its security forces but not the non-combatant civilian population.²⁰⁸ The TTP, in contrast, targeted innocent civilian non-combatants by using different coercive tactics and created fear through various means to ensure compliance of the local population. No attempts were made by them to win the hearts of the host population. They attacked diverse targets including schools, healthcare facilities, mosques (of

(206) Interview 2, 'Two Anonymous Mid-Level Officers from National Security and War Course, NDU' (Pakistan: March 20, 2014).

(207) Interview 8, 'Baz, Ali, Major General (retired), Principal NUST Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies (NIPCONS), Pakistan National University of Science & Technology' (Pakistan: March 26, 2014).

(208) Interview 8.

all sects) etc., which afterwards led to the erosion of their support among the local population. But the state's inability to cash in on the opportunity provided by the ever-coercive TTP, through ensuring good governance and improved law and order in the area, left the population with only two choices - siding with the state or its opponent. The population, facing a threat to their lives, had to manage staying alive in the very same hostile environment, no matter how infested it was with militancy and terrorism. Once the Army operation started, the population even voluntarily left their homes to help the Army clear the area of militants and terrorists.²⁰⁹

Perceptions of counterinsurgency

The terms counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT) were being used interchangeably as if they were synonymous. However, it was for the most part the term "COIN" that was nearly absent in official discourse at that time in Pakistan. Some official websites in Pakistan mentions that COIN operations have been conducted,²¹⁰ without saying that the opponent was an insurgent. At the same time, some would call the opponent an insurgent while efforts against him were called CT operations. The civilian policymakers, though, would use the term CT more readily than COIN. Needless to point out, sometimes typologies and classifications, in terms of adopting strategies following particular paradigms, do not prove beneficial when applied uniformly to all situations; and sometimes these may even restrain the practitioners and scholars from thinking freely. After all, there is no a priori reason to assume that either of the approaches can singlehandedly tackle insurgencies or terrorist groups. In fact, as the militants and terrorists used different tools of terrorism and insurgency to advance their objectives, the government of Pakistan also used tools from both COIN and CT to handle the precarious situation. Some interviewees, who were practitioners at the operational level, also termed government actions as law enforcement, instead of CT, which is, again, an interesting observation and might as well have been the case.²¹¹

There could be multiple reasons behind this inconsistent usage of different types of terms by practitioners and policymakers for the operations in Pakistan. For example, public sympathy for some factions of the TTP, including

(209) Interview 2.

(210) For example, the Pakistan NAVY website, and the NDU website mentioned the words 'insurgency' and 'COIN operations' respectively.

(211) Interview 2.

from some political parties, too, caused the ambiguities to exist on account of political expediency. Also, COIN theory is predicated upon the recognition that the opponent is an insurgent. However, the overall impression from the interviews was that the opponent in FATA/NW did not fit into any single definition completely. In that sense, since the TTP were never a monolithic whole. Just like the Taliban in Afghanistan, they didn't qualify for either of the terms, and therefore the linguistic mayhem evolved.

Lack of knowledge of COIN theory or CT theory may also have contributed to this situation. These terms were more akin to jargons that were perceived as more appropriate in describing the state's response - a common problem with reactive approaches to solving problems.

⚠ Lesson identified: The use of multiple terms and jargons to describe conflict situations only results in linguistic mayhem to the detriment of the efforts to counter the challenges to the state. The state narrative should be clear and unified for all.

So, as it is a civilian government who authorized the operations, the term CT efforts is more likely to be used in Pakistan, but somehow this does not lead to complete adherence to a CT approach. One reason could be that this would imply that operations against the state opponents be undertaken by Police and other civilian Law Enforcement Agencies, which is clearly not the case in Pakistan. Most of the operations in NW are being conducted by the military in a very conventional way.²¹²

Another reason could be that COIN and CT, as theoretical perspectives in an effective strategy, are taught to a lesser degree in Pakistan in civilian institutions and equally so at the Pakistan Military Academy, even. Purely indigenous research on COIN and, to a large extent CT also, is absent in Pakistan,²¹³ which could have helped the policymakers define and describe the situation more accurately. Practically, it would seem that people in routine interactions would use any term that came to their mind without worrying about what this might lead to when it comes to devising state responses. In fact, Pakistan does not have COIN theorists, academicians, or scholars at all.

(212) Interview 3.

(213) There is only one Master of Philosophy dissertation in Pakistan about COIN, authored by Lieutenant Colonel Asim Ahmed TI(M). Otherwise, one finds very few articles on the matter published in newspapers or in NDU publications.

Recently, there has been an increase in the trend to study counterterrorism theory and practice, ever since the Pakistani government started using the term “terrorist” more frequently, although ambiguities still persist. A reason for this could be that the subject of COIN is thought to be the domain of the Pakistan Armed Forces and a typically military field of study, which civilians cannot study or may not be allowed to study, and for which civilians do not see a potential demand, and do not perceive it to be needed in Pakistan. To them, Pakistan does not have insurgencies that make it necessary for common people (and for that matter, military academia) to study the phenomenon and devise COIN strategies. This is another anomaly, since Pakistan has faced officially recognized insurgencies previously: one resulted in the separation of East Pakistan, now called Bangladesh; and another was successfully handled by the state in 1960s, in Balochistan – through the use of a mixed approach comprising a conventional campaign along with negotiations to bring the disgruntled elements back into mainstream politics.

▲ Lesson identified: Pakistan has had insurgency experiences in the past, but because of the difficulties in labelling the opponent in FATA and NW, there seems to be only minor interests in studying COIN, and there is thus a bias toward using the instruments of hard power, in accordance with a classical Army understanding of an enemy.

At the same time, many people carry the impression that since the idea of COIN originates in West, it is imperialistic and driven by colonial objectives,²¹⁴ which is now long-forgotten history in Pakistan. Therefore, such ideas are not applicable in the Pakistani context. This leads to the feeling that Pakistan needs to have its own indigenous approaches to deal with the opponent, since both the state functionaries and the opponent live within the same territory. However, Pakistan could benefit from theories developed during France’s operations in Algeria, which was believed to be an inseparable part of France, and from the United Kingdom’s experiences in Northern Ireland.

Insurgency motivations

Perhaps, a peek into the mind-set and motivations of the opponent could better indicate not only their ultimate objectives but also add another clue as to how these must be interpreted, in terms of classifying them according

(214) Interview 3.

to any established theory. Internal conflicts are in every way very complex, and no two conflicts are identical in relation to dynamics, circumstances, manifestations, and methodologies, etc. For most of the interviewees, a consensus existed that the motivation for terrorism was not one but a mix of multiple drivers. However, if one were to rank all the motives in the order of priority, it varied from region to region, group to group, and also along the different cadres of the groups.²¹⁵ The motivations of the highest cadre of the TTP would be different from those of its lowest cadres.

A trend towards an increasingly evolving consensus between the civilian and military sides was obvious with regards to the perceptions about the primary motivations of the anti-government elements. There was a high degree of consensus amongst the interviewees on the argument that without addressing the root causes of the internal conflict and merely focusing on eliminating the negative elements does not solve the problem in a comprehensive way at all. The mix of factors thus included repeated governance failures by successive governments in Pakistan and years of neglect, which played a major contributory role in creating terrorists. Socio-economic deprivation was a consistently mentioned cause by all respondents, which according to them was aggravated and eventually exploited by the opponents, also due to lack of governmental outreach in remote areas of FATA. Although the population never backed the terrorists outright, this still created, in the very least, an environment conducive enough to creating the breeding ground for a disgruntled youth to engage in anti-state activities.

▲ Lesson identified: Constant neglect of grievances of a population, along with lack of governmental outreach to an area, will render its environment conducive enough to becoming a breeding ground for anti-state activities, even if the population does not support the terrorist/insurgent's agenda.

The example of Swat was cited by interviewees where the part of *clear* and *hold* was executed very well by the Pakistani army, but the *build* and *transfer* part did not take place at all, as no civilian infrastructure or trained manpower was available to take control once it the area had been cleared by the Pakistani army²¹⁶. This necessitated another operation in 2008 by the Pakistani army but things have yet to improve to the desired level.

(215) Interview 6.

(216) Interview 5.

△ Lesson identified: It is absolutely necessary that civilian manpower and capacity be readily available to take control of governance-related infrastructure once the armed forces have "cleared" and "held" an area. If otherwise, the area will be at risk of falling back into the hands of the anti-state elements and losing the local population's trust in the state apparatuses. After all, the 'build' phase is not the responsibility of the armed forces.

A consensus was also obvious amongst the interviewees in terms of the fact that the terrorists did not demand a separate state for themselves.²¹⁷ They more or less wanted to be left alone to manage the affairs in the areas they were settled in.²¹⁸ However, this does amount to wanting to create, if not a separate state, then a state within a state, which the TTP tried to do in the earlier years. So local political power and money became in this context a strong motivation for keeping up terrorist activities. The TTP miscreants had realized that money was absolutely necessary for becoming politically influential and carrying out their militant activities. In that connection, they soon got engaged in extortion, kidnapping-for-ransom, smuggling, etc. And at the same time, they actively destroyed the local Malik system²¹⁹ and set up their own system of delivering speedy justice instead of the centuries-old Jirga system, which deepened the political vacuum in the area. The Taliban-styled summary trials, though, did not gain much popularity over the years.

There was a consensus on the religion not being the primary motivation behind terrorism and militancy - a perception shared by the Danish interviewees.²²⁰ However, the small core leadership used it as a tool and narrative mixed with ideology to consolidate their hold on power and as an excuse to make attempts to isolate the civilian society from the state.²²¹ The narrative could not be sold to the common population for long because Pakistani society, in general, is a moderate society. People in Pakistan respect the religious clergy but do not want to see them in Politics.²²² In politics, Pakistani society has consistently displayed secular trends. This fact is evident

(217) Interview 6.

(218) Interview 8.

(219) Interview 3 The Malik system is a centuries-old tribal Jirga system, in which all tribal elders, called Maliks, sit and settle local disputes according to local cultural traditions, history and religion, through consensually made decisions. This is an informal judicial system, which has worked for centuries.

(220) See chapter about Afghanistan interviews.

(221) Interview 4.

(222) Interview 1.

from the general elections throughout the history of the country, in which people have never voted en masse for religious parties. The people's electoral behaviour is further evidenced by the fact that the religious parties did not even receive more than 5-6% of the vote in the last general elections in 2013, although the voter turnout was the largest in the country's history (around 60%). In comparison, it is, in fact, the religious parties that have had to adapt to democracy as a matter of political expediency to gather some popular support.²²³ Also, the respondent cited that there are numerous international surveys, for example PEW global surveys,²²⁴ which have shown that 85% of Pakistanis totally reject the Taliban and their way of life.²²⁵

The religious factor was, however, highly useful for the militants and terrorists in many ways. It is used as a motivating factor for creating support, recruiting foot soldiers (and potential suicide bombers), and attracting fundraisers while hiding the real root causes and intentions.²²⁶

⚠ Lesson identified: Religion is an important tool for furthering anti-state agendas in modern-day conflicts and can be used to recruit/brainwash potential members for a terrorist/insurgent outfit.

Borrowing a religious narrative to serve political purposes was obvious from the training and recruitment of suicide bombers by the TTP, which implies that this was just another useful tactic for them. Willingness to die is linked to traditions and religion of Islam through the idea of martyrdom (*shahadat*) in the way of Allah (God) and Jihad, which might be puzzling for foreigners or Western minds.²²⁷ However, this idea, along with ideas of heaven and other divine blessings awaiting *Shuhada* (martyrs), was used (or rather misused) to form a narrative to encourage and recruit potential suicide bombers. The TTP otherwise was/is not religious at all, since no religion enjoins upon its followers to blow up mosques, places of worship, kill innocent men, women and children or suicide bombings.²²⁸ They had turned into something more akin to bandits trying to create mayhem, in order to have autonomy in specific areas. To achieve such a purpose, one way was to attack the state

(223) Interview 1.

(224) 'Pew Research Center' <<http://www.pewglobal.org/>>.

(225) Interview 1.

(226) Interview 7.

(227) Interview 7.

(228) Interview 4.

infrastructure, its security-related institutions and common people alike in order to destabilize and weaken the state.²²⁹

However, once moving down the hierarchical order of the TTP, the motivations changed from purely religious/ideological to other socio-political reasons like security, employment, and monetary benefits, etc. As far as ideology is concerned, the TTP leadership was mostly motivated by religious ideology, especially in the beginning. But with the passage of time, they realized the importance of having political power and the concomitant financial benefits of this power.²³⁰ To one interviewee, ideology did not exist for the TTP, in the technical sense, because even the most basic framework to define ideology would state that ideology is

“..a practical guide to organizing a state and society and establishing some kind of relationship between an individual and the political authority, providing sources of legitimacy. It is a vision of the society.”²³¹

But even this most basic framework cannot be applied to the TTP. The TTP had some idea of how a society should be shaped and what the state ought to look like, and only in that sense could one perhaps say they had an ideology. But, on the other hand, they completely rejected the constitutional legitimacy in Pakistan, and they themselves lacked any sources of legitimacy among the civilian population. The only approach toward establishing relations between the individual and the state in the TTP mind-set was through implementation of their own version of Sharia law.²³² The ideology was used only to lure in masses and recruit illiterate civilians,²³³ because many in the TTP cannot even read the Holy Quran.²³⁴

The militants themselves were thus more rejectionists²³⁵ than insurgents in their approach, rejecting what was being offered by the state. “Takfeeri:²³⁶

(229) Interview 6.

(230) Interview 9.

(231) Interview 1.

(232) Interview 1.

(233) Interview 4.

(234) Interview 7.

(235) Interview 7.

(236) Takfeeris are, in simple words, those Muslims who consider all others who do not follow their understanding and interpretation of Islam as ‘Kafirs (Infidels/non-Muslims)’.

rejectionists²³⁷ considered that anyone who did not agree with their ideology and way of life was not a good Muslim and needed forcible reformation. Some in the TTP following this line of thought had actually no political motive but to sacrifice their life for the cause of their version of Islam and live a life of their version of jihad.²³⁸ This was their understanding of ideology, and purely this type of ideological motivation motivated mostly the middle cadres of the TTP hierarchy.²³⁹

However, downwards in the lower cadres of the TTP, the religious narrative also helped the ordinary person to move up the social ladder in their surrounding society.²⁴⁰ To those who would otherwise be living an insignificant life in society, this gave them a sense of purpose and a reason to live and die for, raising their self-respect.

▲ Lesson identified: With an illiterate population, religion can be used as a tool for recruiting potential anti-state elements by giving them a sense of purpose for life, raising their prestige and self-respect amongst fellow members of their society.

Also, it provided them with a sense of security so the motivating factors became multiple. Their understanding of religion combined with a need to raise their social standing and status within the society in which they lived. Some would be motivated by social-political reasons,²⁴¹ greed, and an aspiration for power. Quite interestingly, it was mentioned by one interviewee that the TTP had developed a fair idea on who could accept and be brainwashed into believing in whatever was told them. Thus, their special criteria for recruiting was that the potential militant should be the third child from large family, with comparatively presumably (for TTP recruiters) less familial bonding, without any possibility for any other stable career in the traditional system²⁴², who could be motivated/brainwashed according to their whims. The idea is surprising nonetheless, whether or not it is based on scientific studies/research. Since too many criminal elements, bandits,

(237) Interview 1.

(238) Jihad for many factions of the TTP is to fight against unjust invasions by non-Muslims onto Muslim soil; injustices caused by the regimes that support Western agendas. However, this also, somehow, included killing fellow Muslims who did not abide by TTP's version of Sharia (Islamic way of Life).

(239) Interview 9.

(240) Interview 9.

(241) Interview 9.

(242) Interview 4.

and armed gangs had joined the TTP with nothing but criminal intent and purposes, the “money” factor was added to the motivations’ basket.²⁴³ This argument is also supported by ample evidence and admission by the TTP of carrying out kidnappings-for-ransom, bank heists, extortion, and targeted killings in Karachi.

Another motivation for some youngsters to join the TTP was to protect their families. In the areas where the TTP was maintaining a presence, it was usual for them to intimidate and ask every family for a fighter, and the threatened family would give one fighter to them so that the family was protected from that very same TTP group that threatened them in the first place.²⁴⁴ The fear of getting killed if one refused to join the TTP thus made many people choose to join the group.²⁴⁵ For others, it was simply the way of life they were accustomed to. This is probably more the case with former, trained Mujahedeen from the era of the Soviet Union’s war in Afghanistan. The government having failed for long in incorporating them into the society and according them decent living opportunities, they only knew one skill set for life - war fighting.

To some interviewees, the quest for power itself, however, could not be the main motivational factor because the TTP neither planned for nor thought of taking over the state or its institutions.²⁴⁶ The state institutions were too strong and the TTP were never in a position to grab power in the central government.²⁴⁷ All they could do was to keep attacking from the peripheral areas to pose a challenge to the state’s outreach and try to discredit and weaken the state’s profile to break its will.

⚠ Lesson identified: Strong state institutions, especially security institutions, are necessary to give the state an upper hand over internal conflict-related situations.

⚠ Lesson identified: At the same time, strong state institutions tend to push insurgents/terrorists towards peripheral areas of the country, i.e. into the rural areas, and there needs to be a strategy for approaching this challenge in these areas.

(243) Interview 6.

(244) Interview 9.

(245) See transcripts of different interviews.

(246) Interview 7.

(247) Interview 1.

However, it was argued by the respondents that a sectarian angle was added into the mix due to a proxy war between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the region.²⁴⁸ Some Shia groups were indirectly funded/supported by neighbouring Iran, while the militant Deobandi faction aligned with other Sunni elements against the Shiites, were supported by elements in Gulf States.²⁴⁹

The role of the international community was mentioned in the context of setting the stage, too.²⁵⁰ The double standards exercised by many countries in the international community in treating militants in Pakistan differently, especially in case of Balochistan, were mentioned. The international community also tries to set the stage for Pakistan by labelling the conflicts in ethical/non-ethical, moral/immoral and legitimate/illegitimate terms while they themselves play a supporting role in case of Baloch militants and their leaders by hosting them in their own countries.²⁵¹ Also, the infamous Mullah Fazlullah, head of the TTP, resides in Afghanistan, for example. In response to this, people from western countries argue that most of these countries have laws against sending wanted people back to a country where they risk a death sentence. That is why these wanted persons are not sent back.

One interviewee mentioned that many foreign intelligence agencies are involved in anti-state activities in that region.²⁵² The terrorists receive substantial support from these intelligence agencies in terms of arms, money and trained mercenaries. Otherwise the TTP militancy would eventually have been vanquished long ago, because the TTP did not have enough resources of its own to continue its activities.²⁵³ At the same time, al-Qaeda, factions of Afghan Taliban, and different foreign powers would all be pulling the strings of the TTP for their own interests.²⁵⁴

▲ Lesson identified: Conflicts, internal fighting, and other anti-governmental activities are difficult to isolate, as there can often be outside support for the opponents of the government. Although this is difficult, or even impossible in practice to circumvent, a

(248) Interview 7.

(249) Interview 1.

(250) See transcripts of Interviews.

(251) Interview 4.

(252) Interview 7.

(253) Interview 6.

(254) Interview 6.

country fighting an insurgency and terrorists must have that in mind when devising a strategy.

The roles of some foreign-based NGOs was also mentioned in this connection and, under the garb of humanitarian assistance, had established their own setups in these areas and were involved in anti-state activities.²⁵⁵ Some NGOs were there only to raise issues and not to actually do humanitarian work in the area or guide the government towards better strategy making. Calling them “drawing-room warriors”, one of the interviewees was of the view that such NGOs benefited from the conflict in numerous ways.²⁵⁶ It should be added, though, that it is the prerogative of some NGOs to raise issues that they find interesting, puzzling, or against national or international laws.

Overall, the above-mentioned dynamics influenced the governmental approach to dealing with militancy and terrorism. Earlier the Swat region and four out of six agencies in FATA areas had no serious issues, therefore the Army resorted to short and swift targeted operations in these areas to achieve objectives, in collaboration with the Frontier Corps (FC), local militias, and local notables’ assistance and help until 2007. Afterwards, the Pakistani army, having firmly established boots on the ground in these areas, came more into a position of obtaining micro-level information. This is the stage which is largely led by intense intelligence operations,²⁵⁷ and which brought more success in putting the unrest to calm and peace. This allowed the Pakistani army also to initiate developmental work in the area.

▲ Lesson identified: The presence of the Army in an area ridden with conflict facilitates intelligence gathering at the micro level, and strengthens the state’s profile in the eyes of the local population. This will initiate a positive development as the local population will deliver intelligence and cooperate more. The stronger they perceive the state to be, the stronger will be the state’s position to provide them security in the future.

(255) In the summer of 2015, the Ministry of Interior consequently banned a few international NGOs on similar charges. The details can be found from the Ministry of the Interior’s (Pakistan) official website.

(256) Interview 5.

(257) Interview 9.

- ▲ Lesson identified: For a strategy to deal successfully with internal conflict, multiple prongs should go side by side, also recognizing that there will always be a need for initiating quick-impact development projects in the stability phase,²⁵⁸ so that the population feels secure and sees the government making a genuine effort to help them in the post-conflict scenario.

Counterinsurgency tools

Despite the discussion about whether Pakistan is fighting insurgents or terrorists, Pakistani officials and high-ranking officers recognized and used tools from counterinsurgency warfare. Most ordinary operations by the Pakistani army consist of shaping the battlefield, clearing the area of unwanted elements, and securing the area as preconditions for a civilian effort to stabilize the area through development. The Pakistani government had recently updated and issued a new 3D-approach to counter the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It consisted of Deterrence, Development, and Dialogue, and was focused on the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas along the border of Afghanistan, apparently leaving Karachi and Punjab out of the approach.²⁵⁹ Later, the Pakistani government launched a new internal security policy called National Internal Security Policy (NISP), in February 2014 and started talks with the TTP, although, initially, the aim of these talks was not clear.²⁶⁰ Apparently, the military had been rather silent about these talks and had some kind of veto over the process.²⁶¹ However, the talks were stalled due to various reasons, especially the continued TTP attacks on state infrastructure and innocent civilians alike during the process of negotiations.

- ▲ Lesson identified: A precondition for handling terrorism or unwanted militarism in Pakistan must include a clear definition of what the approach is aiming at. Are the CT operations aimed at eradicating the terrorists or reintegrating them into civilian society? The two different approaches make use of completely different tools, which must be endorsed and resourced in an overarching strategy.

(258) Interview 9.

(259) Interview 9.

(260) Interview 2.

(261) Interview 7.

Like most other counterinsurgency fighting countries, Pakistan's "comprehensive approach" strategy comes without instructions or tools to be applied at the tactical level, leaving room for on-ground improvisation of tools also.²⁶² Further, the overarching 3D-approach does not explain how the political end state, in reality, is translated into achievable goals, making the transformation difficult at best and producing negative effects at the tactical level when conducting operations in support of the strategy. In fact, the Pakistani strategy seems riddled with contradictions between the need to fight terrorist organizations in Pakistan and the need to have a partner within the same organizations to keep some kind of influence over the situation in Afghanistan. The contradictions have some roots in the Pakistani Government attempts to deter other regional states (particularly India) from exploiting the situation to the detriment of Pakistani interests. But these contradictions do not make it easier to address the root causes of terrorism. And without sufficient disarmament of potential terrorists, along with a development of the contested regions, the outcome of the strategy is unclear.²⁶³ Some of the contradictions are believed to have a background in the polarization of Pakistani society, in both the religious and secular arenas.²⁶⁴ But at the same time, it is problematic for the Pakistani government that the TTP has been rather clear that they do not want to negotiate within the framework of the Pakistani constitution.²⁶⁵

Adding to the problem, the Pakistani army had its own approach that differs somewhat from the governmental approach.²⁶⁶ The primary objective of the Army's talks with the TTP was apparently to turn them away from conducting operations in Pakistan, rather than convincing them of laying down their arms completely, albeit there are some differences in opinions about this, indicating that it is not an official Army approach. The official Army approach is still to fight off any terrorist organization in Pakistan, a part of the 3D-approach. However, Pakistan has historical connections with Afghan Islamist groupings through various religious parties in Pakistan, especially after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.²⁶⁷ This has proved to serve as cheap and easy access to influencing the political environment in Afghanistan, but

(262) Interview 9; Interview 8.

(263) Interview 2.

(264) Interview 4.

(265) Interview 1.

(266) Interview 4.

(267) Interview 5.

it comes with a flipside. Pakistan's Sunni Deobandi Islamist parties²⁶⁸ do not have a history of success in national elections but have shown to have an influence on Pakistani society through their influence over Pakistani policymaking on Afghanistan.²⁶⁹ Another reason for the Army's apparent reluctance for fighting the Haqqani network in North Waziristan is due to the risk of triggering a series of terrorist attacks in the cleared Swat Valley. The clearing of Swat Valley in 2008 is believed to have been a successful military campaign of preventing terrorist attacks and securing peace. The Haqqani network is an insurgent entity operating on both sides of the Pakistani-Afghani border under the leadership of the Pashun Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin. The word Haqqani derives from a madrassa in Pakistan that the late Jalaluddin Haqqani was leading.²⁷⁰ The Haqqani network is allied with the Taliban in Afghanistan and seeks to establish a strict interpretation of Sharia laws. The network was nursed by the U.S.A. and Pakistan during the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan, but aligned itself with Taliban, and is now fighting U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.²⁷¹ But the peace in the Swat Valley is a fragile peace because it lacks a civilian follow-up effort to make the peace permanent through development.²⁷² With a fragile peace, after an operation that is seen as successful in military terms, the Army is not interested in "rocking the boat" and causing the TTP to re-emerge in the Swat Valley. The risk of the TTP re-emerging may be imminent according to some views, as that kind of unwanted activities did happen during the fighting in South Waziristan, and also previously in the Swat Valley.²⁷³ So the Army has a historical bias for eradicating or forcing out terrorists instead of trying to disarm and reintegrating them. This approach is not changing the root causes for a terrorist picking up arms in the first place and, along with the lack of civilian long-term stability and development operations, the government is risking that the neutral majority of the local population can be exploited by the terrorists. Now, once the Government has decided to

(268) Deobandi is a revivalist movement (based on Wahhabism) and was founded as a reaction of a failed rebellion against the British rule in India. Approx. 20% of the Pakistani population regard themselves as Deobandi, and Deobandi are estimated to control up to 80% of the madrassas in Pakistan. See M Gohari, *The Taliban : Ascent to Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

(269) Interview 4.

(270) The death of Jalauddin Haqqani has not been independently confirmed.

(271) Note: After the attack on the APS school in Peshawar in December 2014, the Pakistani government banned the Haqqani network, effective as of January 2015, according to Reuters, 'Pakistan Bans Haqqani Network after Security Talks with Kerry | Reuters.'

(272) Interview 1.

(273) Interview 1.

address the issue all-out, a strategy to counter terrorism and militancy will have to include winning hearts and minds of the local population in order to reduce the support from the population to the terrorists, whether this support is offered voluntarily or under threats from the terrorists.

However, the Pakistani government wants to keep its options open and as the ISAF-mission terminated at the end of 2014, Afghan Taliban are believed to be included in the political process in Afghanistan at some level.²⁷⁴ And fighting the Taliban groupings that are operating in Afghanistan could prove to be counterproductive to Pakistani attempts to influence the situation in Afghanistan through these groupings.²⁷⁵ But the absence of governmentally secured stability and issues in fighting Afghan Taliban in North Waziristan led to a drone campaign by the U.S.A. in the area.²⁷⁶ It should be added though, that the Pakistani government from July 2014 and onward has initiated operation Zarb-e-Azb with the aim of fighting the various militant groupings in North Waziristan in response to the attack on the Jinnah International Airport in June 2014, an attack for which the TTP took responsibility. However, this has created some problems for the government, as it is seen as cooperating with the Americans or at least allowing the drone attacks to take place, which provided a possibility for the terrorists to boost their narrative and thus the battle for “hearts and minds” - and at the same time establish parallel governmental structures.²⁷⁷ The moral and political dilemma for the Pakistani government in their cooperation with America is clear and has to some extent been, at least, a tactical disadvantage. It has fuelled anti-American sentiments, which the terrorists can exploit by channelling the anger and frustrations toward the Americans and the Pakistani government for not standing up to the American engagements on Pakistani soil. In fact, the drones have become symbols of America’s unwanted influence in Pakistan and have a possible outcome of pushing even more moderate Pakistanis into the arms of the terrorists.

However, some of the interviewees pointed out that the Army’s ability to use money without full parliamentary oversight and, in this aspect, the initial distinction between “bad” and “good” Taliban, i.e., enemies and alliance partners, divided the civilian and military approaches rather than uniting them.²⁷⁸

(274) Interview 4.

(275) Interview 4.

(276) Interview 5.

(277) Interview 7.

(278) Interview 4; Interview 7; Interview 5..

- △ Lesson identified: In Pakistan – especially in NW, there are at least two strategies against militancy and terrorism in place: One on the civilian side that emphasizes talks with the objective of reaching a peace settlement; the second one is an approach that uses the Afghan Taliban as a promoter of Pakistani political influence in Afghanistan. These two strategies have not been coordinated per se, as their ends, ways, and means differ.
- △ Lesson identified: Although there seems to be talk of a comprehensive approach toward terrorism and militancy, the data shows that the military and civilian sides have different approaches, stretching from limited military operations over greater military operations with the following permanent presence aimed only at containing areas, in order to stop terrorism from spreading. Of the two approaches, only the first makes it possible for the civilian side to support the efforts made to counter terrorism, as it makes it possible to create a secure environment to start the *Build*-phase. The latter approach makes it too difficult to support lasting development, as the terrorists will still have severe influence on the population in the supposedly contained areas. These non-comprehensive approaches have the power to dilute any overarching strategy, making it difficult to sustain successful results over time.

One of the interviewees emphasized that Pakistan's neglect of wholeheartedly supporting social, economic, and peaceful development of the FATA for years, in combination with the Pakistani involvement in the Afghan struggle against the Soviet Union's engagement in Afghanistan, is believed to be a main driver for Pakistan's own version of the Taliban's ascent to power.²⁷⁹ The consequences of 9/11 and the following removal of the Taliban government in Afghanistan have severely damaged the social, tribal, and governmental structures in FATA as the majority of the Afghan Taliban was flushed out of Afghanistan and into FATA, where they found potential safe havens among followers and their ethnic kin. These safe havens were made possible by the lack of Pakistani governmental control in the FATA, but also by the government turning a blind eye to what was going on, and, thus, with some direct and indirect Pakistani support.²⁸⁰ The TTP has taken advantage of these troubled conditions and has developed parallel administrative structures,

(279) Interview 9.

(280) Interview 7.

which can handle justice in accordance with their own interpretation of Islam – the Sharia Law system.²⁸¹ These are some of the major problems that Pakistan faces in the country’s struggle with terrorists; the TTP had parallel governmental structures in place in the rural areas and could challenge the outreach (or lack of the same) by the Pakistani Government.²⁸² It then becomes a battle of winning “hearts and minds” in the classical form of counterinsurgency warfare, which involves social challenges, culture, powerbases, and development in an attempt to deliver the most credible way of constructing a coherent society with security and justice in the provinces.

However, the Army tried to separate the local population from the terrorists and several of the interviewees point out that the operations, earlier in the Swat Valley, exemplify these efforts.²⁸³ But the separation of terrorists and the neutral parts of the local population is not just a physical task. It must also include the terrorists’ radical ideology so the core of the terrorists and their followers can be targeted and more moderate people can be rehabilitated back into the society. One interviewee pointed out the possible success of using local people to fight terrorists, but apparently this has only been successful in a few cases in Pakistan.²⁸⁴ The flipside of that approach is the possibility of creating yet a new, armed organization in the form of local militias that later could challenge the governmental outreach.

⚠ Lesson identified: Separating terrorists from the neutral majority of the population is not just about using hard power tools to physically force the separation. Also the radical ideology of the terrorists must be targeted and thus emerges the demand for an objective to win the narrative through communication and education of the local population.

⚠ Lessons identified: Fighting terrorists by arming the local population seems to be useable in certain cases but risks creating yet more militant actors that later have to be eliminated. On top of that, it becomes difficult to separate the terrorists from the local population when adding local militant actors.

(281) Interview 2.

(282) Interview 7.

(283) Interview 2.

(284) Interview 1.

Since 2008, the Pakistan Army has conducted several operations in the safe havens to prevent terrorists from using them.²⁸⁵ However, the terrorists' answer to these operations has been a series of attacks throughout Pakistan in order to deter the government from using the Army against the terrorists and to demoralize the public through damaging security in the country. Still, the military actions – taking the previous example of the Swat Valley - show that persistent pressure and a strong military presence can weaken the terrorists, and also prevents them from conducting attacks. The on-going Operation Zarb-e-Azb therefore started off with heavy aerial raids on terrorists' hideouts, followed by conventional moving in of Army in NW through which entire infrastructure of terrorists has been destroyed. However, this campaign has to be followed by civilian development if this is to become a permanent situation.²⁸⁶

⚠ Lesson identified: In areas where terrorists have their centre of gravity, fighting between the terrorists and the government tends to be about credibility, in order to convince the civil population that the government is the stronger and more capable actor in relation to providing security, stability, and development. In this regard, the battle of the narratives becomes important and must be followed by results on the ground, including respect for local social patterns and culture. However, without a coherent and comprehensive strategy - both military and civilian - this is difficult to achieve.

Interviews show that there is a discrepancy between the strategy levels in the Pakistani army's approach to terrorism or, more precisely, in how the political vision is transformed into operational objectives and later tactical goals. At the tactical level most of the tools applied are direct and hard power tools with little access to or knowledge of soft power tools. According to some of the interviewees, who have chosen to be anonymous, younger officers are annoyed over the lack of civilian support after the military has secured an area.²⁸⁷ Contrary to this perception, high-ranking officers focus more on what they believe is an experienced-based success: The integration of civilian and military efforts.²⁸⁸ It must be noticed, though, that some high-ranking officers

(285) Interview 9.

(286) Interview 5.

(287) Interview 2.

(288) Interview 9.

support the younger officers' perception.²⁸⁹ Although the interviewees in this book represent a fraction of the Pakistan Army's officers, there seems to be a pattern of an Army experienced-based, bottom-up approach to fighting terrorists and a political-based, top-down approach to handling terrorists. This is not uncommon in strategy making and actual combat with the enemy, but is something that must be considered at the operational level in order to facilitate political ends, ways, and means with tactical experiences, tools, and cultural awareness. We have not been able to see how, and to what extent, the operational level in Pakistan influences strategy-making, which suggests that this level, as was also the case for ISAF in Afghanistan, is almost absent.²⁹⁰

△ Lesson Identified: If the operational level in strategy making is absent, it becomes difficult to translate the political level's vision to tactical operations on the ground. It becomes especially difficult to embrace both tactical experiences and national policies in order to create a comprehensive approach with coordination and synchronization of different lines of operations toward an end state. The absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy by the Pakistani government has left the formulation of a plan for countering terrorists to the Pakistan Army, which has a historical bias for a hard tool approach.

However, most of the interviewees agree that the means that should be applied to counter terrorism are dialogue and development in combination with a military approach of clearing the area of terrorists. Some of the interviewees talked about the importance of rule of law as a tool in order to make CT operations legitimate in the eyes of the local population, as the terrorists exploit an environment of anarchy in the rural areas and will therefore benefit from setting up a parallel rule of law-system.²⁹¹ Others, however, point out financial resources (or rather the lack of resources and possibilities among the civil population), as the most important driver behind terrorism. In combination with greed and local power struggles, this has led to a situation where the terrorists use all means available to maintain and expand their powerbase, including religion, blackmail, and bribery.²⁹² As most countries, which are countering terrorist organizations experience, there are several reasons for

(289) Interview 4.

(290) See chapter about the Danish experiences with counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.

(291) Interview 1.

(292) Interview 4; Interview 8.

a terrorist organization to gain a physical or psychological powerbase, and the political struggle for power in the social and economic areas is a common denominator. However, there are other reasons including opposition to the government, greed, and struggle against poverty and all the reasons are often entangled in the struggle and there is thus a demand for applying different tools to counter the different reasons. However, the challenge is that the situation and the operational environment are dynamic and therefore vary over time and from area to area. This naturally makes it difficult to develop a counterterrorist strategy that is universally applicable. In the case of Pakistan, the different opinions of what needs to be done had apparently led to a stalemate where the military and the civilian sides were developing independent, uncoordinated strategies. By a trial-and-error approach, in which different sub-tactical approaches from the Army are carried out and the successful approaches endorsed, the situation has improved in certain areas, but a comprehensive and coordinated approach is still lacking.²⁹³

⚠ Lesson Identified: As the root causes of terrorism are different from area to area, and even change over time, a counterterrorist strategy must be able to change ways and means without changing the ends. This calls for a strategy that is flexible enough to let the tactical level adapt and overcome to different situations but at the same time follows identified priorities in an overarching strategy.

⚠ Lesson identified: The practitioners of a strategy at the tactical level must have the same perception of the key priorities in the overarching strategy, along with access to the appropriate means. The means include both hard and soft power tools, which must be coordinated at least at the operational level. It seems that the interviewed officers have ideas of what they perceive is needed to counter terrorists but have different approaches. This is not uncommon among practitioners and also seen among Danish officers regarding the COIN operations in Afghanistan, but if different tools are applied without firm coordination with other supporting means and, especially, the civilian side, this increases the risk of implementing counterproductive tools and sacrificing the end state in pursuit of short-term objectives.

(293) Interview 9.

Tools crowded out

As discussed earlier on, tools and means can be counterproductive when implemented in an area infested with terrorists if they are not coordinated and in compliance with the overarching strategy. Some tools may provide short-term successes, but at the same time these tools can compromise the long-term successes by destroying the possibility or making it difficult to provide credibility to the operations in the first place. The hard-power approach toward terrorists without addressing the root causes can prove to be initially successful as the terrorists are eradicated or removed. However, in the long-term perspective, the local population will still face the problems that gave birth to some of the conditions that caused terrorism to arise in the first place and, thus, the terrorists can re-emerge. The interviewed Pakistani officers acknowledge this problem, in general, but without direction from a comprehensive and coordinated overarching governmental strategy, embracing both long-term objectives and short-term goals, tools will continue to be implemented at the tactical level without necessarily being helpful to the end state.²⁹⁴ Some among the interviewees talked about this dilemma but seemed to be faced with a demand – or the perception of a demand – from the Army commanders to get things done at the tactical level despite the lack of sufficient coordination from the operational level. This results in a bias to focus on using the tools at hand to secure at least short-term successes. Often these tools will be hard power tools in the form of military actions aimed at removing terrorists from an area. However, if the hard power approach is not followed up by soft power tools from the civilian side, in the form of development, rule-of-law institutions, medical facilities, schools, and other government institutions securing order, stability that create an environment in which the local population is given opportunities for a better life, the military measures will eventually fail. Also, the officers seem biased toward removing terrorists instead of removing the root causes for the terrorist actions and thus prefer to use hard power tools at least at the tactical level.²⁹⁵

⚠ Lesson identified: Without civilian means and an overarching strategy to counter terrorism, there is a tendency for the hard power tools to crowd out the soft power tools. This is counterproductive as wholly military operations are best at short-term removal of terrorists, while civilian efforts can secure the removal of the root causes for terrorism and thus provide the long-term security.

(294) Interview 9; Interview 7.

(295) Interview 2.

Some officers are of the opinion that tools are not really crowded out but work differently over time, and from area to area.²⁹⁶ It is suggested that the real problem is coordination, which has to be improved. Also the absence of civilian tools is problematic. They are not crowded out. They are in reality not present initially at all. This lack of civilian soft power tools limits the possibilities for the government to be seen as a legitimate entity in the eyes of the terrorist-infected local population and risks further alienating the local population from Pakistani society – something the terrorists can exploit. One interviewee expressed it like this:

“...governmental outreach must be achieved. If the state is not there, something else will take its place.”²⁹⁷

The need for civilian tools when countering terrorists is widely accepted among the officers. They all have ideas of what things need to be delivered by the civilian side, especially after a military operation has been conducted. However, it is problematic that when the civilian side is absent, the military side uses the tools at hand: Hard power tools to uphold the immediate success for the Army’s eradication of terrorists from an area but without reaching a permanent solution and facing the need for continuing to have a substantial military force in cleared areas to hinder the influx of terrorists from other parts of the area.

⚠ Lesson identified: It seems to be agreed upon that some tools are more effective than others and that the efficiency of a tool can change over time. If so, lack of an overarching strategy will add to the risk of focusing on short-term successes in order to give an impression of progress.

⚠ Lesson identified: If the civilian side cannot deliver soft power tools in a cleared area, during and after a military operation, the military has to uphold a substantially sized force to maintain security and stability in the cleared area.

Only a few of the interviewees talked about a situation where the terrorists are disarmed and reintegrated into Pakistani society and not just removed

(296) Interview 7.

(297) Interview 1.

from an area, which is interesting.²⁹⁸ Normally, an overarching strategy will include an objective aimed at reintegrating disarmed and rehabilitated persons back into the society. But the Pakistani 3D-approach does not include such an element, unless this is an underlying and unpublished part of the "dialogue" approach. If it is so, this can probably explain why there is an observed bias toward the perception of the terrorist organizations as a foreign phenomenon. If terrorists are seen as persons not to be included in Pakistani society, because they are foreigners, and the root causes for the terrorists are seen as coming mostly from outside Pakistan, then it is outside the Pakistani governments' power to do something about them, and they can thus be neglected. Some officers talked about India's influence among the terrorists and others of terrorism coming from Afghanistan.²⁹⁹ Others talked about America's bad influence on the situation; the use of drones and U.S. pressure on Pakistan to address the problem of safe havens on Pakistani soil supporting the Afghan Taliban operations in Afghanistan. Accordingly, this has only sustained and expanded terrorist networks in Pakistan in opposition to the Pakistani government.³⁰⁰ In fact, one of the interviewees claimed that terrorist organizations did not exist in Pakistan prior to the 2007 siege of the Lal Masjid mosque and the Jamia Hafsa madrassa complex.³⁰¹ The siege in itself developed the TTP terrorist organization because the Pakistani government started to address the local mullahs' power bases.³⁰² Whether or not outside influence exists among the terrorist organizations in Pakistan, it is problematic if the most common understanding of a solution is either to remove the terrorists completely, without any reintegration, or to fight the perceived outside support without addressing disarmament, demobilisation, and perhaps even a reintegration program (DDR program) as part of the solution. A reason for the absence of the understanding of the importance of a DDR program could be due to lack of cultural understanding. This seems odd, though, as some of the interviewees stated that cultural awareness is not missing.³⁰³ As the counterterrorist operations are conducted within Pakistan, the fight against the TTP can, for obvious reasons, not be lacking cultural awareness as the TTP and Pakistani society for the most part share

(298) Interview 2.

(299) Interview 4; Interview 7; Interview 2.

(300) Interview 5; Interview 7.

(301) On 3 July 2007, there was a live fire exchanged between the Pakistan Army and some students barricaded inside of the Lal Masjid mosque in Islamabad. The exchange of fire reportedly killed over 20 people and wounded over 100 others.

(302) Interview 1.

(303) Interview 2.

the same cultural background. However, cultural awareness is not just a question about understanding how things work among the local population, but, more importantly, how this knowledge is used in connection with countering terrorists. If empathy and respect of local settings and traditions are not part of the approaches, then the local population will perceive any approach as outside interference, fuelling the terrorists' narrative. Nevertheless, there seems to be inconsistency between the interviewees about the root causes of the terrorist organizations and, thus, how to address the problem. These will almost unavoidably lead to some tools crowding out others, as they will target different issues with the risk of being uncoordinated or not leading to the same solution of an objective in the strategy.

⚠ Lesson identified: The use of cultural knowledge and how it is implemented into the strategy as an asset is key to addressing the root causes for terrorism and to conducting operations designed to counter terrorists – whether it be the removal of terrorists or their reintegration into society. This is important especially in a country such as Pakistan, with diversified cultural and social conditions, and the cultural knowledge must be implemented into both the counterterrorist strategy and, not least, in the education of the practitioners.

Counterproductive effects

The Pakistani counterterrorist operations and approaches are riddled with counterproductive effects. Most of these undesired effects arrive from the fact that Pakistan does not have a comprehensive strategy toward the terrorists. Holistically addressing this specific lack of political direction requires a closer look at Pakistan's history. No doubt, the rise of political jihad in Afghanistan, and the later exploitation of religion by General Zia-ul-Haq in the late 1980s to serve his political goals, gave critical support to the fast development and spreading of madrasas in Pakistan. Before the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan, only a few madrasas existed, but now their numbers are close to 17,000.³⁰⁴ Some of the madrasas play an important part in creating and supporting jihadist organizations and, thus, terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This is the case because they are not seen as educating the students but rather as indoctrinating youngsters without other educational possibilities into a rigid and intolerant mind-set.³⁰⁵

(304) Interview 7.

(305) Interview 7; Interview 2; Interview 8.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: The previous governmental acceptance of the role of the madrassa system in recruiting youngsters for the armed fight in Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention later proved to be counterproductive. This parallel education system has to be targeted in a counterterrorist strategy by creating a more comprehensive education system with future job possibilities. Further, the government must address the madrassas that preach hate and violence, either closing or subjecting them to supervision.

Lacking a comprehensive strategy against terrorism, Pakistan has followed an ad hoc approach. In this manner, taking advantage of military successes and initiating civilian developments projects have not followed up on a number of initially successful approaches. Thoughts of an "ink-spot strategy", where areas would benefit from the governmental outreach and serve as beacons for other areas has been left untouched because there was no overarching strategy for combining "ink-spots" and wider secure areas.³⁰⁶ The Army conducts operations and can reach the phases of *Shape*, *Clear*, and *Hold* from a counterinsurgency strategy-universe, but with the civilian side absent in the *Build* phase, the military's hard power approach will only alienate the local population, at the risk of creating more terrorists.³⁰⁷

- ⚠ Lesson identified: The ad hoc approach toward terrorism mirrors a systemic failure in Pakistan, where the government does not live up to its responsibilities. The Army has played its part in counterterrorism efforts to secure initial stability and peace, but the civilian efforts have to play the greatest part. Furthermore, the politicians have the responsibility to provide and endorse a Whole-of-Government Strategy with a clear and understandable end state. But that is only half of the political establishment's responsibility. At the same time, the political establishment must make sure to provide control measures to assure that the governmental institutions at the operative strategic level (i.e. the ministries) are transforming the end state into achievable objectives that are endorsed, resourced, and coordinated before being given to the tactical level.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In order to maintain credibility, the military and civilian efforts have to work in accordance with an overarching strategy without changing the end state but instead adjusting the means for development and successes on the ground.

(306) Interview 1.

(307) Interview 4.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the obvious, inherent pitfalls in relation to any type of effort to understand the same phenomenon from two apparently completely different perspectives, this study merely highlights once again the ages-old reality that humanity and common human experiences transcend beyond civilizations and cultures. It validates the original idea behind writing this book, namely, that experiences between diverse nations need to be shared to bring together alternative views in the quest for developing a shared understanding for addressing security challenges in a comprehensive manner, in order to promote sustainable peace building. Consequently, even more than the authors initially anticipated, a lot of commonalities in thoughts and actions were found between Pakistan and Denmark at all levels. As the result emphasises specific areas to develop COIN, CT, and CM strategies based on experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it only points at the window of opportunity available for both countries to share further experiences, which could enhance general peace building efforts in the region.

Understanding the lessons identified

All through the course of writing of this book, one lesson identified stands out in both the Danish and Pakistani experiences in dealing with respective conflict situations, as readers might be able to gather from the earlier chapters. It kept reappearing as we looked both at the strategic and the tactical levels and therefore turned out to be one of the most important lessons identified in the book: The great need to have an overarching and comprehensive strategy combining civilian and military approaches with a clear understanding of a strategy's ability to embrace ends, ways, and means before any country embarks on a journey to deal with security challenges. This implies that the level of ambition has to be in accordance with ways and means, as a very ambitious end only will be achievable if the same ambition is applied to ways and means. The strategy must contain a desired end state as well as the identified objectives to reach that end state. Further, it must be resourced in accordance with the ambition of the end state and endorsed by all concerned parties in order to facilitate the on-ground implementation of the objectives. If there is a lack of these elements, or a disproportionate balance between ambition and committed resources, the strategy will at best have a protracting and costly effect on the mission, in general, and at worst render the COIN and CT objectives unrecognizable to the civilian population, or even to the tactical and operational levels trying to attain them. As described in this book, this will prevent sustainable progress in implementing the strategy.

In the absence of an overarching strategy, there seems to be a bias toward using hard-power tools, which apparently crowds out soft-power tools. The result is a stalemate in COIN and CT strategies not able to fully succeed in reaching the desired objectives and thereby the long-term effects to secure peace, stability, and development. An unwanted side-effect of the almost endless and unsuccessful operations with only minor effects is the need to uphold a large military presence just to create and maintain a rudimentary security situation. Yet another side-effect is the risk of implementing and using tools that are counterproductive and which could thus result in unwanted long-term effects. Also, it must be pointed out that a generally observed bias for hard-power tools is not in accordance with the population-centric COIN perspectives. The problem of such approaches is that these involve the risk of increasing tangible support for the insurgents, or terrorists, concerning the means and lines of effort that are used by countries for dealing with security situations. However, the lesson identified concerning the need for an overarching and comprehensive strategy is primarily applicable to situations where the COIN and the CT forces have an area of responsibility. Still, it is a lesson identified to which strategy makers have to pay particular attention to create a strategy with balanced ends, ways, and means in order for the operational level to develop a series of resourced and obtainable objectives, which at the tactical level can be translated into specific operations aimed at reaching the desired end state as quickly and as easily as possible.

Another lesson identified is that the window of opportunity must be kept open through dialogue and negotiations with both the counterpart and the local population. Peace and stability can be brought through broad-based engagement of different segments of society and promoting reconciliation amongst different ethnic groups, the insurgency or terrorist organization, and the government. Some of the conducted operations may not have been needed at all, and in many cases mere astute political skills, coupled with deep understanding of tribal customs, would have had the ability to resolve issues. The desire to show quick results to local and international communities may be counter-productive in both the long and short run.

At the same time, to fill the power vacuum created after completion of military operations and the ouster of insurgents and terrorists, there is an urgent need for establishing political institutions in the affected areas. The initiation of political activities will create a sense of ownership among the local population and expedite their return to normalcy by bringing them back into - or introducing them to - the mainstream political system and

give them a chance to represent themselves in political forums. Also, any envisaged reforms should be backed by a complementary economic package for development purposes. Such a package should include socio-economic, development-related plans and funds, allocated to especially the education and health sector, in order to increase the support among a majority of the civilian population.

A shared lesson identified in dealing with the conflict situation was that many wrongdoings could have been avoided in earlier stages. Most insurgencies, whether or not induced or tangibly supported by foreign actors, almost invariably arise out of grievances. Destroying centuries-old, established, local traditional structures without being able to bring about an effective alternative does not create security. Inconsistent government policies, neglect of local grievances, at times coupled with lack of national political will and the absence of a uniform decision on how to deal with the insurgents or the terrorists makes matters worse. However, no matter what the resource capacity of the state undertaking COIN or CT operations, it will always be a costly affair.

In both Denmark and Pakistan, we discovered that the operational level, the level that translates the political visions and strategies into achievable objectives and provides resources to them, is almost absent, leaving the tactical level with the responsibility of identifying operations that could sustain the implementation of the political end state. Furthermore, the ambiguities in perceptions of the opponent and classifying him as an insurgent or a terrorist made it difficult to create solutions on how to deal with him. The lack of clarity coupled with frequent changes in perceptions may have been a factor that prevented states from creating sound narratives about who the enemy was and why he was an enemy. The lack of clarity and the lack of achievable objectives tend to lead to a pseudo-strategy where the political end state is given directly to the tactical level, which results in politicians trying directly to control operations on the ground. This perhaps serves as a political narrative about the politician's firmness and prudence, but it is very difficult - if not impossible - to handle and implement at the tactical level.

There are also implications in the other direction, as the situation on the ground is not filtered at the operational level in accordance with the achievable objectives but given directly to the politicians and thus flavours their take on progress and whether or not operations are contributing to the strategic

end state, and whether the pace of implementation is fast enough. This will force the strategic level to make constant changes in the strategy in order to at least secure short-term successes, and it thus risks rendering the strategy irrelevant and, perhaps, even useless at the tactical level.

Thus, the lesson identified suggests that the operational level needs to be revitalised and given the task of creating objectives that are achievable, even if this comes at the expense of political ambitions. This could lead to a more coherent understanding of the strategy across various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations and, in addition, the possibility of remaining relevant and viable in the eyes of the civilian population. The chances of success - as well as trust in and understanding of the strategy among the COIN and CT forces - will increase as operations are all working in the same direction: toward the desired political end state.

At the ground level, cultural awareness is most important and should be a part of the strategy in order to convince the local population as to whom they should support, often described as winning 'hearts and minds.' There are different opinions of how much cultural awareness is needed, which naturally is connected to where operations are conducted. The Pakistan Army is conducting operations on Pakistani soil, among their own population, and therefore possesses knowledge of cultural habits and ways of life. Still, understanding the specific local setting and dynamics is an area of improvement for the Pakistani army. In Afghanistan, Danish battle groups had some cultural awareness education before deploying, and they cooperated with the Afghan Security Forces to circumvent any cultural shortcomings. Arguably, it was not enough to prevent counterproductive interaction with the local population.

However, the lesson identified in this field is not so much about cultural awareness as it is about how this awareness is utilized. Apparently, there is a need to educate the ground level in how to deal with the local population in the setting of their daily lives in order to handle problems that, if left unaddressed, could evolve into unrest and lend support to the insurgents' or the terrorists' narrative. This is not just about holding meetings with representatives of the local population but also about how the tactical level conducts operations, in general, and whether these succeed in convincing the local population of the need for the operations to take place in the first place.

The primary objective should therefore be winning the narrative in competition with the insurgents or the terrorists. One way of doing that would be to be able to explain why the COIN, CT, or CM operations are needed, i.e., explaining what is needed both from the government and the local population; how this is best achieved; and what are the benefits to the government and, especially, the local population. This emphasises the need for a specific *local* cultural awareness, which differs from area to area and village to village, and demands local information and the processing of this information into intelligence. Otherwise, there is a risk that the policy level starts looking for one-dimensional solutions to fit multi-dimensional problems, which at best is counterproductive and at worst devastating for a COIN or CT strategy.



Artillery guns firing on terrorist hideout in North Waziristan Agency. Archive: ISPR.



Weapons seized from militants are being displayed to media. Archive: ISPR.



Pakistani sports celebrities visiting IDP camp. Archive: ISPR.



Pakistani troops during a clearance operation in North Waziristan Agency. Archive: ISPR.



Reconstruction after the operation. Archive: ISPR.



Search and clearance operations with the help of electronic devices. Archive: ISPR.



COAS and tribal heads inaugurating a power project in FATA. Archive: ISPR.



Pakistani troop assisting and guiding IDP's. Archive: ISPR.



Troops raiding a suspected terrorist hideout. Archive: ISPR.



Artillery in action at night. Archive: ISPR.



IED search and clearance operation. Archive: ISPR.



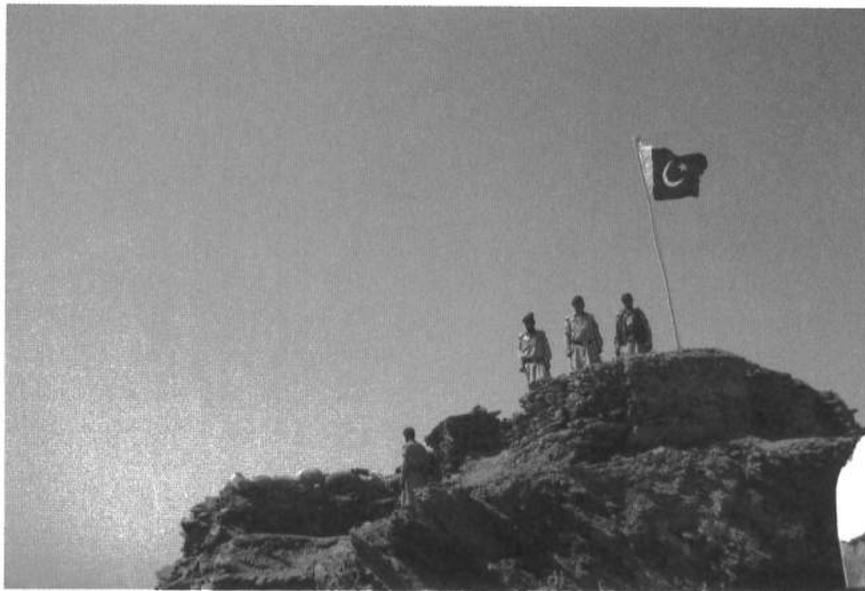
Search and clearance. Archive: ISPR.



Afghan Army sanger (turret) in Green Zone north of Gereshk 2010.



Engaging enemy in the dark. Archive: ISPR.



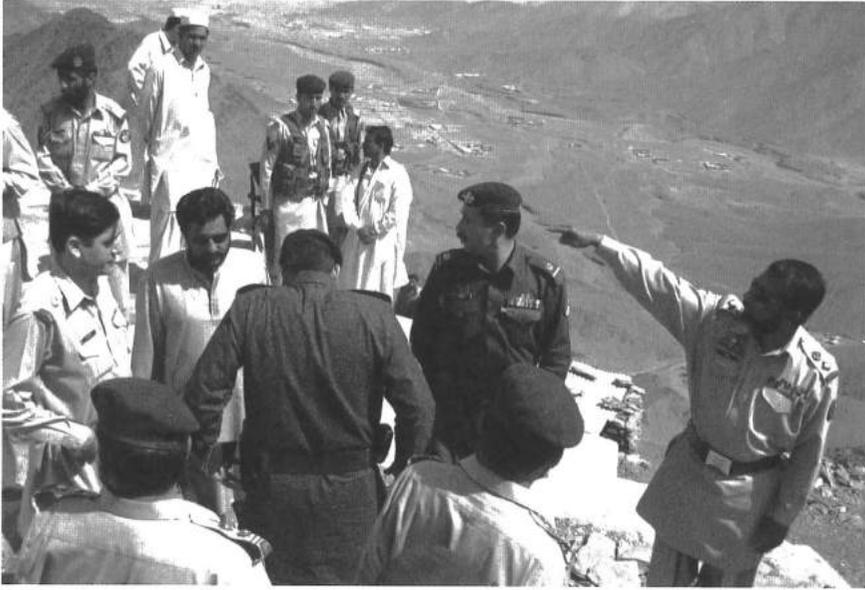
Frontier Corps troops along Afghan Border in Khyber Agency. Archive: ISPR.



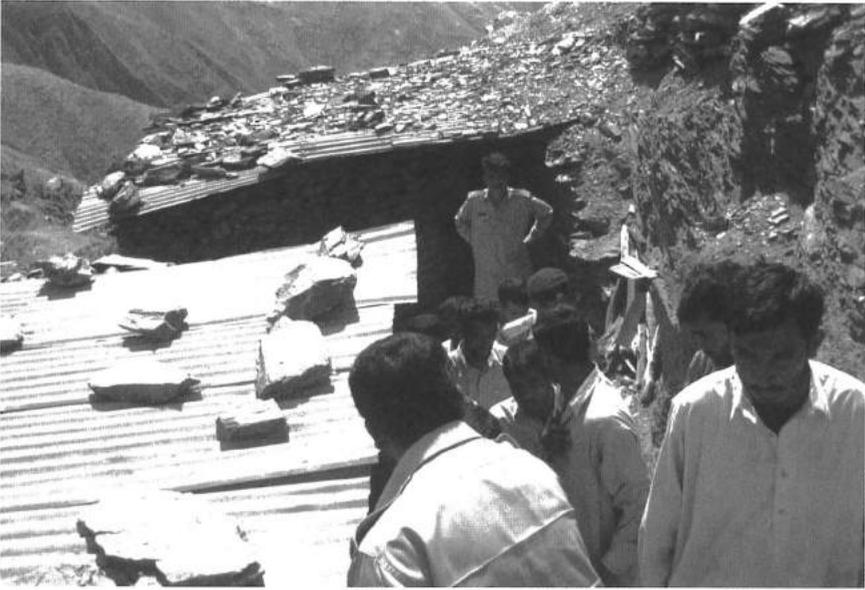
Construction of a Post in Shilman Valley, Khyber Agency. Archive: ISPR.



Civilians of Shilman Valley and Frontier Corps troops after setting up a post. Archive: ISPR.



Planning a joint effort against miscreants in Khyber Agency. Archive: ISPR.



Frontier Corps troops guarding the frontier against miscreants. Archive: ISPR.



Mechanics workshop in Lashkar Gah 2009.



British patrol in downtown Lashkar Gah 2009.



Danish patrol in Gereshk 2009.



Local girl near Sanford Patrol Base in Upper Gereshk Valley 2009.



Helmand governor Gulab Mangal during Election Backbrief 2009.



Typical local village with compounds and fields with crop near Lashkar Gah 2010.



Guard at near defence of Lashkar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team 2010.



Helmand governor Gulab Mangal and commanding officer, British military headquarters, brigadier James Cowan during backbrief of operations south of Gereshk 2010.



Local shops at market in Lashkar Gah 2009.



Danish patrol near Camp Bastion 2009.



Afghan police checkpoint outside Gereshk 2009.



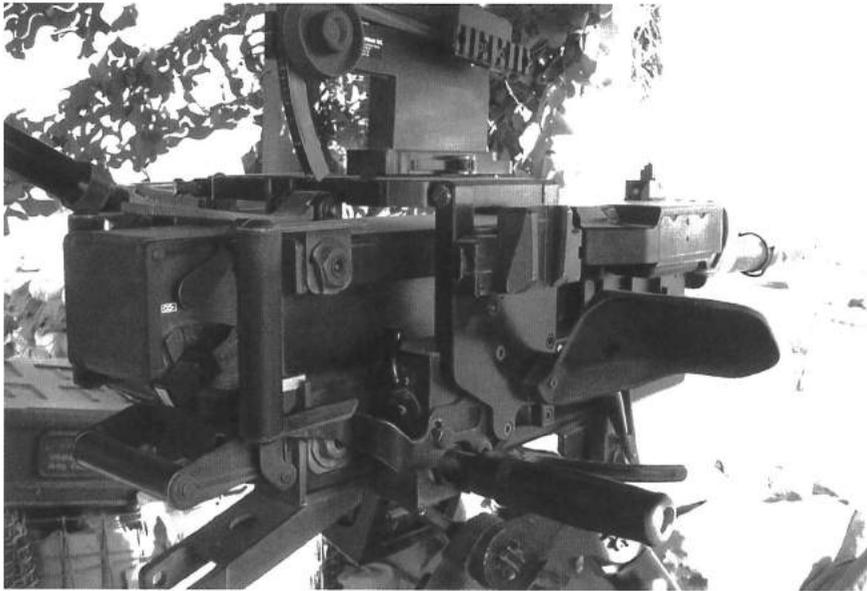
Danish patrol in Gereshk passing an Afghan police checkpoint 2010.



Danish combat patrol on guard outside Gereshk 2009.



Afghan Army patrol base in Upper Gereshk Valley 2009.



British machinegun at patrol base in Upper Gereshk Valley 2010.



Danish soldiers from ISAF 6 conducting CIMIC work with local Afghans in Helmand 2008. Archive: Danish Defence.



British Chinook at Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team base in Lashkar Gah 2009.



Afghan police sanger (turret) at prison in Lashkar Gah 2009.

Appendix 1 - Complete list of lessons identified

COIN operations in Afghanistan

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Provision of security and stability in the area of conflict is a necessary precondition for starting development-related efforts.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: In a conflict situation, it is very important that governments keep the political options and doors to negotiations open, which may allow them to avoid employing force-heavy responses.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The difficulties between countries and organizations with labelling the opponent in Afghanistan influenced the means in the various strategies among the actors involved. This has not made coordination between the countries involved easier and possibly may have influenced the effectiveness of the tools implemented. There is a need to develop a more commonly shared understanding of what the opponent is and how the overarching strategy should address him.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Classifying the opponent as an insurgent widens a government's range of possible approaches but at the same time adds legitimacy to the opponent.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is problematic if there is a common belief among strategy makers and strategy practitioners that the opponent is unintelligent. This creates a risk of flavouring the operations against him: thus impeding the possibility of reaching a desired objective and augmenting the likelihood of being drawn into an endless asymmetrical battle against an opponent that does not react as anticipated.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the host nation government enjoy legitimacy among a majority of the civil population and that its outreach in the local areas do more to secure a certain level of legitimacy in the eyes of the civil population.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the COIN forces not be perceived as a party to local internal conflicts and maintain an image of neutrality in the eyes of the population.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: As one battle group stands on the shoulders of the previous battle group, a rudimentary national political strategy must be issued before deployment of military and civilian resources. As quickly as possible, this rudimentary strategy must be developed into a long-term strategy coordinated with coalition partners, taking the situation on the ground into consideration. Even the local and national government's political ambitions and thus objectives must be included in an overarching strategy, still leaving some room for the COIN forces to make tactical adaptations, in order for them to implement the strategy and carry it out in an ever-changing environment. From 2001 to 2008, Denmark had no overarching political Afghanistan Strategy, which led the military to create its own goals in support of the British Task Force's tactical plans. As the British plans shifted over time from an enemy-centric to a population-centric approach, so did the Danish military goals, which was counterproductive to a consistent Danish strategy. To some extent, the Danish battle groups then neglected the Danish Helmand Plan and Afghanistan Strategy, as these were seen as irrelevant to the situation on the ground and products of a remote desktop in Copenhagen, made to suit Danish political purposes rather than progress on the ground in Afghanistan.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In order to develop a consistent strategy that can lead to the desired end state, a comprehensive, relevant strategy must be developed. This strategy must be able to withstand the test of time while still being flexible enough to adapt to changes on the ground. Most importantly, the political objectives must be firm and last for the entirety of the mission, in order to facilitate the operational and tactical levels that have to transform the objectives into achievable goals and tactical operations. The strategy must be coordinated with strategic partners and comply with the overarching strategy for the international mission, as well as that of the government in the country. This strategy must be broken down into achievable objectives at the operative level (various agencies and ministries) and, thus, prioritized and resourced before forces

on the ground can create supporting tactical goals, which can be attained by applying tools from counterinsurgency warfare.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: The Defence Command must, in cooperation with the Army Command, issue a Directive of Operations closely connected to the Danish strategy in order to create a continuous pattern of operations. This will improve the momentum of the Danish strategy and pre-empt issues of counterproductive operations from battle group to battle group – and more importantly, strengthen the credibility of the Danish operations in the eyes of the local population, thus making it possible to win hearts and minds in the long run.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Cultural awareness is a key element when relating to a local population and in environments necessitating a population-centric strategy. It is necessary to streamline the education in cultural awareness from top to bottom – and from team to team, in a dynamic way taking the development in the situation on the ground into consideration in connection with the overarching objectives. A way could be to amplify the connection between intelligence and education in cultural awareness in order to understand the local population, its situation, and how things are done in the area, including understanding the power structures. However, this is a Sisyphean task as power structures change over time, so the cultural awareness education must be centralized and conducted in a learning environment in order to stay relevant. It is probably necessary for such a centralized education unit to have a small element attached to each battle group to enable feedback of how things change on the ground and what is necessary to be taught back home.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Two situations on the battleground are never identical; thus, the appropriate counterinsurgency tools will change from operation to operation, as well as over time. The tools utilized must be in line with the local population's needs, which will change along with a change in the environment. If the wrong tools are applied, they will at best be wasted and at worst be counterproductive to the strategic end state objectives. A change in tools must rely on or at least include the local population's perception of the security level in order to obtain the desired effect.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: There seem to be different opinions, between the battle groups and the Army Command, concerning which tools work and which do not. Some of the discrepancy can stem from the fact that the battle groups wrote their own Directive of Operations and that that directive was approved without comments from the Army's Lessons Learned Element. This was the case because the element either deemed it unimportant in operational matters or because the decision process in the Army Command takes place in a closed environment due to security. It could also be because the Army Command is focused on lessons learned at the operative level, whereas the Lessons Learned Element focuses on the sub-tactical level – or best practice lessons – in cooperation with the Army's different branches. In order to integrate lessons learned into the battle groups operations, the Army Command could emphasise the importance of lessons learned by setting up a structure where lessons learned at the operational level are harvested, qualified, and implemented in a centrally developed, maintained, and issued Directive of Operations.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Even if a COIN approach includes negotiations with the insurgents, it is not necessarily possible to follow-up on that approach from the start. First, the insurgents must have the impression that a military victory is not achievable. This could emphasise the need for the overarching strategy to be enemy-centric from the start and gradually turn population-centric, depending on the insurgent's willingness to negotiate.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The civilian side in COIN operations must be strong enough to support the civilian authorities and the local population after the military side has provided security. If this does not happen, the military side will crowd out the civilian side. The military operations should rather be scaled down in cooperation with what is possible on the civilian side: rather do a lot in a small area than only some in a large area. Also, the tendency to think in parallel tracks between the military side and the civilian side must be countered by including the civilian side in the military decision-making process, thereby overcoming the different chains of command where the military side only reports and is directed by the Army Command, while the civilian side only reports and is directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: There is no consistency in whether tools are crowded out or not, but it seems to be agreed that some tools are more effective than others, but that this effectiveness can change over time. That calls for an overarching strategy flexible enough in order to apply different tools at different times but at the same time provide a focus on the long-term effects of tools utilized. The flip-side of this flexibility is the risk of focusing on short-term successes to give an impression of progress.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Even the best COIN operations cannot solve problems that come from outside the area of operations if the strategy does not include a political track including all regional actors. COIN operations are best conducted successfully if they can be limited to a geographical area that is isolated from the outside world. As this is virtually impossible to achieve, an overarching strategy must address this dilemma in order to create coherence between the strategic and operational level, thereby supporting the COIN operations at the tactical level.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Although corruption should in principle not be tolerated, support must be given in an environment of cultural awareness so as not to undermine governmental authority. At the tactical level, corruption could be minimized by supporting the most progressive – or perhaps the best available and least corrupt – leader and let that serve as a kind of ink-spot approach. At the strategic level corruption could be minimized by following the money from the top level all the way down in order to assure that money is actually spent in a project relevant to the strategy. However, a balance is needed, as too strict an approach could result in further bureaucratic resources like funding, manpower, and political interest being withdrawn from the projects. This implies that there is a need for developing new cost-efficient tools of monitoring projects. Another counterproductive effect is a strategy's benchmarking system for measuring successes. It can pollute the strategy because one tends to get more of what is measured. There are examples of benchmarks influencing the strategy, as everybody focuses on doing things that create short-term success. But, according to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the countries behind ISAF have become better at handling this undesired effect

by coordinating efforts across organizations and countries and focusing less on benchmarks.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In order to maintain credibility in the eyes of the local population the battle group have to operate in accordance with the overarching strategy without changing priorities and focus, in order to serve short-term objectives. That calls for a centrally written Directive of Operations, as well as a structured hand-over process from one battle group to the next, supervised by the Army Command to ensure that lessons learned be implemented. If the strategy changes over time, the battle groups must invest time and effort in explaining to the local population why a change is necessary and how it will influence the local population. It is important for the battle groups not to promise more than what can be delivered.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Units operating outside of the chain of command (Special Forces) must be included in that chain, or at the least a minimum of coordination with ground holding units must take place. Ground holding units must be given the possibility to intervene in a kill/capture mission, especially if the mission targets mid-level leaders who are deemed necessary for the stability and development in the specific area.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The perception of how to label the opponent differs among those interviewed. While this is no surprise, among different

CT and CM operations in Pakistan

- ⚠ Lesson identified: The perception of how to label the opponent differs among those interviewed. While this is no surprise, among different countries it can cause problems at the tactical level if strategy makers cannot agree upon how to label the opponent, and thus what tools should be employed to counter the opponent. An unclear definition of the enemy increases the risk of leading to an unwanted narrative and the formulation of an end state that is not achievable.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Labelling an opponent as an insurgent might lead to expectations among the local population that the opponent be negotiated with, as the opponent possesses some kind of legitimacy. It is usually equally politically suicidal for the government and policymakers to classify the opponent as an insurgent, as opposed to a terrorist. If the opponent is classified as a terrorist, it implies an enemy-centric strategy and a corresponding official narrative, which the government of the day will feel less hesitant to apply and implement.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: There seem to be three types of anti-state elements. First, there are grievances and deprivation-led, low-intensity, insurgency-like situations leading to tactics of ethnic cleansing. Second, there are ethnically divided militant wings of different political parties. Third, there is the Taliban, which have a more cohesive approach to overthrowing the governmental institutions in FATA.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: A problem related to internal conflict cannot be addressed adequately without knowing the history of the country and people. Also, it is important to gain knowledge on cultural and political structures in local areas and regions of the same country. Anyone denied basic necessities, or anyone deprived of basic human rights, can become a terrorist or an insurgent.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Displays of extremism can be bi-directional. It is wrong to assume that only ordinary members of society can resort to extremism; states may also equally be perceived by the people to be indulging in extremism.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important that the COIN forces should not try to impose their own cultural ideals and preferences on the population they are trying to help and whose hearts & minds they are trying to win.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is important for the government forces to understand that there can be no single "silver bullet" solution uniformly applicable to all cases/conflict situations of similar nature, nor will all laws be interpreted and implemented in all areas in a similar way and to the same extent.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In the battle for winning the hearts and minds of the local population, it is imperative that the government forces avoid civilian casualties and "collateral damage". Otherwise, it will risk being seen as worse than the insurgents, who are already more likely to build a narrative around the grievances of the local people.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The use of multiple terms and jargons to describe conflict situations only results in linguistic mayhem to the detriment of the efforts to counter the challenges to the state. The state narrative should be clear and unified for all.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Pakistan has had insurgency experiences in the past, but because of the difficulties in labelling the opponent in FATA and NW, there seems to be only minor interests in studying COIN, and there is thus a bias toward using the instruments of hard power, in accordance with a classical Army understanding of an enemy.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Constant neglect of grievances of a population, along with lack of governmental outreach to an area, will render its environment conducive enough to becoming a breeding ground for anti-state activities, even if the population does not support the terrorist/insurgent's agenda.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It is absolutely necessary that civilian manpower and capacity be readily available to take control of governance-related infrastructure once the armed forces have "cleared" and "held" an area. If otherwise, the area will be at risk of falling back into the hands of the anti-state elements and losing the local population's trust in the state apparatuses. After all, the "build" phase is not the responsibility of the armed forces.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Religion is an important tool for furthering anti-state agendas in modern-day conflicts and can be used to recruit/brainwash potential members for a terrorist/insurgent outfit.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: With an illiterate population, religion can be used as a tool for recruiting potential anti-state elements by giving them a sense of purpose for life, raising their prestige and self-respect amongst fellow members of their society.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Strong state institutions, especially security institutions, are necessary to give the state an upper hand over internal conflict-related situations.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: At the same time, strong state institutions tend to push insurgents/terrorists towards peripheral areas of the country, i.e. into the rural areas, and there needs to be a strategy for approaching this challenge in these areas.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: Conflicts, internal fighting, and other anti-governmental activities are difficult to isolate, as there can often be outside support for the opponents of the government. Although this is difficult, or even impossible in practice to circumvent, a country fighting an insurgency and terrorists must have that in mind when devising a strategy.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The presence of the Army in an area ridden with conflict facilitates intelligence gathering at the micro level, and strengthens the state's profile in the eyes of the local population. This will initiate a positive development as the local population will deliver intelligence and cooperate more. The stronger they perceive the state to be, the stronger will be the state's position to provide them security in the future.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: For a strategy to deal successfully with internal conflict, multiple prongs should go side by side, also recognizing that there will always be a need for initiating quick-impact development projects in the stability phase, so that the population feels secure and sees the government making a genuine effort to help them in the post-conflict scenario.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: A precondition for handling terrorism or unwanted militarism in Pakistan must include a clear definition of what the approach is aiming at. Are the CT operations aimed at eradicating the terrorists or reintegrating them into civilian society? The two different approaches make use of completely different tools, which must be endorsed and resourced in an overarching strategy.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In Pakistan – especially in NW, there are at least two strategies against militancy and terrorism in place: One on the civilian side that emphasizes talks with the objective of reaching a peace settlement; the second one is an approach that uses the Afghan Taliban as a promoter of Pakistani political influence in Afghanistan. These two strategies have not been coordinated per se, as their ends, ways, and means differ.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Although there seems to be talk of a comprehensive approach toward terrorism and militancy, the data shows that the military and civilian sides have different approaches, stretching from limited military operations over greater military operations with the following permanent presence aimed only at containing areas, in order to stop terrorism from spreading. Of the two approaches, only the first makes it possible for the civilian side to support the efforts made to counter terrorism, as it makes it possible to create a secure environment to start the *Build*-phase. The latter approach makes it too difficult to support lasting development, as the terrorists will still have severe influence on the population in the supposedly contained areas. These non-comprehensive approaches have the power to dilute any overarching strategy, making it difficult to sustain successful results over time.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Separating terrorists from the neutral majority of the population is not just about using hard power tools to physically force the separation. Also the radical ideology of the terrorists must be targeted and thus emerges the demand for an objective to win the narrative through communication and education of the local population.

- ⚠ Lessons identified: Fighting terrorists by arming the local population seems to be useable in certain cases but risks creating yet more militant actors that later have to be eliminated. On top of that, it becomes difficult to separate the terrorists from the local population when adding local militant actors.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In areas where terrorists have their centre of gravity, fighting between the terrorists and the government tends to be about credibility, in order to convince the civil population that the government is the stronger and more capable actor in

relation to providing security, stability, and development. In this regard, the battle of the narratives becomes important and must be followed by results on the ground, including respect for local social patterns and culture. However, without a coherent and comprehensive strategy - both military and civilian - this is difficult to achieve.

- ⚠ Lesson Identified: If the operational level in strategy making is absent, it becomes difficult to translate the political level's vision to tactical operations on the ground. It becomes especially difficult to embrace both tactical experiences and national policies in order to create a comprehensive approach with coordination and synchronization of different lines of operations toward an end state. The absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy by the Pakistani government has left the formulation of a plan for countering terrorists to the Pakistan Army, which has a historical bias for a hard tool approach.
- ⚠ Lesson Identified: As the root causes of terrorism are different from area to area, and even change over time, a counterterrorist strategy must be able to change ways and means without changing the ends. This calls for a strategy that is flexible enough to let the tactical level adapt and overcome to different situations but at the same time follows identified priorities in an overarching strategy.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The practitioners of a strategy at the tactical level must have the same perception of the key priorities in the overarching strategy, along with access to the appropriate means. The means include both hard and soft power tools, which must be coordinated at least at the operational level. It seems that the interviewed officers have ideas of what they perceive is needed to counter terrorists but have different approaches. This is not uncommon among practitioners and also seen among Danish officers regarding the COIN operations in Afghanistan, but if different tools are applied without firm coordination with other supporting means and, especially, the civilian side, this increases the risk of implementing counterproductive tools and sacrificing the end state in pursuit of short-term objectives.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: Without civilian means and an overarching strategy to counter terrorism, there is a tendency for the hard power tools to crowd out the soft power tools. This is counterproductive as wholly military operations are best at short-term removal of terrorists, while civilian efforts can secure the removal of the root causes for terrorism and thus provide the long-term security.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: It seems to be agreed upon that some tools are more effective than others and that the efficiency of a tool can change over time. If so, lack of an overarching strategy will add to the risk of focusing on short-term successes in order to give an impression of progress.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: If the civilian side cannot deliver soft power tools in a cleared area, during and after a military operation, the military has to uphold a substantially sized force to maintain security and stability in the cleared area.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The use of cultural knowledge and how it is implemented into the strategy as an asset is key to addressing the root causes for terrorism and to conducting operations designed to counter terrorists – whether it be the removal of terrorists or their reintegration into society. This is important especially in a country such as Pakistan, with diversified cultural and social conditions, and the cultural knowledge must be implemented into both the counterterrorist strategy and, not least, in the education of the practitioners.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The previous governmental acceptance of the role of the madrassa system in recruiting youngsters for the armed fight in Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention later proved to be counterproductive. This parallel education system has to be targeted in a counterterrorist strategy by creating a more comprehensive education system with future job possibilities. Further, the government must address the madrassas that preach hate and violence, either closing or subjecting them to supervision.
- ⚠ Lesson identified: The ad hoc approach toward terrorism mirrors a systemic failure in Pakistan, where the government does not live up to its responsibilities. The Army has played its part in counter-

terrorism efforts to secure initial stability and peace, but the civilian efforts have to play the greatest part. Furthermore, the politicians have the responsibility to provide and endorse a Whole-of-Government Strategy with a clear and understandable end state. But that is only half of the political establishment's responsibility. At the same time, the political establishment must make sure to provide control measures to assure that the governmental institutions at the operative strategic level (i.e. the ministries) are transforming the end state into achievable objectives that are endorsed, resourced, and coordinated before being given to the tactical level.

- ⚠ Lesson identified: In order to maintain credibility, the military and civilian efforts have to work in accordance with an overarching strategy without changing the end state but instead adjusting the means for development and successes on the ground.

Appendix 2 – Questions for the respondents

Q1: How do you classify Insurgents and Terrorists?

Q2: What is the motivation for insurgents/terrorists?

Q3: What tools do you see as appropriate to handle insurgency/terrorists?

Q4: Are some tools crowded out?

Q5: If so, why?

Q6: Is civil and military tools sometimes counterproductive?

Appendix 3 – Transcriptions of interviews from Pakistan

The following transcriptions have been written in good faith and as close to the spoken words as possible. Some words and phrases have been changed in order to increase readability. In a few instances the quality of the audio file created limitations for transcription, and in such cases sentences have been removed or marked in the text with “...” Any errors or misinterpretation that might have occurred during the transcription process are the responsibility of the authors and not the respondents.

Interview 4: Ahmed Nadeem

Pakistan, March 21st 2014

Interviewer: “How do you classify your opponent, whether he is an insurgent or a terrorist?”

Ahmed Nadeem (AN): “You know....look in depth at a very bookish kind of approach, whether you call him a terrorist or traitor. The substance of it is that these guys, whatever their motivation is, have challenged the writ of the state. So you know this is a very long debate, which you have must have heard of when you are talking of Kashmir; somebody’s freedom fighter is somebody’s terrorist, so that is not really too substantive. The point to be understood is that these guys are a bunch of hoodlums who decided to challenge the writ of the state and to establish their control in certain given areas, which principally should be under the government. How you would define it; it is up to you. It really doesn’t matter what you want to call them terrorist, insurgents. But when you go into FATA, they’ll probably call them freedom fighters. So it doesn’t matter who is he? And how do you classify him? Or how do you want to define it. You need to understand when you talk about insurgency, it has a political agent and in the case of sheer terrorism, it serves to unnerve the government, maybe on the behest of a foreign hostile country. We must understand that: who is the foreign enemy of the state?”

Interviewer: “In this case he is an enemy of the state when you discuss the driving/motivating factors behind the action they are doing. We discuss opportunities behind the relationship & ideologies, social and economic deprivation, and the criminal element as a pure power. If this is a combination, does it depend on who is an opponent or on the level on which the opponents are? Is it pure power or is it simply related to the criminality?”

AN: "I think it is a mix of everything. There can be dissatisfaction among the general population. There are number of reason. Maybe economic deprivation, poverty, injustice, there can be a hundred and one reasons. The issue is that these people who are discontented from the state can be exploited by the hostile intelligence agents (HIA). To a great extent there may be a population which is disenchanted in Islamabad, but they don't have that kind of weapons. So, for such kind of an activity to be sustainable you need continuous support. Terrorism has been going on in Pakistan for a long time. Insurgency all over the world has some outside support. Without that they cannot survive as they have not enough money to buy weapons, to get training and feed the family. The moment the outside support dies, they die their own death. All these deprivations are exploited by the hostile intelligence agencies. It's given like a political agenda, political mission, that's why they are most acceptable in the international community. E.g., look at Syria, the other army supported by the XYZ country, but they are acting against the state. We need to look at the motivation, some of the deprivation, their exploitation by the HIA and the state failure to address the deprivation. E.g., to get a separate state in FATA with the xyz support, that is not motivation. Motivation is to have the area where they have freedom of speech. General public in these areas are afraid, they are not providing them willing support on moral and ethical grounds. Just like before the Swat operation, anyone who did not support the bad guy they killed, lashed. The general population was made to provide them with intelligence and food. So, going back, what is the motivation, there are so many factors which are combined together."

Interviewer: "You talked about external influence. Are these state actors or non-state actors? Or hostile intelligence services?"

AN: "When the countries, e.g., the hostile countries, get involved in an act like this, they use multiple channels to achieve their goals. It could be non-state actors or through own intelligence agencies or even through direct contact. E.g., in cases of Baluchistan, a lot of separatists are being helped by the some of the foreign governments. You don't need to go into details. They have their special guests, and they are taking good care of them. So, whether it is being done by the state or non-state actors, at the end of the day there is someone who is pulling the strings, and if one could say that it is Al-Qaeda, I would say no. and if you think it is Tehrik e Taliban Afghanistan, which is a non-state actor, might be partially. And if you say it is multiple intelligence agencies of multiple countries, then it also might be partially yes. Look at the cumulated effects to the country which is at the receiving end. I was a

member of the Commission, which looked at the assassination, killing of Osama Bin Laden (OBL) at Abbottabad. I have been viewing his instruction he gave to Tehrik-e- Taliban Afghan that these guys who are killing, murdering people in mosques, tell them that these are not Muslims, this is not Islam. Bait-ullah Mehsood sent a warning to the lieutenants of OBL that this is not correct. As a guy in America took up the car on the roads, in which there was a bomb, which was not exploded and when he is caught, he was linked with Pakistan. Again OBL sent a letter to America that although he was Muslim but is an American national and subject to U.S. laws. The instructions of TTP do not really support the philosophy of the TTP. TTP is not a one homogeneous mixture; there are different groups in it. They are not unified under one command. There areas of influence are different.”

Interviewer: “Did you see the role of religion or some ideology by TTP?”

AN: “No, there is no religion to teach you to kill and play with the heads. Go in mosques and kill them. They strike the Pakistan army. Millions of people who died are civilians. So what’s the motivation? Keep it under the influence because it’ll make Pakistan an economically weak country, and an economically weak country cannot stand up on its feet and challenge the international wrong decisions.”

Interviewer: “Yesterday you talked about Opponents being criminals, and it is summed up into two groups: leader of opponents and the fighters during the operation they were conducting. The leadership in power were blackmailed by those who are underground...”

AN: “E.g., if there is HIA they did not have to go and talk to the Army and soldiers. They went to the leadership. This leadership is given a dole, money, a weapon, and training. Let’s say you have to recruit one thousand people, and those one thousand are not intelligent people. They are looking at the money they’ll get. They are motivated by the leaders on religious lines. An interesting fact is that when we were done with the Swat operation, I was the in-charge of the special support group, which look at the humanitarian side. In Mangora, the Army said that there are twenty guys who surrendered by themselves, so what do we have to do?

So, during my previous kind of engagement with the disaster management in the earthquake of 2005, I developed some good relations with all kind of segments. I knew a leading psychiatrist lady was needed, and I asked

her that we have these juveniles, there are some issues. Come and help us. She came with the whole team and interviewed all the twenty boys. Ages ranging between 15-22. She asked them what was their motivation to join TTP. When she was done with all this, she got the profile of all of them. They belonged to a poor family, exactly similar to the juvenile belligerents of the West. Had very low IQs, joined for the interests to get wealth, you'll control the certain area. No one will move without your signature. They even have no sense to question what they are being told by the so-called leaders. So, you are right these foot soldiers on the ground they might not know what they are doing. Somebody is pulling their strings, and motivating them to become a suicide bomber. There were specialists in TTP who were known specialists to motivate people to be suicide bombers.

There is somebody that is blackmailed because they have each target, low IQ, low self-esteem, probably isolated in their own society, or from the family in which, there is a reason, that they are at number 3 or 5.”

Interviewer: “This is a phenomenon, not a single-word conflict in the world. Is this a very unique conflict or does same appear in other countries?”

AN: “Let’s take the two examples of Libya and Syria: the bad guys are being given the ownership by the international world, the west. But here, because of the political reason, the international government is supporting the government of Pakistan to fight against Pakistan. Essentially the phenomena is nothing, but the politics of the phenomena are different than in Syria and Libya, which the international community is supporting, and in Pakistan it’s the government that has the support. The international politics also played a role. That must be factored in while studying a particular case. IP played a great role in turning the action of state to be legal or illegal, ethical or unethical, to be moral or immoral a sin case of Pakistan. Another example: within Pakistan there is acceptability in the community to treat these guys as bad guys. But there is reluctance in the international community to look at the Baluchistan insurgents in the same way. So, same country same phenomena, but politically it is viewed differently by the international community. Because their leaders are being hosted by the west, there in the U.S., Britain, they are giving all sorts of support.”

Interviewer: “Insurgency is the same, but the political roots are different? And how does the international community view the international matters of

Pakistan in counterterrorism? Is your context in the international context the same? The Chinese use the same tool in Xinxiang.”

AN: “Yes, I totally agree.”

Interviewer: “What tools or measures are necessary to counter non-state actors?”

AN: “This is the most critical assessment. In humanitarian world, Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) and Post Crisis Assessment (PCA): PDNA is done after a natural disaster and PCA is done in complex emergencies like terrorism. You need to understand, e.g., in the Swat operation I identify four factors: 1.) People are not getting speedy justice, rule of law. 2.) Livelihoods, 3.) improved service delivery system of government health, food, education, sanitary care 4.) Good governance system. These have created problems. There is a need to work on economic infrastructure, good governance, and rule of law, agricultural resources, education, health, social protection, and strategic communication. If we could address them, then the support they are getting, we could remove the root cause. That is sustainable for long-term peace. Civil administration and government are not capable enough to take over from them and start a reintegration process. It creates dissonance within the small community. A lot of careful handling is required. Then peace will remain elusive; PCNA is the right tool. Remove these root causes through an institutionalized process a thorough process. Create health opportunity, education, then there will be no reason for them to go.”

Interviewer: “You are separating counter insurgency operations from the normal population, but it will create a environment to stigmatize the insurgents away.”

AN: “The hard core will melt away with the bad guys. But the guys they are doing soft jobs, intelligence, bringing them grocery. The whole cannot move from one place to another, they have to come back. So the reintegration process is necessary. Their acceptance to the society is a challenge.”

Interviewer: “Does it requiring a government role?”

AN: “No, not only government but NGOs, organizations to create an environment where they create an acceptability. Army is not responsible to sort out. It is the responsibility of the government. As in Swat I offered UNICEF to come and sort things out, but they didn’t due to the challenging environment. Now we have reintegration centers in South Waziristan. Lot of good work

is being done there. People living in those areas required a lot counseling and this is the job of the government.

It is a long process and it requires a long-term policy, and brings everyone on the same boat. Governments are more bureaucratic, centralism, slowing their approach, even more methodical; it causes delays. Pakistan is suffering from a non-integrated approach, lacking a well thought-out strategy.”

Interviewer: “It is difficult to divide the task and the power in any society. Some areas in the world are unified. The U.S. has a comprehensive philosophy of the whole government.”

AN: “I have no intimate understanding of the Danish system. Our government is more lethargic. Final delivery is much more difficult. Our politicians serve their own areas. There is a complex situation in our country.”

Interviewer: “Do you think there are some tools and measures that are available to our government but they are not using them?”

AN: “These issues are resolved if we had the grass root level of government: a local governance system. Listen to the people, voices through local elected peoples. Unfortunately we have removed that structure. We are not giving them power. Swat was lively, a travel place. There are so many problems in Pakistan. Just ignore those which are not pinching. Target those things which are pinching. Adopt a kind of reactive approach. The system we had initiated had a top down approach, but during Musharraf’s local body system, it was a delay in deciding about the funds. That’s how the local body’s likely to spend. Political authority thought that what we are getting? Local authority is getting everything.”

Interviewer: “Who is benefiting from this conflict? Who is the beneficiary whatever is happening in Pakistan?”

AN: “I don’t want to mention any country name. E.g., a country, ‘A’, wants Pakistan to do certain things. Country ‘A’ has some leverage with these guys through which they can twist the government of Pakistan. Do this, otherwise we’ll do this. Common terrorists will not go and hit the Atlantic in the Mehran, Kamra airbase, so, it clearly shows there is someone who is pulling the strings from behind. There could be multiple beneficiaries for different tasks.

There could be a hundred tactical, strategic reasons. Big countries played a major role in eliminating the governments and placing the government.“

Interviewer: “Can you trade off your soldier’s tank man to help out the enemy?”

AN: “I have lost 2,629 people and 8,000 injured people to these Bad guys. How I can be friends with them. We have used all the aviation assets in the war on terrorism. Over 500 Minor operations and about 200 major operations in 2005 alone. We have 108 soldiers at 100 sq. km. do you think that we can help them or we could save them? No. We are fighting them because they have challenged the writ of the state.”

Interviewer: “Do you think that there has been a difference in terms of choice, in terms of tools and choices between the government and military?”

AN: “The civil government has a totally different set of tools to resolve a dispute. The military has one tool, which is force. Once it is cleared by the political authority that you have to carry out or achieve certain ends, then the military does not go into negotiations with the bad guys. They have the force and with force clear the area and evict the bad guys. But when it goes to the government then they have negotiations, involvement of media to address the root causes of some of the problems. So they have to achieve the same goal. Whether they have apprehension of that, they use it. E.g., at that time in Swat, the ANP was in power in KPK, Asfand Yar Wali was head of the party, 9/10 MPAs and MNAs are from Malakand. He came to Army and said to please stop the operation. All people who are elected from my party are from this area; we want to give them a chance and I assure you that nothing’ll happen. The military move back and said,” O.K., do it.” And they said we do negotiations. They came up with the Shariah law. The federal government said OK. Shariah law is imposed on Malakand. Their motivation was not political it is something else. So, they moved beyond Swat, Deer, Shangla. It created a momentum within all the segments of the society to deal with it militarily, as political efforts failed.

So, the tools within the government and military are very different. The military is time-bound; the government is not. The military can create the initiating environment for the government to come and resolve.“

Interview 5: Mussarat Ahmadzeb Pakistan, March 21st 2014

Interviewer: "There are a couple of things, which are quite clear now, which are common for all of the interviews: the first thing is the history."

Mussarrat Ahmadzeb (MA): "The Pakistani history which is of very high importance in what is happening. So it's clear that the developments are based on events which have happened in history. The recent history since 1954, we think. It is also clear to us that focusing on a liberal pact that was choking at a particular time, which meant that in Pakistan, probably, we have seen until now and what we are looking at is also, to see that the concept of this is very complex. There is big difference on how uprising, or however we classify the power, we know that internal conflicts are different. I can talk to you about Swat, in black and white. If you ask me about Waziristan and Bajour, and if we go there for day or week; it's not enough.

What I am trying to say is if you are not giving them the basic necessities for living, I am not saying a hi-fi living, I mean the basic necessity of living. If you don't give that, don't give that to anyone, then it will lead to terrorists. Becoming a terrorist is not difficult, but denying them the basic necessity of living is denying them their right, so when you deny them their right anyone can become a terrorist. For instance, I am not quoting any country or anybody because I don't believe in it, I take myself. Why can't I give them a basic right of life, which is their right? So anyone can come and offer money and gets... for instance, he becomes an agent. You are Pakistani, me, she and others and will be paying this much and ask for work as he did not have a job and doesn't have enough to feed, feed children and feed myself. So I blame you, west, and wait for miracle.

Now let me give you an example, me, forget I am a princess, forget where I am living, what I am. I am just giving an example. I have nothing, no identity I have a meal for one time and no source for the 2nd meal, I don't have anything, all of us. He hires me. I will be giving this large an amount, and this is what you do, what am I going to do? You will be killing this and that will kill, and then they will get a target too. My God, how will I kill 20? What have they given us? So I will be more furious. What is right to lose? Nothing in life.

Let me clear one thing that you will be meeting people, fancy big dogs, but reality is very harsh. Our condition is worse than that. And we call those people terrorists and insurgents. So then they say they want to bring Islam. I have so many discussions where everyone says that they want to bring Islam.

They come and take those projects, and they are too good in talking and shocking. I offered my services to the government as a volunteer, so that I can volunteer in Waziristan, and I will find you the heroes, unsung heroes, and that is how we go about. Even when you start an operation, side by side, we should be having proper people for rehabilitation and reconstruction, women empowerment, children.”

Interviewer: “Last question was about the benefiter, you talked about the benefiter?”

MA: “Yes, the NGOs are taking benefits. I also call them drawing-room warriors. They hate me a lot, I think, but still I call them drawing-room worriers. As they are.

I really want to learn how to talk like them. I really want to learn to hide my emotions and express myself. Once I asked DG ISSRA, too. He said, O.K., there is a workshop coming, and you must come over there, so I was under the impression, I said, you know I came here under the impression that I will be getting a course to learn to how express myself, hide my emotions like these people... You don't talk with emotions and you don't mix them and you talked politely and you twisted and turned it, and you know you complicate it, and you don't know that the other person will get confused whatever you say to him. He said, don't change, we love you the way you are . Maybe my way of talking and expressing and explaining nobody may be interested in. So that means I have to change, so I opted for this NSW. NSW did not do that work. But now I will be working for others trying to find out some courses, where I want to speak more complicated, as I speak very simply.”

Interviewer: “What you are trying to do ma'am, do you think we have to un-learn honesty?”

MA: “No, you did not get my point. I am what I am. So maybe that's a wrong way, when you are going apart, going through history how would you look at history? How history turns out for your country as far as the regional situation concerns.

The reason we where we are now, I will not say it is Afghanistan. No. Have we not helped Afghanistan? Planned out and USSR were top of us, we had been the 2nd country at that time. So to fight the Afghan war was a brilliant, super and excellent idea. At that time, that was the solution to the problem to create an Islamic country. Until 2 years ago, we were without international help. We were all alone. And, yes, we were helping Afghanistan but in actual fact, we were helping ourselves. We were protecting ourselves. That is what my thinking is. But then post operations, war and peace, go side by side and parallel, and that is why things go wrong in our country; because with the war, with the operations with the planning with the strategy, the peace makers should be sitting side by side, parallel; they should be going. Here it is the war and here it is the peace makers. I was with the American Consul General a few weeks back just before my operation. He told me that, we have done developments, USAID.”

Interviewer: “What can be the impact of the Malala case in this regard?”

MA: “There are no such things, that you would say that Malala is, the only thing at that time, the man who shot her. It’s the only sympathy. We see lots of things were exposed in a home town even before it came out to the western world. It became a huge drama. Swat is a place, which is a beautiful valley, let me tell you, but nothing is secret because of the purity of air and water. There was CIA, staying and training her. Everybody knew that. Preparing her and bringing her for interviews, not only their interviews but also on different channels, so it’s that everybody knew that there is something going on and her father is a little too ambitious, which is very good, one should be ambitious. There is nothing wrong in it. But the story that we created (of Malala) was not true. But the west wants to make something out of mother Teresa. I just sympathize with her for the shooting, other than that: nothing. No child should go through shooting because the only thing for me as a mother, and as a woman I feel for her. But the rest of the stories are just stories, as she is a child.

At that time I said, “Bye Islamabad” and “Welcome Swat”. I started work for the women.”

Interviewer: “The policy making and the strategy in the drafts or the papers, we never see women anywhere although they are the most critical victims in both situations, so why is that so, why are the women not thought about during their process of strategy making?”

MA. “I really don’t know, because if women were given power... It would run better. It’s the women who are the beggars now.”

Interview 8: Ali Baz
Pakistan, March 26th 2014

Interviewer: "Sir, how would you classify the opponent, is he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Ali Baz (AB): "Before answering the questions in one line, it is very important to understand what an insurgency is and what terrorism is. In an insurgency there is always a political objective. It has political objective on the part of the insurgency, then in a direct challenge to the government. There is always, invariably, demand for a separate territory. In order to get freedom from the so-called reservoir of the state or whatever you name it. They generally do not target the non-competence. They make targets of the competence. They generally avoid the destruction of national property. Because some of the assets are located in their own areas, so they won't like to destroy the properties.

Now coming to the terrorism, in our case, now I am more focusing on Pakistan, there is no declared political objective. In Pakistan, the Taliban's, the state enemies there, demand is based on the devotion to Shariah, and there is no demand for separate territory, and this may make the difference between the insurgency and terrorists that they ruthlessly target and kill without any discrimination between competence and non-competence, children, girls; they target mosques, schools, markets; they don't leave anything. They thrive on creating fear among the masses, whereas the insurgence, they don't create fear rather seek the support of the masses. So having seen all that in Pakistan, I would say that it is terrorism; it is not insurgency.

Some people may say that in Balochistan, it is the insurgency, yes, you can say it may be have the shape of insurgency, but if you follow, and if you see their modest apathy, it is exactly terrorism. So generally speaking this is the concept in Pakistan, and I call it terrorism."

Interviewer: "Sir, thank you. You already gave us the ideas for our second question because we are concerned about the modulation – because it is very important in understanding about this phenomenon: that how this phenomenon has rooted, and the motivating factors: one of those being social and economical deprivation, it is religion and ideology and it's Shia power and simply the legal actions, so we have good picture with your intellectual views of where the motivating levels are and which are the most motivating factors."

AB: “Absolutely, so all these factors and facts you already write and the factors you have written. They are all part of their set agenda. But let me, for the clarity of our mind.

Let’s take them one by one.

Ideology and religion, this is what allows them to pursue their agenda, they misuse the masses. You know that all masses are not as educated as in your country, or in western countries, so they can be easily carried away by these misguided ideologies or thoughts. So I would call it ideology and religion, on which they confer or declare their agenda.

Then we come to the socio-economic deprivations that are so in our FATA areas, KPK areas and generally in Pakistan also, because the poor people are there. So, the economically, socially deprived people, especially the youth, they become their target so this is the very large space that is available to them. They use it as a space.

What is now happening in Karachi, there is also the evidences available that in fact the Taliban are involved in the kidnapping for ransom, extortion and these sorts of activities because they need money. There is an outside source; then yes there is a source they internally kidnap and demand money. And the extortion is carried on in Karachi. So, this is their force multiplier, I would say. The ongoing war in Karachi is going on, which is their force multiplier. And the control of power unlike the insurgents, as I said they want to achieve it by creating fears among the masses. Insurgent forces only to an extent need to achieve their political aims: their main effort is not to kill counterinsurgents, but rather to establish a competitive system of control over the population, making it impossible for the government to administer its territory and people. Insurgent activity is therefore designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and influence.

And the control of power, as I said, unlike insurgence, they also want to achieve it by creating fear among the masses and by breaking the will of the government by continuing killing and destruction; ultimately if the government is discredited to the extent and becomes so weak, then they can ideologically prevail because they have power, this is their ultimate objective. There are two versions: one is that the government agrees to their demand and forces Shariah law, so they will give up their fights, but we don’t believe

them. Because these Taliban people, most of them don't know about religion, they can't even read the Quran, they are a gang of criminals, and they have taken shelter under the umbrella of Taliban.

The poor and the uneducated people, those who are deprived become warriors on behalf of the Taliban. So, some of them take shelter, and they are used to create that sort of environment, in Pakistan, that the criminals, the thieves, and the killers they would run on the settle areas and take shelter on to the FATA areas, even now these people have taken shelter to join this organization, so now this is the mix of everything, that the mix of criminals, the mix of youth and those are the people who are exploiting the religious."

Interviewer: "Is this purely a local phenomenon or are there some other actors that are involved in this. "Now there is no doubt, in that there are so many people who are in name is that Al-libbi, Al jahware, khorasanese, blah, blah, blah, and so many people there are Arabs, and from Uzbekistan; you know there was an Islamic movement working in Uzbekistan also, but in Uzbekistan the government, because there is no democracy, so they ruthlessly, they expend them, either kill them and most of them, either ran from the country and got shelter through Afghanistan and in Pakistan, and they are now under the shelter of Taliban, and Taliban operating with them and working with them.

So when we are looking at your system and how it's trying to mediate this, it lacks many things, can you elaborate that what is in your mind that how it trying to mediate this?"

AB: "It is a very wise and wide question. As you see when a state deals with such acts there are certain tools which are applied simultaneously, and some tools are applied sequentially, so both have their own approach. So basically all these tools have picked through the approach which is picked up that is maintaining a very strong deterrence, carried our phenomena of dialogues and when possible, wherever possible, carry on the development areas. So, these are the broad areas.

So first of all, in my mind and I have been waiting for this for the past two years, there is a need to build a very strong national narrative to defeat the basic ideology, misguided ideology of the terrorists. So that is the first step that should have to be taken.

So, I believe that there is a national narrative that should be built, so in this case the Taliban drive from their own ideology, from the Quranic sources and from the Hadith, we call it. And they misquote them they just pick up some of the elements and convert them for the sake of their own benefits; they have to be defeated by using the same tools.

So again we again talk about national narratives that are the Quran and Hadith, which they are misquoting. So when we talk about the national narrative that is very important.”

Interviewer: "Can you elaborate on how these institutions in your country behave in a comprehensive approach or manner? First, is the national narrative and next national consensus. Since the nation is in the same phase."

AB: "As I already mentioned this, the media, judiciary, intelligence agencies, and the civil society have to be on the same page. As you see that the consensus is slowly moving in good position but as far concerned with the dialogues. Which are already discussed in parliament, they might be fighting over the issues of their own agendas like political parties fighting over their own issues, but there is a consensus in the parliament that you can follow the process of peace dialogues between them. Now, at the same time there are some judges they let them go because of the lack of evidence."

Interviewer: "So, all these factors are there, that should be tackling with great power."

AB: "The NDU is the first of the national security policy and ISP, so these elements are there so at least the government has an idea, taken the initiative and at least there are many factors, so the national consensus in all these are very important whether you want to sort out these or through the dialogues. The important thing which we get is that religion is very important in this country."

Interviewer: "So do you think that they are providing the approach to it?"

AB: "Absolutely they analyzed the threats and they know about what is going on in their surroundings.

As I said that there are certain lacunas involved. Any previous government never thought of that, despite the security advisers. How do you see when

the Army is providing and the decline has been crossed? I mean power tools: soft power tools and hard power tools.

In my mind no tool has been... I mean there are economic, social, securities, ideology, national narratives, and it would be credible. Then there is another element which is very important, that we need to shield the masses from radicalization. Because there are so many agencies like madrassas, and all are misguiding the youth, so there has to be some system where you can shield your masses. So we are on the right track when we stand out in order to protect our country. In our village, in our country side and every type of landscape, there are mosques, and you may call it a Sunni mosque and Shia mosque, Brelvi mosque and ahl-e-hadees. There are various religious sects in the village as you can see that they spread their own agendas, but we say that Taliban are spreading their own religion and their sources. So there has to be required national security policies and all that should be documented there. Madrassas and mosques training are very important. There is some necessity of the problems we should focus on that this all relate to the security paradigm.”

Interviewer: “So another question is: Is the civil or military government using different tools in order to deal with this situation?”

AB: “Definitely, the military government relies on the hard power and the civil government is trying to deal with the soft power. Their preferred choice is to apply that soft power. But when they combine the both powers, they become smart powers. So within this power you can deal with the elements. You combine both. If you feel that there is a need for all these powers, so that you can follow just hard power on a temporary basis not on a permanent basis, it is just for the time being. But soft power is always there in order to deal with this chaotic situation. Hard power applies to facilitate the soft power. So when you apply them both they became smart power. He explained about the trends of 9/11 before and after and there prevailing factors Afghani Taliban, Punjabi Taliban and all. This is not only in Pakistan but also in India, Sri Lanka, Ireland and all. And the situation of Ireland is very old, as compared to this, so these all things are happening all over again.”

Interview 9: Javed Iqbal Ramday
Pakistan, March 26th 2014

Interviewer: "Sir, my first question would be how would you classify your opponent, enemy of the state? Is he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Javed Iqbal Ramday (JIR): "Good question because I really have a very strong opinion in that I would not classify him as an insurgent; he is militant or a terrorist. OK."

Interviewer: "So he is operating with the objective to simply to target civilian population for own purposes and utilizing and exploiting the situation."

JIR: "Absolutely because what we have to understand in this... Some of the techniques that they use as a group or as individuals might be similar to some of the techniques which are used by classical insurgents. But on the whole they actually go beyond the act, and in this case I think the reasons and causes they also transcend classic insurgency, that's all."

Interviewer: "Sir, we have sub-divided the next question into four categories, we are trying to look into what are the driving factors, the engine behind this phenomenon in your country, and we have looked at social and economic deprivation; we have looked at the religion or ideology or pure power or simply criminal intent, can you elaborate this?"

JIR: "Actually my experience is a combination of all this, essentially when you look at the motivation factor for most of the individuals within these groups: one, of course, it's going to be a combination. But of course the combination is going to be in different degrees, some of the causes are going to dominate the others, and even within the same group, also motivation are going to be very different and varied. On the whole my own stance is when you are looking at the crook. It's going to be leadership, which is going to be most likely highly motivated by their understanding of religious ideology, but over time the motivation is changed within the individual, so leadership actually begins with religious understanding but over time it transforms into power exercise mode and also financial benefits, which they can have by virtue of their position; when you go down to the hierarchy, here you are most likely going to find the pure ideological motivations, which is going to be the middle leadership cadre. When you go down to the foot soldier, the motivation should be different; they derived motivation from religion but

then, of course, it should be some social expression standing within society in that very, very limited circle, also in certain cases. It's going to be for financial benefits, in other cases for socio-political cases, for some reasons of security, for some family provide fighters, seeking protection from the same groups. For some, it is way of life. It's a job. It's a dynamic picture on the whole."

Interviewer: "So it's also connected to the prestige that they can be part of something that they have some respect from society?"

JIR: "Absolutely I have mentioned socio-political reasons, for power, and if you have that kind of power as a member of society. In that case you were able to extend that power away from the groups into your own local area, into the village and place you are living your family lives, so there is extension of that power. When we access the motivating factors, you look at what is needed. In our experience we have shown more or less a certain resilience as a nation. And the same time tried to transform also from being conventional forces in contemporary conflicts, we have to pave the way in front of us. We have learnt lessons from operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq through developing common understanding in our troops from problems like this, and we built up COIN doctrines on the way. In a traditional way, we found out that domestic strategies must be supported and be known and focused beyond."

Interviewer: "Looking at the Pakistani concept could you elaborate on tools and measures you think, in the Pakistani approach could be necessary to continue once you have had the success?"

JIR: "Actually Pakistani experience in the areas in the border areas are slightly different than the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, some of the reasons are very obvious.

In our case some of the tools and techniques which have been applied are quite different and the reason is that in all these areas the government has been present, the security forces were there in sufficient numbers slightly different in a posture, then we also look at that impact in these areas. The constitutional arrangement was there though different from one place to another. The socio-economic development in these areas, that is also different and the situation, which has been created because of these diverse groups, that was also different. And during the course of it, it has changed. What the Pakistani security forces did was to go through essentially two, three phases. while leading that kind of things post 9/11; Swat did not have

an issue which appeared on radar screen. Out of 6 tribal agencies, I would say four tribal agencies did not have the symptoms; two of those agencies have and the reasons are again very much known to us. So in these areas they had the presence. The Army essentially went in not to create a more tense environment, as far as the security forces are concerned, but to go for very targeted operations in cooperation with the militia, which is already there, which is called the FC, but more importantly with the help and assistance of the local people who had social political power in those areas. That was the pattern then. So that pattern essentially in The Battle of Swat also known as Operation Rah-e-Rast, began in May 2009 and involved the Pakistani Army and Taliban militants in a fight for control of the Swat district of Pakistan. The first Battle of Swat had ended with a peace agreement, widely criticized in the west, which the government had signed with the Taliban in February 2009. However, by late April 2009 government troops and the Taliban began to clash once again, and in May the government launched military operations throughout the district and elsewhere to oppose the Taliban.

The 2nd concurrent, parallel action to do is that is to enable civilian departments, the ministries and the agencies have to establish their presence in these areas; and the 3rd is to enable your sister law enforcement agencies to establish themselves and start operating in that time; and lastly, which is in fact very important, that you go for quick impact development projects which are actually directly impacting on the populations because in most of these areas, infra-structure would have been serially damaged by the militants , so you will have to restore all that and additionally because people that you get hold of, they are the ones who were dealt with harshly.”

Interviewer: “When you look at the institutionalized approach and campaign like this, obviously against militancy and militants, what do you think is the approach in these areas? How are the institutions getting it right in different areas when you institutionalize different ideas in tribal areas. Can you elaborate?”

JIR: “This approach is not constant, actually Pakistan, has learnt lot from the trial and error method and then tried to implement lessons. And so cooperation within institutions means a lot, but it was not there. Different stakeholders, through support of militants, and interference in their neighboring countries’ affairs have directly or indirectly held onto power. This has been at the center of decision-making in the country since its creation in August 1947. Militant Islamic groups are the other powerful players; sometimes standing on the same side as the government, as in the case of

jihadist trained and recruited to fight wars in Kashmir and Afghanistan, and sometimes against the government, as with those fighting Pakistan's security forces today.”

Appendix 4 – Transcriptions of interviews from Denmark

Interview 10: Niels Vistesen

Denmark, June 2nd 2015

Interviewer: "The first question is; how do you classify your enemy in Afghanistan, was he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Niels Vistesen (NV): "I would say he was an insurgent, and looking at your question about classification of insurgents and terrorists, I don't think it is always useful to compare the two like we do. It has implications, you know, I am a historian and I see things from a historical viewpoint, not politically, not economically, not militarily. When you classify someone as insurgents, you immediately dive into history and take out counterinsurgency lessons, and I think the problem is that you choose the lessons that fit the situation you are in. NATO or the western alliance decided to do counterinsurgency, and arguably it began in Iraq. Once you classify someone as an insurgent, it is an exact classification, and I don't think it works like that; then you dive into history to find the lessons from Vietnam, from Malaya or Lawrence of Arabia, but you don't look at it comprehensively, so you draw out the lessons you need and it is very difficult to use history in that sense. Besides that, I would say that at least some Americans classify our opponent or enemy as terrorists; you still hear the USA has come to Afghanistan and talk about 9/11 because that is why they were there, so I think a lot of the soldiers thought of the enemy as terrorists, and maybe there is a different way to deal with terrorists, so you can't distinguish between the two. I'd say that what we were fighting in Helmand was an insurgency because to a large extent, it was internal to Afghanistan and it was parts of the population that were against something, I'd classify terrorism as something different, smaller groups with a different agenda to change society. To put a picture on what I think of terrorists; a terrorist is not just a terrorist, I have some terrorism studies from St. Andrews that I have lectured on to military people and often when you think of a terrorist you think of "a terrorist", but they are often very different. They range from Greenpeace to al-Qaeda more or less, and in between you have people freeing animals, anti-abortion, you have the left-wing groups that we forgot for a little bit like Rote Armee Fraktion and others. We have Black Hand in Greece, so terrorist groups are very different, so you can't just say it's a terrorist group and that's it; you have to sort of delve deeper into it, it is more complicated."

Interviewer: "Some scholars look at the terrorism as a means, almost like a strategy."

NV: "Exactly, I would certainly say that you can have acts by terrorist groups, with a terror aim, which is an aim to cause fear wider than the immediate target. I think that is absolutely possible, and when insurgents or other groups commit acts of terrorism, or similar to terrorism, then you classify them as terrorists groups, which they aren't really. So I think that confusion in terms also creates a lot of confusion."

Interviewer: "We have also heard that countries prefer calling their own opposition terrorists because then they can use a lot of means from all kinds of counterterror measures and terrorists don't have legitimacy. They are just bandits. While if you call them insurgents, they could have some kind of legitimacy because they are actually fighting for another form of governance. Where they in a democracy could vote about it, but because it isn't, they fight."

NV: "I understand what you are saying, and it makes sense, but it also goes exactly to the problem of it not always being useful to distinguish an enemy, so it is either an insurgent or a terrorist or they can be doing both things at the same time. It is more about understanding your opponent in a different way. You began with saying that you would be looking at sort of the strategic and political levels and not so much t the tactical level. But this is just one of the examples where you can't distinguish that much. I brought up the example of a strategic corporal, that is, the direction we usually look at it going up, a strategic corporal, that is a soldier on the ground, does something bad, then it has political ramifications, but that works two ways and that has never really been described in an article. Politically decided classifications and choice of means – these have an effect on a tactical level on what you do, whether you can shoot people or not if you build big impact products or not, whatever you do on a tactical level. So you can sort of delineate all the time it has a consequence the same way a strategic corporal has a consequence for a larger political level. The politician also has a responsibility for what is going on at a tactical level. I think that is why the classification or the use of classifications or the use of words, the semantics about insurgents or terrorists, are important in the way you deal with things. I don't know what you do with those things."

Interviewer: "Actually, what we chose to do in our case with Pakistan, we mostly classify them as terrorists and that changes how the government is going to

look at them. And maybe some times, at least when we felt during the War on Terror, they should have looked at COIN strategies more than counterterrorism strategies. But then again, the same thing you were saying about Afghanistan with local governments, these aspects still are not being looked into. We are actually looking at the same failures or success in a way, and that could probably be a lesson, shared with Denmark, we are still not looking at structures in the governance area. And that is why we made the question in the first place: how the classification affects how the people, the policy makers look at the phenomena, does it affect their policies.

Were there at any time discussions about what to call the enemy? I think what we are aiming at with this question, is does it have a relevance to call it an insurgency instead of terrorists? Because what I hear you say is basically that it is pretty much the same. It is all about how we choose to define them. So you didn't exactly say that by calling them an insurgency you give them political power that terrorists don't not have."

NV: "No, that is actually what Thomas said. He said that insurgencies carry within them a percentage of legitimacy. I don't think so at all, and it is a shame to argue against you when you say that calling it an insurgency calls for other means and different tactics, so of course it matters. But you should really look at the people, what they are doing. If you look at a terrorist group like Rote Armee Fraktion in Germany in the 70s as an insurgency, what you would see would be of small military weight but there would be a lot of supporters. What we see in insurgencies is that they will often be living geographically together like in Pashtun or other places, in a place like Germany it would be sort of the lower working class, they would be dispersed into society but they would still be there. They don't need the geographical placement, actually you see the insurgency as a certain part of the country or something like that. It is difficult. I began with saying it is not useful to distinguish things in that sense, rather than acts of terrorism, look at the problems you have. Do you need to solve it with better governance, with different conflict resolutions in different ways. I think that is more useful way to look at it. Don't classify them as insurgents or terrorists; say that there is a problem that needs to be solved. Find a better word for it."

Interviewer: "Yeah, but it is very difficult to have an enemy that you don't name. In Afghanistan to begin with we called the enemy Taliban and then there was a shift to insurgents because we had this group that couldn't all be defined as Taliban, but we have to call them something. So how do we solve this, maybe

it is not that progressive to call them terrorists, maybe it is not so good to call them insurgents, I mean I'm not asking you to solve this I am asking were there any discussions on this subject, when you were a political advisor?"

NV: "Absolutely. You can always, and this is difficult politics just look at the election campaigns, you have 15 seconds to say it, so it is either insurgents or terrorists. But it could be religious extremist terrorists or it could political terrorism or eco terrorism, it could be a local national insurgency or a cross border insurgency or something else. You can put a pronoun in front of it and classify it further. As to Afghanistan it was difficult that some people, and I think we will get back to that in some later questions, when some people where fighting insurgents and some people terrorists in the same area, it gave rise to conflict. I think operationally and politically we need to call them enemies of Afghanistan to avoid calling them insurgents or Taliban or something else."

Interviewer: "Anti-governmental forces?"

NV: "Yes. I think at that time, it was enemies of Afghanistan. And what I found out was that the Afghans, the people I worked with, where calling them "Doucheman" "bad people", so that was just the generic term for people who were against us in one way or the other, and then we didn't have to look at the origins to their motivations."

Interviewer: "What do you think was the motivation for the insurgents or terrorists, or whatever we classify them as? From your experience why were they fighting the government forces?"

NV: "I am sure that by now it is fairly well established that in Helmand a lot of the people that were fighting against ISAF and ANA were locals, it was farmers fighting for their opium fields, revenge for killing their brothers or fathers or sisters or something else, so I think that the motivation for 80% of the people who had opposed us and took up arms against us locally in Helmand, were local grievances. It was to protect families, farms, livelihoods and something like that. I am quite convinced of that. And don't forget that some of it was not just against the Afghan security forces or the government per se, it was merely because it was a competing fraction or tribe or something else; it could be a criminal element fighting, not against ISAF as such, but against a gang who happened to wear police uniforms coming in on their opium trade or whatever they were doing."

Interviewer: "That was how they looked at other forces?"

NV: "Sometimes they were, yes. I think it was local conflicts to a large extent. I don't think that most people were shooting at us in Helmand because they wanted a different president in Kabul."

Interviewer: "You were naming the 20%; were they a catalyst, or was it just flavor on the cake?"

NV: "It was probably both. Because there was a larger network there was a larger command network to some extent. I think we know that as well. There were other extremists with ties to higher Taliban leadership to some extent. They were there as well."

Interviewer: "They were probably fishing in a pond that was already in trouble or what?"

NV: "You could say that. It is a two-way street, we became part of the problem. It is not like if you moved us we could just be out, once we started killing people we became part of the ongoing fighting. So once ISAF stepped in and started killing people we were a part of it, and we escalated things as well, as much as we tried to make it better."

Interviewer: "Was there any difference between the approach of the European forces, or the ISAF forces, and that of the American forces? Was there any difference in terms of classifying the enemy or with the ways they saw the motivations of the opponent. Was there any difference between the two forces? Or were they seen, by the local population as being the same thing? Those are two different questions."

NV: "Yes, I think on the first question, we all worked under ISAF a NATO body under their classification. So you can say that theoretically. No, there was not any difference the way we looked at it, different countries had different perceptions. I can't say all Americans, and I can't say all Danes, looked at it differently, but there were certainly tendencies towards the extremes in different places. There were certainly some Americans who were extreme in the terrorist approach, about killing more people; that is safe to say. I know a particular quote, I don't know if I should say it, if it should be on or off the record, but I remember the U.S. Marine Corps major general saying to all his colonels in the room, he probably meant it as a bit of a joke, but there

is probably some truth to it, he said something like: If it weren't for all this COIN shit I would have Helmand clear of insurgents within a month. And that was sometimes the attitude that you dealt with."

Interviewer: "But that is against his own field manual."

NV: "It is indeed, yes. So he must have meant it as a joke."

Interviewer: "Actually there is a saying that Nixon in the White House had a sign on the wall, it was of course during Vietnam; grab them by the balls and their hearts and minds will follow. There is a lot of testosterone in some people who want to say something smart."

NV: "We can make fun of the general, but once the politicians chose a Marine Corps general to go in and solve things, it is sort of what you get. You can't put soldiers in to get shot at, and then they just think the enemy is really nice people. Once you choose to use military tools to clean something up, you also get military solutions, you get people going out to kill others."

Interviewer: "In 2010, you were there as well, one of the biggest issues were "courageous restraint". Trying to get back on track as opposed to not killing so many people and shooting that much."

NV: "I think the difference was that I spoke a lot with Afghan people, I actually wrote a paper on it because I sat with information operations in Kabul, and I wrote paper about it to the staff, which was very well received, on civilian casualties. I knew this was bad and said "oh, no we had civilian casualties" and they said "do something about it to make it go away", and I was like "dude, you just threw a missile into a house and killed 15 women and children, we can't make it go away, you know it happened. And I think in particular with the situation in Afghanistan, maybe it cannot be copied, but having seen so much fighting over decades the local people knew that civilian casualties were going to occur, but they distinguished between two different cases. One was where the civilians were caught in the middle of fighting, as sort of collateral damage, they understood that and knew that it could happen; what they didn't understand was the other situation when a guard at a guard post shot a civilian because he was too close. They didn't understand when the top gun of a vehicle shot at a car because it was too close, because everyone drove close, they did not get the casualties in the cases where they were unwanted shootings like that. The Afghans actually

distinguished between the two of them, so it wasn't all the same. So that is what we tried to stop with the courageous restraint. Once you get shot at, you can reply with everything you want, jets artillery and everything else, but when some nervous corporal at the top of a vehicle would take his .50 caliber machine gun and put 50 rounds into the Toyota of a local mullah just driving too close to him, they didn't understand that was necessary. You can kind of follow the way they are thinking; it kind of makes sense."

Interviewer: "Why would the corporal do that in the first place?"

NV: "Because he was young and nervous, he was afraid of bombs and was told to protect his comrades in the vehicle, and that is what happens."

Interviewer: "Basically the two sides did not understand each other. That question leads to this question. How well did the corporal understand the cultural differences? I know they got training in cultural understanding, but was it enough. Would they understand the local dynamics? And how soon would they do that?"

NV: "I think some never did."

Interviewer: "Was it a big issue when you sent your soldiers there?"

NV: "Yes, I think that it was a very big issue for us."

Interviewer: "Is that the Danish point of view, or the general opinion of all ISAF member countries?"

NV: "I think it is a general opinion. Some of the cultural awareness we got before deploying was things like, you know, Pashtun Valley, take off your shoes, don't shake hands with women, it is a little obvious. As you behave like a nice person, we usually don't have many problems. I found that Afghans in many ways, Muslims of one persuasion or the other respected me for what I was, as long as we behaved and talked nicely to each other it was no problem; we were different and that is the way it is. Much of the cultural awareness was about very small things; not about understanding the society."

Interviewer: "Do you know the book about Greg Mortenson called "Three Cups of Tea"? He was discredited for some financial problems later, but he talked about that, you had to know the people you are talking to, treating them as

your friends or by talking to them on their terms, then you will gradually get invited inside and get access to what you really want to understand. He talked a lot about the problems with the rotation system because a new guy was dropped in all the time, and eventually the local population didn't want to engage them because there will be a new guy in 4 or 5 months, why should I bother."

NV: "We'll come around to that in one of the later questions when we talk about police vs. military solutions to some of these things. But on the cultural awareness thing, I think it has been fairly well described in Mike Martins book about Helmand, the British not understanding the dynamics we went into. I think that is very much the point; he is very meticulous, and it doesn't mean that everybody needs to speak Pashtun and sit around in circles and drink tea all day, but understanding the concept of what you are going to do. Before I went to Afghanistan I had the ISAF briefs and I took some of the preparatory courses on the internet and learned about the history of Afghanistan, it was all so very bland, so I, being a historian, set out to find Afghan history books. And there was actually an Afghan professor; M. Hasan Kakar who was working in the university in the 1970s and was imprisoned in the early 80s and managed to escape in the mid-80s, came to California and wrote a book about it in the early 90s about his experiences: It was the Soviet invasion and the Afghan response, and when you read his book, you get a look into how he learned history and how society works and so on, and I actually found out that when I used some of those terms and some of those historical examples with for example a governor or being at a party with them, they thought that somebody knew something about Afghan history, and you could use those interactions and understand it a little bit better, rather than just know to take off your shoes and not to shake hands with women; it is a little too obvious, it is more about understanding society. I'm not saying that if you want to do COIN in Denmark you would have to know Danish history, but something else, I think that worked. But how you get that cultural understanding into corporals, that is a different thing."

Interviewer: "Yes, because we found that Mike Martin's book was also a bit of an easy shot, because if you want to do something in a region in Afghanistan, then if you need all that training before sending your soldiers in, the conflict will be over before we can do anything, so you have to balance it. I think the main question from me to you is: The level of the cultural awareness, at the time, was it sufficient in your opinion, or do you think that more steps should have been taken?"

NV: “No, I think for most of the troops it was actually quite adequate. I think they knew what they were doing and they were having a good time and were respected. I think when you look at the companies of soldiers sitting out in FOBs talking to local Afghans, I think that was pretty okay, they got along well, talked to each other well, we see with the training with the ANA we had a close relationship between westerners and Afghan soldiers. I think they had a pretty good working relationship. You need to go to a slightly higher level, where you need to understand the nature of the conflict and how it works. That is where the cultural understanding should have been better: maybe with advisors, maybe with generals or people making the grander plans of things.”

Interviewer: “Do you think religion was a big motivation for the insurgents?”

NV: “No, don’t think so.”

Interviewer: “Because the religious narrative was very strong in our side of the country, and that is what we got from the Taliban as well. So do you think religion was actually that important an impact or was it just a narrative and they were not actually fighting for religious purposes?”

NV: “I don’t think they were fighting us, as Muslims against Christians. I don’t think that was a motivation at all, perhaps for a few hardcore people, but not for the general enemy. If you talk about the society as in a civil war with a struggle between two levels of Muslim influence, should it be the strong Taliban rule or a softer version or a different version of Islam. I don’t know. I think that is as much cultural as religious, and you can’t differentiate between them. I don’t think it served as a motivational factor, no.”

Interviewer: “What was the main motivation, except for what you said about local motivations? Generally what do you think was their basic motivation?”

NV: “It must be a basic distrust in government or the powers that be. If you were a terrorist group that wants to change society, like the Rote Armee Fraktion wanting a communist society, then you would proactively go out and to change something. I think a lot of the insurgency wanted to get rid of the corrupt and predatory government. I think to a large extent that was it. They wanted to be left alone in some sense; they didn’t want to go out and change some things. I think they saw the government as being corrupt and intrusive, coming to destroy the opium fields or take their money in different

ways, and the government was synonymous with the armed gangs, they were the same. So it was more of a defensive fight rather than an offensive one. Did that make sense in any way?"

Interviewer: "Yes, very much."

"So what did the local government do, because when they had outreach they would be seen as an intrusive force, in their day-to-day business?"

NV: "I think the local government tried to help them do it, also before we came. Their outreach, I think, was corruption; they were stopping people and beating them if they didn't pay enough money, so I don't think they lacked outreach as such. I think they began lacking outreach when people started fighting back."

Interviewer: "But they were not there to make a social contract with the locals, they were there to get tax revenues?"

NV: "Yes, I think so, that was the general way it was."

Interviewer: "I understand that they saw taxation as extortion?"

NV: "I think it was extortion, I don't think they saw it as that; it was extortion because what they taxed, if you want to put it that way, didn't go into government coffers, it went to lining people's pockets, so it was extortion and corruption. And I think it became too much and was often done by government officials, not everyone of course, but that was the general setting. It was also done by police officers, the mayor of the city."

Interviewer: "But trying to understand it, they didn't pay tax in Gereshk but there was some kind of road tax for getting in and out of the city. The local population knew about that and they respected that on a certain level. It was when it became too much that they started complaining. They knew that was how they paid taxes but if they were going to pay more every time."

NV: "I have used that precise example before, and I think we have some concrete examples from both with the ring of payment around the city and checkpoints on the highway, but also other things like getting people out of jail and things. It was getting to a monopoly economy, even if you have that

economy in theory, you charge what you want, but only to a certain level so even in corruption there is a maximum of what you can demand.”

Interviewer: “So it was self-regulating.”

NV: “Yes, self-regulating. When it became too much then a certain kind of ID appeared in the city and then the system self-regulated a little, because some police sergeant would have to find a new job or it would regulate back. If I paid taxes to her majesty’s government or to a police officer in the street, if it is the same amount of money and I get the same service, it doesn’t make any sense, corruption is a sort of taxation.”

Interviewer: “I think we should move ahead. We have been around some of it but about the discussions you had at the CIMIC office, what tools did you see as effective or appropriate in order to handle these insurgents and can you generalize on these tools at all?”

NV: “I think you can, absolutely. I think there are two tools which are very important and that is policing and political dialogue.”

Interviewer: “Define political dialogue?”

NV: “I think you need to talk to someone, instead of killing them, you need to talk to them. And it is not because some people don’t deserve to be killed, it is because you need to maintain a dialogue, maintain contact and talk about things. Their problems might be that like any political negotiation or dialogue, it is going to start with people being apart from each other and to maintain the dialogue you need to have a dialogue track. I think we lost that completely in Afghanistan for many years, where we didn’t talk to anybody and didn’t want to talk to anybody; it was only in the later years we realized we needed to talk to someone about it. When I came in, we didn’t want to talk to the Taliban; we didn’t have any appetite for a negotiated solution at all, so you need to maintain a dialogue. Even when you go in as a strong state into a minor area, to maintain the dialogue, it doesn’t mean you can’t keep your intelligence apparatus, you can still kill people with rifles and drones and what you want, but keep a political dialogue open somehow.”

Interviewer: “When you say political dialogue, it seems to me like it is the soldiers who need to have the dialogue?”

NV: “Hopefully at some leadership level, even with the UK-IRA conflicts in Ireland you could maintain a political dialogue with Sinn Fein. You have a political representation of the political group, being an insurgency or terrorist group. So search and invite anyone to a political dialogue and talk to them. Of course, the dialogue also goes between your soldiers meeting the local farmers while patrolling; that is also political dialogue. Keep it up somehow, but of course the purpose is to get someone with influence to talk to you.”

Interviewer: “If that is such a big issue as you described it, why did the Americans restrain Karzai from talking to Taliban? After they had defeated Taliban in 2001 and left for Iraq.”

NV: “I think it was a mistake, always talk to people, because there has to be a negotiated solution. The only situation where there is no negotiated solution is a WW2 scenario where you need an unconditional surrender.”

Interviewer: “YouGov and the UN have made some surveys in Afghanistan. Interestingly enough in 2001 only approximately 10% of the Afghan population supported the Taliban and thought of them to be a part of the solution. I think the last survey was from 2013, but now almost 80% of the Afghan population see the Taliban as a part of the solution.”

You have another problem if you maintain this political dialogue with the Taliban. There would be a lot of Afghans, a lot more than in 2001, I think, more than 50% would oppose this decision. Your alliance partner the Northern Alliance the Afghan parliament doesn’t want to talk with the Taliban. So you are going to push a lot of your Afghan local supporters away if you initiate political dialogue with Taliban; that is at least my perception.”

NV: “I disagree a little bit. And even if we take it as such it is our problem to get out, internalize and shape to be able to have a political dialogue. Just because it would be difficult for us doesn’t mean we should not do it, which is like saying because we would shake up our alliance we won’t do something which will lead us to victory. That is stupid, we need to realize that this part of the insurgent strategy, that we as an alliance need to be able to cope with having a dialogue with our opponent. Then we need to settle that internally. I think particularly in a country like Afghanistan, thinking that people won’t talk together is a completely wrong premise. I think that society over millennia has been based on people having a conflict, and then finding a negotiated solution afterwards. I think that is how it has been going

on to a large extent in all societies. You have a conflict and then you need to move on afterwards. So people can talk and negotiate, and I think once we moved in and didn't want to talk to people, we destroyed that actual societal structure in Afghanistan. That leads me to one of the later points again with special operations forces, that some of the things we did was that we killed a lot of the people who should have facilitated the political dialogue, and I think that was a huge mistake."

Interviewer: "Why did it take us 10-12 years to recognize that we have to talk to local people? Or was it because we didn't know whom to talk to?"

NV: "You can talk about lacking cultural understanding, not knowing who to talk to or that it was even a conflict resolution mechanism in Afghanistan, that Americans are stupid. You can say all those things, that it would hinder alliances and some Afghans didn't want it, but the real problem is that we didn't have a proper historical understanding of the counterinsurgency strategies; we drew out the lessons because we were very delayed in getting a COIN strategy in Iraq in 2006, we took the lessons we wanted from former campaigns. We took the lessons from Vietnam, from Malaya, Algeria, Lawrence of Arabia and other places, we took the lessons we wanted and ignored the other lessons. So it was a very hasty process, which wasn't good enough, so we actually devised a wrong counterinsurgency strategy, which relied too much on what Nixon said. A smart core COIN and a hardcore COIN, killing people. That is what Petraeus did in Iraq; we killed some people from the other side and that forced them to surrender and negotiate with us. I think that was a wrong premise, and I think a proper study of the COIN lessons in a historical perspective would have changed that, or I would hope so. So I think that is the real lesson. And that is what could be copied to any future conflicts."

Interviewer: "Once you read the COIN manuals of NATO and the U.S., it is just an observation you may not agree with it. There is a lot of difference between approaches of the different manuals. The NATO manual shows more flexibility towards negotiating political, dialogue and the U.S. manual, although it mentions it, but they are more authoritative in their rules. What could the difference be? And now when you talked about Afghanistan, were we didn't go for political settlements; we were more into killing the enemy. Experience also shows the same thing, so what was the difference? And why do you believe it was there?"

NV: "I don't know actually. I don't think I know enough of the different manuals to properly answer that. I think maybe if you look at the way the American manual is written, the first FM 323 came about with the few people writing it, and the few select experiences going into it, might have been some of the reason behind that."

Interviewer: "The first field manual actually leaned toward Galula's experiences in Algeria, and he wanted to use power to separate evil from the insurgents and actually force something down on the people, to attract their attention, and then seal the border with mines. Let the government do stuff they would not normally do in order to create peace. The funny part is that Galula wasn't that big a name with the French. And his book was gone in 50 years before it was released."

NV: "I think one of the best books I read on the subject was by Gian Gentile: "Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace [of Counterinsurgency]". He presents counterinsurgency as the answer to everything that is wrong; he describes several wars where he describes it as; we walk into a war; things don't go that well from the beginning and things start going bad; then someone shows up with a COIN manual and "bing" everything becomes better. He goes into a lot of explanations why it isn't so, why something else made it better, it wasn't actually the COIN manual. It was a bit of a cult thing, like the cult of COIN. It comes out and it should fix everything; there are not a lot of questions on it, not a lot of new answers. You don't fit it to the scenario you go into."

Interviewer: "And you often use the lessons learned from the previous war, even though they might not be applicable."

NV: "But again you only use the lessons from the previous wars that you find; that is the problem you don't use them all. It is a selective use of history which is always extremely dangerous. I think that is one of the big problems behind it."

Interviewer: "I just have one last question, it is back to the political dialogue. In the beginning you mentioned that the insurgency or terrorism was mostly driven by a local agenda. So is a political dialogue on a strategic level even possible as with the Afghan insurgency or do you have to take it locals by locals, initiate the dialogue with the locals in a different scenario from province to province? Because as I see it, the political dialogue with the Taliban might not

work, because nobody knows how much of the insurgency that they control, my best guess would be below 30%.”

NV: “This is circular because you need to identify the people you need to talk and identify the people to do so, and you can’t do either before you start talking to someone who will lead you down a certain path. I mean once you have chosen a path in Afghanistan, you have chosen your path. It is a little bit circular and you need to avoid that, and I don’t think there is an easy answer. Regardless of how many Mike Martins you have, you can’t always identify it beforehand. So I think it is a process; we just need to start to talk. Whoever is in place as a local governor or official person, mayor or whatever you have in the local governance structure, you need to begin from there and talk to people and find out what it is. You need to sit down and talk and that takes time. Over time you will figure out who is the real one to talk to, who is in charge in a local society. It doesn’t have to be an official person, but it needs to be local, you don’t want to talk to someone who misrepresents the local people that is not good either. That is like us thinking that Karzai represented the people of Afghanistan, maybe that was the wrong bet too. So don’t choose one guy. We did it in Iraq as well; we chose one guy, we chose one exile in America and thought he spoke for all Iraqis, surprise; he didn’t. Go to the local level and talk to someone.”

Interviewer: “I agree on that, but the problem, as I see it, is we have this local political dialogue which of course has to be there at all times, but who at the strategic level should address them? They don’t have anybody to address, they don’t have a leader to address.”

NV: “Well, that becomes very Afghanistan specific, there is still a political landscape in Afghanistan, and they may not be political parties or elected to parliament, maybe it is just some tribal leader who is part of the political landscape. He is part of the power networks, find him and talk to him. It needs to start nationally; you don’t have to go looking for someone in Kirtak to talk to, begin somewhere else; I know it is not easy.”

Interviewer: “You mention two tools as the most important that were crowded out; why were they not used? If they were so central to the mission, why didn’t we use them? I know of the problem in Gereshk with the police, there wasn’t that much police to train or negotiate with.”

NV: “Well, that is the problem with local police, there wasn’t much of it, but I think the police have a different approach. I think it is the ongoing discussion on counterterrorism as well, that it is a police matter and not a military one. So if you could provide some military people to protect the police, but the more police you can see going into an area, maybe not local Afghan national police with the police station in Gereshk, but then it is a Danish police officer lecturing them, going out with them on patrol. Because police have a different approach; the military go out to shoot people, and the police go out to solve problems, ideally speaking. So when policing use police forces and of course they need to wear bulletproof vests, and what have you, but choose some old nice, laidback police officers because they are not likely to shoot at mullahs driving too close to them, and now we are back with the young corporal. The policing approach is a lot better with much of that.”

Interviewer: “But wasn’t it the police part of the system like a fox guarding the geese?”

NV: “Yeah, it is, but I don’t think that change that it is really the solution. I think we have seen that the military wasn’t the solution.”

Interviewer: “So what was your experience with the military doing the policing? How did that turn out, you just mentioned that you didn’t have much capacity, it is the same in Pakistan also that the military has to do police jobs also.”

NV: “I would stay out of it. The military just had a different approach, they wanted to get things faster, they wanted objectives, they had missions to accomplish, they had people to shoot and they are more fire from the enemy, simply. Sometimes you looked at a road and you could see there were a lot of IEDs in the road, and the reason for it was because we drove on that road. The radical approach is if you want to get rid of the IEDs, stop driving on the road. And you can’t do that everywhere, but don’t send the military patrol if you know it is going to take military fire, and people are going to get hurt, then simply don’t do it. Send out a police officer instead who won’t get shot at, and will talk to people instead. Arguably it requires a different mindset to tell the military not to do that, but I think it is the direction we need to go in. Some kind of policing solution where we have the police mindset approach to things in an area to provide security rather than heavy military forces.”

Interviewer: “I’m not aware how much you know about the current situation in Pakistan, but what were the key lessons you think I could take back to Pakistan,

and might be useful there? I know there is one very important lesson which is a common one for us also, there is no police there, so there is no one to take over for the Army when it leaves, therefore the Army never leaves.”

NV: ”I don’t know enough about operations in Pakistan, so I probably shouldn’t advise on anything. I don’t know enough about the situation or what is going on at the top of the operations. But if there was one thing which is very common in most counterinsurgencies, which I think was immediately counterproductive, it was the use of special operations forces and the killing of midlevel commanders. Special operation forces enjoy the privilege of being autonomous and having high prestige and status, so almost everything that special operations force do is accepted. It is shrouded with secrecy, we don’t know exactly what they are doing, but they get away with it because of who they are. In Afghanistan they operated outside the chain of command to a large extent, and I don’t think they always tried to understand anything culturally. They were targeting people opposing us, taking up arms, so in a small area like Helmand, where I was, they would identify the midlevel commanders and kill them. They would go in on night raids they would use drone strikes, and it is not because these people were bad, some of them had killed Danish soldiers, so obviously they deserved to get killed, they really did; they were bad people, but it was counterproductive to any solution to the conflict. Because the ones we killed, they were not tribal elders, but they were the people who knew how to solve the conflict. We killed some of the people we should have used to negotiate with afterwards. So we sort of killed a whole level in society of the middle-aged sensible men, those are the ones who take up an AK-47 and fight for their family, but they were also the ones who could tell their family and the rest of society that now is the time to stop. So we killed a level of the key people we should be talking to. I would be restrictive when using special operations forces to kill midlevel commanders. One thing is going after Osama bin Laden that is a whole different high level, but some of the midlevel ones: the locals from the villages, societies, even though they control a cell fighting against you or put out IEDs, don’t kill them because you need to talk to them afterwards.”

Interviewer: “Isn’t that because using special forces to take out people is a one way to track when you have deck of cards with all the most important Taliban leaders in it. After a while you can start removing cards because they are killed but they still have the lower level, so you will go there to take them out.”

NV: “Yes, and the problem is that it is not integrated into the chain of command. So you will have a military trying to do policing, governance and talking to people and operating just alongside them will be the special operations forces not in any coordination with them on a practical level, or at the more political-strategic level. So they will just do their thing on the side, and it is counterproductive to the overall effort. I think that would be slightly different in a pure terrorist scenario we would have smaller terrorism groups, if I were back with the Rote Armee Fraktion in Germany you would have a police special force searching out key leaders from the terrorist group, but that is different from an insurgency rooted in local grievances and functioning in that sense. And then you could say we have an open view over an area with an insurgency we have identified 50 people, this type of midlevel people, why don't we go in and kill them, that requires a general rejecting the idea, because they are needed in a year or two, for the political dialogue. Because we can't kill them; we need to keep an eye on them, but don't kill them because they are needed afterwards. That would require a strong general to say that.”

Interviewer: “That is also kind of changing mindsets about that, because if you use the police and you can prove he is guilty of whatever, you can convict him. So you can teach them to stay on track within the law, then you won't be convicted, but you will still be alive. The other way around with just killing people is just...”

NV: “Yes, that is a little counterproductive even if you go and kill him, somebody is going to take his place, and he is more radicalized, and it will only fuel the conflict and that stuff. The real problem is that it is the people we need to talk to; they are part of the society that we need to reconcile with in some extent. So to anybody in any insurgency or what is going on in Pakistan, but anywhere in the world where something like that would go on, I would advise against having someone running around killing people as they want. It is counterproductive to the solution.”

Interviewer: “It has been a very interesting interviewing you, but I have one last question, since you didn't deal with information of operations, we didn't account for it in the questionnaire. What about narratives? Did you face any difficulty in terms of narratives? There was a very strong narrative coming from the Taliban over the decade, it is also a problem we faced in our country and we had to fight for the population. So do you have anything to say on that also?”

NV: “Yes, but I need to think about it. It was difficult. I think one of the key lessons was that the only real counter propaganda tool was education of the population, it wasn’t direct refutation. It is very tempting to go in, and go against what the other side says, but I think to stay out of that and educate the population against it. That is a long term thing that will undermine your opponent’s propaganda and inform them, so they will know how to spot the lies, they didn’t shoot 7 people, no they haven’t shot down a helicopter; no the government isn’t predatory in that and that sense; you know you can trust what they are saying. So it is a long-term undermining strategy.”

Interviewer: “And there are no short-term solutions?”

NV: “No, I don’t think there are. The civilian casualties was a classical one, but you can’t make casualties go away if they happened. There is no information operations magic that can make it go away.”

Interviewer: “They could say; don’t dress the enemy’s propaganda with your own propaganda.”

NV: “Yes, exactly. No direct refutation. Slow, steady measured engagement to educate against the propaganda.”

Interviewer: “So that is applying your own propaganda, but at a slower pace?”

NV: “Well, we use information operations, and the enemy uses propaganda..... I think that is how you counter that. There can be certain religious strands of it, where you can go against religious propaganda by saying they aren’t actually speaking on behalf of the religion or the holy Quran or whatever is going on, but you need special people in a special way to counter that, but it can be done.”

Interviewer: “Thank you.”

Interview 11: Jeppe Trautner Denmark, June 2nd 2015

Interviewer: "We will just go ahead with Question 1: How do you classify insurgents and terrorists and do you see any difference between these definitions?"

Jeppe Trautner (JT): "I see them as on a continuum. Terrorism is a tactic whereas insurgency is a political intention. It is possible to imagine terrorists without a real political aim, like a lone wolf, like the Norwegian terrorist who had no allies and no friends and just was crazy. But the very vast majority of terrorism fits, as I see it, into a political framework. Somebody wants to achieve a political change and uses the tactic of terrorism. So whether it is a full-blown insurgency, or it is so small that they are just terrorists, depends on where they are and how much room they are given."

Interviewer: "We talked with Niels about this also: Do you give a certain amount of legitimacy to your enemy when you call them an insurgency instead of a terrorist group?"

JT: "Yes, but I find the alternative is worse. The moment you call them terrorists you focus on their tactics and then you are unable to deal with them, so I would prefer to call them insurgents, militants or something like that rather than terrorists, because the moment you call them terrorists you focus yourself on their tactics, and you can't cut off their political support."

Interviewer: "Exactly, then you are focusing more on eliminating them instead of aiming at solutions."

JT: "My favorite solution with terrorists, which I prefer to call insurgents, is not to kill them but to squeeze them to death, it takes about 10-15 years."

Interviewer: "I would just like to ask what would you think is the primary or main motivation behind the insurgency or terrorism?"

JT: "I find two major reasons for insurgencies, one is ideological, for instance, extreme Islamism like Islamic State and al-Qaeda inspired terrorism; the second is national grievances, for instance, between Afghanistan and Pakistan you have a country: Pashtunistan, which doesn't really exist but because the country doesn't exist there is a void which is filled by anybody

with violence. So nationalism and political ideologies would be the two main drivers of insurgencies.”

Interviewer: “What about the local agendas or materialistic goals?”

JT: “Grievances? There are always grievances, even in very wealthy societies, but if they are not given an outlet through politics, it is much easier for religious or idealistic ideologues or fanatics to capture these grievances and turn them into political agendas and violence. So grievances, yes, they can be used, but somebody needs to use them, and that is where the insurgency comes from. Grievances by themselves will not become an insurgency, somebody needs to organize it.”

Interviewer: “When you look at the Taliban or the insurgency in Afghanistan, would you say that their agendas are driven by a religious approach, or would you say that it is other agendas?”

JT: “Afghanistan is a very difficult question: the whole insurgency in the Peshawar Seven, they grew up with the same school of engineering in Kabul and had the same religious-political ideology, but definitely national differences, ethnic differences split very soon, Rabbani went north and Hekmatyar went east and so on, so I guess at that stage of the insurgency they were religiously motivated but very soon became ethnically motivated as well. I don’t think it makes a very clear split between religion or nationalism, it would be a mixed ethnicity and religious motivation.

I don’t know about the Pakistani Taliban, what makes them act as they do.”

Interviewer: “I will just briefly say how I see the situation in Pakistan, I think they used the narrative, but there was no actual religious motivation, because we have about 200 million people and most of them, about 80-90% do not subscribe to their ideology, which is why they don’t join them and don’t like them. So they are pretty isolated in that sense, and the reason probably is that nobody wants the religious narrative, actually; it was very strong; it had some impact on the population but they did not buy it, so there were not many followers either. And that is probably our side of the experience, vis-à-vis the Pakistani Taliban. But they did not declare much of their political ideology unless they wanted to have their own government system, but they did not try to set up a constitution or an alternative government or anything. They had some radical system, but they did not try to make a government system in the

sense that we know of it, or maybe the Islamic State is more organized if we compare them. They are more organized and more global in their outlook, and their war tactics are more sophisticated than the Taliban in Pakistan. That's what I had to say about it.

So you said that a political ideology would be one reason, what about grabbing power and money and controlling resources?"

JT: "As is well known, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely; and if you are a militant you might be fired on by religious feelings or nationalist feelings, grievances and whatnot. But the moment you realize you have absolute power, I think very many militants are corrupted. And then as you say power becomes an aim in itself. There will always be an element of crime in the militants because they need funding, but for some, many militants, I guess, crime almost becomes the aim after some time."

Interviewer: "You said the primary motivation of the insurgents and terrorists was religious extremism and nationalism but we could also add power and money?"

JT: "Power money and crime, yes. Very few people wake up in the morning and think, "Today I'll be a criminal." Those people try to comfort themselves by thinking in the morning, "I fight for a noble cause." But in reality some of these warlords in Afghanistan, they are criminals. They will tell themselves that the drug money is needed to fuel their noble cause, but in reality they are drug lords.

I think, if you look at many revolutionary movements, very soon they attract criminals because of the power, and the revolutionaries will use the criminals because they are very good at organizing violence."

Interviewer: "What tools do you think would have been or remain appropriate to handle insurgents or terrorists, whatever classification we may use?"

JT: "I have studied how different military forces from different countries look at insurgencies, and I compare the doctrines they use, and I find that there are three families of doctrines, simplified. There are three different approaches to fighting an insurgency, and I don't think any country would choose just one of these, it would be a mix. The better way to answer it is to look at how they are going about it, and then you can see which of the three families of

the doctrines they use on the insurgents; how they regard the insurgents. I did prepare some slides, two or three slides on it, which, if you have time, I would like to show you.”

Interviewer: “Would you please show them to us?”

JT: “I was in Pakistan and India which also have their insurgency problems. They have a lot of Maoists in the northeast. And elsewhere, I’ve also been to Malaysia and looked at that old problem; it is interesting to see how different people perceive insurgencies and the different tactics they use against them.

I think there are three different ways of looking at insurgencies, particularly here in Europe, you have a lot who are liberals in their views on insurgencies; they think that insurgencies are rebellions because of injustice; somebody feels hurt and then they rebel; it is frustration that drives the insurgency. Fear, hate and injustice would be the reason for somebody to make problems, and how to fight an insurgency would be to remove the problem, to be kind to those who rebel, to tell them that you are on their side and you will solve their problems. The moment the counterinsurgency campaign uses violence the problem just becomes worse, so you should restrict violence as much as possible. And how to make the military work in counterinsurgency: first you would send the military to stop the problem and then the civilians will follow up and rebuild the place. That is the idea. And when the military has fixed the military problem you take the military away, to avoid creating more problems, and put in the civilians and they will fix the problem. That is the liberal view, which is very common in Europe, of how to deal with insurgents. It is often called the hearts and minds doctrine of counterinsurgencies; you must have come across it, but probably not in Pakistan very much.

The other of the three is the military technological – or mil-tech - doctrine of counterinsurgency. There you view the insurgents as terrorists, people who have stepped outside the political process and have disqualified themselves, and the only way to fight them is: “They’re terrorists, losers and fanatics,” as a former American secretary of defense put it; then you have to find the bastards and kill them. Find and eliminate; search and destroy, kill them. That will solve the problem. So you have a secure base somewhere; go out, find the terrorists, kill the idiots and go home again in the evening. And it will be a much nicer place. Okay, you need civilians to build a school after you have destroyed the terrorists. Okay, that is partly a caricature, but it is

very much the way I think most western forces operated in Afghanistan until at least 2010. Am I too harsh on this one?"

Interviewer: "A bit, change the year to 2006 or 2007, and I will follow you."

JT: "I see a lot sooner the west adopted the hearts and minds words, but the operations, also the Danish, were clearly to isolate yourself inside your camp, go out and find the terrorists, you can't find them by the way, and go home again, and that meant that the Taliban completely dominated the population. And as they did not speak any language relevant to their area and didn't know what was going on. So the Taliban played the game patiently. We had no impact, sorry.

The third way of looking at the matter is the political way of looking at it. There you see the insurgency as a competition in government. So the insurgents, you say, will have a political program, they have something they want to achieve. It could be a limited program, we just want to rule Swat and live from the money here, and you should stay away, or they could have a global aim like IS: "We want to rule the world," but the insurgents have a political aim with what they are doing. So they are a political competitor who uses violence as their means to get power. And how to fight them? If you look at them this way, you want to deploy your counterinsurgency forces thinly all over. Ideally, you have to focus somewhere, but usually you would say some key towns and dominate them. Then your forces are there for 5-10 years in small pockets everywhere, and they know and talk to the local population, smile to people and keep them safe, and in particular they support the police, the local administration, the state administration, the tax collectors and the judges, and they maintain the order in the area. In this view, people could like the counterinsurgency or they could hate them, it doesn't matter, because the feelings of the population are not important; what is important is that the population obeys the state and not the insurgents. So don't confuse the political view with any kind of kindness, it is not. If you look at how the Brits fought in Malaya it was not kindness it was brutal, but the key here is that there should be very close military political integration, but the military is under the politicians, so the politicians decide what the military should achieve and tell the tax collectors, the mayors, everybody what to do, so there is unity of command and the military is under and in support of the civil authority. Master Mattis, Kilcullen and Petraeus were advocates of this in 2006 in Iraq in the Surge, which was not a surge in troops but a surge in using the brain, and by the way Templer heard so many times of hearts and

minds, but he disagreed with them, he called it a nauseating phrase because he heard it from liberals who wanted to be kind to the insurgents, and that was certainly not his plan. So look at any counterinsurgency campaign and you can find it fits one of the three ways, in my very, very brief summary of a very complex situation.”

Interviewer: “So which of the three do you think was used in Afghanistan?”

JT: “The liberals dominated from 2002-2006, but they completely lost control; it was the Germans in Kabul and nobody really cared. Everybody thought the problem was solved, and interest was in Iraq, so the Americans pulled out and a sea of Germans ran around in Kabul, not knowing what they were doing, so there would be a liberally dominated phase until 2006 or 2007, and also your provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan, many liberals, tried to be kind and nice and win the hearts and minds of the population. Of course, it did not work. Then the Americans came back with the Brits in mid-2006, and came in to kill the terrorists. And as we know everybody with a beard and a Kalashnikov must be a terrorist, it did not work well. And at the same time the ideas of hearts and minds, this soft approach, and this hard approach competed, but then Kilcullen, Petraeus, Mattis had at least limited success in Iraq with, and in 2009, they and McChrystal were brought into Afghanistan and came with these ideas and tried to force these ideas of making the politics drive in Afghanistan trying to force the rest of the military system into it, and you can’t move that many people that fast.”

Interviewer: “What was the previous doctrine, the antiterrorist doctrine?”

JT: “Antiterrorist doctrine, yes. So they tried to get the more political ideas and recreate what helped them in Iraq some years before, and I don’t think this came over well, but at least some part of the way they managed to change the focus of the operations. The airstrikes stopped, for instance.”

Interviewer: “You said that winning hearts and minds did not work well, if I understand you correctly, what were the reasons? Because we are still listening to the phrase at this side of the world, so why didn’t it work?”

JT: ”If you are a farmer living in Afghanistan or in Swat, and even if you by heart feel that you love your government, if someone comes to you and says: “If you don’t do as I say, I will kill your son or you,” then it doesn’t matter, you will obey the one with the power. And it goes the other way around too. Of

course, it is nice if the population likes us, but it is not a necessary ingredient. What I am saying here is not really what is commonly said, but generally I think people will like those who provide order in their daily lives, because for very good reasons what people fear the most is complete chaos. I've been in Africa, I was in Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire, and I have seen complete chaos and it is the worst possible situation. You can't imagine how bad it is. You're not even safe in your home, and you don't know when your children will be killed or raped just in front of you or something like that. That kind of complete chaos is what Iraq descended into in 2006 or 2005. And if people have to choose between complete chaos and unjust order, they will choose unjust order. As Kissinger said, I prefer unjust order to no order, and that is a valuable insight. When the Taliban in Afghanistan burn schools, it is not because they are against schools; what they are really doing is that they tell people if you want your kids to go to school, and all Afghans do, then it will be our schools or no schools."

Interviewer: "That is a strong message."

JT: "It is a very strong message, so it makes sense, burning schools is a political message to the population, follow us or live in chaos, and then most people will sensibly prefer Taliban rule, even if they only get 2 or 5 or 10% of the population to support them politically."

Interviewer: "Because they would provide a governance mechanism?"

JT: "Order doesn't really matter to governance because usually with a dictatorship you can make a deal: "We do nothing against you and you let us live in peace," that is the usual deal in a dictatorship. So as long as you, as a normal citizen, reasonably can think that you can do your own business and that your children are safe on the road and can go to school, then you are reasonably content even if you have no political influence. Everybody will like to be like Switzerland, but if you can't get Switzerland at least you can get order from the IS or Taliban. And here comes the best in our ideas of hearts and minds and whatnot destroying order and then we are surprised people are not very happy. So forgetting the politics of it means that you will screw up your counterinsurgency campaign; that would be my short summary of counterinsurgency."

Interviewer: “The problem from our point of view, from the ISAF point of view, would be that we cannot address the situation like that, we cannot say to the population, if you do not choose us you will have chaos.”

JT: “Or kill them?”

Interviewer: “We cannot apply that tactic, so we have to figure out a concept to at least implement some of the parts of the hearts and minds idea.

This was even the case in democracies in counterinsurgency operations. The Israelis do it to some extent, the French did it in Syria and the Brits in the Himalayas, so it is not uncommon even for a democracy to take measures like that.

But today it would be very difficult to have that strategy.”

JT: “In peacetime or when it is a war of choice our ideals are very high, when democracies fight for survival as in the second world war, we use nuclear weapons against cities full of civilians, no problems. So in peacetime when we are not directly affected our ideals will be fantastic.”

Interviewer: “And the problem is that we are conducting a war in peacetime?”

JT: “Yes, but with Afghanistan I think when we are dealing with it, it is so much easier to be smart after the event, hindsight. I’m very good at this. Looking at everything we did, there were so many mistakes but, however, I think our intentions were fine, and I also think that the net effect of our effort in Afghanistan, talking about the American reconciliation, it is that we have 5 million Afghans who lived in Iran and Pakistan they returned to Afghanistan. I think that is a good success, also there weren’t many girls in school and now there are millions; there were three media outlets and now there are 200, so we have changed Afghanistan, and we even changed the Taliban. Ten years ago the Taliban were against schools for girls and against women working outside their house; now the Taliban thinks that girls should go to Islamic schools and that women could work outside their home if they wear certain dress, so Taliban moved and Afghanistan moved. And I think the net effect of it, in spite of all our mistakes, is positive. I only hope that we don’t pull the support for the capital government, and put Afghanistan into chaos again as we did in 1989 (1992).

The moment the Soviet Union disappeared, the west, like somebody wrote, took Afghanistan like a used handkerchief and threw it on the floor, and that was not morally or politically a very sound idea. And Obama, who is a nice person, I'm sure and good for the American economy, he took Iraq the same way and pulled out, and everything we had achieved was lost in complete chaos."

Interviewer: "And now we have ISIS."

JT: "Yes, and that was not progress from anybody's perspective."

Interviewer: "Just a question I keep asking everyone; there is a difference of approach if we are talking of manuals of counterinsurgency, there is a difference of approach in the NATO manual and the U.S. manual and the one stark difference I realized was that you are more into softer, politically negotiated solutions, and the American manual, although it mentions it, does not go for it for about 10 years."

JT: "I haven't read the most recent version of the NATO manual, but the manual is fantastic because there is something for everybody, there's a lot for the liberals, a lot for the mil-techs, and something for the Clausewitzians. Whereas Mattis, Petraeus wrote There's a lot for And little less for the two others."

Interviewer: "As you rightly commented a few minutes ago, that it was more on the lines of what Galula was thinking. And his is my conclusion as well, it was more in the U.S. ideas, their lessons from Vietnam. So what is your observation on that, why was the difference there? If you agree that there is a difference of approach, then why do you think it is true?"

JT: "NATO is a huge staff bureaucracy without any forces, NATO is completely hollow there is nothing in it, except for the huge staff, and then when they want to make a doctrine all the countries sit around a table and discuss, and they only finalize it when everybody agrees to it. So it will be like a stew of everything you can imagine, so NATO doctrines are not doctrines. They are catalogues of ideas that may work; it is useless as a doctrine."

Interviewer: "And also a consensus organization, so everybody has to agree."

But don't you think if they had implemented NATOS's ideas in Afghanistan, that it would have produced a better outcome?"

JT: "In a sense, NATO's ideas were implemented in Afghanistan, because NATO agrees with everything, it meant there was a complete lack of strategic guidance until 2009-2010 when McChystal was the first one who tried to align what it was doing. It meant that every national contingent did what they thought was right, and one half year you had a Danish unit who fought this way, the next half year they would fight in a completely different way, so it was complete chaos."

Interviewer: "There were a lot of strategies but no connections."

JT: "Even if you have no strategies some of the tactics could be positive, as I think they were in Afghanistan. But with the benefit of hindsight we could wish there had been one consistent strategy and one idea. The Americans are the key to this; they say they are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fighting power in NATO, and $\frac{7}{8}$ in Afghanistan and in Iraq and the others are just adjuncts to American power. So they believe it is probably 95% of what is happening."

Interviewer: "Exactly, so that is why I am asking you why are they so different in their approach, dealing with the same situation?"

JT: "But if you look at the Americans they are very different as well all ready in 2003, in Iraq, the U.S. marine Corps, which has a strong scholarly tradition; they read Clausewitz and think Clausewitzian COIN doctrines, and they had Ramadi and Fallujah. They actually had success there because they understood the politics of the area and tried to work with people, but then the Army and the secretary of defense forced the confrontational antiterrorist doctrine, and the U.S. Marine Corps had to fight for a doctrine they did not agree with. So the Americans are also divided, and when the American antiterrorists messed up in 2005-2006, and it was a complete clear that they were losing Iraq and destroying the American army, in a country with 10,000 fighters as an enemy, then they gave the reigns to Petraeus and Mattis, who took command with their vision of counterinsurgency. So the Americans are split internally, and they fight all the time, who should decide the American doctrines: Clausewitzians, the liberals or the mil-techs or something else."

Interviewer: "They were a house divided once they were in Afghanistan."

JT: "Yes, they always are. As you very well know with the Pakistani forces as well; should the Pakistani forces be the backbone of society, or should it be something else, you know this discussion very well."

Interviewer: "That is one of the downsides of democracy, there are too many conflicting approaches."

JT: "Yes, but when democracies get sufficiently mad, they will do the worst things in action. And in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have a distance where we have the luxury of failing, the Pakistanis don't feel the same way."

Interviewer: "At that time, I do think, at least in Pakistan, that this time when the military went for operations against the militants that the whole political leadership had given consent, and they were all on board once the operation had been started. So the legitimacy granted to the anti-state elements isn't there anymore. In this particular incidence, we have benefited from political leadership consensus, but otherwise I would believe that there are too many opinions, like they say, too many cooks for the broth."

JT: "Yes, but the situation changes and for some years, one person dominates Pakistan, a lot of people in Pakistan felt like the ISI, that everything that hurt India was good no matter what, but now that it really hurts Pakistan, I think that opinion has changed, and now you describe a consensus where enough is enough."

Interviewer: "I just want to quote Jack Nicholson in the "Guantanamo" movie, were he says "we are here to spread democracy not to exercise it"."

JT: "It is easy sometimes to confuse the Clausewitzian view with the liberal view, but for the Clausewitzian, it is about the obedience of the populace, and not the love, that is important."

Interviewer: "We have 10 max 15 minutes left."

We are down to the last question, actually. We have talked about all the others. Do you think, in relation to Afghanistan, that there were some tools available to the military and the governed, but which were crowded out for some reason? They should have been used but weren't."

JT: “Yes, very much, as I said there is a conflict between the schools of ideas and for those who are antiterrorists. In this view, the insurgency will not have patience for political solutions and they won’t have patience for deploying their troops anywhere for extended periods. They want to fix the problem and go home. So ,yes, of course, it was and is a competition between different views on what insurgency is and how to deal with it. And all three of them can’t win at the same time.”

Interviewer: “So basically the political negotiation as a tool was ruled out? Would you say that?”

JT: “I don’t know if it was possible to talk politically with Taliban. I think Taliban until 2007-2009 could believe they could win through a military solution. I think it was only when Taliban was hurt so badly, because they had a lot of success in 2006, but when they were hurt so badly they realized that they could not win Kabul again, then you could talk with them. So you cannot necessarily talk politically with your enemy in the beginning, only when you have hurt them.”

Interviewer: “Only then will they come to the negotiation table.

This question was raised when we were collecting data in Pakistan, and it is very interesting for us: Do you think that civil and military tools are sometimes counterproductive?”

JT: “No, they are always very useful, but only if there is a clear political intent with the use of them. So I think it is political intent that makes use of the military and other state instruments that will destroy an insurgency. So it is wrong to say that this tool is better than that tool. The reason you have an insurgency is because the police can’t handle it anymore; when the insurgency overwhelms the police then you only have the military left. It is terrorism as long as the police can deal with it; it is an insurgency when the army is needed. Could that be a functional differentiation? I think so.”

Interviewer: “So what, in the case of Afghanistan, was the basic motive for the insurgency? Why was there an insurgency in the first place?”

JT: “I think we have to go back to the Kabul engineering school in 1973, where all the people who shaped Afghanistan were either teachers or students, and to their ideas of what to do with Afghanistan, its ethnicities, and Islam. Their

ideas really meant something from 1975, when they had a communist coup, which was completely against what they stood for, and certainly from 1979 when they became the leaders of the mujahedin. And I think the ideological conflict from 1973 and 30 years of war have split Afghanistan into bits and pieces, and it is slowly healing.”

Interviewer: “Sorry to interrupt you, but do you not think it was a governance failure in the first place?”

JT: “Afghanistan was never a strong state, nor is Pakistan a strong state in Swat on the frontier, that gives room for people with a different agenda. And the two communist parties in Afghanistan also messed up very badly from 1975 to 1979 and invited the Russians in. After so many years, there are so many bad things, there is the ethnicity where Haraazas have been killed by Pashtuns and Tajiks by and so on, the ethnicity aspect in the chaos meant a lot. And then there are the political differences where some want a normal Muslim state, and some want a very distinguished state, very few I think, so they are split up, and there is a lot of crime and narcotics.”

Interviewer: “You mentioned history as a foundation for some of the problems. But the western powers supported nationalism and even supported Muslim extremism, because they were useful tools to us against the soviets, because it didn’t exist to the extent it does now, neither in Afghanistan or Pakistan in the 70s or 80s.”

JT: “Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani rule at the time, used Islamist trends to consolidate his power, so it was a trend in Afghanistan and Pakistan at the same time, and so I would say political Islam has quite a strong influence but they have few followers. I think if you ask the total Muslim population in the world there would be something like 2-5 percent who think it would be a great idea to have Islamism. But many people will bandwagon with Islamists because they are well organized, modern, offer a clear narrative, have clear solutions to the problems and clear enemies, but that does not mean that people support their basic ideas. But you are much closer to the problem that I am.”

Interviewer: “So do you think that the ISAF or American military had sufficient cultural understanding once they were in Afghanistan, or were they met with issues because of the lack thereof?”

JT: “The answer is very clear: of course, they did not have enough, you can never have it because at best 1% of your troops know the local language. But I believe it is necessary to speak the local language and understand the culture where you are, what is necessary is to understand the politics and pick some allies in the country, pick the allies you think have the best chance of supporting your favorite solution, and then try to shape these allies so they are as little evil as you can get away with shaping them to be. I don’t think that you should, in a liberal way, try to feel with them and think with them when we intervene, we should try to influence the local balance, to put a finger on the weight scales to tip it in the way we like, rather than fight everybody all the time ourselves, which will not be good, because everybody knows that we are leaving. We have decided to intervene in this mess, and I think it is a moral duty to get the best out of here for our own populations and for the poor countries we are engaged in, so pick some allies and try to shape them into something sensible. At least something more sensible than was before. I consider Afghanistan a success. There are 28 million Afghans today and 3,000-5000 die because of conflicts, mostly the Afghan policemen and soldiers, and only 1,000 civilians; it is a lot but it is nothing compared to 28 million where most people live a reasonably normal life; very many people go a year without hearing shots fired in anger. We focus on the 7 districts out of the 400 districts where some things are really bad, but we forget about the three-hundred-and-ninety-something where they live a normal life.”

Interviewer: “You talked about the national events in the beginning of the interview, what are the key national events that you feel caused the population to side with the insurgent or host the insurgency in Afghanistan?”

JT: “The northern alliance was always very Tajik dominated with Burhanuddin Rabbani and Massoud, and they won the power game in the middle ‘90s, but they weren’t really compensated and they didn’t manage to get the Pashtuns abroad, which the Taliban did in 1996. But the damage has been done, when people rally in ethnic groups and exclude others there will be a lot of damage and it will take many years to repair that.”

Interviewer: “If we have a first reaction to the Northern Alliance government, could it be that?”

JT: “I can imagine that the Northern Alliance government was not very representative; I think they just enjoyed power and they got it. And as I re-

member they had to destroy Kabul to take it, which isn't really the best way to make yourself popular with the population."

Interviewer: "One last question. I just want to ask you why do you think that once they had stopped for quite a long time with skirmishes, and suddenly it escalated with this idea, recently we heard that the UN observers said they had attacked from that side of the water, which was a surprise for us, so why do you think they have resolved to this tactic?"

JT: "I see it like the conflict between the India and Pakistan it is very political, there are people in Pakistan and in India who won't benefit from India and Pakistan cooperating, so when the Indian prime minister invited the Pakistani prime minister to visit and so on, a lot of people wanted to stop that. And it is very easy to generate tension and it is very difficult, and it takes a long time to deescalate and create trust, and some benefit from that. A very small laboratory of these dynamics can be seen in Cyprus, which is a divided island with the UN in the middle and so many businesspeople are reliant on the UN, so every time they try to pull back UN troops, because it is silly to have them at all between two EU members, somebody will stir up some trouble. And I think some of the dynamic are there, but in Azad in Kashmir for example the legitimacy of the rulers hinges on the enmity with India, there are pan-Islamists extremists all waiting with arms there; there are extremists from Gulistan and Swat fighting in Kashmir and even some Arabs, paid by Osama bin Laden."

Interviewer: "It's a ready narrative for them."

JT: "Yes. So there are people who fight for illogical reasons, or because of national feelings prefer confrontation."

Interview 12: Franz-Michael Mellbin
Denmark, June 2nd 2015

Interviewer: "How do you classify your enemy vis-à-vis Afghanistan and your experiences there?"

Franz-Michael Mellbin (FM): "I think one thing that is very important is that it's a very complex situation. If you define your enemy too narrowly, you miss a lot of key elements because the insurgency or the counter-government activities are spread amongst a number of actors with very different motives. You will have people who are opposed for ideological reasons and some who oppose because they are trying to establish a safe heaven, which is a fairly resent development; we've seen it because some groups are being pressed out of Pakistan. You have local grievances which also fuel counter-government actions; you have criminal networks, and Taliban; it's a very mixed group of people. In an Afghan context, we like to call them antigovernment elements, to avoid classifying them too narrowly. There's a tendency to call a wide range of them for Taliban, but as I said, in reality, if you're working with these issues, you have to be much more specific. One very good example of how important this is, is to realize that a large part of the people who are fighting nominally for the Taliban are recruited locally, very often for a limited amount of time. And the vast majority of people who are arrested or killed in action with government forces will be from a radius of no more than 20km from where the action is taking place. So you will have all these various interest groups and the terrorist cells of various sorts having an influence on what is going on and fueling what is going on, but they also rely very heavily on these localized elements, which add to the complexity of the situation. So I would say very careful focus on who is dealing with the violent opposition in order to stable the government. That is the core."

Interviewer: "In your opinion what is the main motivation behind the antigovernment actions as we see them today?"

FM: "Historically, looking back at how the insurgency developed, you have a phase which was the armed intervention, which came shortly after September 11. And then you have a fairly stable time period because there are very few foreign troops in Afghanistan and far fewer than people remember; it's quite interesting to show people graphics of the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. What then happens is that we have the Iraq war, which changes everything because that is when there is a resurgence of several trends. One

important trend is that there is a renewed hope that the Taliban can become a real opposition force to the government, actually they had lain very dormant until then. The other thing is that it is again legitimized by state sponsored terrorism, which of course changes everything. We had a fairly interesting period after September 11 up to the Iraq war, where state sponsored terrorism more or less stopped, with Pakistan being the spectacular noncompliant state. But there were other countries; Sudan, Syria, Gadhafi's Libya etc. they stopped that. But that changed when the Iraq war happened. And there was a drive to open a second front because the Americans drew down militarily at that time in Afghanistan, and the political focus in Washington drifts from Afghanistan to Iraq. This was very clearly perceived also among the insurgents. What happens then is that in 2005 we get this spectacular reemergence of the Taliban trying to position themselves as a military force, and they are badly mauled; it is the last time we see them actually trying to field military operations, in this famous battle outside Kandahar. After that, the nature of what the Taliban tries to do changes; it becomes more insurgent level activity. The idea that they can militarily come back vanishes because they would just get killed. The response from the ISAF forces and NATO is then to try to make a drive towards the south, and that is the final moment in the Afghan campaign, because it changes the nature of the military presence in the country. After 2002 we have a fairly stable situation because there is no perceived possible military opposition towards the new government and the foreign troops there. And there is this new chance which appears because a lot of money starts flowing, and support for opening a second front as I mentioned before. And then when you make the drive towards the south you open up a new kind of campaign because you start entering into areas where the Taliban have been able to lie low, remain present but also remain inactive; however, that changed, as I said before, with the big battle outside Kandahar. The perception of ISAF and NATO was that they could not allow the possibility that the Taliban would try to reemerge as a military force; and that is why you get the drive to the south. What happens after that is that you get this fairly low intensity insurgency, which is highly opportunistic. You can't go to the field with the idea of regaining territory, but you can start this kind of ongoing insurgent activity, which actually is attrition. So this is also when the Taliban begins talking about, "You have the clocks and we have the time", and the whole idea of attrition comes in. The effect of the drive towards the south is partly successful in the sense that the last pockets of permanent Taliban control are denied. And in 2007, around Christmas day, the last place where the Taliban can claim there is a Taliban major force is Musa Qala, and since then it was not possible for the Taliban.

The ongoing change in the campaign, from where we have been until today, would be that the Taliban were able to seize a district, claim it was theirs and hold it, and that hasn't been possible since Christmas 2007 with Musa Qala. It's a discussion I have had with the Afghan government, trying to stress to them the importance that the Taliban are denied the ability to claim they are holding a district because of the propaganda effect that would have. The Taliban actually declared it to be their stated goal for their campaign seasons both in 2013 and 2014; they did not do it in 2015 either. But I can promise you, this is what they want to do; they want to take a district and have permanent control. It's been a long time for the Taliban, 2007-2015 – it's 8 years now, it's a long time, and all the while they try to convince their followers that the goal is just around the corner, and now the foreigners are leaving and we have our big chance. But if they are never able to seize territorial control, that bargaining chip will simply not be in their hand, and that is what the struggle is about, as we speak. The picture I have painted is dynamic in the sense that it has these two distinct phases, and now we are in the development of the third. We don't know which direction it will be; it's hanging in the balance. As you all know, if we drew a map, there would be districts where the Taliban actually are in de facto control. If that will be the case when the fighting season closes when the year runs out, I don't know, but that would be of an enormous significance if that would be the case."

Interviewer: "But they will not claim any territory at the moment. Why not?"

FM: "Because they would be killed. They can't come out in the open now. That is the key issue if you are talking about military comeback for the Taliban; it's about territorial control; it's as simple as that. They have a tough job now, I forgot to mention that, these people have been running a low-level intensity fight over many years, based on IEDs and asymmetric attacks, and all these kinds of things. If you want to have a military style operation you need to have logistics, communication, you need a flow of money, ammunition, backup, replacements, and rotation. It is a completely and entirely different game, and I am quite frankly not sure if they have the ability to transform themselves from being able to do sporadic fighting into actually being a military opposition, and I think they are struggling with it."

Interviewer: "In the conventional sense?"

FM: "Yes, because otherwise there's no change in their negotiation position as we move forward, it is just continuous low intensity attrition, and it could go on and on for 20-30 years."

Interviewer: "So what I understand is that territorial gain is the primary motive behind their insurgency?"

FM: "No, I wouldn't say that, because again you have this very mixed group of people who are driving it, so you have some people who are in it for ideological reasons, which is a very small group, actually; you have some people who are in it for the money; some people have built a power base on being military commanders. If there are no wars, they have no power, bases, money or followers. You have criminal gangs, who for example smuggle; people talk a lot about the drug trade, but the fact is that it's immersed in various kinds of what I would call racketeering, which I think is a much better word to use, as it involves drugs, smuggling of ordinary goods, which is a big problem in Pakistan, kidnapping industry all these things combined, And these interests are also driving a part of it. And then there are the localized elements. The things that are driving the insurgency become very complex, because there are so many facets to it, but you can sort of split the question. How could the insurgency survive and be sustained? I think that is an interesting question because it gives us part of the question about what we need to do to change that situation. It was sustained in two ways, through financing and a safe haven in Pakistan. Without those two the insurgency would not have been sustained. On the financing side, it has four primary incomes, one is racketeering. The other source is the drugs that many focus a lot on. Then there's the income nobody talks about, which is remittances, a lot of people working in the Afghan, Pakistani community and in the Gulf States are happy, voluntary contributors to the Taliban, or their families would be in trouble, so they pay a tithe there, and that is quite a lot of money. Then you have the state sponsors, of which there is an unfortunate long list, and it is sad because most states are financing as a hedging strategy and less because they think that the Taliban are a great idea. They are just nervous about not being in on the deal if the Taliban should come back, and then there are the large scale private sponsors from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia etc. We don't have a precise idea about the amount and size, but my own perception is that the four types of income are of equal size. So there is a certain resilience to change on the financing side. Finance is very important and the other thing, of course, is the safe haven in Pakistan. Without the ability to recruit, organize, arm, medicate, redistribution of resources, plan and more

inside Pakistan, it would simply not be possible to sustain the insurgency in the form that it has had for the last decade and as it is today. That is also why Ashraf Ghani; this is something I've done myself actually when I've talked the Pakistani government, very wisely said the Pakistani government is not willing to make the Afghan Taliban their enemies but they could do a lot of other things. For example, if you're from the Taliban you can drive all around Pakistan without getting stopped. If you took a car, and went first to Baluchistan and then to Waziristan, we'd see where you would end up; it just doesn't happen you can't move around in Pakistan like that or at least you will get arrested. But the Taliban they can drive around like crazy; they can drive around with money, drugs and arms and they can recruit freely, and have training camps. The Pakistani government helps all the leadership of the Taliban; they live in houses provided by the Pakistani government, their kids go to schools sponsored by the government, all these things are being provided. Instead of just saying the Pakistani government needs to crush the Taliban, which we have had a tendency to do, but that won't happen because they are afraid of the spillover effect of that. But there is a lot of low level actions they could do, I for example challenged the Pakistani government to not give them privileges, because they might not want them as enemies, but why give them privileges? You are allowing the Taliban to drive around in your country in a way that you would not allow your own citizens to do, just make sure they also get stopped at the police checkpoints, ask them to open the boots and see what's inside, it's very simple. And the Taliban won't turn against the Pakistani government, if it's that level we're talking about; it would annoy them and it would hinder their operational abilities. And that is what Ghani has asked the Pakistani government to do, to do things that reduce the operational ability of the Taliban. As long as that is not happening, Pakistan as a safe haven is also very important. So money and a safe haven and the tacit support, we can always discuss if it is overt support, but that is another discussion. But if they at least didn't give them privileges that they don't give their own citizens."

Interviewer: "Has there been a change in that setting? I mean, since June?"

FM: "That's a tough question to answer. There have certainly been changes within parts of what is going on in Pakistan, and one thing that did happen was that the Taliban leadership, whether induced or not, started laying low. They are not as open in their dealings in Pakistan as they were. I won't say they are laying low because they are very active right now with the spring offensive, but they certainly made sure that they reduced their semi-public

profile, if I can call it that. They are more careful, and they are a lot more careful about who they meet on the Pakistani side, something happened there. The Pakistanis use this to say they don't know where these people are anymore, which may be true, but I doubt it. At least seemingly, at a superficial level, the Taliban have drawn a little away from the public. There is various information surrounding what has happened, since it's a great place for conspiracy theories one of the theories that all this is just being done because then others won't put pressure on the Chinese and the Pakistanis because they can see something has happened. Others say something has changed at the top level, but nothing has changed at the bottom level yet, so the people at the bottom need to get the message also, which is what they tell me from the military side. The Pakistani military says they have changed their behavior, but that it takes time to come into full effect, and they are saying that Sharif appointed this new guy with ISI, but he doesn't have control over ISI anyway. But what I think is very difficult, and I will be very careful ascertaining what is the truth or a charade, is whether the conspiracies are correct or not, but I boil it down to what are the results, and that is interesting. We can have all kinds of assurances or thoughts on change of policies or perceptions, and where we are in the process and how long will it take, but the key factor is: Is it helping us or not? And it is not, and that's the problem. That's why Ashraf Ghani has become much more assertive over the last weeks, and the list is very alive; it's not as new as many people want to make it, but it is an attempt to be much more precise on what we are actually asking the Pakistani government to change. The idea is to target a level where the Pakistani government doesn't have to make the Taliban into their enemy, because they are not ready to go there right now. If you go to Pakistan and talk to them about why they are not ready to do that, the answers I get are that right now they have had this large-scale offensive against the terrorists who were threatening us, so we are not interested in taking on people who are not threatening our state; they are very open about that. If they went against the Afghan Taliban, they believe that the Taliban would be squeezed into Afghanistan as with various other groups, and because the Afghan side is not ready to take on these groups, it wouldn't work. Afghanistan would not have the ability to shut the door on the groups so you wouldn't get the hammer and anvil effect. And once the Pakistani side eased the pressure, it would be safe and they would come back. And then they would certainly be the Pakistani state's enemies. I've had a discussion on how prepared the Afghans are, what they can muster, what their operational capabilities are. Can they overcome more than one offensive, etc.? And I have to say that they have made it very clear to the Pakistanis that it has been amazing that Ashraf Ghani has been willing to

challenge the groups who are not his enemies, TTP and others, who tried at least to establish themselves in safe havens inside Afghanistan.”

Interviewer: “Thank you so much. I was just going to ask this question. I see it this way, that there are safe havens on both sides of the border, with the entire leadership of the Pakistani Taliban living in Afghanistan.”

FM: “First of all it’s quite a few TTP people, compared to the majority, who are in Afghanistan.”

Interviewer: “But that is the key leadership.”

FM: “Some individuals are there, but some have also been arrested, and the Afghan government has attacked some of these places that were perceived as safe havens. The Afghan government will not claim that it has gone after the full breadth of the TTP; it doesn’t have access to all the places, but it has shown a willingness to engage militarily and effectively against some of these people, who are not threatening them. And that is why I said I think it is amazing, that the Pakistani state which is, for all the fragility we have in the county, still a much stronger state; they aren’t prepared to do what the Afghan government is doing. IT shows that the Afghan government and Ashraf Ghani have come to the clear conclusion that there is no middle way. To him the position that the Pakistanis have taken is not a viable proposition, to live and let live. He perceives these circles of criminal terrorist networks as different parts of one whole; as long as you keep one string you are maintaining the whole range of strings, because there is a fleeting line of coinciding interests between them so that in the end they will always support one another against the state actors.”

Interviewer: “So he is challenging them all?”

FM: “He is challenging them all, but the Afghan state does not have the ability to move out full scale towards all the groups, so right now, for example, they are very occupied in the north, there’s a lot of fighting in the south as well, so they can’t handle much more right now. In that sense the Pakistanis’ worries are real enough; it’s likely that if they went after the Taliban that they would flow over border and return again. But in the longer perspective you have to ask if the answer for the Pakistani state is to continue its support for these groups or not. And clearly even the most diehard people in Pakistan have understood that they will not have the Taliban back in Kabul. They all

say that the Taliban were the worst, and it was horrible when they were in control, and now Ghani is trying to create the best relationship there has ever been with Pakistan. But really, Pakistan has never been happier than when the Taliban were in Kabul, but it won't happen again and people know that, of course. The problem is that there's no plan B on the Pakistani side. I don't know, a lot of people talk about it, but I don't see a lot happening. And let's see if it can be shaped, but they are not there now."

Interviewer: "So they are trying to sustain the Afghan Taliban on them in order to promote some kind of political influence?"

FM: "Yes. It is part of this balance, why did they support the Taliban for all those years? Because the idea was once the foreign troops leave, we can push the Taliban back and impose an Islamabad-friendly government in Kabul. And the Pakistani ambassador, he was very funny, he said to me last year when they had 8 or 10 presidential candidates, and I asked if he was supporting any one candidate and talked about the thought of an Islamabad-friendly government in Kabul, and he said; it would clearly fail because all of them hate us. I think it was a funny comment, but it is also partly a true comment. Today there is simply not a strong political drive in Afghanistan that will allow an Islamabad-friendly government to be in power in Kabul. If it is going to appear, it will have to come from outside Afghanistan. So I think in many ways the Pakistanis should see Ashraf Ghani's active diplomacy and outreach as a very good bet, though I am not sure they do."

Interviewer: "You talk of the Taliban almost like an entity, but you started off saying that the Taliban is composed of different groups. But how good has the Taliban been in organizing all sorts of grievance and opposition towards the foreign troops, the government or the new way of life?"

FM: "No, they are not, and you can see that because they change their messaging accordingly. Some simple things like: in the beginning they had a much starker messaging on what kind of Afghanistan that they would like to have, clearly that changed. They lost part of the information campaigns; for example, schools were high on their agenda. They had a policy for attacking schools, schoolchildren and teachers, but they simply gave it up. Because people want schools, and it was very unpopular to kill schoolchildren, unsurprisingly. So they stopped and now they are saying we'll allow girls to go to school. So what to me is very important is the Taliban, except for a very narrow not very well defined group of people who are in it for ideological

reasons, are there to gain power, influence and money. It is part of the fight over resources in Afghanistan.”

Interviewer: “So the ideas from the 90s are dead?”

FM: “Stone dead. The thing is, already 2 years ago when the French had these Champs-Élysée meetings where it was very obvious that the Taliban don’t care about women, they want to be ministers and they want to live there and have control over parts of the country. It is about money. It is not very surprising because the thing we know about the Taliban is what would have happened if they had turned against Osama. Let’s remember that they were asked and encouraged several times, even during the campaign, even just before they were crushed after the invasion, if they would turn against al-Qaeda and help the Americans. Had they done that they would not have been kicked out the way they were.”

Interviewer: “They kicked Osama bin Laden out of Afghanistan previously because he was based in Kandahar and became more and more unpopular in the area.”

FM: “Yes, but the thing is they could just have done what Gadhafi and Sudan and everybody else did, and then there would have been no invasion. Would the Taliban have survived as it is now, I don’t think so. I think they are on the verge of collapse, we will never know the real answer to that, but I always like to liken Taliban with the religious movements we had here, Calvinists and I don’t know what, a strong religious drive going against the old corrupt regime and the corrupt church and the landowners, as it was back then, morally very strong forbidding people to dance and sing and burning everybody who had another view. People got really sick and tired after a decade; all these religious movements collapse because people can’t live like that. In a way you could ask the question: Was the Taliban regime really at its end back then? And, of course, it gets prolonged then because when they come back and try to reestablish themselves, they try to use the moral argument again; it is clearly their argument, we are the evil crusaders and so on. But in reality they have given up, and we don’t see in the areas where the Taliban take over, from time to time, them rounding people up and hanging them, which they did previously. They would hang people just to spread fear. That changed; if you want to position yourself as a realistic part of a future Afghan government you can’t go around doing that. And those policies have been changed. And they are clearly into the business of

strengthening their position in order to get a negotiation leveraged that will allow them to enter government. That is, from my point of view, what the Taliban as Taliban want to do.”

Interviewer: "The Quetta Shura?"

FM: “Yes, they are quite assured people. Then there are a lot of people who call themselves the Taliban, who have no interests in it, because they simply have no interest in peace.”

Interviewer: "Local looting is their income?"

FM: “As an example, yes. And people who are in the racketeering business. Peace would only be bad for them.”

Interviewer: "Back to your previous question: What would have happened if they had delivered Osama bin Laden or turned on him? I think that if they had done so, it would also have sealed the end of the Taliban, because they had built up this profile amongst themselves and the population that: we have the Pashtunwali and what we do is the way to do it. So if they would have bent their knee to a foreign power, especially when Osama bin Laden's arguments were idealistic, that would have been their end."

FM: “You could also say that they had made an enormous effort to get U.S. recognition and they almost achieved it; the U.S. was ready to recognize them on November 1st. It was very close.”

Interviewer: "But I am convinced that the Taliban today, would have turned on him."

FM: “Yes, you are absolutely correct. I have talked to Taliban, and they told me about the things they did wrong. But the biggest mistake they made was not giving up Osama, and they didn't even have to catch him.”

Interviewer: "I think to the leader Mullah Omar, that solution was just not possible, he would have compromised what he had built up."

FM: “Yeah, maybe. Until 2001, before September 11th, Russia and the U.S. were exerting an enormous amount of pressure on the Taliban to extradite Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, to no avail. And even though there was this

enormous pressure from these two countries consistently and in cooperation at that time, it's interesting that the Americans still were ready to take steps to recognize the Taliban. And that is why they clamped up.”

Interviewer: “But why did they leave that position, because when they left for Iraq they actually instructed Karzai not to negotiate a peace with the Taliban.”

FM: “Yes, but that is because Iraq changed everything. Once they got to that point, they got to a stage where the War Against Terror had been redefined by the U.S. government and President Bush. This is most clearly shown in their willingness to engage in Iraq in the way they did. I feel very strongly that the intervention in Afghanistan was the right thing to do; It would have been a disaster of historical dimensions had it not taken place, but unfortunately then we get the wrong decision later, which is the engagement in Iraq which was just a monumental mistake. Probably, one day when the Americans come around, like with the Vietnam War, which took forever for them to face up to, they will recognize that decision lead to the end of U.S. world domination. It's that magnitude of a mistake that was made. His (Bush) legacy will go down with history, I promise you that. It just takes a little more time; the Vietnam War took 25 years.”

Interviewer: “They are still not completely over Vietnam.”

FM: “At least there are some very good insightful books about Vietnam. Actually we didn't talk about that before; the Taliban was very inspired by Vietnam. Back at the time when they redefined their military intervention, because they could see it wouldn't work, they read a lot of stuff about Vietnam, around 2006-2007. They are very interested in how to apply attrition to their enemy.”

Interviewer: “Based on the tactics they also read Mao Zedong. Getting back on track, we have talked a little about it, but going back to the strategic level. In relation to the tools of counterinsurgency, could you outline two or three tools that you see as effective tools in relation to the campaign in Afghanistan?”

FM: “I am a very strong believer of the comprehensive approach, and I think that is what is needed, because the characteristic of the campaign is that it is being run as an insurgency of attrition. So there are no quick fixes. And that is why we need a comprehensive approach. The resource strain will be, is, and has been tremendous, so unless we get our policies in line. We simply

won't be able to bear the cost. Asymmetry and the cost structure are deadly, and we are fielding and paying for the Afghan armed forces, and if we didn't they would collapse. That is also why the EU plays a more important role than people sometimes think, because the police are doing the vast majority of the counterinsurgency, and not the army. The EU and its member states are paying for a large part of the police force. It's a war of attrition, so I think the comprehensive approach is very important, and unfortunately people talk about it, but it has been very difficult to get there. We have had a lot of stark examples of lack of a comprehensive approach in Afghanistan. Some individual partners have tried some with fairly good success; I actually think Denmark did quite a good job there. But clearly the ones who count are the Americans because they are the ones who are putting the resources into Afghanistan, at a level which cannot be compared to all the others together. It doesn't really matter what anybody else does. The U.S. claim that they were pursuing a comprehensive policy, but we don't have to go very high up the grades before everybody will admit that they did not have the ability to create a real comprehensive approach. The big issue on the American side was the lack of political leadership. As I said before; the Bush government's attention was solely focused on Iraq. I know this from people who were in weekly contact with the White House. I was there myself, as Danish ambassador, because the British ambassador at the time was in a video conference with the White House every week, together with his American colleague. Unfortunately, there was no time, direction, preparation; there was no real leadership around the years 2007-2008. So when we had the great push towards the south, and the new face of the campaign, so to say, is taking shape because of that. And that's unfortunately not the focus that is needed to have a true comprehensive approach. I addressed this myself. I will only mention two instances, which went to the American ambassador. One was Karzai's brother, he was very involved down in Kandahar, with the military base there, and he was very greedy. He was raking in enormous amounts of money, but still some people can't get enough, so he colluded with some American officers, and they stole jet fuel from deliveries. This was discovered and some of these American officers were court-martialed, of course, and they got very long sentences in the U.S."

Interviewer: "But no Afghans?"

FM: "No Afghans. There's an American court ruling saying that Karzai's brother and these guys colluded and they made X millions of dollars, and this American guy is going ten years to jail for that, or whatever they got. I went

twice to the American ambassador and said; the whole country knows about this and you are doing nothing; everybody sees it, people will think you are behind it, what else would they conclude? And he just said, "There's nothing I can do," and that was probably true. Then there were the elections in 2009, and this got really messed up, because the Americans shifted midway because they got a new president, and then they went completely haywire. I went twice to the American ambassador, and said to him; I can smell that there is a risk that President Bush will announce Karzai as his candidate, and if you do that the elections are stone dead, because all Afghans will conclude that he has been chosen as the American candidate and nobody will run against him. And Bush did it on the lawn in front of the White House. At that moment the 2009-elections die and that is not a comprehensive approach, and is out of sync. You would find a lot of Americans on the ground in Kabul at that time who understood how important it was to have a good election in 2009, and instead you got Mickey Mouse elections because of this, that was really bad. And then just to make bad things worse the Americans changed their mind, which made Karzai go absolutely berserk, and he has hated the Americans ever since. They couldn't do this, but the comprehensive approach is really important.

The other thing is to have this regional approach, which I think Ghani has understood correctly. If we analyze the problem as one of foreigners influencing different groups of Afghans in order to counterbalance other regional interests, then unless everybody in the region agrees on what an Afghanistan at peace looks like, then someone will always be able to spoil it. And it is very easy to spoil; it's been calculated that it takes 50 million dollars to keep the insurgency alive in Afghanistan, which is a very small cost. So unless there is a good common understanding and balance between the interests of Pakistan and Iran, China and India, it is simply not going to work out. We have had this before, the actors were called something else, but it was exactly the same; the actors were Russia and Great Britain, but that was only because the geography was different then, and the relative strengths were different from now. Now it's India and China, and we had the old standoff between Russia and Iran, India and the British, it is just a classic problem, nothing new. I think Ashraf Ghani has understood this correctly, so he is trying, with his regional outreach, to create this common ground of understanding. We talked a lot about Pakistani interference, but the Iranians are also very active; they are just much smarter about it. They are giving money to the Taliban, and training them, and weapons, and much more. And when I talk to the Iranians about it, they say that they control the Taliban intelligently. They are

clearly staying in opposition to our left field that the Pakistanis are dealing with. But in the end it doesn't make a difference if you do it intelligently or stupidly, the result is what we have to look at. It shows why the Iranians do it, there's no love lost between the Taliban and the Iranians anyway. And the Iranians hated it as much as the Pakistani loved it when the Taliban was in power in Kabul. But what are the Iranians trying to achieve? They are using it as a hedging strategy because they are uncertain about what will happen, and they challenge me and say, "You cannot tell us what the end result of peace will look like." And that is true; I cannot. It is very difficult to see what peace will look like. To clarify what the Iranians could be nervous about, well, they had the Taliban situation a few years ago, and that is something they don't want again. They have seen China moving in to pressure Pakistan, but they are also fearful that China, as part of a deal will put pressure upon Pakistan to shut down the Taliban, but gain influence in Kabul in return, and Iran won't accept that. So they are quite apprehensive and have for the same reason encouraged the Chinese to talk more with them. I don't think this is Chinese thinking but they have to engage more with the Iranians to discuss this and to avoid misunderstandings. So the Iranians are playing the sitting strategy and they move their policy interests in a way which undermines the joint effort of peace. It isn't helpful for the situation, Iranians coming in to Afghanistan with money and support for the Taliban, just like other state actors. The Iranians invited hundreds of people to go along, because they do like the Pakistanis, who could deliver the Taliban to the table tomorrow if they wanted to. They take the leadership and the families, and then you embedded them because then you have them by the throat, having their families is enough. This is not very political correct to say, but that is how it works. The Iranians invite families over as well, and they are now living there, and that gives them some kind of influence. They are trying to get the Taliban to have some access to the government. They want to be sure that Iranian Taliban is part of that deal. So the regional dimension is important, and without this joint understanding it won't work. What I say to the Iranians when they challenge me about the end result of Afghanistan, I don't know what the peace result will be except that it will end with peace. It is better than continuing the war, so take the dive and go for it, but they are not that convinced."

Interviewer: "Since we're talking of tools, in your opinion, do you think there would be a difference in terms of handling the warrant or ending government elements as you say, by the fact that one side has foreign forces on the ground in Afghanistan, and the other is a host nation, does that make a difference?"

FM: “Are you talking about internally driven conflict? Definitely, this is the biggest gap from my view right now, also on the government side, and I’ve mentioned this with the government, and I will do so more intensely in the coming months. The largest gap right now is because Ghani, with some success, has tried to raise this more regional issue, he hasn’t gotten people to change policies, but he has gotten the message across about what the country wants to achieve, and that is a good first step. People believe him, but they don’t believe he will carry through, so they are not acting accordingly. What has been neglected far too much is whether it would be possible to defeat the insurgency by working much more with the local populace. You were talking about tools, and I think this is the third important element. There is a huge gap here, because if you look at what happened in the north where we have this troublesome spring offensive, what I am most critical about is not that there are some foreign fighters who have been pressed over from Pakistan, but how they could build up the stores and personnel in this area without the local population. Ghani appointed this hopeless governor there; it is a localized conflict that has been going on for years. There are illegal mining interests, which are a mixture of “warlordism” and Taliban financing. There are some Pashtu-Uzbek clashes; it is just one big quagmire. The police chief and the mayor hated each other and the army wasn’t there, it’s just hopeless. If they had some brilliant government or the people were talking together, and they were to reach these villages and address the problems, who knows if it had been possible to make such a buildup? I don’t think so. What, unfortunately, is happening now is that the military situation is such that, again and again, the Afghan government is in the defensive position, so the insurgents choose where and when to confront the government forces and they can pick them off. They have tens of thousands; I’m not exaggerating, of checkpoints and outposts. They have four or five guys at each, so if they get attacked by 20 guys they will run to fight another day, so the government has to be on the offensive. They cannot allow having pockets where you can build up huge amounts of arms and people and prepare for offensives, aligning with local warlords to build up that kind of thing. The Taliban are quite smart in tapping into this, because one thing we should not forget is that the Taliban, when they were in power were in control over a large part of Afghanistan, so they know a lot of these areas and conflicts. Some of the conflicts go back decades and they need to be addressed. And, as I said before, I think this is the largest gap we are seeing right now, everybody is very focused on having talks with the Taliban, but I see the patterns on the local level, and much more could be done; it is hugely neglected. The government needs to do another thing. Their forces are spread too thinly, and that is a very costly

tactic, so they need to find ways that will allow them to focus their forces and get on the offensive, choosing where and when to attack. That should be the situation; it shouldn't be the other way around. These insurgents run over six districts and then you have to start fighting your way through IEDs, barbed wire, ditches, and over houses; it's a very tough struggle. They will win in the end, until now they have always done, but it is tough. They take hits all the time, and these are unnecessary losses."

Interviewer: "You need many soldiers for that approach."

FM: "Exactly, they are losing people in droves, it's really bad."

Interviewer: "But if you want to keep on the offensive, you have to leave some behind to maintain the territorial gains."

FM: "When I was working with Helmand, we had some districts, who declared themselves for government, isn't that some kind of insurgency? Have you been in Afghanistan? You go to Helmand, you are down some river and there's a small village. If ten people started walking through that village how many seconds does it take for the locals to know? They know it immediately. They don't have to oppose them or attack them, just pick up their mobile phone."

Interviewer: "The problem is if the ten guys see them with the phone, they might kill them."

FM: "Experience shows it just stops, because it becomes intolerable. You could do scare tactics and start murdering people, but the fact is you just die. The countryside in Afghanistan is great because you can camp up on some mountainside, but you can't go anywhere. They will find out."

Interviewer: "No, of course not, but if those rural cities or villages do not have their security guaranteed by the government."

FB: "That is true, but that is why you need to get people to take the decision, "We will not allow ourselves to be passive," because if you look at Helmand you had something like 10% supporting the Taliban and 10-15% supporting the government. You had somewhere between 75% or 80% who just wanted to be left alone. Then you can't do it. So you need to get those people on your side, and what happens is that you reduce the space where the insurgents are, and then you don't need 60,000 checkpoints, then you need 8,000 checkpoints."

Interviewer: "The problem is how to convince the locals."

FB: "You need, a good governor, and for the military and police to work together, you need an outreach, I'm not saying this is easy, but it is just not happening."

Interviewer: "I think you need military presence to begin with."

FB: "I am not sure."

Interviewer: "To spoil it, I think we are coming to an end."

Interview 13: Lars Erslev Andersen

Denmark, June 3rd 2015

Interviewer: "You don't specifically have knowledge about the situation, but how would you describe the enemy? Would you describe him as an insurgent or as a terrorist, judging from your experience in Afghanistan?"

Lars Erslev Andersen (LE): "The problem is that we have to calculate it both ways, we don't have a simple situation, it is rather complicated. The biggest problem of course in Afghanistan is that it is an insurgency, because what used to be labelled as Taliban is a group with a lot of relations to constituencies in- and outside Afghanistan, and that means you cannot use the counterterrorism strategy because you will have a lot of locals supporting the insurgency. That was also David Kilcullen's conclusion when he was writing about it in his book. I think it is very much to the point for whoever needs to have a counterinsurgency strategy for the situation in Afghanistan, and I think that needs to be developed very precisely or effectively, because I think it has been very difficult to make the proper analysis of the relations between the insurgent, the Taliban, and the locals. Then we also have networks that are exploiting this conflict: let's take the most well-known network, al-Qaeda, which is now in decline. The biggest difference between al-Qaeda, for instance, and Islamic State is that al-Qaeda has never been an insurgent group; it has always been a parasite that has been exploiting insurgency conflicts, and other conflicts. So they have been trying to gain results out of the situation in Afghanistan, the Sudan situation, the Iraq situation, the Yemen situation, the Shabab and so forth. They have never been an insurgency group, and have never controlled territory, except for training camps. And al-Qaeda was under heavy pressure with a successful counterterrorism effort from 2009 onwards, maybe starting already in 2008, and what is counterterrorism in this perspective: it is taking out the leaders. It is what you would call beheading the snake. And we know that works with terrorist groups; it also worked with the Baader-Meinhof or the Rote Armee Fraktion, and with the Brigade Rosse in Italy, well they could take out the leaders and then they could offer some of the members a nice girl and a good car, and then that approach worked out, but that doesn't work with insurgencies. The insurgencies have a political case that needs fixing. But still we have groups in Pakistan which supported al-Qaeda or worked together with them, for instance, the Haqqani-network, which I think, is still active inside Afghanistan. And it is more or less a terrorist organization, but again exploiting some kind of insurgency. The other groups that I think have been more or less a problem

for Pakistan: for instance, the former Kashmiri based group. The most famous guy who was killed in 2011, I think, was Ilyas Kashmiri. He was conducting his insurgency through a Kashmiri-based group, and then because of heavy pressure on this group from Islamabad, he started to be active and work more together with al-Qaeda and what is called Punjab Taliban. You could take these guys out and see that it worked, but it doesn't work on Afghan Taliban, because they are basically not a terror organization. They are a locally based, people- and population-based organization, which want to control the emirate of Afghanistan, and this is a very different matter. And then I think Kilcullen's idea of the accidental guerilla is to the point, and I think the Danish forces in Afghanistan, if you can rely on the film *Armadillo* at least, show us very precisely that if the locals have to make a choice between the incoming insurgency and the incoming foreign armies, they would support the incoming insurgency, because they are more like them, have more of the same agendas. The Taliban did a lot to try to cope with that, for example, by setting up local conflict resolution institutions, as they call it. I think the Danish troops were in the camp, and went out, and basic relations with the locals were lacking. You can come and have your money because we killed your goat, but if I come to the camp to get my money Taliban will kill me, so I better not. That has been a big problem, but now in Afghanistan, it was so obvious there was no relation between locals and foreign troops. Well, then they started, in Gereshk and other places of course but..."

Interviewer: "Why do you think it was like that, was it the mindset coming from the westerners coming to Afghanistan, believing they knew what Afghanistan needed?"

What was the reason there was no relation between the foreign troops and the locals?"

LE: "First of all, in the beginning in 2006 and a couple of years from thence, they had the same strategy as the U.S. in Iraq, and were trying to kill the enemies through search and destroy, but it doesn't work at all. And if you look at Fallujah and Ramadi you know that the more you do that, the more enemies you get, and that was also the experience in Afghanistan. Then we had all the discussions of the hearts and minds issue. We will win your minds by giving you water facilities or whatever, but doing it without roots in the local contingencies. But I think the Petraeus, Kilcullen strategy was different, and I think that it at least worked, for some reasons that we can come back to, in Iraq for some time. But instead of search and destroy, it was protect

the locals and help them, to do the search and destroy themselves. This is what they did during the surge from 2007-2008 in Iraq, not going out, not sending their own marines into Fallujah, but training a local militia to do that and then help building up other institutions. The headline of the change of strategy, I believe, is to turn to the locals, and it had very broad support from critical anthropologists and critical social sciences, and suddenly there was some kind of consensus between critical people, scientists, theorists, in arming people, and probably it worked in Iraq, and we can now tell it didn't work all the way. That is one of the big problems with counterinsurgency, leaving the theater too early."

Interviewer: "You said that in the normal Afghan village you have people who think they are more akin to the Taliban or local insurgency, or what you would call it. Allow me to challenge this bit: I would say that most of them don't care who they are like, most of them care about the security situation. So whoever presents the best perspective for tomorrow will have their support."

LE: "I think that is basically true. When you talk with people and ask why they are supporting the Taliban, they say they aren't supporting the Taliban but supporting themselves. But I think, not to give totally up on my point, is that the insurgents do better understand their needs and their security situation because they do talk with them in their own language. They know the social fabric of these things much better, because they are from the same area."

Interviewer: "That actually hits a basic point in the failure of COIN strategy. It is that exterior forces cannot apply a COIN strategy, not using Galula, at least, that is not possible. What we can do is train Afghan forces to do COIN, because they can do it, they can talk to them but we need to support them of course."

LE: "But, still, you say Afghan forces. I think, look at Iraq, trying the Iraqi army forget it, as long as the army is recruited by the central government like it is, you can forget it. And the thing that worked in Anbar was of course training local Sunni Muslim groups and militias. I mean this is a very good experience to build on, but then when we are leaving them too early as we see in Iraq, they helped the U.S. get rid of al-Qaeda, but the price was that the militia was enrolled with the army, and they were not, and the sheiks should be part of the political establishment. I mean they won, of course, with the all Iraqiya party, but I think also in Afghanistan when the soviets pulled out of Afghanistan the U.S. forgot everything about Afghanistan. There is this funny joke or anecdote that George Bush senior is having his briefing by the

CIA in 1992 and then the CIA says, “We stopped talking about Afghanistan”, and they still had the mission there, and he says, “Are we still there?” Like they didn’t need to be there and were finished there.”

Interviewer: “That is one of the grudges that people in Pakistan have with the U.S. They came into Afghanistan and then they left just like that. But we had to deal with the two million refugees, more the 2 million actually, and they are still there, it is a huge burden on our economy. And then we had to deal with the terrorism, mujahedin and all that. And then America decided to come back to Afghanistan and now once again we are facing the same thing.”

LE: “And I think also, but it’s a totally different story, but I assure you that now in Beijing they are looking. And what will happen there?”

Interviewer: “You have touched upon the subject, but what do you think are the drivers behind the insurgency in Afghanistan? The main motivation?”

LE: “For the insurgents, it is a reestablishment of the Emirate of Afghanistan. There is actually a very good article by Patrick Porter called The Exotic Enemy, on Taliban, published in his book Military Orientalism. The point is that our interpretation of Taliban from the start was wrong, because our discourse on Taliban was: this is medieval, fundamentalist, old shit. You are not able to talk with them; they are beyond reach; they are irrational or whatever. But if you look at how they developed during the war, they are extremely good at coping, in that local area, if the majority wants to have girl schools, it is okay, if they don’t think it is okay in another area then it isn’t okay, and also the code of conduct that Mullah Omar made. When they had their own emirate they would not allow broadcasting of radio and music, but now they are extremely efficient users of the internet, and when they are doing terrorist attacks in Kabul, journalists can easily get access to a spokesman from Taliban who can explain how many they were and what they did, why etc. So they want to reestablish their emirate, it is not the same as what was destroyed in 2001. I think the paradox of the Afghani Taliban, compared to al-Qaeda, is that the Afghan Taliban, like IS, is like the Pakistani Taliban, they are nationalistic, if you ask mullah Omar about this, they don’t care what happens in Denmark or in Europe, in France or the U.S. Leave us alone and we will develop our state and that’s it. Also there has always been a conflict between Taliban and al-Qaeda like between IS and al-Qaeda, for that reason. So they want to rebuild the state based on the principle that they

are deducing from their ideology or interpretation of Islam, or whatever, in a nationalistic way.”

Interviewer: “When you talk about Taliban you talk about it like a unity. I’m just going to ask you about it because I think mullah Omar this is the main motivation for the Taliban. If you ask the other 99% of the Taliban, they will say: well ideology is good but we want money, we want power and ideology can come second.”

LE: “Yes, but you cannot split it up like that. I mean you could make the same distinction during the Danish election, why is Lars Løkke running for prime minister? Because of his liberal ideology or Danish values? Is it because he needs an enormous amount of money to keep his life running? The example from Iraq is more to the point. If you take IS today. One small part of it is IS of Iraq, the rest is nationalistic, secular former Saddam groups coming together to build this state. This is the same, but they need to have some kind of narrative to mobilize the locals, to make a brand for themselves, telling people what they are doing and what makes them better.”

Interviewer: “As I hear it, between the lines, the Taliban consists of a lot of different directions who have chosen a common cause: firstly to get rid of ISAF and take over the government. But do you see that if they succeed, then they will implode because of all the different reasons they have.”

LE: “It depends on how well they succeed in organizing the power there will probably be a risk for fragmentation internally, like with IS. And like it happened with others, like in Somalia, where the al-Shabab is eating itself up, this could also happen for the Taliban. If they succeed like Abdul Aziz in Saudi Arabia, in making a solid alliance between some important groups – I mean this is basically a royal family running the show – so that is a possibility, but then it is almost a totalitarian system. If they tried to do that before 9/11 that wouldn’t have succeeded, I don’t think so because there was a big opportunity in 2002 to go in a new direction in Afghanistan. We concentrated on Afghanistan, because many in the country don’t want all of this shit, and they don’t want the Taliban, but they want a corrupt regime in Kabul, working together with the alliance of warlords, even less. They have to solve it themselves.”

Interviewer: “Do you think that religious extremism or religion itself had a major role in shaping the Taliban into such an entity? How important was the role of religion in your perception, was it a primary motivation?”

LE: “I think it is a complicated question. I think it is very difficult to answer. I think when Pakistan began supporting Taliban and building up Taliban it was basically groups from the Madrasa in the Pashtun area. If you look at religion, it is a very good tool to mobilize locals, which is what they did in many places in Iraq and elsewhere, but what is in the mind of the Taliban leaders, I don’t know. I don’t think they are doing this for religious reasons; they use religion as a tool, more or less, but the tool often works with village people, poor people, because they traditionally have a more solid faith, than the power people.”

Interviewer: “And also because the only education and knowledge they have access to has been the Madrasas for so long.”

LE: “Yes, that is true, and we saw it for instance in Egypt. I mean if we look at the Arab Spring in 2011, the people behind it were the liberals, but they are a tiny group and when it developed they were squeezed out by the military on one side and the fundamentalists on the other. Almost 80% voted for the Brotherhood or Anur Abadi, and you will see the same thing in Afghanistan. They see it like Bush: we don’t want to be the victims of the politics in Washington, appealing to the locals. And the people outside Kabul don’t care about the business in Kabul.”

Interviewer: “What do you see as an appropriate way to handle an insurgency or terrorism, however we may classify them? What do you think could have been more effective?”

You have touched upon the local militias.”

LE: “I think it always has to be based upon local investigations and analysis. The reason why it worked in Anbar in Iraq was that the awakening sheiks and the group volunteered themselves. There was actually a very interesting story, because they started getting in touch with the U.S.; it was not the other way around. They said they weren’t happy with al-Qaeda: we are not happy about the Iranian involvement in Baghdad. They are foreigners, foreigners from Iran or al-Qaeda. I think it well seen when the U.S. agreed to work with them. I would love to make a reference to an article from 2008 in Foreign

Affairs, written by Stephen Simon: *The Price of the Surge*. It is written in 2008, one year after the surge and the Anbar awakening. If you read this article and what they needed to take care of to make sure it continued to be a success, you could say, "Okay, they didn't do that, and now we have the Islamic State", a fantastic article. It isn't precise to say that it worked in Iraq, but the strategy only worked so far, and it didn't work when you didn't keep your promises. In Afghanistan the U.S. military commander, who became the ambassador in Kabul afterwards, Karl Elkenberry, he said it wouldn't work to implement what worked in Iraq in Afghanistan, because of the big differences between the peoples, and there was nobody who volunteered like in Iraq. It didn't work and wouldn't work because of the local differences. So if you threatened me with death, to come up with a solution for what would work in Afghanistan, I still wouldn't know."

Interviewer: "What wouldn't work?"

LE: "I think the big problem in both Iraq and Afghanistan is that we committed so many failures, so we made the situation worse and worse. So we had the recipe, if we looked at in 2009, it was very promising, but not anymore. So I don't know what we could do now."

Interviewer: "One of the mistakes, in Iraq at least, was not keeping on track."

LE: "Yes, of course, and in Afghanistan in 2002, I think the majority of the Afghan people was supporting the effort to build up an Afghanistan that was getting rid of Taliban, which would be based on some kind of transparency, but they were really disappointed because we supported Karzai in relying on these old warlords."

Interviewer: "Was that a lesson from Iraq, where they terminated the army and whatever warlords there were? Maybe they took that as a bad experience and tried to include them in Afghanistan."

LE: "But they didn't even try to disarm them, I mean, Dostum's militia was bigger than the Afghan army."

Interviewer: "Another question, following up on your answer, is: why was that so? Why did that happen in the first place; why were the strategies that we have learned would work not used in Afghanistan?"

LE: "I think why didn't we keep up the momentum in 2002 in Afghanistan, and the answer is very simple; because of Iraq. If you go back and look at U.S. policy in 2002, Afghanistan didn't exist anymore. So the Answer is Iraq and the buildup for the Iraq war. And that is one of the biggest tragedies in this war on terror. It is a lot easier seeing this fault looking back than at that time, but I think there also were a lot of people that warned about it, and what they should have done, and what we thought they were doing when Rumsfeld traveled around the world getting support. Okay, they want to get rid of the Taliban and the Tora Bora camps and then rebuild the country, but they didn't. They had fulfilled their mission around Christmas time in 2001-2002, and then they left it to others to clean up the area, and only in 2005 they realized it wasn't any good because the Taliban was reorganized and so on. I think the biggest problem with the war on terror was that they were so eager go to war with Iraq. I was in the United States at the time and looking at the media, if you for instance switched on CNN, every hour they had a countdown to the war on Iraq. I mean it was not a question of if but when. From the beginning of 2002 and up to 2005, it was already decided."

Interviewer: "Before they actually went to Iraq, the media war had already started."

I'm just trying to get into the kind of discussion again, because what we are looking at is Afghanistan after 2007, and also the counterterrorism after 2007 in Afghanistan. Do you see any negative tools that were used – you probably do – in this strategy that you would like to point out, just one or two, in relation to counterterrorism or counterinsurgency in lessons learned of what not to do?"

LE: "It is a tough question, it's probably a lot."

Interviewer: "You already mentioned not sticking to the original strategy in Iraq was a major mistake, and not keeping Maliki to his promise; the U.S. could have done that; they paid the Iraqi army. But if we take Afghanistan, would you be able to mention something similar?"

LE: "I think the biggest mistake and tragedy was that they didn't, from the start, try to hold Karzai accountable for the development in Kabul, for the buildup of the army and political system. This is the backbone of the fiasco."

Interviewer: "Yes, so you could actually say that both in Iraq and Afghanistan, that holding the Host-nation government accountable has been lacking."

LE: "I think this is a very important point concerning counterinsurgency, and we are seeing the same thing, for instance, in Somalia probably, in Libya and Mali and other places, and that is that you do counterinsurgency by turning to the locals beyond the state and that ends up like a boomerang: you will have the problem thrown back into your face.

And you see the same in Somalia where it is even more visible. One of our young researchers did a study about counterinsurgency in Somalia, and she has this fine concept of Somalia as global marketplace because everybody had an interest in doing projects to earn money: NGOs, private security providers, external armies, intelligence agencies, local politicians. The only one who will gain nothing from this are the locals. The British private security provider they have good times. And what is the government in Somalia? It is a puppet regime. So don't do it beyond the state. I think that is the greatest lesson learned, and that is also the critique you could direct, not only at the U.S. counterinsurgency strategies, but also other ones, including the Danish one. Denmark invented a lot of things, civil military relations and so on, but basically it had been developed before, so it's more of a Danish kind of development. Denmark did not have this long history of counterinsurgency; it is quite astonishing that Denmark ends up being one of the main countries in the Helmand province, to do counterinsurgency with a record of no experience whatsoever. But that is the way it went. My point is that the critique is not only directed at military operations or the civil military cooperation, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs working together with the Defense, it is also directed at the anthropologists and so forth, because they all clapped their hands when we saw the new counterinsurgency going loco. But there is no way you can avoid being in bed with the state. And then this strategy, where we know that Karzai, Maliki, or whoever, they are a little bit corrupt, but that is the system, that doesn't work."

Interviewer: "The last question from me is: We were having a discussion just before you came in, about the two manuals, one developed by NATO the other by America; one is the result of so many countries coming together, so it takes care of many political dimensions but once we see the American manual on counterinsurgency, it is more authoritative, although it mentions taking care of cultural sensitivities and all that, but the manual made by NATO is more accommodating and more into political dialogue and negotiation. Why is the difference there? Do you think that the fact that so many countries came together and made a manual was a good thing?"

LE: "I'm not sure I am able to answer that because I haven't been studying NATO strategies very closely. I am much more concentrated on the U.S. strategies and their problems. So I think I would like to avoid answering this question, even though it is very important."

Interviewer: "I have nothing more.

We are on a tight schedule, so we won't take any more of your time. Thank you, Lars, for participating."

Interview 14: Pernille Dueholand & Louise Mariegaard
Denmark, June 3rd 2015

Interviewer: Our first question is: How do you classify the opponent or enemy in Afghanistan, is he an insurgent or a terrorist from your perspective?"

PL: "Actually, I'm not sure we have this perspective of an enemy, it is sort of a conflict in Afghanistan where you have different groups, so I don't think we ever talk of them as enemies but as part of the conflict.

We normally use references to insurgents or Taliban and other militants, opposing groups, militant opposing groups. So it is sort of a part in a national conflict."

Interviewer: "One of the interesting parts for us is also how you talk about the enemy, the opponent, when you are drafting documents, when you are making your strategy. How do you talk about this enemy when you talk with one another, and what words do you use when you implement it in your strategy?"

PL: "If you look at the later strategy and also the one before it, the term we used was insurgents basically (*oprørere*), it's in Danish, unfortunately. Or else we have used Taliban and other military groups."

Interviewer: "So it is not that consistent? Does it change through the writing or...?"

PL: "I don't know about the early times, maybe right after 9/11. Did you use terrorists? No, we talked about terrorism, you know that the conflict in the region would rub off on the security in Europe, or in Denmark, and that was part of the reason for us to engage, but that was not directed towards specific terrorists?"

Interviewer: "So terrorism is more like a means, or a strategy, than anything else?"

PL: "It is more of insecurity or instability in the region that can have an effect on the rest of the world, in fostering terrorists. And this was referring back to the Taliban regime giving space to al-Qaeda, for example. So it is not related to Taliban or other opposing groups because we do not view them

as being a threat towards Denmark, but they are a threat to the stability in the region. Does it make sense to you?”

Interviewer: “It is not new to us because everybody says something along the same lines.”

PL: “So actually we haven’t talked about the Taliban and other militant groups as terrorists. I don’t remember that we have used that term.

But maybe a good way to look at it systematically would be to look at the strategies that we made over the past years, and the decisions that have been made by the Danish parliament, because you have the phrasings of how they affect the policies.

And you can find all the references to the decisions of the parliament on our web page. So you can see all the decisions made by the politicians.”

Interviewer: “Given your experience in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan, what is your idea about the main motivation behind the insurgency or unrest taking place in Afghanistan? What is the primary motivation for them to continue with their behavior?”

PL: “Their motivation today, in the past or over time?”

Interviewer: “Over the years. Any key factors?”

PL: “I think our perception has been that it was power, to have the power in Afghanistan and to come back to that position in the country. I’m not sure that is how the perceived goal is now. I don’t think they have any ambition of coming back into power, more of power sharing maybe, and influencing the policy of the Afghan government.”

Interviewer: “It is a little bit interesting what you are saying, because we haven’t heard that before, except for yesterday when we talked to Franz Melbin, he talked about that too, but nobody else has.”

PL: “It might also be because, I think, that Taliban today is more split today than they were before, and there are probably factions today that are seeking political influence, which are also more attuned to looking into future reconciliation; they might be more attracted to gaining more of the traditional

political foothold in Afghanistan, being part of political systems, others might not be. I think there are maybe a pretty wide set of goals behind the various Taliban commanders and probably varying a lot at the different levels of Taliban. From the high level, where some may more clearly be leaning towards getting a political foothold, others sticking firmly to their insurgency or the fight; there may also be local motivators in terms of resources, local power, security and so on.”

Interviewer: “But why do you think it changed their motivation from trying to reclaim the government to maybe becoming part of the government, or at least have some political influence? Why has that changed over time? Because ISAF was doing the right thing, or something else?”

PL: “There may actually have been earlier times to where they have been interested in being part of the political process. Maybe we and the Afghan government were not as open to a broader based, negotiated settlement.

I think that is fair to say, they were not part of the Bonn Agreement, and that was the first mistake we made. That was in 2001.”

Interviewer: “Yeah, Taliban actually tried to maybe pursue a political agreement to some extent, but the Americans told Karzai to close that road when they left for Iraq.”

PL: “I think the writing of the history on this chapter is difficult, and I don’t think there will be any agreement on how it should be written yet.”

Interviewer: “I tried to write something about it, but I was overtaken by a book that actually came out three weeks ago, about why we lost in Afghanistan. I can’t remember the exact title, but it was riding with what you say, that the Taliban actually was more open to negotiations in the start, but we closed that down, and they reinvented themselves fighting ISAF in 2005.”

PL: “And I think that is one of the lessons learned: that we can take with us from Afghanistan, that the inclusiveness is necessary with the issue of negotiating and needs to be stressed.”

Interviewer: “Exactly, but I see it more as one of the major problems at that time was also how many Afghans were the Taliban actually representing. My best estimate would be not over 5%.”

PL: “Maybe a bit more at that time but, maybe 20% or something like that, and during the next years it diminished to about 5%.”

Interviewer: “Yeah, so striking a political deal at the time with Taliban would also have lead to complications with the population.”

PL: “And also striking at what terms? It is a little bit hard to say exactly whether that would be satisfactory to the various parties at the time, and it still is the question.”

Interviewer: “Do you think that Taliban are now in a position to make territorial gains?”

PL: “I don’t think that is our assessment at the moment, we don’t see them gaining permanent footholds over cities. Of course, there are areas where they have a great presence, and where the Afghan authorities are basically absent. Well, there has been instances where Taliban has run over cities briefly; it seems that the Afghan security forces have been sent in there and sort of rebalanced the situations, so the Taliban has been pushed out again. So I don’t think that we see them coming back taking control of territory, and making a mini state or something like that, we don’t see them as a vital threat to the security of the government as such, it’s more of a long-term destabilizing effect that they have.

And I don’t see the donors continuing their support if it is the Taliban regime, and in that sense they will lose a lot of the gains they have made so far in the service delivery to the population, so I don’t think they will be able to have a stable society without these service deliveries, that the present government is, with our money.”

Interviewer: “Do you think that is their perception?”

PL: “I’m not sure, but I think that will be hampering their ability to have stable governance over the country. They will be back in the position where they were in 2000 without any money.

Of course, it is our impression that they are present that they have areas where they aren’t disturbed much by the government if you will, but we don’t see them as gaining territory or any sort of vital area like cities.”

Interviewer: “Do you see religion as a motivating factor for the Taliban? We identified power as the primary factor, but do you see religion as a factor as well? Or how big a role do you think religion played in the insurgency?”

PL: “Part of their narrative is that they have the “patent” on how Islam is going to be practiced, and in that sense I think religion plays a role. On the other hand they are using religion as a part of their narrative, and I’m not sure how well founded it is in their day-to-day governance in the regions where they have control.

My impression is that they have adapted some of their norms and beliefs over the years, so they seem to be more willing to accept for instance education for women. They are adapting a little bit to what Afghans are now expecting, that their girls can go to school. It seems that Taliban has acknowledged that; there are some elements where they seem to be adopting to the locals demands.”

Interviewer: “Yes, also because when you are conducting an insurgency, you need local support and if the locals don’t like your program, you will have to adapt it, or you won’t have an insurgency.”

When developing these strategies have you identified some tools during the years that have worked effectively in the strategy and tools that haven’t worked? In terms of COIN and the comprehensive approach, it is pretty much the same from this point of view.”

PL: “With the Danish view, we were trying to emphasize more on getting a workable state that had some capability to deliver to its people and thereby create a foundation for a more functional state. I don’t think we looked primarily at it as COIN in terms of our efforts; it was more how do you build a lasting foundation to peace. We need some functioning institutions that can deliver services that will also crowd out the potential services that Taliban or other insurgents could deliver to the Afghans.

Different countries have different arguments for entering into this assistance for Afghanistan. The UK, for example, had countering narcotics as their essential goal for entering into it, for the U.S. it was COIN, but for Denmark it was the stabilization of the region as such and to a large extent to create development. And of course you can’t make development without having some sort of stabile situation, and that we also provided the military security, but that was as an instrument to create a stabile situation.”

Interviewer: "In these development programs, the aim was to have a functioning state at some level, I think what are looking for is, are there any specific examples of what went well, for example, building schools have been a success, or the opposite also?"

PL: "And I think the lessons learned were that we need to work on all aspects, and Denmark as a country can't do it alone. And that is why more than 60 donors are engaged in Afghanistan and we have donor cooperation and a division of labor. We have engaged in democratization, budgets assistance to the Afghan national budget through ARTEF, we have worked on human rights, education, livelihood, employment. We have looked at different focus areas, and other countries have focused on health or the legislature system, or you name it. All the other sectors. And I think it is very important to have this cooperation and division of labor between the donors, because we can't all be doing everything, but our strategy is that everything is needed; we just have to divide the workload."

Interviewer: "So you have to spread over all sectors, you have to build all sectors at the same time."

PL: "There were many important sectors, I don't think we can say if they were each equally important at any given time, but there were limits to how many sectors we could engage in. I think our assessment is that our education sector has been very valuable both in terms of the number of kids getting access to education and also in terms of counterinsurgency, as it has contributed to a broader sense of a backing for the education of girls, so also normatively."

Interviewer: "But is that a focus point, what the local Afghans would prefer? The militics talk a lot about the security, then stabilization and rule of law, and then the rest will come by itself. Many in the military think that way, but you talk about schools and so on?"

PL: "I think Local security means a lot, but at least some of the priorities of what is important have changed over time."

Interviewer: "I find it quite interesting that you mention schools, I know it is a big issue in Denmark, of course, but combined with what you told about Taliban allowing children to go to school, so the local population has created security because they didn't want their school to be blown up or turned into

something else. So the Taliban changed because the population wants a safe place for their children.”

PL: “I think it could be very interesting for you to look into the Asia Foundation that has made yearly surveys on what the population wants, and how they perceive their own situation, because it has changed over time. At first it was security in first place, unemployment second and education as third. Now it is education first.”

Interviewer: “But that implies that they have security enough, at least to function.”

PL: “Yes, so it has been turned around, and some of the less important issues, at first, are now the most important. I think it is quite interesting to look at those.

I think for the ordinary Afghan, your expectations have shifted as well, where the rest of us expect better services gradually, so when you stabilize the situation, the expectations shift. I think maybe we were not good enough at ordinary policing and so on in the first phase. It has been lagging a bit behind, what we did for the ANA and so on, and that is also a sector where Taliban is still competitive.

We shouldn't single out any countries but we divided the labor out, and it easy enough for me to spot the countries, it is also a very big task.

Yes it is.”

Interviewer: “But they combined it with Germany being responsible for the police force.”

PL. “But it's hard to say that we know lessons that can be used for future situations, it is hard to apply the knowledge to a new location.

You can see more peaceful or developed countries that are more concerned about crime or watershed management and things like that. And we can see now that Afghanistan is beginning to talk about these things, but they weren't 10 years ago, so it is sort of moving in the right direction.”

Interviewer: "You have already partially answered the question that we were going to ask about, if some tools were crowded out and not used while they should have been, but if you have some specific answer that should have been made, but wasn't."

PL: "Perhaps more attention should have been brought to trying to find a political solution; I think that would have been better."

Interviewer: "With the opponent?"

PL: "Yes. And this should have been taken care of much earlier."

Interviewer: "If I may ask why you think it wasn't used? It might have been done much more peacefully with fewer deaths if it had been. From your perception?"

PL: "I'm not sure. The Afghan political game is very difficult, with lots of interests.

I think Denmark is a very small player in this game, I think other players, including President Karzai and the Americans, were maybe not so attuned to try it, at least as we would have preferred today in hindsight."

Interviewer: "Did you find any counterproductive elements in the strategy during the years? Did you find anything in hindsight that some element didn't work."

PL: "There were numerous things that weren't optimal. In the beginning much of it was kind of like trial and error. The first phases: it was very rudimentary compared to today.

It depends on from where you see it, because if you see it from a different point, you could for example have chosen another province than Helmand. So Danish forces wouldn't have been put there. We were actually asked to be somewhere else by the UN, but due to other priorities in whom we wanted to work with and things like that we ended up in Helmand.

If we should look at a very narrow perspective, of how could Denmark have achieved more, maybe we could have achieved more in another province; that is difficult to say, because right now we chose Helmand. It also depends

on how you measure it, because if we had chosen a more stable province, maybe more kids would have gone to school for the money spent and so on.“

Interviewer: “But why did we go to Helmand then? Because we had a relationship with the Germans in the north, and even with the Swedes and the Baltic States, but we preferred to go with the British.”

PL: “That was part of a greater plan, someone should go to the south and we were asked. And we had a good cooperation with the British in Iraq, so that was why we went together with the British, and in Helmand. How would Helmand have looked if we hadn’t been there? We will never know; that is very difficult to answer.”

Interviewer: “I remember the discussions that were going on at the Defense Command in 2005-2006, Helmand looked attractive in some way because there wasn’t a lot of trouble down there, because we weren’t there yet. It was a safe haven for the Taliban, and it was where they originally came from, so it was their backyard so to speak. There wasn’t peace, but it was peaceful enough from the outside, and it only had 3-4 big cities, so they thought it would be manageable.

I think actually it was more a military decision also, to want to engage in the fights, be out at the front, being able to state it and to, in a kind of cynical way, train our own forces. So I think we were very aware that this would be a province with a lot of fighting.

Lars Erslev thought it was kind of peculiar that Denmark with no COIN experience went to the most difficult area in Afghanistan.”

PL: “But there are so many factors and I think that the fact that the Danish defense felt quite comfortable working with the British, was the key factor. Now for instance we have the transport helicopters in the northern part of Afghanistan, and we would go with our gut reaction and go with the British, as it felt right.”

Interviewer: “It is easier for the Air Force because they are truly joint, but the Army isn’t, we can do operations alongside the British but we are not joined. We have our own area and do our own things, but use intelligence from the same source and so on. A helicopter is just a means of transportation and can connect with everything. I think that was one of the reasons we went with the British.”

PL: “But then why not have the PRT there as well? To this day I still don’t understand it. Political wish perhaps.”

Interviewer: “I think they asked for us there, to contribute with something. And we didn’t have much left, so we sent some staff officers. A bit halfhearted, but at least we could plant a flag.”

Is there any difference in your perception between going to some other land with the development work and COIN work, compared to an intervention by the local government? Does that affect the effort or policy? NATO was there as a foreign force compared to Karzai in Afghanistan, would there be any difference in the approach from the two different parties?”

PL: “Possibly. What we tried to do in the development of systems has actually been to stay very much behind the Afghan authorities, in that we have given the money to Afghan authorities. So the local departments build things, with our funding, so it looked Afghan. We didn’t have many Danish flags, it actually was part of the strategy not have many markings or flags.

Of course, there had been schools by the early phase that were built by Danes, but much of our approach has been to channel the money through the Afghans authorities. That is not necessarily a bulletproof strategy either, but we think it has been the best in a difficult situation.”

Interviewer: “Yes, because one of the problems with that approach is the lack of a guarantee for any change at the local level. Because if we deliver the money centrally, we can’t make demands on where it be used. So we need to give them the money and trust that they will use them well.”

PL: “That was the balance all the time, the sort of way we gave money was through negotiations about what general area being prioritized, and we asked the Afghans to make a plan on the project and how to prioritize it. So we made it more specific, and have ongoing conversations with them. But it is a balance between having Afghans learn to budget, plan and prioritize versus our need to ensure results and avoid corruption.

And we didn’t deliver the money at the door. We actually had experts, local staff mostly, within the ministry of education that had been to help build up the ministry and develop the procedures, follow the money and things like

that. But sort of behind the scenes in the way that it was the local department of education that was delivering.”

Interviewer: “Was that an easy task? There was a lot of money flowing around in Afghanistan and I could imagine if they could just go to the other countries without any restraints then why go to Denmark, who couldn’t give that much. In Helmand I met a guy from USAID, and he had a million dollars to spend every day, so they bought airplanes and tried to reestablish the airfield. It was for agriculture in the regions, and he could survey the progress with the planes.”

PL: “You also see that, they could sort of dump a school in the middle of nowhere but as long as you don’t have the ministry of education’s support with teachers and books and counts of children in the area, it didn’t function.”

Interviewer: “The Marine Corps had a “School in a box” system, but with no teachers it doesn’t work.”

PL: “We find that our model is the best one, or else we wouldn’t do it. But it is also a long-term strategy, in building the ministry and functions, getting all the basic things to work. Where are the teachers and how many are there and so on.”

Interviewer: “Has it been a problem that Denmark has focused so much on schools? Is that what the local population really wants? I remember reading that it is a too direct approach to solve a local problem; you have to engage the population who doesn’t want the school right now but a bridge between the two villages for some reason. And after the bridge was built they would come and ask for a school.”

PL: “That is a very important point, and that is the task of the local government. To survey for the wishes and feed it to the central ministry. And thereby contributing to the prioritization of the funds.”

Interviewer: “So it was not the Danish visiting the locals about building schools but with the local government.”

PL: “Yes. 99% of our funds go through national programs, and not directly to Helmand in local programs. Even though if you ask the Danish population they believe we have done the things in Helmand.”

We actually had another part of the program we contributed to, where a part of it is focused on villages and small towns where the locals have discussed what they need like a small bridge or a well.

Something that will be to the benefit of the whole village. They get 200 dollars per family and that program is more or less spread to all the villages in Afghanistan now.”

Interviewer: “Yes, because the military and not only the Danes had some money they could spend in projects, mostly in support of security, but some of the projects were to build wells. And I think in 2008 everybody built wells everywhere. Because it became a measurement of success: how many wells have you built, oh, 10, then it must be a success. It ended up with a story, I’m not sure if it is true, but the picture of the story is that one well was actually sabotaged from time to time, and eventually the military put out a post in the vicinity to figure out what was happening. And it was actually the women who sabotaged it, because previously they would go down to the Helmand River to wash their clothes and whatever, and the men didn’t want to go that far with them. But now they were sitting next to the women, so they couldn’t talk. Maybe you think you are doing the right thing but you may intervene in a way you can’t even imagine.”

PL: “It is probably characteristic for many of the things that went down in Afghanistan together with Iraq. It was a situation where we try to make development where there has been a need for a military presence at the same time, and the difficulty in delivering to judicial development is very high in such a situation, so non-traditional development actors have also been delivering development projects but maybe on a smaller scale. Some of it has been what could be done, but some of it hasn’t been thought through that much.”

Interviewer: “Some of it wasn’t sustainable, maybe it worked for half a year, and then it was useless. But I remember one of the main issues in ISAF was that nobody knew how to measure success, whether military or civilian. When they discovered that one of the criteria of success, apparently, was to build wells, then everybody built wells, and the next month if you discovered you were patrolling together with Afghans that was a success; then it wasn’t wells but patrolling with Afghans. And that happened everywhere, all the way up to central ISAF, and they asked us each month how many patrols we had.”

PL: “That is the risk of having benchmarks. Often we want these benchmarks to focus our assistance or communicate our success. It can divert the assistance to areas where it is not useful.

We have examples of plans from the Danish effort where there had been a benchmark about building 15 checkpoints, and it was realized that the 15 checkpoints might not be that necessary compared to something else, but it was already set as a goal. So sometimes the plan would be formulated very specifically around some targets and you would have to adapt to that.

And if you go to the strategic level you see it in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, as well, where you have a few benchmarks, and one of them is a law against violence against women adopted. It was adopted; was it implemented? No.”

Interviewer: “Actually, I did a study on the Helmand plans and I have just one question that came to me. A lot of the benchmarks were on spending money, so it became a benchmark, did you see any complications in relation to the strategy? At the time, 2006-2008, it actually became hard to spend all the money addressed to Afghanistan, so all the donors looked everywhere, trying to spend money. I think the problem was that the accountability in Denmark was the more money you spent, the better the result.”

PL: “You are deluding yourself; I think there was a clear risk of that. Because we were all very eager on creating success, there was a big focus on spending this amount of aid, or building this amount of whatever, and at times there was a limited absorption capacity. There’s the risk of corruption when things have to go fast.

I think you also have to consider that it was maybe the possible way to measure, because you couldn’t monitor how it was used, there was a lack of opportunity of monitoring the success.”

Interviewer: “So you had a quantitative approach instead of a qualitative approach.”

PL: “You need to remember that the Helmand situation is quite unique compared to the rest of Afghanistan. And in many parts of Central and Northern Afghanistan, we were able to monitor and monitor on impact and not on money spent.

Sorry, but I have to go now, but you are welcome to send me an e-mail or call me, or something.”

Interviewer: “I will. Thank you.

But actually I think we have come to an end here? Maybe we have a question or two?

I would like to ask about the Taliban narratives. It was a very strong narrative, how did you deal with the narratives from the Danish side?”

PL: “I don’t think we did.”

Interviewer: “That is a problem in Pakistan also, there has to be some counter narrative.”

PL: “Yeah, but I think we let it be up to the Afghan government to make a counter narrative, with our help and money; they get a strong statement in delivering it to the population. That was our strategy to push the Afghan government in front of us, and not being the ones making new narratives. We were trying not to be visible. And that was part of what Brahmi sort of preached in the early years that the “light footprint” was important. Letting the Afghans be in the driver’s seat. Trying to let the Afghan government show, they were a better alternative than the Taliban.”

Interviewer: “But don’t you think that a strong narrative from the other side would make the population come to their side? The Taliban made all sort of arguments to make people support them. That’s why I thought that when strategy was being developed for the operation, a stronger narrative should have been a part of that strategy.”

PL: “Yeah, I think that the Taliban narrative was peaking against the international force that occupied Afghanistan. In trying to counter that, we said we were supporting the Afghan government not occupying territory, and that was our narrative in a way. I’m not very sure we were very successful in making it visible, or if we were effective enough in our narrative, that we were just trying to help.”

Interviewer: “That was all from me. I only asked this question because we are also having this problem in Pakistan.”

PL: "But it is quite a different situation in Pakistan. You don't have a lot of foreign troops or foreigners trying to impose something on you."

Interviewer: "And no exit date."

Yes we are fighting on our own soil; we have to live with it."

PL: "Yes, but we have to admit that Taliban was extremely effective at spreading their word and their narrative. I'm not a COIN operative trying to make narratives and blocking web pages and stuff like that."

Interviewer: "Just one last question; the new strategy, could you single out two or three areas that are very important for the Danish Foreign Ministry?"

PL: "You can read the previous one. We are actually continuing along the same path. We are withdrawing our troops and focusing on training, but that was already the plan. So we are still thinking that the government assistance is important and to reintegrating refugees from Pakistan and so on. This is all part of the idea to strengthening the Afghan society and making them able to continue by themselves in a number of years 10-14-18, whatever it might be. It is a long term strategy that has gradually lowered our military presence, and we have expanded our development assistance, and we are now at a very high level: Afghanistan is the country that is receiving most assistance from Denmark."

Interviewer: "Is it tied in any way, that money?"

PL: "Yes, it is tied to these 3 areas: estate building, education and growth and employment, and then we have humanitarian assistance, which is partly used for repatriation of refugees and other humanitarian projects."

Interview 15: Christian Bayer Tygesen Denmark, June 4th 2015

Interviewer: "Our first question is, looking at the initial experiences in Afghanistan, how would you classify your opponent in Afghanistan? Is he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Christian Bayer Tygesen (CBT): "I would classify the insurgent in Afghanistan as an amalgam of groups with many different, local agendas, who share one overall goal, which is to undermine the existing, crucial order: the regime currently holding power."

Interviewer: "So the opponent is a soldier and not essentially a terrorist?"

CBT: "Yes, you could say that. Also with the understanding that within certain limits you can still do business; you can have negotiations; they can flip and they can change sides, whereas the terrorist is more of an irreconcilable element, whom you can't necessarily force to change, or persuade to change, his agenda in the same way."

Interviewer: "Do you think that Taliban could be persuaded to change?"

CBT: "I do think they could and can. I think there are multiple examples of small Taliban aligned groups, or groups calling themselves Taliban or groups that actually may be Taliban elements, who have flipped sides depending on the local power balance. But the top strategic level, the core around the Taliban leadership, of course, it hasn't been possible so far to make them come to the negotiation table in a serious way and actually reconcile. But I think at the local level there've been multiple examples of Afghan army and Afghan police commanders who have struck deals with Taliban leaders, which have worked for shorter or longer periods of time, as long as their interests have been aligned to that extent.

But I think the problem with classifying them as terrorists is that you immediately put them in a box where you can't negotiate with them, meaning that there aren't really any political deals to be made in the long term. Of course, I understand that they are using all means necessary, including military means and attacks on all targets, including soft civilian targets, to advance their aim, and in that strict sense you would usually put them in the same box as terrorists. But since this is a case of counterinsurgency,

we're talking about political solutions, and I would just be hesitant to put them in that box because we have to understand that they are going to be a part of the outcome in Afghanistan. Will we strike a big bargain and sign an agreement and a paper? I don't think so, but they will be part of the national fabric of Afghanistan. And so, labeling them terrorists you restrict your room for maneuver, and you put a large chunk of the Afghan fabric in a category where you can't do business with them in the future, and that's not particularly helpful if you want to advance a stable outcome. Otherwise, the logical conclusion would be that we would have to kill every single last one of them, and that is not going to happen. They are going to be part of the fabric of the political solution, and that's fine, as long as they don't pose an existential threat to the state or a security threat to the immediate surroundings, and more relevant to the international community, not hosting elements like al-Qaeda who pose a threat to targets worldwide."

Interviewer: "You have already partly answered this question, but what, in your perception, is the primary motivation behind this insurgency?"

CBT: "The primary motivation behind the insurgency? I would distinguish between local agendas, of very localized groups who have a very "leave us alone" agenda – they don't really care who is in power in Kabul, as long as they don't meddle in their part of Afghanistan they don't really care. So that is a localized agenda. Then there is the more national agenda, which is where we get to the more strategic level of the Taliban leadership and their national agenda of actually reclaiming or taking control of the reins of power in Kabul again. And there are some elements who have, or have had, a broader objective, like the al-Qaeda elements that are still there in Eastern Afghanistan, who have an agenda that's not bound to Afghanistan specifically but which goes beyond."

Interviewer: "Would you say that there are elements within Taliban who have a broader agenda than a national Afghan one?"

CBT: "No, I would say that the Taliban, specifically, have localized national agendas, but then there are elements with whom they are aligned, who have a marriage of convenience with the Taliban; in particular, al-Qaeda, who have a broader agenda. And then there are elements that operate on both sides of the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, who have an agenda that is more regional; they want to maintain their area as an ungoverned area, where they can preserve their interests. But the Taliban have an agenda that is confined

to Afghanistan, and then there are subcomponents of the Taliban who have more localized agendas.”

Interviewer: “Do you see religion as a primary motivation?”

CBT: “Yes, I do think for the ideological Taliban, for the core leadership, because they have an ideologically based end state of how Afghanistan should be in the future. But for the foot soldiers of the Taliban, motivations vary a lot, and for quite a few of them the primary motivation is religious. It’s primarily a monetary motivation providing of food on the table and providing basic security one brother being in the ANSF and another in the Taliban, and they promote their interests by being on both sides of the fight. For the foot soldiers, it is money and security, because they fear the consequences of not supporting the Taliban in areas where the ANSF is weak, or in contested areas. Further up the chain of command, it is a question of power and ideology and for those who are more ideologically motivated, religion plays a very important part.”

Interviewer: “You mention local agendas and national agendas: I would say that the main driver of these two is the local one. I would say that more than 70% or 80% would be what we define as local agendas.”

CBT: “Local agendas in the specific valley or village, yes, a very small part of the area of operations. They change significantly, these localized agendas, but they share the common denominator that the ANSF and the international supporters pose a threat to their local agenda, so the overall political narrative of the Taliban binds them together on a strategic level to fight against the occupiers and the puppet government in Kabul. They don’t really care about what happens in Kabul as long as it doesn’t affect them, but when it does, it becomes a problem. We have also been part of fueling that insurgency by trying to extend the authority of Kabul-based government to parts of Afghanistan where Kabul has never really had any influence. I very much agree.”

Interviewer: “In relation to the COIN approach, do you see any tools that were highly effective or especially counterproductive? Feel free to include civilian approaches as well.”

CBT: “I will mention some tools that were among the most positive and important lines of effort and some of the most counterproductive. Among the most positive and productive, I would highlight capacity building in

relation to the ANSF and pushing them out to start taking on responsibility for security in the transition process. Building host-nation security forces in order to transfer security responsibility to Afghans, rather than having Danish and British and U.S. troops meddling in the daily lives of Afghans, was something we should have done a lot earlier and on a bigger scale. We tried it earlier with a sort of nation-lead approach, but it was on very small scale compared to what happened when we began really taking this seriously. I was in favor of the pretty ambitious transfer of security responsibility to Afghans, but that doesn't translate into me necessarily being in favor of the quick scale-down of international troops. We could have been there in larger numbers for a longer period, but quickly transferring the lead security responsibility to the Afghans was the right thing to do, because that meant that Afghan troops were the ones who were patrolling and walking around in Afghan villages. It was much more difficult for the Taliban to recruit Afghans to shoot other Afghans. It posed new challenges to their narrative of international forces being there to occupy. That was important and we should have done more of that earlier on. It was one of the most important things we did. Another thing, I would highlight is the education effort, to build schools and provide the possibility of an education for the Afghan youth. I've heard multiple anecdotes from Danish, British and U.S. troops, who have arrived at the middle of nowhere, a small hamlet or Afghan village somewhere, and the top three questions they were always asked concerned security, health/education and some means of providing food for the family. Education was equal to and, sometimes even more important than, health. And I think providing basic education for the Afghan youth gave them a dividend of what stability could do for them if they supported the Afghan security forces vis-à-vis the Taliban, or at least refrained from actively opposing the Afghan security forces by supporting the Taliban. Education was one of the concrete dividends they would get, so it had a short term impact in affecting the mindset of Afghans, making them more invested in maintaining stability in their villages. And I think it also will, or can potentially, have a quite profound effect upon Afghan society at large; it's a country with 30 million inhabitants; half of them are 15 years or younger, and if you look at the adult population of Afghanistan, 80% of them are illiterate, it's a huge shackle in terms of economic development; it creates incredible constraints on economic growth and political development. And it makes it a lot easier for narratives such as the one that the Taliban have peddling to gain support in the rural population when the population is as uneducated as it is. The reason why I think the education drive had quite a profound effect is if the current 8 to 9 million Afghan children who have been going to school for

the past several years are able to take the reins from the current 80% illiterate adult population, that can have a transformative effect. All of a sudden you have a country with a lot better conditions for economic development and for some level of political moderation and worse conditions for the narratives such as the Taliban have been putting out there. Because even though the basic education they get is obviously very poor compared to what you can get in the neighboring countries, it is a lot better than not having any at all. A lot of these young boys have been going to school with young girls as well, and that in itself has a profound effect on how they see basic roles of men and women in the society in the future, because before all this Afghanistan was one of the most progressive countries in the region, so it is not set in stone that Afghanistan has to be this sort of medieval backyard. It used to be one of the most progressive countries in the region where you'd have universities and philosophers and writers and scholars and so on, but the basis for that kind of society requires some level of literacy, and that level of literacy is in the young population who need to grow and take the reins. So education had a short-term effect and can have a long-term transformative effect, which is quite fine, and which might make Afghanistan move beyond the point of no return, and avoid a relapse into the kind of violence they've had before. Those were the two positive things."

Interviewer: "I would just like to add to what you said about education. It's more of a comment than a question. I view education from the perspective of information. By focusing on education we actually also open Afghan society to information from abroad. Those doors have been closed for so long, and now more and more Afghans are beginning to understand the message from abroad, or at least they can get information from abroad that they didn't have access to before. And I think that we will see the progressive development of that effect in 10 or 15 years, which will actually, in my mind, be one of the most positive things we have done. In hindsight, 10 or 15 years from now, I think we will see that some positive elements that can be traced back to exactly this."

CBT: "Yes, and it would make it a lot more difficult for the Taliban to gain support. And they'll have to either live with a lot less support or change their narrative, their political agenda in a more moderate direction; and they are already, possibly, hopefully, saying that they are doing that."

Interviewer: "But you can see that girls can go to school now; that's a change, and women can work now."

CBT: “And that is excellent; it forces them to change and to moderate themselves in a way that increases the odds of a more moderate political development in Afghanistan in the future and education is vital to that.

On the negative side some of the things that I think have been most counter-productive are, for instance, if you look at the counter narcotics effort, it’s been zigzagging between different approaches; and one approach, where we have basically been trying to completely eradicate poppy fields, has been incredibly counterproductive, because you’re taking the livelihoods away from Afghans who have no other alternative but to turn to the Taliban, because why would you support the international presence, or the ANSF, who have just taken away your livelihood? This has been immensely counterproductive. Another thing that has been counterproductive at times has been occasionally spreading our presence too thin over too vast an area, and moving into areas that weren’t really problematic to us. Obviously it’s not as clear-cut as I am making it now; it could have been an area that’s a key transportation route for the Taliban, but the area as such isn’t particularly important, so we move into the area because we want to cut off that route for the Taliban but end up upsetting the locals and creating a hotspot where there wasn’t one. So it’s not always that easy. Often there are real dilemmas that make decisions difficult, and I don’t think many American generals have been particularly keen on spreading their troops to areas where they didn’t think they could hold fast, but there have been a lot of negative examples.”

Interviewer: “Is Helmand one of those examples?”

CBT: “Parts of Helmand. If you go up to the Sangin district, if you go north of Nahri Saraj, Musa Qala, that is an area where I think legitimate questions could be posed of whether we should have been there in such large numbers. There are plenty of examples in eastern Afghanistan, as well, where American troops were placed for months on end as sitting ducks in a valley; and they couldn’t go anywhere. All they could do was just wait for a new attack, a new offensive by the local insurgents, and it made no sense whatsoever. It had an aggravating effect. I think the only positive effect we might be able to claim was that it tied down Taliban or insurgent resources, but that is a difficult sell to the American public; they won’t understand why their troops are there.

We should have been better at focusing more strictly on populated areas, and we have had the same learning curve in Denmark, too, when we had troops out in parts of our area of operation, where they were too far away from

Gereshk, in an area that they couldn't hold, which had very little strategic value, and the only thing that really happened was that we were under attack all the time, losing soldiers in an area that we shouldn't have tried to hold in the first place, whereas things were going well in Gereshk. Simply holding that territory and making it blossom would have been the more realistic way forward. And that is what I think eventually did happen when we began to concentrate our efforts around Gereshk, rather than trying to control all of northern Nahri Saraj. But further up, north of the Sangin valley, there are similar problems. We should have focused on the more populated areas in Helmand: Lashkar Gah and Gereshk."

Interviewer: "We are approaching one of the last questions. In your perception, are there any COIN tools or CIMIC tools, or however you would define it, which could have been employed with better results. I know you have already touched upon some of them, but do you think there are any specific tools that you can say, "If we had applied this it would have generated more success." As you put it, we should not have been spread out too thinly."

CBT: "There was the training of the Afghan security forces, which, when we actually got that up and running sufficiently, had a very positive effect. We should have done that, and more of it, earlier on. If you look at the provincial reconstruction teams, PRTs, Helmand is actually a pretty positive story compared to a lot of the other PRTs because it began very early on to focus on civilians building capacity to transfer responsibility of some of the things on the civilian side that the international community was doing to Afghan hands; and also narrowing the focus of what we were doing on the international side to what could eventually be transferred on to Afghan institutions; and trying to align the civilian transition timeline with the security transition timeline. I think was done at a much earlier stage and in a much more advanced stage of thinking, in Helmand than in a lot of other provinces. When I was there in 2011 and 2012, Helmand was always highlighted as the model to follow by the other PRTs, as a way to look at how can we focus what we are doing at the provincial level to a few lines of activity that can be realistically transferred from international hands to Afghan hands, and what we needed to build in the meantime, in terms of Afghan capacity, to achieve this transfer of responsibility. I think they were very advanced in their thinking from an early stage in the Helmand PRT, and that is something we should have applied and done a lot more of across the country."

Interviewer: "Could I call it a parallel strategy for civilian and military transition?"

CBT: "Yes. Mirroring the military transition to the civilian planning at the provincial level, and that entailed focusing your effort on what could realistically be transitioned to Afghan lead, and then mapping out what Afghan capacity was necessary to be build. The problem is, of course, that it is more difficult to build sustainable civilian institutional capacity, which can maintain a minimally sufficient level of capacity to carry on from where the international community leaves off, than it is to build the minimum level of military capacity, because Afghan soldiers only have to be marginally more effective than their insurgent counterparts, and that is not particularly effective. They only need very little capacity, so it is a lot easier to build that capacity, and just deploy them, than it would be to build the minimally effective civilian capacity. Civil servants need, at least to some extent, to be able to read and write. They need a basic understanding of public administration and some basic wherewithal within their area of responsibility, and that bar is a lot higher than what you would need to train the military parallel to the civil servant, because the military simply don't need that much training. You can have 20 completely inept soldiers, but with one well-trained officer, they can make all the difference, but you can't apply that to the civilian servant. That is why you need to have a realistic understanding of how long it takes to build civilian capacity, and what are the most vital lines of effort within the civilian domain that we have to focus our effort on, so that Afghans can take over responsibility, come the end of 2014."

Interviewer: "Why do you think that these efforts were ignored or somehow got crowded out?"

CBT: "For instance, if I remember correctly, there was actually pretty good civil-military dialogue at the strategic level of the Helmand PRT leadership. And that dialogue, between the civilian and military actors, wasn't as good in most of the other provinces. Helmand was a very important part of the military campaign, but it was actually the civilian component of the Helmand effort that was very strong compared to most other parts of Afghanistan. The PRTs didn't have a particularly well developed civil-military cooperation or dialogue, and so there was this crowding-out effect because the political imperative was to look at the security transition and to make sure the military planning was intact to allow for the security transition to be carried out in a timely way. I think a lot of the attention was directed at the military part of

the effort in that particular province, and the civilian part of it was often not geared to link up to the military timetable because they were either unable or unwilling, or the military was too fast. It was a function of poor dialogue between civilian and military actors, out in the field and in a particular province. It was a function of timetables being out of sync because it's more difficult to build the civilian capacity in such a short timeframe, but the way to deal with that would be to set your goal on the civilian side at a much lower level, and you would have to adjust the military goals as well. And it was also a function of the political attention focusing more on the military dimension because that was what the opposition parties and the population was focused on: When will we get our soldiers out of Afghanistan? And Helmand was more the odd one out compared to the rest of the PRTs, which told the general story of how the civilian and military cooperation went.”

Interviewer: “From a Danish perspective, did you have any difficulty with spreading your narrative against the narrative of Taliban? Their narrative was very strong, and even we, in Pakistan, had difficulty countering them.

And was there any difference between the ISAF forces approach to the issue and the American approach?”

CBT: “The answer to that becomes very anecdotal, because my point of view goes back to when I was in Afghanistan, where I was in Kabul, very far away from the Danish soldiers. When I talked to Danish soldiers and civilians who were engaged in our area of operations in Nahr-e-Saraj, it was my understanding that they had quite a good dialogue with local Afghans, it was very pragmatic and quite down to earth: two guys trying to find out what do we need to do to make your lives a bit better. Also, it was my assessment that the Danish soldiers were very good at doing their utmost to avoid civilian casualties, because if a civilian casualty did occur, it would have a severely negative effect on the relationship with the Afghan population. So they put great constraints on Danish soldiers in the field, which was the source of significant frustration among Danish soldiers because sometimes, when engaged by insurgents, they weren't allowed to return fire. But all this was done to maintain a good relationship with the local population and to make the local population understand that the soldiers weren't there as an occupying power, that they weren't there to force a western-style democracy, with all the problems that come with this, on their local village. They were only there to try and build a more stable and slightly better life for them. That narrative enjoyed greater resonance with the local population. I had a

pretty good relationship with a lot of U.S. special forces, who were a lot better educated and trained, than their regular counterparts within the U.S. Army, and one of the things they were a lot better at was engaging locals, talking to them in a way that was strikingly similar to the Danish approach, of talking to them about their basic needs, and not trying to grandstand and talking about giving them democracy or providing them with a whole new model of government. Rather they offered a very day-to-day, basic narrative of how they could make their lives a little bit better and what were the sources of instability in their area. I think if you look at the American narrative, it varied incredibly, depending on whom, on the ground, was dealing with the local population. U.S. security forces who were put out in villages were a lot better equipped to talk to the locals than a 19-year-old, uneducated American soldier who had a minimum of training, and was put in a position where he had to talk to village elders, who might be 40 or 50 years old, and have a lifetime of different experiences. From the outset, it would be impossible for them to build any kind of relationship with the local population.”

Interviewer: “I think that also reflects the general system in the United States, where you have a very big difference from the lowest educated to the highest, and the U.S. Army needs a lot of soldiers, and many of them are recruited from the lower segments of U.S. society, so there is an explanation for that, and in Denmark we don’t have the same problem.”

CBT: “No, so there are just different conditions from the outset. The Danish and the American armies work in different circumstances, and if you looked at the more privileged part of the American Army; the special forces that were well trained and could pull their recruits from other parts of the American society, the outcome on the ground, in their relationship building with the Afghans, was strikingly similar to the Danish outcome. And in terms of the narrative, obviously it was different, at the national level we were talking about building a different Afghanistan and helping Afghanistan build a state that was at its foundation democratic and could allow them to break with the past cycles of violence, provide basic services to the population. This was the general narrative at the national level, but at the local level it was not Kabul-centric, it was always about the local needs in this valley, and this particular village was what you would have to try to tune in to because if had a Kabul-centric regime narrative out in the rural areas, you wouldn’t be listened to. So it depended a lot on where you listened.”

Interview 16: Ole Kværnø
Denmark, June 9th 2015

Interviewer: "The persons being interviewed are at the strategic level, and that is why you could say it is data collection at the strategic level, but all mentions, of course, especially the disconnect between the tactical and strategical level and also the long command structure between it, and the decisions made at the strategic level, have implications at tactical level."

Ole Kværnø (OK): "Yes, but in that sense I am a bit odd as an interview person because I operated only at the operational level. I was there to translate strategy down to tactics. I influenced strategy from the bottom you may say, but I was never a part of the strategic decision-making body."

Interviewer: "But we already have findings of the strategic corporal and the political soldier."

And we have talked to a few people in Pakistan, who are also on the operational level.

First of all, my point is that the disconnect is not only here, it is the same case in Pakistan. So our first question is how would you choose to classify your opponent is he a terrorist or an insurgent, from your point of view?"

OK: "He is an insurgent. But it would be wrong to classify the Taliban as one kind of insurgent. The structures we met were both real Taliban, real insurgents, you may say struggling for their autonomy or their own freedom of movement in their own country etc., but then on a broad scale right down to regular criminals, terrorists who would finance themselves through corruption, drugs and so on, and all along that scale you will have a mixture of them. That is only the physical opponent, because there is also the, if you will, the invisible opponent of grey figures or power brokers who would operate in both legal and legitimate business and in criminal and illegitimate business, so whether you would classify them... I guess they are hardly insurgents responsible for the insurgency, Ahmed Malik Karzai in Kandahar would be the iconic example of it. Karzai's half-brother who is both chairman of the provincial parliamentary assembly and the biggest business owner in security and the biggest entrepreneur, and one of the real problems with dealing with drugs, so he was everything, and how to classify him? Most of his business was invisible to us. So insurgents on a broad scale but with

affiliations with criminal structures, so clearly problematic, and affiliations also with governmental structures, so clearly problematic. So it is difficult to classify the opponent as one of them.”

Interviewer: “It is not one single entity; it has many elements in it.

So which group would you define as the largest group?”

OK: “The insurgent Taliban.”

Interviewer: “You would say that they are larger than...”

OK: “In numbers, yes, if you look at the ground troops, they would be the largest, it is probably because they would often hire 10\$ Taliban. So, if you will, they were it. It is difficult to classify the structures in terms of size as well, at the core of it. It is very difficult to grasp it.”

Interviewer: “I would say, from my perspective, that the largest group would be the last group you mentioned, the day-to-day hire. Much harder than a centralized insurgent group.

Our next question is, although you have partially hinted at it, but what was the primary motivation of the insurgents, from your perspective?”

OK: “That is a tricky question because the answer they would give, themselves, would be partly political, in order to free their country from an occupation force made up of the U.S. and its allies, and the religious answer, to make up the Caliphate in a local geography, the emirate. It was never the big al-Qaeda ambition to seek the global delivery of the Muslim world as such; it was also connected to a local context, or at least a national one. There is a political answer, there is a religious answer, but there is also a Pashtun answer, where a number of the people we talk to in insurgent areas would often describe the insurgents as having a regional ambition, to establish autonomy for the Pashtun tribes. How those three motives, there would probably be more, would play out in interaction with each other is enormously difficult to come up with a straight answer to. There isn’t one answer.”

Interviewer: “Back in Pakistan, did you see religion as one of the primary factors, or was political objectives more important for them?”

OK: "I don't know. Religion would often be played as a primary motive and can be argued to be it, but I would also be in doubt as to whether that was because of good nature, it is good sportsmanship to mention religion, if that is what you are expected to do. But the real reason would be something else, whether or not religion is the pretext or the true motive is quite impossible to establish."

Interviewer: "It will be an essential part of a narrative at least."

OK: "It is absolutely, it is always almost the infidel occupation force made up of the Americans and us the allies, and the struggle against that infidel occupation force. That would most often be their primary motive."

Interviewer: "Do you think that was a very successful idea?"

OK: "At least something that fascinated some of the local population. It resonated also with the local population. We as the occupation force could be seen as such by both insurgents and locals. The whole idea was, at my time, was labelled governance-lead operations which was the "big McChrystal change". I came in late August, early September 2009 and stayed all through 2010. The big change at that time as to try to move away from enemy centric counterinsurgency to population centric counterinsurgency, but that was very difficult to do in a genuine and complete fashion, so we didn't do it 100%. We tried to establish a euphemism for it that we called government-lead operations, so we only used physical lethal force in support of a governance purpose. But that was only part of it, because we still had remanence of the enemy-centric counterinsurgency with us because there were still bad guys out there who needed to get killed or captured, as my American colleagues, would have it. So you would have us performing governance lead operations as a mainstream modus operandi, whereas we still had the special forces operating against insurgents. The specific individually identified targets that were seen as part of the problem, that couldn't be solved with governance. So take them out, we called it a decapitation strategy, which is of course a very unpleasant euphemism, but the idea was to take out the key notes, leaders and commanders work with the rest. So we had weekly targeting meetings were we would discuss between us, commanders at my level; colonels and up, whether this was an insurgent that the local Afghan government could reach out to, or whether this was a target that couldn't be reached and therefore had to be physically attacked. That of course was enormously difficult dichotomy to be in, as we talked about before, you worked with two

mutually exclusive strategies, because you can't tell the local population that you are there to support them and help the Afghan government reach out to them with political and social deliveries, during the daytime, and during the nighttime you send in your special forces to the same area to take out the insurgent leaders or commanders. That is two opposing strategies that work in mutual exclusivity, and that was part of it."

Interviewer: "How come both strategies were in play? I can accept that you needed to bring the "bad guys" to some kind of justice, but as you said it is very difficult to explain to the local population. Listening to them and wanting to help them, and wanting them to point out their leaders to figure out problems, and then the next night somebody will go out and shoot someone."

OK: "Yeah, that is exactly the problem, and I think part of the answer was a coalition with 48 members, with the biggest cognition partner, the U.S. being made up of different entities who didn't agree either. If you asked over at state, they would say go completely for the population-centric strategy, whereas the Marine Corps, who was in Helmand with a tactical hammer, and they were looking for tactical nails to hammer. They would say; yes, that is all very well, but there are some insurgents out there, Taliban, criminals, drug lords, who are so malign that they can't be reached, so if you stay in the daylight we will serve at night for ourselves because there are people out there who need killing and can't be reached. So it was kind of our friction, our lack of ability to reach consensus amongst ourselves, even within the U.S. structure they couldn't reach a consensus. I guess that was part of the answer. So if we were able to change today completely to a population- centric counterinsurgency strategy. We may have avoided some of the problems, but I am not sure you can do that, it is like working in a Ghetto in southern London, the police might have the best of intentions not to use violence, but they end up being forced to anyway. I guess what I am saying is that in the ideal world, where we could change completely to a population-centric strategy, but that ideal situation isn't there. It is a matter of creating an explanation, a narrative if you will, that is seen as convincing, by the population. And another problem with that is our lack of understanding of any of the local settings or environments we went into, because when we set up the headquarters with six divisions and the forces we were going to send into south in Kandahar in the summer of 2009. We had our pre-deployment training in York, in England, and we had literally dozens of anthropologists and sociologists from the happy '70s, who would explain to us how important it was to keep locals up to date etc., and we of course went into that, the sort of cultural bit

to understand the local setting. It was given to us by 1970s educated sociologists and anthropologists, and we took that to theatre. So when we went in, I don't know how many liters of tea I have had with mullahs and so on, who all remembered the happy '70s and were thrilled to sit down with me and talk about it, but also politics and solutions. But it remained talk only, because the real political power didn't lie there. It had moved to mercenary power brokers like Ahmed Wali Karzai, so we could talk all that we wanted with the local mullah and elders, but they didn't hold the kind of power they used to, back in the '70s. They were happy talking to us about the '70s, and we were happy talking to them because we thought they had political influence, power or decision making power at best. But we figured out that neither was the case, so we spent a lot of time trying to form population-centric COIN with people who weren't really the population, or representatives of it. That was another part of the problem; we misunderstood the cultural setting of the local environment we went into."

Interviewer: "There was a realization that we need to have a mixed approach, including the enemy-centric, and the population-centric, and there was a shift because, as I see it, it started with an enemy-centric orientation. When did you realize you needed a more population centric-approach? Was it an incident that caused it?"

OK: "No, it wasn't it was the realization that our enemy-centric strategy had not worked, we started out in 2001 with Bush who said no state building, no nation building only a light military footprint, and that spells enemy-centric. So we went enemy-centric for a while and then ISAF was stirred up, it was transitioned from British command to NATO command and during that transition, we just developed the same concept of operations further on. So when we the Europeans, in 2003, started sending troops in, we started saying nation building. But we had the same enemy-centric concept of operations, so that was a discrepancy and until 2008 when David McKiernan took over as leader of ISAF, we just progressed in that sort of thinking, having nation building and enemy-centric operations. And I guess it was during McKiernan's command in 2008 there was a realization that it didn't work, and there was the change that McChrystal got the honor for in 2009, when NATO decided to move from enemy-centric to population-centric. The iconic shift happened in the spring of 2009, in concepts like governance-lead operations. The problem, obviously, was that it wasn't necessarily accepted by everyone, and this was combined with the "surge" Obama decided to put a little over 20,000 marines into Afghanistan, most of them to the Helmand Province.

So we separated out from regional command south to regional command southwest that covered only Helmand and the “surge”. The Marine Corps was given command of that. And here comes the problem of personality aspect, because the commanding general James P. Mattis, the commander of I MEF Forward, which was the structure that was inserted in Helmand during the first selection. He came in with his personal belief that a population-centric counter-insurgency was a misconception and couldn’t work. So he, as the commander, came in with a personal conception that counter-insurgency couldn’t be made to work, unless we would return to being enemy-centric.

So we have a regional command south in Kandahar, who under British command tried to move away from enemy-centric to population-centric, but we also have a countermove because of the personality, I suppose, of a Marine Corps general, who came in to take command in the south west, who did not accept that movement away from kinetic force to governance.”

Interviewer: "I like to go back a little because you talked about you doing governance for the DAI and the Special Operation Forces, and they were to some extent spoiling that because of the way they conduct operations. A lot of countries, including Denmark, think that is a good way of conducting counter-insurgency operations in the future."

OK: “There is a heavy lesson to be learned here. One lesson is that governance cannot be a parallel, or development for that matter, we chose civilian lines of operation inside the overall concept of operation where you had security as the physical line of operation and governance and development as the civilian lines of operation. They were never truly integrated in the south, I don’t know if they were at RTC level, they seemed at the operational level at RTC to be better coordinated, but I don’t think they were ever truly integrated; they were parallel on the ground. We were better at it in region south than we were in region command southwest, when I personally moved from south to southwest because we moved all the Danish headquarters down there, we moved our headquarters to where our troops are, so we moved them to Helmand. And taking my little Danish staff with me, there was a heavy realization that we were better at integrating or coordinating the two civilian lines of operation into the military line of operation than you could over in region south because general Nick Carte, commanding general in region south, was very adamant and insisted that we started on the governance purpose of our operation. The opposite was true over at region command

southwest were we would always start with military operations, freeing or liberating areas from insurgent control.”

Interviewer: “Shape, clear, hold?”

OK: “Exactly, and when we were done shaping and clearing, the next thing was implementing good governance, but only after the physical kinetic operations where the Marine Corps had freed an area from insurgent control. They would turn to me and it was my turn to magically create governance to hold the area. And that was a disconnect between the governance line of operation from the military line of operation, but also disallowed us from doing what was also my task, namely to integrate all the civilian actors AID, PRT over to NGOs into the military lines of operation, that never worked neither in south or southwest, but we were worse at it in southwest, because in south we tried: we made workshops and met with the other actors that UNAMA was officially coordinated with, but it didn’t work; we had to do it ourselves. So when we tried to do that in regional command south, at least most of the actors came in to talk about each of the operations and that helped coordinate the civilian lines of operation with the military lines of operation, where as in regional command southwest we never had that coordination; it did not exist. We did not talk to the NGOs, we talked to the PRTs, of course, and ARD, but we didn’t integrate their thinking and planning with our own plans. So they would have to shape their operations with our operations. If that makes sense?”

Interviewer: “It does. And actually in relation to what you said the problem was; we have already heard others say, if you want to have an effective COIN strategy, at least in the theory that has been used, then you need civilian leadership, if you do it with a military lead then it cannot work.”

OK: “I agree completely and that is a very interesting observation. Because over at regional command south, where it wasn’t perfect, it was better than anywhere else in the south. The civilian American top figure was at ambassador’s level, but not the actual ambassador, he and Nick Carter would hold coordination meetings; it was agreed that one shouldn’t be seen as over the other, but it was quite clear that Nick Carter would coordinate his military operations with the civilian top’s ambition to do governance and development. So it worked the right way around. It started with the civilian line of operation and established military operations to support it, which at least was the general principle. Over in regional command southwest, there was

a constant debate over the command line, who actually had command of whom, and the commanding general insisted that all the problems could be fixed if the PRT could just fall under his command, the idea was that we could make military operations and then support them with the civilian lines of operation. I quite agree with you there, David, that it was part of the consensual problem we had, it wasn't clear that we had established civilian leadership or command over the regional area of operations."

Interviewer: "But that was nearer to the tactical level, because I talked with the commander of the Danish battalion when I was there because there was some kind of cultural unawareness about that. It was the second in command who did all the talking and tried to develop whatever he could, but it was the commander who did the military operations. So the civilians didn't understand either why they weren't talking with the commander himself, when they were negotiating peace and prosperity in an area."

OK: "And that lack of clarity in our own command structure; I don't think it can ever be fixed because you will always have a number of instances that don't fall under a clear definition of what the command structure is, but at least we could do ourselves a favour and do ourselves the service of creating clarity in our own planning, so that it would be clear where we started the plan. But I agree; that is one of the places where we had so much friction."

Interviewer: "Even in 2010 I saw that problem in Helmand in Lashkar Gah, because the British commander wanted to clear the last place, Marjah, where he could earn his next promotion, and he almost forced the Danish PRT to support his operation despite his intention not to stretch his forces too much."

OK: "I agree, Marjah was planned in early 2009, before we came in with the 6th division to take command of region command south. Operation Marjah was largely a 10th mountain division operation and UK planned, and that was a completely kinetic operation, and enemy-centric, when we had changed concept in early 2009, it was being planned at the same time. When we came in with regional command south we said it was enemy-centric, so we won't do that mission and there was a lot of noise from the UK and 10th mountain division, and they had been working on it, so the general went to make consensus, if you will, with the Brits and Americans, so we would let operation Marjah happen as the last enemy-centric operation, but it had lasting consequences what we did, because it tainted the whole year of rotation that 6th division was in regional south for, simply because it was

such a large operation that didn't deliver, it delivered for me. It liberated all the area with fewer casualties than expected, but we were never able to follow home with hold, or build the governance. Even trying to insert teachers into schools, we worked with the American concept of everything in boxes at the time, so we had governance in a box, school in a box, you could drop down a governance box with all the things needed for it, and the ambition was to insert a governor and preferably a judge, and then you would have government starting to function, but we never were able to make it work, so the build phase was never implemented, because we never delivered on governance."

Interviewer: "So there were a lot of kinetic games but not many that weren't."

OK: "Sure, that was why operation Marjah was such a disaster at a regional level, at least at the provincial Helmand level, because we didn't deliver what our strategy was after, the governance, so we weren't able to convince the population that we meant what we were saying. In our minds this was the last kinetic operation in support of an enemy-centric operation, but how do you explain that to your local partners, that this would be the last time we "hit" them but we will hit them harder, it makes no sense. So we had a number of discrepancies in our own implementation of our operation, at the same time as we had friction between ourselves based on the fact that we didn't agree on what the concept of operation was. And add to that, Thomas' concept of the problem with establishing clarity in our command structure."

Interviewer: "I'm just going to skip ahead now because we only have a few minutes left. You've touched upon a lot of this already, and I am going to ask three questions at the same time: Can you specify any tools that were most successful with dealing with the insurgency concretely, were some of these tools thrown out and why? Were they not used, for what reason, and should they have been used?"

OK: "The most effective tool we ever saw was in situation like in Nad Ali where a local political figure would be strong enough to establish himself as governor and play out his governor role with acceptance from the local population. We saw it also in Gereshk, there it is probably an even better example, where the local police director and police force could be convinced to minimize corruption to a lower and tolerable level, where the population would actually accept that this little level of corruption was acceptable. I came into theater with a Danish clean sheet ambition of not being part of corruption at all and not

accepting it, obviously that was an illusion. You can't work in a local setting without accepting that there is some level of corruption because that has been a part of the culture forever. So where the governor was seen as legitimate and only a little corrupt by the local population, and he could convince his police chief to act in accordance with that sort of semi-legitimacy, we saw governance that worked. And I think the market in Gereshk is a very good example of it; we saw the same in Kandahar city, when we had a change of mayor in the city, unfortunately the mayor was killed by Taliban, but we saw the same thing that in large districts in Kandahar, where he was able to establish legitimate governance from the side of the local district head or the district mayors. I had a meeting with him, just to illustrate a point, I had a mission to single out the district mayors who were corrupt, and he told me: "You just don't get it, they are all corrupt, it is a matter of how much, but if they are so little corrupt that I can work with them because of their partial legitimacy in their district, then that is the best we can achieve." And we saw that work. We saw education work as some of the best tools to work bottom up, but there we also faltered because you can't just insert school in a box, open a school and expect teachers to seek positions there; it just didn't work, so we had tons of problems going from setting up the physical school to actually filling the schools with students and teachers. It was one side of it, whereas the other side was where we were successful in terms of inserting or helping governance work. It was where we were able to create the conditions for smaller and medium-sized enterprises to open or to thrive. The Danish and the British signature project of making the Kajaki dam in Helmand work, to supply power to the Helmand and parts of Kandahar province and city, that never worked, it wasn't because we couldn't make the power plant work it was because of our change of strategy, where we went from going enemy-centric to population-centric, that also meant we had to focus on the population centers, so we gave up physical kinetic control of the terrain outside the population centers, which meant that the supply grid was controlled by the insurgents, so obviously it didn't work. Therefore we sat up the world's largest diesel generator park in late 2009, early 2010 in Kandahar city. That worked, it gave the basis for small and medium enterprises to actually start working, small bakeries and workshops. That worked, but it was also a problem because it worked in discrepancy with the two contributing nations' military project ambition, namely to establish Kajaki dam as the main power supply. So we had things that worked, but we also had a number of forces that worked against it. What absolutely didn't work was our constant talk about opium and corruption, either we left them as the elephants in the room that we wouldn't talk about, or we went from one

concept of operation to a different, but contradicting one dependent on the local governor and military commander in that place at the time. So we had complete shifts, one month we would do eradication in the Helmand and the next we would change to alternative crops and support decision making by the local peasant from growing opium to growing something else. That was probably our biggest mistake ever that we were never able to address opium or corruption on the strategic or operational level; we were only able to do it at the tactical level and deal with it as a malign thing we didn't talk about."

Interviewer: "And it. of course. always hit the lowest class the most."

OK: "That was exactly the problem. and it came from the strategic problem that we had accepted in the Bonn Agreement, a French type of constitution that gave so much power to the president that he could make the corruption work at the strategic level to the extent that he could appoint each local police chief in each district. When that level is corrupted, it translates down to a tactical corruption without us being able to do anything about it except working against it on a tactical level. So we could try and mediate or avoid too bad a corruption to the lower level, but it would never move up the chain, so it would never solve the problem, the problem being that the president at the top of the cake was the most corrupt of them all."

Interviewer: "Is there discrepancies in ISAF, or even Denmark, wanting to have some kind of prestige projects, but actually it was the small projects that worked. You said yourself it can be a huge project like with the diesel generators or Kajaki Dam or the local Gereshk power plant, but maybe it was a small generator that actually worked for the population."

OK: "Absolutely. And one of the problems we faced in that art was that the local micro projects that worked from the bottom up, when they worked, for example, in Kandahar city, we would try to reach out to the NGOs or individuals who made it work, but by reaching out to them from the side of the military headquarters we delegitimized them. We saw it worked and we tried to support it, based on the illusion that we could do that without delegitimizing those who made it work, for which reason the local insurgent Taliban, or whatever, would turn against the micro projects that actually worked. A very clear symptom of it was a wonderful lady called Sarah Chase, an American, who made little women projects in Kandahar city and it really worked; we took her in as our advisor and she gave us such good advice that we gave her to McChrystal and told him that she had got it so right:

she makes little micro projects that work bottom up to support women who have been infringed or isolated and so on, and we need to support her. Six months later she was killed, for the obvious reason that by supporting her we delegitimized her. It is us falling victim to our logic; that spells out that we know we are there to do good, but we aren't seen like that, and it is our narrative that dictates our opponent's behavior, and we were never able to establish our own narratives. And that can't be done, stabilization operations can never be based on the external military force that comes in with blazing guns and are only seen as do-gooders. It can't be done.

Interviewer: "Were there any specific tools in the strategy at your level, from your perspective, that weren't used but could have been applied with success?"

OK: "Yes, I think the most obvious was the district delivery program, the DDP, because that was decided at the strategic level to be the tool through which we would build local governance. And then we pointed out a number of districts that were our target districts for that program. Had we been able to stick to the idea behind the program, namely to set up the conditions for local governors to step into districts, to establish legitimate governance, then we would probably have been in a better situation than we were when we did, as we did taking the basic delivery program and basing it on our measuring of success by our good, so it was an independent ambition to roll out the budget, and use the budget for the DDP. If we didn't use the money we weren't doing anything, so we had to use it to show that we were doing things. But that meant we were just doing stuff, we weren't looking for sustainable effect, we were looking for an output from our own operational side. So if we had stuck to the original idea behind the DDP which was actually jolly good, I think we could have achieved much more than we did. But we didn't stick to the idea; we changed our concept from being a measurement of the output rather than the effect. I forgot the name of the American clown who was running the project at the regional level in Helmand. During a meeting where someone discussed the clarity of the command structure and asked him with what authority do you actually speak, talking about the DDP in a couple of target districts, he replied with, "120 million dollars, I need spending before the year is over"."

Interviewer: "Yeah, I met a guy like that from the USAID."

OK: "He was also from the USAID. Not necessarily the same guy but could be."

Interviewer: "Probably the same guy. He walked about with his suitcase talking about how many million dollars he had to spend per day in the area, on farming, agricultural stuff and nothing else."

OK: "Exactly, that was the problem. We had a focus on output and also thereby fueled local corruption without that being our goal."

Interviewer: "Unintended consequences."

OK: "Yes, collateral damage, if it had been a kinetic operation."

Interviewer: "One question from me. At the beginning of the interview you mentioned and talked about the disconnect between the strategic and tactical level, could you identify reasons for that disconnect. This is very obvious in our cases, as well, with many of our problems."

OK: "Well, there were several reasons, but three of the obvious reasons would be the problem of making consensus based, this sounds awful, military operations, but you have to have consensus from 48 different countries contributing to the theatre of operations, if they don't consent they will either slightly fall out of the direction set or work against it. We saw that from both the side of the PRTs and the regional commands that they came in with national ambitions, so there was no clarity of the end state, therefore no clarity for the concept of operation between the 48 contributing states. You had Danish strategy for the Danish contribution to the PRT, and so did the Americans and British, perhaps even the Estonians; the Germans clearly did it and the same with the Norwegians, they weren't in line, so that was one reason. Forty-eight contributing states with something like 28 PRTs. Without any sharing of the commander's intent, there was no clarity of the strategic end state and that is the second reason. Right up until the Lisbon summit in 2010, we didn't have clear, limited strategic end state. There was no clarity of the end state, even when we made the ISAF joint command in 2009, the American General Rodriguez, who took up command, developed his own end state. He went as far as to say that the end state for the south would be to establish human security for each and every Afghan. Now how do you do that, it can't be done. So right up until we established transition as the end state in 2010, we didn't have a clear strategic end state. That is reason number two. And Reason number three, I guess for us, not being able to translate the strategy down to the operational level, was out of our own lack of understanding, of the structure we had made, we had facilitated a president-

centric, Kabul-centric constitution that disallowed local governance unless under the control or the line of direction that President Karzai would make. So we were never able to influence the strategy from the bottom; we had to live with a strategy that was given from the top, which is all right, but if the other strategic partner, the national president, doesn't go along with the same strategy, and he didn't, then you can't translate that strategy down to the operational level. So I guess those were the three biggest problems, there were tons of others as well."

Interviewer: "It is good you could point a few out. So it is 5 minutes past our schedule so thank you."

Interview 17: Mads Rahbek
Denmark, June 10th 2015

Interviewer: "The first question is basically based on your own experiences: How would you classify your enemy in Afghanistan, as an insurgent or as a terrorist?"

Mads Rahbek (MR): "We saw them as insurgents when we began. We encountered ordinary, classic military operations from their side and tried to counter them."

Interviewer: "Do you see any differences in naming your enemy one way or the other?"

MR: "I did not at that time, but I think I would do today, due to the development since 2007 until now. But at that time we didn't see them as terrorists at all. We were to create military security there, and the enemy prevented us from doing that by attacking us, carrying out ambushes or, later, during the campaign, by placing IEDs, so for us it was about fighting an enemy. The general idea was to hunt down and kill enemy soldiers, in order to create military security in the areas we had a responsibility for. It was quite straight forward. And we were in the first armored battalion in the area; we were the first Danish battalion with an area of responsibility, and we had a lot of foreign units attached. We had the opportunity to hunt them down and kill them, and they were on watch to engage with us in the sense of the classical article 5 military operation way, and quite a few of them managed to do that well. They changed tactics during, at least during our team 5 deployment, when we started out it was very straightforward fighting."

Interviewer: "And enemy-centric?"

MR: "Oh, yes. The general idea was to hunt down the enemy, kill them and push them away from the Green Zone and the villages. And when that was done, there would be military security in order to begin rebuilding military-civilian cooperation. That was the basic idea."

Interviewer: "So there was no coordination before the operation with the civilian counterpart?"

MR: "When we conducted the major operations we used to. We took over the Gereshk steering group, which was started by the team before us. And we coordinated and tried to share as much information as possible in order to reduce the civilian casualties and with their own communication warn civilians in the area when there were major operations planned. But that was on a very low tactical level, the mayor and chief of police, leader of the local military and so on."

Interviewer: "When you planned these operations, what did you talk about regarding the motivation of the enemy you approached? Did you map out what were their possible motivations?"

MR: "No, I think we more or less looked at the Taliban as one, very uniform organization which detested all foreign influence and all the things we from the west supported. And that was basically that."

Interviewer: "So you saw them as one group; you were fighting a nationalist movement?"

MR: "A religious based movement, against the development democracy, education and whatever. In our local area, I'm talking just about Gereshk, the Green zone."

Interviewer: "In terms of dealing with them, orthodox and medieval in their approach."

MR: "Yes."

Interviewer: "How important was religion in their motivation? Or was political power more important compared to it?"

MR: "That is more or less a philosophical question. I mean as we saw it, of course, Taliban was based on Islam, but a variation of it; it was quite different from a lot of the other Muslims we met. I saw them as being so far off and so orthodox in their thinking of democracy, education in general and for women, and all these things: so more medieval than Muslim. I think religion was a very little part of our picture of them. We worked together with the local nationals, who were all Muslims of course, the only practical problem with that was that we couldn't hold meetings on Fridays. They wanted us not to make meetings on Fridays. That was the only religious problem between

them and us, on our side as far as I saw it. So I don't think religion meant that much at the time."

Interviewer: "When dealing with this enemy you just called it a uniform enemy, you might get the picture that it is a well-defined enemy you can see but probably most of the time you did not know where the enemy was, you had to track them among the civilian population."

MR: "Oh, yes, and within these they were the local farmers that were coerced to pick up an RPG and fire at us, if they didn't, they would be sanctioned to Taliban soldiers who just travelled around the country fighting, to foreign fighters, now the party was in Afghanistan so they joined it there, they could have been in Iraq two years before or two years later. That was the three variations, some of them were easy to spot; some of them were impossible for us to spot, only locals could spot them or could know that they were under pressure and could end up doing something wrong or something offensive against us. A lot of those guys might as well have worked for us if we had hired them, probably the majority. And then there would be the professional Taliban soldiers; they will fight anywhere, anytime, because that is what they do. And the foreign fighters will fight anywhere in the world anytime if they get the chance, it's their adventure."

Interviewer: "So if I understand you right, it is not that they were that uniform as an enemy, the only unifying aspect was actually..."

MR: "They were the enemy."

Interviewer: "Yeah, and in their mind, you were the enemy. Because they had a lot of local or individual agendas. So how did you develop a rapport, some comfort zone, with the local population?"

MR: "I met with the local authorities every week."

Interviewer: "So there were regular meetings with them?"

MR: "Yes, every week, the mayor was there and the governor, the chief of police, the chief of the highway police and the local ANA commander, and sometimes representatives from schools or hospitals or whatever was necessary. We would discuss local security matters and we would do what was necessary to coordinate the cooperation between them and us, to supervise

or help, whatever was needed. We hoped that working together that way we could create some kind of trust between them and me, so when I told them this and that will happen, they believed me, and the other way around.”

Interviewer: “You mentioned the highway police, who were later banned.”

MR: “No, they were totally corrupt. If possible, even more corrupt than the local police.”

Interviewer: “I was with Team 8, or I was in Lashkar Gah, in headquarters at the same time as Team 8, and they were still there, but they were not paid by the government, just working on their own. Was that a big issue, when you dealt with the Afghans?”

MR: “No, not a big issue, because the local police, when we started out were at least as corrupt, and under the influence of drugs, they robbed the local population because they were not paid. Then we started a supervised payroll for the police. So we sent soldiers to pick up their money, and we arranged the money to be paid to the policemen. That was brilliant because now the police was paid instead of the chief of police putting all the money in his pocket. When we began paying the police, they stopped robbing the civilians at the checkpoints, and their credibility as police increased slowly, and we began sending the ANP on police training in Kandahar, I think, so they were taught police skills and behavior. Some of that rubbed off on their conduct of police duties, and they became more trustworthy, and we became more trustworthy because we actually did what we said we would. Small steps, of course.”

Interviewer: “So probably once you showed them better law and order situation, the population was more cooperative?”

MR: “Yes. When we entered the area the local population detested the local police, they had to obey the local warlords or power brokers, who would attain security in an area a tribal area or village or whatever, and the ANA was very thinly deployed in the beginning and didn’t have the power to have any influence in the beginning. Training the ANA to take over some of the police work until the police were trained, and training them made us more trustworthy, seeing that we fought back the Taliban up the valley, which created the impression that things were moving very rapidly in the right direction. I know it turned the other way, later on. We were quite lucky when

we started out, that the Taliban wanted to fight us straight on and we were very good at that, and they were not. That is of course why the IED threat increased later on which made it very tough for the later teams, but it wasn't tough on our team. There were old field mines from the Russian times and a few IEDs but not that many, except for the vehicle-borne IEDs in town, but that was to hit ANP more than to hit us."

Interviewer: "So it was pretty straightforward for you. Local power brokers, as you mentioned, did they play a significant role, when you planned your operation?"

MR: "No, because in the area the majority of our operations were in an area with no local power brokers, they were in our rear area. We fought from Gereshk and up, and the area from Gereshk and south were outside our area, and they were under local warlord control. And to be honest I said very early in the campaign "why don't we fire all the ANP and hire one of the warlords to keep security in town" because they were less corrupt and less rotten than the ANP. Of course, they would support their tribe and favor them, but that is perhaps better than what was actually going on."

Interviewer: "But that happened later on, to some extent. Americans went in and paid off the warlords, at least to make sure they didn't attack the camp."

MR: "Yeah, we had the same because there was a warlord who had the outer perimeter guard, and when they were fired, shells started coming into the camp."

Interviewer: "This was in Camp Price right?"

MR: "Yes. And when they were rehired, the shells stopped falling. A very, very effective way of protecting the camp."

Interviewer: "I was actually down there, and I think there were two guards outside Camp Price, very badly dressed only armed with an old Kalashnikov, and I asked the officers what they were doing there. They told me it was the security of Camp Price, and to begin with I thought it was a joke, but then he mentioned the story you just told. It was actually through a Canadian security company that they were hired and the day after they hired them the attacks stopped, so, very effective."

In hindsight do you think the approach you took, I know it was a different situation it was straightforward, and do you think you moved too fast on the military scale? Because the civilian part takes a bit longer and has more implications, so if you clear too much land there's the problem that the civilian part has to deal with too many problems at the same time."

MR: "I think we didn't know enough about the civilian structure and the civilian level. There was one hospital in, I don't know, 60 bits. From a Danish point of view that was bad, but is it bad from an Afghan point of view? I didn't know that. And when we are talking about schools the amount and quality of them, in a Danish perspective it was a big problem, but was it from an Afghan perspective? I would have liked to have had some civilian experts who could tell me how bad something is or how big a problem it is. Because the Afghans asked for everything, and when I looked at it, they were right, but did we send our effort the right way, or where they would like us to spend it? The money was spent in the area and it will have benefited the area, one way or another, dollars were poured into the country, and someone spent it, commerce grew, and you could see it in the streets, so it did improve, but was it the right way? I don't know."

Interviewer: "Does that mean that the cultural understanding played a major role in this?"

MR: "I think it does. I did not have a cultural advisor who could explain the Afghan situation to me. I, of course, had some guidance and some advice when dealing with Muslims, but that was actually quite easy and wasn't a big deal. But we could have used an understanding of how this area in Afghanistan worked and how the dynamics were and how things actually worked. And it would have given us a better detailed picture of what we saw as a uniform enemy which was built up of various tribes, gangs and whatever, mixed into each other with very different agendas. We just fought them all at first, and that was easy, but the teams afterwards got another and more detailed picture and other challenges than we had."

Interviewer: "And they probably began operating with some of the tribes?"

MR: "Yes. Looking at it now, I'm sure we have hunted down and arrested someone because some other people wanted us to do it. So we took care of their business in one way or another. And we did not have the ability to see through that. But for our first teams it was very easy, we just hunted down and

killed our enemy. Ordinary war fighting, we gained terrain and the resistance stopped, and there was peace and quiet with no shooting. The soldiers are pleased, we are pleased and the civilians are pleased. But what comes after and how long will it last. I can see the strategic center of gravity switched, we fought up the valley in order to connect Sangin and Gereshk in one enemy-free zone, and team 5 or 6 or 7, I think, turned 180 and fought downwards, and left all the villages up there to rot and to the Taliban came back. And I know they have been slaughtered up there, because they supported us and benefited from our approach and the security we made.”

Interviewer: “That was Team 8. With Team 7 the British removed their southernmost facility in Gereshk Valley, it was named after a British soldier who died there. But they removed that and then Team 8 got the task to secure the southern part of Gereshk city. And you are right they were slaughtered up there. But at least we didn’t know because we were not there.”

Mads Rahbek: ”And that is one of the problems when you start out in a strategic direction and the local nationals commit to you, if you don’t stick to it, and if you leave them they are slaughtered.”

Interviewer: “You probably promised them that you were there to stay and stuff like that.”

MR: ”At least our team we could guaranty that.”

Interviewer: “That almost leads me to the next question, because one of the reasons it went like that on Team 8 was that a new British commander for Helmand wanted to have his say in whatever was going on and he wanted to take the last piece of Helmand that he was able to, the Marjah province so that was why he refocused everything, because if he was not going to grab it the next commander would and then he was not going to be promoted. That is also a part of it, and it makes me wonder if you felt that way, and it is not only a special UK conduct; there are a lot of examples. But did you feel that when you were down there that ISAF didn’t have a strategy that supported whatever you were going to do, or did you not think ISAF that big an issue, you were just operating under British command?”

MR: ”No, we were not operating very much under British command, that was possibly one of our possibilities because we were the first new Danish team. We were the new kids on the block and they didn’t quite know what

they could expect or what they could tell us to do. Before that, Denmark only deployed reconnaissance squads, so we got the first area of responsibility and took that very seriously. And I think we met quite more resistance than they expected in the brigade planning for a battalion to do. And as we were there first, as a Danish battalion under British command, I think we got away with a lot of things. I remember we had a CIMIC platoon placed in Lashkar Gah, and when we got the area and were told that the focus should be on military security and development in Gereshk, we pulled out the CIMIC detachment and placed it at our disposal in Gereshk and used it there, but the British said we couldn't, but we said that when the taskforce only adds one Danish company, it is under our command and we use it for our purposes to secure and create development in our area. That was one of the things that showed that we would do things our way. I think it is one of the reasons we got away with some of the things we did, because we were new in cooperating with the British. We thought to solve our task in that area, and we did it with the means we had at our disposal. But as you said at one point, where we were stretched very thinly over the Gereshk valley there was an attack on Musa Qala, and a major military operation, and they took our troops from under us, because they needed troops there. We were spread as thin as paper all over, and we knew that if we gave up on the Gereshk Valley we would have to fight our way back up there when plastered with IEDs and so on. So it was much easier to defend than to reclaim and there were some arguments between the brigade and us on how much we would let go, and they took the British troops out under us to solve the problem. I think the turn in strategic priorities had a major effect on the ground and on the credibility on the ground. As a Danish battalion we relied on the battalion commander and on keeping to our promises; as long as we only promised what we were sure we could make happen, and we could stick to it. We could create good coverage and we could build trust and credibility but things were taken out from under us, and that made it very difficult. And I think that was one of the reasons we got away with what we did was that we didn't actually promise more than we could deliver on."

Interviewer: "To the Afghans or to the British?"

MR: "To the Afghans, because they were the ones who were going to help us; we will never ever see when the enemy goes out and places IEDs or smuggles in new foreign fighters or something, but the local nationals can help us with intelligence, if they trust us and trust that we will do something about it. If they don't then that is bad."

Interviewer: "But the problem was that after you, that trust was destroyed."

MR: "Yes, I think so."

Interviewer: "So you were probably lucky because you were the first one there, because if the next commander came and said that they would protect the locals the next 6 months, then they would know what 6 months mean."

MR: "I don't know when they lost the confidence, but at least when they switched their focus to down south, they must have lost it."

Interviewer: "Why do you think that switch was made, do you think they just gave the northern areas up?"

MR: "I think they did. I wasn't on the team, it is only the stories I have heard, that they were ordered to make those military operations from Gereshk and downwards in that area and in order to do that they took troops out of the northern area."

Interviewer: "Just like that? They just gave up Gereshk Valley? They still had the big camp up there; it was named after a small village up there. But it was a straight forward order from the headquarters, give up the area, you can keep that base if you want to, and put your force down south, and I was running back and forth to the Danish commander in the headquarters because he didn't like the idea of just giving up what all the previous teams had fought for. It was on Team 8, and gave a new direction for the Danish battalion to head in. It is easy on paper, but it is more harsh in reality, and of course we thought the same, that if the enemy came back then we would have to fight our way back and that is what happened, later with Team 8 and 9."

So when you look back at it, was it a waste going up north?"

MR: "It was militarily logically to do so at the time, and I think we created progress and created a better situation in Gereshk in the six months we were there, than if we hadn't been there. I was the first Danish soldier to walk into Gereshk with a British unit, to see where it was, because we were going to look into how we were going to patrol there. I saw the amount of shops and commerce and so on. And I think I was one of the last from our team to be in Gereshk before we left, and it was a totally different town in 4-5 months or so. I have seen pictures of it afterwards and know how much more it has

grown compared to when we came to it; that must have benefitted someone in one way or another.”

Interviewer: “During our previous interviews we heard from some people that they observed a disconnect between the soldiers who were working on the tactical level on the ground, and those who were making the policies at that time. Did you observe the same thing? And why do you think it was the case?”

MR: ”Yes. Well, as I remember it Taskforce Helmand had a civilian coordination group called Helmand Steering Group, or something like that. Civilian developers, politicians, whatever and then there was the UK brigade, who were our superiors. And the steering group was to set the goals and framework for our cooperation with the civilians, and the development and all that, and it was not possible to get them out of the camp, out of Lashkar Gah. I tried to invite them just to keep the promise and to go out and see what was going on, but it was impossible. They couldn’t even meet with us in Gereshk, in Camp Price, because there were no hard roofs, we were living in tents, of course. They could fly in and out one day, because of the helicopter situation so we had to plan on them eventually staying one night because the helicopter would be cancelled, and they could not stay one night under a soft roof.”

Interviewer: “Because they were too fancy?”

MR: ”No, because they had some rules of the protection that had to live under because they were civilians. And the rules demanded a hard roof. For me that was the picture of how far away from the real world they were. I met with the local nationals, frequently. I did patrols with the soldiers, both in the Green Zone and in the town, and I saw and met the local population. I did not have long conversations with them because it was always difficult with the use of interpreters, but I had another picture of what was going on, on the ground. And my soldiers, who walked there every day, had an even more detailed picture of what was going on, on the ground. I think to be honest that the idea of having civilian leadership with employees that are not deployable, isn’t working. They could have deployed soldiers who could have acted as their eyes and could have helped with making the decisions.”

Interviewer: “But couldn’t they get that intel from you?”

MR: "Yes, and we have filed a lot of reports, and they started a lot of ways to gather information; it was just not the same to read data on a computer as seeing it in real life. I once walked with a patrol, and out of a house came an old mummy, or he looked exactly like it, and he came over to us and said thank you for being here. If you are a civilian, that is why you are there and that is reason enough to be there and stick out your neck. If you never see that and only see the numbers, you have another perspective of what this is actually about. And I think that was one of the problems."

Interviewer: "That actually relates to one of our questions as well, it is about the counterproductive measures. Now you've mentioned that civilian leadership without being able to put civilians on the ground is a big problem. But we heard from some of the other persons we interviewed that civilian leadership is a necessity if you want civilian development, but what I hear you saying is that you actually wanted a bit more military leadership, at least to begin with because you see it as the only possible solution."

MR: "I respect that it is civilian development that is creating the success in the area, we will fight an enemy and maybe destroy him but the development of the area is what creates a substantial peace and the future development. My problem is if the civilians cannot go in on the ground and see what is going on and talk to the locals. And as it is right now, it is only the soldiers who can do that. I don't think soldiers are the best to make development programs, we can fight enemies, but developing schools, hospitals, local governance that is not our job. We can create military stability so that it becomes possible, but there has to be civilians to do that. In the overall perspective it must be the civilian guidance that prioritize where we are going to develop the country in order to make a substantial effort where it would work. The understanding of where in the area, the structure of the society, to prioritize money, that must be civilians. The military can carry out the military solutions and security in the area where it is needed. I just think it was a shame that the civilians were not able to go out and see what was going on and get their own picture of it. I mean this group was placed in Lashkar Gah, and they could not meet with the local nationals in Gereshk if they were not able to walk to Lashkar Gah to meet them. And it is much more dangerous for a local mayor to travel through the country to meet with the western formations than it is for a civilian to fly out and fly back again. I don't know the chances that he will be captured, but our local mayor was, just as I arrived there, and was held hostage for three weeks or so by the Taliban. So it is very dangerous for them to work; it is not dangerous for us. So I think we ought to put civilians

on the ground, be able to train them equip them and protect them, so that they can go in on the ground and talk to the locals, about areas of interest that they understand. I know nothing about schools, hospitals or providing utilities; I know something about soldiering.”

Interviewer: “Did you have that knowledge at the time, and did it influence how you conducted operations, or even how the soldiers were conducting whatever task they had. You knew you could only do so much, they will come after me and develop the country.”

MR: “No, we didn’t see it like that, we firmly believed after we had cleared the area somebody would build there.”

Interviewer: “You hoped that the next team would take over and then the rebuilding would begin?”

MR: “We began in small parts supporting the full civilian-military cooperation focusing on what benefitted us as well as the local nationals, but the major development programs did not start there.”

Interviewer: “But you could live without it because you were the first team, and it would not happen overnight, so if you created a lot of security then...”

MR: “When we started out, there was no overall Helmand plan. It came by mail when we were out there, but it wasn’t there when we started.”

Interviewer: “I suppose you wrote your own directive?”

MR: “Yeah. I looked through some small presentations and our task was that; Battle group Center is to secure within boundaries in order to set conditions for development with the Afghan district. I don’t remember what that was. That was all, just to create security, the rest happened afterwards. So there were a lot of things that weren’t planned when we started out. The team before us, the English team, had just made a military operation clearing up a lot of the Green Zone and we just carried on with that.”

Interviewer: “You have already mentioned it, but I will still ask what tools do you think are appropriate to handle such situations? Not what was used or not used, but what in your opinion are the most appropriate tools that should be used.”

Also with hindsight in mind. For example, is hunt down and destroy the best tool to handle the situation, with your knowledge now.“

MR: “One of the presentations, I found, was about the way we described our concept of operations for the soldiers before we began the military operations, the idea was actually to fight the enemy up the valley with the Danish soldiers, and behind them use the local nationals, the ANA and ANP and civilian military cooperation to create the security and stabilization in the area. And in order to do that, the result of that would be to have a better cooperation with the local nationals. They would be our intelligence gatherers, because they believe we could create the military security. That was the old idea, and what we found out was that if you are going to have an area free of insurgents you need to attack out of the area all the time. You need to create a buffer zone outside the area where the enemies cannot move freely. So if we have an outer perimeter, where we said behind this line we rule, then we need to have another buffer zone outside it where we attack frequently. So that no enemy can be out there without risk. That is the only way that you can create the military security in the inner zone, to create a buffer zone and to attack there day and night, so that everybody who moves in there is at the risk of being killed.”

Interviewer: “Regular patrols.”

MR: “Yes, and that is very hard work because that is offensive operations out of your area all the time, but if you are just defending your perimeter, they will stand on the outside of the perimeter and they will always get in. We have to be right every time, they just have to be right one time. So that was one of the experiences, we actually learned that around FOB Sanford the first base we had up the Gereshk Valley, where it was necessary to control and attack into the depth in order to create stability from that area and down to Gereshk. But then again that was at a time when the IED threat was smaller than it was for later teams. We had freedom of movement on the ground, and we fought for it every day, to keep it, and they lost it at some point and never regained it. If you handle it this way, it is very difficult for the enemy to go in and place IEDs, and it is very difficult for them to restrict your freedom of movement. But when they have done it, it is almost impossible to regain your freedom of movement, because there would be an IED on every corner. And you are going to lose a lot of soldiers trying to fight your way out of it. We would never have had the military strength to retake the

upper Gereshk Valley after we left it. There were not enough soldiers in the Danish battlegroup with any team to accomplish that.”

Interviewer: “Okay, Mads we just have one last question for you, when you went in, you mentioned something about the directive only being military, you needed to secure and clear the area, and what we discussed...”

MR: “I have to say that was a very big framework for the whole campaign and, of course, there were tasks there as well to secure development.”

Interviewer: “At that point you said that the civilian part did not play a big role in this, were there any persons raising this issue when you went in: If we go this far we need to have the others track with us, otherwise it will be wasted.”

MR: “I think we tried as much as possible to do that. As deputy commander of the battalion, it was my task to try to orchestrate that cooperation with the civilians and try to make that work. But there was a very kinetic focus to begin with and this came along as we moved up there, and there were a lot of practical problems if you clear the area you clear a small local doctor’s clinic in the Green Zone. And the Afghan government cannot support you with a new doctor. So you know you have cleared the area and you can start treating the local nationals, but they cannot provide a doctor for you. Or when you clear a village and a local school, they cannot deliver a teacher for the school, because this was not orchestrated and coordinated in the right way. I found the more I looked into the plan the more it was divided into pillars: a pillar for governance, police, army training, and a pillar for God knows what, and they did not connect at our level. They had their strategy for what they were going to achieve and how, and whatever the rest of the guys did in the area, they didn’t know or perhaps care about. So there were parallel lines of approach, with the best intentions I am sure, but it wasn’t coordinated at the lowest level. One of the reasons for that was that the civilians in Gereshk did not get out of their offices and get out in the ground and coordinate.”

Interviewer: “Have you discussed this afterwards with some of the commanders that were there on your team?”

MR: “No.”

Interviewer: “Okay so this is your own point of view.”

MR: "I took over a new job when I got back to Denmark"

Interviewer: "You were also part of educating the next battalion?"

MR: "I was, yes. But that kind of training was very focused on a lot of practical things. Things to do and not to do, in the way you go forward and the handling of a lot of things. There was very little talk of strategy at that time. And at that time, we did not have a stabilization advisor in the Danish battlegroup, it only came in the last month or two when we were down there. And he was the first one on the ground, so it was difficult for him as well."

Interviewer: "He was civilian? What did he say when he arrived? Did he mention any of this?"

MR: "We talked a lot about these things, but again he had another line of command because he was from the ministry for development, it took a while; he had other priorities that we had. We were very kinetically focused because we fought a lot of enemies. We fought the enemies on the ground and we tried to support the civilian cooperation as much as possible. Some of the partners we worked with were the mayor and the local governor, the governor had to flee because he was being investigated by the police. He was accused for corruption. There was a lot of these, perhaps for him, ordinary things that made progress very difficult. The local police commander was taking all the money instead of paying his police officers; he vanished, and all the winter equipment was sold on the market place, that was meant for the military. All those things made it very difficult to get the progression up to speed, where we needed it. Because we had another timeframe, and another perception of progress, than they had of course."

Interviewer: "This is the very last question, the stabilization advisor from the foreign ministry should have been the guy that you were asking for all along."

MR: "He should have been appointed when we started. He should have been appointed when we trained, and should have worked together with us when we made the framework for our battalion order. He should have been a part of that for the whole period. He should have come to us and told us what was going to happen in which areas of development, and how we could support it. All that could have been possible if he had been appointed from the beginning."

Interviewer: "But he was appointed on all the teams afterwards."

MR: "Yeah, I think so. The sad thing is we had all the same experiences in Iraq two years earlier, but by some other guys, it wasn't us. I planned on becoming the commander of the Iraq Team 10 and trained for that, but it ended at Team 9, so we changed direction and trained for Afghanistan instead."

Interviewer: "This has nothing to do with our survey but how much cultural awareness were you taught before your deployment? Because I was on Team 8, or connected to Team 8, and we got one Afghan who lived in Denmark and had lived there for 5-6 years, telling us about how the situation was in Afghanistan, and that was it. One hour of cultural awareness."

MR: "I know we got a lot to read and we got a briefing with a man from perhaps the Danish intelligence about the situation in Afghanistan. I know I got some guidance when we had the last exercise, from some of the interpreters and civilian military cooperation. But it was not that much."

Interviewer: "I think there was a tank colonel, Engholm, and he was appointed at the last minute because the two previous "jumped ship" or whatever. So his learning curve was very steep."

MR: "It was for everyone, I mean we trained the whole battalion on maneuver group operations in a large area. It was during the last exercise we were told that we were going to have an area of responsibility. We were told after the exercise that we were going to have Battlegroup Center, and where it was, and that we got it because the southern and northern ones were even worse. And we were taught about the "ink spot" strategy, a very good strategy, just not enough ink, that is the problem with that strategy. The commander and I worked together at the Army Officers Academy with instructors and tactics. And we took our old manual, that is what we know, and we take it from there. I know because I had been preparing for Iraq, I had been briefed about various cultural topics about Muslims but not about Afghans, so I think when it came to Afghan culture, cultural awareness was very, very scarce."

Interviewer: "So how different did you find the enemy in Iraq and the situation in Afghanistan? Was it totally different once you actually went to Afghanistan instead of Iraq."

MR: "Yeah, I think so, because at that time in Iraq, we were fighting small gangs in towns and were hunting down and apprehending criminals, local warlords, and it was military operations looking more like police operations. We were ready for that, and in Afghanistan and it was straight forward military warfighting, or as close as we get in a modern war fighting scenario, much more straightforward. So it turned during this period."

Interviewer: "We are done with the interview thank you."

Interview 18: Jens Lønborg Denmark, June 10th 2015

Interviewer: "Given the Danish experience in Afghanistan, how would you classify your opponent: Is he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Jens Lønborg (JL): "I don't consider the ones we met in Helmand to be terrorists. Because I don't think they had a terrorist approach or target; their final goal was not on the terrorist side. They were opportunists looking for power. So they were more political insurgents than terrorists. We were relatively new in Helmand, when I was there in early 2008, Team 5, and we took over Gereshk which is the main economic city, with the most trade and so on going through Helmand, three or four months before my team arrived. So our local knowledge was limited, and I still remember my British commander saying to me, "It will take you at least three months to understand what is going on," and he was right. But it probably took two or three years before we really understood the dynamics inside a city like Gereshk. All the old powerbrokers were still there and they were doing things that it took very long to understand. So to us, of course, it was insurgents fighting, the legal authorities being the police, the army, the mayor and his people and so on, but why they did it and who they were was a difficult thing to figure out, so my intelligence guys had a lot of work to do, and we didn't learn it during our 6 months. To understand the picture was a difficult part, and I still don't think they were terrorists because I have had the opportunity to follow it since then, because my job back home has been to be responsible for the operations since then, which I still am. So I have been following Afghanistan for some time, since the summer of 2007 until now. They were some kind of different political power - if you want to speak of them using positive labels, and not as terrorists. They were committing terroristic acts, blowing up innocent people, but to find out if they were just fighting for the poppy fields, or if they wanted a new head of police, or they wanted a new mayor was difficult to figure out. It is a very complex scenario."

Interviewer: "And one of the reasons why it was difficult was probably also because the reason changed from time to time."

JL: "Yes, but also because of who was the strongest man at that time. That also changed. In some periods, some of the relatively corrupt police chiefs were suddenly some of the strongest in the city. After my time there were some characters in the area that proved that they had so much power, and

with power comes money, so if it is a fight for money, political influence or whatever, the result on the ground is more or less the same: innocent people get killed, police get killed, we get killed.”

Interviewer: “Were your opponents a unified whole or were there different elements? And what type of elements?”

JL: “They were different elements. Some of them were criminal and did it for money. And of course some of them were closely related to Taliban, or being Taliban themselves, but buying foot soldiers in the area. North of us, up in the part of the valley where we were not represented, there were some strongholds; and going from Musa Qala, there was also a stronghold for the Taliban. I think the powerbrokers in our area in Gereshk were mainly due to money, due to a long tradition of Gereshk being the main economic city of Helmand, so there was so much money in that town that the fight for money was more important than the fight for political power. So you had to go out to the countryside where the Taliban had more influence and where they had their income, because when you went 20-50 kilometers out in the valley they could control the production of opium, and get money from that to buy weapons or pay their soldiers. It was a very mixed picture.”

Interviewer: “Although you have already answered the question, still to be on the safe side, what was their primary motivation, political, power or money? Do you see the role of religion in it or ideology? Or was it solely for political power and money?”

JL: “It is hard for us to judge how big a role religion plays. I think they could use religion as an argument, especially against us, as a foreign force on the ground. There was a political argument against us, meaning that we also had to be very careful, showing respect for not only the religion but for the cultural differences. We were very much aware of that but I’m sure it was used, to what extent is hard to say, because you don’t listen in that much, but we could clearly see the difference caused over time. After the Afghan National Army came, they were very respected and could get in touch with the population as soon as they put their feet on the ground. That was much harder for us. Our only Afghan face was normally the interpreter, or at a later stage when we went on patrols together, the Afghan army. But in the beginning they were not able to go on patrols. So the only one we had to rely on, to feel the atmosphere in the area, was our interpreter. Later on when we went with an Afghan company they would tell us far more of what was going

on. The interpreter was seen as one of us, so they would rely much more on their own soldiers than on us or our interpreters. Returning to your question, I don't think it was a religious fight against us, because the real fight was an internal Afghan fight, and there religion wasn't that important, because it was the same on both sides. So they couldn't use it as a strong argument for the reason for the fight. They could use it against us, the foreign troops, but not against the real reasons behind the conflict."

Interviewer: "Did you have sufficient cultural understanding before you landed in Afghanistan? And how much time would you need to develop that and connect to local people?"

JL: "No, we hadn't. We of course did something, but we also learned that we had to do more. And I know that our training developed over the years, so we did more and more. But it is really hard because those who are training us, the instructors from the Defense Academy, are someone who have read about it or travelled in the country, but to get a real grip of this you have to be there. So it's a balance, you can use so many hours and then it doesn't make sense to do more, before you really are a part of it. What we really benefitted from, was that, later on, with the later teams, many of the soldiers were there for the second or third time, so they had a far better understanding after being there for a year, and that helped. It is really difficult to just read a book or listen to a briefing and to really understand what is going on. I think those who really learned it were those who had daily corporation or training with our Afghan partners. In the beginning, it was the British, they had their operational monitoring liaison teams living out in small bases with the Afghan National Army and small units only, platoon size or small companies. We did that at a later stage, but they really learned a lot by being together on a daily basis, working, sleeping, eating, fighting together with their Afghan colleagues. They got a far better feeling than we had in 2008. So it is really important, because if you do that wrong you will have a problem."

Interviewer: "Broadly, what were the areas that you knew about before going to Afghanistan? What did you know about Afghanistan?"

JL: "I had the opportunity to make two or three visits together with my commanders. So I had the company commanders and my chief of staff. So I had some understanding of it before, I had been there, and I visited Kabul prior to our deployment. But apart from that, it was just what we had learned about the conflict; it was all very new, we just moved from the Kabul area

down to Helmand a year and a half prior to our arrival, so our knowledge wasn't that great. We of course learned about what the economic structures were, with the poppy production being a really big issue, and one of the things I wondered about was why we didn't try to develop their farming as part of getting interaction with the locals. If we go to a country where 95% or more of their income is from agriculture, you could say the wrong agriculture, the only way to relate to those people is to bring some farmers I would say. We did that at a very late stage, as the Americans, but I wonder why we didn't do it earlier."

Interviewer: "When did the Americans think of this idea?"

JL: "I'm not sure. We supported with a team as late as 2012 or 2013."

Interviewer: "And that worked?"

JL: "We were only there for 4-5 months, and they were in a closing down phase, so I think we must turn to them to find out how well it worked. If you need any reports on that, Thomas, it was a team from the Home Guard, so the Home Guard Command have the reports from that."

Interviewer: "Some kind of reminiscence from the old idea of the Home Guard sending out specialists?"

JL: "Yes. They sent a specialist team of four or five, working with the Americans down in Lashkar Gah."

Interviewer: "I helped facilitate that in Iraq, but it was never really a big issue because the Army didn't want to pay the specialists enough, so the project stranded with that."

JL: "They received the same salary because of their dual role, being in the Home Guard and interested in going for that reason, and then having their civilian experience being their reason for going. In 2012-2013, it was late in the mission. They were part of an American team with headquarters in Lashkar Gah. So if it has any interest the Home Guard can help you with that."

Interviewer: "So you brought in Danish farmers?"

JL: "We did. At a very late stage, as part of an American project. In Danish it was called, "Gårdmandbjørnprojektet"

Interviewer: "Do you have an estimate of how many Danish farmers went there?"

JL: "There was only one team, and they were four or five. Jens can probably remember."

Interviewer: "Do you think it could be possible to get the names of the farmers?"

JL: "From the Home Guard, yes."

Interviewer: "The next question is: what tools do you see as being more appropriate in dealing with the insurgents? Given your experience in Afghanistan."

JL: "The primary tool is getting to understand the dynamics, and that means that you must bring the strongest intelligence possible. Surveillance, intelligence, analysts, people who can figure out what is going on. Because if you can figure out what is going on, not only on the, let's call it, offensive side of the insurgency, but also the gray or the white picture of the situation, what is going on and where you are. In a place like Helmand, Gereshk, Lashkar Gah, the mayor takes the phone and calls the local Taliban, because more likely than not they are cousins or the like, so most likely they know each other. The locals know who they are, and if you can gain that picture you have a far better chance of pushing the ball in the right direction. Because it is not a question of how many you can kill or how big a part of the country you can dominate, it is putting your finger on the right places, and that is extremely difficult. It is far better than thinking that you can achieve it through sheer force. It is also necessary, but it won't solve the problem. The other challenge is, of course, that in a country like that military power or a camp or visible unit is seen as security by the population, so there are two sides of it; the ordinary population will see it as protection if there is a military unit, in a very conventional way, when we build a camp, and placed soldiers there, that was security and they liked that. Within 2-3 kilometers we would be on foot patrols, so it would be relatively safe because we were often there, but that is very local and we will never be able to be everywhere. So we need to figure out who the real bad guys are and get a hold of them, and that comes down to the intelligence. And we will never solve that problem by digging up roadside bombs, or killing ten-dollar Taliban."

Interviewer: "So at the very local level, family relations and ethnic relations were a major factor?"

JL: "In the local area, having troops on the ground is appreciated by the population, but if you have to look at how to solve the problems in the country or in a city the size of Gereshk, with 100,000 people, I had a battalion including my British and Czech units of less than 1,000 personnel. I can never solve a problem within a city of 100,000. But if I can find the corrupt police chief and the bad guy at the mayor's office, and the one making all the money off the poppy fields, I would solve more problems."

Interviewer: "When you went to your area of operations was your approach enemy centric or was it population centered?"

JL: "I think we were forced, due to conditions, of what happened to be a relatively enemy centric approach. There had been heavy fighting prior to our arrival in the autumn of 2007, there had been a quiet period over January and February, my predecessor said we would change this to a CIMIC-operation, it being a population center, but from early March and the next two months, we made contact with the enemy every day we went outside the camp. So I had to think in force protection, how to counter roadside bombs and things like that."

Interviewer: "Could you protect your own soldiers?"

JL: "I had to try and protect my own soldiers but also to get out. Just getting out was a military operation, getting out to get a feeling of what was going on. So it was enemy centric. Then we were lucky enough to have a lot of ANA coming in from Kabul, more than southern ANA coming in, maybe 1,500. And that changed the situation, so from May and onwards we were able to turn the picture and focus more on the population, not the population as a whole but focusing on how could we strengthen the mayor's position, and make sure he did the right things. When we arrived, he had one or two civil servants in his administration, in a city of 100,000. It was him and a city council and one or two civil servants. How would they run a city? We started with that, meaning employing civil servants, to run the town but also to look at rule of law, for instance, so we started a rule-of-law project together with taskforce Helmand. So we tried to do some of the civilian strings, to strengthen them. There was one judge in the city, but no one to help him. And, of course, three months later he got killed."

Interviewer: "This is a side question: you said that 1,000 ANA soldiers came to your area, and it eased the situation a little. I'm just wondering, wasn't the ANA affected by the same family and ethnic relations, or were they from another area ,so it wasn't a problem?"

JL: "They were. The ANA came from different provinces."

Interviewer: "So care was taken so that they didn't belong to the area?"

JL: "Yes."

Interviewer: "And the policemen were more often locally hired? And that was not an issue?"

JL: "The policemen were locally hired, and they lived in the area. And that wasn't an issue. The ANA came from other provinces in general. Of course, some of them had relations to the local population. I remember the brigade commander's cousin was part of the Taliban commanders, and they tried to assassinate him, I think 6 or 8 times, but when the assassin didn't succeed he called him, to let him know that he would get him the next time. And we thought; it's a really strange country we're in."

Interviewer: "Almost like a game."

JL: "From the outside it could look like a game, but a serious one."

Interviewer: "That comes back to the cultural awareness doesn't it?"

JL: "Yes, it does."

Interviewer: "We don't understand it because it is a completely different mindset, power structures and so on, what we think is unsound, could be normal there."

They play polo in a different way.

You play chess and they play polo.

So, was it easy to deal with the local civilian officers, dealing with the governance?"

JL: “Especially with the mayor we managed to establish good relations. Our relation with the police was not that good, because they were there, in general, to make money, unfortunately.”

Interviewer: “They could not be effective, anyway?”

JL: “They tried to be polite to us, because they had an interest in not being too unfriendly with us, or make us a direct enemy, but the main interest of a major part of the police force was money. And the point of view from police on the streets, it wasn’t that strange because his wage was so low that he could hardly survive on his salary. So he had to do something else.”

Interviewer: “If he got his pay.”

JL: “If he got the money at all, yes. He might only get half his pay, so that was difficult. So the police taxed trucks.”

Interviewer: “And later on, the police was banned by the central government.”

JL: “But their business would go on. And the money from the central government was so insignificant that it didn’t matter.”

Interviewer: “The government closed the highway police, but it didn’t matter, they just continued.”

JL: “And of course that was a bit strange to us.”

Interviewer: “But if your income isn’t coming from the government, it won’t matter; the business goes on, it’s “business as usual.”

Once you were there, did you feel there were any tools that were crowded out or not used, but should have been used in the first place to make things better somehow? From the strategic to the tactical level? You have already mentioned the farming.”

JL: “Although it was difficult, I think we should have done more on the civilian side, from the beginning. A civilian part of the mission was placed in the capital of Helmand in Lashkar Gah in the British brigade’s headquarters, and they were a relatively large staff placed along the provincial government and the provincial governor. But at the battalion level, I had one civilian advisor

at the beginning, and of course she couldn't cope with all that was going on. If you see this as a counterinsurgency operation, the significant thing is that the insurgents are hard to find, and then you need someone to help you find them, if you can build up the civilian side and create a perception among the civilians that you are there to help them, the civilian side will become part of your intelligence. Seen from a military point of view it could be used, if you get a good relationship and if they trust you, and if they see that you help them by building schools and upholding the law etc. Then we become a better deal, compared to the Taliban. And if that happens, all the opportunistic people of Afghanistan will help you to get to be part of that better deal."

Interviewer: "Support from the neutral community?"

JL: "Yes. Point number one, there is not a clean military solution, and there's not a clean foreign solution, there is only an Afghan solution. To fulfill the Afghan solution, you have to strengthen those whom you believe could head the Afghan solution. And, of course, one very big part of it is security for the people, so you need to strengthen the police and the army, but the other part is the rest of society and that is just as important. And if that is left undone or done at a significantly slower pace, then trying to strengthen the security operations won't work."

Interviewer: "It sounds to me like time is a big issue in this?"

JL: "Yes, because we carried out a military operation for years while the civilian operations went at a slower pace, up until today. Now the civilian operations are the stronger operation, because it is more or less the only operation that is left."

Interviewer: "Why was it delayed? What should have been done in the first place?"

JL: "Because if you lead a mission, you typically have a mission lead by military leaders. And even if they can see the need, then if I turned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Defense and tell them that it is fine that I'm allowed to bring 600-800 Danish soldiers, but I need 25 specialists from the civilian side, please send them, there is no career in being sent in on the ground in Helmand if you work in the ministries, and you're relatively likely to be shot at. So you can't get those people, unless you are

willing to pay quite a lot of money. But I believe that maybe 10 of those could have the same impact as maybe a platoon or a company.”

Interviewer: “So more civilian specialists?”

JL: “From the beginning, you shouldn’t just look at the military side, there’s a military operation going on, there’s a military task. Of course, you can’t do that without soldiers, but you are only there because the Afghan government thinks you should be there; you are not at war, it is a warlike situation, but you are there in a country that wants your help but has many more problems than just the security ones. So it is extremely important from the beginning to work on the civilian side as well. And you need to be ready to invest not only money but people, as well. Because the money will just end up in the wrong people’s pockets.”

Interviewer: “As I see it, the command structure could pose a problem if 10 civilians were reporting to a military leader. Would they advise him or tell him what to do?”

JL: “In some cases they should tell him what to do. In fact at a certain time in Helmand, was it when you were there, Thomas? The civilian head of mission became superior to the military one, as they were both British and the British Government made it so. So it is not impossible. In practical terms he would not decide on military operations, but he could priorities military operations, or certain goals that he needed to get fulfilled. The civilian side should have a better idea of what would work in the long term for a society that you have to rebuild or strengthen than some military blockhead who mainly understands how to fight. Of course, we had relatively broad training, but it is not our main focus to build societies.”

Interviewer: “So the civilian leadership was brought in during 2009 or 2010? Especially, the leadership?”

JL: “They were there, they were just too few in numbers.”

Interviewer: “The leadership?”

JL: “I don’t remember when, but it was somewhere around 2009-2010, it was after 2008.”

Interviewer: "I was there in 2010, and it was sorted out by then, so it must have been in 2009."

At some point in time, did you find a disconnect between the tactical level and the policy level?"

JL: "This is difficult to evaluate from the battalion level. Because at the battalion level, if we had a good understanding with our military superiors, and to see how the big politics from Kabul or Washington affected us is hard to see. It's hard to say if there was a disconnect. Seen from a military point of view, one of the major mistakes was that you started being Kabul-centric and waited far too long to realize that you had to be out in the vital provinces on the ground. So we came too late, probably."

Interviewer: "And that was because of Iraq?"

JL: "Probably because of Iraq, and resources. The same reason why we don't do anything in Syria today, because we are tired of being at war."

Interviewer: "And afraid of what comes out of it."

JL: "Going into Syria would be even more complicated than going into Afghanistan. And not agreed upon in the UN Security Council. But from a military point of view, early action would always be preferable, because the earlier you get close to the problem, the easier it is to fix. So I think the Taliban had really good time to build up, and we have to remember that the power structures of the Taliban had been there for decades, so it is not something new, they had been in power for 10 years or more? And they had time to reinforce their local power structure, reorganize and make it stronger. And nothing happened the first years. We came out to Kabul in 2003 and we were not the first, and it took three years before we went down to Helmand. Three years is a long time."

Interviewer: "Getting to the last two questions, you just mentioned that civilian leadership should have been implemented before it was."

JL: "Maybe not leadership. But reinforcing the civilian structures."

Interviewer: "Do you see any other tools that could have been used, and why they went unused? And also why you think the civilian specialist won't go to

Afghanistan because of their careers and other things? Do you think there are other reasons why the civilian side wasn't boosted to begin with?"

JL: "I think you will have to ask some of the ministries responsible at that time, because it must have been discussed how and when, but we tried in Iraq, sending a small team. They were placed inside Basra palace, and that was a Danish idea to do that at that time. It was a relatively strong civilian team. And it was strange – why didn't we do that?"

Interviewer: "It was the first step in the Ministry of defense at that time, it was a new deal and nobody actually knew how to engage with the local security forces and government, but that was the first approach to do something."

JL: "It is really boring to read about, but I think we will have to do it. It never became quite sexy."

Interviewer: "And eventually the foreign ministry kind of lost interest in it. It was a big deal at first, and the ministry told NATO how bright an idea it was, and then they lost interest in it."

Was it Lars Jensen who is now in NATO?

He was there for a couple of years, and as one of the first, and he was in Afghanistan with the PRT in Helmand for a couple of years also, so he is really a specialist in that area."

JL: "That is also a good example of how few people at that level that we have. Who dares and is interested and willing to do it. Because how can this be one man?"

Interviewer: "Yes, it was himself a few deputies and a protection team, and that was it."

JL: "And when we had to send someone to Afghanistan, the only name that came up was his, more or less. It's like in the Army, for a long time, when you've had a higher command within the UN, we had one old colonel in Holstebro that we could send."

Interviewer: "Strangely enough, and maybe a little off to the side, we just arranged a conference with DIIS because of these lessons learned, coming up, and

we tried to get access to Lars Jensen, but the Foreign Ministry thought it was a bad idea. The saying was, well he is good at the micro-tactical level, but you won't get anything out of him, and he's bad at presenting stuff at a strategic level, and we have another guy who is much better.

I actually talked with him several times on completely other subjects; I didn't know he was involved with this. The last question, as we only have 5 minutes left, could you name specific Civic and military tools that were very counter-productive?"

JL: "More or less, no. I think the military tool that combined with a civilian tool could be counterproductive is if you make promises that you can't deliver on. You come to some place and promise to stay and make sure that the school will go on, and 6-12 months later you have to go back on that. But that is just being trustworthy. Afghan people are like all other people; they like to be able to trust those they cooperate with, and of course there is a challenge with bringing in new teams every 6 months, as every team can change the priorities they have. So if you change directions to many times, or you change priorities, because they aren't just there for 6 months, they live there. Being trustworthy and having a long term strategy, and knowing that the long term strategy sometimes changes because it has to, but you have a big task of explaining that to the local population. For example, the team after mine, they promised electricity to the whole of Helmand with a big generator, that they would make sure it would keep running, but it never did, and that is difficult to explain."

Interviewer: "This is just to make sure, I understood your answers from before. You said before that the military track was ahead of the civilian track to begin with?"

JL: "There was a heavy a very heavy involvement on the military side for good reasons, but relatively weak on the civilian side, but I don't know why."

Interviewer: "This relationship actually ended up being counterproductive?"

JL: "It meant that you were standing on only one leg. I don't think it was counterproductive, but it meant that it achieved less than you could have achieved if you had been able to deliver on that side more efficiently from the beginning."

Interviewer: "Do you think we should have a look on our rotation system?"

JL: "It is probably not possible for good reasons, we do 6 months, and some nations do less due to fatigue. But I would say that the battalion I brought down there and back home, they were tired after months. So it becomes inefficient. But what you should consider is that some of the key personnel who are able to figure out what is going on, that is, the intelligence people, some of them should be there on longer tours or, at least, overlapping the teams, and that's what we employed. But if you can have analysts there for a longer period than 6 months, it is also very beneficial."

Interviewer: "How about the vacation system, because you train two years before you go on a mission, and then you are sent abroad for 6 months, but in that short time you are going home for 3 weeks. I know the British talked a lot about when they could do something about that, or would it make more problems for our soldiers' behavior?"

JL: "I don't know about the behavior, but I think it will also be harder to get the support from the families at home. So it is a difficult question."

Interviewer: "Just to show the whole picture, the British had thoughts about it, but they couldn't change it."

JL: "I will not be the one to change it, to explain it to the relatives or the soldiers themselves."

Interviewer: "We are done, but to wrap up, I would like to ask one question: How different do you think it is to fight an insurgency on your home ground compared to fighting on other ground."

JL: "Very different, because at home I would know the game and the rules far better. It is a very different thing because the motivation would be very different. We could feel that the Afghan soldiers were really proud because they felt they were fighting for their country. The Danish soldier and the British soldier are fighting for their unit, for their friends. To get a Danish soldier to think that he is fighting for Denmark; it can only be in a very broad sense. It would be very different. I don't hope that I would have to fight an insurgency in my own country; I know you have the problem in your own country."

Interviewer: "That was why I asked it."

You could argue that history shows that the insurgency will die out, but that could take 40, 50 or 100 years, no one knows.

Thank you, Jens, for your time. We know you are a busy man, not at least because you are reorganizing once again.”

Interview 19: Jens Riis Vestergaard
Denmark, June 10th 2015

Interviewer: "How do you classify your opponent in Afghanistan, is he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Jens Riis Vestergaard (JRV): "Well to me, at the tactical level, I didn't really care much, we were going to fight those who threatened the security of the area, and if his motivation was political, financial, or something else didn't matter much to me, because I knew that not only did we have the fighters that came from the Taliban and had an ideological aspect, but we also fought the criminals who wanted to make money on poppy growing and all that. So I looked on them as opponents and not as a specific group with one set of values; it was all kinds of people who wanted to make the area unstable."

Interviewer: "It was not a uniform whole?"

JRV: "No, not at all."

Interviewer: "You could say that you saw them all as the antigovernment groups; they could have different agendas?"

JRV: "Absolutely, and some of them just wanted to make money. And we know that some of those we fought were just peasants being exploited by the different groups. It wasn't just one group."

Interviewer: "As you already mentioned, was political power the primary motivation for your enemy or was it something else? Why were they fighting the government and the ISAF forces?"

JRV: "I believe that those who had ideological reasons behind their fighting were afraid that they couldn't dominate and keep to their daily business as they used to in terms of local authorities and also be allowed to continue growing and harvesting poppy fields. They were basically afraid of the changes."

Interviewer: "So that was the motivation for fighting the ISAF forces?"

JRV: "They wanted to bring insecurity and instability into the area."

Interviewer: "What role did religion, or religious narratives, play in their motivations?"

JRV: "Not much, we should talk to some intel guys, but from what I could see, religion didn't play a big role. I think it was based on living conditions, but maybe a small core had religious values that they fought for, but it wasn't the primary reason to oppose the government."

Interviewer: "When you went to Afghanistan did you have an enemy-centric approach or population-centric approach?"

JRV: "It was a combination, it wasn't just either or. But, of course, my starting point was population-centric, and in the of case the city of Gereshk, I knew very well that there was a stable situation in the city. We didn't do any operations within the city limits; we just had a lot of meetings with the police and the military. We knew a lot of illegal things were going on in the city, and things that somebody should have reacted on, but we didn't because it was in a way stable, and continuously the conditions improved: more trade, local governance and police. I know a lot of different police directors came into place, but we saw continuous progress in the city, so we kept an eye on it to get the best intel possible, but it was really difficult because, it is a city with people coming from all of the region, not only from Helmand, so it was very colorful, and a lot of things went on in the city that we had no clue about. We could get some intel one day, and the next it would be completely opposite. We had discussions and meetings with the police, the city governor and the district governor, but we never really grasped the exact scope of activities that went on in a city like that. So I tried to improve the conditions in the city through meetings and discussions and by letting the local authorities handle the city, and then I looked outside the city, because I knew a lot of the security threats came from the Gereshk valley, and not necessarily from within the city."

Interviewer: "Looking at the challenges, you must have had fears when you entered Afghanistan; could we say that cultural understanding was playing a major role in Afghanistan?"

JRV: "Absolutely. No matter whether you operate as police within the city limits or if you went into the valley, it was crucial for every soldier, not just for the leadership."

Interviewer: "Did you have sufficient cultural knowledge or awareness, you being in contact with both local governance and the civilian population?"

JRV: "Yes, I believe we did. Of course, there were frustrations because of the different cultures and what comes with them, but we put a lot of effort into the training before we deployed. From the previous teams, we got to know who the key leaders are; and what the triggers are; the internal relationship between tribes; how they will react to us; talking to the locals to see if we could support them in any way, so it is really decisive. And, as I said, not just for the leadership, but for every single soldier as well."

Interviewer: "Given your experience in Afghanistan, what tools do you think are most appropriate in dealing with an insurgency?"

JRV: "Throughout the campaign you shift tools accordingly, like we talked about before, you need to focus more on the fighting at first, perhaps, so some tools need some preconditions to be used. It didn't make sense that we started partnering with our Afghan colleagues if they were not there, to impose a new way of dealing with fighting and use of weapons and arms. You had to have preconditions in place before you could do that. So you have to build and have success in some areas to use certain tools. And different tools are needed at different times. The more developed the area is in terms of governance etc. in the campaign, the softer are the tools you need; more training, mentoring, discussion, meetings, and less fighting."

Interviewer: "So to begin with, you the leadership in the operation should be almost entirely military, in order to create a secure area, and then after that you move in with the softer tools?"

JRV: "Exactly, you need to have a certain degree of security, otherwise there's absolutely no trading; nobody wants to be in office for the local governance etc. But as soon as you have some security, you can move on with the next steps."

Interviewer: "Did that work accordingly in Afghanistan?"

JRV: "I think so, yes, but I believe that when I arrived after some years of heavy fighting, in the beginning especially, I think that the civilian progress in terms of ISAF support was less developed than the military approach. I think we came a long way in terms of creating security, and continuously

handing over small bases and camps to the Afghans, and getting wiser when it came to supporting them. But I think the entire civilian aspect was not nearly as developed as we were in the military due to many reasons; one being as simple as a lack of military advisors in order to take the campaign to the next step. I think that the amount of civilian mentors, whether in the legislation, agriculture, health etc. the level of support was the same way too long, we scaled down the military structure, but didn't scale up the civilian support."

Interviewer: "What would you recommend based on your own experiences? Did you need more civilian advisors?"

JRV: "Absolutely."

Interviewer: "But should they also be part of directing the operations?"

JRV: "I think it should be in cooperation with each other. We of course had meetings with the PRT, the civilian advisors, and the locals at the same time; and of course with the civilian advisors alone. And where I sent my men was based on my impressions from discussions with the civilian advisors and the governance of the area. So you can't separate the two, you have to really listen and promote together with the civilian leadership: where do you want to improve conditions next. We can fly you to the Gereshk valley, and you can visit a village and make a small campaign together with us in this field. So we try to incorporate them, but nobody here really dictates it because when everything was said and done, I decided if something in terms of security had a higher priority than he might necessarily think, for instance, the district governor."

Interviewer: "Just to clarify what you are saying: you talk a lot about what you did, so with your team, were you in charge of negotiating with the civilian authorities?"

JRV: "A very long way, yes, but I also used my deputy a lot for the regular meetings. But I had meetings often with the district governor, especially, and also with military and police leadership."

Interviewer: "Did you decide yourself, or was it lessons learned from previous teams?"

JRV: “It was not from lessons learned, I couldn’t tell my deputy to take care of the civilian side of the operations, because it is and should be an integrated part of the campaign. But he took care of many daily business issues. And when it came to, let’s say, large operations, then I was always in meetings with the local governors.”

Interviewer: “Yes, because that is a bit of a change, I think, from the earliest teams. There the second-in-command would be the one to attend the civil side of what was going on in Gereshk, and the commander would take care of the military operations.”

JRV: “Yes, so it was more or less separate.”

Interviewer: “Yes, more separated and, in my experience, the Afghans thought of that as being peculiar because they wanted to negotiate with the leader, and, in their opinion, the leader decides. And the second one can be important, but it is not his decision in the end. So it is interesting that you were perhaps more involved in the civilian aspects, maybe because of the scaling down of the combat part of the operation.”

JRV: “It could be a step on the road to better integration, with a larger focus on civilian side. It depends a lot on to what effect the PRT, the civilian advisors, can integrate civilian leadership into a common effort. You have different personalities and a lot of different leaders, I think the district leader changed every second month, and the personal relationship between the civilian and military advisors, and local governance is decisive. And we need to have good understanding of one another’s efforts and purposes; then we think we came a long way, and some of it could be left for the deputy, but some of it is so important that the commander himself needs to be part of it.”

Interviewer: “How about the PRT, did you see them as someone you could negotiate with, or did they have their own track and you each did your own thing?”

JRV: “I think we could discuss priorities and also whenever I had my commander’s conference with my company commander, I also had the civilians there in order to hear their perspective on the development in each of the areas, and they were there for every meeting. And every month when I made a new, let’s say, small campaign, they were a part of this, as well, in order to get to know their picture of what was going on in terms of education, health, etc.”

Interviewer: "But you had the final call?"

JRV: "In terms of the use of my troops, of course. If my colleague from the Afghan army wanted to do operations, and I didn't want to join, he could go ahead but not with my troops."

Interviewer: "It is more in relation to the civilian track that I am interested. The reason why I ask you is that ultimately there is only one military leadership. You can integrate the process and work together and probably find the best solution together, but ultimately there will be one deciding what to do, and your reasons for launching a campaign would involve security, how to secure an area. The civilian leader will look at the best way to exploit this area in terms of state building, governance, and there might be conflicting interests from the different sides. I guess what I am leading up to is: could the civilian advisors, and I know there weren't many of them, could they come up to you and say we need this area secured because there are great possibilities for state building or for building a school here, which will improve the entire situation."

JRV: "Yes, and I will listen to them, and I will probably ask if they talked to the Afghans first, the police force, the military and so on, but if I saw a good reason to follow his intention, I would support it. Because the more we could get them into the leading role the better, but we were also, from time to time, asked to do operations that I simply turned down because of force protection. And I sometimes had the impression that the real motivation behind the operation was not to improve conditions, but tribe-on-tribe conflicts. There were several agendas in play."

Interviewer: "So that was from the Afghans?"

JRV: "Of course. If you mean the civilian advisors, we would definitely help. If they had an impression or a good idea for an operation, or if they asked for support they would get it."

Interviewer: "At any point in time, did you feel there was a disconnect between the people who were operating at the tactical level, the soldiers, and the policy makers?"

JRV: "The policy makers in ISAF? Well, not really, no. But compared to the national policy makers there was some disconnect."

Interviewer: "Could you please explain how?"

JRV: "I think that my country had the impression that this was a Danish campaign, since we had Danish advisors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish police officers and the Danish military. So it was a Danish campaign to them. And they never really understood that this was a multinational effort, where the operations were designed in the area, and the objectives and the campaign planning took place within ISAF. But the Danish politicians had the impression, from my point of view, that they would more or less command the troops on the ground from time to time. And I think that was a big problem; I think they didn't have a true understanding of the conditions on the ground. Denmark made a so called Helmand plan; it was issued just one month after I got into office, and this was very specific on handing over even small patrol bases to Afghans, including timelines etc. and it had absolutely no sense of reality."

Interviewer: "But you must realize that that plan was made by soldiers in the Ministry of Defense."

JRV: "I heard so, and it was supposed to be integrated with the British, but when I told my British brigadier about this plan he said "What the f... has happened here?" He knew nothing of it, and the timing of the plan was absolutely crazy. So that presented a huge disconnect."

Interviewer: "Can I ask for an example of this? In any area, just a particular example?"

JRV: "We had a number of bases that were placed closely together; they were called base patrol lines, and it had four bases, and the plan was to improve the conditions so that the Afghan National Army could take over the bases one by one, and finally only have one ISAF base in the line. But this Helmand plan stated specifically that the entire patrol base line would be handed over to the Afghans by the end of my tour, and that was 5 months after the plan was published. The conditions for it weren't even there at the end of the year, and I think another year went by, and then the British had to take over because the Danish troops were leaving. We had already been there 6 months longer than was planned. It ended with the British having to be there because we couldn't, because of politics, and the Afghans were definitely not ready to take over."

Interviewer: "So were there any measures or tools that you think should you have used in the beginning of the campaign but which weren't?"

JRV: "I think the Danish government should just support the operation, and it is okay to have a policy or guidance, but it should definitely not be too specific, because we ran out of options with this paper in hand, and in the end it wasn't successful. I think that, even though the political leadership back home wants to show, well, leadership and also progress, and set goals, they should be really be careful because, as you know, the situation could change completely over a few months, based on what happens in an area."

Interviewer: "I actually did a study on the Helmand plan, and my biggest problem with it was that it was celebrating spending money, so the more money spent on a project, the better; no discussion of quality. It was just: we have initiated that project, and if the project could be related to education or gender issues, then it was better."

JRV: "Yes, and that was another issue, measuring the success; it is impossible, or at least difficult."

Interviewer: "They tried, and if you measured something, you would end up getting to do more of that. When I was in Afghanistan, we started to measure the number of patrols that were integrated with the Afghan security forces, and that became a figure that was brought up every night and compared to other regions, so the number was raised. Even though it was just going around Camp Price with one or two Afghans, it was included in the numbers. I must say that the Danes tried to resist that system, but the British thought of it almost as a sport, so they made smaller and smaller patrols with just one or two Afghans in them, going around in a two-hour patrol. It had nothing to do with quality or what they did."

JRV: "But we still have the same problem in Iraq, we need to have specific results, even though no one knows what is really meant by a trained soldier, and counting the numbers you train is very difficult to measure."

Interviewer: "And every month I had to get the PRT to make a report that I could send to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, showing progress. In one month there is no progress. Maybe only an issue or two were fixed. But then if we couldn't show progress, they wanted more reports. Then we would have to send reports every two weeks."

In relation to the COIN strategy, or concept, or whatever you want to call it, you mentioned some of the tools before that were used, and I want to ask if there were some specific tools that could have worked but which we didn't use? Or a tool that was used but got sidetracked?"

JRV: "I didn't see that, no."

Interviewer: "With the first teams, the civilian side got sidetracked because the military side was so important for creating security, so even though security is only one step, everybody focused on security, and that is why the civilian side was probably sidetracked, at least for some time. But you didn't see something like that?"

JRV: "No, and if so, only small problems, not if you looked at the big picture. I think when I came into, and typically when Danish troops come into, a theater like this, we are very focused on military operations, and this is what we learn, this is what we train for. Of course, we also trained for handling the culture and so on, and we all had this military mindset. I had it, no doubt. I wanted operations and results during my 6 months. I couldn't rely on everything going well on its own. In the beginning, I probably tended to initiate meetings and discussions with the locals, the civilian side, and then I most probably turned to doing some operations. But if you look at my time in Afghanistan, I shifted the focus a bit, as soon as we had the operations in a frequency that made sense, and I could go from making a main effort in different areas from time to time, I could put more of my effort into talking with the Afghan leadership, whether military or civilian. But I think that is how it typically goes. You come with your view, it is a tour of 6 months and you want some military action and create results, but you don't necessarily look at the long term. I think of myself as being only a tiny little leg in this huge roadmap, and we should probably be more careful about being too ambitious on the military side at the beginning. But that is hard to tell to a commander going in, because he knows there are security issues everywhere, if that makes sense?"

Interviewer: "Perfectly. Did you find that there were any civil or military tools that were counterproductive?"

JRV: "Yes. If we launched a major operation with a lot of troops on the ground, it was definitely counterproductive in terms of creating the understanding that the Afghans were leading the security of the country, and they were and

should be, and we should do joint operations and all that. But if I wanted to make sure that the operation was successful, I had to invite as many Afghans as I could, but it would most likely be 80% ISAF troops on the ground, and this gave the wrong picture to the locals. No matter how you looked at the relation between ISAF and the local military, we were seen as dominating the area. This was of course counterproductive to the understanding and the picture that in just a few years the Afghans would be alone, and would be able to take over all the responsibilities and not just security.”

Interviewer: “One of the last questions, in your own perception did you find that any civilian approaches or any civilian things that you think were counter-productive? There was a lot of talk in Denmark about that we should put our money into education, building schools, and some would say that we paid too little attention to building the institutions like the legal institutions, especially.”

JRV: “Some mistakes were made, like building the police station in, what was it called? In the Gereshk valley, called Rahim Kalay. And it was never used. I think, in the end, Afghan local police came in and were there, but a lot of money was spent, because it was a plan made early in the campaign, and the preconditions just weren’t met. I don’t know when exactly it was made, a few years before I came to Afghanistan, but it was a disaster in the eyes of the locals, because it was never used.”

Interviewer: “Do you know if it was from the military side it was decided? Was it one of your previous commanders that had emphasized that it was necessary, or was it a civilian, or was it some kind of prestige project?”

JRV: “I think it was the latter; that the locals, the governance the PRT, and everybody agreed to make an ink spot in Rahim, and hopefully it could expand but it never did, and I think that that was probably another mistake we made. This idea of making a lot of small, stable, safe communities” failed. “We had to turn back to the big city, and let it grow from there; it was never really successful.”

Interviewer: “So, in your opinion, the ink spot strategy was not successful?”

JRV: “No, not at my level, maybe an ink spot strategy is okay if the city of Gereshk can be an ink spot, at an operational level or strategic level, but at my level it didn’t make sense, and this was an attempt to employ this strategy at a very low level.”

Interviewer: "Yes, because it is in our books, that the ink-spot strategy is a good idea. I hope all the theoretical thinkers in counter-insurgency operations have talked about ink spots strategy to some extent. But it doesn't work with small villages?"

JRV: "Exactly, because you have to put so much effort into this, not only in terms of security but also in terms of civilian support and advisory support, and if you cannot establish this, it will fail."

Interviewer: "And also because not all of them talk of the ink spot in a positive way, because the problem is that when you say ink-spot strategy, you imply that it's the same ink that you can use on different positions on the paper, but it is not the same ink; it varies from village to village, from area to area. So you can't just apply the same tools everywhere."

JRV: "Exactly, and you really need a lot of resources to do this. And it couldn't be done."

Interviewer: "So we are generally done with the interview. One last question from my side, it is just about how you perceive things, how different would it be to fight insurgents in another country, compared to fighting on your own ground?"

JRV: "I don't know. This is way beyond my imagination, but it would be very different. Of course, we sometimes talked inside the Danish military about how the Afghans fought, how we think they needed to take on responsibility to really move forward. We see the same problem in Iraq right now. In terms of what we are used to, we don't see enough initiative to take responsibility for their own situation. How it would be in Denmark, I don't know, in this country, because of the education level I think we have a good understanding of the nationalities, compared to the regions where the local tribe is the center of the world, so it is difficult, I can't really answer this, I'm afraid."

Interviewer: "Thank you so much."

Interview 20: Jan Hjelmager

Denmark, June 10th 2015

Interviewer: "The first question is: How would you classify the opponent in Afghanistan? Was he an insurgent or a terrorist?"

Jan Hjelmager (JH): "An insurgent".

Interviewer: "And why do you not classify him as a terrorist?"

JH: "The term terrorist is very broad. And if you take a terrorist, he will be a terrorist all the time, but the population in Afghanistan are sometimes just civilians and at other times insurgents. This changes while it doesn't for a terrorist. That is how we see it. Of course, some of them might be terrorists, but from a military point of view, if a person shoots at you he is an opponent, or an insurgent, who doesn't want you in his country. If it happened in Denmark and a guy shot at soldiers, he might be defined as a terrorist, because it is inside your own borders."

Interviewer: "There is more political motivation in the insurgency than in terrorists?"

JH: "Not necessarily. It can also be money. We saw a lot of these insurgents being paid for what they did."

Interviewer: "The distinction between an insurgent and a terrorist is actually not that significant?"

JH: "Not for us, no. If they shoot at you, you shoot at them. Or you try to find out why they shoot at you."

Interviewer: "That was my next question, why do they shoot at you? What motivates them?"

JH: "There are many motivations; of course, you have to take the local part of it. Of course, you might be more familiar with that than I am, but as we see it the culture about tribes and so on, you have to see the world from their point of view. They try to find out which horse they want to bet on, to keep themselves alive. Often that is the strongest motivation, so the tribe will fight with the strongest faction, and that can change over time. When the Taliban

was present there, some of the tribes were with them against the government, now a stronger force came in and some of them changed teams, simply for the sake of survival. Survival could be one reason. Another could be that they are poor, and they received money for putting an IED in the ground, again for survival. And then you have the religious part of it, that you know from Pakistan, being brainwashed as we see it, go into Afghanistan and commit suicide and kill locals or soldiers in the process.”

Interviewer: “How did that influence our lessons learned?”

JH: “Most of this is intelligence, as I see it, because it is imperative that you very quickly identify, who is who, and why are they shooting at you. If they are paid to do it, you could try to pay them more, or make sure they can make money on other things, such as agriculture. If it is a terrorist coming in from Pakistan, or an insurgent from Afghanistan who has been brainwashed, we don’t have a way to deal with them, except killing them. They are so fanatic that you can’t change their mind.”

Interviewer: “Heavily brainwashed?”

JH: “Yes. It was the same pattern we saw in Iraq. Most of the people carrying out suicide attacks were not Iraqis; they were foreign fighters. In Afghanistan, we see the same pattern, it was not the Taliban who did this but brainwashed fanatics from foreign countries, coming into the country to commit suicide attacks. The Taliban was too clever for that, and the same with the Iraqis, they saw the fanatics come to the country and sent them on the suicide missions. They didn’t do it themselves. That was the pattern.”

Interviewer: “So religion was not the primary factor?”

JH: “For the brainwashed foreigners it was.”

Interviewer: “It was used as a narrative and as a tool? But not the actual reason for the insurgency?”

JH: “Yes, it was used. It was only a part of it, and not the most important one. You can’t deal with the most fanatic part of the foreign fighters; they just enter the country and do their business of killing or being killed.”

Interviewer: "They only represent a small group in the overall picture. So when dealing with, what we would call, the main group of the insurgencies in Afghanistan, are there any tools that you would say have been more effective in engaging them? It could both be military tools or how to engage them politically."

JH: "It's really difficult for foreign nations to enter a country like Afghanistan and deal with how the local structure is built up. Because you have these tribes and some local hierarchy of who will be bribed and who owns this etc. And if you try to change this because of a corrupt mayor or something, then you will change the whole structure. As long as he is your friend, he gets his pay; he will stay loyal because you are the strong one, but if you punish him for taking bribes, there's a chance he will become an insurgent. It is very difficult and might take generations to change. My favorite story is actually, when you ask me who I am I will say my name is Jan, and I'm from Denmark, I live in Holstebro. But if you ask someone from Iraq or Afghanistan (This is an Iraqi example because I am familiar with it), if you ask an Iraqi who they are, they will say my name is ***** and I'm a Arabic, and a Shia Muslim; then what tribe they are from and only with his fifth or sixth link of his answer will he say that he is Iraqi. That is how he sees his world, Baghdad is far away and the government doesn't have much of an influence on his life, just like with Afghanistan. If you only know of your government as corrupt, and only the local part of it will help you, then you have no relation to the central government. So who the president is doesn't really matter, it is not part of your world, that's how they see it. I had friends in Iraq and Afghanistan among the soldiers and locals, and when I talked with them, they didn't know anything of the government. It is solely: We have a good governor, and he will take care of us. So when it comes to elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, they don't know the candidates they can vote for; they know whom to vote for in their own region, but they don't know who should be president; it doesn't matter."

Interviewer: "When your soldiers went to Afghanistan, do you think they possessed sufficient cultural awareness?"

JH: "We learned a lot in Iraq, and we were focused on trying to read the locals, and how things were going. So I think we were a lot better off in Afghanistan than in Iraq. Iraq taught us that we had to be more aware of this. So in our next mission we will immediately think about where we are going, who the peoples are, what the patterns in their lifestyles are. Who will be and could be our friends, and whom will be difficult to befriend. We had a good idea about that even before getting there."

Interviewer: "And that is a question of intel."

JH: "Of course. And also civilians who know a lot of the country are part of our training in local culture. Not only military but also people who have studied the country, who can tell us about what to be aware of."

Interviewer: "What would be the most appropriate tool for handling the insurgency?"

JH: "This is my personal view. Picture this, when we were in Iraq and tried to do some policing, we had a lot of police stations, all of them corrupt. Now we had to train these guys, in the beginning we took three or four officers from all the stations and trained them for a period, and sent them back. And what happens when you send three or four well trained officers back to a maybe a hundred corrupt colleagues. It's a matter of time, and they will be corrupt again, so that didn't work. We tried to go out and take one big police station, train them and give them a decent chief, give them better pay, and use a station as a test area. People began to notice that the police were different, then we took commanders from the other stations and used it as an example of how it was supposed to and could work. And most of them wanted the same training, to raise their area to the same level. It takes longer time, but the effect was a lot greater. And if you raise that to the strategic level, and take it to Afghanistan, you need to take one province at a time. Start with a test area, Afghanistan is a huge country. You can't change it all at the same time. Build up one part and use it as an example for the rest of the country. So they can see that the police can be free of corruption, and you can ask them for help and so on."

Interviewer: "This wasn't used in Afghanistan? Do you know why?"

JH: "It wasn't used in the same way. I don't know about the policing, it was just what at that time was part of our job, as the military police. But of course it takes a lot of time and a lot of work mentoring and training at that level."

Interviewer: "What I am aiming at is about what you said, taking it to a more strategic level and actually use this method in order to create a test area, also in relation to the Afghan army, government and so on."

JH: "Showing them that it can work. If you show them that agriculture, trade etc. is increasing in this area, then the others will look at it. Of course, some

of the hardcore insurgents will try to mess it up, but that is part of it. I think having a test area might stand a chance.”

Interviewer: “Interesting idea. Based on your lessons learned, could you name some tools in the country that have been especially counterproductive, civil or military?”

JH: “One of the worst enemies is time. At the political level they want to go in and finish the job, and take the soldiers out fast because we are very expensive. Looking at Iraq and Afghanistan, as soon as possible you have to rebuild the local police and military forces, because you can’t deal with it for forever. So rebuilding the forces should be done as soon as possible, and let them take responsibility, as we know from Iraq, go in, rebuild them, train with them, support them, and at the end you just monitor that they do the right things. It costs a lot of money and takes a lot of training, and you have to be sure that you get the right guys.”

Interviewer: “Do you think we should speed up this process, or do you think that setting an exit date actually was problematic?”

JH: “It will be problematic if you set an exit date, because the insurgent will know they just have to lean back and wait. Have you heard about the Russian intervention in Afghanistan compared to the NATO intervention? They were very much alike. This is what the Russians did, they got in there and set up a new government, built up the local forces and they tried to make an exit, and they had paid a lot of money to get it all going. But when they got out, the political focus shifted and in the end they stopped paying for the local forces, and things fell apart. If you compare this to what we are doing right now, the same thing will happen, because when our forces withdraw, in the beginning we will pay for the local forces, but after some time it will not be of political interest anymore, the payments will stop and the forces disappear, and maybe the Taliban will take over again.”

Interviewer: “I told the commander on team 8 that he should be aware of that he was right now in 2010, exactly where the Russians were when they left Afghanistan, and we were actually using the same areas and almost the same bases as they were. We were using the same positions, tools and everything was the same. He even admitted that one of his soldiers was contacted by a local Afghan who said to him; are you Russians?”

JH: “The main point was that the strategy was exactly the same, and in the end it would fail. A two-star UK general.”

Interviewer: “Last question from me. At any point in time, since you were making reports and dealing with the tactical level, did you find that there was a disconnect between the people working at the tactical level, the soldiers, and the people making the policies?”

JH: “Yes and no. I think many of the lessons we learned in Iraq about who was responsible for what we call the civic part of it. It had been changed, because we made a mistake in Iraq that I remember: We had a Danish battlegroup down there and the political level said we had to put some Danish money into the area. Then they send some guys from the foreign ministry with a lot of money and started to rebuild in our area, and in a short time the neighboring battlegroups under British control, they didn’t have the same amount of money to rebuild, so you saw a difference from one part of the region to another, some evolving some staying poor. And that occurred over the borders of the local tribes, so they began fighting each other because some of them now have more wealth than the others, so we caused them to start fighting. And we got the civilians out because they were making more of a mess than fixing things.

In Afghanistan we worked more with the British in a bigger area, so we didn’t see this disconnection between different areas, seeing Helmand as one whole area. They tried to have the same level of development in the whole region. And that was much more effective than in Iraq. It was a lesson learned that you can’t do it locally; you need a top-down approach, and a central organization of a region. If you just let a civilian with a lot of money do it, it will end up a mess.”

Interviewer: “The other way around you have the question of corruption, but you just have to live with it?”

JH: “You have to. But the main lessons from these two countries are that when we talk about elections, democracy etc., I think everyone can agree that we are not talking about the same kind of democracy as in Europe, if you call it a kind of a democracy it will be okay, because if that is what they want, according to their tribes and so on, then it must be so. It’s the same with human rights, we have a lot of discussions on how to deal with that, for example. In the beginning in Iraq we were occupiers and made the rules, but

when they weren't occupied we were visitors and they make their own rules, and if they have a death penalty we can do nothing about it. And should we? The Americans have as well, and we work with them. Now we come to some of the strategic problems when the political element talks of human rights, democracy and stuff like that, and in the end, it is the soldier on the ground that has to take the decision on what to do."

Interview 21: Uffe Pedersen
Denmark, June 10th 2015

Interviewer: "We are foremost interested in your experiences from the operations in Helmand, but we are of course also interested in how the Defense Command view it, so if you have any points on that please go ahead and feel free to ask if there are any questions."

Uffe Pedersen (UP): "I will just follow the questions now, really, please break in, but I think how do you classify insurgents and terrorist? I think that is a very tricky question, isn't it? Because an insurgent in my perspective is a person who is against the legitimate government, if it is a legitimate government which is in that country where that person lives. So an insurgent is in the opposition to the government, and the tricky question is really what is a legitimate government as such, and I think that is one of the key questions in counter insurgency, really, and how you should actually perceive it. Because you could probably say that the government installed in both Iraq with the CPA in Bagdad led by the U.S. and the follow-on government with Nouri al-Maliki, who has been put in to govern Iraq, may not be very legitimate because there was a lot of thought, a lot of discussion about the election process, and equally you can say that twice in Afghanistan. So the Karzai government in the first place was probably not a legitimate government, thus we had huge problems with corruption, and in that perspective the normal Afghan man in Afghanistan or in Helmand: Did he really see that government, which had invited NATO, as such, at the rule of UN too, go against insurgents and Taliban on behalf of that government? Is that really or was that really a legitimate government as such? , I mean, that's probably a key question right there. So, so let's say it was, then. Actually we are fighting on behalf of the Afghanistan/Afghani government as such to suppress and fight the insurgents for this government really to develop that process which is actually, you know, the war in a political scope."

Interviewer: "So you would say that anybody who challenges the legitimate government would be classified as insurgents?"

UP: "Yes, if they do that with arms as such and not, I would say, in a violent way, but it is the divergence between an insurgent or a terrorist, yes, there is, I mean, an insurgent would in a legitimate way fight the governments troops and the government as such, and if you do that, I mean, in a stand up way, more or less with an open face, and in not in a way where you, more

or less explode bombs in a normal populated area and such, killing people here and there, then he is a terrorist and then I would not, I am not sure, I would really classify him as an insurgent, as such. I mean, there you have a clash, and... it would be difficult to define, I would say, but I think that is the main difference between an insurgent and a terrorist, and they can be both, probably, but if he is a terrorist he is not really a legitimate insurgent, I mean, because he is not fighting by a normal set of standards and rules; he is terrorizing the normal population in favour of, you know, achieving his own political [objectives].”

Interviewer: “So actually, by defining the opponent as an insurgent, we actually add some legitimacy to the opponent, I mean, could you say that?”

UP: “Yes, you could probably say that. He is actually against that legitimate government which is in a country we are fighting on behalf of; now that’s another key question COIN, counterinsurgency as such, because it is about fighting the insurgency, in my opinion, and it’s fighting it on behalf of that government which we are invited by until that government is able to take over the task itself, and probably one of the major mistakes done by the international society, both in Iraq and in Afghanistan, in Iraq we dismantled the armed forces and completely dismantled the whole administrative system in Iraq led by the U.S. and the U.S. government I would probably say that the coalition was not probably not part of that decision making process, but it created a huge power vacuum which made that government in itself illegitimate in the normal populace as such. I would probably argue and by doing that first of all you are putting around two-hundred-thousand armed men with their weapons because they left the barracks with their guns, which are trained, and they have a command structure as such; then you are creating a very, very dangerous insurgency as such. They are organized, half their organization as such, but you then have to start all over again by recruiting and building up a new force as such, I mean, from scratch, and there is no textbook for it and that.”

Interviewer: “Are we talking about Iraq?”

UP: “No, now we are just talking about Iraq, but we can mirror the same thing in the campaign in Afghanistan.”

Interviewer: “Yeah, because the DDR process was a top-down approach, and a lot of the soldiers did not know what was going to happen. Some of the leaders,

maybe the warlords, saw an interest in keeping the process as long as possible because they earned money in it, and the money was never given to the local soldiers on the ground, so...

"No, it was never distributed."

"...and there was no local ownership because there wasn't a system, where the UN, or whoever, give money to the local community in order to integrate soldiers. When they came back, they were actually left on their own with no weapon in hand."

UP: "Yeah, that was in Iraq, but you can actually mirror that and putting it on to Afghanistan, the mirror there said that one of the key mistakes, in my perspective, was what you called it the prolonged process of building up their Afghan national army because we came in 2006, and really the building up of that army first accelerated around 2009. I would say that, actually, fighting that insurgency on behalf of that government for three years more or less: Will that be a legitimate fight in the normal populace's eyes, when there are, actually, foreigners who are fighting the Afghan fight on behalf of that government, in their country. And I think that's probably one of the gravest mistakes, in my opinion, both in Iraq but also in Afghanistan: that we are in every aspect in the driving seat, and thus the outward face toward the local population. And you could probably argue that that gives a legitimate reason to be an insurgent because you have a foreign force in your country."

Interviewer: "Yeah, and you can also, if you see how the theory of COIN was developed based on those theories of Galula and Thomson, you can actually say that it is impossible for a foreign power to actually conduct COIN operations; it has to be with domestic power. In this case the host nation did not have the capacity or capability at all... plus corruption..?"

UP: "But you, actually, yeah plus corruption and plus you, actually, have, I would say, an illegitimate government. I mean, you have now the ingredients for Hamas, and that took a long time to manage, and you actually have Karzai inside for two periods, and now they have Ghani in the unified government in Kabul, but Ghani is president because of Karzai's faults. Is that a legitimate government? Luckily it's now a unified government, you know, which is probably a good thing, and it thus has a lot more legitimacy, but now we are in a situation where the appetite for actually delivering the full effort for Afghanistan, you know, going the last mile, is probably not there in

the international community, and there is really a danger in my perspective that Resolute Support will not deliver the needed effect in the short period of time that we actually have left.”

Interviewer: “So it means, even if we have a legitimately constituted government in the country, it has to be seen that we are by the people also. It doesn’t matter if outside world recognizes it; if the people recognize it as such, that’s the legitimacy?”

UP: “Yeah, and then you have probably a fair reason to be an insurgent.”

Interviewer: “Yes, okay, so the next question we will be asking you, as you can see, what is in your opinion the primary reason, and after that, why will the fighting go on after this?”

UP: “I mean it’s probably woven into the key question about legitimacy, isn’t it? So that’s one thing, I mean, that’s the political side of that and then you have, of course, the idea of the Caliphate or, you know, how to actually be a real Muslim, right, so you have the radicalism in it as an ingredient as well.”

Interviewer: “Ideology?”

UP: “Yeah, ideology and religious ideology, I would probably say, and that’s, you know, also a very nasty ingredient in this because having a more western government in Kabul but having a government which is accepting some western values, and you have a broad part of the population who reject that, and you find that that is actually not religiously orthodox enough, I mean, then I mean then you actually also have a reason to be an insurgent, as we had in Europe several hundred years ago and such.”

Interviewer: “So did you see the opponent as a uniform whole or are they composed of different elements?”

UP: “Completely different elements, or I mean, in Helmand. I mean of course, you had opponents who fought for religious causes before us, and they actually thought that we were there for illegitimate reasons and actually occupying the country. I mean, that’s probably one part; then you have a very corrupt system as such in Gereshk in Lashkar Gah coming from the top down from Kabul, the whole way down the whole system; they had a patch-made system and probably still have, and the local government actually exceeds in their

power grabbing, land eradication; opium as such taking the life bread out of some of the farmers, corrupting them the way that they attack people going into the city and going out of the city, going in to the market.”

Interviewer: “Taking advantage of their position.”

UP: “Exactly, through pure corruption. I mean, if have to go to the bazaar, you have to have some kind of license from the local government in Gereshk, just that will cost you several thousands of dollars you have to put into your local government, and actually pay the district police officer or the government to get those licenses. You know that goes into a massive corrupt society and that’s another reason to be an insurgent and in opposition to the government as such.”

Interviewer: “The lawlessness and corruption?”

UP: “Yeah, then you have a very huge criminal, and also I mean corruption and criminality just, you know, follow each other, and together you have, you know, a proper rule of law in let’s say Gereshk; you had a lawyer; you had a judge sitting up in the local fortress; he was so afraid he wouldn’t enter the bazaar during the day; he was just sitting up in the fortress he never put anyone on trial you have to do that in other cities– in Lashkar Gah, in Kabul - so you complete lack rule of law, and thus that man really that the local police officer would actually, you know, grab the law by himself and would just punish or fine people without any jurisdiction. Well, that’s probably what you do if you are a law enforcement officer and the rule of law system above you is, you know, broken down and that gives, you know, a few obstacles as well, but the criminal network in Gereshk was probably quite huge. There was kidnapping. Corruption as well is running some of the bazaars and markets, I would probably say, and then you have the whole opium smuggler ring issue as well. Probably opium enough north of Gereshk and that part out to Now Zad and then to Iran or Maya Kandahar to Pakistan and finding its way from those channels, actually, to Europe and the U.S. and the Russian market and, of course, there is an enormous amount of money involved. And in the opium and I’m not sure whether it was the Taliban or the criminal network who is actually operating as such, especially, having linkages to the economic benefit, of course, it would probably be that. Using the Taliban really to be in the first line as such the farmers will harvest the opium. It will come up in the different markets with how they are fabricated and stuff like that, and on that market the Taliban will be part, and they will take their

part and the rest will probably then follow the criminals out of Europe, so you will actually also finance the Taliban by that. The Taliban would also go to the farmers. If he had a bad year and he didn't have any crops, they will deliver the opium crops to the farmer, and wanting their share by the harvest, you know. So that was perfectly normal practice in that area as well, so you have a huge criminal network that was woven into insurgency criminality corruption with a non-workable law enforcement force with a non-workable rule of law set up, I would probably argue – and corruption from the policemen in the street all the way to the top to Karzai who would appoint the different district police officers, district police chiefs: Let's say in Gereshk; let's say in Lashkar Gah; in Sangin he would be the person who would appoint the local governor and, you know, mix the cuts now and then to maintain his power position.”

Interviewer: “But if I were to challenge you a bit with some of the first things you mentioned, I would say that most of the insurgents operating locally in Helmand, they would not care at all whether the government was religiously based or not religiously based; pro-western or anti-western. They would still operate with the single agenda to gain local power to make money locally and to make as good a life as possible for themselves; they don't care what happens in Kabul?”

UP: “I am not sure if that's right. I agree that that's probably a part of it, but, on the other hand, there was, and probably still is, a power base in Pakistan sitting there drawing the dealers, and they would direct the commanders in Helmand from the distance, and in Kandahar that was quiet and we knew it from an intelligence base, and they will farm land as well Pakistani fighters especially during the harvest season.”

Interviewer: “Sorry, sir?”

UP: “Especially during the harvest season, for example, buses - like at the Copenhagen railway station - would simply come from Pakistan up through Kandahar and stop in Gereshk, I mean, from there people would harvest and fight, so it was actually not only locally based, you could probably say we nailed quite a few Pakistani fighters as well; youngsters but some were very good; they were quite skilled with the guns as well and snipers, just to take an example, we caught two snipers in May 2012, both Pakistani youngsters. NATO probably took down 21, 22, 23 or something, but you know, very skilled, and you know, very effective, so their route would go up to, you know,

Sangin and through the different valleys and down through Kandahar to Pakistan that was more or less a route or a way through. I can't remember, but there is, of course, a very huge zone down there as well, which would go into Kandahar."

Interviewer: "So they actually had some or a lot of power over the commander and they would follow the Quetta Shura's directions you would think?"

UP: "Yeah, they had this Quetta Shura in that was called Quetta, and they would direct, you know, how to operate in the next fighting season, and all the commanders would actually go on holiday during the winter time in that area. They would probably relax but also probably make plans for the next year and so, more or less, the most significant commanders in that area were out of the country during the wintertime and would then flow back in April, more or less, and then fight until September working 5 or 6 months – What we call the fighting season."

Interviewer: "So once your country went to Helmand, was you approach enemy-centric or population-centric? How would you classify it?"

UP: "I was not there, but I would probably classify it as enemy centric. I think that in the first couple of years a lot and probably too much firepower was used in the beginning. I mean, I was not there. I don't have the exact perception of it but from previous officers, who were down there both from the Danish side, but also for the UK, I mean, the kind of operation they actually conducted was more or less attack, offensive operations, you know, happy use of firepower artillery and tanks."

Interviewer: "And did your troops have sufficient cultural awareness once they went back there, or did they face some difficulty in that?"

UP: "I would say that we probably did the best we could in the pre- and prolonged training to try to achieve the cultural awareness that you should have to try to operate in a country like that, but of course 14 days in Jutland, where two local interpreters - not to patronize - with no actual experience... When you land in Gereshk, just to take Gereshk as an example, we were there 2012, but we still didn't understand the local patterns in Gereshk."

Interviewer: "So how effective where the interpreters in telling about the culture, or did you actually need some people who were experts?"

UP: “We had cultural advisors who were, you know, western, actually, but still very good and very sensitive and sensible to try to actually advise the best way regarding culture. I actually think that was very effective. We had different sets of interpreters, both Danish British American interpreters some of them were actually Afghani, themselves with a U.S. passport, and then we had the local interpreters from my side. I used the U.S. Afghani interpreters the most. They had been there for 2 years or more. That gave me and my commander, you know, some inside knowledge of how that society actually did work but also how we were supposed to behave and talk with our Afghan counterparts in a good way.”

Interviewer: “So this brings us to our third question, what, in your view, would be the most appropriate way to deal with insurgents today from your experience...? Yeah, you have already mentioned the buildup of the whole nation’s security forces.”

UP: “Yeah, but I think the most important thing is actually that we operate there on a legitimate basis, also as perceived by the local population. I mean, that’s probably the first thing, so it’s very political, and I think both in Iraq but also in Afghanistan, our governments have not done us that favour: to actually put us into a job to actually fight for legitimate reasons, and I think that that’s actually key in the question, and that our governments with the different natures that they have are trying to combat corruption from the starting point, when we are actually in a country like that because that’s probably some of the most damaging factors in counterinsurgency that the government, on whose behalf we were acting, was illegitimate and super corrupt, so I think that’s actually the starting point, you know. You have to lay a proper foundation for the operation as such. Providing that, I think in my perspective, these good things about creating new roads and sewers, electricity, and all that stuff is, of course, very, very important and efficient for building up that country on behalf of the government that we are actually there for. But I think that counterinsurgency, in my perspective, you have to counter the insurgency, and I think by doing that, in my perspective, you have to go very hard against the command network by intelligence-led operations, soft operations and attacking the network severely because what we need is actually to squash the insurgency, and in parallel with that build up the local law enforcement and Army as such and armed forces, so the government becomes fast and more fast than we have seen in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and will be able to take on the fight themselves. And I think that’s where the main efforts have to be because that’s what it is about, if those, I mean,

if the law enforcement and the rule of law and the armed forces are there in a workable manner, of course, we could probably support from the western countries in different ways and aspects. If you create a secure environment development will come from it; it's very difficult to develop in an unsecure environment, as such. All your equipment could be destroyed, even you roads your bridges your police stations etc."

Interviewer: "Even schools?"

UP: "If you cannot project power into the areas where you are actually building the schools then I mean what's it worth? A very good example is that the Danish forces built a school ten k out of Gereshk, in a little spot called Rahim, which we could control. And out there we had a fine school, a fine police station out of reach of the district police officer and the local government, so you couldn't find a teacher who actually would work out there and teach the kids and in a, you know, a vacuum where the Taliban would actually have the leads."

Interviewer: "They didn't like the schools anyway?"

UP: "They don't do that in the mosques, so that an example if you probably have to develop, and I think, in some ways you will have to do it in the public centres like Gereshk, Lashkar Gah or Kabul but not out in the rural areas, as such. I mean, you cannot project power out there or protect your efforts; it's a waste of money and a waste of time."

Interviewer: "So we already come to the question: Do you think anything was crowded out – any measures, any tools that should have been put to use?"

UP: "I mean, it's super difficult to answer that question, really, in my perspective the different lines of coordination were not properly synchronized, I mean, building up there."

Interviewer: "The coordination amongst them was not that good?"

UP: "I mean, probably, but when you are starting to develop and not, you know, actually putting your efforts in building up the Army and the law enforcement structures, the rule of law, but you are starting more or less developing building roads schools stuff like that, I mean, all that money especially that the U.S. had put into the country, I mean, where is that money?"

It is certainly not in the schools and certainly not the roads, and building a school in Gereshk is more expensive than building a school in Copenhagen and building a road in Gereshk is more expensive than building a road in Copenhagen. And why is that? It's quite obvious, isn't it? It's not because the salary from the roadman or the schoolteacher are very high. It's putting money into corruption and just, you know, going to the top, so are there any tools to be crowded out? Probably not, but one thing I might argue is that, in my perspective, the tactical idea of patrolling, living amongst the people, putting all kinds of bases out in the rural areas and countries to be able to more or less dominate the terrain, patrolling amongst the population, trying to win the heart and minds of the farmer next door, or stuff like that, is probably a waste of time. I mean, you have to build up defensive areas around those centres you want to develop you can call it a wall in an old-fashioned way, but more or less, you have to have some defensive barriers to protect what it is you want to develop. And to heck, in my opinion, with the farmers a hundred km up the valley. Let them wait and then develop a society. If you want to develop from the inside out like you do in Europe and have done in Europe, put walls around the defensive towns where you actually have a market. Have people learn; have universities and stuff like that, and from that point on you build up. You cannot build up everything in one go."

Interviewer: "So you go sequentially, not simultaneously?"

UP: "Especially, when you can't project power out in a vast, vast rural area full of mountains and valleys and rivers and stuff like that, I mean, there is a reason why the government in Kabul have so tremendous problems projecting power out of Afghanistan because you can't, I mean, it's a mountainous area you have a huge rock in the middle. It is completely impossible, and it's the same thing in the northern part of Pakistan. I flew in over it several times, and you just say: How are you ever going to project power in these areas? You can't, so near to impossible."

Interviewer: "So are there any tools that you found out were counterproductive?"

UP: "Don't kill civilians, ever, I mean, that's probably the most important thing, especially from a foreign forces perspective. That's absolutely a no-go. A killed child, a killed farmer by accident is so counterproductive to the overall campaign that, you know, it can have strategic implications. So you have to project power in a very precise and sharp way; and it's not by flushing in the infantry company with the guns sticking out in every direction to fight an

insurgent, so we did that many times, you know, making huge operations: clearance operations, swept through the country and found some minor stuff and things and explosives and some opium and stuff like that with the Afghani army, but if you cannot hold, eventually, what's the point of course? You will have to clear things now, and then in due order also teach the Afghani and also Iraqi army to operate as such. And I think that a valuable way, by conducting a lot of those operations as we did we did 7 or 8 major brigade operations, together with the Afghani army, and that's in that sense a good thing, but it's like vacuum cleaning the floor. I mean, two days after you finish, there will be dust in it again and that's the same way you can see it, if you are not there all the time and you cannot project power there all the time you cannot clear it all the time. And, you know, keeping it tidy and clean then you should really consider what you are doing because it also has future implications on the farmer, who will get their fields destroyed, and their kids and families might be in harm's way, so I think that is one of the things that is super important."

Interviewer: "Sir, I would agree with that. I met an Afghan woman who was from the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She said that 2 things created a lot of damage in the perception of people: that was nitrate and the collateral damage, and I would agree: that yes that should have been avoided somehow. I know you were also constrained but then they should have some mechanism to avoid it...yeah, but there was some mechanism there. Karzai's ten commandments: you had to be operation proved if you wanted to conduct operations during the night, of course, that mostly applied to ISAF because the troops could conduct whatever operation, and it should be so because they were going to solve a situation."

UP: "Yeah, we stopped. We did a couple of night raids, but you have to have recognizance 2 level because we had to be approved by commander RC SW - 4 star, 3 star general, as I recalled, and that also had to be approved, by I think, the provincial government in Lashkar Gah, before you could actually do something like that to try to embrace the fact that the Afghan populace disliked and almost loathed night raids, as I understand it. I have to point out that a little bit later, so I think you actually have heard the fact that we stopped using mortars in the battalion in April 2010 because I and the commander found that using mortars was inappropriate and actually was too dangerous for the local population. We had an incident at one time where a patrol went down just north of Gereshk and the company commander had a mortar lying, sitting actually, up in the Valley, and I think that they fired

150 rounds or something like that in those 15 minutes, and actually we lost a local child on that account, so we stopped using mortars and would only go for artillery because it was more precise, and we could control it from Camp Price. So instead of using mortars it would be artillery or helicopters or F-16s, or whatever jets from the air, which were significantly more precise, so that was the consequence actually.”

Interviewer: “At any point did you ever find a disconnect between soldiers working on the tactical level and the people who were making policies sitting far away? The information and experiences coming from a tactical level were they incorporated, did anyone listen to it?”

UP: “Yeah, they would absolutely, but I was on a tactical level myself and we correspond with Task Force Helmand who told us to do more or less, and they would do what RC SW told them. There was a very long distance from Kabul and HQ ISAF to the deputy commander in Nahr-e-Saraj. I have absolutely no idea; what I can say is that our strategic paper called Helmand Plan, or something like that in Denmark, I think I read it while I was in Denmark, but I never took any notice of that ever when I was actually down there because it was developed in an office in Copenhagen and with different benchmarks and stuff like that, which I at that time, maybe I follow it a little bit more significantly now, but at the time I found it a little ridiculous.”

Interviewer: “And why is that, so why is that so in the first place?”

UP: “Yeah, probably I think one of the things was that we were actually going to develop a functioning Afghani brigade. I think that was one of the goals, as I recall it. First of all, a Danish battalion does not partner a brigade sized unit, I mean, that’s completely impossible a battalion can support and help another battalion; that’s just one thing that was a team 8 task and a RC SW objective as such; absolutely not a Danish battle group with two companies, I mean, completely disproportioned really. Then we could probably develop in some lines part of the Afghan forces but, then again, it would have to be embraced of all RCSW and our HQ ISAF plan as such, so now we are in a Danish way saying that is the objective that we have really in connection with the plans developed in ISAF as such. Another thing is that we were going to transit the patrol baseline to the Afghan side, and I think they were saying we had to do that by 2011, going in to 2012, that’s fine, but why is a government in Denmark putting up directions for a tactical position, which should be done on a tactical level? I mean, that is a battalion-level decision. I mean, why

is that conducted in Copenhagen? It's the key question and of course it was not... they were partnered at least until I left in 2012 because you couldn't give that up. You still had a patrol baseline not with UK or Danish soldiers in the whole line but cliffhangers to leave a point to support the locals the local company. I think also the plan stated that we had to close another patrol base called Budwan, also named Armadillo - and you could probably argue there was a good reason of doing that. You could also argue there was not, but again that's not a decision that should be taken in Copenhagen on a political level. It has not to be taken by a Danish army commander."

Interviewer: "But it was like that because I was attached to team 1 in HQ by the British HQ in Helmand in Lashkar Gah, but it actually changed the name of that base in order to linger on being able to close it because there were too many feelings connected with the Armadillo aim."

UP: "But a thing is though, it's not for the Danish to decide closing down a base. I would say that base, it has to be framed into the overall tactical plan developed by RC SW and Team 8, and not by a Danish government."

Interviewer: "No, I suppose one of the reasons why the Danish government or the Danish commander was involved with this is because we tend to build our bases so big that there is actually a lot of money invested in a base, and you cannot just let a single commander decide I am going to close that when over there, and the next commander would do something else."

UP: "We were putting down a Danish recognizance team, set up by different generals and stuff like that to come down and give suggestions to how to develop the next 2 or 3 years of planning in Helmand, and they do not have that knowledge that commander RC SW and commander of Team 8, who are commanding soldiers, you know, and have the responsibility for the insurgency for the counterinsurgency in there, not Danish fact finders."

Interviewer: "I was actually interviewed when I came back because I think the Defense Command, the Danish Defense Command, wanted me to say that we were under pressure from the British to close that base, but we were not; they said to us: It's your base do whatever you want with it. I talked to the brigadier. He said, "I can see on team 4 and 5 it had some value because it was in Upper Gereshk Valley, but now I cannot see why you are going to put so many resources in some place that is not even in the Green Zone and totally surrounded by

IEDs, but it's your call. It's a Danish camp. Do whatever you want with it." So we were not under any pressure he was just thinking why."

UP: "In my perception what we did with the first brigadier guards was patrolling in the area but being helped into the area or driving up there, and then a company of some soldiers would patrol the area, guard the area, and then go out of the Green Zone and find a place to be."

Interviewer: "It's kind of a safe haven for a battalion."

UP: "Yeah, but we didn't have any demo, when I was down there instead we projected force for a week or two, and took them out again, put them into another place, so you wouldn't have that defensive area as you had in Armadillo, which would then be sown with IEDs the whole way around, you know. It would make it impractical and completely impossible to control out of the base because you have to go through a hundred-meters thick minefield before you can actually conduct your patrolling. So on a tactical level, where you have to probably have the skills to be able to patrol, live off the land of the land for a longer period of time, living off the backpack, going to the local farmers and actually be able to live off his water and stuff like that, and then patrol on again. And the fact that the intensive patrolling happened in that area where you had Gereshk here, and then you had Budwan up there in that area, was actually that the insurgents would concentrate their efforts around that control, really making it very, very calm on the downside to Gereshk and that was very significant when we gathered the insurgents were right down the patrol baseline so that had, you know, the Budwan base also had that significant about that it would make the insurgents concentrate, you know, draw attention so by projecting power out which is very reasonable you could actually, you know, have your defensive layer which would enable you to have more peace where you actually want to have development and such, but that priority and you have to probably from the first level to prioritize where do you want development."

Interviewer: "And who should make that call?"

UP: "I mean, that's going to be at the strategic level; it would have to be in Kabul in coordination with higher HQs."

Interviewer: "So two last questions, purely out of curiosity. Number 1, did you find any difference in approach among the European countries and the Americans? Did you find any situations of having similar situations in Afghanistan?"

UP: "No, actually not."

Interviewer: "Okay I got the impression from reading the COIN manuals that they are different in their approach, the one developed by NATO and the other by the Americans, but you did not see any difference on that?"

UP: "I think, actually I have a lot to do with the stabilization office the GOs, and the Americans were much more proactive than their Danish and British counterparts, so if you want something done you will have to go to the Americans. They will have the money and will have the skills and the drive to get things done. I would say in the USAID they would have a connection to USA and much more punch so roads were built, and we got money to fund different things, and it came from the USA. The Danish were putting some money into some schools in Gereshk and stuff like that. Fine absolutely. Trying to establish the rule of law sector – waste of time. But the Americans built roads, built a new bazaar in Gereshk, built cooling for vegetables, stuff like that. I mean, there was a huge help from the U.S. I think that was really significant. The U.S. forces which I operated with were special operations forces who operated the so-called HTAs, so people from the Navy Seals and Rangers and stuff like that, with whom I had a very good cooperation, and we had a very similar understanding of what was needed in the AO, in the area we operated in, and they were very connected to the war plan. And what happened really was that we handed over parts of our AO in the last period of our time to the HTAs – it was in Rahim and that area, trying to get on with the transiting part."

Interviewer: "All time facilitating each other?"

UP: "Yeah."

Interviewer: "Okay, and last question I am going to ask, and it is purely out of imagination, how different would it be since you have a greater land to protect you, how different would it be to fight on your own side against insurgents instead of fighting on foreign soil, just from a Pakistani perspective what's your perception of how different it would be?"

UP: "I think it would probably be a lot easier because you have legitimacy doing it."

Interviewer: "And the cultural awareness and, you know the people..."

UP: "Yes, exactly, but I would go very hard after the insurgents and the illegitimate leadership on that command side, and the logistical side, where they get their money. Follow the money and that would probably be the most significant thing to do to stop them. Follow the money you can, find the hole and dig up the whole system, but we never followed them in Afghanistan, at least that's my perspective of it, but then I was on a tactical level, and then did not have the full understanding. We tried to go after the Havalan system in Gereshk with my HUMINT force."

Interviewer: "Also called HUMINT?"

UP: "But we probably caused more damage because when you are then making a Havalan, what you call a banker, as we did twice in Gereshk, that would have all the note slips, all the accountant books and stuff like that; we are talking about huge boxes of account books, and for a moment loss of peoples' savings, because they are actually recorded in those books. We managed to get it fixed again, but that was probably counterproductive, but again you had to go in and go through the accounting books to find out where is the money going."

Interviewer: "I suppose they have a lot of the operations, and a lot of the operations conducted there, in hindsight, they were not that effective, but you didn't have any knowledge previous, so maybe it could add to the pattern of life or whatever, at least, so it could be of some usefulness even though it seemed like having no effect?"

UP: "I think it probably had an effect, long term, team 1 & 2 operations and such, where you could actually go after the network more efficiently. A battalion can't do things like that, we do have very large difficulties in conducting intelligence based operations as such and nailing down an insurgent. It would be the small fish. It will be the clashes. Patrol an area and you will eventually probably kill a Pakistani boy, who has come down to Gereshk to harvest the land. It's very so, I think we nailed 2 or 3 or maybe 4 on the JPEL list from the battalion side during my period; that's all and the rest were peasants and boys."

Interview 22: Thor Hilton
Pakistan, June 30th 2015.

Interviewer: "How would you classify your opponent in Afghanistan?"

Thor Hilton (TH): "I would classify more according to ideology than individual persons because there were groupings: You have the criminals, insurgents, political groupings, who may not be shooting at you, but they are creating the narrative of the insurgents: You also have the farmers who are unemployed and don't want to fight but because they have nothing else to do, so they were paid, and they start shooting at you. So there is not a specific group of people; there was more of an ideology or thinking that these intruders from the outside are there. These kind of ideologies are created by these groupings: That's why it's O.K. to fight them, they shouldn't be here; it should be a matter between Afghans and Afghans. We were intruders. That's why they were fighting us, and for that purpose they created an ideology: Taliban terrorism, extremism of different kinds and that was what we were up against."

Interviewer: "So you would not classify them either as purely terrorists or purely insurgents?"

TH: "No, I think they were mix of different groups, and that is a challenge against such an aggression."

Interviewer: "What are the motivations behind that?"

TH: "Why it is so difficult is because different groupings have different motivations; some are simply just poor; they have nothing else to receive (get) the money and then place an IED, and they did that for survival, criminals were fighting over the power derived from opium trading or other types of smuggling, and so were struggling just for power; and local tribal leaders who didn't want international community to be pro-active in their area; and some were more classical insurgents doing the religious fight: We have intruders coming in here and we need to fight for our religion. In the end, as I said: the political fight, who's in power in Kabul some political fighters supported some other political leaders so. Then ISAF was supporting Karzai; the opponents thought that it is legal to fight us because we were supporting Karzai, so they took it as to fight with the support of Karzai. ISAF was sup-

porting Karzai, so then we were the enemy. So there were different reasons for different groups to fight against us.”

Interviewer: “Do you think the religion was the main motivation?”

TH: “No, not really, if we look at the years of good experience or as a good explanation or good narrative of the groupings, they are extremists, insurgents, criminals; they used religion as a tool for promoting their reasons for fighting.”

Interviewer: “So their narrative was not actually the main reason for fighting?”

TH: “I think, yes, that is my experience, because I was invited to so many places where religion was a part of it, and I was an outsider from Denmark, and it didn’t matter to them because they were looking at me as a person. In my daily work I didn’t see religion as being a problem. It’s more when it was used as a cause of narrative. Look at these (us) as intruders; they have been fighting us in all Muslim countries. They use this as a narrative. I didn’t experience it in daily work as a problem. I could speak to any Muslim Leader any religious leader, at large, they supported each other they and didn’t use religion as a talking point they just respected it as, yes, it is yours we respect it, but I could see the religion was being used as a tool in the narrative.”

Interviewer: “In general, sitting with them, did you feel any difficulty in dealing with them with regard to the religion?”

TH: “No.”

Interviewer: “What was the reaction of the public on ground? Did they buy the narrative?”

TH: “Some did. I could go to meeting where I could meet maybe 10 people, and I could experience some people using the narrative in their argumentation and sometimes it became the point of discussion between Afghans themselves. If there was a religious person at the meeting saying to blame me maybe another Afghan rises, saying that this is not right. You should also respect others. At large I don’t think it caused problems in the meeting. Although in one area at a point, my task was to help the reconciliation process between the Afghan Taliban movement and Kabul leadership, and also I was going to help in many practical ways but then I was told by some

religious people that I could not actually do that because reconciliation is not an arrangement; it comes from inside the heart; it has to be something that develops some impact, and a person from outside cannot do that. Yes, I could help from a certain point, but then it has to be an Afghan-led process they should do because this is how their religious affiliation goes about reconciliation.”

Interviewer: "So you don't have any leadership role?"

TH: “No not exactly. It had to be an Afghan led process, so there I thought something about religion, but I was doing the job but then again we respected that and we let them have the process. But at the end we felt that religion at some point was taking over our planning, but in accordance with our strategy. It was religion or tradition to me it is just as important that there I helped the discussion, and I heard the argument and I respected that. I said I respect your religion or tradition. We will learn, but we will be doing the process in the end. Yes, sometimes we had discussions but the religion was not a show stopper in the work I was dealing with.”

Interviewer: "Do you think that you or ISAF had sufficient understanding of the culture of the Afghanistan?"

TH: “Yes and No... In 2003 the Danish Armed Forces got involved in the Iraq War, and I was in there at first in 2003, with the first team down there. I was given the responsibility of training the first new Iraqi army, and that thing was new to me. We were a kind of experimenting. The experience from that... we used a lot of cultural training for the next units going to Iraq. Later we got involved in Afghanistan, armed with larger army units in 2006 or 2007; we had been better in preparing the military, the soldier, the units, and the leaders of the units. So I was also going through this preparation before my deployment in 2009, but it was not enough. It was not sufficient because we realized that it was such a complicated terrain. Ideological things, cultural things, religious things, so many things that you cannot sit back in Denmark and learn about. You can be travelling in different tribal areas: the tribal system is like this, the religion, the norms, the prayers, background about the religion. You have a little taste of everything, so when you land in Kabul in the first 2 or 3 months my learning experience was just incredible because every day you learn something more about it. In the beginning when you go to a meeting you are acting like a westerner in a western manner, but I realized that that's not how it was in there, in the culture of Kabul. You

don't start just with agenda you start with small chats for 10 to 15 minutes, and then you come to the point. To me it was difficult in the beginning. I realize that I had to deal and respect the way they were dealing. Yes, we were prepared, but, no, we probably could not put more in what we learn because the layout was so difficult."

Interviewer: "What method do you think, or what do you suggest, is more effective in dealing with such areas?"

TH: "I think the best preparation I had was actually to come out for a week before starting education back home for my job. So I was coming here on 1 October last year. I knew my training would start from 1 July, so before 1 July, I had to come here and meet my predecessor and follow him to his meetings and his colleagues, so I was sitting there to listen, feel and learn, and when I got back, and I then had the education back home I could ask more questions, because I certainly had a picture of what I was going down to. It is difficult to do that with a unit going to be deployed in Afghanistan, but there we try to do the final training by inviting Afghans to Denmark. When a Danish officer is negotiating in an exercise he is actually negotiating with an Afghan who has a cultural background. In this way you are experiencing the thing which you are going to experience down there, making it as realistic as possible; it is more effective. In the beginning it was more classical military training, but as we learned from our deployment in Afghanistan, we created an environment in the training area so that a unit might be deployed in two weeks; they were living there and we brought in Afghan civilians in the training area, who were also living there. You make it more cultural (and realistic) so from a more classical military training we made it more Iraqi or Afghan society where the units do their training. Realistic training as close to the environment that you will be deployed to is important. I think the training could be better; it could be creating also an environment from what we are going to deploy people to. It's not only units who had to be prepared to that environment; it's also the individuals who are going to do the duty on the political level."

Interviewer: "Do you think there were any tools that have been crowded out that should have been used by the government while dealing with the situation in Afghanistan and they were not used at strategic level?"

TH: "I think we have created a whole-of-government approach. We were very early at adopting a whole-of-government approach in all of our enga-

gements, in Afghanistan at least. So when we have military units, that is one kind of support; we also have development programs, so in the area where we have units we could also support the development projects. If there is problem with rule of law, with the judges, with the courts, then we could also from the Danish Ministry of Justice have people come down and help us in building up the legal system, so it was not just from the military, not only from the development ministry but also from the ministry of education; they could also have people coming down and training teachers. Then we are supporting to build up the ministry in Kabul helping the ministry of finance how to make a budget of a country. Police we have Danish police officers coming down training how to investigate a murder how to make an arrest in a civil murder, which is not a military murder, so the whole government of Denmark was needed in the engagement. They were brought together that was a whole-of-government approach.”

Interviewer: “It came much later?”

TH: “It came much later because we were learning from the beginning....”

“We think it was confidence building...”

”I think we are now up in 2007 or 2008; it was as from our experience, and it was not in the beginning of the Afghan deployment; it was later on.... It cannot be only Denmark it has to be more countries. It has to be a coalition of countries so therefore we have been the clever country in the world saying how it should be done. We couldn’t have done it because it has to be more countries together doing this. One country cannot do it, but a coalition of countries can make a difference. That is actually something that came later in 2009. I think when General McChrystal was head of ISAF. He was the first one who was really experienced and integrating the international community of all the countries who had units deployed. He engaged with those that could make an effort together; he also brought Afghans really into the game and said, “O.K., let’s not create a western solution. Let’s create an Afghan solution,” and he also brought the civilian side to the military side, so there was cooperation between the two sides. When he started, we Denmark, as a country, straight away adopted that also as a policy that is how we should do things also. So I think we learnt when the international community or ISAF came up with that way of doing things. I think we adopted that very quickly and then used it as a tool of our policy making.”

Interviewer: "What do you think your approach was: enemy-centric or population-centric?"

TH: "In the beginning I think it was enemy centric, and then, with McChrystal coming in, it became population-centric. Let me give you an example here, there were a lot of causalities coming out of fighting, civilian casualties. For example, one night two tankers of petrol had been stolen from ISAF. Some units found them; they could see them in the dark with night vision; and the tankers were surrounded by a lot of people. They really expected that these people were criminals or Taliban who apprehended these tankers, so they caught fire. Forty people may have died and afterwards they realized that these tankers were left by the criminals and civilian people were gathered around to get as much petrol out of that, so they killed 40 civilians. At the headquarters of ISAF, Gen. McChrystal became so furious. The impact of this thing was that now millions of Afghan people would not trust ISAF. There he was trying to change from an enemy approach thing, and now we do something that may impact the civilian community, so trying to teach every soldier, every leader to think about the population instead of thinking about the military objective; and that changed the whole strategic planning. It has to be a civilian a public-centric and not just a military objective. In my experience it's difficult because to understand the soldier out there fighting; it's very difficult for that leader to decide should I shoot there, but they are shooting from that place, yeah, I have to shoot back. I really understand that it's not easy to incorporate everything but I think one should try. I think it should be the driver in respect to all sort of military objectives.

Some would say what I am advocating for is the military to take responsibility of nation building; that is not true; the military cannot be responsible for that. That has to be the international community using platforms like the EU or UN, but the military is an important tool for that, and we have to think that how we engage the enemy or opponent, because we are just one of many tools. Another issue about nation building is the challenge that there has to be a nation to build upon. I can give you an example; don't know whether it's true or not: Iraq, a country or state consisting of three major groupings: the Shias in south, Sunnis in centre and Kurds in north you can actually say that these are three independent areas. It's not mixed-up much, so one could ask you that this is not a nation to be built on. This has to be a state with individual provinces. They may have a common foreign policy, they may have a national army, but each region has to have the right to decide what should be the text in the Shia area; what should be the school system

in the Kurdish area, because it makes differences in the culture or in the way of proceeding what is right or wrong so try to force these three groupings into one country into one nation, you will just cause more problems. So, therefore, if the international community, with the help of military thought in nation building you have to be sure about there being a nation to be built on; you cannot just do that everywhere in the world; you cannot just impose any political system; you cannot tell them you have to have a democratic constitution or you have to have a parliament. It may not be the right thing for that country or that nation, so you have to do it in respect, once again, for the society that you are trying to help, for the culture that is in place. Afghanistan why should it be a democratic system shouldn't it rather be a republic Not for me to decide, but you must open up the society there; that's a nice good tribal system where the tribal leader is actually doing good job in making decisions for his people. I didn't know that before I came down here. So what I am saying is that you need to learn about the region the area where international society is trying to help. Again taking Afghanistan we came there because we wanted to kick out al-Qaida or make it impossible for them to function; we realized that the Taliban want a society that was not really good; treating women children very bad; so we decided: "O.K., now we are here we will try to improve the rights of women the rights of school to go to school," and stuff like that, but slowly we slipped into that: "Now we have to build a democracy," and we were so wrong. We shouldn't try to build democracy in Afghanistan, and I don't think democracy will work in Afghanistan. I still believe in many of the elements of democracy: like freedom of voting, tolerance for every religion or sex etc. So I think we have a lot of good objectives, but inserting it into a nation building, a democratic objective, I think that was wrong. We should support building up an Afghan solution with the elements that I am talking about. But if the Afghan solution is more republic or autonomy of the provinces, then it should be that we will support, and not the ideas that come from our home or wherever in the world. I am not saying only the western thinking; it could also be South American thinking or any other culture. So you really have to be careful when you get involved as an international community in something that could be related to nation building. This is also something we could achieve."

Interviewer: "What is your experience: Was there any measure or step that was counterproductive while dealing with civil-military side on their part?"

TH: "Yes, and this actually cuts into two problems because take again Afghans as an example, there was a lot of instability in Afghanistan. The military had

to create security because if there is no security, you cannot have civilian organizations trying to build the institutions of civilian society, so there we have to conduct military operations trying to counter the bad guys: insurgents, extremists, criminals. We had to do military operations, but when you do that you have to realize the people you take away are those who are providing local people the security may be also providing them jobs, providing medical assistance, so when the military is taking away what we call the enemy you are also creating a vacuum, where the civilian society has to be ready to provide that assistance so the civilians in that area, where we did military operations experienced the lack of security and other assistance. And here come the two problems: the military wanted to do operations in the area where the enemy was strong; we wanted to take away the enemy. This was important to us, but at the same time civilian society was saying that no that not a good area to do that because we cannot provide people with civilian teachers or doctors to go out there, because these people have to live in a society, and this society was still not secure enough even though we had made an operation at night time. Some Taliban may come and kill the doctor, so we cannot provide the people that are needed for society to move on. Then the discussion between the military side and civilian side became a problem. We wanted to do operations, but we cannot provide the civilian element there. Also here was a big problem about the political side because the politicians back home from the countries, who were deploying forces or providing aid to that area they expect results that they can talk about during their elections, during their time of being in power. They were paying billions and were taking the responsibility of lost lives of soldiers so they were seeking some momentum, giving us something to talk about. So what I experienced in Afghanistan – some countries were supporting the building of the schools in areas where there was no need for schools, but the politicians back home needed it to be able to say: “We have built hundreds of schools in Afghanistan.” Now there is a possibility of kids going to school, but they were built in areas where families were afraid of sending their kids to school, or the tribe was not used to sending their kids to school, so we were doing a lot sometimes for the benefit of politicians back home being able to say we are doing something good in the country that we are trying to build up. So there was always a challenge that where the military operation we had to do and how civilians should be ready for whatever, and where should it be done? In what area should it be done? Denmark always tried to build up in the area of education because we believe that if you have the educated people, then they would be able to do the change from the inside. Instead of imposing you give them the possibility to learn something: learn

to analyse, learn to argue, learn to question and thereby you certainly create a new generation of people who will be willing to change, because the way you think that should be changed not because someone from outside is saying so. You should be doing the changing. So in the area where we have tried, it takes time to teach a generation and politicians back home who are going to be elected within two years and cannot wait a generation; he needs to be able to answer that why are we using billions of Danish taxpayers' money down there so he needs to have something, some achievements that he could use as an argument of continuous support. So the time is always a problem also."

Interviewer: "Could you find any disconnect at some point in time at some level between the policy level, strategy level and the tactical level?"

TH: "Yes, and I think that will always be there because at the tactical level or even at the political or strategic level, out in the field you are in the country, you are in the society, you are in the culture, you are on the ground and trying to think that in that sense because it's not just words: it's a sense, a feeling. Trying to describe that to people back home is very difficult. So one of our objectives in Afghanistan and also now for me in Pakistan is to bring the people, the decision makers out here for themselves to meet, to see, to experience, to sense to get the feelings. So to bring what we call it strategic level and tactical level from back home to the place where it should be functioning. Bring that together that will create a better understanding of things for the decision makers which are at political level but also military leaders. Then they will have better understanding of what are we making a decision about. If you just to sit back home reading some reports some newspaper or intelligence you will not have that sense, and the feelings of what is going on out there. So bring that together it is so important to have many visits. In Afghanistan when we were doing a lot of operations there, in any other country where challenges need to be dealt with, the cause of international aspects, come out yourselves: meet, discuss, see, meet the youngsters, see their education system, meet their military training systems, meet their political levels, see their departments of ministries, see that there may not be as many people working there, so giving them a lot of demands about being able to drive everything is impossible, see how can a business be built up. So what we are trying to do is to bring business people here, so that they themselves can travel around in Punjab, Karachi or Peshawar, and see how they can cooperate with Pakistani businesses. Then they go back and may put pressure on governments, that we should do more about creating business in Pakistan, because that will create economic growth in

Pakistan and Afghanistan. Whatever could move forward within that area. So it is important to bring the decision-making level to the tactical level, or the area of operations or interest, and I must say it's not only the political level; it's also the people of the country because politicians have to look for the people, and if the newspaper is only bringing bad stories from a country, then it doesn't matter what the political level knows about a country it is impossible to create good stories even though we have tried so much. So you also have to bring out journalists, academia and think tanks, who can take experiences back and bring them into the discussions which people can listen to. These will then advocate why we should engage with that country or region and then the Muslim society or thinking will not be a mystery to them or dangerous to them anymore."

Interviewer: "What is your assessment about ongoing operation, Zarb-e-Azb, in North Waziristan? How different or difficult is it to fight an insurgency or against militancy on your own soil, as compared to fighting on foreign soil?"

TH: "I think it is a classical example of how things should be done and how things should not be done. Let me explain what I think. They were very right about making the operations. It was incredible for me to know that 500 meters away from a military cantonment there was an IED factory, but they couldn't be working at that time. The military operation came suddenly; they got control of all the stuff and created that sense that criminals or terrorism or extremism couldn't be working. But that is just a short-term solution when the military has done that, now civilian society has to step up; now they have to create what should be done in FATA. Should it be an autonomous region, just like in the north, should it be a province with the rights of a province? How should we help that society that we have been operating in. "How should it be," that is what is the long-term solution for the problems. And what the national action plan is for finding the solution; you see in writing what needs to be done. They were focusing on madrassas, they were focusing on the narratives their funding, the Baluchistan things, sectarian violence all these elements. If you are creating something there, then you have the long-term solutions for the areas where you have done the military operations. If you just have done a military operation, the military cannot keep on being there. When you start withdrawing, the insurgents will come back again. That's why I think army is reluctant to have other organizations come in and help the refugees (IDPs) to come back because they want to be sure that among these IDPs, we don't have insurgents again, but an army cannot be responsible for that alone. It has to be civilian society

because as I said it has to be a long-term solution for that area. So, yes, these operations were right to be done. It was good to do it, but now it is time for creating long-term solutions.”

Interviewer: "Let's go back to the question, rephrase it rather: Is it more or less difficult to fight the insurgency on your own soil, as compared to fighting in another country on someone else's soil?"

TH: "I had never tried to fight it on my own soil, but I would believe it would be easier to do it on your own soil because it is in your own society. You understand the cultural difficulties. But at the same time, I can understand the problem for soldier at the tactical level, just shooting at your own people: that must be a difficult thing to deal with. But I think having the understanding of the society you are fighting within, that would be more beneficial than the down side of being accused of shooting at your own people. It should be a military-civilian operation not just a military operation. That's what we have learnt from Afghanistan and Iraq: that it's a joint whole-of-government approach, and that's what I found in the national action plan: that it was not only focusing on short-term plans, but also on long-term difficulties that could be related directly to the civilian operations. My experience with the national action plan is that the long-term problems have not been dealt with properly. I have read the Ministry of Interior's feedback on a question to the parliament, about a month and half ago, and there the question was what has been done regarding madrassas; what has been done regarding funding' what has been done regarding the constitutional approach to the FATA. It's really crucial, and he couldn't say that something has been done."

Interviewer: "Do you think it is a question of political will, or is it about resource constraints?"

TH: "That is a whole new discussion because any politician will be happier if he could make a change in the society in the right way. But in a society where there are so many different power bases on the local level, the provincial level, the state level, military, civilian, historical, religious, tribal all these elements. It is so difficult to manoeuvre in. That's why I see a big challenge here. I hope that by creating the education, jobs, and possibilities of business, all this will help the economy that will be the driver of a society to move forward. And then maybe creating trade with China, trade with Afghanistan, trade with Iran, and then certainly India might think that now Pakistan has created regional trade; now we want to do more trade with Pakistan. Then it may

create more open borders for trade. Out of that there could come political discussions: "O.K., what about Kashmir, what about atomic problems." I think the first thing is to have the business, the thread because that creates opportunities; that creates a positive thinking that will create value that people will defend rather than just an ideology."

Interview 23: Lars Nygaard
Denmark, July 1st 2015

Interviewer: "So in your perspective and given your experience, how would you classify an insurgent versus a terrorist?"

Lars Nygaard (LN): "I'll go back to, you know, military definitions and say that an insurgent is in my perspective, from a military point of view, defined as an irregular, who is known to be a type of person who fights actively and who obviously is not a regular, which is an important point. We'll go back to those points, a regular military person would be under the command of a state, right? A regular would be uniformed, a regular would in various degrees, of course, even the best soldiers make mistakes, but they will subscribe to conventions and they will be trained in conventions and they will carry their weapons unconcealed, so these are certain ways to define a regular versus an irregular, and for that matter also an insurgent also, as we know them from our operations in the past 20 years."

Interviewer: "Would you actually say a nonconventional?"

LN: "I would use the term irregular."

Interviewer: "Irregular, yes, okay."

LN: "That means that the irregular, the insurgent, by virtue of their nature would be hard to recognize as an enemy. And there are many aspects of that because, one of the big mistakes I think we have made and lessons we have identified is this. For good reasons we have an urge to label enemies, label them good guys, label white NGOs, for instance, and mutual actors and when we talk about an enemy we are in an uncertain area because also relating to experience, the enemy of today as a single individual might not be your enemy tomorrow. Because the guy, that this certain day took up a Kalashnikov and shot one of our allies had reasons today and those reasons are not there tomorrow, for an example, he could be earning 15 U.S. dollars and for that reason he could save his family another week of food, so the labeling of the enemy is difficult, but the but it is you know.. of course – from a theoretical point of view it's a good term to have an enemy. Irregulars they can be mixed up with regular forces, as we saw it in Iraq, which creates yet more complexity, and then you could, and that does probably also points towards your.. the part of the question about terrorists, because you could

also define those irregulars as guerrillas, partisans or terrorists. Where the guerrilla is an organization or a single person who is determined to a turnover of government. The partisan has an aim to get rid of foreign forces, and a terrorist is a person who uses violence, intimidation, subversion, murder, hostage taking, sabotage, bombing to create fear within the population which again creates a certain attention in relation to the overall purpose of this guy being a terrorist and that is typically related to politics, religious goals or ideological goals. For sure all irregulars, all guerrillas, partisans would attempt to in various degrees use the methods of terrorists so this is not a “you know” this is just a way to get an idea on “how to”. Actually to communicate who you are talking about, and there are lots of flavors and relationships and if you take the Taliban or the al-Qaeda Afghanistan related organizations they would have you know.”

Interviewer: “Overlapping agendas?”

LN: “Yeah, exactly and they would have aspects of both being guerillas and being partisans and being terrorists, so yeah, that’s pretty much how I see the insurgent and terrorist relating to one another.”

Interviewer: “So in general ,it’s hard to, it’s hard to differentiate?”

LN: “Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course, it is. I think most of our vocabulary related to this is always coming from our history and we have learned a great deal, in particularly Iraq and Afghanistan where we have operated, and other countries have learned their lessons in a longer history going back to colonialism, and they are probably relearning a lot of stuff, eh, yeah. Well, actually I read this, when we talk about these conflicts area of insurgents, irregulars, terrorists, partisans, guerillas, I’ve read this interesting book written by Kilcullen, you know, you are familiar with him?”

Interviewer: “The Accidental Guerilla?”

LN: “Exactly, which I think, in my point of view, pretty much says it all, that our need to label sometimes is very unuseful.”

Interviewer: “Counterproductive.”

LN: “Exactly, it is dangerous, and has been. And it is, it is also... a natural thing because when we start a military operation there is a need for it to

evolve rapidly, to get it going, get it done, you know, make progress,, and hence the intelligence that we need to address all the different nuances in these complex countries. We simply don't have it, and if you combine them also with a tendency, which we have in my point of view anyway, luckily we have left it behind I guess, where we put up unrealistic goals in relation to stabilization. So if you combine that .You attempt to, to try to fix a very, very fine engine, and all you got is a hammer. So the hammer could be fine if you said, okay what we need to do here is to, whatever, take out the carburetor or whatever and put in another one, you could do that with simple tools, but when you set the overall aim to be stabilization, you need knowledge about the engine and you need a lot of different tools.”

Interviewer: "Okay, some would argue that there is quite a difference between naming your enemy a terrorist or an insurgent because when labeling your enemy as an insurgent, you actually add legitimacy to their cause but it also provides you with a broader set of tools to approach them. When you label them as terrorists, there is actually only one approach as I know of and that is cutting off... I don't know if you have any comments about that but..."

LN: "I would say, to act to it, okay, are we talking about individuals or are we talking about terrorist actions, or are we talking about organizations?"

Interviewer: "I think we are probably talking about organizations."

LN: "I guess you will never see an organization label itself as a terrorist organization."

Interviewer: "No, we label it."

LN: "Yeah, but still you know labeling an organization as a terrorist organization, but also that has purposes right?"

Interviewer: "Yeah, but it also closes down the political actions; you label an organization as a terrorist organization and the political actions are out; if you label it an insurgency, then you have the political opportunities."

LN: "As you see with Taliban and the strife to get political solutions, whereas al-Qaeda was absolutely ruled out, yeah."

Interviewer: "Yeah."

LN: "So, yes, it makes good sense that it is the labeling itself that gives us limitations and possibilities. Probably it is a part of the labeling is also the narrative that you want to use when you are communicating with your own population right?"

Interviewer: "Yes, very much."

LN: "So, I guess if we took a closer look at al-Qaeda and various organizations being driven religiously, you could broaden out and say this is a regional or worldwide insurgency. This is what, if you take a closer look at foundations, you could argue. And then, I mean, in reality it also comes down to what kind of power do these organizations have in their hands. Whereas you can say that you know I'm just talking and following your line if you could compare al-Qaeda in Afghanistan which would where they were pretty much hosted right? They were tolerated by Taliban. Whereas IS in Syria and Iraq; they have a huge impact; they actually have lands they control they have a very big impact on certain parts of the population for various reasons, but they do have certain power and at a certain point they will, I guess, they will also have some kind of relation to certain parts of Muslim society, where they have some kind of legitimacy to Bagdad. And what they, what actually made the problem was the failure of the Maliki government to include certain parts of the Muslim society, right? That created the foundation for this terrorist organization who calls themselves insurgents, legitimate freedom fighters."

Interviewer: "Okay, I'm gonna jump down to Question 2 now: In, and that's, of course, in your own experience, what do you think is the appropriate label in Afghanistan: Insurgents or terrorists, based on your experiences?"

LN: "In Afghanistan I would say... I think the book we just discussed makes good sense to me, actually I don't know how well it was documented: the way he saw it, the circles with the core and the leaders and then I don't know. It makes very, very good sense to me, especially, when we come to the outer parts when we talk about people who are just trying to survive in a very uncertain environment And what was their motivation? I don't actually know remember how Kilcullen is labeling the insurgency, religion doesn't matter much, we're talking about ordinary people like you and me, facing severe problems or severe challenges in a environment where what we as an western community try to achieve is not perceived; I mean my reading, when we talk about democracy development, capitalism locally founded, it is stuff that, at least in the outer district of Afghanistan, they simply do not

understand what we are talking about because there is no culture for that; It is based on family, tribes, how to gain power and you know all the related stuff; how they how they have the idea of how the local society is built; what they are concerned about, to my knowledge, I don't think that if you go out to Helmand district they know that Kabul is the capital; probably they know there is some kind of government, but it really doesn't matter for them, that is quite a large part of the population, I guess. So the motivation for those parts of the population is obviously to survive, to gain a minimum of power. And then you would have to go further in people looking for opportunities."

Interviewer: "Local power opportunities?"

LN: "Exactly, and that is when we also see which is a big, big, big issue, which I don't know if we didn't have the intelligence, or we just ignored the importance of how local economy is built, including what we would label as criminality being obviously drugs/weapons. I'm not sure how big a problem trafficking is, but still drugs create a lot of instability; this is a system, an economic system, that has been going on for decades, right, probably centuries, so we, and then we are back at the intelligence part of it, we are aiming at stabilization. And the society is working on the foundations of things that are counterproductive to our perception of stabilization and that is a huge problem because then we are trying, we are going around with a hammer, and I mean a hammer not as a military effort it also includes all the other instruments in the comprehensive approach, but we are, you know, doing stuff we don't understand the impact of, and since we are striving at very high goals in relation to stabilization, it is a long path to walk from a single action to achieving democracy, capitalism in a, you know, in which its uses are for the individual farmer to actually grow his fields with things you can sell on a market without being robbed, without being killed by a bomb on the market or being robbed on the way back with his earned money. You know there is a long way to go, and you know we do not necessarily understand the impacts in between. Obviously you could do stuff; you can support people growing their fields with other things than opium. You could support that, that would, it makes good sense, but what are the actual facts? What do we do if we striving for combatting narcotics if we create an environment, where those powerbrokers are very unsatisfied and hence they go for the farmers. Was that the idea? No it was not but we had the idea that the farmer had a choice of his own."

Interviewer: "Yes."

LN: So, and also if the farmer can simply not get as much money as he needs because he has got a field the size of a stamp it, like okay, if I need to grow something here which I can profit from. The only valuable thing is actually opium. So we have the normal population, the ordinary guy, we have the powerbrokers, the guys looking for opportunities. And they will, my guess is, that they will strive for more power in relation to the way that has always worked, right.”

Interviewer: “Opportunistic?”

LN: “Yes, and a stateless society, right, if we move in we will have some kind of ideological foundation.”

Interviewer: “Core?”

LN: “Yeah, but the core will still be very few persons, who of course are, not, of course, but per definition, are driven by their beliefs in this matter. I think there are quite a few persons in Kilcullen’s sense, and then you have a number of people around believing in the same cause, but at the same time having a small organization related to them, but that organization is related to the insurgency and they are what motivate them. It is probably all the things from the outside, and they subscribe to the idea that whatever the core has stated as the vision for the organization.”

Interviewer: “Yeah, religion?”

LN: “Yeah, but that stuff you can see the way they the Haqqani network works as, I mean, without being an expert, it seems like they are having; they are not a part of the core but they would subscribe to elements because they and this society would gain very much from having the conflict, of course, the Pakistan Afghanistan border and the tribal areas FATA and the Pashtuns, of course.”

Interviewer: “How the organization feeds itself. Okay, so that brings me to another question, not part of that, but that’s more of an interesting question, how much power do think the core in Taliban actually has, I mean, in my perception, if Mullah Omar in the Quetta Shura, let’s say he agreed on a peace agreement, my guess would be that the Haqqani network would not follow it. A lot of other local powerbrokers; they are not in it for the political reasons, so they would not follow it they have totally other agendas, so that’s why, of

course, he would never sign a peace agreement because the moment he does that everybody will see that he actually doesn't deserve any power."

LN: "Maybe, maybe. It depends on the character of the agreement, right, and it's also a matter of the way I see it is that the Afghanistan Pakistan, the westerners we have we have seen, we have learned now there is no solution without a political solution to this. So even though the gains in actual effect on the, you know, lower level network or organizations, the Haqqani is quite powerful, right, even though we don't see a full implementation, and that is what we have seen in northern Ireland as well. The IRA, their impact is limited, but we need a political solution because if we don't have it, we don't have the narrative to take our direction from, and we need that because without any kind of political solution we would be stuck in the same. We would never have a Taliban subscribe to a government in Afghanistan, so you need the Taliban to be included although the political part of the Taliban because the Taliban is so much, right, as we talked about, these are Pashtuns, you know, in a broader way, and killers on the other side, right, and suicide bomber. So if we can have that solution, we can bear our narrative, which will hit you know a lot of certain part, and there will be there a force between Taliban and the loosely associated networks for instance the Haqqani network, so they will actually be able to that whether the core as you stated are interested in that, I don't know, that is probably also why every fighting season has been very important following them. But this is a very vital fighting season because that will be the foundation for where the negotiations will start right and that could be right, or it could be right that the Taliban says you got the watch; we got the time, and we will just sit it out and then strive for another insurgency on the other hand. If I were the Taliban all year, I would say we've been doing this quite a long time. It is achievable, protectable and that's an important matter. I would sit down, and I would that, and, yes, you could say: Yes, we could strive for it. Is it realistic? I think their answer to that would be..."

Interviewer: "They know it's not realistic."

LN: "Yes, and then you're back to what can we gain from this, what is the legitimacy of the government of Kabul. The way it is now, is it palatable for us now, I mean this is Afghan-led. This is, I mean, obviously the U.S. boots on Afghan soil is not a good thing, but I mean they are needed, so it could be now it was something that was doable, but I'm not clever enough in Taliban matters to get inside their heads, of how they will be able to be flexible

towards their core reason, right, what the perception might be. But if we are smart enough, it could be done, and even get back, I am sorry to interrupt you, but because we need that agreement; we will fix it, it can be that the agreement is a poor agreement, but then you can have another in two years; but we will have it because we need it, okay, so and that's a starting point."

Interviewer: "I think there are some problems in relation to that. I think the first problem is that the war has been going on for so long time now that many second level leaders in the Taliban profit from the war, bought houses in Pakistan; they are living from the war to continue, so they will not be interested in doing that. The second problem is you have an office in Quetta negotiating. We don't know what mandate they have, and they don't know what mandate they have. We even don't know if Omar is still alive. We don't know if a decision is made at the top level; we don't know how many will follow it, then we have another very important reason is that most of the afghans most of the Pashtuns they despise the Taliban, they hate Taliban, so if the government in Kabul negotiates a peace agreement with the Taliban, a lot of people will feel this is wrong. The majority of the Afghani population would say why should we negotiate with the enemy why should we negotiate with them."

LN: "But I think that could be fixed with the narrative, couldn't it?"

Interviewer: "I think it's hard, especially down in the Pashtu area. If we, I said we, but if the government in Kabul, if they come to a peace agreement with the Taliban, I think a lot of the tribes in Helmand and Kandahar will feel betrayed."

LN: "Of course, they fought so long against the Taliban, and know we are making a deal with them."

Interviewer: "Exactly, and they will say well we are just going to pull back to our villages because we cannot trust anybody, we will not support and with the example in Iraq, we are not going to support a government that does not do anything for us now they have made an agreement with our enemy we have fought for the government, so long and now it just wasted."

LN: "But I think there are no opportunities, I mean, if you take a look at the Israeli Palestinian conflict, if you take a look at Ireland, if you take a look at Spain at a certain point pending the power of the insurgents. I mean if we take a look at Afghanistan and the problems they face in relation to Taliban, what is defined as Taliban, you end up fighting yourself because, and then

it's back to what is the narrative: whom did we actually make a political agreement with. Is that the, you know, the Taliban political leadership and the Pashtun people, you know? I would argue without being an expert, and I have not followed the Taliban like you have, I would argue that we do need it, and it is doable to make a narrative which will, I mean, have more neutrals than enemy's towards the agreement and that's what it is all about right. We need to somehow, we need to capture if we should have any aims at having success in what we have done, and what we are going to do in that country. I think we simply need to make that happen. I mean even though we would have to have low substance in an agreement it would, I think, it would be needed when we stop hunting terrorists away. I mean that is also part of the narrative. You could build that narrative, and we did with al-Qaeda, we said okay NATO said to the Afghans, you now, in the previous discussions on where are we going. They said there is no way al-Qaeda is going to be included in negotiations, and the same way you could say: Okay, Taliban, what is Taliban, we are not going to negotiate a deal with them. And you can pinpoint elements or you could make them general, and you make sure you take out those parts who will not subscribe to the way an Afghan government should work. That's also why we were smart, I think, in using Karzai. He kept on using the jirga instrument because even though the Kabul was build up in a democratic way, as we see it, he needed the heritage so he brought in the jirga. This is an instrument parallel to people elected, which says: Hey, I think it worked actually because it gave him legitimacy did we understand it? I guess not, but it worked and that and then we are back to I think one of our biggest challenges. We do not understand a lot; we have ideas of how great we made it work for ourselves. We are trying to sell our model, right, and I think actually what we have done the last four years has been quite good, quite realistic and quite relevant because it has been built on the power of the idea of what we need; what can we subscribe to; what can we accept, but taking into account the foundations of how Afghans do stuff, both locally and regionally, including in Kabul."

Interviewer: "When you say the last four years, I'm beginning to question three years, you actually mean that it's the capacity building of security forces, right?"

LN: "Yeah, when we started up the security forces that was a good thing because it was a remnant, and it was realistic. Could we have done it earlier? Absolutely, I think we could anyway but then we are back to the intelligence part of it because when you build up security forces there is always the danger of where will that security force be in 5 years, and that's actually what I have

seen our effort has been like, I mean, the first two years were actually quite good, I mean, we came there to take out al-Qaeda; we came there to overthrow a Taliban regime, which had given a safe haven to a terrorist organization; we did. That was quite good; it was realistic; it was relevant. Then we took a turn that was unrealistic, and it was partly relevant because the aim was too high to implement, at least the stabilization part of it, and then we took a turn back to something that was actually quite good. Could we have made the security forces assistance model without the stabilization part? That is a question that is actually quite good because it so easy to say that we should have made the al-Qaeda, Taliban and the Kabul part, and then we should have made the security forces system, but maybe at that point, it would have been absolutely the most dangerous thing to do.”

Interviewer: “Probably would have been”.

LN: “Yes, I think so. We could not have done it.”

Interviewer: “Started build up a military regime... Okay, do you see any other tools? If you could outline one or two or three specific tools in order to handle insurgents? You did mention one: the capacity to build up security forces was actually quite good and a quite appropriate tool: let the Afghanis themselves deal with the insurgency problems. Do you see any other tools that have been or not been used, as appropriate?”

LN: “I think we have been around it, right? Using the entire toolbox in a comprehensive approach, that we have spent so many resources, blood, money and time, so we have probably tried everything. Actually, I cannot think of a thing we have not tried.”

Interviewer: “You already came up with one, right, building a military regime just only focusing on the security forces?”

LN: “Yes, but bear in mind what aims we had, so I think that probably most of these efforts have been you know for the good. Actually, I think some of it has been too late. Some of it has been too little.”

Interviewer: “In general you would say that the appropriate tools have been used?”

LN: “I’m not in a position to say.”

Interviewer: “But from your perspective, you don’t see any tools that you say: Well, this tool could have been used?”

LN: “No, I haven’t got the imagination to think of the tool that we actually did not use, bearing in mind what we tried to achieve, because if, I’m not even sure it was doable, we could probably have done the al-Qaeda Kabul thing, and then have left the country, you know. Bearing in mind that our interest in that region at that time, you know, the great game and all that stuff was probably also a driver for this very broad and very time-consuming and resource-consuming effort that we did. So let’s not fool ourselves: that we, you know, did it to stabilize, to do some good for the Afghans. It was probably for ourselves, right? So it’s hard for me to say that there is a tool that we needed. There was some timing in it. There was some something probably that we didn’t have to do because it didn’t make any sense at all. There were probably things we did there that were directly counterproductive. You mentioned the you know the war economy. A country like Afghanistan being the land for so many foreigners spending so much in a country. They earned so much money. In a society that creates an unhealthy environment ... I think that’s not a single tool as if you know a downside to bringing in the apparatus we chose. If I should point out why actually the thoughts behind what we tried to do were actually quite all right, I say that that was what we tried to do – we will not discuss right or wrong anymore, but if you say this is what we want to do, to stabilize: We say, okay, if we are going to handle the insurgency, what this is all about is the perception of the population as such. Because one of the first things we need to do is to create a distinction between the normal population and the insurgency, so we have to have the population as centric and the population thought about them as being important, and that calls for you know broad efforts right? A broad variety of efforts including you know time stuff.”

Interviewer: “Comprehensive approach?”

LN: “Yeah, exactly, and that is, well, I think the comprehensive approach is like democracy, it has a lot of downsides to it, but I cannot come up with a better alternative, and I mean even though we see now that we tend to make, from military perspectives make more limited goals we tried that in Libya; it did not work, right? Well at least it did not work so far. No we did not spend so much money there, and we did not lose any soldiers; that’s good from our perspective but it’s most uncertain where the country will go, right? If we jump to Russia and Ukraine, we have seen comprehensive approach art

conducted by Putin: that is his prerogative as a de facto dictator. He can do that because he doesn't have to ask so many about it, but he has really been very, very skillful, the way I see it, the way he has managed to achieve his goals in that region, right, with limited resources standing, I'm not talking about what price he will pay in the future, but he made a high stake bet, and I am still waiting to see who will come out on the other side, and say it was worth it if it would be the European Union, western part of the world or the Russians. That will be very interesting."

Interviewer: "Okay, so I'll just dwell on this question one last time, given your experience in Afghanistan, also maybe looking to specific operations or specific projects. Have you seen any approaches that could be an aggressive approach: a state building approach in a specific area? Do you see any of these approaches that you will say dealt well with this type of insurgency in Afghanistan? This approach actually worked at this time?"

LN: "I would say the security forces assistance model. I would say again that is..."

Interviewer: "That's the best way to handle an insurgency, you would say?"

LN: "Not the best, but I will say that is a tool that we took up that was effective, which actually clearly was on our strategic path, so whereas a lot of the other stuff is... E.g., we are not quite sure what happened to agriculture development."

Interviewer: "Should there have been more civil advisers on the agriculture development?"

LN: "I'm not familiar with the numbers. I don't know, actually, I don't know what effort was made. You know that it is hard to understand the effort made in Afghanistan. I only know the agriculture alone because we sent out Danes to do it, but it was too late and more related to other goals seen from a Danish perspective, but anyway I know the U.S. made a lot of agricultural development, but I haven't got the knowledge to actually, to actually to judge. You can take, I know, that Denmark has been big on education, school systems."

Interviewer: "Has it worked?"

LN: "I'm not in a position to make an assessment of that but what you can say is if we say that the future belongs to the Afghans, I will say that education is clearly a vital path as with the security forces, right. So we need an education for all reasons we need to educate the population, so that would be something which, well, we have had setbacks on education systems obviously, we have Taliban raiding schools. That we have seen before, probably, but that will be, I mean, you now, going to school will not fix surviving tomorrow, but if we have kids coming out with some kind of education they will be able to take Afghanistan to another level, so I think a school system is vital, and then you can say you have a lot of supporting effort that we found out, okay, we might need to do something about corruption. Because if you don't do something about corruption, a lot of the efforts we are doing in the more important matters they are not working or they are working kind of working, right?"

Interviewer: "So what I have actually noted down here is that you say that education is important in a long term perspective, while building security forces are important in the shorter term."

LN: "But still in the long term, you obviously need forces to take care of your security in a broad way. That's also why Afghanistan is talking about a certain task for their security forces, including the regional elements in their perception of their security, and we are looking at the internal stuff, right, primarily."

Interviewer: "Primarily, but, I mean, no education before security."

LN: "No, no, those things go together: no development without security and no security without development. Because you need the population to subscribe to, you know, the idea of getting further so if the population gains nothing from the increased security: hey, what's it to you, just combating the village, and then we don't like that, so if they don't gain from it in a development perspective... all things go hand in hand. I'm not too happy to say that was the important part, 'cause I'm not in a position to say which we can rule out. You need to know what we are talking about now are just, you know, flashes of my memory, so..."

Interviewer: "Dropping to the last question, civil and military tools being counterproductive, yeah, you can separate them or you can answer it as a complementary element."

LN: "I would say that it would be a general answer for me again because I cannot point out where did we do something which was counterproductive, but we did I'm sure we did go to areas creating security for reasons not that suitable for the long run. I mean, we went to certain areas in Helmand in which it was unrealistic to create security, but we tried to do it anyway, and what we did create was a lot of uncertainty, where it would probably have been better just to leave it. Well, maybe it's hard decision to - or harsh judgment to make because as you mentioned: the third level, second or third level of leadership. We took out a lot of that in those days which weakened the insurgents locally, which made development come a bit further, I mean, what happened in Gereshk over those years we were there wasn't it improvement?"

Interviewer: "Sorry..?"

LN: "What happened in Gereshk, getting the markets working again that was a big improvement. Whether that was what was the course of what happened, it's hard to say. It is hard to say if it was just meant to happen because local dynamics called for markets to work again, or it was because we were there, we were present, so we..."

Interviewer: "The security situation allowed the market to develop?"

LN: "Yeah, all the efforts made on the civilian side, but you know actually. We did already discuss it. You know that there will be aspects where have so much complexity dealing with enemies all types of enemies, dealing with own forces you know that is an issue when you when you go into combat, it is the use of violence which is massive, right, even in a society which is used to it, but when you use the kind of military power we have, including the fighter planes, all that it is: it has big impact on a society, right. You have all the green forces, you know, the afghan force being there and it acts on its own. You have all the IOs the NGOs, the GOs working and all should be centric on population, which again holds its own dynamics. I mean, the population, they have different agendas and purposes as well, so I cannot come up with specific examples of what we did as counterproductive, but I'm certain that we did stuff which in the short term worked very well, but in the longer term was a big mistake. Let's see where we end up with the Afghan local police,

for instance. I'm also certain that we did stuff which was a big failure, while we did it, but in the longer run... actually, it was good building the Kijacki Dam, you know providing the engines, I mean, that was a... it took forever. I'm not quite sure they ever got the engines up there, but at least let's see if we in 8 years' time actually say it was a good place for that engine, and now we have the opportunity to get them, and the U.S. will deliver the engines and we can so whatever, hover them in, whatever, and maybe it was not something they would do in 8 years if we haven't had that period of time were we actually strove for it. It's hard to say."

Interviewer: "Yes, just one last comment if I should point out one little positive element that I think we will see the result from that in, yeah, the next 10 to 15 years. It is actually that for a period of time, almost 15 years now, we have actually opened the Afghani society to information, and I think that the impact of that that will show in the years to come because we have actually been maintaining the lines of communication. It has opened, and the first results – we have already seen the first results of that – it's that the core Taliban leadership has already changed it agenda toward woman working and girls in school because they know now that they cannot get the support from the population. It's a no-go. Nobody will support this and the main reason for that is that information has come in through Afghanistan from the outside world, and that's also why the Taliban of the 90s is totally dead. This was also a success. It will never happen again and one of the reasons is actually also that when it came to power it promoted itself as crime busters. We are gonna establish law and order now. They have been forced into the illegal businesses making money. On the illegal businesses in the 90s they talked against drugs; they are now dependent on drug trading, so they have lost their legitimacy what can they say to the population. They can only say you need to hit the front troops, but the front troops are no longer there."

LN: "Probably, I agree with that and basically what you say about information is parallel to the education, right, so information is actually education or whatever of the population so that is a matter of attitude, you know, how are we informed how is the press influenced that's what matters more. Who are controlling the press and what messages are coming across, right."

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