

Afghanistan: An Analytical Framing Past, Present and into the Future

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Afghanistan: An Analytical Framing – *Past, Present and into the Future*

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*Concerns for the present raised urgent questions about the future*²

Abstract

This paper comes out of a paper presented by the author at a NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre conference in early December 2015, at which the question of analytically framing Afghanistan was addressed. In order to do so, consideration was given to the intervention in Afghanistan since 2001 and the present situation as a basis from which analytical framing can be explored, developed, refined and further tailored. Analytical frames assessed as pertinent into the future are elucidated upon with reference to a range of classical texts, newly published research and analysis, as well as recent first-hand experience. Serving as a key conceptual starting point is Clausewitz's 'trinity' and its clarification in the context of the Global War on Terror and the ongoing intervention in Afghanistan. This thread is subsequently traced through matters of policy, strategy and operations, and their corollaries. Appropriate reflection is also entered into in relation to a range of relevant selected paradigms, assumptions, historical developments and thematic issues. This finds that although Afghanistan presents an extraordinary complexity -- that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future -- ways do exist in which analytical framing can be usefully undertaken. This necessarily utilizes: insights arising from frank analyses of events, paradigms and constructs; assessing and where apt adapting pre-existing analytical frames; carefully examining assumptions; locating congruence between analytical frames and making use of what this may offer; tailoring to and enabling appreciation of context as part of analytical exploration; developing constructive awareness of limiting factors; and being creative about challenges such as data availability and volatility.

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² Professor David Stafford quoted in Keene, Thomas (2012) p.55.

Main Findings and Recommendations:

The Situation in Afghanistan: Past, Present and Prospective

- Afghanistan is a country, a situation and of circumstances which will continue to be salient to and amongst global political affairs for the foreseeable future.
- Afghanistan is very likely to experience a further period of difficult challenges, particularly amid uncertainties about: security, economic development, and regional dynamics.
- The importance of Afghanistan for regional and global security, stability and prosperity should not be underestimated. This draws on historical and other recent developments.^{3 4}
- What commenced as a war of purpose in Afghanistan in 2001 currently appears to be characterizable more as a war of risk. However, risk and consequence management could well prove insufficient approaches in addressing: a range of actors with renewed purpose; an environment of growing instability and uncertainty; and, signs of strengthening determination of proxy actors, supporters and related dynamics.

U.S. and International Community Goals in Afghanistan

- Crucially, al Qaeda and other terror groups active in Afghanistan have some significant symbolic and relatively long-standing roots in war in Afghanistan.⁵ Their ties with the Taliban and its various elements remain rather opaque, but not unbroken.
- Combat continues to occur involving U.S. and NATO-coalition forces, despite efforts to withdraw and delimit their engagement with insurgent forces and terror entities.
- President Obama's announcement of the ending of the combat mission in Afghanistan in December 2014 is symbolic of changes to the meaning contained in the "GWOT" (Global War on Terror) formulation. In praxis, his announcement of "the end of the Combat Mission" then is not the end *per se* of war on terror. Nevertheless, this represents a key point along a longer trajectory of changing the tone, tenor -- and to a degree -- the character of the U.S.'s engagement with the threat of terror attacks.
- Critically, threats currently cited by President Obama comprise many of those stated by President G.W. Bush during his presidency. Indeed, directly invoked in President Obama's recent major speech on Afghanistan of 15 October 2015, are the threats of: various al Qaeda affiliates; extremists; state-sponsored networks; local militias or extremists interested in seizing territory; regional networks

³ The referents of: security, stability and prosperity, will be used through this paper and in congruence with the will of the international community in UN Security Council mandates (more on this in Annex 1 and in the main body of the paper) as useful norm, but also allowing for a range of political interpretations and uses.

⁴ For an especially thoughtful recent article including strong argument as to why Afghanistan is important and will be in the future (and why) see: Rashid, Ahmed (2015) 'While we weren't looking, the Taliban surged back in Afghanistan: Fifteen years of western intervention achieved no more than the pretense of a stable state', *The Spectator Magazine*, (London), 12 December 2015, available: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/12/while-we-werent-looking-the-taliban-surged-back-in-afghanistan/> Accessed December 2015.

⁵ For more on this there are numerous sources. Coll (2004) is one of the more exciting and detailed with focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is especially useful here. For a more philosophical and thought-provoking perspective, see: Gray, John (2003) *Al Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern*. London: Verso.

launching periodic attacks against western diplomats, companies, and other soft targets, or resort to kidnapping and other criminal enterprises to fund their operations.

- The “global reach” of groups with networks utilizing terror to target the U.S. and its allies (e.g., al Qaeda, and a range of offshoots and militant groups) is a continuing problematic, including for international global engagement, linkages and elements of integration. Challenges arising out of this, such as the impact of these on U.S. influence and power projection (and perceptions thereof) to resolve crises. These should be neither overlooked nor ignored. In Afghanistan, the consequences of the 2001 intervention and efforts are still filtering through. Meanwhile, the tools, breadth of relationships and confidence of close allies have been broadly reducing in Afghanistan.
- Terror and its use --what is widely called terrorism – is largely a symptom of challenges. It is neither the root cause nor solution to terror.⁶
- The “disrupt, dismantle and defeat” (“triple-d”) formulation, applied to Afghanistan quite systematically since 2009 is a key construct in U.S.-led international efforts there. Although an attractive sounding alliteration, it has served to filter statements and conceptualities of: the threat / enemy; goal(s); and, concurrently: strategy and tactics. It deserves focused attention due to its enduring presence and capacity for catalyzing, but also obscuring meaning of goals and associated factors. Thus, it’s of great importance for analytically framing Afghanistan, past, present and into the future.
- As Schroden (2014) claims, it seems as though President Obama and the White House were of the mind that they had (albeit perhaps hopefully) defeated the core of al Qaeda in c. 2014 *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan.⁷ However, the situation has been altering, as acknowledged by President Obama – e.g. in his statement of 15 October 2015. In the latter statement, President Obama made reference to the Taliban making “gains” in Afghanistan; this is an unusual level of detail among other admittances of significant recent security issues in Afghanistan and of “fragility”.
- The unresolved questions about the goal in Afghanistan, and issues around interpretation through the ‘triple-d’ matrix, may be due to uncertainty on the part of the White House. However, this state of affairs can also be ‘read’ as the out-workings of political calculation encompassing less favourable intentions on the U.S.’s part. Some important potential regional support may suffer if this is not better addressed. This is despite how strange assertions may seem that the U.S. wishes leave a degree of instability in Afghanistan in order to weaken some regional powers / global powers.
- What remains unclear is: what is it to defeat al Qaeda? Here, earlier difficulties with aligning ways and means with ends from the Bush era, and the many complications that occurred since then, are continuing to fog efforts.

Towards Analytical Framing

⁶ It may be a trigger, or a contributory cause, but seldom a root cause in the sense used, for example, in conflict analysis as taught by the UN System Staff College. This is also in keeping with various other conflict analysis definitions, methodologies and ontologies.

⁷Schroden, Jonathan (2014) ‘Obama’s Confusing Al Qaeda Strategy’ *The National Interest*, 19 June 2014, accessible: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/obamas-confusing-al-qaeda-strategy-10701> accessed December 2015. Discussions with various officials adds weight to this and the sense that al Qaeda in Afghanistan had been ostensibly destroyed. However there was also a sense in late 2015 that this was changing, particularly in the East of Afghanistan and with the ISIL question.

- Tensions between reality, and analytical-cum-decision making frames (and within these) have developed at various points. This is reflective of the not infrequent conflation of goals and strategy and especially strategy and operations. Possible/potential correctives to analytical framing appear too often to be a threat to: the narrative; the fulfillment of frames assumed to be fixable by one side in the spirit of decisiveness; and, winning decisive battle that has assumed such an expansive notion of spatiality under the Global War on Terror, and to date.
- Output driven approaches frequently employed by the military in planning, strategy, tactical guidance and operations in Afghanistan,⁸ have several spatial parallels and pitfalls noted above. With reference to Clausewitz and the trinity, they are not often sufficiently responsive to passion, chance and reason and its effects on policy, strategy and operations. As in the analogy of the trinity Clausewitz gives, they are magnets: alternately attracting and rejecting each other, so never forming a fixed relationship. They are dynamic in nature as is war.⁹ Important attempts to ‘engineer’ the government, military and (aspects of) the population are also indicative of this. Consequently, policy, strategy and operations – and analytical framing of them -- need to be adjusted not as infrequently as a result.
- Simplification of spatialities can simplify thinking and circumscribe it too, for example, the ‘Af-Pak’ reference and analytical frame. This is also observed in the case of the concept (and de facto analytical frame) of ‘homeland’, which sees bounds disproportionately defined by borderlands and beyond these ‘wild zones’ or ‘grey zones’. Towards these, policy, strategy and operations and their framing are consequently impacted and circular / self-reinforcing; rather than strongly solution seeking and clarificatory.

Analytical Framings

- The conceptuality of ‘war’ is necessarily appropriated in this paper as a conceptual starting point, rather than as a criticism or a critique. Thus, the analytical frame of key significance to what commenced with war in 2001 in Afghanistan, and where war continues, is the triad of: policy, strategy and tactics.¹⁰ Although distinct levels, in practice they do interact with each other.¹¹ What is essential is the use of clear language and the concepts that underpin the language. From there, further precision can be achieved through clear questioning and interrogation. This is also relevant regarding and to a broad spectrum of efforts in Afghanistan, ranging from military to development, humanitarian and political issues.
- Independence of the civilian from the military and the military from the civilian have both been held up as important,¹² but so is a comprehensive conception; a cohesive starting point from which policy, strategy and operations can configure and be configured. Necessary adjustments can be crafted in

⁸ From the author’s own experience in Afghanistan in a range of military and political military settings. This includes: policy, related processes and strategy, and relating to military operations.

⁹ Clausewitz stated: “A theory which insisted on leaving one of them out of account, or on fixing an arbitrary relationship between them, would immediately fall into such contradiction with reality that through this alone it would forthwith necessarily be regarded as destroyed.” Carl von Clausewitz (1950) *On war*, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles, Washington D.C., p. 18.

¹⁰ This is also synonymously referred to as: goals, aims and operations or objectives, aims and tactics, or ends, ways or means. The interchangeability of synonymous terms in these synonymous frames is also possible, e.g. goals for policy, but not goals for strategy or tactics. This is a central consistency.

¹¹ Strachan (2013) p.58.

¹² For instance the famous military thinking Helmuth von Moltke the elder held that the politician should fall silent when the war broke out. Politicians are often (rightly) adamant that the military should be able to deliver policy under conditions such as war and in various conflicts. Further, humanitarian principles call for independence from political and military actors (the latter in practice in particular) in order to have access to all areas where humanitarian needs may arise. Nevertheless key for both actors in the same environment to have a clear grasp of each other’s perspectives and at least a similar language through which they can effectively communicate.

respect of sensitivities, particularities, preferences and proscriptions while maintaining a necessity of clarity and consistency congruent with policy adjudged to be realistic and achievable.¹³

- Clausewitz's trinity of 'passion, chance and reason' requires careful clarification in relation to the central analytical frame of 'goal, strategy and operations' (as above), and the often misidentified and conflated triad (not trinity) of: government, military and the people. These frames are consequently widely applicable as an important and co-informing fundamentals to analytically framing Afghanistan.
- Gray (2015) provides a useful analytical frame regarding strategic history (and identifying a threat/enemy) by locating recent salient aspects for analysis, i.e.: 'strategic history can be approached and understood as the very dynamic outcome of relations among human nature, political process, and strategic logic and method'. Nevertheless, the element of 'human nature' can benefit from more contextual refinement, for example from perspectives of political anthropology and as found in quite recent studies of conflict. Similarly, the element of 'political process' is more apt as 'political processes' in view of the theoretical and very much the practical challenges arising in analytical framing *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan.
- Institutions are an analytical frame that is very appropriate to and in Afghanistan, at numerous levels, through different historical periods, and multiple 'lines of effort'. It is comprised of formal, informal and illicit institutions. Approaches to using this framing can benefit from a suspension, in particular instances, of judgment about legitimacy and certain moral issues for the purpose of challenging possibly faulty analytical assumptions, e.g. in the case of opium poppy cultivation or in governance. Indeed, illicit and licit boundaries may be blurred. Similarly, exploration of the ways in which institutions constrain and enable behavior is strongly encouraged, as are issues of relations, discourses and rules. Regarding the latter, especial attention is likely necessary regarding matters such as of social transmission.
- Spatialities of the local, including local history and local political culture, are essential for inclusion in analytical framing, if qualitative and quantitative analysis is to be at the more reliable end of the spectrum of probabilities.
- In a conflict setting aptly described by Goodson (2001)¹⁴ as a "mosaic of warfare" the frame of "micro foundations of war" (Woodward (2007)) can be an appropriate analytical framing tool. In analysing the generation and perpetuation of violence this frame includes: local, village, town, community, and personal dynamics.¹⁵
- A related associated frame applicable to nation states through to individuals, and much in-between, as well as more moderate circumstances is: actors, interests and dynamics.¹⁶ Allied to the latter and former frames is that of 'forces and factors'. These are worthy of sensitive appraisal and are easy to overlook, but can change the results of analytical interpretation. Items include: ideas, religion, nationalism, honour and prestige.¹⁷

¹³ This understanding needs to be developed over time, and ideally prior to engagement in war or conflict conditions, when the uncertainties – fog of war – which characterize it: passion, chance and reason, render communication of utmost importance, and learning whilst doing much more challenging and prone to errors which can be costly. Internal complications and civil-military tensions often grow during this time, too potentially strongly politicizing even terminological discussions (author's personal experience).

¹⁴ Goodson, Larry, P. (2001) *Afghanistan's Endless War. State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*. p. 36.

¹⁵ Woodward, Susan (2007) 'Do the root causes of civil war matter?', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1/2 (2007), p. 156.

¹⁶ This is used, for example, in conflict analysis, as taught by the UN System Staff College (UNSSC) on excellent courses offered by them.

¹⁷ As stated in Berdal (2011).

- Although the local appears to be a neat addition to the national, other spatial frames do exist that are increasingly informative and crucial regarding Afghanistan. Salient among them is: city and rural,¹⁸ this is sometimes referred to the relatable (though not precisely the same) frames of centripetal and centrifugal forces.¹⁹

Current and Prospective Thematic Areas of Focus

- A central analytical theme to each of the three main intervention efforts in Afghanistan since 2001 (OEF, NATO and UNAMA) is: security. Ideas, analyses and conclusions about security were instrumental in the institution of and changes to the three aforementioned efforts, and will likely be in the future.
- Regarding security, understandably, different inclusions, ways of categorising, counting and deriving meaning from events can have dramatically different results -- even before in-depth evaluation is entered into. Government accessibility is a more complex assessment to make, but one, which with careful attention can be tailored to the context, can be one of the most informative. Increasing experience of data modelling indicates that limited data from a variety of sources is more useful than a great detail of data with a similar focus.
- The National Unity Government, the touchstone issue of elections, electoral reform, representation and notions of legitimacy is a key area for sometime to come. A harmony of interests in the Afghan government is not uniformly and immediately evident.
- Powerbrokers and new political alignments with their dynamics require close analytical attention.
- The relationship between Afghan National Security Forces²⁰ and the civilian authorities (in what is in numerous ways a securitized state) constitutes an analytical frame of the utmost significance looking back and analysing Afghanistan into the future.²¹

¹⁸ Giustozzi, Antonio (2009) 'The eye of the storm: cities in the vortex of Afghanistan's civil wars' Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 2, 62. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, available: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28123/1/WP62GiustozziR.pdf> accessed December 2015.

¹⁹ Thanks to Dr David Mansfield for alerting me to his use of this concept in what I regard as his exceptionally insightful work. For examples of the use of 'centrifugal forces' in Afghanistan, see, for instance: Mansfield, David (2013) 'EYES WIDE SHUT: Counter-Narcotics in Transition' *Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit*, Briefing Paper Series, September 2013, p. 16. Available: <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/Opium%20BP.pdf> accessed January 2015; Goodhand, J. and D. Mansfield (2010) 'Drugs and Disorder: A Study of the Opium Economy, Political Settlements and Statebuilding in Afghanistan', Crisis States Research Centre, Working Papers Series 2, Number 38, London School of Economics, November 2010, available: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/download/wp/wpSeries2/WP832.pdf> accessed January 2016; Rubin, Barnett (2000) 'The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan', *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1789 to 1803. Accessed January 2016.

²⁰ ANSF are now referred to as ANDSF in another change of jargon by the U.S. and NATO (Afghan National Defence Security Forces).

²¹ Looking at the most recent articles on the topic, such as that by Stancati & Totakhil (2015), it is striking to compare with the clear and quite systematic analysis coupled with narrative in Giustozzi (2007) and to see that a number of central issues with the ANA continue. Stancati, Margherita & Totakhil, Habib Khan (2015) 'Afghan Army Fights to Quell Widening Exodus:

Soldiers quitting the battlefield hamper campaign against a nationwide Taliban insurgency', *Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2015, available: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-army-fights-to- Quell-widening-exodus-1450288759>

Accessed December 2015. Regarding a more in-depth and outstanding study of ANSF see: Schroden et al. (2014)

Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces, *The Center for Strategic Studies of the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA)*, VA U.S.A., 24 January 2014, full version of the paper is available here:

https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2014-U-006815-Final.pdf Summary is available here:

https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2014-U-006816-Final.pdf Accessed December 2015. And, more recently, in a concise section on ANSF with some useful key comparable observations with earlier ANSF developments: McNally & Bucala (2015) 'The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security', *Institute for the Study of War (ISW)*, March

- External interests are currently increasing their reach across the political, security and economic space. This makes it difficult for the Afghan authorities to do what the sage of dealing with insurgency, Sir Robert Thompson, counselled: address the roots; get into a sustainable position; wait and use breaks to gain advantage.²² All the while, work goes into to making Afghanistan something of a going political and economic concern, with security perhaps treated more as a cause than a symptom of problems exploited by groups using terror nationally and globally.
- Afghanistan's economic situation underscores its vulnerability in multiple ways, not least its overall security and opportunities for development unencumbered by international and regional actions.
- The sophistication of forms of bargaining, revenue-raising, and illegal taxation in the political-security-economic nexus at local, and 'higher' levels is an area where no strong systematic data exists. As a thematic area, it is also one of the most underexplored areas of Afghanistan. This is despite it being a key nexus and way for a government, or indeed an insurgency, to draw support and build authority in the country.²³
- The reach of regional countries into Afghanistan has effects on political security, economic, cultural and a range of factors in Afghanistan's being, in co-informing and complex ways. Questions regarding ISIL, Taliban, and regional support for them is a source of regional tension, too; in addition too local concerns.
- Central Asian states, Russia and China also have reemphasized strong concern about the threat of insecurity from Afghanistan spilling over. This can be seen with statements from increasingly active and vocal regional organizations, such as CSTO. Criticism of them for overstating threats is possibly overdone. Their determination to deal with threats (perceived or actual) of radical Islamist militant movements and their influence is firm, for historical and other reasons.
- A combination of analysis of broader political, economic, security, humanitarian and other trends regarding Afghanistan, including those provided by impartial entities such as the UNAMA in its public reporting can be useful frameworks from which to draw to developing analysis and refine analytical framing. They also provide entry points through which to enter into more detailed investigations. Focus on seams of apparent tension between actors, interests, and dynamics is invariably fruitful. Proceeding rather systematically through these, endeavouring to establish causal factors and influences, and seeking to more deeply understand the contextual fabrics is germane and not incidental. Access to local knowledge, including pertinent histories is a *sine qua non* for precision.

2015, pp.22 to 24, available: <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/taliban-resurgent-threats-afghanistans-security#sthash.6EZDkRey.dpuf> accessed December 2015.

²² Thompson, Sir Robert (1966) *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1966). For this formulation see: Marks, Tom (1989) "The Counter-Revolutionary: Sir Robert Thompson – Grand Master of Unconventional Warfare," *Soldier of Fortune*, 14, no. 10 (October 1989), pp. 58 to 65 and 77 to 80.

²³ Also going by historical examples, even in the region, tax surveying and raising was a means of settling the frontier and spheres of influence. For example, on the North West Frontier and with connections with Afghanistan in the 19th Century see: Allen, Charles (2001) *Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier*, London: Abacus. (It is also published under the title: 'Soldier Sahibs: The Daring Adventurers Who Tamed India's Northwest Frontier').

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Part I

Main Paper

Background

Afghanistan continues to provide a rich source of questions regarding interventions in general, many of which refer implicitly, or more explicitly, to the security situation in the country and its international implications.²⁴ As public perceptions appear to accelerate towards a view that the war in Afghanistan is ostensibly over,²⁵ the conundrum of what to do about continuing commitments *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan amid instability remains.²⁶ Indeed, the threats that largely brought intervention in 2001 have not disappeared, owing much to their nature, character and resilience. Hence, the question of: ‘how to understand as well as analyze Afghanistan: now and into the future?’ remains especially pertinent. Since the intervention in Afghanistan of 2001, innumerable changes have occurred in and around the country. Not to mention alterations in the attitudes, approaches and application towards it in the international community. Perhaps the most notable among the more recent developments are: the formation of the National Unity Government; the shift from Transition to Transformation; the end of the ISAF mission; and, the quite rapid drawdown of international security forces in the country.²⁷ It is always wise to look ahead, but difficult to look further than you can see, as Sir Winston Churchill observed. We can, nevertheless, be proactive about being ready to better understand what may transpire. This can also be about looking at what we can see, but also considering and looking again in ways that could be fruitful. Of the temptation of keeping to presupposing ways of thinking or assumptions that may neither stand the test of time, nor be sufficiently invested with analytical rigor: this may not be a wise way of looking. It is also a personal observation that there may be a ‘comprehensibility gap’ between what the situation understood in Afghanistan and abroad, now, at a number of points in the past and possibly into the future. Contributing to a narrowing of this is a hope as part of the fabric of this paper.²⁸

²⁴ This ranges not only from the regular UN Security Council Reporting on “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security” to the original rationale for intervening in Afghanistan in 2001, but also to current rationales provided for continuing engagement there by the U.S. and other countries, including NATO. Regional countries and organisations, such as the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) have also voiced strong concern at the security situation in Afghanistan, including recently. Numerous international and national media reports also currently frequently feature stories with a substantial security content or theming.

²⁵ This is a phraseology used by U.S. President Obama in his most recent focused statement on Afghanistan and Pakistan, on 15 October 2015. See: Obama, B. (2015) ‘Statement by the President on Afghanistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

²⁶ This can be said of the U.S., the NATO coalition present in Afghanistan, regional countries and others who have interests in Afghanistan. The role of Afghans and its central importance should also not be overlooked in the field of international affairs.

²⁷ The National Unity Government in Afghanistan was inaugurated on 29 September 2014 with the deal signed on 21 September 2014; the ISAF mission formally ended at midnight 31 December, 2014; for example, according to official figures, ISAF and U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) reduced from 57,004 on 15 January 2014 (at the start of the year) to some 13,000, according to: http://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2014-01-15-ISAF-Placemat.pdf (accessed December 2015) and various statements by ISAF commanders; the NATO Post-2014 Resolute Support Mission (RSM) is due to number 12,800 in this period of December 2014.

²⁸ The phrase ‘comprehensibility gap’ was used by Sir Robert Thompson in a letter to then National Security Advisor and later U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger in early April 1971 with reference to the Vietnam war and the gap between understanding of it in the U.S. that in Vietnam, on the ground. See: Thompson, Sir Robert (1989) *Make for the Hills: Memories of Far Eastern Wars*. London: Leo & Cooper, p. 166.

Introduction

The development of pertinent analytical frames with which to consider Afghanistan into the future has been undertaken in consideration of recent developments *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan.²⁹ The intention in this paper is therefore to further enable evolving understanding of a country, and more especially of analytically approaching it, as an extraordinary intervention draws down further.³⁰ Although the intervention is drawing down in terms of troop numbers, admittedly delayed, Afghanistan is a country, a situation and circumstances, which often seize our collective attentions and undoubtedly continues to be salient among global political affairs for the foreseeable future. As Afghanistan's 'decade of Transformation' unfolds, the concerns of global terror groupings remain, and political, military, security and aid support do not, and are unlikely to, cease flowing from abroad in sizable sums. Consequently, manifest is the desire and determination to refine ideas about, approaches towards and analysis of Afghanistan. Moreover, Afghanistan is very likely to experience a further period of challenges, with a future to be experienced by many rather than a few with regard to our increasingly shared histories in a globalized world.

This task has been gone about intentionally pointing out at once the 'conceptual frustration' met with concerning Afghanistan in relation to the intervention, which began in October 2001.³¹ A sense that is evident, and at times palpable, in casual discussion about Afghanistan, as well as in those with a range of international officials in capitals to Afghans at local level in Afghanistan. The frame of fundamental importance to what commenced with war in 2001 and where war rages on as 2015 comes to a close, is the triad of: policy, strategy and tactics.³² Rather than applying the term (and conceptuality) of 'war' as a simple criticism or even a critique, in view of the desire in a number of countries that intervened in Afghanistan in 2001 to close that chapter, it is necessarily appropriated as a conceptual starting point. A central one that is inherent to past and present events, and into the future. As such, the term and the triad of policy, strategy and tactics are therefore employed rather carefully due to their ongoing relevance as a frame for analysis, and into the inimitable uncertainties of the future. Given its inherent conceptual breadth and consequent coverage, this provides good potential as a starting point for developing further analytical framing, together with insights. It can also be concurrently be used as a referent for consistency and possibly corrective views and activity.

Multiple applications are potentially viable with such starting point and fundamental analytical frame. It can be utilized in order to assist analysis, and as a means for further analysis (in the paper and as a tool in itself). For example, in the discrete and often co-informing activities of: identifying, orientating, comparing, contrasting, questioning, and clarifying matters of select interest, then implicit context can be explored and explicit points made. Other context, perspective and examination of assumptions can also be undertaken with a useful reference point. This, as we shall see, is in order to guide, provide

²⁹ This was the broad question given for the conference presentation for and from which this paper was developed.

³⁰ It is extraordinary in a number of ways, not least as it's the world super power' --United States' -- 'longest war', with significant on-the-ground military and other support. This is despite it not being often a well-understood intervention, or receiving the attention of other contemporary interventions, such as Iraq, which it preceded in various ways (date, thinking, trends). In addition, Afghanistan: symbolizes enduring challenges to U.S. and international political-military and coalition might; continues to be viewed as an incomparable spatiality in efforts against global terror groups and networks such as al Qaeda.

³¹ Officially October 7 2001, as per the announcement by U.S. President George W. Bush. Bush, G.W. (2001) Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001. *The White House Office of Press Secretary*, available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html> accessed December 2015. Preparatory actions were undertaken for this contingency, including the insertion of clandestine military and political-military units into Afghanistan.

³² This is also synonymously referred to as: goals, aims and operations or objectives, aims and tactics, or ends, ways or means. The interchangeability of synonymous terms in these synonymous frames is also possible, e.g. goals for policy, but not goals for strategy or tactics. This is a central consistency.

direction to argument and focus, as well as to introduce the development of further analytical frames of potential and pertinent use. Among the most notable are, for example: addressing the quite widespread misperceptions of Clausewitz's 'trinity' and the related notion of the instrumentality of war; clarity in comprehending threats and of identifying the enemy; political process as a dynamic thread which runs through much and many manner of analytical framings, but cannot be regarded simply as process; and, the inescapability of context and different ideas of transactionality informing political and other significant interactions and interrelations.

From this analytical base, which can draw together past, present and the future as a central theme to war and continuing war in Afghanistan,³³ other further tailored analytical frames can be crafted and appropriated in use. This can be conducted variously through: theoretical links and adjustments; in view of on-the-ground developments deemed of importance to better discernment of Afghanistan and wider yet interrelated contexts; lessons from other situations. Allied with this is the question -- albeit explanation of -- methodology. This is present in the recognition that while the nature of war has not changed, its character does.³⁴ In so doing, relatively new developments that are germane to goals in Afghanistan, for instance the question of al Qaeda and transnational terror networks, can be explored for the new character they bring to war. In consequence, new meanings can be discovered of analytical importance and refinements to analysis can be implied and/or developed for analyzing Afghanistan past, present and future.

Towards Analytical Framing

The interrelations that inform Afghanistan, for example: political, development and economic, among others, necessarily involve consideration as they are integral to security and the spectrum of apprehensions of it: from narrow to expansive.³⁵ The local, regional and global, and how these figure towards Afghanistan, and that which may emanate from it, also invest thinking; for instance the spectre of terror precipitated the most recent intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, post 9/11. Terror and the threat of it continue as a key rationale for various forms of engagement with Afghanistan by the U.S. and allies. Furthermore, concern about terrorism of terror attacks, and their use, is the *zeitgeist* (also noting the choice is terminology regarding terror and terrorism is neither always clear nor precise).³⁶

³³ This is not stated out of desire but rather owing to the rigours of analytical exactitudes and pertinent theoretical frames, most notably the relevance of Clausewitz's 'On War', which can also take reasonable account together with military intervention, counterinsurgency (to name some of the 'predominant phases' in Afghanistan) of: terror, terrorism and responses thereto such as criminal-management responses amid war.

³⁴ See in particular Strachan & Schiepers (2011) *The Changing Character of War*, Oxford: OUP. pp. 11 to 14.

³⁵ Such as security as freedom from fear in the Rooseveltian sense echoed by President G.W. Bush in key statements on the Global War On Terror prior to and just post the intervention in Afghanistan. This is arguably also has manifestations of what Beck (1992) calls de-bounded risks in the current age. This de-bounding is three-dimensional: spatial, temporal and social. Security – *Sicherheit* -- in German, Beck's native language, can mean: 'security' or 'safety' or 'certainty' Adam (2003). Security, and concepts of it can also range to be of more concrete tangible forms of physical security, such as that offered by Manunta, Giovanni (1999) 'What is Security?' *Security Journal*, Volume 12, number 3, pp. 57-66. Human security is also noteworthy as are the insights offered on the case of Afghanistan by Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou (2005). Contrasts with the U.S. Joint military definition of security are notable. In the latter, security is defined as: "security --1. Measures taken by a military unit, activity, or installation to protect itself against all acts designed to, or which may, impair its effectiveness. (JP 3-10) 2. A condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences. (JP 3-10) 3. With respect to classified matter, the condition that prevents unauthorized persons from having access to official information that is safeguarded in the interests of national security. See also national security. (JP 2-0)". Joint Publication 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (As amended Through 15 November 2015) (2015) Joint Chiefs of Staff U.S. Department of Defense, Washington D.C., available: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf Accessed December 2015. On the link between President F.D. Roosevelt and the idea of 'freedom from fear' and its investment in political vision, see: Bauman, Zygmunt (2006).

³⁶ The axiom that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter is apt to mention here, as is the increasing recognition that the paths to terror are many indeed as they are to radicalization. For a useful perspective on pathways to

For instance, such as in perspective of the high profile attack in Paris on 13 November 2015, later claimed by (and widely attributed to) the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has been strongly alleged to be present in Afghanistan, too.³⁷

Although constraining prospective developments in analysis of Afghanistan to a narrow ‘terror’ focus is possible, such a path has not been commenced with or intended here. As in the eyes of Janus, the Roman God of beginnings and endings, whose temple doors were opened in times of war and closed in times of peace, or when armies marched out and returned again: it can be convincingly held that war in Afghanistan is not over. Accordingly, as Janus appeals: beginnings and ends -- as well as rightful doorways to these and into the future -- should be carefully observed. I would submit the same if so examined.³⁸ In recognition of this sense and spirit of seeking to establish clarity as a way of grasping what may be in and into the future, let us be frank so to yield and effect cogent analysis: combat continues to occur involving U.S. and NATO-coalition forces.³⁹ This is despite combat operations by the U.S. and NATO-led allies being formally over and under the title of another paradigm. A paradigm primarily of assistance, advising and training, however, it also has an authorization for self-defence, which enables various dimensions including combat. The paradigm of TAA and other elements of the U.S. and NATO-led Missions in Afghanistan post-2014, titled “a non-combat role” also do not account for covert activities widely known to be occurring, such as some drone operations.⁴⁰ In addition, well-publicized events in Kunduz city, Kunduz Province speak to a shift in the character of the earlier presented train, advise, assist (TAA) paradigm, to what sees combat exposure and engagement in combat even through it. Among other possible recent examples indicating combat, even if instigated by insurgents is the incidence of recent U.S. Special Forces

radicalization and this important perspective that inheres a wide array of issues from the psychological to the political, ideological and economic for example, see: McCauley, Clark & Moskalenko, Sophia (2008).

³⁷ Also frequently referred to, among other names, as: Da’ish, Islamic State, and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Its presence in Afghanistan has been debated in various political, security, academic, and other circles public and private. The author’s view is that ISIL do pose a significant danger and threat to and in Afghanistan. For example, the argument that there is no ‘proof’ of ISIL fighters from Iraq or Syria being in Afghanistan under the ISIL banner in the latter misses several substantive points regarding understanding who an enemy is and also as part of assessing threats and enemies. More will be addressed regarding this in due course in this paper.

³⁸ Arendt also uses reference to the Janus as part of, simply put, underlining the significance of appreciating beginnings and ends, close examination of these foundations and their importance for new interpretations towards the present and the future. Arendt, Hannah (1961) *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*.

³⁹ A useful article that makes poignant and salient points on why war in Afghanistan is not over, and was published before more contemporary events, see: Knefel, John (2015) ‘Drone Rules in Afghanistan Go Unchanged, And Other Reasons the War Isn’t Really Over: Despite the official end of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, our involvement goes on’, *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 7 January 2015, available: <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/drone-rules-in-afghanistan-go-unchanged-and-other-reasons-the-war-isnt-really-over-20150107> accessed December 2015.

⁴⁰ This terminology of “train, advise, and assist” has gone through multiple changes, nevertheless, the meaning is understood as largely similar through these iterations. The NATO SOFA, for example, defines these terms in a legal sense.

casualties in Sangin, Northern Helmand Province.⁴¹⁴² Also, to some degree, operations against ‘probably the largest’ al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan ever destroyed.⁴³ Thus, it behooves us for reasons of actuality and the search for clarity, understanding if not wisdom to examine: how to effectively analytically frame the situation in Afghanistan, towards better discernment of it. It is not simply an exercise for our-selves, rather, it with the aspiration of making sense of a complex and

⁴¹ U.S. and NATO-led coalition forces remain in Afghanistan albeit under specific and differential mandates (the Afghanistan-U.S. Bi-lateral Security Agreement (BSA) and NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and a UN Security Council Resolution welcoming the latter NATO-led mission. Extensive international coverage of the fall of Kunduz city to Taliban and related forces exists, including intervention by U.S., U.K. and other special forces such as Germans. Although at times presented as advising, local and other sources credibly confirm combat by the aforementioned. The caveat of self-defence is not infrequently used regarding reports of combat by both U.S. and NATO troops (for example see statements by the NATO Resolute Support Mission under Transcripts, Press Releases and Casualty Reports: <http://www.rs.nato.int/news/4.html>) even when placing such close to insurgents and militants raising the question of intent. In a number of cases the coalition member states involved in such situations are not declared, such as during the Kunduz city response. For example, see the Guardian newspaper report: “Taliban widen offensive as Nato special forces join fight for Kunduz” 30 September 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/30/taliban-widen-offensive-as-afghan-army-fails-to-retain-kunduz> accessible December 2015, and Daily Mail (2015) ‘Afghan forces recapture main areas of key city from Taliban in early hours offensive ‘assisted by British SBS commandos’ 1 October 2015, available: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3255811/Afghan-forces-recapture-main-areas-key-city-Taliban-early-hours-offensive-assisted-British-SBS-commandos.html>. Sensitivity to declarations of direct involvement in combat by nation-state’s forces since the formal announcement of the ending of the combat mission in Afghanistan by president Obama on 28 December 2015 are self-apparent. i.e. to fulfill this status of the end of war. In this context regional tensions affecting wider international relations also exist, for instance over tensions with regional countries about U.S. intentions longer-term, such as basing. For some countries, such as Germany, clear examples of issues of declaring the situation in Afghanistan involved war regarding this exist for historical reasons, which been a factor in presentations of involvement in Afghanistan. This has at times culminated in ministerial-level crises, such as that which engulfed the German defence minister regarding stating what was happening in Afghanistan was ‘war’ in 2010 a high-point in the conflict. See: Strachan (2013) p.143. Numerous media reports also exist about the reaction this created, for example: ‘It’s War, says Guttenberg’ (2010) The Local de, published: 4 April 2010. Available: <http://www.thelocal.de/20100404/26311> Accessed December 2015. The U.S., U.K and numerous other both major and minor troop contributors to the NATO-led coalition did term involvement there war, and certainly prepared troops as if it were, with some additional trainings for the theatre of operations. German sensitivities regarding the use of the term ‘war’ (*Krieg* in German) have been especially notable as the aforementioned example is indicative of. This has not changed significantly.

⁴² On the Sangin (a district of Helmand Province) example, which is interesting for this aspect, among others, see: The Times of London (2015) ‘SAS battle to stop Taliban from taking over Helmand, 22 December 2015, available: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/asia/afghanistan/article4647203.ece> Accessed December 2015.

⁴³ This naturally poses the implicit questions of: how long has it been there, and relatedly, was it in existence before the end of ‘the combat mission’ 31 December 2014? For some more on the camp and the operation to destroy it, see: Lamothe, Dan (2015) “‘Probably the largest’ al-Qaeda training camp ever destroyed in Afghanistan”, *Washington Post*, 30 October 2015, available: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/10/30/probably-the-largest-al-qaeda-training-camp-ever-destroyed-in-afghanistan/> accessed December 2015.

enduring conflict. Afghanistan is the domain of a conflict – a war -- with ramifications for international safety and security.^{44 45}

Such a recognition also enables justification for concerted application of at least one of the few well established analytical frameworks with which to embark upon an analytical journey: war, policy, strategy and tactics. Crucially, al Qaeda and other terror groups active in Afghanistan -- similarly the Taliban and its elements -- have some if not many or most of their roots in war in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ Terror and its use --what is widely called terrorism – is largely a symptom. It is not in and of itself the root cause or solution to terror.⁴⁷ The matter of insecurity in Afghanistan is more proximate to its cause and comprehension. The analytical frame of war, closely related to matters of security and insecurity is even more particular, relevant and useful to start with towards analytically framing Afghanistan apropos the past, present and into the future.

Objective and Aims of the Article

The objective of this paper, as articulated above, is to offer pertinent analytical frames with which to consider Afghanistan into the future. More precisely, this objective sees two co-informing aims arrived at in conceiving of what how to go about such a matter. Firstly, to make deeper sense of the intervention, conflict, and other developments arising related to this endeavour, (and given first hand

⁴⁴ The UN Security Council is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Relatedly, the objective of the international community with Afghan authorities' agreement toward (and within) Afghanistan is inherent in the structure of both UNAMA quarterly reports to the UN Security Council (UNSC) report on the situation in Afghanistan, and more formally expressed in UNAMA's UN Security Council mandates, which have been renewed annually, with some slight variations in the annual renewal dates, since 28 March 2002. For the evolution of the vision for Afghanistan from 2002 see: <http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/28%20March%202002.pdf> paragraph 3 "Stressing the inalienable right of the Afghan people themselves freely to determine their own political future," and most recently "to achieve a unified, peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of Afghanistan" UNSC (2015) S/RES/2210. The main change and most comprehensive expression of the objective for Afghanistan was in 2007 and the UNAMA mandate: UNSC (2006) S/RES/1662: "*Pledging* its continued support for the Government and people of Afghanistan as they build on the successful completion of the Bonn Process in rebuilding their country, strengthening the foundations of a constitutional democracy and assuming their rightful place in the community of nations". This was after several processes inspired by liberal democratic interpretations of international norms had been asserted. (See Annex 1 for more detailed observations on the evolution of the international community's vision for Afghanistan). Commitment to: "sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan" is the 'anchor' statement present in all UNAMA mandates from 2002 to the present day as an expression of the will and norms of the international community. Notably, the UNAMA mandate UNSC (2005) S/RES/1589, sees al Qaeda noted for the first time since 2001, and also Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). On the more complex matter of U.S. and U.K. goals (e.g. as the major nations involved in OEF from the outset) a detailed examination of goals in Afghanistan by the U.S. in comparison, the U.K. takes place later in this paper.

⁴⁵ Unique and outstanding reporting on the situation in Afghanistan has and continues to be provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA), which is mandated by the UN Security Council (UNSC) to formally report to that body quarterly. (The aforementioned qualities of the report have been positively remarked upon by numerous diplomats, military personnel and other officials and researchers it is also an excellent record and reference.) The report's analytical content is, true to its purpose of an impartial account of quarterly developments along political, security, development and regional strands as well as others. Consequently, it is not as assertive, critical or potentially controversial as other written, primarily analytical works, such as this. The most recent UNAMA Report to the UNSC on "the Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security" was on 10 December 2015, and is available here: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_942.pdf

⁴⁶ For more on this there are numerous sources. Coll (2004) is one of the more exciting and detailed with focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is especially useful here. For a more philosophical and thought-provoking perspective, see: Gray, John (2003) *Al Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern*. London: Verso.

⁴⁷ It may be a trigger, or a contributory cause, but seldom a root cause in the sense used, for example, in conflict analysis as taught by the UN System Staff College. This is also in keeping with various other conflict analysis definitions, methodologies and ontologies.

experience of it).⁴⁸ Secondly, of further enabling evolving appreciation of a country. In doing so, reference is made to a selection of learned literature, from the proliferation of research about Afghanistan. Both aims, and the overall objective are necessarily contingent on considering the past, due to its implications for the present and the future.⁴⁹ Resultantly, some frames of analysis will have different uses and or applications over time. Likely timeframes, spatialities and prospective longevities of analytical will be noted where appropriate. In so doing some analysis will inevitably be part of exploring, considering, defining and even refining analytical frames. Although the intention is to provide a fairly broad spectrum of analytical frames, given the uncertainties of the future and of war (especially so), these can be neither presented nor perceived as definitive.

As we shall see, the interconnection of policy, strategy and tactics – and clear cognizance of this as part of analysis (considering the past and present) as well as for continuing efforts (into the future) – is arguably more apposite than ever.⁵⁰ Certainly, the differential way in which these over-used terms have been appropriated and applied before, very much during and currently *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan is a perplexing as well as a profound problematic with practical impacts. Distinctive phases in the intervention also raise questions of deeper discernment and dynamics that can guide toward better policymaking, strategies and tactics be they military, civilian or civ-mil, humanitarian and so forth. Moreover, major challenges remain in Afghanistan, and it's importance for regional and global security, stability and prosperity should not be underestimated.^{51 52}

In hindsight, it is alarming for the over-use or under-use of concepts, terminologies and selected parts of them -- whichever way one wishes to view it. It is even more concerning as decisions need to be made about what to do next. More particularly, as asserted here and as follows, is the lack of consistency, coherence and cohesion in international community efforts in Afghanistan post the 2001 intervention. This is demonstrated through analysis of major conceptual categories before and during the intervention, and their application towards Afghanistan. In turn, this provides for a greater

⁴⁸ The author was a political affairs officer with UNAMA for extensive periods from spring 2009 the end of June 2015.

⁴⁹ This approach values historical insights for a variety of reasons, including those asserted by Strachan & Scheipers (2011), and also based on personal experience. Both assert the indispensability of appropriate contextual analysis, which is rooted in historical sensitivity. The significance of conflicts and roots of conflict informing war remains strongly in evidence in Afghanistan and unfortunately not always grasped as effectively as it might be. Indeed, there is growing consciousness that interventions entail complexity, including pre-existing complexities of history, sociology, anthropology, economy, and politics, to name but a few. For example, see Berdal, Mats (2011) And also as in discussions with a range of academics and experienced practitioners.

⁵⁰ The intervention in Afghanistan (2001 to the present day) has involved predominantly military effort and is envisaged to important focus on security support to the Afghan state, including with possible training teams in addition to diplomatic staff at embassies such as the U.S. envisaged into the future. For now 'hubs' and other U.S. or NATO military bases remain in geopolitical locations in the country, such as Mazar-i-Sharif (North), Jalalabad (East), Bagram and Kabul (Central), and so on. Counterterrorism operations by the U.S. and other NATO members, in addition to and with those by the Afghan authorities, are, in the author's opinion, probable in the short, medium-term, if not the long-term. Hence, for analytical purposes use of the construction: policy, strategy and tactics is apposite, particularly as counterterrorism has arisen as a line of operation as part of military effort and the overarching condition of war. This also enables consistent analysis over the duration of the intervention and into challenging conditions in Afghanistan and the region into the future, which will likely demand military (and other) responses by the national authorities and international actors, including of a security nature. Moreover, this triad is well-established and despite contemporary complicating of its meanings through injudicious use it, it retains an inherent integrity, usefulness and clarity invaluable to analysis in this context and of this article.

⁵¹ The referents of: security, stability and prosperity, will be used through this paper and in congruence with the will of the international community in UN Security Council mandates (more on this in Annex 1 and in the main body of the paper) as useful norm, but also allowing for a range of political interpretations and uses.

⁵² For an especially thoughtful recent article including strong argument as to why Afghanistan is important and will be in the future (and why) see: Rashid, Ahmed (2015) 'While we weren't looking, the Taliban surged back in Afghanistan: Fifteen years of western intervention achieved no more than the pretense of a stable state', *The Spectator Magazine*, (London), 12 December 2015, available: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/12/while-we-werent-looking-the-taliban-surged-back-in-afghanistan/> Accessed December 2015.

understanding of key complexities faced, problems arising and also those pre-existing the intervention. It also draws out more useful analytical frames going forward in reflection of what may not have been fully absorbed already by some policy makers (though some of course may have), and can offer an implicit as well as at times explicit corrective of analyzing how to proceed. It is a truism that although some may wish that the intervention in Afghanistan and what has arisen from it is over, Afghanistan as such has not finished with us. And by us, I mean the world.⁵³

Part II

Steps in Analytical Framing: Objective, Aims and Strategy

A feature of discussions about and efforts towards Afghanistan since 2001 to the present-day are the complications caused by confusion, and not simply incoherence, about what is intended to be achieved by both the military and civilians.^{54 55} The interaction of intentions, thinking and actions toward the situation in Afghanistan is a crucial nexus for making sense of events. Conceptual approaches are also shaped by this interaction, some of which continue to inform endeavours within and outwith the country, and could be analytically useful. Yet, as with any attempt that seeks to consider the past, to inform the present and possibly the future: careful selection of subject, theme and period, etc., are requisite, and should inform the whole, not becoming convenient fits to an analytical problem.⁵⁶

⁵³ The international community's objective for Afghanistan is for it to be a safe, secure and prosperous country and full member of the international community of states As is stated in the UNAMA mandate, which necessarily provides an expression of the vision of the international community, given UNAMA's formal mandating by the UN Security Council (and agreed to by Afghanistan's sovereign government).

⁵⁴ The distinction between military and civilian efforts is at once important but also subject to complications for various reasons, which include the necessity of civilian oversight to military efforts and the frequent necessity to carry out roles and responsibilities – even among humanitarian actors – to consult, coordinate and de-conflict with the military. Relations between civilian and military actors have been a substantial challenge in Afghanistan for both simple and complex reasons. More precisely elements within each have, intentionally or unintentionally, overly politicized relations between them at times. This observation stems from the author's own experiences 2009-2015 and discussions with a wide range of local, civilian and military interlocutors: national and international.

⁵⁵ For example, of emphasis on incoherence and not as much attention to conceptual fundamentals and issues therein, see: Stapleton, Barbara, J. & Keating, Michael (2015) 'Military and Civilian Assistance to Afghanistan 2001–14: An Incoherent Approach' *Chatham House Briefing Paper, Opportunity in Crisis Series*, London. Available: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150722MilitaryCivilianAssistanceAfghanistanStapletonKeating.pdf accessed December 2015.

⁵⁶ For example, a positivist view of history is not assumed here.

Concomitantly, recognition is necessary that extensive reflection is a requisite constant, in order to make sense of continuities, impacts and changes.

Of the more entrenched paradigmatic issues affecting analysis of Afghanistan, past and present, relates to the lack of a presence of clear consistent terms through which to assess the intervention and recent efforts in Afghanistan in various ways (by 'recent' I mean since *circa* 2001). Although this may at first appear to be an appeal about definitions in the way a pedant may prosecute a perfunctory argument, closer inspection reveals not only effects on articulating intentions but also thinking and actions toward Afghanistan. Precision of language is key as it has meaning, meaning through and by which important ideas can be given meaning and coherence in contrast to contributing to confusion. Furthermore, in an even more practical sense, precision of language has implications beyond symptoms or perspectives of actual delivery, it also weighs heavily upon how we view what could, should and what may be deliverable.

Taking a step back for a few moments is an illustration of the ease of confusion available, even before complex conditions are encountered and consequences ensue. This is, on the face of it, a terminological issue pertaining to one of the most central paradigms that also serves as a framework for military and civilian efforts -- including in and towards Afghanistan. Indeed, it is liable to grave confusion of meaning, reception and appropriation. This is of the terms objective and aim. Implied and affected is thus strategy.

The terms objective and aim are often used in confidential policy making but also public statements of intent, in measurement and in reasoning. Each are defined by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary and the Merriam Webster Dictionary as synonyms, however, they are not always the same *or used in the same way*. Goal is another term not infrequently used interchangeably along with them. To contrast, in significant strands of civilian discourse aims are concerned with purpose and objectives with achievement.⁵⁷ In a political sense objectives are what are sought. Aims in military parlance can take the role of achievements to which resources are to relate. Clausewitz, the author of "On War" and a practitioner as well as theorist provides invaluable insight and precision here. As Strachan states:

Clausewitz realized the explanatory power of the role of policy, he could go on to construct a 'trinitarian' view of war that was made up not of people, army and government, but of tactics, strategy and policy – a construction that could be further development in another 'triad', that of means, aims and objectives.

Policy, strategy and tactics, or put the other way, objectives, aims and means, are distinct levels (the first of each triad being the 'highest'). Although distinct levels, in practice they do interact with each other.⁵⁸ What is essential is the use of clear language and the concepts, which underpin the language. From there further precision can be achieved through clear questioning and interrogation.

Independence of the civilian from the military and the military from the civilian have both been held up as important⁵⁹ but so is a comprehensive conception; a cohesive starting point from which policy, strategy and tactics can configure and be configured. Necessary adjustments can be crafted in respect

⁵⁷ For example in education and also business literature, though within these there can be wide variation.

⁵⁸ Strachan (2013) p.58.

⁵⁹ For instance the famous military thinking Helmuth von Moltke the elder held that the politician should fall silent when the war broke out. Politicians are often (rightly) adamant that the military should be able to deliver policy under conditions such as war and in various conflicts. Further, humanitarian principles call for independence from political and military actors (the latter in practice in particular) in order to have access to all areas where humanitarian needs may arise. Nevertheless key for both actors in the same environment to have a clear grasp of each other's perspectives and at least a similar language through which they can effectively communicate.

of sensitivities, particularities, preferences and proscriptions while maintaining a necessity of clarity and consistency congruent with policy adjudged to be realistic and achievable.⁶⁰

Adding to this thrust is ‘strategy’: a term that has for quite sometime suffered from some of the greatest deprecations of casual, or some might state – careless -- use. Strategy is now used so broadly that it has been robbed of meaning.⁶¹ It is also a term often used by leadership figures.⁶² However, strategy is essential for acuity of insight and focus in numerous respects, perhaps most apt here to note: it lies at the intersection of policy and tactics, or at the intersection of objectives and means (as above). As Strachan has observed:

[B]y 2003 it [strategy] has lost its identity: part of it had been subsumed by policy and part of it had been subsumed by operational thought [tactics/means]. Because neither the politicians nor the soldiers had a clear grasp of what strategy was, they could neither put the pieces back together again nor develop a clear grasp of the nature of the wars in which they were engaged.⁶³

The effect of terminological misapplication and its effects, as observed by Strachan, were to prevent governments from having the intellectual tools to manage war for political purposes. Instead, various political agendas (not congruent with the latter), daily political concerns and counterproductive aims were projected into strategy.⁶⁴ Terrorism, the instancing of which is at the roots of the rationale for the intervention in Afghanistan, is indeed the most obvious case in point.⁶⁵ To take the idea of the effect of unclear grasping at terminology and concepts between key actors further, the relationship between government, military and population also sees major misconception and not infrequently unclear shared conceptions of the war in Afghanistan. This can go considerable way to explaining the contentiousness in connection with the war in Afghanistan and the ends, ways and means about its continuation.

Triad, the Trinity and Deeper Tensions

Much of the discourse about Afghanistan and other countries since the intervention began, but too the rationales for it, involves the relationship between civilians, the military and government, either explicitly or implicitly.⁶⁶ The triad of government, military and the people has been postulated as key

⁶⁰ This understanding needs to be developed over time, and ideally prior to engagement in war or conflict conditions, when the uncertainties – fog of war – which characterize it: passion, chance and reason, render communication of utmost importance, and learning whilst doing much more challenging and prone to errors which can be costly. Internal complications and civil-military tensions often grow during this time, too potentially strongly politicizing even terminological discussions (author’s personal experience).

⁶¹ As observed by Strachan (2013) p.27.

⁶² For example, in major announcements by President Obama on Afghanistan and Pakistan 2009 through 2015 and White Papers, such as that of 2009 on Afghanistan and Pakistan (see references for a list of these and links).

⁶³ Strachan (2013) p. 21.

⁶⁴ Strachan (2013) p.21 argues along the same line, although more has been added such as: various political agendas, and; counterproductive aims. These will be clarified further later in the paper.

⁶⁵ The significance of this will be explored in more detail later in the paper, particularly as an overarching theme in the identification of threats, risks and opportunities and in contrast to war of necessity and of purpose.

⁶⁶ For instance, the UNSC resolutions cited above in respect of Afghanistan, see also appendix 1 for more detail.. Also statements by leaders of countries involved in the intervention see this, for example in the invocation of inalienable rights of peoples to select their leaders and a representative government, the formation of security forces to ensure safety and the development of government institutions and development. Variations in detail on this major theme of government, the people and the military are almost infinite. This triad can also see reflections in other configurations informing approaches in the study of politics, government and governance, war, and sociology. The importance of identifying and understanding approaches to conceptions of the triad of government, the people and the military should not be underestimated in importance for clarifying agendas and indeed conceptual issues as part of them.

regarding intervention and the relationship of military forces with other actors by important thinkers such as Smith (2011). This is as a result of theorization and praxis, and is in the case of Smith based on his wealth of experiences of and in major contemporary interventions (Northern Ireland, Iraq (1st Gulf War), Bosnia) and through the changing character of war (the Cold War to interventions). Major academic scholars of Clausewitz such as Paret & Howard (1976) have also come up with a similar interpretation of this triad, also identifying it as the trinity of utmost importance to Clausewitz's enormously influential and classic work "On War."⁶⁷

This, however, stems from a misunderstanding of the trinity Clausewitz identified, its role and most eruditely its inter-relationship, with ramifications for application, expectations and approaches (including of and for analysis). The 'trinity' Smith identifies is one of the people, government and military, which: "is crucial to all forms of war, to this very day";⁶⁸ "is a useful tool with which to analyse the actor's purpose and activities";⁶⁹ can be held in "harmony";⁷⁰ can be "strengthened"⁷¹ or be broken;⁷² and in his "experience in both national and international operations...without all three elements of the trinity – state, military and the people – it is not possible to conduct a successful military operation, especially not over time."⁷³

As Strachan (2013) notes: the trinity's "three elements are not the people, the army and the government, but passion, chance and reason." And that although "Clausewitz went on to associate each of these three elements more particularly with the feelings of the people, the exercise of military command and the political direction of the government"⁷⁴ they are not synonymous. This is not to imply that the relevance of Clausewitz's is found in a state-centric analysis of war as others have done, and for different reasons or as a result of a variety of influences.⁷⁵ To do so moves from the 'trinity' itself to its application; rendering what for Clausewitz was the primordial trinity the secondary one: in so doing the components of the state are put in front of the attributes which comprise war. Indeed, "the army and the government are elements of the state, not of war."⁷⁶

I would submit here, for example, 'the people' could be conceived of, understood and appropriated in many different ways. For instance, in three major manifestations (and to continue the pattern of 'threes'): (a) within the (intervening) state (b) as part of the 'enemy', and (c) as the populace of the country intervened in. Yet there are many potential combinations and permutations. Privileging one

⁶⁷ von Clausewitz, Carl (1950) *On war. translation* O.J. Matthijs Jolles, Washington D.C.

⁶⁸ Smith, Rupert (2005) *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, London: Allen & Lane, Kindle edition location 1138.

⁶⁹ Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 5174.

⁷⁰ Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 3173.

⁷¹ Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 3964.

⁷² Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 4089.

⁷³ Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 1138.

⁷⁴ Strachan (2013) p. 46.

⁷⁵ This has occurred at different points, notable among which are the influence of: the crisis of the Vietnam War, and calls for a state-centric view to guard against perceived distraction on insurgency, see for example: Summers, Harry G. jr., (1982) *On strategy: a critical analysis of the Vietnam War*, Novato, CA. Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and the 'system of systems' approach has also informed network-centric warfare with inconclusive results in areas such as targeted killings of insurgent and designated terrorist group leadership. For RMA regarding this period and the situation of Clausewitz, see for example: Shimko, Keith, L. (2010) *The Iraq wars and America's military revolution*, New York. Regarding the New Wars thesis, see: Van Creveld, Martin (1991) *The Transformation of War: The Most Radical Reinterpretation of Armed Conflict Since Clausewitz*, Free Press. And also: Kaldor, Mary (1999) *New and old wars: organized violence in a global era*, Cambridge, Mass.. On misunderstanding Clausewitz more generally see: Keegan, John (1993) *A history of warfare*, London, and also Bassford, Christopher (1994) 'John Keegan and the grand tradition of trashing Clausewitz: a polemic', *War in history*, 1, pp. 319-36.

⁷⁶ Strachan (2013) p. 46.

association of people with passion, chance or reason, over another, substantially misses the point befuddling the interaction of ends, ways and means and threatening the effective conduct of war where not all aspects are under control or controllable. Similarly, such an approach makes it analytically complicated to isolate a discrete element such as ‘the people’ towards sustaining it as part of a triad or series of triads -- in the context of war. To do so, particularly with the aim of holding such an element in this triad in harmony, or for it to be strengthened, or indeed broken in an instrumental fashion amid deeper complexity misses the goal.

Moreover, the trinity Clausewitz identifies is not on three levels of: the government, military and people, as ventured by Smith and others.⁷⁷ That would be a triad. The Clausewitzian trinity is a true trinity; it is three in one (in the Christian sense) with the connotations this has.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Clausewitz was clear that the relationship of the three elements of the trinity was akin to magnets: alternately attracting and rejecting each other, so never forming a fixed relationship and of a more dynamic nature as is war.⁷⁹

Smith does, however, identify a useful triad for analysis despite his problematic expectations of it and erroneous attribution to Clausewitz (as others have done). Other expectations of the use of the triad of government, military and the people -- and its instrumentalization to promote political change for ideological reasons can be seen in numerous policies, ‘strategies’ and decisions relating to Afghanistan and further afield.⁸⁰ This has been done without due accord with and respect for the trinity Clausewitz in fact identifies (passion, chance and reason). Our analytical assumptions, practices and expectations have also likely been affected by this conceptual manifestation. Smith is nevertheless correct in his underlining that the claim is erroneous that “there is a point at which policy as politics and diplomacy is stopped and war commences”. Although his contention these are “parallel activities” is not quite the case. It is more that “political and military *objectives* are...definitely separate but wholly related.”⁸¹ (Italics my emphasis.)

Using war as an instrument is therefore less straightforward than some have supposed or argued in favour of in contrast to earlier typologies of war (e.g. mass-industrialized warfare) and contradictory to Clausewitz’s wisdom; more specifically his famous and enduring trinity. The latter is in essence not consistent with instrumentalizing the triad of the state, people and military as war and its object. Despite the aforementioned erroneous observations and concepts developed arising out of them (with a general evolution in related footnotes) some muddling pertaining to the trinity appears to be more inadvertent in some cases more than others (for example, contrast Smith (2005) with Kaldor (1999)). Unfortunately, the wrong conclusions can be arrived at both by misinterpretation and incorrect rationalization of war with far-ranging ramifications for policy, strategy and operations, be they civil, military and other kinds.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Strachan (2013) p. 50.

⁷⁹ Clausewitz stated: “A theory which insisted on leaving one of them out of account, or on fixing an arbitrary relationship between them, would immediately fall into such contradiction with reality that through this alone it would forthwith necessarily be regarded as destroyed.” Carl von Clausewitz (1950) *On war*, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles, Washington D.C., p. 18.

⁸⁰ More on this in relation to the Global War on Terror – a major frame of analysis – later in this paper.

⁸¹ Smith (2005) Kindle edition location 1146.

Part III

The Global War on Terror – GWOT?

Passion, chance and reason are the trinity in war, war's reciprocity is part of its essence: the clash of wills, which creates a clash of policies and the animosity underpinning war. Uncertainty, fear, 'fog', and friction are also part of the nature of war.⁸² The latter qualities are perhaps easier to locate than the former for they speak to us all in a kind of reflexive recognition of the challenge of coming to terms with war. Policy makers also have difficulties in dealing with war. This can be seen in what the U.S. termed the Global War On Terror (GWOT), which presaged the intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. The temptation to define war according to desires is also ever-present, not least for what war may seem to offer, and for its all-too-frustrating complexity. Apparent early success in the GWOT influenced U.S. President George W. Bush to state on 16 April 2003: "we are redefining war on our terms."⁸³ Although the character of war may change, its nature does not.

The GWOT is currently of arguably of heightened interest, partly as a result of recent events: the atrocity in Paris (coordinated terrorist attacks on the evening of 13 November 2015, later claimed by ISIL); the enduring existence of al Qaeda; the development of ISIL; the strengthening of salafist and other terrorist group activities; developing proxy conflicts, some of which -- though not all -- involve radical Islamist groups, and so on. Many of these incidences appear to be directly related to the GWOT and of its legacy, and retrace the prominent themes invoked in the launch of the GWOT by President G.W. Bush in 2001.⁸⁴

⁸² As expressed by Clausewitz in 'On War'.

⁸³ Bacevich, Andrew (2005) *The new American militarism: how Americans are seduced by war*, New York, p.148.

⁸⁴ A number of the major themes invoked as part of the GWOT will be examined in this article in due course.

Afghanistan features at the start of the GWOT as the first major intervention, and war, under its expansive ambit.⁸⁵ It is part of what Colin S. Gray conceives of as a ‘stream of history’ in the context defining the threat(s): crucial steps to and in war.⁸⁶ In addition, the GWOT has generated a spectrum of often well-informed critiques and outright criticism, which are principally focused on its intellectual integrity.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the GWOT is worth analytical attention here as a concept *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan and for analytically framing it past present and into the future. This includes inter-linkages which span: *a priori* ideas informing the key concept of GWOT promoting and justifying intervention in Afghanistan in 2001; particular ways of how policy, strategy and tactics should work (according to key underpinnings of the GWOT concept); as well as especial assumptions as part of these (a number of which have not been borne out), to name some.

GWOT and OEF

Although the GWOT’s prime appellation has changed (from Operation Enduring Freedom to Operation Freedom’s Sentinel) both see Afghanistan as principal referents. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was announced by U.S. President George W. Bush on 7 October 2001 while informing the U.S. public (and the world) of that U.S. intervention, together with some other countries, had begun. OEF henceforth, and until recently, became the official name used by the U.S. government to describe operations in the GWOT.

Prior to this, the ‘war on terror’ was first declared by President G.W. Bush on 12 September 2001 in a statement broadcast in the U.S. in the wake of the ‘9/11’ attacks the day before,⁸⁸ and on 20 September 2001 he articulated this in further detail in an address to a joint session of U.S. Congress.⁸⁹ In addition to Afghanistan, subordinate ‘operations’ under the label of ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ included those in the Philippines, Somalia/Horn of Africa, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Trans Sahara (Africa) and the Caribbean and Central and South America.⁹⁰ The GWOT continues in various

⁸⁵ A point somewhat humorously made, as is frustration regarding the logic behind the name ‘GWOT’, by Matthew Yglesias in the Atlantic: Yglesias, Matthew (2007) After GWOT, What? The Atlantic, May 8 2007. Available here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2007/05/after-gwot-what/42486/> accessed December 2015.

⁸⁶ Gray, C.S. (2015) Thucydides Was Right: Defining The Future Threat *Strategic Studies Institute & U.S. Army War College Press*.

⁸⁷ A spectrum of numerous examples exist such as those with linguistic bases: linguist George Lakoff observing that there cannot be a war on terror in a literal sense, as terror is an abstract noun (Lakoff 2006) to George Soros’s high-profile observation, which had been observed by many, that the War on Terror is a false metaphor (Soros 2006). To others have observed more generously that the GWOT is the conflation of perceived threats (although perceived threats as a set in the U.S. in the eyes of the George W. Bush administration. Pre-existing viewpoints by officials prior to coming into office are also noteworthy, some of who had been academics, and not infrequently referred to as ‘neo-conservatives or neo-cons.’). It is perhaps significant that many critiques of the GWOT emerged after the interventions in Afghanistan (often dated ad 7 October 2001) and Iraq (15 June 2003). A particularly interesting example is the change of view, from supportive to critical of the GWOT, by the well-known International Relations scholar Fukuyama, Francis (2006) ‘After Neoconservatism’, The New York Times Magazine, 19 February 2009, available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/neo.html?ex=1298005200&en=4126fa38fef80de&ei=5090&partner=rss&userland&emc=rss&r=0> accessed December 2015.

⁸⁸ See: Bush, G.W. (2001) Address to the Nation, *transcript by the BBC*, 12 September 2001, available: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/12/newsid_2515000/2515239.stm

⁸⁹ Bush, G.W. (2001) ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 20 September 2001, available here: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> accessed December 2015.

⁹⁰ For more details on these in a concise format, see for example: Feickert, Andrew (2005) ‘U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia’, *Congressional Research Service*, Washington D.C., 26 August 2005, available: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32758.pdf> accessed December 2015.

locations such as the Horn of Africa.⁹¹ Although the GWOT with the title OEF has been renamed in Afghanistan, in important ways it continues, (notably, the same title style has been maintained with 'OFS'). Also with counterterrorism operations (a central feature of the GWOT, OEF and OFS) and continued on-the-ground presence. A change of presentational emphasis for OFS is remarkable, nevertheless, the practical scope for similar core activities to be undertaken under OFS, as were committed under OEF, remain. Officially designated or suspected 'terrorist threats' or threats to the U.S. and coalition troops are permissible to be struck.⁹² (The latter are sometimes referred to as "threats to the force" echoic of themes in Smith (2005), i.e. preserving the force so as to be able to use it later in (envisaged) protracted conflicts).^{93 94}

In passion, anger and as Strachan puts it "in understandable shock", the United States need not have seen war as necessary reaction to the heinous 9/11 attacks. Facets of what can be identified as war need not mean it is either inevitable or desirable. The U.S. and more precisely the Bush (G.W.) administration also need not have maximized the problem, both in terms of the original attack (which could have been treated as a crime not a war) and in terms of the responses required to deal with the subsequent threat.⁹⁵ Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but wonder we must to analyse looking back, forwards and now. This is a logical consideration of how we may view the past, current activities in Afghanistan and ways of analyzing it into the future, not prioritizing a moralization about it.

In terms of dealing with the perceived (and similarly for the actual) threat, the Global War on Terror suffers from questions of strategy, in part as it's too broad: covering too many environments, actors and dynamics. Consequently it's been perhaps fairly labelled as astrategic (if such a term exists).⁹⁶ Put in another way, and building upon concepts, definitions and appreciations developed above: means were not related to aims (in a military sense) and to objectives (in a political sense), *de facto* abandoning strategy. Instead, concepts derived from strategy, but devoid of context, were used. To view it from another perspective that happens to concur with a popular and linguistic critique of the GWOT: "Terrorism is a means to wage war" making the 'global war on terror' "strategically illiterate."⁹⁷ Exaggeration of the implications, effects and severity of acts of terror the media and the responses of political leaders (responding to popular reactions) marked a new historical development

⁹¹ Indicative of this is the following taking note of the TBD (To Be Determined/Decided) end-dates of these operations as part of the GWOT: U.S. Department of Defense (2015) 'Department of Defense Authorizes Service Stars on the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal', *U.S. DoD, Press Operations*, February 9 2015, available: <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/605375> accessed December 2015.

⁹² Notably, in a U.S. Department of Defense report to Congress released 16 June 2015, the Pentagon stated U.S. forces were no longer authorized to target individuals based on affiliation with the Taliban or any group other than al Qaeda. It went on to assert that U.S. forces are permitted to take action against individuals that "pose a direct threat" to U.S. and coalition forces: "For example, U.S. forces no longer target individuals solely on the basis of their membership in the Taliban; however, if a member of the Taliban threatens U.S. or coalition forces, or provides direct support to al-Qaida, U.S. forces may take appropriate action," see: <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/605568/dod-releases-report-on-enhancing-security-and-stability-in-afghanistan-june-16> and: U.S. Department of Defense (2015) 'Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan', 3 June 2015, available: http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_1225_Report_Final.pdf accessed December 2015.

⁹³ For example, see: Rosenberg, Matthew and Schmitt, Eric, (2015) 'U.S. Is Escalating a Secretive War in Afghanistan: Data From Seized Computer Fuels a Surge in U.S. Raids on Al Qaeda', *New York Times*, 12 February 2015, available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/13/world/asia/data-from-seized-computer-fuels-a-surge-in-us-raids-on-al-qaeda.html> accessed December 2015. More on this and the nuances of this will be addressed in due course.

⁹⁴ A closer look at the continuities and changes in the GWOT from 2001 to the present day through the analytical frame (and lens) of goal, strategy and means (and its corollaries) will take place in due course).

⁹⁵ Strachan (2013), p. 44. The view that 9/11 could have been viewed as a crime rather than a war was strongly asserted by the former head of MI5, Lady Eliza Manningham-Buller, in 2011: Norton-Taylor, R. (2011) 'MI5 former chief decries "war on terror"', *The Guardian Newspaper*, London, 2 September 2011, available: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/sep/02/mi5-war-on-terror-criticism> accessed December 2015.

⁹⁶ Strachan (2013), p. 44.

⁹⁷ Strachan (2013), p. 21.

(and in war), which impacted strategy. Acts of terror were frequently identified as terrorism⁹⁸ and lacked context, perspective at different levels of society, and clear threat assessment. Often there was not an articulated distinction between the symptoms, various causes and roots of acts of terror. Who was the enemy? Even now, are the Taliban the enemy, or is it al Qaeda, or both, and how are they related? What were and are the other goals and co-informing elements of these?

Part IV

Afghanistan: Of Ends and Endings

In the quest for elucidating frames of analysis toward Afghanistan applicable into the past, the present and into the future, this is a useful juncture at which to compare and contrast publically stated rationales, including characterizations and presentations of goals, strategies and operations in 2001 by President G.W. Bush prior to the intervention and GWOT,⁹⁹ with those by President Obama and Secretary of Defense Hagel, at the formal ending of the U.S.'s "longest war" (a term used by both in their statements). (OEF being the lead intervention of the GWOT.)¹⁰⁰ In doing so, continuities and changes in this war can be detected and explored for implications for analytical framing. Indeed, intrinsically to carefully consider significant strands pertaining to what has occurred, what is happening and what may take place through this central analytical frame. From there analytical framing can be further clearly, logically and more comprehensively refined.

Of the two statements by the Obama administration on the 28th December 2014, on this momentous occasion, that by Secretary Hagel is the more detailed and in several respects the more interesting, (but not entirely so as we shall see). This is perhaps fitting with broader trends, firstly, President Obama

⁹⁸ For a useful discussion of distinctions between this see: Marks, Thomas (1990) Terrorism vs. Terror: The Case of Peru, *Counterterrorism & Security*, Vol.2, No. 2., pp. 26-33. Many thanks to David Ucko for recommending this article and for Thomas Marks for his additional thoughts regarding it, too.

⁹⁹ Including President George W. Bush's: Address to the Nation 12 September 2001; Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001; Address to the Nation 7 October 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Including: Obama, Barack (2014) 'Statement by the President on the End of the Combat Mission in Afghanistan', and: Hagel, Chuck (2014) 'Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom's Sentinel'. Both occurred on 28 December 2014. Available, respectively, at: : <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/28/statement-president-end-combat-mission-afghanistan> and <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/605332> accessed December 2015.

distancing himself from the GWOT and to some extent Afghanistan¹⁰¹ and secondly, his apparent preference for overarching statements, propositions, and deftly crafted narrative amid complexity. Remarkably, this is at variance with the provision of points of detail and detailed demands by President G.W. Bush in office, and in 2001 with reference to the GWOT. He did so by deploying large concepts, at times extraordinarily creatively (if not to some constituencies highly resonantly, self-apparently right and justifiably).

President Obama and Secretary Hagel's co-informing statements demonstrate intent to positively mark the ending of the combat mission in Afghanistan, which occurs in the title of President Obama's statement: "on the End of the Combat Mission in Afghanistan" (and to similar effect in the content of Secretary Hagel's statement of the same day).¹⁰² President G.W. Bush, in his statement of 7 October 2011, launched: a military operation, that was intended to have (and did) further operations, all as part of a war, which possessed of an emotive 'mission' (as stated on 7 October 2001).¹⁰³ In comparison, in the Obama administration's key statements of 28 December 2014, a combat mission is announced as "ending" or "will come to an end" (President Obama and Secretary Hagel, respectively); it has not according to their language ended *per se* at this point.

The choice of words on such a momentous occasion is signal and precision necessary. That a more concrete statement of finality of the combat mission in Afghanistan was not provided cannot be dismissed as either incidental or insignificant. The choice of words in the Obama administration's statements is also curious when bearing in mind the processes involved in drafting and clearing such a statement, and the legal rigour not infrequently deployed to hold the administration to account (of which the White House is very aware given its experience). Moreover, sensitivity to language and presentation, particularly *vis-à-vis* the GWOT has been a noted feature of this White House, as noted in several reports.¹⁰⁴

It should not be overlooked that timing could be cited as a factor in the aforementioned choice of words. The planned "official conclusion" of OEF (and the U.S./NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force) was the end of 2014: a few days after the date on which this statement was being made. However, this explanation or mitigating factor is not entirely convincing as a more final formulation could have been used notwithstanding (in the context of the occasion) and, rather than the use of the present continuous.¹⁰⁵ (It is also noteworthy that President Obama announced the ending of

¹⁰¹ U.S. President Obama campaigned to end the war Iraq and to bring troops home from there and Afghanistan as part of his bid for the U.S. Presidency. It is little secret that he was frustrated by the war in Afghanistan and a number of key U.S. and Afghan figures there. For more detail see, for example: Woodward (2010) *Obama's Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

¹⁰² In substance and structure, though with some important additions of detail, as befitting his post, in comparison to that of the President, and allowing for the overall thrust of President Obama's statement in keeping with his election and subsequent pledges and undertakings to end the war in Afghanistan and Iraq (see the section "Afghanistan: Objectives Then and Now"). This also affects the ontology of the GWOT, which will be relevantly addressed in due course.

¹⁰³ See paragraphs 1,2,3, 6, 10, 13,14, 15, 16 and 20 of this statement in particular.

¹⁰⁴ Wilson, Scott & Kamen, Al (2009) "'Global War On Terror' Is Given New Name', *Washington Post*, 25 March 2009, available: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html> accessed December 2015. The G.W. Bush administration also found that war on terror to be rather difficult and sought to reinvest this with new meaning, however the direction taken was in a more expansive direction towards "freedom" in several senses, plus some detailing, in contrast to the Obama administration which in several respects sees the inverse. Regarding a significant shift regarding the language of the phrase "war on terror" by the Bush administration, see: Davis, Matthew (2005), 'New name for "war on terror"', *BBC News*, 27 July 2005, available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4719169.stm> accessed December 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Such as among the simplest of formulations: on 31 December, our [the U.S.] combat mission in Afghanistan will end.

“American’s longest war” in this same statement in the same tense and in a similar vein as the “the combat mission”).^{106 107}

One may therefore ask, could a better date have been found, i.e. on the 31 December 2014 or 1 January 2015, instead? However, that may have raised the uncomfortable question: why not be present at the official ceremonies in Afghanistan then? Other possible explanations are there, which may be more compelling. For example, a conscious presenting the “combat mission” as “ending” but which in important ways was continuing. The ambiguity between both looser and stricter interpretations of linguistic meaning of “ending”, coupled with the date of the statement can be understood as creating political space for a *fait accompli*. Whilst also facilitating both strict and popular acceptance of continuing military operations (and therefore war). Such a method can carefully maximize political capital in the apparent fulfillment of a pledge to end the war in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁸ For the Obama administration, this would be a political victory and also be a means of keeping political and military options open (and ongoing).

In perspective of this, the military effort in Afghanistan by the U.S. and key allies has been refined, but cannot be categorically and credibly called an end to war in Afghanistan and military involvement in it. An end to a war is something not in the entire control of one side, added to this a war that was started by the U.S. as a global war. Further, U.S. troops continue to be deployed in Afghanistan and foreseeably involved in combat. Thus, although not an end to the war in Afghanistan (something wisely and pointedly not claimed in the aforementioned statements), the state of affairs in Afghanistan in the context can be accurately termed an ending of “the combat mission” (underlining my emphasis). The latter can be understood as a part of what is in reality a transition (and a longer one that the official Transition/*Inteqal* process),¹⁰⁹ which can also take on renewed meaning without seeing an end to combat (as has been seen) or war in Afghanistan (at this time). More philosophically, serious moral dramas have their continuities. Continuing military operations involving combat in Afghanistan by

¹⁰⁶ “[O]ur combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, and the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion.” Obama, Barack (2014) ‘Statement by the President on the End of the Combat Mission in Afghanistan,’ December 28, 2014. Available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/28/statement-president-end-combat-mission-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Secretary Hegel mentioned “America’s longest war” in terms of American’s sacrifices. This was the only instance of the use of the term war in his co-informing statement of 28 December 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Martinez (2015) is not completely correct in his article apropos President Obama’s Afghanistan pledge and undertakings to the electorate about Afghanistan, but does offer a useful early statement by President Obama, when running for office in 2008: “We will end this war in Iraq. We will bring our troops home. We will finish the job —we will finish the job against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.” See: Obama, Barack (2008) ‘Remarks of Senator Barack Obama on New Hampshire Primary Night’ *Wikisource*, available:

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Remarks_of_Senator_Barack_Obama_on_New_Hampshire_Primary_Night accessed December 2015. Regarding further important statements on this topic by President Obama, see, for example: Obama, Barack (2012) ‘on Ending the War in Afghanistan’, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, May 1 2012, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/05/01/president-obama-ending-war-afghanistan> and ‘Issues – An economy built to last –Barack Obama (2012) document from the Barack Obama Campaign, available:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/557608-issues-an-economy-built-to-last-barack-obama.html#document/p3/a86841> accessed December 2015. On his intention when also announcing the “Surge” in 2009 for a “responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan” see: Obama, Barack (2009) ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 27 March 2009, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan> accessed December 2015. Martinez, Jack (2015) ‘How Many Promises Has Obama Kept?’, *Newsweek Magazine*, October 16 2015. Available: <http://europe.newsweek.com/obama-afghanistan-troop-levels-promises-334907?rm=eu> accessed December 2015.

¹⁰⁹ A summary of the Transition / *Inteqal* process (2011 to end-2014) can be found in: ‘Inteqal: Transition to Afghan lead’ (2015) *NATO* last updated 7 January 2015, available: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_87183.htm For a more critical view (part way through the Transition) see: Ruttig, Thomas (2013) ‘Opaque and Dilemma-Ridden: A look back at transition’ *Afghan Analysts Network*, 12 August 2013, available: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/opaque-and-dilemma-ridden-a-look-back-at-transition/> accessed December 2015.

U.S. and coalition forces under the aegis of the GWOT and envisaged as counterterror have ramifications for making sense of this and the wider context now and also looking ahead analytically.

From Mission and Operation, to Missions and Operations

Most recently, and in his last dedicated statement on Afghanistan (and Pakistan), on 15 October 2015, President Obama reflected on the ending of the combat mission:

America's combat mission in Afghanistan came to a responsible end...Our troops are not engaged in major ground combat against the Taliban...

But as I've said before, while America's combat mission in Afghanistan may be over, our commitment to Afghanistan and its people endures...Our forces therefore remain engaged in two narrow but critical missions -- training Afghan forces, and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.¹¹⁰

This changes the goalposts again with the more final use of the term "end" but in a newly created context -- one with the introduction of the construction: "major ground combat against the Taliban". The word order also reconfirms ambiguities, with reference to his remark: "But as I've said before" in relation to "America's combat mission" and the subsequent use of "may be over". Ellipsis is evident in not a few statements by President Obama and his administration on the matter of Afghanistan and especially the status of goals and endeavours towards their fulfillment.

The choice of the phrase "combat mission" is worth further examination at this time for deepening conceptual comprehension and related analytical framing. For President Obama, as attested in his statement of 28 December, the "combat mission" in Afghanistan is also identifiable as America's longest war, given his use of phrase in the same sentence and it is therefore in immediate, closely time-related series, and tense.¹¹¹ In so doing, war is deployed in relation to Afghanistan which is a nation state, as is a mission that is focused on this and a specific quality of it: combat. This coheres with a more strictly military and technical terminological use, rather than a possibly religiously orientated, 'exceptional' or emotive use of the term, as was the case with President G.W. Bush in major statements before OEF (and since). It is also more consistent with the thesis that war is and continues to be strongly associated to the nation state, implying the "New Wars Thesis", which was easily detectable in President G.W. Bush's major statements in relation to the intervention in Afghanistan and particularly the run up to and announcement of it.^{112 113}

As though continuing the same train of thought, Secretary Hegel's statement of the same date continues in articulating the "combat mission" in the same sense above of the longest war (in Afghanistan), and of its "ending". However, it goes further in informing of a "follow-on mission". This is a material shift, congruent with constraining of the expansive meaning and conceptual associations of the term "mission" espoused by President G.W. Bush (towards and at the start of the intervention in Afghanistan, OFS and GWOT). In doing so, it redefines the "mission" and as a result also White House policy as President Obama makes no mention of OFS or of any other "operation" (except vague

¹¹⁰ Obama, Barack (2015) 'Statement by the President on Afghanistan', *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015.

¹¹¹ Although there is some room for definitional flexibility, i.e. the "combat mission" could still be more expansive beyond the war in Afghanistan, but this is not so likely in the context.

¹¹² This is the same set of statements used earlier and consistently, namely: President George W. Bush's: Address to the Nation 12 September 2001; Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001; Address to the Nation 7 October 2001.

¹¹³ For excellent discussions of the "New Wars Thesis" see in wider context, and as noted earlier: Strachan (2013), and for a more focused and detailed analysis see: Berdal (2011).

“counterterrorism operations”) in his statement (and avoids any further use of the word “mission” except the once apropos it “ending”).

In keeping with close associations drawn between mission and war in President Obama’s statement of 28 December 2014, and his “ending” them, a more precise look reveals quite reasonable (in a more legalistic and defensible sense e.g. in U.S. political discourse) and claimable options for keeping open what are ostensibly combat-based activity and options of this type. Public consciousness of his pledge and of his tone towards the war in Afghanistan have been and continue to be navigated. “Counterterrorism operations”, (which are noted as part of “maintain[-ing] a limited military presence in Afghanistan”), introduce a new departure and modifier to meaning and prospects around goals, warning that “[o]ur personnel will continue to face risks”. Accordingly at the announcement of the ending of the combat mission in Afghanistan (on 28 December 2014) which was a pre-existing mission including the introduction of the GWOT with an “Operation” in Afghanistan under President G.W. Bush, has given way to “counterterrorism operations”. The person may have changed, but this comes from the same post. This construction and content also infers an end to military operational efforts against terror groups such as al Qaeda may not be in sight. This new message was arguably not as evident in major statements by the White House in 2009 to c. 2013.¹¹⁴

Of Operation with Missions

Regarding these “operations”: what are they to be considered a part of? What are the implications for strategy and policy in comparison with President G.W. Bush at the start of the GWOT, OEF and the military intervention in Afghanistan? President Obama, despite stating (not announcing) the combat mission is ending, provides the “counterterrorism operations” are “against the remnants of al Qaeda” towards an “Afghanistan that is never again used as a source of attacks against our nation” as part of “an enduring commitment of the United States to the Afghan people”. Thus, major elements of policy, of goals aims and means of the GWOT are unchanged, and combat by U.S. (and other) forces is messaged to continue (and has) despite some appearances, and presentational features to the contrary.¹¹⁵ What began as a war of (grand) purpose seems to be now one more of risk.

Particularly apparent in Secretary Hagel’s more detailed statement, is an altered use and meaning of “mission” compared with that conceived of by President Bush’s administration. “Mission” is now tied much more closely with operations further emphasizing the change to a more classical, military application and more terminologically narrow and restricted usage of the term. This is relevant in as much “mission” can cover a spectrum, or to some political persuasions polarities: from the religious

¹¹⁴ More on this latter aspect is considered in some detail later in this paper.

¹¹⁵ To claim and accept that all combat is over for U.S. forces in Afghanistan would neither be realistic, nor be consistent with events since 28 December 2014. As noted above, including the introduction, there have been numerous reports of U.S. forces engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan, even if termed more acceptably to various parties and observers as ‘counter-terror operations’. A quite early story of this difficulty was by Rosenberg & Schmitt (2015), and also in the New York Times, by Ahmed, Azam & Goldstein, J. (2015) ‘Taliban Gains Pull U.S. Units Back Into Fight in Afghanistan’, *New York Times*, 29 April 2015. Available here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/30/world/asia/more-aggressive-role-by-us-military-is-seen-in-afghanistan.html> accessed December 2015.

It has become increasingly difficult for U.S. forces in Afghanistan to maintain that they are advising and assisting Afghan forces only or acting on the request of the Afghan authorities, as provided for by the BSA and the NATO SOFA details of which and analysis of are available See: Ruttig, T. & Clark, K. (2014) ‘Three Birds with One Stone: Signing the BSA and NATO SOFA to project reliability’, *Afghan Analysts Network*, published 6 October 2014. Available: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/three-birds-with-one-stone-signing-the-bsa-and-nato-sofa-to-project-reliability/> accessed December 2015.

to a synonym for a military operation. We can see this, as alluded to, in comparing the two administrations' uses of "mission" at key junctures on the subject of Afghanistan and policy, strategy and operations concerning it.

As to the two missions part of OFS, these are, as to Secretary Hagel explained: with the support of the Afghan government; part of a coalition with a NATO dimension; entailing training, advising and assistance to Afghan security forces. It's worth pointing out on the theme of recasting and reinvesting meaning, these very dimensions were privately and academically either criticized as lacking under OEF (as was a comprehensive approach) or did not exist. Here, they are being further developed within and under the appellation of "Operation" (as in of the framework of "Operation Enduring Freedom" and now "Operation Freedom's Sentinel"). Operational aspects therefore are unsurprisingly greatly stressed, including: training, advising and assisting, as well as a "counterterrorism mission" (the latter coming from the Secretary of Defense, rather than the President who alludes to it as "counterterrorism operations" but which is comprised of counterterrorism operations).¹¹⁶ The interplay between the rather loaded meanings "mission" and "operation" is poignant as the two are terms that have been at the forefront, introduction of,¹¹⁷ and discourse about the GWOT.¹¹⁸ Their reordered use and investment can be seen to be part of the redeveloping the GWOT and its successive refinements, but not a complete end to what it has and continues to entail, particularly counterterrorism operations and missions (and *vice-versa*).

This is not to diminish or demean the changes by President Obama and his administration in policy strategy and means towards Afghanistan. Taking stock of the mission President G.W. Bush defined in comparison is instructive: his was of an exceptionally expansive "mission" with an "operation" which saw other "operations and wars". Its circularity is indicated by the later use of the formal title "Global War on Terror" for the mission and operation that introduced it. His use of "mission" brought together war in pursuit of freedom from fear (of terror and terrorism) and notions of freedom *per se*, including war against those who are deemed (by the U.S.) to threaten the U.S. and allies, especially with terrorism. As part of this conceptuality, the U.S. and allies were embodied flag-bearers of a quite literal freedom, justice and peace with military action very much at the fore.¹¹⁹ For President Obama and confirmed by Secretary Hagel, respectively: "counterterrorism operations" and "our counterterrorism mission" continue, and the GWOT is not completely at an end (or its use as a title).

¹¹⁶ The two missions, as defined by Secretary Hegel as part of OFS: "We will work with our allies and partners as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission to continue training, advising, and assisting Afghan security forces. And we will continue our counterterrorism mission against the remnants of Al-Qaeda to ensure that Afghanistan is never again used to stage attacks against our homeland." Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Both Statements occurred on 28 December 2014.

¹¹⁷ The term 'mission' was used in President George W. Bush's key statements of: Bush, G.W. (2001) Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001, and Bush, G.W. (2001) Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001. 'Operation' was first used in a major statement post 9/11 regarding Afghanistan and the GWOT in the latter Address. Since then, both terms of 'mission' and 'operation' have been used extensively regarding the GWOT, Operation has endured in usage (pun intended). The use of the term 'mission' has both under- and over-tones (depending on perspective) of prophetic intent. This has been observed by some to be related to destiny and even evangelical Christian outlook, both of which have arguably affected reception in various parts of the Muslim world. It is worth pointing out that in President G.W. Bush's Address of October 7 2001, concerted effort was made to emphasize the Muslim world was not the target (see paragraphs 3 and 10). However the integrity underlying these statements has been contested. President Obama has been far less enthusiastic in his use of the term 'mission' in the context of foreign affairs and interventions except in a very technical and defined sense.

¹¹⁸ Much has been published about the GWOT. Useful references include: U.S. Department of State: The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/wh/6947.htm> ; Bergen, P. (2011) The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al- Qaeda. London: Free Press; Strachan, Hew (2013);

¹¹⁹ See: President George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001. More specifically, military actions taken in pursuit of: justice, freedom (from fear), and threats to peace and freedom were noted in paragraphs 6, 14 and 15, and 13 of U.S. President Bush's Address to The Nation 7 October 2001. Democracy was not mentioned, although it was noted once in his speech of 12 September 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

As to the precise policy goal and comparisons with the Bush (G.W.) administration, this requires further examination in due course (owing to the complexity).

Part V

A Trajectory: Recalibration and Reinvestment in the GWOT

It is timely at this point to draw further attention to a trajectory of ‘a recalibration and reinvesting in the GWOT’, where key statements and an historic turning point in its major markers: President Obama’s announcement of the ending of the combat mission in Afghanistan is not an isolated example of changes to the meaning contained in the “GWOT” formulation. It is a key point along a longer trajectory of changing the tone, tenor, and to a degree, the character of the U.S.’s engagement with the threat of terror. This goes further than being seen to deliver on election pledges. It’s a chance to recalibrate presentation of – and expectations about – how the U.S. government sees the GWOT largely now and proceeding in the coming period. Therefore, it’s about how it intends to deal with the challenges of terror and those using it against the U.S., and their interests.

A marker in this trajectory, and further evidence of it, was the speech by President Obama on 23 May 2013 President Obama titled: “The future of the War on Terror” delivered to a military audience, though reported more widely. In this speech, although he accepts that “our nation is still threatened by terrorists” a recalibration is at first introduced through an historical observation that: “After I took office, we stepped up the war against al Qaeda, but also sought to change its course. We relentlessly targeted al Qaeda’s leadership.” Secondly, through declaring a change in the threat: “the threat has shifted and evolved from the one that came to our [the U.S.’s] shores on 9/11”. A more heartfelt re-conception of what the [Global] War on Terror demands and implies is thence expressed passionately, even invoking one of the fathers of the U.S. Republic. It is worth quoting a key paragraph at length (underlining my emphasis):

So America is at a crossroads. We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us, mindful of James Madison’s warning that “No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” Neither I, nor any President, can promise the total defeat of terror. We will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings, nor stamp out every danger to our open society. What we can do – what we must do – is dismantle networks that pose a direct danger, and make it less likely for new groups to gain a foothold, all while maintaining the freedoms and ideals that we defend. To define that strategy, we must make

decisions based not on fear, but hard-earned wisdom. And that begins with understanding the threat we face.¹²⁰

The narrowing of the GWOT to a WOT (!) is of little surprise as the ‘brand’ of the GWOT was by now damaged and part of a predecessor’s policies, moreover one who held very different political views. The change in nomenclature is also a change in brand, image and communication, but less about core intent.

In the speech, threats feature strongly, reiterating the necessity for continued action, with the most overt criticism of prior efforts in the “war” as: “compromising basic values – by using torture to interrogate our enemies, and detaining individuals in a way that ran counter to the rule of law.”¹²¹ Deficiencies are also claimed as being addressed now. Critically, threats cited comprise many of those stated by President G.W. Bush. Indeed, President Obama directly invokes in the speech the threats of: various al Qaeda affiliates; extremists; state-sponsored networks; local militias or extremists interested in seizing territory; regional networks launching periodic attacks against western diplomats, companies, and other soft targets, or resort to kidnapping and other criminal enterprises to fund their operations.

Events of the ‘Arab-spring’ are pronounced in his speech as a strong reason for the emergence of new threats of extremists and local militias. “Older threats” are claimed to be very similar to those predating the 9/11 attacks. Also, the differentiation involved in the use of the phrase “older threats” joins the alleged current diminished threat of al Qaeda. The salience of a recalibrated conception (and strategy) is neatly professed as: “if dealt with smartly and proportionally, these threats need not rise to the level that we saw on the eve of 9/11.” The efforts of the past have, as President Obama conceives of the threat, both contributed to it and helped diminish it. What he has to offer is a new conceptuality and strategy, the value of which is claimed through a specific reading of history and a more precise listing, explanation and relation of threat to cause than President Bush initially offered.¹²² President Obama maintains focus on al Qaeda especially those with regional manifestations and groups using terror to threaten the U.S., which in many ways is a different way of identifying a very similar threat (rather than an enemy) President Bush classically announced: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” (Underlining my emphasis.) How “global reach” is organized in an argument

¹²⁰ President Obama’s speech on the future of the war on terror: Obama, Barack (2013) ‘The future of the War on Terror 23 May 2013, National Defense University, Ft McNair’, transcript, *Washington Post*, available here, as prepared for delivery: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/05/23/read-president-obamas-speech-on-the-future-of-the-war-on-terror/> accessed December 2015.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² In President Bush’s Address to the Nation 12 September 2001; Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001; Address to the Nation 7 October 2001, he states the threats in a very expansive way. In his address announcing the launching of OEF and the war in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, paragraph 13 contains the only explicit mention of ‘threat’ which necessitates quoting due to this quality: “Yet, as we have learned, so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today’s new threat, the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it.” President G.W. Bush’s address to the nation of 20 September focuses very generically on “terrorists” and then more precisely on al Qaeda as both the threat and enemy in the major pronouncement in announcing the GWOT: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” His Address to the Nation of 12 September, 2001, sees no “threats” explicitly named, rather, the more pejorative “enemy” and “enemies” is deployed in reference to characteristics, many of which are again rather pejorative in a strategy that appears to be incremental presentation of his understanding of terrorist threats and what should and is to be done about and to them. To quote: “This enemy hides in shadows and has no regard for human life. This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, then runs for cover, but it won’t be able to run for cover forever. This is an enemy that tries to hide, but it won’t be able to hide forever. This is an enemy that thinks its harbours are safe, but they won’t be safe forever. This enemy attacked not just our people but all freedom-loving people everywhere in the world.” These are the somewhat vaguely implied threats.

is a critical factor; ‘global reach’ can reasonably identify reach to and into the U.S. and its interests. Several regional groups of al Qaeda noted as threats by President Obama noted above are.

Continuities and Changes in the GWOT: *further aspects*

If the shift in Freedom to Sentinel (of it i.e. possessive) in this construction is to be read literally, it is that freedom has gone from enduring, to safeguarding or requiring to be safeguarded. Freedom, at least in the Western democratic tradition, from which the U.S. draws its democratic heritage, was ever thus. Sentinels can be proactive and reactive, distant and more towards the omnipotent end of the spectrum. The “combat mission” may be “ending” -- presented as it is with a less confrontational modus than before under President G.W. Bush. The ‘mission’ now involves apparently more assistance than intervention, and a recognition of international opinion on the one hand, (which has been broadly critical of the original GWOT formulation) and adept risk-sharing with it on another (and in the eyes of some, either actual or potential blame shifting).¹²³

As we see above, numerous continuities occur in the de facto continuation of the GWOT and under the title of OES instead of OEF. The grounding of this in an “operation” that ‘absorbs’ the NATO Resolute Support Mission (which has a counterterrorism component that has more flexibility to it than combat-less training, advising, and assistance) can be regarded as increasing: the unity of effort; presentation and risk management aspects; the strength of the case for continued involvement in Afghanistan.

In President Obama and Secretary Hagel’s statements of 28 December 2014, a sense of internal contingency and justification for OEF is perceptible, and this trend continues as to the introduction of OES, based upon preceding efforts expressed as “hard-won gains”. Possible, offered measures of “gains” and implied success¹²⁴ are: giving Afghanistan the opportunity to chart a secure, democratic, and prosperous future; and strengthening Afghanistan. Implied ones include: “a sovereign, secure, stable, and unified Afghanistan.” Implied gains very much mirror UNSC UNAMA mandates and their recent addition of “unified Afghanistan”. A ‘unified Afghanistan’ could serve as a useful retrospectively applied aim or even objective (goal), coming in a period when U.S. President Obama has made clear his determination to draw-down from Afghanistan,¹²⁵ and under considerable political pressure, to establish reasons for this being done “responsibly” (the latter term was used in his speech of the same day, and Hagel’s).

A change in tone, language and approach between President G.W. Bush and the Obama White House can also be identified in relation to the politically significant notion of opportunity. At no point in the key speeches by the former (12 September 2001; 20 September 2001, and; 7 October 2001) was the

¹²³ A few of a number of well-informed analysts, military officers and diplomats this issue was discussed with.

¹²⁴ These are presented under the mantle of “work” which resonates with particular U.S. domestic constituencies, i.e. working class and the middle class, which have arguably borne the brunt of the GWOT in terms of personnel and opportunity cost vis-à-vis government resource flows under the financial crisis.

¹²⁵ The term ‘withdraw’ was refrained against prior to and during the draw-down of troops in Afghanistan: c. 2011 to 2014, during which the author was present in the country and engaged in the transition process. Various explanations exist such as precision of language (the U.S. was not departing Afghanistan in civilian or military capacity for the foreseeable future), and perhaps more so the politically loaded qualities of a term such as ‘withdrawal’, i.e. a possible interpretation of defeat (to a greater degree than with the use of the term ‘draw-down’ as part of a planned surge (which implies its temporary nature)). Indeed, at formal meetings concerned with the transition process, such as when a senior non-U.S. diplomat used the term ‘withdrawal’ in 2011, swift and firm ‘correction’ was preformed by a senior U.S. military officer.

term ‘opportunity’ used.^{126 127} In contrast, the Obama White House did (in Defense Secretary Hagel’s statement that was coordinated with President Obama’s of the same date) in the sense of the facilitator of opportunity in dimensions valued highly by the U.S. such as democracy, prosperity, and also security, now and into the future.¹²⁸ President G.W. Bush made specific demands; the non-deliverance of which was confessedly judged with military actions taken in pursuit of: justice, freedom (from fear), and threats to peace and freedom.¹²⁹ Contrary to some revisions of history and heavy criticism: during the George W. Bush period in office, the articulation of goals, aims and the means to achieve them (under OEF) towards Afghanistan could be regarded as clearer than at later junctures.¹³⁰ Certainly, the demands laid down to the Taliban were clear. Their fulfilment was, however, unlikely, and the means and ways to delivery on the stated ends did not see an alignment between military capabilities and espoused policy. This apparent clarity is, however, part and parcel of the expansiveness of the GWOT sent out by President G.W. Bush, and the lifespan of the undertaking as envisaged. Later dynamic impacts and consequences of intervention complicated an already complex effort and deceptively simple-sounding intent. Moreover, at that time there was no articulation of a long-term U.S. vision for Afghanistan together with the ways necessary to achieve this. Those questions were faced later amid an insurgency arguably with the initiative (this will be further addressed later in the article). The provision of opportunity by Bush can, in this light, be said to have been was under strict constructed and unrealistic conditions, whereas for the Obama White House, opportunity was in a sense inherited, interpreted, grappled with. It was also utilized more in keeping with liberal and neo-

¹²⁶ The notion and use of ‘opportunity’ can cut in various directions, including as an acknowledgement that further efforts are needed by persons, as part of social movements to resolve social deprivation, mistreatment, grievances and injustice. “Engagement in contentious politics” defined by Tarrow (1998) as political opportunity, can be presented as a direct result of domestic, i.e. Afghanistan / Afghan issues (and not externally generated or originating ones). This is as a key advantage of this theory, its deployment, and through its close association with the buzzword quality of opportunity (in the political context) towards policy ends. This can include the key issue of the significant reduction in troops used in an earlier intervention and other more political programmes and efforts, some of which may be ongoing and require protection. Thus, ‘opportunity’ (in the political context) can be used to explain why social movements emerge and/or increase their activity at a given time. Crucially, and reinforcing these potential uses, political opportunity theory asserts that simply having grievances (organizational consciousness) and resources will not be enough: political opportunities must exist (or be created from whichever source), thus potentially vindicating ongoing, albeit attenuated intervention in its wider possible meaning. This potential interpretation is further reinforced by the use of ‘opportunity’ by Hagel, in the final sentence of the historic and symbolic speech of 28 December 2014 marking the change from OEF to OFS, in the undertaking that: “We will continue to work with our Afghan partners to secure the great progress we have made since 2001 and to seize this defining moment of opportunity for Afghanistan’s future.” Fascinatingly, this also positions the U.S. as the actor, and one with a grievance, in accordance with this model, rather, for example, than the other way round even at this stage of the conflict.

¹²⁷ Of great importance in understanding political opportunity theory, and its use, is that too great an emphasis on the role of social networks and social network analysis in this regard, while often almost entirely ignoring the cultural underpinnings that allow these networks to form, exist and succeed. The lack of contextualization and also dynamism of conceptualization and approach to associated issues of intervention, social and political dynamics, is a concern that runs through this paper regarding efforts towards Afghanistan by the international community. This is particularly so regarding major policy-makers, strategists and also at the operational level, and as noted earlier vis-à-vis the trinity, and triads. Further concerns about social network theory, with which particular manifestations of political opportunity theory have become associated and used within, will be explored to some degree later in this paper. An excellent reference on political opportunity, in addition to Tarrow (1998) is Meyer, D., S. (2004) ‘Protest and Political Opportunities’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30: 125-145. A response to criticisms about the lack of ‘dynamism’ of the model, as briefly noted above was provided in: McAdam D, Tarrow S, Tilly C. (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁸ Security (and particular ideas thereof) was a major theme in President G.W. Bush’s stated rationale for intervention in Afghanistan in all the aforementioned key speeches, as was a more amorphous concept than democracy of ‘freedom’.

¹²⁹ For instance, in paragraphs 6, 14 and 15, and 13 of U.S. President Bush’s Address to The Nation 7 October 2001. Democracy was not mentioned, although it was noted once in his speech of 12 September 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

¹³⁰ For example, as expressed by Bowman, Steve and Dale, Catherine (2009) *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*, *Congressional Research Service*, Washington D.C., p. 7 footnote 17. Available: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40156.pdf> Accessed December 2015.

liberal thought. In sum, war claimed by President Obama as acceptably fulfilled but has been extended in particular ways. *Prima facie*, both Presidents presented the idea of to not be at war as differential forms of opportunity such as: freedom (G.W.Bush) in contrast to democracy (Obama); security and freedom from fear (G.W. Bush) versus being secure in a difficult world (Obama); seeking justice (G.W. Bush) vs. discharging responsibility (Obama). While formulations of opportunity enable the extension of war, the dynamics of this are different and point to particular aspects of interest for each of these Presidents, their policies and political persuasions. Counterterrorism or counterterror is a label for this and a vehicle.

GWOT: Counterterrorism, Underlying trends, and Interests

Counterterrorism is the area of continuing focus for both Presidents G.W. Bush and Obama. As Byman states, there has been “a systematic emphasis on ‘counterterrorism’ by the Obama administration, and that it has, “established a national security machine adept at identifying and disrupting terrorist networks.” This has occurred “building upon the post-9/11 efforts of the Bush administration”. The political logic Byman attributes to this is: “The American people, generally skeptical of intervention abroad and particularly skeptical of intervention in the Middle East, consistently make exceptions for efforts to fight terrorists, whom they see as existential threats to the United States.” The threat to the homeland paradigm identified by the Obama and Bush administrations is consistent with this existential sense the U.S. and other Western publics express about how they feel. Among the effects of “an overwhelming focus on counterterrorism” including by President Obama, according to Byman, is for “the United States to miss the broader regional trends undermining U.S. interests in the Middle East” (Pakistan and Afghanistan are ostensibly included such as on p 17 of the article). More critically, he contends: “By fixating on counterterrorism, the United States overlooks opportunities to prevent or mitigate civil wars and regional conflicts – steps that would address the problem at its core.”¹³¹ This is stiff criticism, however, owing to my personal experience in Afghanistan spanning the period 2009-2015 and ongoing interest in the area, this should not be simply dismissed. In the fraught realm of international affairs and foreign policy reflection on what U.S. interests are and how these relate to the GWOT is germane. Through this, possible explanations for the focus on counterterrorism and related analytical frames, concepts, paradigms and implications can be analysed and developed. Byman’s postulation of the severity of this can thence be appropriately tested, and relevant conclusions drawn informing analysis, too.

The leitmotif of U.S. interests is a challenging one as it can be assessed variously. The issue of attribution is also problematic: are interests the result of short-term events, or part of coherent policy and strategy in an ‘anarchic’ world?¹³² An approach that accepts the importance of the structures of the international and domestic landscape for U.S. foreign policy and related interests is arguably more helpful. As Edelstein & Krebs venture in their recent article, the enduring structural features of the international and domestic landscape are: “the United States’ material preponderance, the powerful corporate interests that profit from global integration, and dominance of core liberal tents in American political culture.”¹³³ This depiction is importantly in general and specific agreement with “U.S.

¹³¹ Byman, Daniel (2015) ‘Beyond Counterterrorism: Washington Needs a Real Middle East Policy’, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2015. For the latter two references see p. 12.

¹³² A realist perspective is but one possible to take in international relations. It should also be well understood, which is not always the case. For a very useful perspective on this see: Rösch, Felix (2013) ‘The Human Condition of Politics: Considering the legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau for International Relations’, *Journal of International Political Theory*. Volume 9, Issue 1, pp. 1 to 21.

¹³³ Edelstein, D.M. & Krebs, R.R. (2015) ‘Delusions of Grand Strategy: The Problem With Washington’s Planning Obsession’, *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2015, p. 111.

enduring national interests” as expressed in the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy.¹³⁴ The “global reach” of groups with networks using terror to target the U.S. and its allies by an avowed enemy, such as al Qaeda, and a range of offshoots and militant groups is an obvious problematic for U.S. maintenance of this. The matter of expectations arising out of these features for U.S. influence and power should also not be overlooked.

To gain a more through interpretation of how these features of the international and U.S. domestic landscape inform the ongoing counterterrorism mission of the U.S., a brief examination of roots of the GWOT is apposite. Especially as there are continuities and changes that will probably affect U.S. and other actors’ actions towards Afghanistan in the future. They necessarily need to be borne in mind in analytical framing.

Given the global reach of the terror threat, Afghanistan was intervened in in the name of national (and international) security, but precipitated by an attack on U.S. sovereign territory. The response to this by President G.W. Bush, and his administration as part of the GWOT, was a turning point relating to the notion of sovereignty. In his speech of 12 September 2001 President Bush unprecedentedly undertook that:

[...] we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.¹³⁵

Richard Haas, the director of Policy Planning in the U.S. State Department in 2001 in his oft quoted speech reveals insights into the thinking behind this:

Sovereignty entails obligations. One is not to massacre your own people. Another is not to support terrorism in any way. If a government fails to meet these obligations, then it forfeits some of the normal advantages of sovereignty, including the right to be left alone inside your own territory. In the case of terrorism, this can even lead to a right of preventive, or preemptory, self defense. You essentially can act in anticipation if you have grounds to think it’s a question of when, and not if, you’re going to be attacked.¹³⁶

This introduces the idea-- sometimes referred to as a ‘thesis’ -- that there are limits to sovereignty, in special ways, building upon President G.W. Bush’s preceding undertaking. The U.S. national security link was more explicitly made by Haas’s counterpart in the U.S. Department of Defense, Under

¹³⁴ The U.S. National Security Strategy, the most recent version of which was published in June 2015 lists U.S enduring national interests as: “the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners; a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and a rules-based international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.” The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015: The United States Military’s Contribution To National Security June 2015 (2015) available: http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf Accessed December 2015.

¹³⁵ President George W. Bush’s: Address to the Nation 12 September 2001.

¹³⁶ Haas’s interview in Lemann, Nicholas (2002) *The Next World Order: The Bush Administration may have a brand-new doctrine of power. The New Yorker Magazine*, April 1 2002 available: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/04/01/the-next-world-order> accessed December 2015.

This speech was followed by a speech at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London some months later, where he similarly stated that “sovereignty should only provide immunity from intervention if the government upholds basic, minimum standards of domestic conduct and human rights” See: Barela, S.J. (2014) *International Law, New Diplomacy and Counterterrorism: An interdisciplinary study of legitimacy*, (Routledge New Diplomacy Studies), p. 190.

Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, in a speech a few years later to the Council on Foreign Relations:

The United States strengthens its national security when it promotes a wellordered world of sovereign states: a world in which states do not commit aggression and have governments that can and do control their own territory; a world in which states have governments that are responsible and obey, as it were, the rules of the road. The importance of promoting a wellordered world of sovereign states was brought home to Americans by 9/11, when terrorists enjoying safe haven in remote Afghanistan exploited “globalization” and the free and open nature of various Western countries to attack us disastrously here at home. Sovereignty means not just a country’s right to command respect for its independence, but also the duty to take responsibility for what occurs on one’s territory, and, in particular, to do what it takes to prevent one’s territory from being used as a base for attacks against others.¹³⁷

A linkage is made between humanitarian intervention (Haas) as a rationale in “limiting sovereignty” and a new rationale as introduced in the GWOT by President Bush, and further detailed by Haas and Feith (as above), adding acts of terror to the ‘list’. Furthermore, intervention under the humanitarian or R2P ‘principle’ that was reactive had become explicitly preemptive (Bush, Haas and Feith as above). A new spatiality of the ‘homeland’ was also introduced concomitantly, joining the immediacy of what is happening with an urgency framed as ‘national security’, which was also global. Thus, pre-existing debates about the place of sovereignty in the emerging world order and responses or reactions to it have been joined in the post-9/11 era by debates about sovereignty from a new source: the GWOT, and with a new modus of ‘preemption’ rather than of reaction (or one could also say of ‘receptiveness’ in the network sense of the meaning).¹³⁸

This meant that already-established foci of debate about sovereignty saw a conjoining with far-reaching and appointing imperatives. Questions had circulated for sometime about the impact of Globalization on the nation-state framework and related questions such as whether or not sovereignty is being eroded by transnational economic linkages, economic relations, trade, financial flows and production networks. The doctrinal question of humanitarian intervention was now conjoined in rationale, and to some unclear extent in meaning, as it became ‘networked’ as part of a new pressing preemptory ‘principle’. One that inhered globalization and its networks including economic ties with security (national and global) as an overarching reasoning.

¹³⁷ Feith, D.J. (2005) Speech: “National Defense in the Second Term” Council on Foreign Relations, 17 February 2005, available:

<http://www.cfr.org/united-states/national-defense-second-term/p7858> Accessed December 2015.

¹³⁸ For a very interesting, cogent and conscientious perspective on the politicality of R2P see: Reed, Esther (2013) ‘Responsibility to Protect and Militarized Humanitarian Intervention: A Reply to Glanville’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Volume 41, Issue 1, March 2013, pp. 183-208.

Part VI

Temporal and Spatial Frames

The “global” remains a recurring explicit referent and perceptual as well as conceptual frame utilized by the Obama administration in relating to terror. Not only this but also how terror can and may present and the character of the threat it poses. ‘Threat’ is a more frequent referent in the GWOT as the term ‘war’ is less widely used by the current administration in comparison with its predecessors. Notwithstanding the moves made to reinvest the GWOT with more constrained meanings by the Obama administration as explored above, observed and interpretations of the temporality of the GWOT continue to be a topic of intensive discussion.¹³⁹ Temporal but also spatial formations arising from the GWOT have not infrequently inculcated as problematic, and put succinctly, particularly in matching means with ends. Legal, moral, ethical and other concerns have also resulted as part of these critiques, too.

Cartographic frames have increasingly been challenged in view of the concept to the GWOT and its prosecution. Cartographic frames have been critical referents for conflict historically, politically and normatively, and as embedded parts of describing, explaining and planning in relation to these. Indeed, responding to war and reasoning about it have been rooted in cartography¹⁴⁰ and related territorial conceptions. This now needs to be supplemented by other, more liable spatialities, so the argument has evolved, resulting in no small part from the GWOT and its impacts. More specifically, the geopolitical needs to be transcended and also connected to the bio-political and the geo-economic. It may also need to trace space as a ‘doing’: partially open and never complete, according to Gregory.¹⁴¹ Prime among examples, and especially pertinent here is the concept of the battlefield, which has been

¹³⁹ For example, see: Keen, David (2006) *Endless war? Hidden functions of the ‘war on terror’* London: Pluto Press; Duffield, Mark (2007) *Development, security and unending war*, Cambridge: Polity; Filkins, Dexter (2008) *The forever war* New York: Knopf; and more recently Gregory, Derek & Pred, Allan (2013) *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*, London: Routledge.

¹⁴⁰ For example, Jomni’s assertion that strategy is the art of making war upon the map. (Jomni’s influence on modern military thinking is notable.)

¹⁴¹ Gregory, Derek (2011) *The everywhere war*, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 177, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 238-250.

replaced in U.S. military doctrine with the multi-scalar, multi-dimensional “battlespace”. This terminology and related thinking was in widespread use in Afghanistan.¹⁴²

“Space” confers many possible meanings and can act as an invitation to be filled, as the old adage goes, a void is want or liable to be filled, be it a political space or another. As Graham contends, “battlespace” has no front, no back. The theoretical if not practical extrapolation is that battlespace is “where everything becomes a site of permanent war.”¹⁴³ The last asserted quality and alleged resultant consequence might be taking it a little far, yet what is there to constrain it? This is not easy to resolve.

Battlespace, which had been the battlefield is also now a decision-point that has a greater operational focus than a decisiveness. However, it seeks to bring together space, time and decisiveness largely on the terms of the definer of the particular battlespace at points in time. In so doing, it privileges ‘doing’ to define, fulfill and aspire in a circular self-reinforcing logic and action. A pervasive theme within this is the raising of Clausewitz’s concept of decisive battle in war to a presence in space and time of one’s own choosing in conformity with a circularity that is also the analytical frame cum-reality. But, it is devoid of context and ‘full spectrum dominance’ is neither necessarily in effect, or perhaps even desirable in the circumstances (e.g. ranging from counter-productive effects to unnecessarily raising expectations that cannot be later satisfied in, for instance, a COIN or CT campaign and effort). The line between reality and virtual, modeled reality, can become easily blurred as the categories used to define determine and decide, assume space and time are essentially inherited. However, understanding of space and time is constrained as part of conflated analytical and decision-making frames. These follow the logic that space and time have both been successfully ‘fixed’ (together) as a ‘successful requirement’ and an aspiration that can and are fulfilled, along a narrative trajectory of ‘success’. Exploration of space and time and thus of context as well as factors do not fit comfortably with the circularity of: aspiration, initiative, define, determination, decisiveness, fulfillment and re-aspiration. Tensions between reality and analytical frames cum-decision making frames (and between the latter) grows as correctives are a threat to the narrative, the fulfillment of frames assumed to be fixable by one side in the spirit of decisiveness, and winning decisive battle that has assumed such an expansive notion of spatiality.

The notion of choice, opportunity, of new dimensions, (implied) control, decisiveness, further success and possibilities (a number of which are undefined) appear to offer ultimate success, rather than, say, solutions or in so doing, consequences. Related to this logic, it could be claimed ‘a decision being made for you’ may be a new ontology of defeat, thus doing and deciding may in themselves be protections from defeat. But is this particular paradigm of spatiality creating new problems, and even greater problems? Is it proportional and does it help achieve proportionality? More to the point is the process fit for purpose and how adaptable is it? For example, the loss of a battle cannot always be equated with the loss of a war. Battles cannot always be decisive, despite their increasing ties to all-important space. Insurgencies and individuals and groups or cells using terror are not commonly engaged in battle, though they may be in a struggle that may not connote absolute weakness. Therefore, missions and operations should not, it can be argued, see too close an association drawn to one another, as other approaches are necessary, including political, economic and so on.

Output driven approaches as frequently employed by the military in planning, strategy, tactical guidance and operations in Afghanistan,¹⁴⁴ have several spatial parallels and pitfalls as noted above.

¹⁴² In the author’s experience and evident from discussion to documents where it was used often by U.S. and NATO-led coalition forces there.

¹⁴³ Graham, Stephen (2009) *Cities as battlespace: the new military urbanism*, *City*, Vol. 13, pp. 383-402, see p. 389, and, Graham, Stephen (2010) *Cities under sieve: the new military urbanism*, London: Verso, p. 31.

¹⁴⁴ Author’s own experience in Afghanistan in a range of military and political military settings, from policy, related processes and strategy, to military operations.

With reference to Clausewitz, and the trinity, they are not often sufficiently responsive to passion, chance and reason and its effects on policy, strategy and operations. As in the analogy of the trinity Clausewitz gives, they are magnets: alternately attracting and rejecting each other, so never forming a fixed relationship. They are dynamic in nature as is war.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, policy, strategy and operations need to be adjusted not infrequently as a result of the effects of the trinity on each of them and as each – policy, strategy and operations - informs the other. The enemy and other actors in the environment are also reactive, which also needs to be constantly taken into account.

Ideas of where military and counterterrorism operations occur are spatialities worth noting here, too. Expectations about the nature, character and rules about efforts in the ‘homeland’ in contrast to say, Afghanistan and against the same target can vary greatly. Simplification of spatialities can simplify thinking and circumscribe it too. For example, if it is overly relativized as in the observed case of the ‘homeland’ that is bounded by borderlands and beyond these are ‘wild zones’ or ‘Grey zones’.

Imagined geography informs expectations about the nature of military endeavour and of war. As Gregory states: “‘our’ wars – wars conducted by advanced militaries that are supposed to be surgical, sensitive and scrupulous – and ‘their’ wars.”¹⁴⁶ That we have a choice about this once war is entered upon is not realistic, neither is it borne out in the case of Afghanistan (more on which will be developed further in this paper). This also means that our analytical frames require to be more attuned to events more as they are, than as we wish to imagine them to be. The emergent “event-ful” quality of contemporary violence is noteworthy as it is occurring and reported in Afghanistan,¹⁴⁷ also “moments of pure laceration” that penetrate the daily, which are a diffuse and dispersed “state of violence.”¹⁴⁸ Resistance to the increasingly established imperative to react to media, as noted above, is necessary - - not only preferable -- in forming strategy, informing policy, tactics and operations. This is not to contend that appreciation of events and the search for context isn’t useful, but this needs to be framed eventually, for example, towards ascertaining proportionality in assessments of conflict, war and counterterror. (Proportionality in his reflections on the GWOT is what President Obama has stated he desires.)¹⁴⁹ This is more profoundly important meaningful in the prosecution of the GWOT, which has not fully known consequences in what is confessedly a global issue of the threat of terror. A threat possessing roots in more localized contexts and complicated relationships of state instability, fragility, crime, insurgency, and proxy conflict, which will be explored in due course appropriate to the task in hand.

A Pause and “Af-Pak”?

A spatiality that has directed efforts towards Afghanistan for an influential period of the intervention is “Af-Pak”, particularly by and for the U.S. and its allies, (as seen, for example, in the appointment

¹⁴⁵ Clausewitz stated: “A theory which insisted on leaving one of them out of account, or on fixing an arbitrary relationship between them, would immediately fall into such contradiction with reality that through this alone it would forthwith necessarily be regarded as destroyed.” Carl von Clausewitz (1950) *On war*, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles, Washington D.C., p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory, Derek (2011) The everywhere war, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 177, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 238-250.

¹⁴⁷ For example, in press reports, military, human rights related, and other reporting. It is not an isolated phenomenon. It can be seen as a part of the media’s changing role in conflicts (as noted by Strachan (2013) earlier), the distance from those where many of the NATO-led and U.S. mission’s forces are drawn from and where their families and friends are. It’s also a way of capturing an individual-orientated incident and incidence, with normative paradigms at the front or possibly implied.

¹⁴⁸ Gros, Frederic. (2010) *States of Violence: an essay on the end of war*, Seagull: London, p. 260.

¹⁴⁹ President Obama’s speech on the future of the war on terror, 23 May 2013, National Defense University, Ft McNair, U.S.A., available here, as prepared for delivery: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/05/23/read-president-obamas-speech-on-the-future-of-the-war-on-terror/> accessed December 2015.

of numerous “SRAPs” (Special Representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan)). This dates from circa 2008/9, and was an attempt to identify more effectively and concerted focus where political and military efforts were needed in the course of a difficult and deteriorating war in Afghanistan. Some interlocutors wonder: is this (still) necessary? More than this, it raises important geo-political and other spatial, conceptual and analytical questions, for instance.

An early official indication of this frame’s coming official usage can be dated variously from March 2009, with the outcome of the strategy review by the Obama White House.¹⁵⁰¹⁵¹ A driving force was Richard C Holbrooke,¹⁵² whose first presentation of it can be dated as early as 24 February 2008.¹⁵³ He has been credited with its creation.

Crucially, Holbrooke convinced Bruce Riedel, a lead in the strategy review of 2009, to utilize it in this. Holbrooke had argued:

We often call the problem AfPak, as in Afghanistan Pakistan. This is not just an effort to save eight syllables. It is an attempt to indicate and imprint in our DNA the fact that there is one theater of war, straddling an ill-defined border.¹⁵⁴

Riedel concurrently was quoted as: “our policy sees Afghanistan and Pakistan as two countries, but one theatre of operations for our diplomacy, and one challenge for our overall policy”.¹⁵⁵ This new spatiality encompassed more than the classic military cartography. Pointedly, this drew in another nation-state (Pakistan) into a ‘theatre’ (a term usually reserved for localities where military operations are occurring or are to take place). In fact, the importance of operations was stressed in relation to this frame.

On a more positive note, it was as part of an attempt to make greater sense of the context and its peculiarities. To the chagrin of Pakistan and Afghanistan, however, it introduced uncertainty and distrust as to the status of each. This was reflexive. As such, much could be implied by the epithet “Af-Pak”, but what could be made explicit and to what advantage for strategy being reviewed and crafter further? Moreover, the war in Afghanistan was and remains undoubtedly complicated by sizable, deep and perhaps intractable issues between the two countries. Not least the porous border between them that was and remains a key area – or spatiality. This is especially the case with regard to more clearly singled-out groups such as the Taliban and more so al Qaeda. Regarding the spatiality bordering both countries, some argue quite convincingly that changes in this area holds major distinctions, (e.g.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, James (2009) ‘Briefing by National Security Advisor General James Jones President Obama’s Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPak) Strategy’ *U.S. State Department*, 27 March 2009, available: <http://fpc.state.gov/120965.htm> Accessed December 2015.

¹⁵¹ On 9 October 2015 in the Rose Garden, President Obama referred to the war in Afghanistan as a theatre indicating this change was well established and not short-term. For details, see Woodward, Bob, (2010), p. 214 and 213 and also on the non-public development of this frame with involvement of Bruce Riedel and Richard C. Holbrooke (e.g. Chapter 10 and Chapter 8 respectively).

¹⁵² A useful insight into Holbrooke is provided by Packer, George (2009) ‘The Last Mission Richard Holbrooke’s plan to avoid the mistakes of Vietnam in Afghanistan.’ *The New Yorker Magazine*, 28 September 2009. Available here: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/28/the-last-mission>

¹⁵³ “There is a theater of war, that I would call AfPak, with two fronts — an eastern front and a western front,” said Richard Holbrooke, the former United States ambassador to the United Nations and a supporter of Mrs. Clinton’s. “I believe that we will look back ten years from now and say that AfPak was even more important to our national security than Iraq.” *New York Times*, 24 Feb. 2008.

¹⁵⁴ *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*: Vol. IX, No. 2 / No. 3 (Spring / Summer 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Riedel, Bruce, Holbrooke, R.C., Flournoy, Michelle (2009) ‘Press Briefing by Bruce Riedel, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Michelle Flournoy on the New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, March 27, 2009, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/press-briefing-bruce-riedel-ambassador-richard-holbrooke-and-michelle-flournoy-new->

Dorrnsoro (2011))¹⁵⁶ which by implication go beyond Af-Pak. Opinions may vary, but the response from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Af-Pak appellation has not been altogether favorable and the benefits of this are arguably hard to find. Further, the potential for political fall-out if this is not finely understood; the recent ‘MOU debacle’ is arguably a case in point.¹⁵⁷

I would argue that the non-divestment of nation-state frames and concurrent norms remains key not least in keeping sight of the differences between the two countries on many matters of consequence. An important ‘test’ too to satisfy oneself of is: did the “Af-Pak” frame really elucidate more that it elided: identification, understanding of, and potential (and actual) actions towards the al Qaeda and the Taliban? Does it reveal clarity of the context, communities and consequences or retard them?

¹⁵⁶ Dorrnsoro, Gilles (2011) ‘The Transformation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border’, in *Under The Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*, Bashir, Shahzad & Crews R., D., (eds.) London: Harvard University Press , pp. 30-44.

¹⁵⁷ See for example: Ruttig, Thomas (2015) ‘Political Cleavages over Pakistan: The NDS chief’s farewell’, *Afghan Analysts Network*, 23 December 2015, Available here: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/political-cleavages-over-pakistan-the-nds-chiefs-farewell/> Accessed December 2015.

Part VII

Threat Assessment

In the GWOT the enemy ranged from individuals (heads of state such as Saddam Hussein but also leaders of terror and insurgency groups perhaps most notably Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar) to religious and ethnic groups. The spatiatlies, as stated above, can be complicated yet crucial to assessing how militaries may go about their duties. In another shift from more traditional conceptions with temporal and existential dimensions: the enemy has increasingly become a ‘threat’ with threat assessment defining of the enemy. Received wisdom, including that of the towering figures of Clausewitz and Sun-tzu, is that military action in pursuit of a political solution requires a clear enemy towards which it can be directed. The growth in threat assessment and confusion about who is the enemy is therefore of concern. It is also pertinent to Afghanistan. For example, is the enemy the Taliban (as in unitary group that does not exist) or al Qaeda (necessarily comprised of cells)? Undulating discourse about the existence and extent of links adds to the confusion.¹⁵⁸ This necessitates closer scrutiny of this as part of developing analytical framing. Further, looking ahead, what the threat is and who is/are the enemy will almost certainly become an even more acute, exacerbated by the intended reducing of resources among the international community for Afghanistan. This will render the identification of threats and measures taken to address these more subject to narrow margins. The dynamic effects of the drawdown of troops and the consequences of what has gone before in the campaigns also cannot be overlooked in relation to this, as we shall see.

Threat and the future are concepts that are linked and we need sometimes to be reminded of this and the uncertainties it entails. As we cannot ‘know’ the future, the importance of the past and the present and of continuities and change abound. The conceptuality of a stream of time can provide all-important temporal context to pursue enquiry. This is a stream where there is no precise beginning, for it is impossible to locate one in the context of Afghanistan and related context. However, while this can accommodate considerable change, even with no exact starting date or event, such an approach insists upon our appreciation of the many, and principally fundamental, continuities in our history. This is as

¹⁵⁸ ‘The Pygmy who turned into a Giant: The Afghan Taliban in 2009’, (2009) Giustozzi, Antonio, LSE IDEAS Briefing paper, available: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SU001/giustozzi.pdf> accessed December 2015; Strick van Linschoten, Alex & Kuehn, Felix (2012) *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan*, Oxford: OUP; ‘The Taliban’s new leadership is allied with al Qaeda’ (2015) Roggio, Bill & Thomas, Joscelyn, *The Long War Journal*, July 31, 2015, available: <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/07/the-talibans-new-leadership-is-allied-with-al-qaeda.php> accessed December 2015; ‘The Taliban affirm their alliance with al-Qaida: Afghan peace talks in doubt’ (2015) Riedel, Bruce, *Brookings*, August 20, 2015, available: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/08/20-al-qaida-alliance-taliban-riedel>, accessed December 2015.

the consequences of these can help us in better understanding threats. The challenge of scale and quality of the problem can be sifted in the search for proportionality.¹⁵⁹

Fortunately, strategic history can be approached and understood as the very dynamic outcome of relations among human nature, political process, and strategic logic and method. This frame requires careful handling as well as acknowledgement. In the context of Afghanistan, the element of political process is relevant in distinctive though ultimately interconnected ways. For instance: political process in the sense of that which was involved in determining the intervention and during it by the U.S. administration and among her allies. There was and continues to be political process among the complex insurgency and their decisions and actions, too. Talks to bring the war to a conclusion entail a political process that sees direct meetings between government, international and insurgent and other figures. Thus to provide security, there has to be a political process. The quality of the security to be provided also varies in relation to the character of the political process, which is really comprised of several political processes. These political processes may not conform to western-centric models and ascribed transactionalities, whereby contextual understanding is rendered even more critical.

Political process is intimately involved in determining the ends, ways and means: a fundamental, if not the fundamental triad in strategy and ‘doing’ strategy. Its interrelated nature is paralleled in the triads of policy, strategy and tactics, or, goal(s), aims and operations. As Gray states, this triad “needs appreciation in the context of the prevailing assumptions, meaning [sic] beliefs that may or may not be well-founded factually.”¹⁶⁰ What the threat is can be informed through exploration of these elements of the triad if contextualized. There is fortunately or unfortunately – depending on the perspective taken – no simple mechanistic manner through which satisfactory, apposite and effective threat assessment can be achieved. Moreover “threat manufacture, transmission, receipt, and interpretation is [sic] always an essentially human enterprise.”¹⁶¹

Threats, Enemies and Relationality

In the GWOT the enemy could conceivably come in many forms: al Qaeda; other terrorists; those sponsoring terror or harbouring terrorists; those not with the ‘coalition of the willing’, and so on.¹⁶² As pointed out above, the threat for the purpose of matching ends with means was too identified too broadly so as to be strategically meaningless. Not dissimilarly, applying finite military force, political capital and other resources in ways that in hindsight did not have the desired effects such as reaching a resolution to the threat or threats, plural is also problematic. The notion that there is more than one effect, i.e. a solution or not is implicit and essential in reflection of historical experiences and understandings of war. As famously stated by Clausewitz and represented in his trinity explored earlier: of passion chance and reason. The question of possible counter-productive effects from decisions taken *via* interpretations of the triad of ends ways and means is a challenging one. But it is wise to entertain the possibility, and even more so the probability. Examples do exist be they civilian casualties all the way to mistaken identities, in what is incorrect threat assessment and identification, to far reaching effects resonating well beyond the tactical with shockwaves reaching ‘homeland’ through the media, constituencies and interests and impacting means and ways.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ The excellent monograph by Gray (2015) was drawn on extensively in addition to in particular Strachan (2013), Smith (2005), Arendt (1970), Coker (2009). Gray, C.S. (2015) *Thucydides Was Right: Defining The Future Threat* Strategic Studies Institute & U.S. Army War College Press.

¹⁶⁰ Gray (2015) p. 8.

¹⁶¹ Gray (2015) p.17.

¹⁶² This is a brief selection from President G.W. Bush’s statements and announcements; the same set of three as previously referred to.

¹⁶³ A major resource and tactical as well as strategic advantage is airpower, which is a case in point in Afghanistan to date. Casualties caused by wrong target identification or errors (for whatever reason) in delivery of munitions to target

Identifying and targeting the threat is connected with the stream of history we identify and the links made in space and time between actors, interests and dynamics. The threat of terror and those who commit acts of terror may be seen 'other' but even this construction of the threat means connectivity and relationality exist and may be manifest.

President Obama (and President G.W. Bush) presented overcoming or taking on the threat, respectively, with (some) specific security measures to do so. In this modus they are, as Anderson describes: "Securing life as circulation, transaction, or infrastructure [which] is inseparable from a sent of anticipatory affects, including the hopes and promises that become attached to specific security techniques, the fears and anxieties that surround certain sorts of threat, and the affects of urgency that animate and infuse efforts to secure a valued life."¹⁶⁴ Security in the grand politics of the 'war on terror' is indeed a value, promise, and a lived condition.

Applying power in efforts to secure – in deliverance of hopes and promises – has involved it taking the form of domination, control, authority, and other modalities. What is the object of power, as is similarly the case with threat assessment, is bound up with an image of reality. This is a device and a hypothesis with an anticipatory temporality. As Professor Klaus Knorr advised:

The act of threat perception creates an image of reality; it is a device, a hypothesis. Indeed, this holds true of all perception. All human awareness is a personal construct, something that we organize. It is a set of assumptions that deals with the outside world selectively, focusing on some components while screening out others. We continuously "bet" about the nature of reality. Preexisting assumptions (i.e., theories) about the outside world help us to select our "bet". But for this very reason, they hinder, as well as help, perception.¹⁶⁵

Taking this further, as Anderson states: 'an "object" of power names the surface of contact for processes and practices of power' which is central to orientating actions that comprise the exercise of power in pursuit of goals. In the realm of the GWOT, what can be perceived upon 'touch' as a generator or a symptom of insecurity may be categorized similarly. Not all objects are passive and may become a self-fulfilling threat in the root meaning of the word ('object' as in obstacle: something standing in the way of or put in the way of, in this case, the practice of power to achieve security).

Terror networks are explicitly cited in the GWOT as the threat and elements part of them, i.e. dangerous individuals, groups and 'associations'. This is a consistent feature of identification of the threat through the GWOT, to the present day (and likely for sometime to come). Disrupting,

became an enormous debate of consequence in Afghanistan. In particular 2009-10 in what is generally regarded as the height of the insurgency. Researched examples of targeting errors with important ramifications for the coalition effort also raised questions at senior political level about the assessment of the threat and targeting, for example: Clark, Kate (2011) 'The Takhar attack: Targeted killings and the parallel worlds of US intelligence and Afghanistan' Afghan Analysts Network Thematic Report, *Afghan Analysts Network*, 10 May 2011. Available; <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-papers/the-takhar-attack-targeted-killings-and-the-parallel-worlds-of-us-intelligence-and-afghanistan/> accessed December 2015. Also see, for example the airstrike in 2009 that eventually resulted in the resignation of a German Minister and affected debate about the use of air strikes in general in Afghanistan during perhaps the most intense period of political-military focus on the country, see respectively: Kulish, Nicholas (2009) 'German Minister Resigns Over Afghan Airstrike', *New York Times*, 27 November 2009, available: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/28/world/europe/28germany.html?_r=0, and: Farrell, Stephen & O'Connell, R. A. (2009) 'NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War', *New York Times*, September 4th 2009, available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/05/world/asia/05afghan.html> accessed December 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Anderson, Ben (2010) Morale and the affective geographies of the 'war on terror' *Cultural Geographies* Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.. 219-236, p. 222.

¹⁶⁵ Klaus Knorr (ed) (1976) *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, p. 112.

dismantling and destroying these terror groups, conceptualized as networks, is similarly a strong continuing theme in the GWOT.¹⁶⁶ Effects based operations (EBO) have been an outstanding feature of the GWOT as part of counterterrorism operations and counterinsurgency efforts so salient in and to the conflict Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ One of the most important studies that is open-source on targeting networks as part of EBO in Afghanistan was: ‘The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of the Night Raid Surge on Afghan Civilians’, by The Liaison Office in 2011.¹⁶⁸ It provoked strong reaction from U.S. Forces Afghanistan and NATO-ISAF. Nevertheless, it makes an important contribution to the scope, intensity, issues and consequences of such network and effects based operations. And to significant extents, how they feature, are composed and comprised. This is pertinent to the COIN campaign, counterterror operations and of overlaps and issues between them. For example, with the high value placed on ‘hearts and minds’ in the COIN effort (with some irony), in contrast with the counterterror line of operations as part of war, and in the same ‘theatre of operations’ as an enormous COIN campaign.

As an integrated part of their use, EBO designate terrorist networks as objects of power. As Anderson observes, “Morale”, “will to fight”, “denial of popular support” have been used interchangeably in U.S. military and, more broadly, western military thinking prior to and during the intervention in Afghanistan. It is even less surprising that these objects of power have been targeted when terrorist and insurgent networks are notoriously difficult to locate, deal with and/or dissolve by governments and principally their militaries.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, morale has long been invested in as a target in the hope of victory by disrupting, dismantling and destroying an enemy.¹⁷⁰ The ambiguity of the goal construction of ‘disrupt, dismantle and defeat’ contributes to the investment in morale as a target (more on this construction and aspect, later in the paper). In relation to terror networks, these affects, known as “collective affects” are often taken as both the cause and consequence of how the enemy, understood as a network, holds together.¹⁷¹ This understanding is reached under an anticipatory logic identifying these objects of power also as threats and embodiments of a de-contextualized enemy.

¹⁶⁶ President G.W. Bush utilized the very similar notion of “disrupt and destroy” terrorist networks soon after the 9/11 attacks on 14 September 2001: Speech by President G.W. Bush Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism and Work to Prevent Attacks Against Us and Our Friends, available: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss3.html>. This later saw what is currently still used by the Obama administration of: “disrupt, dismantle and destroy” terrorist networks. Regarding the Afghanistan campaign under President Obama key examples of the latter formulation include the campaign review for the Obama White House conducted by the former CIA official Bruce Reidel, who served in the G.W. Bush administration (and also as detailed in Woodward (2010)). An important example regarding Afghanistan is: Obama, Barack, (2009) Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary* 27 March 2009, available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

¹⁶⁷ Effects based operations focus on humans and human organizations using information technology and ideas of 4th Generation Warfare and network-centric warfare in a systems approach for assessing contexts and identifying centers of gravity. The classic critique of EBO is: Vego, M. N., (2006) “Effects-Based Operations: A Critique” *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 41, (Spring 2006), pp. 51-7.

¹⁶⁸ ‘The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of the Night Raid Surge on Afghan Civilians’, Open Society Foundations Regional Policy Initiative on Afghanistan and Pakistan, *Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office*, September 19, 2011 Kabul, Afghanistan, available: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/Night-Raids-Report-FINAL-092011.pdf>, accessed December 2015. This became the basis for an article by the Guardian Newspaper: Borger, Julian (2011) ‘Nato success against Taliban in Afghanistan “may be exaggerated” Report says kill-or-capture raids are not a surgical tactic as claimed and use of the word ‘leader’ is suspect’, *The Guardian Newspaper*, 13 October 2011, available: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/12/nato-taliban-afghanistan-exaggerated?INTCMP=SRCH> accessed December 2015.

¹⁶⁹ “Dissolve” is used here in either sense of destroy or see a solution to in a more peaceful manner. No preference is implied hereto.

¹⁷⁰ Anderson, Ben, (2007) “Hope for nanotechnology: anticipatory knowledge and governance of affect”, *Area* 19 (2007), pp. 156-65.

¹⁷¹ Anderson (2010).

As a consequence of the network concept and the rationality it is imbued with, it sees the extension of a network to a broader series of networks. It is in this highly constructed context that “morale” is established as a target in the hope it can be overcome. Overcoming the will of the enemy also known as breaking the enemy’s morale are generic affective states of the enemy. Other examples include “will and cohesion”, “opponents psychological will”, “popular support”, and “will to fight”. Targeting of this also often involves targeting specific affects that are the property of individuals or collective bodies of combatants (and civilians), e.g. “hope”, “confidence”, or “optimism”.¹⁷² What is occurring is the making of distinctions within affective and emotive life.

Although “morale” refers to the existence of something pre-existing, the act of naming it with different names and distinctions makes it more evocative of an embodied existence that can be transposed for targeting. Naming also serves to individuate within lines of descent or hierarchies. The overarching term and target “morale” stabilizes what is sought to be: controlled, managed, as well as ultimately overcome. This “dialogue” is highly anticipatory in a very specific way that is operationally focused but the operability of its concepts is constantly deferred. In contrast, the apparent continued existence of a network that has been targeted and struck sees morale deferred onto a range of other targets throughout a network (given its many possible and immanent manifestations). There is therefore a significant problematic in raising collective affects to be the cause and effect of a network holding together, such as a terror group. Effects based targeting decontextualizes and appears to provide an answer to the challenge of how to damage or destroy a network defined by its spatial-temporal dispersion.

Meantime, consequences flow from other effects in targeting and striking networks.¹⁷³ Basing strategy on such high levels of the operational and without clearer examination of the operational concepts and their implications for strategy are a continuing concern in view of the focus on counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere by the U.S.. As Gray states: “Policy and strategy inherently are relatively more important than are technology and tactics.”¹⁷⁴ And: “While tactical and much technical error provide correctible and survivable, almost invariably, political and strategic mistakes were fatal, no matter how worthy the ultimate political and moral intentions may have been.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Anderson (2010).

¹⁷³ An insight into this for the Taliban, their increasing radicalization and their relationship with the al Qaeda as stated by Strick van Linschoten, Alex & Kuehn, Felix (2011): “The U.S. military appears to hope that aggressive targeting of the insurgency leadership leave local networks more open to reconciling with the government, thus avoiding the need to deal politically with the movement. This strategy will, the argument runs, lead to the demise of the movement at large. The more likely outcome, however, is potentially very different: a still growing and ever more radical but largely leaderless insurgency.” The author also shares this view regarding the emergence of more radical commanders in different groups and elements comprising the Taliban. This and the effects of it were seen on the ground by the author whilst serving with the UN as a political affairs officer 2009-2015. This is a significant challenge present day and into the short, medium and likely long-term too in Afghanistan and region. Available here:

Strick van Linschoten, Alex & Kuehn, Felix (2011) Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan, New York University Centre On International Cooperation, February 2011, available:

http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/gregg_sep_tal_alqaeda.pdf

Also, disclosures about the Joint Prioritized Effects List or JPEL with continuing significant consequences for efforts by the international community and Afghan authorities in Afghanistan, and to a considerable extent in the author’s own experience also, can be seen in Nick (2010) ‘ Afghanistan war logs: Task Force 373 = special forces hunting top Taliban’ *The Guardian Newspaper*, London, 25 July 2010, available: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/25/task-force-373-secret-afghanistan-taliban> accessed December 2015. For now open-source insights into intensive targeting and the dynamics noted above, see the above. For insights into targeted eliminations and the drafting of target lists see Der Spiegel (2010) “Capture or Kill”: Germany Gave Names to Secret Taliban Hit List,’ *Der Spiegel*, August 2, 2010. Available here: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/capture-or-kill-germany-gave-names-to-secret-taliban-hit-list-a-709625.html> Accessed December 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Gray (2015).

¹⁷⁵ Gray (2015).

A finer understanding of the threat in context is preferable, rather than what can amount to a tactically-driven military operationalisation of manifestations of power, in order to overcome or dominate others in what occurs as a self-affirming and regenerating way at the possible expense of goals and strategy. In so far as analysis is concerned, it is necessary to analytically understand what has occurred Afghanistan including the impact of past events, and to not be tempted into over-concentration on the tactical, as has been a trend, even if this is through neglect of clarity of goals and strategy. Political intention, therefore, should not be assumed but discussed more deeply, explained clearly and endeavour to be understood of those who may appear as the enemy, pre-existing or emergent threats.

If: Threat=capability x political intention

understanding of political intentions may be constrained utilizing Effects Based Operations approach for the reasons above, namely as a result of the over-focus on objects of power and de-contextualisation. This also impacts understanding of political process involved in an enemy or potential enemy's strategy. The salience of political dynamics more broadly is of deep importance as the political is part of the process of strategy that determines the matching of means with ends in the fulfillment of goals. Political intentions, the political environment and structures change arguably more dynamically in conflict settings such as Afghanistan, compared to those in less volatile ones. Ends do too: over-focus on the tactical can lead to the atmosphere, and later belief, that the tactical situation changes constantly, but political intentions and ends do not.

Acknowledgement that political intention changes on all sides is where closer understanding of the political dynamics in Afghanistan and the region are necessary in making sense of threats to it and emanating from it. As such, it would also assist in more clearly identifying the enemy and certainly beyond de-contextualized focus on networks and particularized operational properties demanding certain forms of action. Changes in ends are also evident in the case of Afghanistan with lessons that can guide in the future: ousting of the Taliban and the formation of a new government with the assistance of the international community in 2001, which assumed the Taliban were a spent force, and that remnants of al Qaeda would be pursued to their destruction, and democracy would take root. However, by 2009 a counter-insurgency effort against the Taliban and strident efforts by international security forces to protect and enable elections was at the fore. This was in parallel with efforts in the hope that support, time and 'space' given to the Afghan government would pave the way to a Taliban that was no longer a threat to them and al Qaeda, which was defeated and ultimately destroyed. Intervention eventually gave way to Transition and in turn Transformation, predicated on increased sovereignty to be taken by the Afghan authorities with the phased assumption of security responsibility punctuated and undergirded by elections.¹⁷⁶ Drawdown of international military forces, integral to both transition and transformation, is not necessarily consistent with the same ends as at the start: Al Qaeda and a new terror network: ISIL remain. The Taliban have been the main enemy, but currently are not. Ends have been adjusted.

¹⁷⁶ I.e. Under the Lisbon (2010) Summit Declaration. See: 'Lisbon Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon' (2010) NATO, 20 November 2010, available: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm accessed December 2015.

Part VIII

Ends: of Means and Ways

The preceding elucidation on: the roots to the GWOT, shifts in spatial formations as part of it; the growth of operational orientation; dynamics of threat assessment and related actions illustrates that each of these (and matters arising from them) are germane to the core analytical frame of war in the case of Afghanistan. This now enables us to return to what is one of the most important matters for analytical framing and reference, which is: what is the goal in Afghanistan for the U.S. and key allies, now, and how does this compare with before? In turn, this can bring out further issues and what may be required for further analytical framing of strong integrity. Without these systematic steps, our analytical framing will be much more generic and the poorer for it. It would be more liable to unresponsiveness to issues that have not only more immediate presentation, but also longer gestations and reception for analysis.

An entry point for the matter of goal(s) is provided for in the question put by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Select Committee, in 2011. This enquired, among other things, if a change in ends in Afghanistan had occurred from 2001 to spring 2011? It concluded there had been sizable changes to the objectives in Afghanistan:

[I]n the period between 2001 and 2009, the UK's mission took on a significantly different, and considerably expanded character, moving from its initial goal of supporting the US in countering international terrorism, far into the realms of counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, protection of human rights, and state-building.¹⁷⁷

This is a fair assessment. More so when we compare it with the statement by Prime Minister Tony Blair to the House of Commons on 4 October 2001:

We must bring Bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat they pose. And we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism. If the Taliban regime will not comply with that objective, we must bring about change in that regime to ensure that Afghanistan's links to international terrorism are broken.

I believe the humanitarian coalition to help the people of Afghanistan to be as vital as any military action itself. [...] The international community has already pledged sufficient funds to meet the most immediate needs. [...] We will give Mr Brahimi [Lakhdar Brahimi, former United Nations representative for Afghanistan and Iraq] all the support we can, to help ensure that the UN and the whole of the international community comes together to meet the humanitarian challenge. [...] (Underlining my emphasis.)¹⁷⁸

A resounding focus on countering international terrorism was present, but it is one that could -- even at this early stage -- see expansion to state-building in Afghanistan in “bring[-ing] change in that

¹⁷⁷ The fairly succinct document under section 7 “Assessing the suitability of the UK’s mission and goals” shows this in: U.K Foreign Affairs Select Committee (2011) *Assessing the suitability of the UK’s mission and goals of The UK’s foreign policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan*. London: U.K. Parliament, available here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmfa/514/51412.htm> accessed December 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

regime”. The reasons as to why the “expanded character” of the campaign in Afghanistan occurred can be traced to differing understandings and concepts of how this “core goal” could be attained. For example, there is the not unreasonable contention that without counter insurgency efforts, counter terror efforts would not be effective.¹⁷⁹

At this important (and quite politically charged juncture), the aforementioned U.K. Parliamentary committee in 2011 recorded that the U.K government held that there were four “goals”, which demonstrate a reduction in the scope, scale and precision of earlier more expansive expressions, and with withdrawal high on the list, too:

- i. a more stable and secure Afghanistan;
- ii. the conditions for withdrawal of UK combat troops by 2015, including capable Afghan National Security Forces;
- iii. an Afghan-led political settlement that represents all Afghan people; and
- iv. regional political and security co-operation that supports a stable Afghanistan.¹⁸⁰

As part of the trend of reducing the scope, scale and difficulty of the U.K.’s goals, objectives and strategy in Afghanistan, earlier in 2009, the government of Prime Minister Gordon Brown made a key change -- even before the announcement of the surge that year. This key change by PM Gordon Brown took away emphasis on democracy and refocused on the Afghan government’s ability to handle its security and deliver basic services to its people.¹⁸¹ This alteration was broadly consistent with the prioritized elements of the COIN surge whereby security was prioritized over a democratizing agenda.

The most recent public statement of U.K. policy in Afghanistan was in a policy paper dated 8 May 2015.¹⁸² Extraordinarily (compared with earlier statements on policy) it does not refer once to goal(s), objective(s), aim(s), strategy, strategies, tactics, or operation(s). It only refers to mission in reference to the NATO Resolute Support Mission. A narrative, descriptive format was adopted in this document, inside of which details are carefully controlled. This gives the impression of a simple explanation is being provided which is, and is about, a subject that is nothing out of the ordinary. One that contains parallels and equivalencies drawn as though illustrating a well established norm, for example, the first sentence of the paper: “We are in Afghanistan for one overriding reason – to protect our national security by helping the Afghans take control of their own.” This statement is contained within what at times reads like a concise history, with minimal technical language and jargon.

Although there are no explicit goals mentioned, the paragraph titled in that emotive political way “Issue” states:

¹⁷⁹ A position advocated by Generals McChrystal and Petraeus on numerous occasions. For reference to this see Woodward (2010). This also draws on the author’s own experience in Afghanistan in the same period.

¹⁸⁰ Assessing the suitability of the UK’s mission and goals” in: U.K Foreign Affairs Select Committee (2011) *Assessing the suitability of the UK’s mission and goals of The UK’s foreign policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan*. London: U.K. Parliament, which lays this out, and is available here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmaff/514/51412.htm> accessed December 2015.

¹⁸¹ Wintour, Patrick (2009) ‘Gordon Brown redefines British goals in Afghanistan’, The Guardian Newspaper, London, 30 April, 2009. Available: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/30/uk-strategic-goals-afghanistan-pakistan> accessed December 2015.

¹⁸²U.K. Government (2015) *Policy Paper 2010 to 2015 government policy: Afghanistan*. London. Updated 8 May 2015 and available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-afghanistan/2010-to-2015-government-policy-afghanistan#political-settlement> accessed December 2015.

We are in Afghanistan for one overriding reason – to protect our national security by helping the Afghans take control of their own. We are helping the Afghan government to develop its ability to maintain security, so that it can prevent the return of international terrorists, such as al-Qaeda, to Afghanistan.

Preventing the return of international terrorists has been the most important part of our work in Afghanistan and the terrorist threat to the UK from this region has been substantially reduced. The UK has played an important role in developing and training Afghan security forces. UK support has also helped Afghanistan to become a more viable state; one that can provide basic services, improve the lives of its ordinary citizens and reduce instability.

A range of international partners are also working in Afghanistan to develop security, governance, infrastructure, economy and the Afghan government's ability to provide essential services.¹⁸³ (Underlining my emphasis.)

The underlined parts are those most redolent of policy or ends. The notion of preventing international terrorists (including but not limited to al Qaeda) returning to Afghanistan is clearly expressed. It also makes a direct link to U.K. national security interests in relation to this. Notably, Afghan government capabilities to take control of their own security are directly and self-reinforcingly linked to the U.K. in two key ways: the U.K. is helping with this, and also as a direct U.K. interest (and implied goal) under the ambit of national security. The notion of a terrorist threat to the U.K. is not necessarily contingent, as expressed in the document, with the return or non-return of terrorists such as al Qaeda to Afghanistan. This provides flexibility regarding the threat(s), and in turn of the goal, depending on future government assessments.

Preventing the return of al Qaeda to Afghanistan” is a formulation in this stated policy, which was asserted as an important goal by President Obama in December 2009:

Our goal is not to defeat every last threat to the security of Afghanistan, because, ultimately, it is Afghans who must secure their country. And it's not nation-building, because it is Afghans who must build their nation. Rather, we are focused on disrupting, dismantling and defeating al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and preventing its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.¹⁸⁴

The ‘prevent’ element continues in U.S. policy statements towards in Afghanistan, as “prevent” or “preventing” are used four times in President Obama’s statement on Afghanistan on 15 October 2015.¹⁸⁵ Is it a goal, however, that can ever truly be fully fulfilled? The closer one examines the elements of this, the increasingly unclear the aforementioned goal becomes towards which the military, and other actors, can clearly and coherently plan and also implement. For instance: is the return of a terror group a matter of prevention, and how do strategies and operational options inform such a policy? Is the goal of prevention total or partial, as prevention can have a range of meaning from

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ See: Obama, Barack (2009) ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 1 December 2009, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan> accessed December 2015

¹⁸⁵ See: Obama, B. (2015) ‘Statement by the President on Afghanistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015. Available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

hindering or impeding (but not stopping) to a more terminal meaning of stopping.¹⁸⁶ This ambiguity adds to the sense of flexibility in the current formulation of U.K. policy and notable links with important themes therein.¹⁸⁷

Perspective on aspects of the evolution of U.K. goals/ends provides a useful comparison and alerting in assessing the case of the U.S., as the lead nation in the intervention in Afghanistan. The U.S. is also the lead of the GWOT and the NATO mission in Afghanistan. The U.K. was the other nation involved from the start of the GWOT in addition to the U.S., and a major contributor (qualitatively and quantitatively) to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan.

Regarding the U.S. and its assertion of ends: President G.W. Bush defined the U.S. goal in Afghanistan in famously difficult ways to summarize. On 20 September 2001, in an early instance of articulating his goal, strategy and tactics, he stated: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.”¹⁸⁸

This is rather precise and categorical in comparison to the U.K.’s statements. Referring back to the key statement by Prime Minister Tony Blair declaring goals in 2001, the latter contended: “We must bring Bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat they pose. And we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism”¹⁸⁹ Osama Bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders are noted to be ‘brought to justice’ and the ‘threat they pose eliminated’ – *not the entire movement and membership (as by President G.W. Bush).*

President G.W. Bush made a more structured statement of goals and associated aspects in 2007:

Our goal in Afghanistan is to help its people defeat the terrorists and establish a stable, moderate, and democratic state that respects the rights of its citizens, governs its territory effectively, and is a reliable ally in this war against extremists and terrorists.¹⁹⁰

Five “key goals” were included as part of this, which are wordy, and although not simple to succinctly summarize, an honest attempt is here:

- (1) The United States and our allies will help President Hamid Karzai increase the size and capabilities of the Afghan security forces.

¹⁸⁶ The Collins On-line Dictionary is particularly useful in showing this:
<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/prevent> Accessed December 2015.

¹⁸⁷ The notion of prevention regarding terror and terror groups is an area of emphasis by the U.K. government in 2011 and 2015, for example, with the controversial publication of the ‘Prevent Strategy’ and its place as an important part of to U.K. counterterrorism thinking. See: U.K. Government (2015) *Policy Paper 2010 to 2015 government policy: Afghanistan*. London. Updated 8 May 2015 and available:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-afghanistan/2010-to-2015-government-policy-afghanistan#political-settlement> accessed December 2015. See also: U.K Government (2015) *Policy paper 2010 to 2015 government policy: counter-terrorism*, Updated 8 May 2015, available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism> accessed December 2015.

¹⁸⁸ See Bush, G.W. (2001) ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People’ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 20 September 2001, available here: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> accessed December 2015.

¹⁸⁹ U.K Foreign Affairs Select Committee (2011) ‘*Assessing the suitability of the UK’s mission and goals of The UK’s foreign policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan.*’ London: U.K. Parliament, lays this out, and is available here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcaff/514/51412.htm> accessed December 2015.

¹⁹⁰ AEI (2007) ‘President Bush on Winning in Afghanistan transcript of President G.W. Bush’s speech, AEI, 15 February 2007’ *American Enterprise Institute Newsletter*, March 1 2007, available here: <https://www.aei.org/publication/president-bush-on-winning-in-afghanistan/> accessed December 2015.

- (2) Work with our allies to strengthen the NATO force in Afghanistan.
- (3) The United States and our allies will help President Karzai improve provincial governance and develop Afghanistan's rural economy.
- (4) The United States and our allies will help President Karzai reverse the increase in poppy cultivation that is aiding the Taliban.
- (5) Help President Karzai fight corruption.

These five “key goals” may be better termed ‘aims’ as part of strategy, rather than goals (President G.W. Bush also uses the term strategy interchangeably with goals in this speech).¹⁹¹ In addition, the George W. Bush administration also undertook, as policy, to not distinguish between terrorist organizations and nations or governments that harboured them.

Although attention to strategy by the G.W. Bush administration is evident in presentations relating to the intervention in Afghanistan, the difficulty is that strategy was also presented as policy. Furthermore, this was done as part of an overarching mission involving so very much. Policy as such became blurred with strategy and tactics.

As regards whom the enemy was conceived as, in important statements by President G.W. Bush, the link between the Taliban and al Qaeda was asserted as strong and substantial. This informed goals through the strategy and aims he noted early on, with a degree of consistency, for example: October 7 2001 in paragraph 6 in his address to the nation 7 October 2001, in reference to ostensibly the Taliban and al Qaeda: “By destroying camps and disrupting communication, we will make it more difficult for the terror network to train new recruits and coordinate their evil plans.” And, in a similar fashion on 29 October 2001: “But the strategy we have at the time right now is to use our military to dismantle Taliban defenses, use our military to destroy al Qaeda training bases, and to work with troops that now exist on the ground to fulfill our mission.”¹⁹² As noted earlier, the link between al Qaeda and the Taliban, in 2001, was less concrete than he contended, and not only alleged.

The Obama Administration and Ends

On 27 March 2009, President Obama announced that the “core goal” of the U.S. in Afghanistan after a review, sections of which are worth quoting:

“So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future. That's the goal that must be achieved.”

A distillation of aims within this statement of 27 March 2009 is not so easy to find. However, in the White House White Paper (something of a mouthful!), which informed this statement, it did unpack the goal into discrete parts that can be considered as aims. These are identifiable under the title of “objectives” in this White Paper, as follows:

- 1 Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.
- 2 Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.

¹⁹¹ These are numerous. See: *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, 2001, Book 2, July 1 to December 31, 2001, National Archives and Records Administration, Office of the Federal Register, pp. 1317-1318.*

- 3 Developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance.
- 4 Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.
- 5 Involving the international community to actively assist in addressing these objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an important leadership role for the UN.¹⁹³

Unfortunately, the White Paper is itself inconsistent and therefore not very clear in articulating the goal and its constituent parts. For example, on page 1 of the White Paper, it was written: “the core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.”¹⁹⁴ In conclusion and on page 6 (the last page) of the same White Paper, it commits:

This new strategy of focusing on our core goal - to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually destroy extremists and their safe havens within both nations, although with different tactics - will require immediate action, sustained commitment, and substantial resources. The United States is committed to working with our partners in the region and the international community to address this challenging but essential security goal.¹⁹⁵ (Underlining my emphasis.)

This raises numerous questions about what the goal really is, at least at this (key) stage, and the steps necessary towards fulfilling it or them. For instance, does degrading terrorist networks, as in “objective 1” of the White Paper assumed to lead to or invested with the hope of the destruction of such terrorist networks, in relation to the goal as noted in the conclusion of the White Paper. Is destruction the same as defeat in the sense used here? The question is crucial as (i) defeat does not always necessitate destruction *per se* (ii) ends need to be matched with means and ways (iii) expectations are important in both war and efforts against terror: for the public (domestic, international, regional, etc.) and for the enemy and their supporters. There is a moral hazard if success as perceived to be promised is not achieved, indeed when so much effort is perceptibly pledged and invested.

Whatever the case in the White Paper,¹⁹⁶ it can reasonably appear more an exercise in self-assurance and rhetoric, rather than clear thinking with regard to the “ability” of al Qaeda (expressed as “any ability”). When viewed through the lens of the lack of clarity over defeat and/or destroy al Qaeda, it amplifies the ambiguity. One last point here is that the twinning of al Qaeda and its safe havens *vis-à-vis* “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat” also serves to multiply possible understandings of the goal, not least as a terror group is quite different from a safe haven in composition and kind. Thus, although the “disrupt, dismantle and defeat” formulation may sound good, it is neither likely to go down in history as the clearest statement of intent and articulation of a goal, nor as a goal around and towards which strategy and tactics could be easily tuned. Moreover goals against sophisticated adversaries with the initiative.

In his next major statement on Afghanistan, 1 December 2009 President Obama stressed:

¹⁹³ White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan (2009) *The White House*, March 2009. Available:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf accessed December 2015.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Even regarding “objective” 1: “Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.”

“Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.”

This is materially different from the goal stated in either the White Paper or his statement of 27 March 2009: safe-havens are not noted as a goal. The statement of 1 December 2009, however, has the benefit of clearer summation of how this goal was intended to be fulfilled. To accomplish the goal, three “objectives” were pledged to be pursued, more clearly than before:

[1] We must deny al Qaeda a safe haven. [2] We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. [3] And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future.

He also committed to begin the “responsible” withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan beginning in July 2011.¹⁹⁷

A goal earlier in the year had, as in item “1”, become an “objective”; i.e. an aim in the terminology established herein. In item “2”, the Taliban explicitly feature, as does the importance of the Afghan government’s domestic, regional and international credibility and capacity in relation to received understanding that an insurgency was strongly underway (as was the case and the debate in the White House at the time).¹⁹⁸ A combination of COIN and counterterror efforts was as such firmly announced. However, at the same time, there was an announcement of a timeline for the drawdown of U.S. forces from Afghanistan (and by inference international forces, too).¹⁹⁹

As at January 2014, some, such as Dale (2014) argue: “The Obama Administration has reasonably consistently articulated two core goals for the war [in Afghanistan]—to defeat al-Qaeda and to prevent future safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”²⁰⁰ Also admitting: “Yet the Administration has made some refinements and changes in emphasis over time.” As Dale (2014) further asserts:

In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama described the goal as “defeating the core of al Qaeda”, a new and narrower formulation.²⁰¹ And between 2010 and 2011, in its “1230” reports to Congress, the Department of Defense (DOD) revised its description of the

¹⁹⁷ Obama, Barack (2009) ‘Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, March 27, 2009, available: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/

¹⁹⁸ For example, as detailed by Woodward (2010).

¹⁹⁹ This has since been roundly criticized by academics and former commanders alike. See for example, Ucko, David & Egnell, Richard (2014) Options for Avoiding Counterinsurgencies, *Parameters*, No. 44, Vol. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 11 to 22. and in the press: Gordon, Michael, R. (2014) ‘Criticism Over Troop Withdrawal Emerges From Beyond G.O.P.’ *New York Times*, June 4 2014, available:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/05/world/asia/criticism-over-troop-withdrawal-emerges-from-beyond-gop.html?_r=0 accessed December 2015.

²⁰⁰ See for example, Obama, Barack (2009) ‘Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, March 27, 2009, available:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/ and Obama, Barack (2012) ‘Remarks by President Obama in Address to the Nation from Afghanistan Bagram

Air Base, Afghanistan’, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, May 1, 2012, available:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/01/remarks-president-obama-address-nation-afghanistan>. [cited by Dale 2014].

²⁰¹ Emphasis added. [by Dale 2014] See President Obama, State of the Union, 2013.

strategic architecture of goals, objectives and activities, subtly narrowing the scope of ambition.²⁰²²⁰³

The question of defeat of the core of the al Qaeda is central to the Obama administration's delivery on a refocused goal, and arguably a more realistic one (in comparison with defeating all terror groups in Afghanistan and worldwide as did President G.W. Bush). It is therefore, too, highly political for President Obama's: legacy; room for navigation on other difficult policy issues, with an at times adversarial Congress; handling of a major inheritance and foreign policy mire. It also allows for and possibly shows the continuation of the 'decapitation' operational logic that has informed and infused much effort in Afghanistan and other locations by the U.S. and allies in counterterrorism operations.²⁰⁴

Notions of "defeat" (of varying 'formations' of al Qaeda) are among the most traceable in President Obama's statements and speeches referring substantially to Afghanistan since 2013. In his speech on the future of the war on terror, 23 May 2013, at the National Defense University, Ft McNair he claimed:

Today, the core of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat. Their remaining operatives spend more time thinking about their own safety than plotting against us.

²⁰² Dale also notes in a footnote in the same position in the above quotation: "DOD's "1230" reports are based on P.L. 110-181, §1230 and 1231, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, as amended. The two 1230 reports issued in 2010, in April and November, echoed the language that had emerged from the strategic review conducted by the Administration in late 2009 – that is, two core goals, defeating al Qaeda and preventing its return, together with a number of objectives to support the goals. The objectives included, among others, reversing the Taliban's momentum and denying it the ability to overthrow the Afghan government; and strengthening the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and the Afghan government so that they could take responsibility for Afghanistan's future. The 1230 report issued in April 2011, the first issued after the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review (APAR) conducted by the Administration in late 2010, retained most of the language from the 2009 review and the 1230 reports from 2010, but significantly altered the emphasis. The report identified a core goal: to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to prevent its capacity to threaten the United States and U.S. Allies in the future." The status of "denying safe haven to al Qaeda" was shifted from a goal to a supporting objective. The objective concerning the Taliban was modified to remove reference to reversing the Taliban's momentum, thus emphasizing the remaining half of the objective, preventing a Taliban overthrow of the government – a formulation that pointedly leaves open the prospect of arriving by peaceful means at a political power-sharing arrangement that includes the Taliban. In addition, in the April 2011 report, the 2010-era objective of strengthening Afghan security force and government capacity was downgraded to a passive opportunity – further degradation of the insurgency by U.S. and coalition forces would "create time and space for Afghan capacity to grow," without committing the coalition to actively facilitating that growth. See Department of Defense, *Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, November 2010, April 2011, and October 2011. "[All by Dale (2014)]

²⁰³ Dale, Catherine (2014) 'War in Afghanistan: Campaign Progress, Political Strategy, and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, 2 January 2014, available: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43196.pdf> accessed December 2015.

²⁰⁴ The results of this, according to the academic literature and on the ground enquiries are mixed. For example, see: Carvin, Stephanie (2012) 'The Trouble with Targeted Killing', *Security Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 3, pp. 529 to 555; Price, B.C. (2012) 'Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism' *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 9 to 46; Johnston, P. B. (2012) "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Combating Insurgencies" Policy Brief, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, June 2012, available: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/22120/effectiveness_of_leadership_decapitation_in_combating_insurgencies.html ; Jordan, Jenna (2009) 'When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation' *Security Studies*, Vol. 18, Issue 4, pp. 719 to 755; Hafez, M.M. & Hatfield, J.M. (2006) 'Do Targeted Assassinations Work? A Multivariate Analysis of Israel's Controversial Tactic during Al-Aqsa Uprising' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, Issue 4, pp. 359 to 382. Moorehouse, Matthew (2014) 'It's Easier to Decapitate a Snake than It Is a Hydra: An Analysis of Colombia's Targeted Killing Program' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, No. 37 2014, pp. 541 to 566. It is noteworthy that such studies are strong on quantitative approaches, but qualitative effects are harder to account for. Analysis of impacts of decapitation strikes /leadership targeting in the medium to long-term is rare, or often not pursued due in part to the statistical difficulties involved. These are sometimes referred to as 'strategic' effects. There is a growing recognition among practitioners and some academics that medium to long-term effects of such strikes may be much more important than short-term gains.

They did not direct the attacks in Benghazi or Boston. They've not carried out a successful attack on our homeland since 9/11.²⁰⁵

And the following year, President Obama highlighted this perceived trend:

today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized Al Qaeda leadership. Instead, it comes from decentralized al Qaeda affiliates and extremists, many with agendas focused in countries where they operate.²⁰⁶

In President Obama's most recent statements on Afghanistan, he has underscored that "the mission has not changed"²⁰⁷ and claimed "devastating blows against the al Qaeda leadership in the tribal regions" were "struck" by U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

However, circumstances *have* changed. In explaining why U.S. forces are not drawing down as earlier undertaken, President Obama stated on 15 October 2015:

Pressure from Pakistan has resulted in more al Qaeda coming into Afghanistan, and we've seen the emergence of an ISIL presence. The bottom line is, in key areas of the country, the security situation is still very fragile, and in some places there is risk of deterioration.

He also reemphasized what had been earlier moved from a goal in 2010 to, as Dale (2014) describes as, a "supporting objective": denying safe haven to al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. President Obama did this succinctly on 15 October 2015:

As Commander-in-Chief, I will not allow Afghanistan to be used as safe haven for terrorists to attack our nation again.²⁰⁸

As Schroden (2014) claims, it seems as though President Obama and the White House were of the mind that they had (albeit perhaps hopefully) defeated the core of al Qaeda,²⁰⁹ but the situation was altering, as acknowledged by President Obama -- in numerous examples in his statement of 15 October 2015. Indeed, he made reference to the Taliban making "gains" in Afghanistan; an unusual level of detail among other admittances of significant recent security issues in Afghanistan and of "fragility". Returning to the key matter of the goal, although in this speech he states it "has not changed" (under the new trend of reinvesting the "mission") the question of core al Qaeda as the goal remains neither fully nor satisfactorily clarified (for at least some).²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ President Obama's speech on the future of the war on terror, 23 May 2013, National Defense University, Ft McNair, U.S.A., available here, as prepared for delivery: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/05/23/read-president-obamas-speech-on-the-future-of-the-war-on-terror/> accessed December 2015.

²⁰⁶ Obama, Barack, (2014) 'Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony.' *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 28 May 2014. Available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony> accessed December 2015.

²⁰⁷ Obama, B. (2015) 'Statement by the President on Afghanistan' *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Schroden, Jonathan (2014) 'Obama's Confusing Al Qaeda Strategy' *The National Interest*, 19 June 2014, accessible: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/obamas-confusing-al-qaeda-strategy-10701> accessed December 2015. Discussions with various officials adds weight to this and the sense that al Qaeda in Afghanistan had been ostensibly destroyed. However there was also a sense in late 2015 that this was changing, particularly in the East of Afghanistan and with the ISIL question.

²¹⁰ For example, Schroden (2014).

Some further idea of how President Obama and his administration see the goal in Afghanistan is provided for elsewhere in his speech on Afghanistan of 15 October, 2015. For example, he states:

Our forces therefore remain engaged in two narrow but critical missions -- training Afghan forces, and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.”²¹¹

Thus, it could be enquired, are the remnants of al Qaeda the core, or, is the core defeated as available in possible interpretations of earlier key statements by the White House? Indeed Schroden considered the implication to be the latter in the Obama’ administration’s statements in 2014. He wrote in the summer of 2014 that in his view, on balance, the view of the Obama administration was that: “Al Qaeda has in fact been defeated” and: the [Obama] administration will accept vestiges of al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, so long as they are unable to attack the U.S. homeland and our interests abroad.”²¹²

Considering the circumstances and the fast pace of events of 2014, it is possible and maybe more likely that circumstances changed unexpectedly for the White House in considering Afghanistan and al Qaeda there. The evident and at times stark rebalancing of messaging from 2013 into 2014 in 2015 could support this assertion. According to the White House, on the one hand there has been success against the core of al Qaeda and the goal of it being defeated (whatever that quite means). On the other hand there is ambiguity regarding the unequivocal fulfillment of this goal, which will continue until greater detail is available. “Remnants” (almost the diametric opposite of core) are now being *de facto* presented as the goal, but without being completely clear on the status of the long-standing goal is (the core of Al Qaeda). As such, is the most recent manifestation of the goal a follow on and mopping up effort? What of the conditions in Afghanistan noted of the “Taliban making gains” and of “fragility”?

Although the unresolved questions about the goal may be due to uncertainty on the part of the White House, this state of affairs can come across as the out-workings of a political calculation: not revisiting earlier messaging that the core goal in Afghanistan had been largely fulfilled gives room to the administration for explaining its actions later. It also facilitates policy space for taking and accounting for steps against an enemy that has not continued its perceived downward spiral, contrary to messaging in 2013-2014. A corresponding policy position has been taken that bridges this positioning, whilst reasserting an integral part of the Obama administration’s shift in its strategy in Afghanistan (and globally): security force assistance and continuing counterterrorism operations (with emphasis on the former).²¹³ What remains unclear is what is it to defeat al Qaeda? Here, perhaps earlier difficulties with aligning ways and means with ends from the Bush era, and the many complications that occurred since then, are continuing to fog efforts.

A question into the future is: will this changing of the goal, aims (often referred to by the Obama administration as “objectives”), strategy and to some extent tactics, be effective? Indeed through the largely unintended sequencing of: a limited intervention; a COIN campaign; drawdown; counterterror plus security force assistance with an admixture political, economic and other support. Concentration by the administration on troop drawdown, its timing (announcement and effecting) may yet pose yet

²¹¹ Obama, Barack (2015) ‘Statement by the President on Afghanistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

²¹² Schroden (2014).

²¹³ “Our forces therefore remain engaged in two narrow but critical missions -- training Afghan forces, and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.” Obama, B. (2015) ‘Statement by the President on Afghanistan’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 15 October 2015, available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan> accessed December 2015.

more difficult questions. How aspects of COIN work with counterterror efforts, of the latter some continue as part of, for example, the security force assistance and limited programming in Afghanistan is a fascinating question into the coming year or so, too.

A construct that has been largely maintained, despite other changes is: “disrupt, dismantle and defeat”. This is also a further example of ambiguity in goals, strategy and tactics as it is construct that ‘filters’ statements of the threat/enemy, the goal but concurrently aims, strategy and tactics. It deserves focused attention due to its enduring presence and capacity for catalyzing but also obscuring meaning of goals and associated factors. Thus it’s of great importance for analytically framing Afghanistan, past, present and into the future.

The “Triple-D” Construct

The first example of the construction “disrupt, dismantle and defeat” (‘triple-d’) from the White House was on 20 September 2001, in direct reference to the ‘how’ of fighting the GWOT:

Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command -- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war -- to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.²¹⁴

The ends were intimately tied up with the means, which continues and manifests to the present day. The Riedel strategic review of Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009 saw the introduction of the current version of ‘triple-d’ formulation.²¹⁵ This formulation has remained the key construct of the goal in Afghanistan, specifically regarding al Qaeda, to the present day. (Not without complexities as will be discussed soon in brief.) Moreover, this construct’s application to the question of what to do in Afghanistan has not been without quite major difficulties. Specifically, with regard to:

- Al Qaeda (i.e. what ‘part’, e.g., as a whole, core or remnants to name major cited examples);
- The matter of the importance of Taliban (and *vis-à-vis* al Qaeda);²¹⁶
- Interconnected questions of goals / ends / objectives as well as of strategy and tactics. In the course of this, other possible interpretations and words starting with “D” were considered or used, such as “destroy” instead of “defeat” (White House White Paper c. March 2009).²¹⁷

Acute and at times perplexing complications run through this enduring construct, with some evolutions. Firstly, as some U.S. National Security Council senior officials found in 2009,²¹⁸ it raises the central question: what is the goal precisely? In addition how do ‘disrupt, dismantle and defeat’ relate to each other, if at all? -- Are they related in series, as steps in parallel? Or, are the first two elements (disrupt and dismantle) possible synonyms for the meaning invested in the third: “defeat”? Thus, are all the elements part of the goal? What of the degree of satisfaction of each of the elements

²¹⁴ Bush, G.W. (2001) ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People’ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 20 September 2001, available here: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> accessed December 2015.

²¹⁵ For Woodward (2010), see chapter 13.

²¹⁶ For some idea of the complexity and confusion around this in 2009 during the strategic review of Afghanistan, also through the tripe-d formulation, see: Woodward (2010) chapters 13 through 26 in particular.

²¹⁷ White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan (2009) *The White House*, March 2009. Available:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf accessed December 2015.

²¹⁸ See Woodward (2010) chapters 13 through 26 in particular.

for satisfaction of the whole? -- After all, reality is often less neat than our constructs. The room for confusion is large, and can be alienating.

Many other considerations are indeed possible regarding the ‘triple-d’ formulation. A number reasonably come to mind as a reflection of the conceptuality of Effects Based Operations (EBO) and network-centric warfare, with their similarities to the triple-d construct and its investment with affects. With a more political interpretation in mind, the alliteration inherent in ‘triple-d’ is rhetorically compelling, conveying a message of unequivocal seriousness. Gravitas has and remains a quality of import for President Obama: quite young in-post, at his inauguration and at a critical point in the intervention in Afghanistan, not highly experienced in foreign affairs or the military, and politically pressured by some Republicans (partly in view of his voting record on matters liable of perceptible parallels of intent drawn, such as in relation to the question of U.S. (military) efforts in Iraq).

Although the ‘triple-d’s’ meaning can be further nested and shifted to appear consistent and assertive, clarity suffers with change. Even in its simplest formulation: “to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda” it not always easy to interpret due to the ‘matrix’ effect of the formulation alluded to above and the range of meanings that could be claimed. Add to this modifiers regarding what the enemy/threat/target is e.g. in terms of al Qaeda, i.e. al Qaeda *per se*, or core al Qaeda, or remnants of Al Qaeda, then, a wider set of permutations and explanations are claimable. The ontology may very well be that adjustments to the object/subject of al Qaeda (and which attribute) can be attuned as well as adjusted in relation to political support from the political structures and environment. This unfortunately overlooks the necessity that it needs to be translated into military orders and civilian instructions by a government and allied governments and agencies. Furthermore, it is not a very user-friendly construct if performance against goals is to be assessed to inform strategy and tactics. The latter is so regarding different sets of assessment, including public support (which has seriously waned in Afghanistan, with not a few outstanding issues). Again, the probability of strategy being eclipsed by the operational and policy positioning (and leaning towards particularized kinds of operations) is as arguable as it is problematic.

With a view to drawing together the above analysis, towards crystallizing analytical framing, a selection of historical points and aspects will be provided. This is intended to provide underpinnings of consistency and appropriate rigour (to the demands of the task and matter). Historical observations are especially helpful in refining analytical frames further, for purposes of improving reception, illustrating appropriateness, enhancing orientation, developing clarity and overall communication.

Part IX Concluding

Select Historical and Thematic Developments Towards Analytical Framing

The goal of the 2001 intervention, in the form provided publically by the G.W. Bush and Blair administrations (key countries from the start) focussed on the defeat of al Qaeda and the Taliban. The

Taliban perspicuously featured as an entity possessing strong ties with al Qaeda. The goal itself encompassed the destruction of training bases, communications and expressed a strong intent for the destruction of al Qaeda and the Taliban *per se*, and ‘with certainty’ as threats to the U.S. and U.K. and their allies and interests. At the outset, there was ostensibly no equivocation about the goal: President G.W. Bush’s conception of defeat of al Qaeda, is encapsulated as communicated in his statement of 20 September 2001: “The only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it and destroy it where it grows.” Al Qaeda being the identified manifestation and embodiment of terror, as noted in the same speech: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there.”²¹⁹ Regarding the Taliban and its links and undesirability, in the same speech he states: “The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan we see al Qaeda's vision for the world.” And: “we condemn the Taliban regime.” As well as: “By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder.”

As history shows, the Taliban did not divest itself of a relationship with al Qaeda (and deliver on very stringent demands to deliver Osama Bin Laden in accordance with the U.S. ultimatum issued by President G.W. Bush publically in this address of 20 September 2001). The premise of the intervention, and trigger under which the intervention was initiated and justified on 7 October 2001, was the purported intimate relationship between al Qaeda and the Taliban.

In the ontology of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), acts of terror were attributed as well as imbued with a logic of action more than a method of action. This was added to an increasing list of debateable reasons, including R2P and the humanitarian ‘pre-emptory principle’ claiming to successfully challenge sovereignty, and establish a norm of pre-emptory intervention. Obstruction toward the goal of destroying terror groups, around which the trigger for the intervention, and consequently Operation Enduring Freedom was built, brought with it an extraordinarily wide array of issues as part of the goal. From assumed cooperation in western funded and led statebuilding, to acceptance of *de facto* foreign occupation by the local populace. The impression at the time was, even of not fully intended as such, of ‘them and us’. Terror groups and those harbouring them were conflated as equally culpable, in kind and morally, too. Bringing them to an unclearly defined ‘justice’ caused more questions than created a path to the settling of grievances, at least to start with. The very unfortunate use of the analogy of ‘crusade’ by President G.W. Bush on 16 September 2001²²⁰ in reference to the GWOT was picked up on by Osama Bin Laden²²¹, concerned parties, and people in the Muslim world. For terror groups it provided invaluable succour for their cause and increasingly able propaganda machine.²²²

All ‘quite interesting’, but how does it appertain to analytical framing? Well, as pointed out above, in ‘the stream of history’ is essential in understanding threats and their interconnections. This is analogous with the supposition of the GWOT that undergirded the intervention: the globalized world we live in with its wonderful but also fearful interconnectedness.

²¹⁹ Bush G.W. (2001) ‘Address to a Joint Session of Congress’, transcript, *The White House, office of the Press Secretary*, 20 September 2001, accessed December 2015.

²²⁰ To quote from the remarks: “This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I’m going to be patient.” Bush, G.W. (2001) ‘Remarks by the President Upon Arrival’, transcript, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 16 September 2001, available: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html> accessed December 2015. On concerns about this, such as in the U.S. media, see for example: Waldman, Peter & Pope, Hugh, et al. (2001) ‘Crusade’ Reference Reinforces Fears War on Terrorism Is Against Muslims’, *Wall Street Journal*, 21 September 2001, available: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1001020294332922160> accessed December 2015.

²²¹ For Osama Bin Laden’s response see: ‘Bin Laden rails against Crusaders and UN’, (2001) BBC News, November 3, available: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1636782.stm accessed December 2015.

²²² As noted in for example, in: Allen, S.J. & Amt, Emilie, eds (2014) *The Crusades: A Reader: Second Edition*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Higher Education Division; 2nd edition, p. 417.

The why, when and how of interconnections between the Taliban and al Qaeda remains a key referent for both understanding: past goals in Afghanistan, those of the present and likely for sometime to come, each of which includes the continuing counterterror mission with its reference to “disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda”.

The vacillating issue of the Taliban (are they: a priority, a threat, or supporter of al Qaeda, to be rehabilitated?) does require deliberation. Public opinion is another route: would it be acceptable in the U.S. or U.K, for example, for the Taliban to expand their writ, at the expense of the Afghan government. On the other hand, would an Afghan Taliban-linked presence in the Afghan government be acceptable to the U.S., U.K, Germany, and other countries part of the Resolute Support Mission, and who expended ‘blood and treasure’ during the COIN campaign to end-2014? This is not so easy to determine as there are different tracks in play, and, it is a decision for senior political leadership with advice from senior military leadership. Suffice to say, the different scenarios need to be thought about and reverse-engineered into analytical frame tuning. To return to the question of goals, my view, for what it’s worth, is that finding a way to establish understanding with the Taliban (and its members) that al Qaeda should not be supported is a valuable goal for both sides. Analytical framing may wish to bear this in mind, but without compromising frankness of the analytical picture. Without being drawn into the details of what is a critical debate of aligning ends, ways and means, I do not believe it possible to draw a clean line of separation between al Qaeda and the Taliban as was perhaps attempted in the earlier noted U.K. Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee hearing and by some of the ‘experts’ at this hearing. At the same time, it does not mean that al Qaeda and the Taliban should be viewed as one, or that the same goal for each is appropriate. My purpose here is not to remake strategy, but to attempt to draw out and develop useful analytical frames. These comments serve to reinforce the invocation of detailed contextualized understanding that also challenges assumptions, is up to date and cautious. In turn this strongly implies that related decisions largely in keeping with the original stated goals of the GWOT and intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 are subject to the process of analysis as part of the analytical framework of ends, ways and means.

The decision to drive the Taliban from power and to keep them out has, in hindsight, been pivotal to consequences and developments in Afghanistan and the region. The identification of the Taliban with al Qaeda, and *vice-versa*, especially at the start of the GWOT, can go some way to explaining the actions taken later by them both. For example, they were positioned as a common enemy and became one against a united common enemy: the U.S. in particular. The concern here is the analytical implications of this for developing analytical framing. Much can be said about it. The findings of Fields & Ahmed (2011) are useful in assessing the later levelled criticism that the Taliban were not invited to the Bonn Conference, which laid an important path for international and national efforts post-intervention and the ousting of the Taliban regime.²²³ It challenges this often-repeated argument, which is supposition, in useful ways.

As the Taliban were not defeated, against earlier belief and both initial and later expectations, (e.g. in c. 2009, by a range of parties) this might typically raise the analytical questions and indeed frame, (as part of a ‘soul searching exercise,’ for example) at a root level of: quite what and where are the Taliban. Yet, although this is a rather basic set of questions, they are neither simple nor easy to answer as they may first appear. Ruttig (2012) brings this out in concise, well structured and informed way.²²⁴ He also provides exceptionally useful potential analytical frames for making sense of the different evolutions of the Taliban. This leads to the next point, and following reflections:

²²³ Fields, Mark & Ahmed, Ramsha (2011) “A Review of the 2001 Bonn Conference and Application to the Road Ahead in Afghanistan.” In: *Institute for National Strategic Studies, Strategic Perspectives*, No. 8 , p. 19. Available: <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-8.pdf> Accessed December 2015.

²²⁴ Ruttig (2012) How Tribal Are the Taliban? In, Bashir, Shahzad and Crews, R.D. eds (2012) *Under the Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*. London: Harvard University Press, pp. 126-127.

- How do we see the Taliban now compared with before;
 - what was more accurately assessed before and less so and what factors, including analytical assumptions and policy, strategy and tactical aspects contributed to this?
 - In turn, the frame arises of: are we seeing a generational change in the Taliban?
 - Is the Taliban still focussed on Afghanistan and Pakistan, if so which parts are and which elements are not? Are there those who have interests in common outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan with al Qaeda (the Haqqani network comes to mind).
 - What symbolisms and themes do the Taliban identify with, for instance, what is the role of ethnicity and nationalism (as explored to in an interesting way in Kamel (2015))?²²⁵

The generational change question, that has local and potentially global dimensions (as radicalization does, in some contrast with conservatism of some of the older strands of the Taliban (Harakat)²²⁶) can be seen in perhaps two key ways: the debate regarding the Neo-Taliban, as best put forward by Giustozzi (2007)²²⁷ and secondly, since then, are there changes in the Taliban as a result (among other factors) of the loss of their mid-layer commanders,²²⁸ such as: increasingly brutal methods, radicalisation of *tanzims* and operational units, as a younger commanders come through the ranks with the effects of a legacy of intensive conflict and dispossession.

The impact of this dynamic on the Taliban's demands (including policy), as well as strategies and tactics, is a very current question. Indeed, talks about talks (again) are occurring [NB: the quadrilateral process's first meeting was on 11 January, 2016, although preparations had been underway for sometime and in the period this paper focuses on, i.e. to the early part of December 2016].²²⁹ This is at a time that Afghanistan as a state appears fragile and without as much international: presence, attention and interest, as even in 2014. Concerns about the incentives for the Taliban and their backers to negotiate come to mind, refocusing attention on them and implications regarding al Qaeda.

I would contend here, we have been and will continue to see quite serious consequences for radicalisation as a result of conflict in Afghanistan not only during the last 14 + years, but the earlier phases too, and as the consequences of this play out.²³⁰ Perhaps critically for the more consistent of goals of the U.S. and main allies, such as the U.K.: what is the nature and character of the Taliban's relationship with al Qaeda now: what changes has this seen, and in which dimensions? If so, how and why?²³¹

²²⁵ Kamel, Kareem (2015) 'Understanding Taliban Resurgence: Ethno-Symbolism and Revolutionary Mobilization' *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Special Issue: Nationalism and Belonging, Volume 15, Issue 1, pages 66–82, April 2015.

²²⁶ On Harakat, see for example: Fergusson, James (2010) *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerilla Fighters*, London: Bantam Press, p. 251.

²²⁷ Giustozzi, Antonio (2007) *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: the rise of the Neo-Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan*, London: C. Hurst & Co. and New York: Columbia University Press.

²²⁸ As occurred in c. 2011 as covered in several academic papers and confirmed by a number of sensitive military and other sources.

²²⁹ U.S. Department of State (2016) 'Joint Press Release of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation', Office of the Spokesperson, 11 July 2016, available: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251105.htm>, accessed January 2016.

²³⁰ For a different perspective on the period during which conflict has been occurring in Afghanistan see Masadykov, Talatbek, Giustozzi, Antonio and Page, James Michael (2010) *Negotiating with the Taliban: toward a solution for the Afghan conflict*. Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 2, 66. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, p. 1.

²³¹ Qualitative, contextual understandings are more important than networked models that prioritize frequency of contact. Ruttig (2012) as some good points regarding this difficult question. Some interesting insights on this were provided in the 'Bin Laden Files'. Burke, Jason (2012) Bin Laden files show al-Qaida and Taliban leaders in close contact, *The Guardian Newspaper*, London, 29 April 2012. Available here: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/29/bin->

This quite neatly brings us to the matter of context and contextual understanding. The necessity for this is not limited to matters of accuracy, but resides also in readiness for rather rudimentary analysis, and cannot be overstated. Being able to make cogent and well informed sense of the people being considered is crucial, (including Taliban, Haqqani network individuals and also those in al Qaeda) but also in their myriad ways and interconnected milieus. They inform each other, and although may seem to be a ‘luxury’ or perhaps ‘fancy’, but nevertheless, should be a something striven for and at least sought out. If to some they are ‘just an enemy’, they are also people with all that entails. Indeed, people, practices, purposes and societies vary. In this respect, the ‘catch-all’ of ‘human nature’, even as Gray (2010) used it regarding threat assessment (noted above), is arguably insufficient.²³² On the one hand as Bailey (1969)²³³ so elegantly writes, there are norms in societies who see rules but also pragmatic rules, among a political structure and environment. On the other, though not completely distinct and as Berdal (2011)²³⁴ neatly brings together through use of a different case study (in West Africa): ever-present is the real need for contextual exploration of a war or conflict and its actors, their interests and dynamics.²³⁵ This also adds nuance to what Gray (2015) calls ‘political process’, which I would rephrase as political processes as noted above.

At this stage, it is useful to consider the potential framing of analytical frames that have arisen so far. The triad of the government, people and the military exist, with similar triads for example: the insurgency (political wing), their militant wing, and the people. The people are an important ‘shared side’ of the triad (sometimes drawn as a triangle). However, the trinity of passion, chance and reason is the more important and each part of the triad can be applied to each element of the triads noted. The triads cannot be placed before the trinity if most meaningful sense and apposite conclusions are to be drawn through its employment. From here, a further triad is a useful frame that can further refine elements within the aforementioned triads. This is about institutions: formal, informal and shadow/illicit. The legitimacy of these is not necessarily judged, (it is a difficult concept and potentially excluding of useful references). In short, these may be see the following categorizations made, which are apt for adjustment, also.

- *Formal*: rules enforced by third parties (constitutions, bureaucracies, political parties, etc.).
- *Informal*: rules based on norms of behaviour, moral codes, social conventions, self-regulated agreements.
- *Illicit*: rules enforced by illicit entity (insurgent, criminal, etc.); may be formal and/or informal.
- Note: Illicit / illicit boundaries may be blurred.²³⁶

In Afghanistan, these categories are not often straightforward. It is therefore useful to reflect on what is meant by institutions. The term institutions can be defined as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions and form an element in amore general concept of social structure. Conventions are not necessarily the same in all institutions and toward them, and these are essential for them and their functioning. Regarding institutions and analysing them and their resulting

[laden-al-qaida-taliban-contact](#) Accessed December 2015. A more up to date view is of course needed, but this serves to caution about drawing too firm a line of separation between them in terms of possible elements within with common interests or noting the influence of social-political norms of hospitality.

²³² This observation is also drawn from the author’s personal experiences.

²³³ Bailey, F.G. (1969) *Stratagems and spoils: a social anthropology of politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

²³⁴ Berdal, Mats (2011) *The ‘New Wars’ Thesis Revisited*. In: Strachan, Hew & Scheipers, Sibylle, (eds.) (2011) *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 109 to 133.

²³⁵ The analytical framework of: “actors, interests and dynamics” is used by the UN as taught by the UN System Staff College in their excellent courses on conflict analysis. I have inserted this here as it also relates well and reasonably accurately to Berdal’s argument in the referenced article and enables further exploration of some exceptionally useful frames that interrelate with this and others quite neatly.

²³⁶ Thanks to Professor Shaun Gregory (University of Durham) for alerting me to this analytical frame. Adjustment to include non-judgment of legitimacy as appropriate made by the author.

effects, it is advisable to acknowledge and explore ways in which particular institutions constrain and enable behaviour. Institutions have the potential to change agents, including their purposes or preferences, but as in some cases in Afghanistan, the reverse can also occur with implications for political and other processes, interactions and issues, e.g. the will of certain individuals (or groups and analytical categories of individuals) in instituting their interests in shaping the establishment, functioning, delivery and development of an institution, such as the Ministry of Defence.

Relations, discourses and rules are also useful points to consider in the latter discrete areas of institutions. This includes those relations, discourses and rules pre-existing, imported and introduced by intervening efforts, and worked intensively as part of it in varying ways. For example, rules can be 'immanently normative': rules that are scrutinized and contested. This is a major on-going challenge *vis-à-vis* major Afghan security institutions that see highly focussed efforts as part of: the Resolute Support Mission, the work of other Missions and bi-lateral relationships with nation-states.

Social transmission is also becoming more accepted on the ground as a consideration that requires more careful and consistent attention, as this depends on social culture, understandings of language and concepts. At times, it can seem as though the rules and tacit and explicit knowledge of them in relation to donor funding, capacity building and other support to institutions in Afghanistan are areas of cyclical renegotiation (e.g. when new international military, official (including diplomats) and advisor rotations come about). This may demonstrate another way of doing politics: negotiating the rules of the game, but not settling them. The latter is often desired under what may be referred to by some as western intervention, donor support and capacity building modalities, but such an expectation may not be in tune with wider political-security-economic dynamics, what I call the political-security-economic nexus.

Spatialities of the local, including local history and local political culture, are essential for inclusion in analytical framing, if qualitative and quantitative analysis is to be toward the more reliable end of the spectrum of probabilities. Berdal (2011) makes a similar point especially well. It is also the case in my own experience in Afghanistan, too. The local can factor into all of the above frames. Within the local, and with possible associations with the above framings too, is the analytical frame of "micro foundations of war" as per Woodward (2007). In a conflict setting this is very appropriate. This frame includes the following in analysing the generation and perpetuation of violence: local, village, town, community, and personal dynamics.²³⁷ If conflict is not being analysed, this frame can remain useful, too and need not be divested with. This is as it can, for example, be used to monitor instability, historical effects of conflict, (potential) spoilers, and so forth.²³⁸ A related associated frame applicable to nation states through to individuals and much in-between, as well as more moderate circumstances is: actors, interests and dynamics.²³⁹ Allied to the latter and former frames is that of 'forces and factors'. These are worthy of sensitive appraisal and are easy to overlook, but can change the results of analytical interpretation. Items include: ideas, religion, nationalism, honour and prestige.²⁴⁰

Although the local appears to be a neat addition to the national, other spatial frames do exist that are increasingly informative and I would posit crucial regarding Afghanistan. Salient among them is: city

²³⁷ Woodward, Susan (2007) 'Do the root causes of civil war matter?', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1/2 (2007), p. 156.

²³⁸ Sun Tzu's insight here is rather instructive: "Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy;" as in Sun-tzu, ., & Griffith, S. B. (1964) *The art of war*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 77.

²³⁹ This is used, for example, in conflict analysis, as taught by the UN System Staff College (UNSSC) on excellent courses offered by them.

²⁴⁰ As stated in Berdal (2011).

and rural,²⁴¹ this is sometimes referred to the relatable (though not precisely the same) frames of centripetal and centrifugal forces.²⁴² The relationship between these two spatialities, which often changes, therefore needs to be factored in to analysis to make sense of each. An example in Afghanistan is the influence that rural tribal figures can have on the central government. Regarding air strikes, and the reaction this could provoke, for instance stinging rebukes to U.S. and U.S.-led NATO/ISAF Forces in Afghanistan by President Karzai, was for a time underestimated, though later adjusted by General McChrystal and his team in 2009. This comes amid a complex set of rural-urban relations of influence that can translate into power projection of various kinds (e.g. ranging from elections mobilisation to armed groups to control resources and provincial capital security, and through this Kabul's stability). This frame can, unfortunately be all-too-easily be dismissed.²⁴³

The rural-urban relationship is worth mentioning with regard to the vexed question of ISIL. There are indications that a number of factors related to groups gathering under the banner of ISIL see centrifugal aspects. For example: disenfranchisement of some Taliban commanders, some communities and figures, and individuals, who may in the past have projected the will and message of the central government. Also, the targeting of the aforementioned (for support and to disperse resources) by external envoys and larger backers in part as a consequence of centrifugal and disrupted centripetal forces.

If ISIL in Afghanistan (and the region) is taking root in Afghanistan, it is pressing to gain improved understanding of the how, when, why and wherefore as this can also help to tell us how we can improve analysis.²⁴⁴ May the same mistakes regarding the dangers of radical groups or of radicalisation in the region be forgotten from the 1970s to the present day. The insights of Coll (2004) and his detailing of interests and dynamics are invaluable, especially many of these are still present in Afghanistan -- if not concentrated -- as regional and global interests intensify proxy competition in Afghanistan and the region.²⁴⁵ In terms of an analytical framework that may foster further clarity on these questions, with regard to groups using terror, that as offered by Cronin (2011) is notable: motivation, method, mobilization, morphology and mindset.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ Giustozzi, Antonio (2009) 'The eye of the storm: cities in the vortex of Afghanistan's civil wars' Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 2, 62. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, available: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28123/1/WP62GiustozziR.pdf> accessed December 2015.

²⁴² Thanks to Dr David Mansfield for alerting me to his use of this concept in what I regard as his exceptionally insightful work. For examples of the use of 'centrifugal forces' in Afghanistan, see, for instance: Mansfield, David (2013) 'EYES WIDE SHUT: Counter-Narcotics in Transition' *Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit*, Briefing Paper Series, September 2013, p. 16. Available: <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/Opium%20BP.pdf> accessed January 2015; Goodhand, J. and D. Mansfield (2010) 'Drugs and Disorder: A Study of the Opium Economy, Political Settlements and Statebuilding in Afghanistan', Crisis States Research Centre, Working Papers Series 2, Number 38, London School of Economics, November 2010, available: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/download/wp/wpSeries2/WP832.pdf> accessed January 2016; Rubin, Barnett (2000) 'The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan', *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1789 to 1803. Accessed January 2016.

²⁴³ Author's own experience of some international officials, which is possible a result of elite-focus of some people and/or entities but which may unnecessarily delimit their ability to fulfill their interests.

²⁴⁴ Since this was drafted, the U.S. has formally and officially listed ISIL Afghanistan and Pakistan (Khorasan) as a terrorist group. This is a major development indicating the seriousness of the threat they pose locally and globally, going by past similar listings. See: U.S. Department of State (2016) 'Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation of ISIL - Khorasan (ISIL-K)' *Office of the Spokesperson*, 17 January 2016. Available: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251237.htm> accessed January 2016.

²⁴⁵ Coll, Steve (2004) *Ghost wars: The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001*. Penguin Press.

²⁴⁶ Cronin, A.K. (2011) What is Really Changing? Change and Continuity in Global Terrorism. In: Strachan, Hew & Scheipers, Sibylle, (eds.) (2011) *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 133 to 150.

Structuring Analysis of the Character, Timing and Phases since 2001

The intervention in Afghanistan can be defined through reference to three separate efforts,²⁴⁷ which were not ideally aligned or particularly well coordinated:²⁴⁸

- (1) **OEF** the U.S.-led counterterrorism effort (now part of OES)
- (2) The **NATO**-led ISAF effort (now the NATO-led RSM) to provide security. It was originally conceived to enable the third effort, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA). (But the ISAF eventually carried out a wide array of tasks and strategies of its own, especially from c. 2010 onwards as part of COIN implementation.)
- (3) **UNAMA**, whose role was and continues to be to facilitate political, governance and to some degree economic development (in coordination with UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, the UNAMA Special Representative of the UN Secretary General being in charge of all UN entities in Afghanistan).

The assumptions encapsulated in these three efforts necessarily require critical examination to appreciate strengths and weaknesses, but also in ascertaining results, consequences and impacts. There have been a number of changes but also continuities in each of the respective parts. Some attention has been given in particular to OEF and the continuation of the counterterrorism effort in Afghanistan. NATO has the resolute support mission, and UNAMA continues to be present and quite engaged. As all of these efforts are by definition associated with the intervention in 2001, they need to all be considered as part of the major intervention actors and dynamic elements of the intervention. It must be noted that UNAMA has a different identity to a more shared one of OEF and NATO, as a UN Special Political Mission (which UNAMA is) pre-existed the Taliban.²⁴⁹ However, at times there are sensitivities around it working in impartial cooperation with OEF and NATO, particularly on, and even if not directly linked with the matter of reconciliation and humanitarian issues. In the author's experience, personal integrity and trust are key, which is more than one-way. Timelines and evolutions in each of the respective aforementioned efforts can be utilized, and in turn analysis of their efforts. In addition to the fundamental triad of: goal, strategy and operations, the basic triad of: government, military and population can be utilized here, as well as those noted immediately above, also, as appropriate. Excellent timeline references can be found quite widely.²⁵⁰ Mandates and policy announcements and information about lines of effort, programming and operations are significant sources. (For instance, as looked at for the question of goals of the U.S. administrations in Afghanistan, earlier in the paper, and UNAMA mandating aspects, as in annex 1.)

²⁴⁷ As stated by Ucko, David & Egnell, Richard (2014) Options for Avoiding Counterinsurgencies, *Parameters*, No. 44, Vol. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 11 to 22, and with some adjustments to this excellent framing, its details and implications taking into account changes since and for the purposes of this paper.

²⁴⁸ This could be attributed to structural reasons, leadership decision-making / personalities, goals that did not always easily match, and for some, the lack of an overall authority with agreed powers who could also 'knock heads together'.

²⁴⁹ Excellent, concise and accessible regarding the earlier UN Special Political Mission in Afghanistan is: Maley, William (2002) *The Afghanistan Wars*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁵⁰ Some excellent examples include: The BBC profile - timeline, marks some significant dates in a chronology from 1838 to the present day. A number of the selected significant changes in Afghanistan noted in this paper can also be seen here, in a wider coverage of chronology and significant developments: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12024253> accessed December 2015. The PBS timeline is a useful comparator. It ends in 2011, however, it provides greater detail in some respects than the BBC's timeline: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan/> accessed December 2015. One of the most outstanding and interactive timelines is: <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/us-war-afghanistan/p20018> accessed December 2015.

A central analytical theme to each of these efforts and throughout the intervention of relevance, and into the future is: security. Ideas, analyses and conclusions about security were instrumental in the institution of and changes to the three aforementioned efforts. The security situation in Afghanistan also implicitly challenged assumptions within each, such as: the population would seize aggressively the opportunity to rid themselves of anyone associated with the Taliban and promote those ‘untainted’ by them. Another assumption challenged by security (with other aspects, too) was that development would follow, and be a strong factor in: government strengthening, institutional development as well as popular acceptance.

Unfortunately, for those analysing, such ‘events’, divisions, distinctions and developments did not often occur on the ground and in reality. However, does not mean they cannot, for instance, be tested, critiqued and/or confirmed in order to elucidate analytical understanding through analytical framing that assesses them.

In terms of democracy and democratic processes, noted in the framing of efforts part of the intervention in Afghanistan since 2001, the population did not embrace and follow in the footsteps of the Western, liberal and neo-liberal causes. The democratization agenda has in some respects influenced the creation of new cleavages and witnessed the exploitation of sensitive old ones, such as along ethnic-political lines through three increasingly fractious presidential elections (2004, 2009, 2014) and other elections (e.g. parliamentary elections in 2010). This has culminated in a National Unity Government that is trying to work together (with some elements within it making more progress than others), but remains divided about how to proceed with constitutionally required elections (as per the constitution post-2001). Owing in large part to discord about the last presidential elections (2014), tensions are intensifying regarding the symbolic and technical matter of the nature of electoral reform (which could be used to reopen old wounds and politically re-context historic results), the status of key elections, and tight electoral timelines.

Political parties have also gone through a number of shifts, and morphologies, which have shaped political (and security as well as other contextual spatialities). A good starting point predates 2001, and reaches into the anti-Soviet Jihad and civil war periods. For example, the existence of political and militant wings is feature (e.g. Hizb-i-Islami, which itself has split at different times into factions), and the dynamics of these as well as the figures within them. In 2009, political party formation was constrained under the Presidency of Hamid Karzai.²⁵¹ In the past few months, a spate of political party realignments and alliance-forming is a notable change in the political sphere that indicates moves behind the scenes by major powerbrokers and others. How this will interplay with the elections issue will be fascinating and critical.

At national, sub-national (e.g. provincial, district and sub-district levels) there has not often been a ‘harmony of interests’ between intervening forces (and non-military) and limited means to effectively impose decisions, paradigms, paths and approaches, if so wished. This relates to the system of governance. The insurgency and proto-insurgency were not and are not about challenging the status quo as such, they are about vying for power and influence (which are not in substance the same) in often highly particularized ways and as the Afghan state evolves as well as is buffeted. (Interestingly, these historical events are congruent with the British Army’s definition of insurgency, but so much so under the U.S.’s major referents (FM-3-24 and related Joint Doctrine definitions).) A dogged effort has been underway to expand a centralized authority traversing a rugged, geopolitically, complex and complicated country where different centres of political gravity have developed. Some are strongly

²⁵¹ Quite a good overview on political parties in Afghanistan which is recent is: Larson, Anna (2015) ‘Political Parties in Afghanistan, USIP Special Report, March 2015, available: <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR362-Political-Parties-in-Afghanistan.pdf> accessed December 2015.

fuelled as a product of the intervention, such as a selection of powerbrokers (sometimes referred to frankly as warlords and more pejoratively so, too).²⁵²

Campaign assumptions²⁵³ and the difficulties in fulfilling aims, both explicit and implicit between c. 2001 to 2003/4, such as regime change and the formation of a state friendly to the U.S. and its allies (with its notions of freedom) are useful points as is being illustrated in points made above. Prominent are two matters that in a way are prescient in so far as the aims and expectations of key elements of state formation proved problematic. These are major components, in distinctive ways, of the continuing strategy in Afghanistan: (i) Afghan security forces, and (ii) governance capacities.²⁵⁴ The former is a major pillar to the U.S. strategy as it was from early on, although currently receives relatively greater emphasis in statements of goals and aims (i.e. President Obama's statement of 15 October 2015). Governance as a distinctive issue area was singled out later on (lamentably) – particularly from 2009 on. It was at that point when it was recognized by some policy and major decision makers as requiring greater support, for hopes had not been fulfilled and the 'surge' was decided upon that under U.S. COIN doctrine placed greater value on it.²⁵⁵

In contrast to Afghan security forces being at the fore of U.S. policy, strategy and operations in Afghanistan: Afghan governance has been configured more recently to be understood as basic service delivery from grander intentions at earlier junctures (e.g. in the last U.K. statement on Afghanistan policy in May 2015, and U.S. effort focus). The relationship between Afghan National Security Forces (now referred to in another change of jargon by the U.S. and NATO as Afghan National Defence Security Forces) and the civilian authorities (in what is in numerous ways a securitized state) constitutes an analytical frame of the utmost significance looking back and analysing Afghanistan into the future.²⁵⁶

²⁵² On this phenomena see: Giustozzi, Antonio (2009) *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, and also, for a critical view: Mehran, Weeda (2013) *Criminal Capture of Afghanistan's Economy*, *Integrity Watch Afghanistan*, December 2013, accessible: http://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/criminal_capture_of_afghanistans_economy_english.pdf accessed December 2015.

²⁵³ It is fair to point out here that not all in the U.S. government and military establishment thought the intervention would go smoothly. As Coker writes of Iraq, can also be said regarding Afghanistan in most respects: "Some members of the Bush administration believed that they risked little in 2003 in invading Iraq; they expected that a weak regime would fall quickly and that they would be welcomed as liberators (as the American army had last been in Grenada in 1983). But it is also clear from the most recent literature to have emerged about the actual decision-making process that many in the military knew the risks from the first: the risk of not going through the UN; the risk of going in with light infantry, in the expectation of 'shocking and awing' the Iraqis into surrender; and the risk of finding themselves involved in a long-drawn-out counter-insurgency struggle." Coker, Christopher (2009) *War in an Age of Risk*, London: Polity Press, p. 103.

²⁵⁴ On establishing Afghan National Security Forces see for example, Giustozzi (2007) pp. 181-189.

²⁵⁵ Regarding the ends, means and ways early on in the intervention and the complications resulting from decisions taken, Hersh (2004) gives useful points in his article: Hersh, S.M. (2004) 'The Other War: *Why Bush's Afghanistan problem won't go away.*' *The New Yorker*, April 12 2004, available: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/04/12/the-other-war> Accessed December 2015.

²⁵⁶ Looking at the most recent articles on the topic, such as that by Stancati & Totakhil (2015), it is striking to compare with the clear and quite systematic analysis coupled with narrative in Giustozzi (2007) and to see that a number of central issues with the ANA continue. Stancati, Margherita & Totakhil, Habib Khan (2015) 'Afghan Army Fights to Quell Widening Exodus:

Soldiers quitting the battlefield hamper campaign against a nationwide Taliban insurgency', *Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2015, available: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-army-fights-to- Quell-widening-exodus-1450288759> Accessed December 2015. Regarding a more in-depth and outstanding study of ANSF see: Schroden et al. (2014) *Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces*, *The Center for Strategic Studies of the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA)*, VA U.S.A., 24 January 2014, full version of the paper is available here: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2014-U-006815-Final.pdf Summary is available here: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2014-U-006816-Final.pdf Accessed December 2015. And, more recently, in a concise section on ANSF with some useful key comparable observations with earlier ANSF developments: McNally & Bucala (2015) 'The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security', *Institute for the Study of War (ISW)*, March

Much attention has been paid to the Afghan National Army regarding ANSF from resources to policy, yet the development of the Afghan Police (in their several forms) has also been a bugbear, and large one at that. Less monitoring of their development in the academic and general public literature is partly explicable as a function of the smaller funding levels they have received, as compared with the ANA. It is also possible to posit that it's also as a consequence of the securitization of the Afghan state, as Sedra (2013) and others whom have observed this phenomenon.²⁵⁷ The full realization that an appropriate, fit-for-purpose, capable and effective Afghan police service was needed to bring security and secure cleared areas, did not (re-) gain momentum until after some bumps until c. 2011 among the majority of the coalition and three aforementioned efforts. It was then that efforts between international military and civilian actors refocused again on this.²⁵⁸ In 2011 this understanding was largely through the lens of the yet to be fulfilled aim of continuing the COIN steps as laid out in FM 3-24: "shape, clear, hold, build",²⁵⁹ and specifically, the (re-) build phase. An analytical frame used by Gray (2015) in assessing threats has an especial relevance with regard to the 'complex' between governance and security organs:²⁶⁰ political process (adapted above in view of the above to 'political processes,' and subject to other analysis and analytical frames for refinement as well as precision). This concurrently goes to the heart of assumptions about the supposedly co-supporting formation of Afghan Security Forces and governance. The reach of these issues from U.S. policy and strategy, but also donor issues, and all the way to sub-national level is as extraordinary as it is catalytic and stymying to goal satisfaction. The effects of early choices of figures to support in the early years of the intervention, evolving funding and arming even as part of security force 'build' are very much part of this complicated security-political-economic nexus.²⁶¹

Presently, the National Unity Government is under pressure internally externally, as key expectations from international and domestic constituencies (not merely audiences) have yet to be unfulfilled.²⁶²

2015, pp.22to 24, available: <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/taliban-resurgent-threats-afghanistans-security#sthash.6EZDkRev.dpuf> accessed December 2015.

²⁵⁷ Sedra, Mark (2013) 'The Hollowing-out of the liberal peace project in Afghanistan: the case of security sector reform', *Central Asian Survey* 32(3) pp.371-387. And also Giustozzi (2007) & (2009) makes this point as he does in other works, too.

²⁵⁸ The author was involved in this effort. On earlier efforts see: Giustozzi, Antonio & Isaqzadeh, Mohammed (2013) *Policing Afghanistan: The Politics of the Lame Leviathan*, Colombia University press and Hurst & Co. and a paper prior to this that also covers this issue, in shorter form, see: Giustozzi, Antonio & Isaqzadeh, Mohammed (2011) 'Afghanistan's Paramilitary Policing in Context. The Risks of Expediency', *Afghan Analysts Network*, 22 November 2011, available: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-papers/afghanistans-paramilitary-policing-in-context-the-risks-of-expediency/> Accessed December 2015.

²⁵⁹ *Counterinsurgency Army Field Manual 3-24*: University of Chicago Press/Department of the Army (2006). This was first published in 2006 and saw several changes, the most recent being on 2 June 2014. The: shape, clear, hold, build paradigm is still present. For an online version including note of which pages have changed see: <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf> accessed December 2015.

²⁶⁰ Including their policy, strategy and operational components.

²⁶¹ For initial intervention decisions and backing see Giustozzi (2007). For a scarce and invaluable insight into a integral political process in institution building, governance 'development' and vying for influence in the security-governance milieu with incomparable ground-level reach, see: Isaqzadeh, M. R. & Giustozzi, Antonio (2015) 'Senior Appointments and Corruption within the Afghan Mol: practices and perceptions', *Integrity Watch Afghanistan*, available: http://integritywatch.co/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/moi_senior_appointments_and_corruption_english.pdf accessed December 2015. Giustozzi (2007) & (2009) is good on the broad history and trends. Multiple studies exist, of varying quality, on detailed elements of ANSF build and sustainment. SIGAR Reports furnish some sharp insights, but is not infallible. The SIGAR website publishes their reports and is updated regularly: <https://www.sigar.mil>

²⁶² For example, in part but not wholly due to unfulfilled publicised plans such as the 100 day plans, see: 'Review of the Anti-Corruption Components of Ministerial 100-Day Plans' (2015) MEC, 17 September 2015 Available: [http://www.mec.af/files/2015_09_17_100-Day_Plans_Review_\(English\).pdf](http://www.mec.af/files/2015_09_17_100-Day_Plans_Review_(English).pdf) Accessed December 2015. On perceptions the author conducted intensive analysis on this matter and the closely related area of public perceptions of the National Unity Government when Afghanistan in 2014 and 2014.

Further, uncertainties have created political space for elements and figures within this nexus to seek to shape interests, events and futures.

On Analysing Security in Afghanistan

There are few issues of analysis more contentious in and about Afghanistan than of security. Security and perspectives pertaining to it have gone through countless changes, which is a form of recognition (but not the only explanation) of the diversity of ways of assessing it. Adjustments in conceiving of security within different organisations, and attempts to measure and account for it, have occurred since 2001.

Among the more widespread analytical approaches to security in Afghanistan is the recording of security incidents, with a view to trend analysis and correlating causes from which some explanatory power can be obtained, over time. Different categorizations of security and elements of security are available, as are various ways of attributing and potentially prioritizing it and insecurity. One of the most common in Afghanistan is, for example, to count the number of security incidents in which people are killed or injured (civilians and/or military), as a result of ‘direct enemy action’. Another permutation of this is to include, in addition, the other incidents that may be consequence of enemy activity, e.g. detonating an improvised explosive device (IED), which neither causes death or injury. But it does cause disruption. This can substantially alter the ‘picture’ presented by the data. More wide-ranging security incident analyses, including that regularly done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, include criminal incidents (which may very well be part of an insurgency or terror efforts). During the course of the campaign, ISAF used EIA or ‘enemy initiated attack’ analysis as a key measure. However, its coverage of the country changed markedly, particularly in c. 2013 to 2014, as its footprint reduced dramatically. Direct and indirect attack classifications also changed as part of the EIA measure, over time, too.²⁶³

Understandably, different inclusions, ways of categorising, counting and deriving meaning from events can have dramatically different results even before in-depth evaluation is entered into. For example, in September 2011, UNAMA and ISAF had very different data on the security situation and trends. This caused controversy in the press and no small confusion, but it did come down to different ways of measuring (and perhaps changes in calculating, for example, at ISAF).²⁶⁴

Government accessibility is a more complex assessment to make, but one, which with careful attention can be tailored to the context, and in my experience and be more informative about different kinds of security than many calibrated measures of “EIA”. In part, this is as political issues are more relevant, require exploration and more localized understandings, are subsequently represented and prioritized in reception. Some may argue that under the counterterror paradigm that is the focus in Afghanistan for a large part of international efforts there, the logic of terror involving severe violence means that government access and indeed local political context is not as relevant as, say, in 2009. This would overlook the evidence that the Taliban is also active, and, for example, designated terror groups are quite sophisticated but may resist government access rather than commit terror acts in their locales-- unless the question of government access is raised.

²⁶³ Some excellent security analysis was provided by ANSO (Afghan NGO Safety Office). See: <http://www.moonofalabama.org/2011/10/what-happened-to-the-afghanistan-ngo-safety-office.html>

²⁶⁴ Nissenbaum, Dion (2011) ‘Differing Data Shape Views of Surge’ *Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2011, available: <http://e-ariana.com/ariana/eariana.nsf/allDocs/11fd2dcf4e6934588725790300561e7f!OpenDocument&Click> or <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2011/september/sep62011.html#6> Accessed December 2015.

Tracking events, though the basis of establishing some benchmarks and reference points for later comparison and trend analysis depends on context and pertinence. Pertinence can be fraught with questions about purpose. In the case of Afghanistan, how important are general security measures (which may take many potential forms) when counterterrorism is the one consistent goal? Flowing from this, and as became a topic of discussion regarding to ‘surge’ or not in 2009: is a narrow counterterror focus likely to achieve its ends without wider efforts to stabilize society. (And, what is meant by stabilize society can also vary widely not to mention ideas around appropriateness thereto?) Therefore, how should security analysis, data collection and anticipated developments to which analysis can be tailored be calibrated?

The amount of data that could be generated on security in Afghanistan is endless, but is quantity necessarily useful? When decision-making, finite resources of personnel and time in particular are taken into account, the answer leans to the negative. Security assessment in Afghanistan is not a *cul-de-sac* and nor should it become one. Increasing experience of data modelling indicates that limited data from a variety of sources is more useful than a great detail of data with a similar focus.²⁶⁵ Frequent reference to context is also paramount, and this does not mean more basic data, but explorations of sociological perspectives and associated social science and arts and humanities approaches. Adjustment of approach is also necessary in response to political, security and other developments deemed relevant. In the current climate in Afghanistan, volatility in the security and intersecting spheres is palpable for those who have been in the country recently. It is a trend that could be said to have started in early 2011 and continued since.²⁶⁶

Territory is another measure frequently utilized to gauge security, insecurity and related changes also implying relative success in strategy. This is partly owing to the heavy emphasis historically placed on territory and related cartography (as noted above) as a supreme indication of reality. In Afghanistan, district capital control or district control are classic measures. Yet, they do not explain more meaningful dimensions of influence, strategy and intent that can radically change implications for security analysis. A range of issues assessed would be more helpful, including local perceptions, assessment of the means being made use of by actors and what is being contested and how this interrelates with sub-regional or larger possible strategic trends.

More subtle are how insurgents and terrorists are trying to influence populations, security forces, governments and other actors. Social and political aspects are invaluable, and often far outweigh aggregated kinetic data, but it is together that they become synergetic if carefully contextualised and crafted for analysis. This raises the question of foci of security, for instance: terror groups, individuals, communities and even designated high profile targets and urban areas -- doubtless all have important stories to tell. One of the areas related to this that is raising numerous questions of an under-researched character centres about youth. This includes the impact of instability and insurgent as well as terror group (and related supporter) outreach on them. One of the few studies of note is by Giustozzi & Ali (2015).²⁶⁷ This is most notable for looking towards the future and medium to long-term analysis, but which would be best started now for better qualitative understanding later.

Fuller, more all-encompassing conceptualities of security, for example bridging security, safety and comfort are possible in targeted ways. This need not be instantly dismissed if conceived of as a

²⁶⁵ Discussions with a variety of data and security data modelers, both academic and security practitioners.

²⁶⁶ For example the terrible attack of 17 January 2011 in Kabul, for example, see: Amiri, Mokhtar (2011) At least 13 killed in attack on Kabul restaurant in diplomatic quarter, *The Guardian Newspaper*, London, 17 January 2011, available: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/17/suicide-attack-kabul-restaurant-foreigners>

²⁶⁷ Giustozzi, Antonio & Ali, A.M. (2015) Reaching Boiling Point: High School Activism in Afghanistan, AREU Issues Paper, October 2015, available: <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1518E%20Reaching%20Boiling%20Point-%20High%20School%20Activism%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf> accessed December 2015.

working idea. Security assessments around the core goal around counterterrorism should be sufficiently sophisticated to see that in Afghanistan, with its history, especially its recent history there is room for working ideas such as this. Moreover, Afghanistan is fraught with conflict, proxy interests, deep networks some of which facilitate terror recruitment, training and other activities. Thus, wider security is not only laudable, but necessary longer-term goal to deal with the roots of terror, insurgency and instability.

The constant, if there is one, is the high value of contextual understanding. If juxtaposition were to be made, it would be done so with ‘battery’ security measurements, which continue despite developments and insists on its own internal logic at the expense of more nuanced forms. Holbrooke’s observation is apt, which can be applied to security or insecurity: “*In the simplest sense, the Supreme Court test for another issue: We’ll know it when we see it.*”²⁶⁸ Sir Robert Thompson made a similar point regarding subtle, but important indicators of a qualitative nature during the Vietnam War: ‘These indicators were not something that Mr McNamara could readily grasp. He wanted figures. I once said to members of his staff (I did not dare say it to him), “If you are in the business, you know whether you are winning or not. If you do not know whether you are winning or not, you are not in the business.”’²⁶⁹ Security is not synonymous with success, but if tailoring to ends it can be. (Progress – in not overly-deterministic sense -- is a better word than success in this case as long timeframes involved. This is due to the depth, dispersion and difficulty of the goal, and associated objectives and possible broader stability-related objectives).

Gaining understanding of Afghan perceptions as to how security is felt, analysed and impacts individuals and communities is also relevant to ascertain the security situation, trends and ontologies, which may provide otherwise obscured insights.²⁷⁰ The lens of the ‘micro-foundations of war’ and of ‘forces and factors’ are apposite in acceptance that as Goodson (2001) penetratingly points out Afghanistan sees a “*mosaic of warfare*”²⁷¹ (historically so and I would argue also currently and in all probability sadly for sometime to come).

Although highly sophisticated analyses and analytical methodologies can be developed, in my experience A combination of analysis of broader political, economic, security, humanitarian and other trends regarding Afghanistan, including those provided by impartial entities such as the UNAMA in its public reporting can be useful frameworks from which to draw to developing analysis and refine analytical framing. They also provide entry points through which to enter into more detailed investigations. Focus on seams of apparent tension between actors, interests, and dynamics is invariably fruitful. Proceeding rather systematically through these, endeavouring to establish causal factors and influences, and seeking to more deeply understand the contextual fabrics is germane and not incidental. Access to local knowledge, including pertinent histories is a *sine qua non* for precision.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Tiedemann, Katherine (2009) ‘Holbrooke on Success: We’ll Know it when we See it,’ *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2009, available: http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/08/12/holbrooke_on_success_we_ll_know_it_when_we_see_it Accessed December 2015.

²⁶⁹ Thompson, Sir Robert (1989) *Make for the Hills: Memories of Far Eastern Wars*, London: Leo & Cooper, pp. 143 to 144.

²⁷⁰ This can only be achieved, in the author’s observations and experiences, through personal relationships based on mutual respect and trust, which again take time and can neither be rushed nor instrumentalized. Dedication is therefore necessary among those requiring security assessments and also conducting them to ensure this is possible.

²⁷¹ Goodson, Larry, P. (2001) *Afghanistan’s Endless War. State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*. p. 36.

²⁷² In this regard, major ‘turning points’ for security can be quite well established by reference to sources such as Giustozzi (2007) p. 109, in his remarks regarding the change from a strongly cyclical character of violence in Afghanistan at the end of 2005 to a greater concentration of attacks by the Taliban, who were no longer content with fighting in the customary fighting season. Various statistical measures and related analyses hold a similar view. In 2009

Trying to understand security from human perspectives, and even those of insurgents, can also be tried with useful results, particularly when transactions and/or violence appear to be random or ‘careless’. They seldom are, in my experience, in Afghanistan. But they do require challenging of assumptions.

It is necessary here to point out that Afghanistan continues to suffer war, insecurity, instability and insurgency. According to the definition the U.K. military use, there is still an insurgency in Afghanistan and therefore to use the correct analytical frames to make sense of the context, we need to acknowledge this.²⁷³ Insurgency is defined as: “organized, violent subversion used to effect or prevent political control, as a challenge to established authority.” As to how established the National Unity Government is, and other interests may be borne in mind in applying this definition, as Ucko & Egnell eruditely point out: “Contrary to conventional wisdom, the British Army does not view insurgency as necessarily geared toward the overthrow of government; instead, it clarifies that it can have “many aims, the most common of which are: to gain control of territory, seek resolution of a grievance or seek the overthrow of the existing authority.”²⁷⁴

A harmony of interests in the Afghan government is not uniformly and immediately evident always. Vested interests run deep, largely as a result of actions by the international community (and the U.S. by virtue of the scope and scale its role and decision making). External interests are currently increasing their reach across the political, security and economic space. This makes it difficult for the Afghan authorities to do what the sage of dealing with insurgency, Sir Robert Thompson, counselled: address the roots; get into a sustainable position; wait and use breaks to gain advantage.²⁷⁵ All the while, work goes into to making Afghanistan something of a going political and economic concern,

new peaks in violence were reached (numerous sources show this, using a variety of methodologies). Regarding recent security trends, UNAMA reports, the quarterly (and before c. 2010 twice-annual) update to the UN Security Council twice-annual Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict are excellent sources. From early 2013 distinctive changes in the insurgency, and actions by terrorist groups were becoming apparent. One was a reversal in the trend of fewer civilian casualties according to the UNAMA Human Rights Mid-Year Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in 2013. This tracked that in first half of 2013, compared with the first half of 2012 saw a fifth more civilians killed or injured in the fighting. The report, and others of this type, are available here: <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports> accessed December 2015. A range of non-publically available reports indicate the same broad trend. See also: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/war-intensifies-with-more-civilian-casualties-the-half-yearly-unama-report/>. By the end of 2014 it had become apparent that there changing dynamics of the war in Afghanistan, As the UNAMA Protection of Civilians Human Rights Report stated: “the armed conflict in Afghanistan took a dangerous new turn for civilians. For the first time since 2009 when UNAMA began systematically documenting civilian casualties in Afghanistan, more civilians were found to have been killed and injured in ground engagements and crossfire between Anti-Government Elements and Afghan national security forces than any other tactic. In previous years, the majority of civilians were killed and injured by improvised explosive devices.” UNAMA Human Rights / OHCHR Afghanistan Midyear Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2014, p.1. Available here: http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=m_XyrUQDKZg%3D& Even more importantly, this trend was also found by others, such as the Political Affairs Division of UNAMA, which forms the backbone of the UN Mission in the country (though does not publish reports such as the UNAMA Human Rights Report, given its often delicate and sensitive work).

²⁷³ As in Ucko, David & Egnell, Robert (2013) *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.5.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. The U.S. Army, for example, defines insurgency as: “An insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself (JP 3-24).” As stated in: FM 3-24, 2 June 2014, available: <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf> accessed December 2015. “JP 3-24” refers to: “‘Joint Publication 3-24 Counterinsurgency’ (2013) *Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 22 November 2013.’ Available: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_24.pdf accessed December 2015. The latter notes in its preface: “This publication provides joint doctrine for the planning, execution, and assessment of counterinsurgency operations.”

²⁷⁵ Thompson, Sir Robert (1966) *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1966). For this formulation see: Marks, Tom (1989) “The Counter-Revolutionary: Sir Robert Thompson – Grand Master of Unconventional Warfare,” *Soldier of Fortune*, 14, no. 10 (October 1989), pp. 58 to 65 and 77 to 80.

with security perhaps treated more as a cause than a symptom of problems exploited by groups using terror nationally and globally.

Afghanistan's Economic Environment

Afghanistan's economic environment is characterized by several key economic institutions and interlocutors as experiencing: (1) on-going political crisis; (2) worsening security, and; (3) economic impacts resulting from the draw-down of international military forces.^{276 277}

Regarding the move from Transition/*Inteqal* into the decade of transformation, and the extent of the economic impact of international military force drawdown, important differences exist among economists, the Afghan government and others. This is noteworthy here as it represents an important frame for analyzing the effects of intervention including military and broader resource streams. It also sets parameters around which analytical framing of the political economy and the political-security economic nexus noted above can be further interrogated for analytical purposes.

For some, such as leading World Bank economists (who have conducted one of the few concerted studies addressing this area): Transition (including ISAF and PRT draw-down) is not having as great an economic impact as many feared or suppose.²⁷⁸ Contrastingly, many Afghan officials, including governors, senior government officials at sub-national and national levels, as well as merchants, have emphasized the severe economic pain suffered by populations proximate to former PRT and ISAF base locations, which is becoming more widespread.²⁷⁹ Relevant factors in assessing the effects of this change include: issues of employment substitution, resource capture and redistribution, and external financial support the modalities of this have strong political economy elements. This is in part because the Afghan economy adding very little value to the goods and services it produces;²⁸⁰ it is largely dependent on overseas aid or capital injections, rather than domestic revenue. A rentier effect is operative filtering through and connecting different interests. The most recent widely recognized *relatively* robust study assessing the broad structure of the economy was the NRVA (National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment) 2013. This found that 27% of GDP is derived from agriculture; manufacturing comprises 14.2% of GDP; and, the service sector 54.4% of GDP. The latter figure is more consistent with a developed Western economy with a vibrant service sector and consumption. Some analysts have noted this is also indicative of a 'war economy' where large injections of cash, contracts and foreign presence create a service sector 'bubble'. This starkly contrasts with other sectors, and inordinately high levels of unsustainable consumption (reflected in an overall GDP figure and GDP composition). Such a bubble is subject to shocks.

Fundamentally, accurate economic data is scarce or non-existent, which some analysts have termed a 'data deficit'. Not only does this affect the robustness of relatively standard economic measures, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and inflation; it also impacts the range of macro and micro economic measures in the country, including those for different geographical areas within the

²⁷⁶ I.e. The ADB, the World Bank, and a range of interlocutors with focus on economic issues regarding Afghanistan.

²⁷⁷ For instance, see the ADB's profile of the Afghan economy: <http://www.adb.org/countries/afghanistan/economy>

²⁷⁸ Claudia Nassif, (2013) *The Economic Impacts of Transition*, World Bank. Available:

http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/9780821398616_CH02 and for more context see the other chapters, available: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-0-8213-9861-6> Accessed December 2015.

²⁷⁹ Discussions with various Afghan political figures and views of counterparts in the international community regarding the messages conveyed to them by the same.

²⁸⁰ This can be seen from data in the National Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), and a range of other surveys. The latest version of the NRVA is available:

<http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/MDGs/NRVA%20REPORT-rev-5%202013.pdf> Accessed December 2015.

country,²⁸¹ unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain systematic data.²⁸² This is of import for two key reasons: (A) rapid economic change is both desired and can potentially occur in Afghanistan, due to its fragility (B) large variations exist within Afghanistan, for instance between: rural-urban areas, provinces and intra-provincially with strong correlations and interrelated political processes and political economy. The most recent GINI coefficient found inequality in Afghanistan has worsened: in 2012 it was calculated at 31.6 points from 29.7 in 2007/08. The World Bank, in discussions, also notes Afghanistan's high poverty rate and income inequality.²⁸³

Associated consequences of the data deficit -- with political, policy and strategic dimensions -- which cannot be underestimated in terms of analytically framing assessment of Afghanistan's situation and prospective developments are: the substantial differentials between basic (key) economic indicators produced by specialized international economic bodies. Indeed, the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have different figures for the key measure of GDP and GDP growth,^{284 285286} impacting confidence, elevating uncertainty, and made calls for support more complicated.²⁸⁷ Moreover, investors dislike uncertainty, be they private or governmental.²⁸⁸

Both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's Afghanistan national economic outlooks attribute falling GDP growth rates in the country 'insecurity' and 'uncertainty'. Similarly, the Afghan government also does in its formal written assessments. However, while the unstable political and security situation certainly affect market confidence and investment levels, there is very little reference to the self-evident link between shrinking international financial commitments and shrinking GDP growth rates. It is important to be realistic about the level of effective dependency Afghanistan has on donor funds; not only for economic growth, but intrinsically tied political and social stability that this enables.

Afghanistan's fiscal circumstances reflect a generally weak macroeconomic scenario. This is largely as fiscal resources mostly flow from abroad. For example, the 1393 budget (total of USD 6.9 billion) is only 30% financed through domestic resources, 64% through external assistance and 6% by debt.²⁸⁹

²⁸¹ For instance, there are different ways of calculating GDP (see annex), which are affected in different ways by a data-deficit, which in turns negatively impacts possibilities for cross-checking. Recent discussions with NATO and international military advisors and international economists exemplified the difficulty in obtaining economic data on regional variations, in order to adjust pay and food stipend pay-scales. No systematic, robust data exists. The only possible guide being the NRVA, which comprises dated data, from well before the Transition / *Inteqal* process.

²⁸² In this regard, although not regarded by a number of analysts as robust, p8 of the Asia Foundation notes the large income variation in Afghanistan, available here: <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2014final.pdf> Accessed December 2015.

²⁸³ Presentation by World Bank lead economist Dr Claudia Nassif – March 2015.

²⁸⁴ The World Bank projects Afghanistan's economic (GDP) growth to be 1.5% in 2015, whilst the Asian Development Bank estimates 1.5% for the same measure. The IMF projects real GDP growth to be 4.5% in 2015. This represents a significant spread in terms of percentage variation (and not just raw percentage difference).

²⁸⁵ The IMF is one of the few that measures real GDP growth in Afghanistan: 2014: 3.2%; 2015: 4.5% (projected). See: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/AFG/index.htm>

²⁸⁶ *Real Gross Domestic Product (real GDP)* is a macroeconomic measure of the value of economic output adjusted for price changes (i.e., inflation or deflation).

²⁸⁷ This was particularly apparent in discussions by members of the international community in relation to funding modalities to Afghan National Security Forces – the single largest area of international community spending currently and prospectively, through the decade of transformation. Specifically, the estimates by the World Bank for Afghanistan's economic growth upon which funding policy and transition was based were found to be overly optimistic. This impacted appetite and influenced policy towards the Afghan Government, i.e. increasing accountability measures and conditionalities to overall funding.

²⁸⁸ Cordesman noted this issue in his paper: Cordesman, Anthony and Burke, Arleight (2012) *Afghanistan, the uncertain economics of transition*. CSIS: Washington, available: <http://csis.org/publication/afghanistan-uncertain-economics-transition> Accessed December 2015.

²⁸⁹ Afghan Ministry of Finance, 1393 Budget.

The Government is the main employer in the country (e.g. 40.1% of the 1393 national budget goes in the salaries of 846,436 *tashkil* – government employees) and national employment levels are largely dependent upon foreign commitments. The latter are not easily calculated as sources differ and centralized calculations are not available. It is estimated that around 45% of Afghan GDP in 2013²⁹⁰ came from foreign grants, through both on-budget, public spending, and direct consumption (off-budget spending). It is estimated that not only does off-budget spending drive a great deal of national aggregate demand, on-budget spending (Government wages and salaries; purchases of goods and services, and the acquisition of assets) is largely financed through external assistance. External funding has an indirect multiplier effect upon the GDP, which is an important factor in terms of the prospects of its reduction. This is as the immediate beneficiaries of capital injections use this money to purchase goods and services from fellow Afghans, to a significant extent with economic and political interrelationships.²⁹¹

Revenue generation is an essential element to Afghanistan's finances and sustainability. Somewhat concerning, is the fiscal room for increasing revenue generation in the short to medium term is assessed as limited. *Adam Smith International's* figures on projected increased Afghan government revenues during the next two to three years estimate that there could be as much as an additional USD300 million per annum available, as of 2017. This would increase the domestic resource share of the national budget from 30% up to 35%. This leaves a very large portion of the Afghan government budget (65%) to be financed through ODA/OOF and debt. Afghanistan also continues to suffer from a period of reduced tax receipts and customs revenue. This is assessed to demonstrate, to some extent, the susceptibility of the Afghan Government to the illegal subversion of government income. Recent reports of increased Afghan government revenue are not seen as particularly credible by a number of strong analysis and economists.²⁹²

Afghanistan's trade balance is among the most imbalanced in the world; of USD 500 million of official exports per year Afghanistan imports USD 9.3 billion of goods and services per year (with smuggling allegedly counting as much as an extra USD 1.6 billion). Unofficial exports, including narcotics such as opium, are estimated to be as high as USD 2.6 billion.²⁹³ However, the government does not see tax revenues and other trade benefits of this, and neither do many Afghans due to resource capture. Some employment and local-economic benefits do accrue from funds flowing from this illicit trade. Unfortunately, there are large social, political and economic costs such as insecurity, conflict escalation and intensification, and instability caused by the 'narcotics complex.' In any case, large foreign cash injections (mostly ODA) effectively facilitate the maintenance of an otherwise unsustainable trade deficit.

This broad trade structure reflects the key weaknesses of the Afghan economy: all exported products are either 'raw' or are processed to a very limited extent, adding little added value and therefore prospective profit margin.²⁹⁴ It also renders them more susceptible to market shifts and uncertainty, instead of diversification out of raw commodities. Conversely, Afghanistan imports all the high value-added products it requires since none are produced domestically. This puts a strain on Afghanistan's currency and the affordability of imported goods, in addition to a low wealth base.

²⁹⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Economic update April 2014, p. 13. This is the latest World Bank GDP figure, available: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/afghanistan> Accessed December 2015.

²⁹¹ Fellow Afghans are providers of labour, goods and services to both expatriates and Afghan nationals employed through the dissemination of international funds.

²⁹² Discussions with a number of economists focusing on Afghanistan.

²⁹³ World Bank, Afghanistan Economic update April 2014, p. 13. This is the latest World Bank figure, available: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/afghanistan> Accessed December 2015.

²⁹⁴ This includes major exports such as: dry fruits, medicinal plants, and animal by-products such as wool and skin, but also carpets (where there is high competition in the region, despite their added value aspect).

Afghanistan's economic situation underscores its vulnerability in multiple ways, not least its overall security and opportunities for development unencumbered by international and regional actions. Afghanistan's illicit is notoriously large, and has numerous associations drawn between it and insecurity, including insurgent and terror group funding, the extent of which is disputed.²⁹⁵

Afghanistan's Illicit Economy

The opium produced in Afghanistan comprises over 90% of that reaching Europe. It forms a very small percentage of that in the U.S.. A joint World Bank/UNODC study on the Afghan Opium Economy made a number of important observations in 2006, which the former head of UNDOC Afghanistan proffers are even more valid today. He wrote recently:

Opium, already seen then as critical to the rural economy, continues to influence employment, land use and access to credit; in the process, drug money becomes a major part of the informal financial transfer system (*hawala/hundi*); whilst poor governance and lack of rule of law exacerbates the problem by providing myriad opportunities for corruption.²⁹⁶

Despite concerted efforts, as part of the intervention since 2001 to eradicate poppy, gains made in opium cultivation reduction since 2007 were erased by three consecutive years of growth. By 2013, a new and historic peak of opium crop was recorded.

According to UNODC, the annual export value of Afghan opiates and their derivatives reached USD 3 billion in 2013, or 14 percent of Afghanistan's GDP. While this is a significant decrease from 2006, when opium production constituted more than half of the country's GDP, it is still very sizable sum in proportion. Much of the decrease in its contribution to Afghanistan's GDP can be attributed to the growth of Afghanistan's licit economy. This tripled between 2006 and 2014 (increasing from USD7 billion to more than USD20 billion.) Opium cultivation, however, did not decrease during that period, although there were periods of reduction.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental anti-money laundering body, estimates that between 50 and 90 percent of all transactions in Afghanistan or across Afghanistan's borders involve the use of the *hawala* system. The narcotics and other illicit trades are known to make extensive use of the *hawala* system. According to the World Bank report, 80 to 90 percent of *hawala* brokers in the Kandahar and Helmand Provinces are involved in money transfers related to narcotics. These remain the most important poppy production regions in Afghanistan. Furthermore, many brokers have reported that nearly all of the funds they received were from narcotics traffickers. No government tax is generated from this, and it is unregulated. Therefore, a key check to the illicit economy is not in place, and an effective and resilient 'black market' with sophisticated financial services is.

The sophistication of forms of bargaining, revenue-raising, and illegal taxation in the political-security-economic nexus at local, and 'higher' levels is an area where no strong systematic data exists. As a thematic area, it is also one of the most underexplored areas of Afghanistan. This is despite it being a key nexus and way for a government, or indeed an insurgency, to draw support and build

²⁹⁵ For example see Giustozzi (2007), pp. 88-89, and also Mansfield, David, more generally, a list of his publications is available at: <http://www.davidmansfield.org/index.php>. Several publications not listed at this site are forthcoming.

²⁹⁶ Lemahieu, Jean-Luc and Bajwa, Madeeha (2014) Capturing the Elusive Formula Against Afghanistan's Drug Economy Through Integration Stability Journal. Available: <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.ef/240> Accessed December 2015.

authority in the country.²⁹⁷ The presence of centrifugal and related forces as part of this thematic area is also key: each informing the other.

It is germane here to pause to take stock of the official banking system in Afghanistan, although it is not ‘illicit’ *per se*. It has, nevertheless, undergone major shocks in recent years, most notably the Kabul Bank scandal (trust is an elemental factor in banking systems and their qualities). Serious reservations endure among international economists, political analysts and others about the accountability and robustness of the regulation of Afghanistan’s funds that flow through this. Strong signals are the administration of government funds for the security and development sectors, as well as within ministries, require improvements to reduce risks.²⁹⁸

Afghanistan’s Security Sector

The enormity of security sector is also worth putting into some historical perspective here, relevant to analytical framing. Although precise figures are not available, the security sector of Afghanistan consumes up to 60 % of the government’s operating budget,²⁹⁹ and likely more than this as a percentage of overseas aid flows into the country. Of the USD109 billion dollars that the U.S. contributed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, more than half (USD 62 billion) was spent on the Afghan military alone.³⁰⁰ This is without counting non-military elements by the U.S., such as the police, intelligence services and counter-narcotics forces. Contributions by other donors (of which there are many) increase the figure further.³⁰¹³⁰² This state of affairs has been broadly and quite frequently criticized by the development fraternity, however, the age-old debate between development to obtain security or security to obtain development looks likely to rumble on.

What is clear is that employment opportunities are scarce and the security sector is Afghanistan’s largest sector of employment, with no immediately clear alternative livelihoods, or programmes with a strong and sizable record of (relative) success. Furthermore, releasing trained soldiers and policemen onto an overburdened civilian job-market so that more can be spent on other sectors may not be wise, especially when DDR, DIAG and the APRP programmes³⁰³ have proven highly challenging. This means Afghan National Security Forces are a focus for political and security hopes in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, but also a target for those seeking to disrupt it, or seek to use it for their own

²⁹⁷ Also going by historical examples, even in the region, tax surveying and raising was a means of settling the frontier and spheres of influence. For example, on the North West Frontier and with connections with Afghanistan in the 19th Century see: Allen, Charles (2001) *Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier*, London: Abacus. (It is also published under the title: ‘Soldier Sahibs: The Daring Adventurers Who Tamed India’s Northwest Frontier’).

²⁹⁸ These funds are largely from donors, but are also from domestic tax receipts and windfalls from mining.

²⁹⁹ World Bank Afghanistan Country Survey, April 2013. Available: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16510/770830REVISED0box377289B00PUBLIC00.pdf?sequence=1>

³⁰⁰ Pillalamarri, A. (2014) Why the US Spent More on Afghanistan Than on the Marshall Plan. *Foreign Policy Magazine*, August 2 2014.

³⁰¹ Sedra, Mark (2015) *An Uncertain Future for Afghanistan’s Security Sector*, Stability Journal. See: <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.ei/244> Accessed December 2015.

³⁰² See the annex for donations to ANSF funding from key donors who are members of the Oversight and Coordination Board (OCB). This does not include funds from Russia, China or India, or programmes, which are substantial.

³⁰³ DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) started in Afghanistan in 2003. DIAG (Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups) was a programme that ran from 2006 to 2011 in Afghanistan, and is regarded by some as a second phase of DDR. APRP (Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Programme) in several important respects followed on from DIAG. A useful reference is: Stapelton, Barbara (2013) ‘Militia Disbandment and Peace Building: AAN republication of a 2008 paper’ *Afghan Analysts Network Occasional Paper*, 28 April 2013, available: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-papers/militia-disbandment-and-peace-building-aan-republication-of-a-2008-paper/> accessed December 2015.

ends. Moves that could be or construed to be could seriously affect political-security and in turn economic dimensions as they are so strongly intertwined. The security dilemma, and of how to manage this nexus is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the Afghan government, and also the international community. The potential for triggering different scales of conflict with volatile escalations is concerning. Regional countries have been showing increasing signs of grave concerns about insecurity perceived to emanate from Afghanistan, and regarding competitors furthering interests which may not be congruent with theirs, in the past year or so.

Regional Dimensions

The cliché that ‘Afghanistan finds itself at a geographical crossroads’, is indicative of a deeper set of relations beyond the strictures of cartographic measurement and territoriality. This may be underappreciated by analytical perspectives more calibrated to understanding of examples of states conforming more closely to classical categorizations of countries and ‘tests’ of sovereignty.³⁰⁴ For within Afghanistan there are communities with strong linguistic, cultural, religious and political ties with countries, areas and localities in the immediate region. There is also a wider ring of regional countries, entities and groupings, which require analytical attention as part of a regional concept, too.

Afghanistan’s identity may be a unitary entity but it is a unifying (and potentially a source of disunity, as with other countries, though potentially more than some others). The unifying effect of external interference or indeed intervention is of issue. History bears witness in Afghanistan to legacies ranging from a central government whose system is modeled on Persian modalities, despite a Royal family being Pashtun. The language of government has been largely Dari (closely related to Persian), not Pashtun, although the latter group held the throne and numerous key positions in the government, military and legal fraternity. These subtleties matter in analyzing: interests; entry points (including for regional countries); means, ways but also reaches; strength of relations and also tensions.

The reach of regional countries into Afghanistan has effects on political security, economic, cultural and a range of factors in Afghanistan’s being, in co-informing and complex ways. Pakistan has, since not long after its creation, looked to ensure what it regards as its interests and influence in Afghanistan, for example, as part of various policies, such as ‘strategic depth’.³⁰⁵ This policy, and perceptions of it in Afghanistan has become a source of discontent in various forms too -- and to some degree in segments of as well as some countries in the international community. The reach of Pakistan in Afghanistan is broadly believed to be unparalleled among neighbouring countries. Historical factors, (politico-) ethnic ties, proximity to centres of geo-political gravity (including security), economic (and

³⁰⁴ Shaw, Malcolm Nathan (2003), *International law*. Cambridge University Press. p. 178. Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, 1933 lays down the most widely accepted formulation of the criteria of statehood in international law. It note that the state as an international person should possess the following qualifications: '(a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states'" And: Jasentuliyana, Nandasiri, ed. (1995). *Perspectives on international law*. Kluwer Law International. p. 20. "So far as States are concerned, the traditional definitions provided for in the Montevideo Convention remain generally accepted."

³⁰⁴ Wheaton, Henry (1836). *Elements of international law: with a sketch of the history of the science*. Carey, Lea & Blanchard. p. 51. "A sovereign state is generally defined to be any nation or people, whatever may be the form of its internal constitution, which governs itself independently of foreign powers."

"Sovereign", *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2005, "adjective ... [attrib.] (of a nation or state) fully independent and determining its own affairs."

³⁰⁵ See: Gregory, Shaun (2013). ‘Pakistan: Security Perspectives on Afghanistan.’ In: *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan*. Snetkov, Aglaya & Aris, Stephen, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61 to 82. For an insightful analysis of this and how it relates to the Pakistan Army and aspects of wider Pakistan society see: Fair, C. Christine (2014) *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

trade) links can account for a sizable portion of this. The question of bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table almost invariably sees implicit or explicit reference to Pakistan's important role. More recently, China's involvement in peace initiatives and its growing ties with Pakistan adds historically new dimension to regional dynamics and analytical framing. Relations are not only one-way, though, and Afghanistan also has a long history of balancing relations with regional countries to pursue and protect its interests. Engagement with India about equipment and training, for example, for Afghan National Security Forces has important implications, for instance, with regard to Pakistan-India tensions and rivalry.

As regards proxy competition, it is believed to be intensifying in Afghanistan by a number of analysts, and Afghan and international officials. The use of intra-regional interests in Afghanistan is a feature of this. Notable regional competitors are: Pakistan and India as inferred above. Long-standing rivalries between backers of Sunni and Shia militant groups and interests is an area where attention is being drawn as a result of several unusual security incidents in 2014 in particular, and tensions arising out of Afghanistan – Iran negotiations about a strategic partnership agreement. The reach of Iran and its willingness to project its power and more subtle forms of influence than some other regional countries should also not be underestimated, either.

A legacy of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is a movement of people from Afghanistan to regional countries: Pakistan and Iran in particular. This included very high numbers in the order of magnitude of millions. In recent years there have been episodic forced repatriation or removals of Afghans from these countries. Notably, some observers state these moves correlate with political currents. That the threat exists, implicit or explicit, of the forced return of Afghans from neighbouring countries, with serious impacts on Afghanistan's stability is in little doubt.

Narcotics and security are two major themes of discourse about Afghanistan in the regional setting. Narcotics includes the cultivation and export of crops such as opium, most of which is to be turned into heroin. Over 90 percent of the heroin in Europe, for instance, is believed to originate from Afghanistan. It is a lucrative export that in its wake leaves social, political, health and other problems. For major regional and international powers, for example, Iran and Russia, it is a great source of discontent and a rationale for taking an interest in Afghanistan. The other issue, and another where there are shared interests with many nation-states in the international system and to some degree regional-international coordinating layers, is the threat of terrorism. Russia takes a firm line on this matter, with experience reaching back more than a century confronting Islamic fundamentalist militancy. Iran also takes this threat very seriously, with the Sunni-Shia dimension close to if not at the fore of their policy. Central Asian states, Russia and China also have reemphasized strong concern about the threat of insecurity from Afghanistan spilling over. This can be seen with statements from increasingly active and vocal regional organizations, such as CSTO. Criticism of them for overstating threats, in my view is somewhat overdone.³⁰⁶

As U.S. and international forces part of the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan draw down further, the political, security, economic and cultural space not simply 'left' but developed and engaged with by other interests will become further challenged. Consequences among and between layers in Afghanistan at various levels of society will take time to play out, but doubtless will have implications for what will follow. Making sense of this will not be simple, but it is necessary as the threat from Al Qaeda and international terror groups has not gone. The Afghan state is still fragile, as is its government, economy, security institutions. Tensions between groups in Afghanistan are quite high,

³⁰⁶ For example, in Michel, Casey (2015) 'Russia Continues Inflating the ISIS Threat in Central Asia: ISIS is recruiting around the world, but Russian rhetoric boosts the threat of ISIS to the region beyond reality.' *The Diplomat*, September 24, 2015, available: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/russia-continues-inflating-the-isis-threat-in-central-asia/> Accessed December 2015.

be they between powerbrokers, government officials, political groupings sometimes with significant ethnic-political dimensions, and intertwined security and economic interests. Meantime, the Taliban have not gone and Al Qaeda lives on. The emergence of ISIL Khorasan is one of the most alarming developments that should be taken seriously for what it means across different analytical frames.

Annex 1

Unlike Iraq, which became part of the GWOT, and in some ways the symbol of it: the U.S. sought U.N. backing for military action in Afghanistan. A key argument for those who see U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan as legitimate -- and UN-backed -- is that explicit U.N. Security Council authorization was not required. The logic cited is that the intervention and subsequent invasion was an act of collective self-defense provided for under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, and was therefore not a war of aggression.³⁰⁷

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution UNSC RES 1368 of September 12, 2001, stated that the Council “expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the September 11 attacks.” Although widely interpreted as a U.N. authorization for military action it, however, neither explicitly authorized OEF to oust the Taliban, nor did it reference Chapter VII of the U.N.

³⁰⁷ "Security Council Resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001): What They Say and What They Do Not Say, European Journal of International Law" available: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MelbJIL/2003/3.html> accessed December 2015.

Charter, which allows for responses to threats to international peace and security, including military action in self-defence. This resolution did not authorize the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) *per-se*. Critics therefore hold that the bombing and invasion of Afghanistan did not satisfy the requirements of an action arising out of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, because the 9/11 attacks were not “armed attacks” by another state. It is useful to note that the necessity for self-defence can be defined as: “instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation.” Although, it needs to be borne in mind that other definitions also can be developed.

Along something of a parallel track, President George W. Bush pursued a legal route through congress for authorization. On September 14, 2001, his administration was authorized by Congress to use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the attacks on September 11, 2001.³⁰⁸ This authorization granted the U.S. President the authority to use all "necessary and appropriate force" against those whom he determined "planned, authorized, committed or aided" the 9/11 attacks, or who harbored said persons or groups. The Bush administration did not seek a declaration of war by the U.S. Senate, and labelled the Taliban supporters of terrorists and terrorism, not as soldiers. This affected the protections they would be afforded under the Geneva Convention by the U.S. among others.

On December 20, 2001, more than two months after the U.S.-led attack began, the UNSC authorized the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to take all measures necessary to fulfill its mandate of assisting the Afghan Interim Authority in maintaining security. Command of ISAF passed to NATO on August 11, 2003. As noted above and in this annex, OEF was acknowledged in later UNSC Resolutions, including UNAMA's.

The objective of the international community with Afghan authorities' agreement toward (and within) Afghanistan is inherent in the structure of both UNAMA quarterly reports to the UNSC report on the situation in Afghanistan, and more formally expressed in UNAMA's UN Security Council mandates, which have been renewed annually, with some slight variations in the annual renewal dates, since 28 March 2002. The evolution of this can be seen as follows: paragraph 3 “Stressing the inalienable right of the Afghan people themselves freely to determine their own political future,” and most recently “to achieve a unified, peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of Afghanistan” UNSC (2015) S/RES/2210³⁰⁹

The envisioning of: “Stressing the inalienable right of the Afghan people themselves freely to determine their own political future” saw further development in the next mandate of 28 March 2003, with the addition of consolidating peace and rebuilding of Afghanistan. The UNAMA mandate UNSC (2004) S/RES/1536 UNSC (2004) saw greater emphasis was placed on constitutional processes and election preparation efforts in Afghanistan, and the presence of a Transitional Administration (post the Bonn Conference).

The importance of extending central government authority is marked in this mandate as are: SSR DDR and DIAG processes; the creation of an Afghan national Army and National Police; and the role of regional countries including economic and trade aspects. The creation of a fair and transparent judicial system is also strongly stated in this mandate for the first time since the intervention.

³⁰⁸ This legislation was titled: “Use of Military Force Against Terrorists” which was passed and signed on September 18, 2001 by both President G.W. Bush and U.S. Congress. In the U.S. Congress, S.J.Res. 23 (2001) (passed 98-0 in the U.S. Senate and with no objections in the House, P.L. 107-40, signed September 18, 2001), was more explicit than the U.N. Resolution, authorizing: “all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 or harbored such organizations or persons.” Available: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/23> Accessed December 2015

³⁰⁹ <http://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/28%20March%202002.pdf>

The welcoming of the adoption of the Afghan Constitution by the Loya Jirga of 4 January 2004 in the aforementioned UNSC UNAMA mandate of 2004 marks a development linking a core internal framework with key external aspirations and norms. This is part of a discernable trend along particular lines comprised of the establishment of a central government, centrally controlled armed forces, economic, judicial and socio-political development, and democratization among others.

A more comprehensive statement of a vision for Afghanistan is first stated in UNAMA's mandate in 2006: S/RES/1662 (2006): "*Pledging* its continued support for the Government and people of Afghanistan as they build on the successful completion of the Bonn Process in rebuilding their country, strengthening the foundations of a constitutional democracy and assuming their rightful place in the community of nations".

U.S. President Obama's formal statement on the end of U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom and [formal] Combat Operations in Afghanistan on 28 December 2014, closely mirrors these latter statements with the domestically important addition at the end (and omission of 'prosperous' likely for similar reasons of domestic public opinion and party politics): "a united, secure and sovereign Afghanistan that is never again used as a source of attacks against our nation"³¹⁰

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Interestingly, U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel does note 'prosperity' in his statement of the same date, available here: <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/605332> . Both accessed December 2015.

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