AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

COALITION OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN POST-2014

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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14 February 2013

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Biography

Colonel Shawn Klawunder is a U.S. Army Infantryman assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from the University States Military Academy in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering, and earned a Master's of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1999. He has served as a battalion commander in Fort Benning, and recently returned from a deployment in Western Afghanistan.

Abstract

On 21 November 1878, the British invaded Afghanistan, defeated the Afghan Army, and installed a new government. Over the following years Afghan resistance grew, ultimately resulting in British withdrawal. Years later the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, seized control of the central government, and replaced it with a socialist regime. Thereafter the Mujahadeen resistance grew, forcing the Soviet's withdrawal in 1989. Two decades later a US-led coalition overthrew the Taliban and supported establishment of a democratic government. Over the next eleven years, the resistance has grown and now, in 2013, the conclusion of another conflict in Afghanistan is unclear.

As the Coalition enters its thirteenth year in Afghanistan, there are questions about our objectives, the approach, and chances for success. This paper seeks to answer these questions. It argues that Afghan stability will only be achieved through a long-term approach using a single, small, civil-military command, supporting civilian-led efforts to improve governmental capacity, linking the central government to rural Afghans.

It does so by explaining why continued Coalition efforts in Afghanistan are so important, in light of an unstable region with violent extremists, and nuclear weapons. This work then describes the current situation in Afghanistan and bordering Pakistan; both countries having inept, corrupt governments, Islamic fundamentalists, and ungoverned areas. This paper continues by describing previous attempts at stabilizing the region by the Soviets. This includes their approach to security, military advisory missions, developmental efforts, educational programs, and governmental reform. The ongoing conflict, spanning multiple decades, is examined, describing the numerous factors which have torn the fabric of Afghan society, leaving a fractured state in its wake.

This paper compares Soviet methods and results to those of the current coalition, showing they mirror one another in many ways. Finally, recommendations are made for an alternative approach with a single, smaller, civil-military command focused on improving governmental capacity and positive influence on rural Afghans.

Introduction

In 1878, the British invaded Afghanistan with more than 40,000 men. They quickly defeated the Afghan Army and installed a government more favorable to British interests. Over the following years, Afghan resistance grew, ultimately resulting in British withdrawal in 1881.[1] Years later, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, seized control of the central government, killed the president, and replaced him with Babrak Karmal. [2] Thereafter the Mujahadeen resistance grew, forcing Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Two decades later, a US-led coalition overthrew the Taliban and supported establishment of a government, led by Hamid Karzai, which was more favorable to western interests. Over the next eleven years the resistance has grown and now, in 2013, the conclusion of another conflict in Afghanistan is unclear.

As the Coalition enters its thirteenth year in Afghanistan there are questions about our objectives, approach, and chances for success. This paper argues that Afghan stability will only be achieved through a long-term approach using a single, small, civil-military command, supporting civilian-led efforts to improve governmental capacity, linking the central government to rural Afghans. A long-term approach is needed to replace the social elites who were lost in over three decades of conflict and to develop functional governmental institutions with manageable levels of corruption. Functional institutions are required to link the central government to rural Afghanistan, taking popular support from the insurgency. An enduring commitment will allow a coalition presence in the region, countering violent extremists operating from the loosely governed border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A single headquarters is critical to ensure unity of effort amongst disparate coalition elements. Problems in Afghanistan are primarily political; consequently the military effort must be led by the civilian expertise necessary to focus on governmental advising. Finally, the military effort should remain relatively small. By doing so, it will have to focus on advising as opposed to partnering, forcing

the Afghans to take responsibility for solving their own problems. As a result, Afghans will be more likely to develop solutions which are more acceptable to their people.

Importance of the coalition effort

A withdrawal before the Afghan government is capable of stabilizing the country would lead to a series of events, mirroring the period after Soviet withdrawal. The current government would attempt to maintain stability, but likely lose control in a few years. A weak central government, unable to maintain a hold on the country, would cede power to warlords asserting regional dominance. Ultimately, warlords would again start fighting one another, seeking extended influence. Ultimately, the Taliban, of similar organization, would seize power once again, supported by people opting for a repressive regime instead of lawlessness. Consequently, Afghans would lose many of their civil liberties. Female educational programs would suffer. Sharia law would grip the country. Most importantly, the Taliban would likely, once again, provide safe-haven for terrorist groups. While the Taliban are regionally focused and not considered an international threat, their fundamentalist ideals and Sharia law parallel those of many Islamic terrorist groups. Finally, the topography in southern and eastern Afghanistan is extremely remote, providing countless hideouts. Terrorist safe-havens are dangerous in any area, but sanctuaries close to a nuclear-armed Pakistan is particularly troubling.[3]

Proponents of a counter-terrorist approach argue that safe-havens may be prevented using drones, missiles, and raids from outside the country. This strategy is flawed for two reasons. With support by Afghans in remote regions, terrorists will literally have tens of thousands of places to hide. Second, with no forces on the ground it would be extremely challenging to develop the intelligence necessary to locate terrorists in hiding.[4] By contrast, the presence of coalition forces in Afghanistan would permit both unilateral and combined Afghan-Coalition

raids, developing valuable intelligence, and denying terrorists areas from which to train and launch world-wide operations. Furthermore, a counter-terrorist approach simply addresses symptoms of a larger problem which can only be rectified through governmental reform.

Another reason to stay the course in Afghanistan is to prevent a resurgence of Al Qaeda. Afghanistan is a special place for the terrorist organization. Osama Bin Laden gained his initial popularity in Afghanistan fighting against the Soviets. Many fundamentalists believe that this Jihad resulted in the Soviet Union's collapse.[5] Thereafter, Al Qaeda trained in Afghanistan preparing for the attacks of 9/11. The defeat of another world power in Afghanistan would be an enormous strategic victory for the terrorist group, permitting the popular support for resurgence.

In short, failure to continue the effort in Afghanistan will almost certainly lead to regional instability and proliferation of extremists capable of threatening the United States. The current situation in Afghanistan bears striking parallels to the condition near the end of the Soviet Union's deployment, signifying a predictable future. However, a small, relatively cheap, long-term effort in Afghanistan is worth the price when compared to the cost of the large scale deployments seen by the Soviet Union, and the current Coalition.

Situation

Afghan society is dominated by several nefarious elements inside and outside the central government. Each competes for, or at a minimum, disrupts the tenuous control the government has on the country. The first group is the warlords. These men wield substantial regional power in parts of Afghanistan. Most of them came to power after the Soviet's withdrawal, fell out of favor with the rise of the Taliban, and assisted the Coalition in 2001. As a result, they have a great deal of influence with the Coalition. Some warlords are regional power-brokers, some lead or support insurgent groups, and still others have high positions in the government or security

forces. An example is Ishmael Khan, a former Mujahadeen leader, who fought against the Soviets in Western Afghanistan. Following the fall of the Taliban, he asserted his power, first as a warlord, and then as Herat's Provincial Governor. Still later, President Karzai nominated him to be the Minister of Power and Water. While working in Kabul, he maintains influence in Western Afghanistan. The second group is corrupt governmental officials and security force leaders. They use their influence to gain appointments to profitable positions, and then use the positions for personal profit. The final group is the insurgents; some are ideologically motivated, while others are common criminals. To make matters worse, the Afghan government is plagued by weak or underdeveloped systems. In many cases, President Karzai has co-opted warlords with rents or the lure of prestigious positions for their support. As a result, there is a blurring of the three categories. A warlord may also support the insurgency, while maintaining a high position in the government.

Afghanistan is a rentier state, meaning that the state's income consists primarily of unearned money. Rents differ from an investments or loans, which require reinvestment to secure profit.[6] A rent requires no reinvestment, and subsequently does not stimulate the state's economy. Afghanistan receives considerable foreign aid. In fact, Afghanistan only makes 8% of its annual revenue internally; the rest comes from international donors.[7] The fact that Afghanistan is a rentier state, unable to manage the funds, poses many problems. Politicians in rentier states use funds to develop stronger social and political bonds, strengthening their positions. As these ties strengthen, patronage networks develop. In the end, most of the state's income is used to keep the leadership in office.[8] Furthermore, leaders seldom reinvest in the Afghan economy. As a result, foreign aid does little to increase state revenue.

International donors are losing patience with the Afghan government. Since the government lacks capacity, foreign funds get stalled in the bureaucratic pipeline, never leaving Kabul. Foreign donors do not see their investment going to good use, and many have started coordinating directly with the user, bypassing the government.[9] Consequently, the Afghan government does not develop increased capacity or get credit for helping their people.

While the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are improving, challenges remain. The Afghan National Army (ANA) is the most legitimate force in the security sector. Most officers are Soviet-trained, and have well developed systems. The Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) are the most capable police force in the country. Their entry standards are higher than the Afghan National Police (ANP) or Afghan Border Patrol (ABP). The ANCOP receive more detailed training and almost twice the salary of the average policeman. The National Directorate of Security (NDS) is a very selective intelligence organization. Recruits are highly educated and earn much more than the typical policeman. They are very capable at developing intelligence, particularly human intelligence. Nonetheless, they do not trust of other forces and are reluctant to share information. The final two elements, the ANP and the ABP, are very poorly trained. In many units, a majority of policemen fail to attend basic training. Entry standards, particularly educational, are much lower than in other forces. Senior leaders receive positions through bribes or favors. Of the five elements, the ANP and ABP have the most contact with Afghan populace. They are the face of the government to Afghans. The corrupt leadership in these two organizations allows and is even complicit in predatory behavior towards civilians. Related to the security sector, the entire justice system is challenged. The police are poorly trained, and investigations are an afterthought. There are few well educated lawyers and judges. The corrections system is overcrowded and ineffective. Many Afghans are released based on who

they know, after committing heinous crimes, while others submit to long-term incarceration for relatively minor infractions. Furthermore, the system does not focus on rehabilitation but rather segregation and control.

Several factors divide Afghan society, preventing any sense of a national identity. Three decades of war have resulted in millions of dead, wounded, and displaced persons, both internally and externally. There has been a mass exodus of educated Afghans, only to be replaced by warlords and power brokers. This has served to further divide an already fractured populace, split by racial, ethnic, sectarian, and tribal differences. The primary religion, Islam, is practiced differently in each tribe. Afghans have more loyalty to their tribe, and ethnicity than their country; consequently, Afghans are distrustful of the central government. To make matters worse, the government is perceived as corrupt and ineffective. The central and provincial governments are not linked to most rural communities. This serves to widen the divide between rural and urban society. Insurgents use the absence of governance in rural Afghanistan to their advantage. They gain the support of the populace, through shadow governments that attempt to provide for their basic needs: security, health care, employment, and even education. As a result, insurgents are trusted and protected in many rural Afghan communities. Afghan geography is extremely mountainous, further dividing communities. Most importantly, Afghan history has fractured the society. For centuries other countries have attempted to use Afghanistan as a buffer state, bringing conflict time and time again.[10]

Afghanistan cannot be properly described without mentioning Pakistan; the two countries are inextricably linked. Pakistan has a vested interest in the Afghan conflict, reasoning that a weak neighbor will give them strategic depth with respect to India. Consequently, Pakistan continually meddles in Afghan affairs, intent on dictating the terms of conflict resolution. As

such, any recommendation to solve challenges in Afghanistan must consider the impact on Pakistan. People in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have more loyalty to their tribe than their country; consequently, this area of Pakistan is essentially ungoverned. Pakistan is a fragile state with a corrupt and ineffective government which does little to provide essential services for its people. Their economy is failing; meanwhile, the ruling elite are unwilling to pay taxes. The leaders live in fear of a military coup which seems inevitable when considering their national history.[11] The military demands 30% of the budget which continues to cripple their stagnant economy. The Army dictates foreign policy, which is dominated by paranoia of India. This paranoia drives their regional engagement, and has soured their relations with the Karzai government.[12] For decades, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has used militants as proxy forces to exert influence in the Kashmir. More recently, the ISI has used the Taliban to foment the Afghan insurgency; intent on weakening the Karzai Government.[13] This foreign policy strategy has backfired with the development of the Pakistani Taliban, intent on overthrowing the government in Islamabad.[14] The military has proven somewhat effective in countering the Pakistani Taliban, but has an arrangement with other militants in the FATA; they will not oppose groups that do not attack Pakistan.[15] This leaves the tribal areas free for the Afghan Taliban and other groups to train and plan operations against ANSF and Coalition forces in Afghanistan. This double game will surely backfire as there are strong links between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Since 2008, several efforts have been made by the Afghan, US, and German Governments to open peace talks with the Afghan Taliban in an effort to arrive at a political arrangement amenable to all sides. The ISI has undermined these efforts, insisting they control the outcome in favor of Pakistan.[16] Most troubling is the fact that this failing state has the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world with over 100 nuclear weapons.[17] The mix of a failing state,

ungoverned areas, Islamic extremism, and nuclear weapons is an extremely dangerous cocktail. Between 2001 and 2010, the US gave a total of $20.5 billion in aid to Pakistan, of which $14.4 billion when to the military, $4.8 billion to buy down the debt, and only $1.3 billion was used for economic development.[18] Addressing instability in Pakistan is critical to success in Afghanistan. The international community should take a hard line with Pakistan and tie continued financial aid to political reform and substantive efforts to combat extremist groups.

The Soviet intervention

In April 1978, a communist coup overthrew the nationalist regime led by Mohammad Daud. A few months later a popular rebellion broke out, challenging the young communist regime. By late winter, the Soviets realized they needed to intervene to save the new communist government and protect Soviet national interests on their southern border.[19] The Soviet's war in Afghanistan started much like the current conflict. From 25 to 27 December 1979, the Soviet Army invaded, killed the president, and installed their own leader in his place. After a quick victory over the government, they worked to stabilize the country. They secured the major urban centers, garrisons, airfields, and roads. They left rural security to the Afghan Army. Their focus on securing the lines of communication, freed Afghan forces to fight the Mujahadeen.[20] However, this strategy proved ineffective, because the Afghan security forces were incapable of providing rural security. For most of the war, insurgents controlled over 75% of the country.[21] During this period, the Minister of Defense claimed the Army maintained numbers between 120,000 and 150,000 when, in fact, they only numbered around 40,000.[22] Reaching the goal of 200,000 Soldiers was difficult with over 30,000 desertions annually. By the time the Soviets withdrew, the security forces including army, police and secret police totaled just over 230,000, far less than the 700,000 required to achieve the 20 security personnel per 1000 inhabitants expected for

a successful counter insurgency.[23] The Soviets did focus on training the Afghan Army, although they trained Soviet Doctrine which focused on large formations in a conventional struggle, offering little help in defeating an insurgency.[24] When it became evident that Afghan security forces were incapable of independent operations, the Soviets took a more prevalent role. In many cases, the Soviets did not trust the Afghans enough to share operational information with them; meanwhile the Afghans were satisfied with letting the Soviets lead operations.[25] In the end, Afghan security forces were too few, with little training in counter-insurgent operations. Consequently, the central government was not connected with rural Afghans due to inadequate security.

From the 1950s to the early 90s the Soviet Union poured development opportunities into Afghanistan. Over this period the Soviets initiated over 270 major projects including roads, power infrastructure, irrigation canals, factories, housing, airports, and much more.[26] Additionally, the Soviets provided funding to develop eight technical schools, which trained more than 100,000 Afghan workers.[27] Thousands more received more formal training in Soviet universities and technical schools based on a Soviet-Afghan educational agreement signed in 1980.[28] Despite the financial aid delivered by the Soviet Union, only half the projects were completed. Surprisingly, this failure is not due to a lack of capital investment or vocational skills but rather a result of poor governance.[29] The government simply lacked the capacity to administer development programs effectively. The inept institutions coupled with the rampant corruption prevented completion of nearly half the development projects.[30] This indicates the challenge is more political than economical or developmental.

Soviets worked diligently to improve governmental capacity sending more than 10,000 advisors to virtually every department of the central government. The advisors extended to

provincial and even local governments where security allowed. Additionally, they provided educational opportunities for more than 6,000 Afghans in the Soviet Union. As the war progressed, the Soviet advisors exerted increasing power. By the mid-80s, Afghan politicians were unable to conduct even routine business without the expressed approval of their Soviet advisor.[31] In effect, the Afghan government was simply a figurehead, controlled by Moscow, having virtually no independence. Consequently, the government lacked legitimacy, and failed to develop the capacity required to govern effectively.

For seven years, from 1979 to 1986, Babrak Karmal served as the Afghan leader. During this period, the political membership bloomed from 6,000 to more than 40,000 members; these members were primarily from the urban-based elite. Nonetheless, he failed to gain popular support throughout the country. Furthermore, he continued to remain ideologically motivated to install a socialist government which was rejected by the average Afghan. Karmal would not relent, even when prodded by Gorbachev to abandon his socialist ideals in exchange for a more pragmatic approach to gain broader support.[32] Ultimately, Karmal was replaced by Najibullah who immediately initiated a reconciliation program aimed at building a more diverse, multi-ethnic support base. He did so using foreign aid to distribute rents, developing a patronage network including ethnic and tribal leaders, warlords, and militia groups. Most people, including the Afghan public, expected the Najibullah regime to fall almost immediately after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, it was not until 1991 when the Soviets withheld all funding, that the government fell. At this point, Najibullah no longer had access to the funding to maintain his patronage network and could not keep the loosely tied organization together.[33]

Several lessons may be derived from the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. First, the military and development struggles are secondary to the political one. As evidenced by the Soviet aid to Afghanistan for 40 years, any developmental programs without corresponding governmental institutions are fleeting. While security force development is important, it is useless without a well-governed state to protect. Governing effectively in Afghanistan requires increased capacity and perceived legitimacy. Increasing the capacity means that the government has the ability to reach rural Afghans, administering programs which positively impact them. There is certainly a security component to reach, but channeling money from central to local governments is equally challenging.

The Soviet Union invested a great deal of effort in training and educational programs for decades including: military training, vocational programs, and professional education. This is evident in the capable cadre who remain in the ANA. Again, these educational programs are worthless without a stabilized central government. Since the fall of the Najibullah there has been a mass exodus from Afghanistan. Afghans from all social classes have fled to neighboring countries. Most of the social elites have left the country for better and more stable opportunities abroad. Economic reform never took root, so those with vocational skills have been forced to find other work. Many Soviet-trained military officers remain because they have found constant employment, with the government, then the Mujahadeen, and finally supporting the coalition.

The Soviet advisory effort in all three areas, government, development, and security, was effective in isolated cases. However, as these advisors tried to force Soviet systems and tactics on Afghans they lost effectiveness. The average Afghan was unwilling to accept a socialist government no matter how well trained the government officials became, and the doctrine taught by the Soviet military advisors was ineffective in countering the insurgency in Afghanistan. As

Soviet advisors became more directive, they took responsibility for solving Afghan problems and Afghans abdicated this obligation. The lesson here is that an advisory effort should assist Afghan officials in implementing their own solutions rather than forcing a foreign system.

The final lesson to be gleaned is the fact that financial aid is the glue that holds the government together. As soon as foreign aid was lost, the government fell. Ideally the Soviet Union should not have been involved in funding the president's patronage networks. Pragmatically, this was probably a small price to pay for stability in Afghanistan, particularly compared to large scale deployments. Additionally, one would be naive to think most representative governments in developed countries do not use some financial incentives to gain the support of influential constituents.

Ongoing conflict

The end of the Soviet Occupation was not the end of the war for Afghans, it simply marked another phase. Afghanistan has been embroiled in this struggle for over thirty years. The Soviet occupation gave way to the insurgency, overthrowing the Najibullah regime. Thereafter, the country was gripped by civil war with multiple warlords vying for power. Lawlessness opened an avenue for the Taliban to gain popular support, installing Sharia law throughout most of the country. Ultimately, their brutal methods were rejected, and many groups joined the Coalition to overthrow the Taliban. Interestingly enough, while Afghans did not accept the Soviet-style socialist government, the tribal-based society rejected Sharia law imposed by the Taliban as well.[34] Since that time, resistance to the Karzai-led government and Coalition occupation has fomented. Over the past 30 years, almost two million Afghans have been killed, and even more have been wounded. More than six million Afghans have fled to Pakistan and Iran, and at least two million more are internally displaced.[35] In total, well over a third of the population has

become a casualty of this seemingly endless war, killed, wounded, or made homeless. While the damage to human capital is daunting, the physical destruction is equally troubling. During the Soviet occupation, at least half of the 24,000 villages were destroyed in an attempt to deny the Mujahadeen popular support. Millions of anti-personnel mines were scattered throughout the countryside. Orchards, irrigation canals, factories, roads, power facilities, and other infrastructure were destroyed.[36] This destruction continued after the departure of the Soviets, as warlords battled throughout the streets in cities like Kabul. In effect, the forty years of Soviet work was reversed.

The development efforts of the Soviets were not the only things lost in this conflict; social, political, and economic gains were devastated as well. Despite educational reforms, most of the political and social elites have either perished or traveled abroad looking for more promising opportunities. The political elites have been replaced by a new class, led by former Mujahadeen, and warlords. A culture of violence pervades Afghan society, fueled by access to weapons in almost every household. Finally, the loss of social elites, coupled with the destruction of infrastructure, has had a debilitating effect on the economy. This void has been filled by an opium based economy.[37] Consequently, despite the Soviet's best efforts, all their progress has been lost, replaced by a more dysfunctional society than when they invaded.

Similarities between the two conflicts

Numerous parallels exist between Afghanistan just prior to the Soviet withdrawal and the present condition. In both situations the government's capacity is limited, challenging development efforts. The Afghan government's reach in both cases, to include security, is limited to urban areas, allowing a growing resistance in smaller villages. In each case, the insurgents are supported by external sources emanating, primarily, from neighboring Pakistan.

The Afghan security forces in both conflicts are marginally capable, with significant difficulties in training, recruiting, and retention. The Soviets and the current Coalition have focused on an advisory effort. However, as success seems more unlikely, the potential exists for advisors to become more involved, ultimately taking responsibility for success or failure; this limits the Afghan's sense of responsibility, and leads to inadequate, foreign solutions to Afghan problems. Finally, in both cases, the president was able to develop broad-based support through neopatrimonialism, a system of government where the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage networks.[38] These networks were maintained through foreign funding intended for other purposes. While this "corruption" appears to indicate rampant dysfunction throughout the government, in fact, it is the glue that holds the government together. The Najibullah regime did not fall because of the insidious corruption, but rather because Soviets cut the funding which maintained his broad-based patronage networks. The fate of the current conflict is uncertain, but it is clear that cutting funding to the current government will likely end in its collapse.

Conclusion

Several lessons may be taken from these conflicts where history appears to be repeated. First, this is fundamentally a political struggle, in a destitute environment, tormented by lethal activities. Sometimes it is difficult to keep focus on governmental development. This difficulty is borne by the fact that we desperately want to help the impoverished people, and are astonished by the endless violence. Nonetheless, the only enduring way to help the people is to assist in developing a government which is at least marginally capable of serving its people. Certainly, political gains must be supported by security and development; however without a stable government these efforts are fleeting. Second, as Soviets learned, simply supporting a central

government has little effect on the people, particularly in rural Afghanistan. A significant component to increasing governmental capacity is reach. The linkage at the district level, connecting the Provincial governments to local Afghans, is critical. Admittedly, rural security and development will compliment this effort, but the governmental pillar is primary. The third lesson is that the diverse Afghan society does not have an affinity for foreign systems. There is a common expression, "Afghan good enough." This does not mean that it is good enough for Afghans, but not good enough for others. It means that it is an Afghan solution; one that will work in Afghanistan, unlike western answers which are destined for failure. All too often, our advisory efforts attempt to develop Afghans in our image. Alternatively, we should assist in implementing Afghan solutions to Afghan problems. The fourth lesson is that Afghans must take responsibility for their development. Advisors invest themselves in mission success. We start out as advisors, then partners, and finally executers, with an audience of Afghans, willingly allowing us to do all the work. There is an old Afghan saying, "Shona khana mokonand". It means taking their shoulder out. Afghans are comfortable doing so. We need to take our shoulders out and force Afghans to take responsibility for solving their own problems. A fifth lesson is that cutting funding when the government is under-developed will likely result in collapse. There is another Afghan saying, "You can't buy an Afghan's loyalty, but you can lease it." Najibullah was able to elicit broad-based support by funding multi-ethnic patronage networks throughout Afghanistan. The same could be said about President Karzai, and the current ministers in Kabul. Finally, attaining self-sustaining stability in Afghanistan is a long-term effort. Education and training is the key to success, and this will take at least a generation. This was evident while the Soviet Union focused on training and education. A critical element

to this enduring effort is maintaining a stable Afghanistan in the interim to prevent another mass exodus of professionals.

Recommendations

These lessons indicate that a larger footprint is not needed in Afghanistan but rather a smaller, more focused effort by a single, civil-military command in a long-term effort to improve governmental capacity and reach, linking the central government to rural Afghanistan. A smaller civil-military command will ensure that our advisors continue to advise and not partner, leaving the responsibility of solving Afghan problems in the hands of Afghans. Advisors should assist in implementation of Afghan solutions rather than attempting to import foreign ones. The civil elements should include specialists capable of advising Afghans to increase governmental capacity in the central and provincial governments. The military advisory groups should be limited. They should focus on administrative, logistics, and training management systems at the brigade/provincial level and higher. We should minimize our advisory effort on operational missions and cease all partnering.

Village Stability Operations (VSO) is a special operations program conducted throughout Afghanistan. It includes a local security solution, and development opportunities to rural Afghanistan. At the district level, VSO includes small district advisory teams which assist in linking the provincial government to the local community.[39] This program is a solution to rural security and governmental reach. It should be continued and expanded, if possible, by transitioning mature village stability operations to Afghan control, so current teams can shift to other areas, expanding the government's reach even more.

We should expand our efforts at primary and vocational education programs, and assist Afghans in improving their university system as well as offering more opportunities for

advanced study abroad. Meanwhile, we should continue funding governmental, security, and developmental programs through the Afghan Government, acknowledging that some of the funding will be used to maintain patronage networks. This will maintain stability, while we work with the government to improve their systems and reduce corruption. Eventually, this will result in a functioning government with the capacity and reach to provide security and essential services to the populace. Ultimately, educated Afghans will remain in their country to assist in further governmental, economic, and developmental improvement.

It is unlikely that Afghanistan will ever be a flourishing society with a representative government, and self-sustaining free market economy. Nonetheless, if we focus our efforts appropriately, it can be a stable region again, limiting terrorist safe-havens in that part of the world.

Notes

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