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**TURNING THE TIDE:
REFOCUSING STABILITY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan are not set up to succeed in stability and peace operations with currently published Joint Doctrine or the culture and language understanding they currently possess. The Department of Defense, in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, has stated a number of missions that need a re-focused effort. One of these missions is stability operations. To ensure the Joint Force Commander's success in stability and peace operations in Afghanistan, new doctrine for PRTs must be written, and a stronger emphasis on culture and language awareness must be required. This paper examines the current doctrine and illustrates its shortcomings as it relates to ongoing PRT efforts in stability and peace operations. The paper also illustrates the paramount importance of cultural and language awareness of the Afghan society and how this understanding directly relates to stability, peace, and reconstruction efforts of PRTs. A thorough evaluation of doctrine, cultural awareness, and language understanding are critical for operations in Afghanistan to progress from Phase 4 to Phase 5. This paper highlights some reasons PRTs are seen by the Afghan population as not credible, and why this credibility piece is vital to the success of the stability mission. The paper draws conclusions regarding how doctrine can be updated as well as how a better awareness of language and culture will bridge the gap between the status quo and success. Finally, this paper gives recommendations on specific doctrine and programs that can be instituted to allow the Joint Force Commander in Afghanistan to reach the desired end state and ultimately hand over operations to Afghan authorities.

INTRODUCTION

*Only through a shared appreciation of the people's culture, needs, and hopes for the future can we hope to supplant the extremist narrative. We cannot capture hearts and minds. We must engage them; we must listen to them, one heart and one mind at a time – over time.*¹

– ADM Michael Mullen, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report released in February 2010 states that the Department of Defense (DoD) strongly needs to “rebalance its policy, doctrine, and capabilities to better support...six key missions.”² The first mission understandably addresses the defense of the homeland United States. However, the second mission focuses on the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment that the U. S. Armed Forces currently face in Afghanistan. This second mission, for which the DoD strongly urges a rebalance of efforts, is: “Succeed in counterinsurgency, stability, and counterterrorism operations.”³ This paper will provide an in-depth look at the stability piece of this mission and ways the Joint Force Commander (JFC) in Afghanistan can refocus and rebalance assets to achieve his objectives.

The CJCS has stated that the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan communicate and control from within the population. They have credibility and have become extremely effective.⁴ In parts of Afghanistan, the Taliban has set up systems of government that undermine the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). The Taliban have created judicial systems, tax assessment and collection agencies, as well as methods to file formal complaints against the local leaders.⁵ As the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander, the current JFC in Afghanistan understands the nature and characteristics of the insurgency and subsequent counterinsurgency when dealing with stability operations. He also understands the importance of cultural awareness of the Afghan people and the importance of credibility of actions with respect to stability operations.

In the ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance released in August of 2009, the JFC bluntly states, "We will not win simply by killing insurgents."⁶ He goes on to say that the key to helping the Afghan people is by securing them, protecting them from violence and abuse by insurgents, and, finally, by respecting their culture and religion.⁷ As the JFC's intent has stated in his new strategy, it is incumbent on his planners to ensure that personnel on the front lines of stability operations are set-up for success. These personnel include Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which were developed to help improve stability in Afghanistan.⁸ In order to facilitate success in Afghanistan and meet the JFC's objectives regarding stability operations, PRTs and their planners must understand key elements of operational art.* Focusing on the cultural elements of operational art and understanding the role of language and culture for the Afghan people will make the PRTs successful and subsequently achieve the JFC's objectives. PRTs in Afghanistan will fail without an understanding of the culture and the language of the Afghan people. To ensure PRT success, three things must occur: (1) Write a Joint Publication for PRT Operations; (2) Focus on language, both English for non-U. S. PRTs and Afghan agencies, and Pashto or Dari for U. S. PRTs; and (3) Focus PRTs on cultural understanding and awareness of the Afghan population.

BACKGROUND

PRTs in Afghanistan were created in 2002 to help improve stability in the nation by empowering the GIRoA to improve the economic situation and increase the local governments' capacity to deliver public services.⁹ PRTs are a means of coordinating the interagency effort to assist in diplomatic, economic, reconstruction, and counterinsurgency

* Professor Milan Vego of the U.S. Naval War College defines operational art as "a component of military art concerned with the theory and practice of planning, preparing, conducting, and sustaining campaigns and major operations aimed at accomplishing strategic or operational objectives in a given theater."

measures in Afghanistan. However, when PRTs were initially designed, they were intended to be temporary, and after a PRT achieved its stability operational objectives, it was to cease operations and transition to agencies within either the U. S. Government (USG) or GIROA that are designed for more permanent stability operations.¹⁰ Government agencies inside the U. S. Department of State (DoS), for example the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), would prove more suitable than military forces for this longer-term type of stability mission. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the United States Institute of Peace, have experience in the role of nation-building and peace operations. There are other government agencies that PRTs look to for assistance and guidance in Afghanistan. With the primarily agrarian culture within Afghanistan, the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) has also taken on a role in the reconstruction effort.¹¹

Initially called Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs) after the Taliban was ousted from government, PRTs consisted solely of military personnel. A team size was only ten to twelve people. The role of the CHLC was to provide the U. S. military with information on the humanitarian needs among the local population. The liaison cells also were given funds from the Department of Defense for projects in Afghan villages designed to build trust and confidence among the populace toward the U. S. military and government efforts. A force protection element, as well as representatives from USG agencies (USAID, DoS, USDA), later expanded the PRT's role. All PRTs were re-aligned from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) command to ISAF command in 2006.¹² Of the 26 PRTs in Afghanistan, as of May 2008, the U. S. leads 12 teams, and 13 other countries are in command of the 14 other PRTs.¹³ In 2008, the breakdown in personnel amongst all U. S. PRTs in Afghanistan was 1,021 military and 34 civilian from the State Department, USAID,

and USDA combined for a total of 1,055 total personnel. One of the 35 civilian positions inside the PRTs was still vacant at the time of the U. S. Government Accountability Office report in October 2008.¹⁴

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, states: “JFCs must integrate and synchronize stability operations – missions, tasks, and activities to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment and provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, or humanitarian relief.”¹⁵ This doctrine also contends that the time to plan stability operations is at the outset, when joint operation planning is initiated.¹⁶ After almost nine years of PRT existence, there is no doctrinal manual that gives detailed guidance for PRT operations. Five pages within the 200-page joint doctrine, JP 3-57 *Civil-Military Operations*, briefly cover some of the functions of PRTs. The document itself highlights the complicated nature of work conducted by PRTs, namely their dealings with NGOs and the international donor community.¹⁷

Undoubtedly the role of PRTs can be confusing. Because of the nature of their work, PRTs must be experienced in both Civil-Military Operations (CMO) and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). JP 3-07.3, *Peace Operations* (PO), states that before PKO can begin, “a credible truce or cease fire must be in effect and the parties to the dispute must consent to the operation.”¹⁸ Examining the PRT role in current operations in Afghanistan and comparing the efforts of the PRTs to the doctrinal definition, the on-going operations in the country arguably would not be classified as PKO but rather what JP 3-07.3 labels Peace Building (PB). JP 3-07.3 classifies Peace Building as

...post-conflict actions, predominantly diplomatic, economic, legal, and security related, that support political, social, and military measures aimed at

strengthening political settlements and legitimate governance and rebuilding governmental infrastructure and institutions. PB begins while PEO [Peace Enforcement Operations] or PKO are underway and may continue for years.¹⁹

Unfortunately, the Joint Publication on Peace Operations never mentions PRTs and how PRTs play a vital role in the Peace Building capacity within the realm of PKOs.

The Joint Publication on Peace Operations does illustrate the importance of cultural awareness for the success of the mission as does the JFC's Counterinsurgency Guidance. JP 3-07.3 indicates that mutual respect and cultural awareness take time, patience, and effort on the part of leaders at all levels. Understanding, mutual respect, and common objectives are essential to the U. S. and its multinational partners and are paramount to the success in stability and peace operations.²⁰ The subject of credibility is also addressed in JP 3-07.3.

Admiral Mullen argues that, "...our biggest problem isn't caves; it's credibility. Our messages lack credibility because we haven't invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven't always delivered on promises."²¹ The Afghan culture is based on trust and relationship. An independent report for the British Department of International Development states that in Afghanistan building trust is of vital importance in nation building due to the years of conflict the country has endured.²² Here we see a major shortcoming in the PRT's make-up. The PRT concept was to be a temporary effort in the stability and reconstruction endeavor for the country. Once the objectives of the PRT were met, more experienced nation-builders were to come in and continue the work that the novice PRT members started. This original PRT quick-fix concept was not favorable with respect to increasing credibility, trust, or relationships. Admiral Mullen admits, "Each time we fail to live up to our values or don't follow up on a promise, we look more and more like the arrogant Americans the enemy claims we are."²³ Because credibility is instrumental to

ensure mission accomplishment for POs, and credibility weighs heavily on the locals' assessment of the capability of the PO force, the force must conduct operations in a way that leaves no doubt as to their abilities and commitment.²⁴

Even with joint doctrine codifying the importance of understanding the culture, language, and religion of both the local populace as well as the adversary (or in this case, insurgents) in Afghanistan, there is still the appearance that PRTs are not credible in stability and peace operations, and that the JFC needs to refocus on this mission. A reason for this lack of credibility is that services are not being delivered. Clinics and schools are built but not staffed or funded (by the GIRoA Ministry of Health or Education respectively), and this failure to deliver services reduces PRTs' credibility in the eyes of the local people.²⁵ This gives an appearance of a broken promise as PRTs constructed the schools or clinics, yet these empty buildings ultimately provided nothing for the villagers. The intent, though, of the PRTs was to create stability in the villages and subsequently a lasting peace.

To enable a lasting stability and peace in Afghanistan and allow ISAF operations to move from Phase 4 to Phase 5, PRTs must be seen by the local population as credible. In the Afghan culture, the concept of time is viewed much differently than in the West. All of the tangible structures can be built by the PRTs, but if a promise is not kept or credibility is lost, the local Afghan village sees this as betrayal. More importantly, Afghan culture and concept of time ensures they will "remember" far longer than someone from the West. And once that credibility is lost or a promise is broken, the PRT starts completely from the beginning trying to mend the relationship and regain the trust and confidence of the Afghan population.

During a visit to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California in 2009, Admiral Mullen commented to the students that their studies in the languages spoken in Iraq

and Afghanistan were, “as important as any undertaking that we have in the United States military right now.”²⁶ The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have illustrated the importance of language skills. Commanders in ISAF highlight the importance of language proficiency and understand how common language extends beyond a normal conversation. “Language opens an important window of understanding into a country’s culture that is a critical component of winning the hearts and minds of the local population in the operational area.”²⁷ A subject matter expert for cultural and language training in the British Army teaches that if one cannot converse in the local dialect, he is “not only deaf but blind also.”²⁸ This sentiment shows the importance of closing the communication gap that exists between members of PRTs that may not have the ability to talk to the population they want to assist in stability and peace operations. Having the ability to converse in the local language does not guarantee the PRTs’ credibility; however, having skill in the language demonstrates commitment by showing the local population that enough emphasis has been placed on understanding what they are communicating.

The JFC not only needs to be concerned with the ability of the ISAF personnel in the PRTs to communicate with the local population in their native language, he also understands the problems inherent in a multinational setting. The JFC has 14 PRTs led by 13 countries other than the United States. Some of these countries are not native English speakers. As organizations inside Afghanistan, for example the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), take on integrated and larger roles in the stability and peace operations, it becomes evident that there is also a need to teach English to Afghan personnel. The common language will help them work with English-speaking nations in the coalition.²⁹ The need for a common language and cultural bond is reiterated by the host nation

commander of the ANP training center in Kabul, General Khudadad Agah. General Agah, who spoke almost no English in the summer of 2009, gave a briefing in English to journalists in Kabul. He commented, “We need to do much more training in English if we are to make certain we can work with the international advisors and with other national police forces. This will be a major step for us.”³⁰

A further problem with the PRT concept, with respect to understanding and communicating with the population to show commitment and cohesion, is continuity. Two factors contribute to this. First, there is a shortage of language-trained personnel. Second, personnel spend as little as four to six months on a deployment where the language skill-set they possess is in dire need.³¹ Until there are trained members on each PRT and comprehensive changeovers, there is a possibility of a break in continuity. This break could be disastrous for the relationships and the bonds of trust and credibility that have been nurtured over time.

Credibility and commitment are also displayed by showing that PRTs have an understanding of the local culture. “If you have a conversation with an Afghan about their allegiances, they’ll begin with religion, tribe affiliation, etc. About the fourth or fifth thing they’ll associate with is nationalism. It’s a tribal society.”³² Even General James Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps, admits that the Corps is still working on educating their troops on the Afghan culture. He does not want to be misidentified as occupiers.³³ General Conway also highlights the functions of operational art. He states, “The physical and cultural landscape [within Afghanistan], are changing the way Marines shape their strategy, forcing the Corps to develop programs that focus not only on fires and movement but also on culture and language development.”³⁴ One of the greatest challenges is operating in a completely

different “human terrain”, where the population has traditions and values much different than the people trying to stabilize and bring peace to the nation.³⁵

The awareness of Afghanistan’s history plays a large role in understanding its culture. Afghanistan has been invaded and occupied by countries within their region as well as foreign superpowers. Therefore, the U. S. military has the potential to be seen by the Afghan population as another occupier or invader. Understanding the culture, and viewing stability, reconstruction, and peace operations through a local villager’s eyes is the way to success. This helps bolster ISAF cohesion with ANA troops. Moreover, the progress of village reconstruction must be seen by its population “as a national effort based through the direction of their government that we’re in support of.”³⁶ To summarize this concept, it would be Afghans working to improve Afghanistan. If history is not studied one may not understand the importance of this concept. The Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan in February of 1989, well within the memory of many Afghan people. The current JFC, through his Commander’s Guidance, details how he wants the ISAF to be seen. When PRTs re-focus their efforts in accordance with JFC guidance as well as the recent QDR recommendations, and rebalance COIN and stability through the understanding the Afghan culture and language, success in the villages of Afghanistan will follow.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

Creating new doctrine specifically for PRTs may not be the path to success in Afghanistan. By the time new doctrine goes through the entire vetting process, the final document arrives too late for anything of substance to be instituted. A timeline for withdrawal has already been established. The current administration says troops could start redeploying in July 2011.³⁷ Both the current National Security Advisor and the Secretary of

Defense have commented that this will be the date when the forces currently in Afghanistan will start to transfer security responsibilities to Afghan agencies.³⁸ With Iraq already in a phased U. S. troop withdrawal and Afghanistan to begin troop withdrawal in 2011, there seems to be little reason to initiate new doctrine for PRTs.

Improving PRT understanding of Afghan languages and culture may not be the way to a more stable and peaceful country either. The status quo is all that is required when it comes to cultural and language awareness. There is no reason to put any more time, effort, or, more importantly, money into the teaching of culture or language to the stability, reconstruction, or peace operation forces. Instead, the U. S. military and the JFC should focus much more exclusively on training the ANA and ANP for the inevitable transfer as the ISAF departs the country starting in the summer of next year.

Still another problem with PRT-conducted stability and peace operations is that it remains a temporary mission. For that matter, even if the USG was able to support the effort with more experienced agencies like USAID and USDA, it would still be a temporary fix in the minds of the Afghan population. The influx of economic stimulation and infrastructure reconstruction that is at the core of the hearts-and-minds effort “does not buy the loyalty of the population – it only rents it.”³⁹ The local Afghan population needs to do for themselves what the PRTs are attempting to do. The people of the villages must recognize and believe that the Taliban are the enemy. Some areas of Afghanistan will be more receptive to this conception; for example, areas of ethnic Afghan populations that are threatened by Taliban governance. However, it is in the predominantly Pashtun areas (the majority of Afghanistan) where historical ties to the Taliban will make it far more difficult for the population to “turn their backs on the ties of language, culture and kin.”⁴⁰

REBUTTAL

Understanding and codifying lessons learned have value for both current and future operations. Doctrine, and in this case, new PRT Doctrine, will have implications for Phase 4 and Phase 5 operations in future conflicts. The date given by the current administration for withdrawal from Afghanistan is simply a target date. U. S. forces will most likely be in Afghanistan for some time (especially for stability, reconstruction, and peace operations) and could still benefit from this new doctrine. Forces, both in future conflicts and in the current conflict, would also benefit from culture and language awareness. It is imperative that stability forces focus on culture and language, both now and in the future, in order to terminate a conflict with the best resolution possible. As B.H. Liddell Hart stated, “The object of war is a better state of peace...Hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace that you devise.”⁴¹

CONCLUSIONS

*The more you understand that culture, the more effective a warrior you're going to be in a counterinsurgency environment. When you have the support and the confidence of the local population, very positive things follow. You will gain intelligence. You will gain support. They will make it tough for the bad guys to come in and start to take root in that society... So you've got to understand the culture.*⁴²

– Gen James Conway, Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps

The new strategy in Afghanistan emphasizes the need to strengthen the Afghan security forces, especially the ANA and ANP. It also highlights the need to improve governance of the country at the provincial and district levels.⁴³ The relationships that are built in these districts take time to develop and even longer to flourish. A better understanding of the local language and one-on-one contact, without the use of an interpreter, will be viewed by Afghans as showing commitment to the reconstruction effort. But the framework for PRT fundamentals and doctrine is virtually non-existent. There are multiple

joint publications that must be referenced to find information relating to stability operations, peace operations, civil-military operations, and reconstruction operations. The underlying issue is there should be only one doctrinal publication after many years of PRTs. Even though joint doctrine applies only to the DoD, the foundation and framework will assist PRTs to better work with their interagency, NGO, international, and host nation partners.

With the ongoing COIN operations and the current PRT breakdown substantially lacking civilian representation, Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, should be updated. This publication currently states, “Civilian agencies should lead COIN efforts.”⁴⁴ Further, this document states, “the JFC must normally focus military operations as part of a comprehensive solution under civilian agency leadership.”⁴⁵ The doctrine states the JFC should primarily focus on establishing security in the COIN operations.⁴⁶ With the civilian agency filling 34 of their 35 positions on the PRTs, and the military personnel filling 1,021 positions, the doctrine should cover, in detail, the military’s role and the JFC’s oversight as a permanent leader in COIN. This modification would allow the JFC to focus more on aspects of culture, language, and religion where the military has taken a secondary role to the civilian agencies with more experience.

A hearts-and-minds style of operation by PRTs in Afghanistan requires many tangible objects. Roads, buildings, schools, wells and other physical pieces of infrastructure are examples of these tangible successes. The strategy also involves aspects that are intangible. It is the intangible aspect of the strategy that is harder to grasp and instill. The intangible part of the strategy is the time consuming effort of really understanding the culture of the Afghan people. This understanding of culture is what is needed to bridge the gap between success and failure. But currently there is a lack of interagency support. With the numbers of forces

drawing down in Iraq and the recent surge in troops given to him by the implementation of the new strategy, the JFC may be able to increase the role and effectiveness of PRTs in Afghanistan. It must be pointed out though, that the interagency numbers assigned to the U.S.-led PRTs is only 35. Interagency organizations like USAID specialize in language and cultural awareness. NGOs also help fill a void created by USG interagency shortfalls. However, as USG interagency support to the JFC in Afghanistan appears to remain constant, the JFC will have to make do with the predominantly military forces he has available to him.

As the vast majority of his available forces are military forces from the ISAF, the JFC must continue to stress the need for language and cultural awareness amongst his forces. He has made his Commander's Intent known through his guidance released in August of 2009. PRT commanders must continue to push their forces to interact with the local communities, learn the local language, and respect the culture and religion of the population with whom they are working. Promises must be kept and credibility must be displayed in all that the ISAF forces do both on- and off-duty. If there are one or two interagency personnel on their PRT, the military forces with limited cultural or language training must learn from them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the war in Afghanistan continues into its ninth year, and ISAF commanders have released and re-released guidance as to the path for success, there is an underlying flaw in the method of transmitting the message. Joint Doctrine is the method to codify the methods of operations. All DoD members that are assigned to a PRT should be able to go to one doctrinal manual, as a starting-point or foundation, to understand what is required of them and how to best conduct their duties. Doctrine is not the only way to conduct operations and missions, but it is a framework to reference. Currently for PRTs, and especially for cultural

and language understanding of the local population, a PRT member must sift through at least six volumes of doctrine (JP 3-0, *Operations*; JP 3-07.3, *Peace Operations*; JP 3-57, *Civil Military Operations*; JP 3-13, *Information Operations*; JP 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*; and JP 3-08v1 and v2, *Interagency Operations*) as well as multiple DoD Instructions (DoDI) and Directives (DoDD) (DoDI 3000.05, *Stability Operations*; DoDD 5160.70, *Management of DoD Language and Regional Proficiency Capabilities*) in order to find the roles and responsibilities of his assigned position. This must be rectified. There needs to be a Joint Publication for Provincial Reconstruction Team Operations that outlines the duties and responsibilities of the function. The DoD has doctrine written already for shorter term operations such as Noncombatant Evacuation Operations but still does not have doctrine specifically for Provincial Reconstruction Teams in operation for almost a decade.

Another recommendation is to create a Provincial Reconstruction Team Center for Excellence based in Afghanistan where the cadre focuses on cultural and language awareness. This Center of Excellence would be the first stop on a deployment for PRT members throughout ISAF prior to joining the assigned PRT in the local districts. This program would cover issues relevant to peace and stability operations for the area of assignment as well as any cultural lessons-learned for continuity. Also, this Center would instill in the individual the importance of the JFC's intent to focus on the language and culture. Obviously the language of the local population would not be taught, but the fundamentals of the language would be instructed. Cultural awareness would play a large role at the Center with a focus on understanding and credibility.

The Center would be based on the Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) in Quantico, Virginia. The PRT Center for Excellence would

instill the ideas that the CAOCL gives to Marines deploying to Afghanistan. The CAOCL's stated mission is "To train Marines to think critically about culture so that it becomes embedded inside the planning process."⁴⁷ The Marine Center develops and resources programs that allow the deploying leader to make sound judgments based on the understanding of cultural aspects of the population.⁴⁸ If PRTs had this solid framework at the start of all deployments in Afghanistan, it would facilitate the cultural understanding of the local population with whom PRTs will be working and aid in the more rapid movement into Phase 5 Operations.

The forces needed to stand up this PRT Center for Excellence would need to be pulled either from the field or from forces back in the United States. As the forces in the Afghanistan are critical and scarce, and the short dwell time at home has the military at an extremely high operations tempo, the forces would most likely need to come from elsewhere. As the number forces draw down in Iraq, the JFC in Afghanistan could benefit from these troops as well as the experience they bring from the Iraqi theater. Experienced civil-affairs personnel would not need as long to educate themselves on the culture and language differences between Iraq and Afghanistan, although they must be diligent in their studies. With the Marine CAOCL as a model, this experienced cadre will stand-up the Center. Rotations will be based on the 12 month Army and Marine model in Afghanistan. The Center will target more senior Civil-Affairs Officers as instructors in order to better train the incoming PRT members.

Finally, the JFC must focus on the continuity of the PRTs within ISAF. The relationships that have been forged and the projects that have been developed by the PRTs need to be carried on by subsequent commanders and individual members of the teams.

Leaders from the top down must reinforce the importance of what General James Mattis classifies as “HandCON.” This is the ability to get things accomplished through a handshake and know that it will be done to the highest caliber possible. HandCON crosses not only joint or coalition boundaries, it also crosses cultural boundaries. As the Afghan locals in the villages are not signatories to any treaties or compacts, they respond to the personal relationships that have been developed by the hard and credible work of the PRTs. When new members are brought into the teams, the concept of reliable trust and relationships must be imparted to the novice by good continuity and overlap with the outgoing leader. This continuity is crucial for the JFC’s new strategy to work. This is an aspect of the Afghan culture that is different than the West, and this will be taught at the PRT Center for Excellence as well. In order for the progress that has been made up to the point of change-over to continue, the JFC cannot have relationships start over from the beginning. If there is a tendency to start completely over every six to twelve months, the JFC and ISAF will maintain Phase 4 Operations and will never progress into Phase 5.

WAY AHEAD

The military has come to the realization, however late in the war it may be, that the need to understand culture and language where operations are occurring is of paramount importance to future success.⁴⁹ There is still quite a lot of work to be accomplished before the JFC and his commanders in Afghanistan can feel confident about the level of cultural, religious, and language understanding of the population. But without understanding the population’s values, customs, traditions, and history, the current hearts-and-minds strategy is much harder to execute with success. The level of support by those civilian agencies which are generally more experienced in the cultural aspect of the population appears to be staying

constant. The need for the JFC to utilize his military forces as the only guaranteed force in the operation thus also remains constant. PRTs in Afghanistan must display the cultural understanding that it is necessary for the local population to be the face of peace and stability in the country, starting with ANA and ANP in the districts. In supporting the effort of the local villages, the PRTs must remain credible in their actions. The relationships they form with Afghan citizens must be carried on by those that replace them in the PRT. Continuity, training, and doctrine are the foundations for PRT successes in Afghanistan. Meeting the JFC's objectives and progressing from Phase 4 to Phase 5 Operations relies heavily on how the Afghan population views the PRTs. Gaining the Afghan people's trust is critical, and understanding Afghan culture is the key to success.

NOTES

¹ Michael G. Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Force Quarterly* 55, 4th Quarter 2009, 4.

² U. S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mullen, 3.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Stanley A. McChrystal, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance* (Kabul, Afghanistan: Headquarters, ISAF, 2009), 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq*, (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 1 October 2008), 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Ibid., 3.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵ Chairman, U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Change 1, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 13 February 2008), xxi.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Chairman, U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Civil-Military Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-57 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 8 July 2008), I-3.

¹⁸ Chairman, U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Peace Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-07.3 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 October 2007), x.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., I-6.

²¹ Mullen, 3.

²² Sarah Ladbury in collaboration with Cooperation for Peace and Unity, "*Testing Hypotheses on Radicalization in Afghanistan*," Independent Report for the Department of International Development (Kabul, Afghanistan: 14 August 2009), 9.

²³ Mullen, 4.

²⁴ Chairman, U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Peace Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-07.3 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 October 2007), I-4.

²⁵ Ladbury, 42.

²⁶ Tim Mahon, "Chatter That Matters," *Training & Simulation Journal* (1 February 2010), 1, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 5 April 2010).

²⁷ Ibid., 1.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Isaac D. Pacheco, "The 7th Warfighting Skill: How Culture is changing the Face of Today's Battlefield," *Leatherneck* 92 (October 2009), 1, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 5 April 2010).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ CNN, "Obama Aides Fine-Tune Meaning of Afghan Withdrawal Date," *CNN.com*, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/12/06/us.afghanistan/index.html> (accessed 29 April 2010).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Justin Kelly, "How to Win in Afghanistan," *Quadrant Online* (April 2009), 6, <http://www.quadrant.org.au/> (accessed 9 December 2009).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Christopher Tuck, "Conflict Termination in Iraq," *RUSI Journal* 149 (October 2004), 1, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 29 April 2010).

⁴² Pacheco, 2-3.

⁴³ Moses T. Ruiz, "Sharpening the Spear: The United States' Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan," (Spring 2009), 75-76, <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/297> (accessed 5 April 2010).

⁴⁴ Chairman, U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-24 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 5 October 2009), III-2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Pacheco, 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ William M. Darley, "Strategic Imperative: The Necessity for Values Operations as Opposed to Information Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan," *Air & Space Power Journal* 21 (Spring 2007), 1, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 5 April 2010).

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