

NATO Senior Civilian Representative Report

# **A Comprehensive Approach Lessons Learned in Afghanistan**

15 July 2010

# Executive Summary

The Secretary General instructed the NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in Afghanistan to provide a concise report which portrays lessons learned in Afghanistan that are relevant to the further development of NATO's contribution to a comprehensive approach (CA) in the context of the revised Strategic Concept. Although the Secretary General specifically asked for the experience and views of the SCR, the SCR directed a more inclusive approach, and therefore the findings presented in this report embrace the ideas of senior NATO leaders in Kabul, including the Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Commander ISAF Joint Command, the UN and EU Special Representatives in Afghanistan, as well as the views of the SCR himself.

Four consistent propositions emerged:

- The application of a well-resourced comprehensive approach might not ensure success; but without it, we will fail.
- Application of a comprehensive approach is a persuasive way for NATO to address contemporary crisis response operations and is fundamentally important to NATO; however, there is no 'one-size-fits-all'.
- It is essential that the analysis, planning and preparation of multi-agency crisis response operations are addressed collectively by all actors, building political will early and sustaining it throughout the campaign.
- A comprehensive approach demands unity of effort across the political, military and civil pillars embodied in military unity of command, where all actors share a unity of purpose realized by harmonising efforts, sharing burden and sustaining political will in order to achieve an overarching political goal that is shared by the host nation and external actors.

The majority of the lessons from Afghanistan identified in this report address the final bullet: unity of command; unity of purpose and effort in support of building partnerships; and harmonising actions and burden sharing in the IC. The conditions necessary to achieve this are established out of the operational theatre by strategic headquarters, thereby ensuring coherent direction and guidance to in theatre principals to enable them to succeed on the ground. It is recommended that NATO moves work on a comprehensive approach forward in three specific areas:

1. Improve NATO's planning frameworks to facilitate and encourage the participation of multiple actors in order to set the conditions for an integrated effort. The goal should be to create a strategic design based on a shared analysis and a common overarching political goal that facilitates an integrated in-theatre campaign plan synchronized in time and space, empowers in-theatre principals, ensures proper resourcing and provides maximum flexibility.
2. Develop an overarching framework and process within NATO that provides timely political guidance, to include policy and doctrine, to guide and direct NATO's interaction with the international community. Doing so in a transparent manner, in which actions are commensurate with the messages

and influence intended, will improve NATO's processes and strengthen international confidence and trust in NATO. This must include clear policy on S&R, stating NATO's intentions and role in regard to governance and development.

3. Identify, generate and incorporate civilian expertise more extensively into NATO's permanent structures and operational structures. At the strategic level, this must include the expertise required for strategic design. Through the NATO structure, it must also include expertise in 'human terrain' mapping. An empowered SCR with a robust mandate, appointed at the same time as the force commander, and of equal status to him in the eyes of the host nation and the international community, should be a basic principle for future NATO interventions in crisis response operations where resolution is fundamentally political rather than military.

These are the key areas that NATO must deliver in a compelling fashion through its debates in Brussels and the capitals. These themes are not unique to Afghanistan; they have been identified elsewhere, both in the context of NATO and other non-NATO operations, and were expressed consistently by the senior leaders consulted during the preparation of this report.

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# Introduction

This report documents lessons derived from efforts to apply the tenets of a comprehensive approach (CA) in Afghanistan. It fulfils the requirements of the initial phase of the work commissioned by the Secretary General to draw strategic conclusions and concrete proposals for a NATO way ahead on a CA.

As requested by the Secretary General,<sup>1</sup> this report represents the experience and views of the NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) and his staff, but they have been informed by the thoughts and ideas of senior NATO leaders in Kabul, including Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), as well as the UN and EU Special Representatives. It is appropriate to emphasise the degree of unity in the views expressed by the military and civilian, NATO and non-NATO, key leaders consulted during the preparation of this report (see Annex A), based on their individual experience in this and other operational theatres. Other analyses have also been drawn on, which examine broad perspectives from Afghanistan and elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> reinforcing the fact that the issues related to a CA have many commonalities.

## Context

Key leaders in Afghanistan were consulted on how to best implement a CA by the international community (IC) in Afghanistan, bearing in mind that NATO's CA Action Plan (CAAP)<sup>3</sup> embodies many of the central ideas. Although there was some divergence in their responses, most agreed that ISAF had undertaken its activities in what they considered to be the framework of a CA since about 2009.

The following paragraphs outline some of the changes that have contributed towards setting the conditions for a CA to emerge in Afghanistan.

Firstly, there has been a renewed focus on operations in Afghanistan over the past ten months; the result of growing political will and increasing support by many Alliance nations. This renewed focus has yielded more resources, comprised of both military and civilian capabilities, which, when coupled with a counterinsurgency plan to deal with the specific circumstances of Afghanistan that has integrated civilian and military forces and capabilities in an operational context, has allowed us to better address security, governance and development in a holistic and synergistic approach.

Secondly, mandates and structures within ISAF have been adjusted. The mandate of the NATO SCR has been reinforced, which, together with a more robust staff, has permitted the SCR to become a more effective conduit for cooperation and coordination between NATO HQ, ISAF, the IC and the Government of the Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> SG(2010)0258 dated 20 Apr 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Including other NATO and UN crisis response operations, and national conflicts.

<sup>3</sup> C-M(2008)0029-COR1, Proposal on a Way Ahead on CA, dated 2 April 2008.

Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). At the same time, the reorganisation of the ISAF command structure into HQ ISAF, the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) and the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) has allowed HQ ISAF staff to focus on the more strategic 'up and out' issues, while the IJC concentrates on the operational 'down and in.' The effect of these changes has improved NATO's unity of command and therefore unity of effort, duly highlighting one of the fundamental precepts for an effective comprehensive approach – unity of purpose and effort.

Thirdly, ISAF has made a concerted effort to improve its interaction with non-NATO entities by building trust, improving coordination, proactively sharing information and setting standards for transparency.

Finally, ISAF has invested consistency in public messaging that informs the public, and helps to build support and establish strong partnerships.

This report identifies those ideas and activities that have enabled a CA to emerge in Afghanistan and therefore should be considered as candidates for institutionalization by NATO. It also highlights several areas where shortfalls remain that need to be addressed.

## **Report Structure**

The following sections of this report are organized to reflect the particular areas of interest expressed by the NATO Secretary General:<sup>4</sup>

- General background observations.
- Adequacy of existing planning frameworks and the need for more integrated crisis management planning, to include civilian and military expertise.
- Integration of civilian expertise in permanent and operational structures.
- Modalities for NATO's cooperation/interaction with other actors.

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<sup>4</sup> SG(2010)0258 dated 20 Apr 2010.

# General Background Observations

## ***General observations from experience in Afghanistan regarding endeavours to apply a comprehensive approach, and its linkage to stabilization and reconstruction***

One of the most significant challenges in analysing issues related to a CA is that NATO has never defined clearly what it means by CA. Further, in policy terms, it would be very useful if the Alliance was also able to define what is meant by Stabilization and Reconstruction (S&R) and express its linkage to a CA.

## **What is a Comprehensive Approach?**

In order to inform such a discussion, the following view is offered. The proposed definition in the trial version of the SHAPE Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD)<sup>5</sup> states that CA is ‘a means to ensure a coordinated and coherent response to crisis by all relevant actors’. This could be taken a significant and desirable step further and described as an integrated response, but such a state cannot be achieved unless there is a strategic design for resolution of a crisis that is undertaken and shared by all actors. In this context, the actors are the host nation authorities (when they exist), the IC – including, as far as possible non-governmental organizations (NGO), and, from a NATO perspective, the contributing nations.

The lack of a strategic design has resulted in the disparate and uncoordinated efforts that characterised IC activities in Afghanistan in the years post-2001. A strategic design would seek to establish the overarching common goal that would define success in resolving a crisis. In the framework of crises in failed, conflict or post conflict states, that goal will invariably be political and will have more than just a military/security dimension. A thorough analysis of the whole problem across all potential domains will reveal all the lines of operation required for resolution. To date, such an analysis has not been undertaken for Afghanistan by any organisation, either singly or jointly.

The outcome of the analysis would provide the basis for a genuine inter-agency campaign plan and directive that addresses the objectives to be achieved to reach the overarching goal, the leadership of the IC effort (if possible), responsibility for the functional domains that need to be addressed as lines of operation and a broad set of measures of effectiveness. The latter are essential, both for evaluating progress, but also to drive a continuous planning review and updating cycle.

If such a strategic design can be achieved at the headquarters level in Brussels, New York, Geneva and other headquarters locations, then the right conditions for success are being laid from the outset. The design should be limited to describing the overarching political goal (end state), objectives and desired strategic outcomes, expressed in output terms. If couched in such a manner, the design would also allow

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<sup>5</sup> Allied Command Operations, Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD-Trial Version), dated 25 Feb 2010, NATO UNCLASSIFIED Releasable to PFP/EU.



common direction from the grand strategic level to theatre level headquarters of all organisations, facilitating the design of a theatre level integrated campaign plan that would join in time and space the actions required to achieve success; establishing priorities, sequencing and dependency for both activity and resources. The responsibility for that detailed plan rests with principals in-theatre, where the campaign is prosecuted. This delineation of responsibilities is consistent with the Proposal on a Way Ahead for the CA outlined by the then Secretary General in April 2008<sup>6</sup>.

In the consultations with key leaders from across the IC in Afghanistan, the lack of a strategic design in Afghanistan and the fundamental requirement for one was a consistent theme. This is therefore a key lesson that has come from Afghanistan, but is one that is applicable to any future operation where the Alliance will be part of a 'Whole of Security' solution to a crisis. From a purely Alliance perspective, the Comprehensive Strategic Political-Military Plan (CSPMP) goes a long way in providing overarching strategy for ISAF, but of course only represents a NATO view. The first version of the CSPMP was distributed to the nations in April 2008, just under five years after NATO first assumed command of ISAF. The CSPMP has been revised annually and the latest version, dated April 2010, represents a positive step forward, as the nine Desired Strategic Outcomes focus more on the outputs and outcomes required - the desired results - than the input actions.

The lesson from ISAF experience is that the CSPMP was far too late, coming some years after NATO's OPLAN for ISAF, and that such a keystone document needs to be produced in time to focus the strategic and operational planning processes for an intervention.

A clearly articulated strategic design also addresses the imperatives of unity of command, unity of purpose and unity of effort. Although there is a prevailing view that unity of command across the political, military and civilian pillars, ie one overall leader of the IC effort, is probably a step too far (both conceptually and, for Afghanistan, practically), the agreement of key objectives to reach an overarching goal will establish the basis of a unity of purpose and the delineation and acceptance of responsibility for individual lines of operation will set the conditions for unity of effort.

In the context of strategic design, it is evident that the Alliance's existing planning frameworks are not yet adequate. Strategic analysis needs to be a robust and enduring capability in Brussels and Mons that is sufficiently resourced to allow NATO to be proactive rather than reactive in identifying potential crises that might affect Alliance security interests, to establish relationships of mutual confidence and trust with other IC organisations and to maintain NATO's comparative advantage in terms of planning capability. In the context of today's security environment, strategic analysis is a fundamental capability.

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<sup>6</sup> C-M(2008)0029-COR1 dated 2 Apr 2008.

## Stabilization and Reconstruction

There seems to be a growing consensus across the IC that S&R describes those activities undertaken collectively in theatre by the IC in operations in **failing**, failed, conflict or post-conflict states to achieve the overarching political goal identified in the strategic design. Under the overall clusters of governance, security and development, the end state needs to address the imperatives of: a safe and secure environment, the rule of law, social well-being, stable governance and a sustainable economy<sup>7</sup>. Not all will be applicable in every scenario, but they are all applicable in Afghanistan. The research that developed these five functional areas also identified cross cutting principles that apply to every actor in a theatre of operations: host nation ownership and capacity, political primacy, legitimacy, unity of effort, security, conflict transformation and regional engagement. All of these principles resonate in terms of Afghanistan and are certainly implicit in all that is being undertaken here.

The challenge in terms of S&R for ISAF is twofold. First, as already described, the lack of a strategic design has resulted in a lack of clarity in the delineation of who is responsible for what in Afghanistan and a consequent inability to genuinely coordinate actions. Secondly, both the lack of an Alliance policy on S&R and an articulation of NATO's role and functions in terms of supporting both development and governance efforts. Notwithstanding the considerable efforts of other IC organisations in Afghanistan, it is a matter of fact that ISAF is providing the lead for security, development and governance in regions and provinces of Afghanistan where the insurgency makes it difficult for other organisations to operate. It is the weight of resources that nations have made available to ISAF, the strategic direction of the CSPMP and the understanding of the dynamics of counter insurgency that have resulted in ISAF being the only organisation in Afghanistan that can truly plan and coordinate across all domains. Yet efforts are restrained by the lack of clear Alliance policy in this area.

In an address at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in 2008<sup>8</sup>, the President of the World Bank observed that most conflicts today are wars within states and that fragile states account for most of them, yet the knowledge in the IC about how best to respond to them remains thin. He went on to say that the framework for resolution was one of building security, legitimacy, governance and economy. He described this framework as not being security as usual or development as usual, but a framework for securing development – bringing security and development together first to smooth transition from conflict to peace and then to embed stability so that development can take hold over a decade and beyond. The significance of securing development for the Alliance is that early concurrent action across all three domains of security, governance and development is necessary to set the conditions for long term success. If this had been applied in Afghanistan, it is possible that the current insurgency might not have taken hold. If other organisations cannot contribute in a

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<sup>7</sup> Guiding Principles for Stabilisation and Reconstruction – US Institute for Peace and US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute.

<sup>8</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, President The World Bank Group -The International Institute for Strategic Studies Geneva, Switzerland, September 12, 2008.

practical sense because of insecurity and conflict, then the Alliance must be able to act across the domains itself.

This report is not advocating that NATO makes any fundamental change to its purpose or seeks to acquire governance and development capabilities of its own, but the Alliance must be organised to plan and execute such activities in concert with traditional security activities and it must have access to the necessary capabilities. It is likely that NATO operations in the coming years will be undertaken in the context of 'Whole of Security'. Agreed Alliance policy on S&R is required as a precursor for doctrine and reorganisation to ensure the right expertise in the civil areas of governance and development is available to the Alliance at the appropriate levels within the NATO structure.

# Planning Frameworks

## ***Adequacy of existing planning frameworks and the need for more integrated crisis management planning, to include civilian and military expertise***

In order to contribute to strategic design, theatre campaign planning and to produce appropriate tactical plans, NATO must develop comprehensive planning frameworks at the strategic, operational and tactical levels that enable effective planning, to include NATO policy support to government reform, judicial procedures, rule of law and institution building.<sup>9</sup> The NATO planning framework must support harmonization of the efforts of all stakeholders in a manner that ensures unity of effort and purpose. Planning frameworks must encompass elements that address both the implementation and the sustainment of actions. However, one of the key findings from melding the views and experiences of the key leaders within ISAF is that the existing NATO planning frameworks have proved insufficient to support the development of a CA based campaign plan for the mission in Afghanistan.

There is a common belief that in order to execute its military mission, and provide adequate support to GIRoA, ISAF must be able to engage in and harmonize its actions with entities outside the military. Two particular themes have been identified that are applicable to advancing CA: the development of better situational awareness and the incorporation of civilian expertise working in a coordinated fashion with military forces. Additionally, from an ISAF perspective, NATO lacks the essential policy and subsequent doctrine necessary to implement fully a planning process for CA.

## **Planning for Overwhelming Entry in a Theatre**

Colin Powell asserted in what is widely known as the 'Powell Doctrine' that when a nation is engaged in war, every resource and tool available should be used to achieve decisive force against the enemy. Powell also stressed the importance of a defined end state that delineated clear objectives for an intervention. Several key leaders interviewed expressed the view that the basic philosophy of the Powell Doctrine - overwhelming force - was never implemented in Afghanistan; doing so might have significantly changed the circumstances of the crisis.

The application of the Powell Doctrine to CA logically concludes that 'overwhelming capability' should be planned and applied from the outset: not only to forces that provide security, but also in support of initiatives that promote and establish good governance, a stable economy and the rule of law. The initial entry force for a crisis response operation should include military capabilities for stabilization (security), and civilian capabilities for reconstruction (governance and development), supported by a unified campaign plan derived from the strategic design. Although the initial cost of such an approach may be higher, a more rapid culmination to a crisis might mean that the overall cost - both in blood and treasure - would be lower. Additionally, it

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<sup>9</sup> A similar conclusion was reached in SHAPE's analysis of the implications of COMISAF's proposals from COMISAF's Initial Assessment.

was emphasised during the interviews that it is easier to draw down capabilities, both military and civilian, once objectives are met, rather than to enlarge them if they prove to be insufficient for the task. The NATO philosophy of the 'minimum military requirement' that is applied to all statements of requirements for operations has more often than not led to under resourcing and runs counter to successful prosecution of operations. A more realistic approach would be to stress the essential requirements for success, which, if they are not provided, should result in operations not being initiated.

## **Situational Understanding**

An important ingredient in any planning effort is situational awareness and understanding. Several key leaders stated that the Alliance lacked an adequate understanding of the situation in Afghanistan and failed to invest sufficient time and resources to improve that understanding. If that observation is correct today, then it follows that it was an overall failing in the process that led to NATO engaging in Afghanistan.

Under the construct of CA, a key imperative is to understand the human terrain. Whereas the technical aspects of military intelligence and target selection are well understood and developed, similar capacity is lacking to analyse and fully understand the human terrain on a local, national, and regional level in a manner that provides a commensurate understanding of political, cultural and economic relations.

While this deficiency is being addressed in ISAF in respect of the theatre campaign plan, it must also be addressed by the Alliance with regard to the strategic design for a campaign. Preparations to conduct future operations must go beyond current organizational constructs and capabilities, to include mapping of the human terrain. The achievement of a comprehensive situational awareness and heightened understanding is a key element to improving planning capabilities for complex scenarios, and thereby highlights the importance in NATO structures of knowledge development teams, incorporating both military and complementary civilian capacity.

## **Civilian Planning Expertise**

All of the key leaders interviewed, as well as the supporting analyses, were consistent in the view that incorporating civilians to work alongside military counterparts was essential to developing an effective capacity for planning in support of multi agency-operations. The scale and skills requirements of a civilian component will depend on NATO policy on CA/S&R. Ideally, the Alliance will agree a policy that recognises NATO's need for planning capacity for governance and development. In this case, the civilian component will need to include proven planners. If NATO does not agree such a policy, then civilian advisors on governance and development issues would probably suffice. The experience of Afghanistan leads to the clear conclusion that NATO does need to plan in all domains, and therefore needs a robust civilian planning capacity. An appropriate governance and development analysis capacity is needed at NATO HQ as part of the strategic design capability. Planners are then required through the command

structure; with a rapid reaction civilian capability to provide the in-theatre planning and liaison expertise required. While work in this area is underway<sup>10</sup>, Alliance policy development will dictate overall requirements.

Civilian planning capacity has been successfully incorporated in HQ ISAF and HQ IJC, bringing expertise and a richer understanding of the non-military lines of operation, including credible estimates of resource requirements and the timelines needed to achieve desired effects. As COMIJC stated “*we have got to combine the planning skills of the military with the civilian expertise that resides out there in things that we [the military] have no idea about.*”

## Improve Doctrine

NATO doctrine does not support the complete spectrum of operations that the Alliance is undertaking. The development of NATO doctrine for COIN<sup>11</sup> has stalled in the NATO Standardization Agency with the ratification drafts of both the AJP and its supporting Standardization Agreement (STANAG 2611) being withdrawn<sup>12</sup>. To fulfil the pressing operational need, ISAF has employed the tenets of US national doctrine in support of COIN.<sup>13</sup> Another example is the lack of specific NATO to support S&R activities. NATO doctrine covering support to civil authorities<sup>14</sup> is currently at the study stage. The lack of an S&R doctrine that would address the full range of operations in failed, conflict or post conflict states, and not just counterinsurgency, is a significant shortfall. It would go a long way to explaining to other IC organizations the Alliance’s roles and functions in multi agency operations. However, it is evident that such a doctrine cannot be achieved until appropriate Alliance policy is in place. Currently, nations follow their own doctrine in Afghanistan, which is sometimes conflicting; compromising conceptual unity and with inevitable consequences for unity of purpose and effort.

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<sup>10</sup> NATO IS-CEP is developing the CA Specialist Support (COMPASS) Database of specialist civilian experts who can be called upon to provide expertise in governance and development in support of NATO’s planning processes.

<sup>11</sup> NATO Standardisation Agency, Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN), AJP-3.4.4.

<sup>12</sup> SHAPE and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) have issued the Bi-SC Counter-Insurgency (COIN) Joint Operational Guidelines (JOG) on the 26 May 2010 for use by all NATO nations and operational HQs pending ratification and promulgation of AJP-3.4.4, but as of July 2010 this document appears to have limited visibility in HQ ISAF and IJC.

<sup>13</sup> Includes: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-24 Counterinsurgency Operations, JP 3-24, dated 05 Oct 2009; HQ Department of the Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24 MCWP 3-33.5, dated December 2006; HQ Department of the Army Field Manual 3-24.2, Tactics in Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24.2 (FM 90-8, FM 7-98), dated April 2009.

<sup>14</sup> AJP-3.4.3, Allied Joint Doctrine for Support to Civil Authorities (STANAG 2576).

# Integration of Civilian Expertise

## *Integration of civilian expertise in permanent and operational structures*

Operations in Afghanistan demonstrate the need for effective civil-military leadership across the spectrum of the IC. Successful crisis management requires the application of an array of civil and military capabilities that are both deployable and highly adaptable. Consequently, to be in a position to contribute effectively to CA in multi-agency operations, the Alliance must be prepared to institutionalize greater civilian expertise in both its permanent peace establishments and crisis establishments.

## Changing Paradigm

Civil-military integration is achieved by changing the way we *think*, the way we *organise*, the way we *plan* and the way we *train*. When the military deploys on multi agency operations, it needs a competent, well-trained component of civilian expertise that it can rely on from the outset for both the effective planning and effective execution of its specific activities as part of an integrated campaign plan. All of the senior civilian and military representatives interviewed expressed the belief that well trained civilians are necessary within the military structure. Moreover, they must be integrated into the strategic, operational and tactical levels so that our analysis, organising, planning, execution and training bears a true civil-military flavour from the outset. Such a civilian component should be deployable, and sustainable, with mechanisms developed to ensure sufficient expertise is available at all levels.

At the same time, it is equally important that professional military education, including doctrine and training, must be adapted to ensure that the military has commensurate understanding of civilian lines of operation - governance and development. At the most senior level, NATO commanders in theatres such as Afghanistan are operating at the 'theatre strategic level', dealing with heads of state, governments and principals of other IC organisations. Experience on NATO and national operations provides on the job training, but more formal training mechanisms, underpinned by Alliance doctrine, would capture best practice and institutionalize it.

## Civilians in ISAF

Examples of where civilian expertise is currently being used alongside military counterparts in ISAF include:

- The NATO SCR's Office (discussed in more detail below).
- HQ ISAF CJ2 staff and IJC Information Dominance Centre; to analyse and understand the political, cultural, social and economic dynamics (the 'human/cultural terrain') within Afghanistan, representing district, regional and national perspectives.

- HQ ISAF Afghan Assessment Group (AAG); to provide expert operational analysis support for the ISAF assessment process.
- HQ ISAF Stability Division; to lead and provide staff for the Development and Governance branches of the division.
- HQ ISAF Force Reintegration Cell; to provide civilian expertise for ISAF support to the GIRoA led peace and reintegration process.

In June 2010 at HQ ISAF, there were approximately 260 civilian and 800 military staff; civilians therefore represent 25% of the total. In the divisions and branches within HQ ISAF that conduct operations (as opposed to enabling),<sup>15</sup> civilians still represent 25% of the total staff (112 civilians and 343 military).<sup>16</sup> The numbers themselves, however, do not convey anything about the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil-military effort, but the functions where civil expertise resides are indicative of the civil-military nature of operations in Afghanistan. By virtue of necessity, ISAF is effectively conducting, on behalf of NATO, a civil-military experiment in real time and under conditions of stress that only combat can deliver. The results must be properly captured as part of the Alliance's learning process.

## SCR Role

A NATO SCR with a robust mandate and commensurate staff in support is judged by those interviewed to be a solid step forward. The SCR undertakes the political aspects of the Alliance's overall assistance mission in Afghanistan and represents NATO officially and publicly to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the IC in Afghanistan; cooperating closely with COMISAF.<sup>17</sup> The NATO SCR is creating political strategic effect by supporting the interface between NATO HQ, the ISAF military chain of command, the IC (including UNAMA), and the GIRoA to ensure that plans and action taken are in the best interest of the GIRoA. The SCR adds significant value by facilitating connectivity, offering forums to support communication and improve the exchange of information. The augmentation of the SCR Office<sup>18</sup> with 10 civilian staff, in recognition of the expanded role of the SCR **within his** terms of reference, has been essential to provide the political effect required. The SCR function has now changed from principally a passive reporting role to an active catalytic role, identifying what needs to be done in support of GIRoA plans and initiatives, helping formulate those plans and ensuring that the right capability is available and applied.

<sup>15</sup> DCOS Intelligence (DCOSINT), DCOS Operations (DCOSOPS), DCOS Strategic Partnering (DCOSSP), DCOS Stability (DCOSSTAB), Force Reintegration Cell (F-RIC), DCOS Communications (STRATCOM), SCR Office. COMISAF's special staff were excluded, but of particular note is the ISAF COIN Advisory and Assistance Team (CAAT), which has 18 (53%) civilian and 16 (47%) military staff.

<sup>16</sup> For comparison, a brief analysis of the NATO Command Structure peace establishments would indicate a ratio of 84% military to 16% civilian at SHAPE, and an average of 91% to 9% for the three Joint Force Commands. Considering only the 'operational directorates', the corresponding ratios are 92% to 8% at SHAPE and 96% to 4% at the JFCs.

<sup>17</sup> DSG(2010)0146 dated 08 March 2010.

<sup>18</sup> SG(2010)0158 dated 11 March 2010.



## **Key Leader Relationship**

The importance of an effective SCR-COM relationship cannot be overstated. When these two work together seamlessly, as was the case with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in Iraq, the impact on unity of command and unity of purpose is positive and compelling. The need for a symbiotic relationship between the SCR and COMISAF was routinely highlighted by key leaders. Given these observations, the key to an effective SCR is an individual who combines vision, charisma, strength of character and recognised standing. Personality is as important for the SCR as it is for the military commander. The SCR should be appointed at the same time as the force commander, must be perceived as an equal partner to the force commander, must be furnished with an adequate staff, and have credibility with the host nation government and the IC.

## **High Commissioner / High Representative**

A civilian High Commissioner, representing the IC and offering the host nation access to a variety of international services and advice, could potentially prevent the multitude of well-intended, but often conflicting and distracting offers of assistance provided by nations and organisations that have characterised efforts in Afghanistan. Such a role would need UN Security Council authority.

President Karzai has indicated in the past that he was paralyzed by the IC presenting him with many 'good ideas.'<sup>19</sup> Without a single point of contact representing all the lines of operation undertaken by the IC, no coherent and timely advice was possible, despite the best of intentions. Multiple, independent approaches not only confuse, but also provided the opportunity for 'divide and conquer'. An empowered High Commissioner, with appropriate direction and guidance, representing all the major IC organisations would have had the responsibility of preparing and executing an integrated campaign plan to achieve the overarching political goal of the strategic design in accordance with the intent of the GIRoA.

Operations in fragile, conflict and post conflict states have a political end state and therefore must have a political lead. It is axiomatic that a High Commissioner must be a civilian and a political appointee acceptable to all. History indicates that examples of successful conclusion of complex multi-dimensional operations have almost invariably been led by an empowered 'supremo'<sup>20</sup>. Historically, such operations were undertaken by individual nations; such an approach has not been attempted in multi-agency operations, which is why a strong UN Security Council mandate would be a prerequisite. Although a High Commissioner may be viewed as an unrealistic ideal for present circumstances in Afghanistan, the concept warrants further analysis - in terms of its practicality, functionality and usefulness in support of future, similar missions. In practice, the post would subsume at least some of the functions of the NATO SCR, UN SRSG and potentially the EUSR in circumstances where the EU was playing a central role.

<sup>19</sup> As recalled by General McNeill – see JALLC, NATO's Military Contribution to a CA to Operations, JALLCCG/09/141, dated 04 Aug 2009.

<sup>20</sup> The most frequently quoted example is that of the British experience in Malaya from 1948 to 1960.

# Modalities for Interaction

## *Modalities for NATO's cooperation/interaction with other actors*

Application of CA across the IC implies a range of unique relationships defined by the perspectives of the individual actors and organisations. Dependent upon the type of outcome desired by each actor, the level of interaction and effort will occur over a spectrum, ranging from awareness, to de-confliction, to cooperation, leading eventually to coherence. Modalities for interaction should be viewed as a set of functions or mechanisms that promote transparency and trust that enable a given level of interaction, e.g., information sharing, planning coordination, cooperative problem solving, collective decision making, and mutual situational assessments. Some of the more important findings/insights/lessons identified in this context are: the need to pursue unity of command within the Alliance and ensure unity of effort and purpose; the need to review national policies regarding the classification of information and sharing of unclassified information; and the management of expectations regarding NATO's interactions with international organizations (IOs) and NGOs.

## Unity of Command

The principle of unity of command is fundamental and unquestionably essential to war fighting. Whereas the nature of warfare remains unchanged, the character of modern warfare and NATO's application of power are evolving. More than ever, NATO will have to 'keep its eye on the ball' regarding this unifying concept. Arguably, there was an unprecedented departure from the principle of unity of command in 2006, when Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan passed overall territorial control across Afghanistan to ISAF. This resulted in two different military missions being prosecuted in the same space simultaneously. Command was split between several commanders, including US Central Command, NATO, and US Special Operations Command. During the period 2006-2008, ISAF and coalition forces lost momentum and allowed the adversary to reconstitute. Since 2009, ISAF has regained momentum, unifying command while applying military and non-military resources in support of 'integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency'<sup>21</sup> efforts. This is a valuable lesson learned, but is one that is exclusive to the military in the command and control relationships established for individual operations. From an Alliance perspective, parallel command structures should, in principle, be avoided.

In a similar vein, the command arrangements for provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) are far from ideal. Although the majority of the military components are under ISAF control, the civilian elements of PRTs remain under national command and there is a long-held view that they work primarily in support of national priorities, with secondary priority given to those of ISAF and GIRoA. There are several examples of development projects (schools, hospitals, police stations) completed by PRTs that reflected national priorities and national public relations' requirements that were

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<sup>21</sup> COMISAF Initial Assessment 30 August 2009.

counter-productive to Afghan requirements as promulgated within the Afghan National Development Strategy and evolving Provincial Development Plans. This is very much an issue of Alliance interest; command arrangements such as those of the PRTs impinge significantly on achieving unity of purpose and effort across the IC. A well constructed strategic design would drive issues of unity of command for elements such as PRTs. We are where we are with regard to PRTs because there was no strategic design when they came into being.

## **Unity of Purpose & Effort**

The large number of actors involved in Afghanistan clearly makes the idea of an overall unity of command over the entire IC effort an unattainable ideal in the circumstances of 2010. The challenge for NATO is to realise the most effective model possible by building mechanisms, protocols and incentives that provide unity of purpose and effort. The situation in Afghanistan has demonstrated the need for NATO - and the wider IC - to improve the 'modalities' for the overall lead and coordination of the efforts of a multitude of actors.

Achieving unity of effort and purpose across a diverse spectrum of actors requires a commitment to share information, build trust and promote transparency. This is being addressed at the theatre level through initiatives such as the Strategic Review Board, which includes NATO's senior civilian and military representatives, UNSRSG, EUSR and national ambassadors (top NATO and non-NATO Troop Contributing Nations, and lead Regional Command nations), empowered to coordinate and integrate actions. The Strategic Review Board reviews progress on various lines of operation in an attempt to align the actions of all actors and to formulate public messages that are agreed and shared widely. The SCR will replicate the success of this initiative by implementing similar boards at regional level.

As has been discussed earlier in this paper, creating the conditions for unity of purpose and effort should be part of the strategic design. With the major IC organisations (UN, NATO, EU, World Bank) all examining their own processes and procedures relating to CA, there is a unique opportunity to align thinking and to build trust and promote transparency at the strategic level. This will require strong leadership, sustained effort and the right investment, but is essential to ensure success in the multi-agency operations that are likely to dominate the security environment in the coming years.

One important aspect of building trust is the fundamental significance of communications. Everything that NATO does communicates a message, often much more powerful and enduring than political rhetoric. Messages are received and interpreted through the perceptions of audiences in theatre, at home and in spectator locations. NATO must strive to ensure that its actions, at all levels, are commensurate with the messages and influence that are intended.

## Information Sharing

Information sharing is a critical enabler for a CA and a source of frustration for many involved in this operation. COMIJC commented that “*we have more than 100,000 people out there who have huge situational understanding but if we can’t share that with the other agencies then we are not helping the team.*” Two specific areas of concern raised by the former COMISAF are the classification of information and the wide sharing of unclassified information. The over-classification of information stems from national and NATO security policies that predate ISAF. Concerns regarding the sharing of unclassified information (releasable to the public) involve contextual issues such as the translation of languages and content lost in transmission through multiple layers of command; to ameliorate this latter point, COMISAF recognized the value of the Commander and the SCR personally briefing the North Atlantic Council and the NATO Military Committee.

Although it is recognised that there has been significant progress since 2009 to update NATO Security Policy in light of operational realities, there is clearly a long way to go. This is an issue that is frequently raised by other IC organisations and is a source of much frustration, fuelling a lack of trust. The proper classification of information and its sharing is an essential element of comprehensive approach - doing so helps build trust, enables better coordination, and improves transparency. Philosophically, NATO needs to move from a ‘need to know’ mindset for information sharing to a ‘responsibility to share’ mindset, including with respect to public messaging.

## NGOs

It is estimated that there are over 1,700 NGOs in Afghanistan. They are widely recognized as delivering essential aid and services to improve conditions for the Afghan population. Many NGOs, such as the National Democratic Institute, Democracy International for Elections, Aga Khan Development Network and others, are in dialogue with the SCR Office and other HQ ISAF representatives, and regularly participate in numerous civil-military working groups which bring together GIRoA representatives, representatives of embassies, IOs and other NGOs. However, NATO must remain sensitive to NGOs that do not wish to be seen to be associated with the military for fear of being perceived as abandoning their neutrality or contributing to ‘militarizing’ aid. UNAMA has the mandate to “*play a central coordinating role to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles,*”<sup>22</sup> but even UNAMA is not aware of, nor willing to interact with, every NGO present in Afghanistan. The ISAF experience in Afghanistan suggests that even the lowest level of interaction – awareness – with all NGOs seems an unattainable goal.

However, NGOs are a reality in the modern security environment and have to be dealt with as pragmatically as possible. Development NGOs in particular are part of the security, governance, development dynamic and need to act as much as possible within the broad direction of the strategic design for an operation. NATO, as part of

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1917 (2010), S/RES/1917 (2010), dated 22 Mar 2010.

the IC, needs to reach out to NGOs to help bring them into the strategic design process and to ensure that their particular circumstances are catered for. To do this, there has to be a far greater understanding of NGOs as part of the mapping of the human terrain and significant effort invested in building trust and transparency with them.

## **Practical Proposals**

Developing relationships based on trust and transparency involves much more than just dialogue. Relationships between key IC actors need to be institutionalized, which. This can take a variety of forms. The most obvious of which is establishing robust liaison staffs, as NATO is seeking to do with the UN. Beyond that, and building on the existing framework of seminars and symposia, consideration should be given to regular exercising between the staffs of IC organisations in areas such as strategic design. Such an initiative would undoubtedly improve trust and transparency and could ultimately result in standardised procedures across the IC. From an Alliance perspective, as a regional security organisation, it would provide a forum to explain NATO's aims, roles, functions and intentions with respect to broad security activity to a wide audience.

Other areas that would merit further study include establishing courses that address CA at recognised academic institutes and the seconding of NATO personnel as instructors, and staff exchanges and secondments between IC organisations. The latter would build a cadre of individuals with broad experience across the IC who might be developed as potential High Commissioners of the future.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

*“Plurality of objectives held by pluralities of politics makes it impossible to pursue unitary aims”<sup>23</sup>*

## Conclusion

The issues identified in this report illustrate the complexity and challenge of the multi-agency operations that dominate in today’s security environment. Afghanistan is but one example of a complex scenario that is overshadowed by an insurgency that was probably avoidable if a cross IC CA as described in this paper had been in place six years ago. CA has a wide applicability, both in crisis prevention and crisis resolution, across many different scenarios; there is no one size fits all solution, but there are principles common and applicable to all scenarios.

The overriding lesson from Afghanistan, and arguably from NATO’s operations in the Balkans as well, is that a lack of strategic direction results in competing mandates, objectives that are undefined and therefore not understood, under resourcing of operations, unrealistic time expectations and relationships in theatre that are built on personality rather than common direction to achieve a common aim.

All these consequences stem from the lack of a strategic design, which is necessary for the creation of an integrated campaign plan by empowered in-theatre principals. This is where the focus of the Alliance’s endeavours to take forward CA should reside.

The CAAP seeks to address all the issues in this report, but it can only really position NATO to contribute to a CA by the IC. Sustained senior engagement with members of the IC, underpinned by clear Alliance policy and doctrine, is needed to persuade others that this is the right way ahead and to convince them of NATO’s commitment to a truly shared process.

## Recommendations

The three most important themes in this report are: unity of command; unity of purpose and effort in support of building outcome focussed partnerships; and harmonising efforts and burden sharing in the IC. These are the key areas that NATO must deliver in a compelling fashion in its debates in Brussels and the capitals. These are the themes that require collective action and improvement. These themes are not unique to Afghanistan, have been identified elsewhere, and are consistent across a range of interviews with senior leaders.

In summary, NATO needs to move forward in three areas:

1. Improve NATO’s planning frameworks to facilitate and encourage the participation of multiple actors in order to set the conditions for an integrated

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<sup>23</sup> Rittel H.W.J., Webber M.M., Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning, Policy Sciences 4, 1973.

effort. The goal should be to create a strategic design based on a shared analysis and a common overarching political goal that facilitates an integrated in-theatre campaign plan synchronized in time and space, empowers in-theatre principals, ensures proper resourcing and provides maximum flexibility.

2. Develop an overarching framework and process within NATO that provides timely political guidance, to include policy and doctrine, to guide and direct NATO's interaction with the IC. Doing so in a transparent manner, in which actions are commensurate with the messages and influence intended, will improve NATO's processes and strengthen international confidence and trust in NATO. This must include clear policy on S&R, stating NATO's intentions and role in regard to governance and development.
3. Identify, generate and incorporate civilian expertise more extensively into NATO's permanent structures and operational structures. At the strategic level, this must include the expertise required for strategic design. Through the NATO structure, it must also include expertise in 'human terrain' mapping. An empowered SCR with a robust mandate, appointed at the same time as the force commander, and of equal status to him in the eyes of the host nation and the IC, should be a basic principle for future NATO interventions in crisis response operations where resolution is fundamentally political rather than military.

In addition, further analysis and study should be considered on the potential for political High Commissioners to represent the IC on multi-agency operations and, oversee the civ-mil campaign, and on the practical proposals for modalities to better interact with the IC.

NATO needs to capitalize on the hard-won lessons from its experience in Afghanistan and use the lessons learned to institutionalize the policy and doctrine that support CA, so that these lessons will not have to be re-learned in the future.

## **Annex A: Key Leaders Consulted**

Ambassador Staffan de Mistura, United Nations Special Representative to the Secretary General

Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas, European Union Senior Representative to Afghanistan

Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, United States Ambassador to Afghanistan

Ambassador Sir William Patey, United Kingdom Ambassador to Afghanistan

General Stanley McChrystal, former Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

General David Petraeus, Commander ISAF

Lieutenant General Sir Nick Parker, Deputy Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

Lieutenant General David Rodriguez, Commander, ISAF Joint Command

Major General Jacques Lechevallier, Deputy Commander ISAF Joint Command