

Conclusions

There has been an evolution of the actual nature of the insurgency

1. There has been an evolution of the actual nature of insurgency since 9/11

In Afghanistan, the international community has opted for a counter-insurgency approach that fails to see the current evolution of the insurgency. The Taliban and similar insurgency groups operating in Afghanistan are perceived outside Afghanistan as part of the *Jihad* and Al Qaeda movements. Although some core Taliban leaders could be seen in this light, most Taliban fighters are local Afghans who have either been attracted by economic incentives or are driven by legitimate grievances. These grievances have resulted in anger, frustration and disillusionment with the government and the international forces.

We divide the insurgency into two dynamics: the Grassroots Insurgency and the Global Jihad Insurgency. Separate from either is the Non-Aligned Local Population.

2. The International Community needs a reality check: we must fundamentally re-assess the status of international community counter-insurgency efforts in Afghanistan

The international community has failed to convince the local population that it is there to help and has failed to increase support for the Afghan government.

This has reinforced a situation in which the local Afghan population sees itself as being alone, faced on the one hand, by the international community and the government, and on the other hand by the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

The support that the international community enjoyed when it first arrived in the country has disappeared and must be rebuilt in order to provide a positive environment for the military to fight in and to build support for the Karzai Government in Southern Afghanistan.

We must acknowledge this reality and take immediate steps to turn around the dynamics between the international community and the local Afghan population. Despite the fact that counter-insurgency theory is normally understood to include many different policy areas, the counter-insurgency strategy used in Afghanistan is dominated by a military approach. The other elements of classic counter-insurgency responses such as humanitarian aid, development cooperation and infrastructure/institution building have been sorely neglected, under-funded and under-prioritized during the five years of international presence in Afghanistan.

This means that despite the significant military success in the south we are not able to establish government control in the south, nor can we establish meaningful security systems.

3. The local Afghan population has legitimate grievances with the international community

We must acknowledge and respond to the legitimate local grievances caused by the both the actions of, and inaction of the international community in Southern Afghanistan. These legitimate grievances are causing people to turn their backs on the Karzai Government, and engender mistrust and anger against the international community. This in turn fuels the insurgency which is gaining in size and support. The majority of the grievances expressed by Afghan people could be dealt with by relatively simple and inexpensive responses which would cause the insurgency to lose momentum.

These legitimate grievances include the following.

- The significant number of civilian deaths, injury and displacement caused by widespread fighting and bombing in the rural areas.
- Forced poppy crop eradication while many farmers are still fully dependent on poppy crops to feed their families.
- The lack of humanitarian aid and assistance following fighting and natural disasters such as floods or drought; people are starving and there is not food aid
- The lack of overall economic development both in cities and in rural areas; more specifically the lack of jobs or decent income opportunities in the area. Southern Afghanistan remains desperately poor.
- The perception that the Karzai government is a puppet regime with foreign countries in control of decision-making.
- The lack of public facilities such as schools and hospitals.
- The perception that the international community does not respect the culture and traditions of Afghanistan and is approaching the country in a Western way, trying to solve its problems through Western approaches and instruments.

Recommendations: Elements of an Emergency Stabilization Process

Recommendation I

Respond to Afghan legitimate local grievances

The international community must rapidly respond to legitimate grievances such as the lack of economic development, infrastructure, humanitarian aid and healthcare. Currently, many Afghans are being lost to the insurgency because of the lack of these very basic provisions.

In addition, military campaigns are responsible for civilian casualties and deaths, displaced persons and loss of livelihood. Provision must be made for those suffering from the consequences of bombing campaigns, to treat the wounded and provide food and shelter for those families that are left without a home. Having more troops on the ground to fight the core insurgency should allow for a reduction in bombing campaigns, which in turn would decrease the number of civilian casualties as military action could be more targeted.

Misguided counter-narcotics must be urgently revised. Current eradication based policies increase poverty and cause social unrest – further undermining development efforts, deteriorating the security situation and widening the gap between the government and the rural communities. Opium licensing for medicine should be pursued immediately.

Economic opportunity must be maximized in order to provide communities with the incentive to support the government instead of the insurgents.

An Economic Stabilisation Process should include:

- Immediate, robust and systematic food aid;
- Emergency plans to assist internally displaced people;
- An end to the strategy of fear and destruction - a full assessment on the nature and extent of the bombing campaigns;
- Compensation to civilian victims of bombings;
- A complete overhaul of failed counter-narcotics strategies – crop eradication must stop;
- An opium licensing scheme for the production of medicines should be implemented in Afghanistan – such a scheme would be preceded by a series of pilot projects; and
- Development interventions must provide support for military strategies.

Recommendation II**Create stability by applying a robust economic response to the Grassroots Insurgency, separating them from the Global Jihad Insurgency**

There is a real chance to build a stability supported by local leaders and their communities if they can be convinced that the international community is there to help. As the nature of the unrest in the Grassroots Insurgency is primarily economic, there must be a robust economic response targeted at this community. This will separate those involved in the Grassroots Insurgency from members of the Global Jihad Insurgency. It will also build support from the local population, who are attempting to stay out of insurgency entirely. A robust economic response targeted at the local population will bring them over to our side.

However, time is running out. Later will be too late.

Recommendation III**Create a shared long term vision of Afghanistan - stop alienating the Afghan population by imposing "Western" ideals, approaches and concepts**

A shared long term vision of Afghanistan must be envisioned and elaborated, one which appeals to all generations. It must incorporate local power holders who have the potential to be partners for peace. As the central government currently has no full control over the country, the importance of local authority must not be underestimated and neglected.

It is a mistaken notion that because it has an elected president and parliament, Afghanistan is a fully functioning democracy. Most Afghans in southern Afghanistan do not perceive our form of democracy as having bettered their lives. The government in Kabul is often far removed from the every day reality of people who identify themselves instead with local centres of power.

Urgent steps must be taken to reshape the democracy towards a concept that Afghans can embrace. We must help Afghans shape their own form of democracy which takes into account Afghan values and culture. Only then will the concept of democracy be valued by the current adult generation enough to pass to the next generation of Afghans.