

NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

**EXPERIENCES AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL OF THE AFGHANI-
STAN OPERATION**

Thesis for General Staff Officer's Degree

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ABSTRACT <p>The aim of the presented thesis is to find answers to the main question: What strategic experience can be learned from the operation in Afghanistan? The research method uses open source information to analyze events and actions.</p> <p>The main objectives of the operation in Afghanistan were the removal of the Taliban from power, the destruction of al-Qaeda units and the construction of a capable and sustainable state. These changes in the country could not occur without the activation of hostilities by the US and a coalition. In order to form this coalition NATO activated Article 5 of collective security for the first time in its history. Despite the military victories and the superiority of the US troops over the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, military success was not enough to achieve the operation's objectives. Therefore, in order to create a favorable environment for economic growth and to improve the welfare of the local population it was necessary to provide a comprehensive approach to developing the political, economic and social domains.</p> <p>In parallel with the hostilities, measures were taken to stabilize and restore the non-military component of the operation. However, the continued conflict has affected the level of security in the country and the overall effectiveness of the operation. Additionally, corruption and the ambition fueled power struggle of the political leadership has limited the extent of reforms in Afghanistan. Key to all of this, the combat readiness of the ANSF has remained at a low level, leaving the local security forces unable to conduct independent operations.</p> <p>The most important factors for the success of the operation are: the level of security, the sustainability and organization of political governance, the level of corruption, economic and social growth, Pakistani-Afghan relations and the characteristics of Afghan society.</p>	
KEY WORDS USA, coalition, GIRoA, ANSF, Taliban, insurgents, local population, corruption, security	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the topic of research

The theme of the international presence and the operation conducted by the international coalition in Afghanistan remains relevant and offers rich soil for research in various directions. Due to its geographic location and geopolitical importance, Afghanistan has often remained at the center of events of international scale. Historical examples of importance of the country include the invasive campaigns of Alexander the Great and the Moguls, the “Great Game” between British and Russian empires, the unresolved issue of the Durand line¹, the arena of military operations and the political confrontation of the Cold War, and the sheltering of terrorist organizations of a radical nature in the post-socialist time-period.

Afghanistan is also called the "Graveyard of Empires". Empire after empire, nation after nation failed to conquer the modern territory of Afghanistan, even if sometimes these empires won some initial battles and invaded the region. When the United States (US) and its allies from the international coalition decide to leave Afghanistan, they will be only the last in a long series of countries.²

In the previous times the majority of empires came to control Afghanistan, taking a similar approach as the Moguls, for instance. According to that approach it was possible to freely control the region by paying various tribes or providing them with autonomy. However, all attempts to establish anything resembling centralized control, even by using the local Afghan rul-

¹ The British established the Durand Line after conquering the Pashtuns. Eighty-five percent of the Durand Line follows rivers and other physical features, not ethnic boundaries. It split the Pashtuns into two separate countries. Afghanistan governs all the Pashtuns on one side of the Durand Line, while Pakistan governs all the Pashtuns on the other. The Pashtuns on the Pakistan side of the border made up more than half of the Pashtun population, but were now under the control of the Punjabis, which made them angry. Throughout history, colonial forces like the British have set boundaries that cause great tension for people who lived in the colony. Because the officials who drew the Durand Line did not consider the ethnic groups that lived in the region, today there are many battles along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Diplomat. [<https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/why-the-durand-line-matters/>], read 18.09.2019.

² The Diplomat. [<https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-is-afghanistan-the-graveyard-of-empires/>], read 18.09.2019.

ers, have not been successful. In the war in Afghanistan 1839–1842 the British also faced similar circumstances and learned that in order to achieve their own goals it was often easier to collaborate with local rulers who had support of the local population.³ These examples show that the support as well as the sympathy or antipathy of the local population have significant influence with regard to foreign presence in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan as a state entity is a unique country, both geopolitically and militarily. According to the Akhilesh Pillalamarri's article from *The Diplomat* magazine: "Afghanistan is particularly hard to conquer primarily due to the intersection of three factors. Firstly, since Afghanistan is located on the main land route between Iran, Central Asia and India, it was repeatedly invaded and populated by many tribes, many of which were mutually hostile to each other and to outsiders. Second, because of the frequency of invasion and the prevalence of tribalism in the area, its lawlessness led to a situation where almost every village or house was built like a fortress, or qalat⁴. Thirdly, the physical territory of Afghanistan makes conquest and control extremely difficult, exacerbating its tribal tendencies, as Afghanistan is dominated by some of the highest and rugged mountains in the world."⁵

As another example of uniqueness of the situation in Afghanistan is described in his report by Marvin Weinbaum: "Many of Afghanistan's challenges, often thought of as domestic, are also regional in character, necessarily addressed with regional strategies and cooperation. Policies that have sometimes been used to insulate the country against interfering neighbors have denied Afghanistan the advantages of joining with neighbors to face common threats and realize new opportunities. Afghanistan has enough security interests in common with its neighbors that, with international encouragement and patronage, a regional security community built on pure national interest would seem a logical step."⁶

³ The Diplomat. [<https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-is-afghanistan-the-graveyard-of-empires/>], read 18.09.2019.

⁴ Qalat- a fortified place or fortified village. [<https://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Qalat>], read 18.09.2019.

⁵The Diplomat. [<https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-is-afghanistan-the-graveyard-of-empires/>], read 18.09.2019.

⁶ Weinbaum, Marvin G.: *Afghanistan and its neighbors*, *United States Institute of Peace*. Special report 162, June 2006, p. 6-7.

The relations between Afghanistan and regional neighbors have direct influence on the development of events in the country, including the success of the ongoing coalition's operation. In that perspective Pakistan has a significant role, which is based on their national interest. In a region that is widely controversial, external strife, as well as internal unrest among neighbors, can easily spread to Afghan soil⁷.

On a regional scale states fight for power and influence, and Afghanistan appears here as part of this confrontation. Therefore, it is quite possible that a restless Afghanistan in the context of the regional confrontation suits the neighboring countries and the situation could be used in the national interests of these neighbors. According to Ewans Martin's report: "Both Pakistani and Indian calculations include gaining an advantage in Afghanistan. From the Pakistani point of view supporting the cause of an Islamic state in Afghanistan not only promises to neutralize the Pashtun irredentism, but also helps to train jihadists to fight India in Kashmir."⁸

The topic of Afghanistan cannot ignore the issue of the country's ethnography. The origin of the peoples inhabiting this country is as diverse as it is often unclear. Although there have been much interweaving over the centuries, they still have distinct ethnic, physical and linguistic differences. Even though most of the local population can speak at least one of the official languages, Pashto and Dari, there are over thirty different languages in the country.⁹

Pashtuns have the greatest influence on the ongoing internal state processes, since they are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. It is believed that Pashtuns make up about half of the country's population. There are still opinions that the word "Afghan" is synonymous with the word "Pashtun". Pashtuns call themselves "Afghans", and their language "Afghani", while the remainder of the peoples of the country call themselves primarily Tajiks, Uzbeks, or something else, and Afghans only secondarily, if at all. Many Pashtuns live in the south and east of the country, while a similar number live beyond the Duran Line, in the border regions of Pakistan.¹⁰ This fact has an impact on relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and more than once was the cause of disputes and conflicts between the two countries.

⁷ Weinbaum (2006), p. 6.

⁸ Weinbaum (2006), p. 6.

⁹ Ewans, Martin: *Afghanistan A Short History of its people and Politics*. Harper Perennial 2002, p. 4.

¹⁰ Ewans (2002), p. 6.

The main characteristics of Pashtuns include a proud and aggressive individualism, practiced in the context of family and tribal society with predatory habits, a partly feudal and partly democratic spirit, uncompromising Muslim faith and a simple code of conduct. Although the severity of this codex, *Pashtunwali*, has diminished over the years, it still establishes obligations of revenge (*badal*), hospitality (*melmastia*), and refuge (*nanavati*). The question of honor (*namus*) and disputes of an economic or political nature mean that private vendettas and more general conflicts are characteristic of Pashtun life.¹¹ Due to the influence of the Pashtuns, based on their sheer number, many forms of proud and aggressive individualism, including the *Pashtunwali* code of honor, are practiced by other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. In his research Zobrist Galád Adriana wrote: "Pashtunwali-literally meaning "way of the Pashtuns"- is far more than a system of customary law. It is an all-encompassing code of conduct and way of living. Most Afghans live in accordance to some variant of this code, although non-Pashtuns do not necessarily identify their moral code by this name. Though, Afghan society remains an honor-based system in which possession of honor guarantees membership in the society and drives any social interactions."¹²

With the rise to power of the Taliban and the subsequent granting of safe havens to al-Qaeda, Afghanistan has become a significant challenge from a counterterrorism perspective. This ultimately led to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001¹³, which later became the trigger to the United States for the initiation of the military campaign and the subsequent operation of the international coalition in Afghanistan. Also it should be borne in mind that before these attacks, confrontations between the United States and Al-Qaeda had already taken place, for example, terrorists attacks on August 7, 1998 on the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania¹⁴ and a suicide terrorist attack on the USS Cole on October 12, 2000 in the Yemeni port of Aden¹⁵. These attacks have definitely had an impact on the planning and conduct of US counterterrorism activities. However, the confrontation between the US and Al-Qaeda finally escalated to a peak in 2001 after 9/11 attacks.

¹¹ Ewans (2002), p. 7.

¹² Zobrist, Galád Adriana: *The Challenges and Role of Structures in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan, Connections*. Vol. 11, No. 2 (Spring 2012), p. 5-36. [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26326272>], read 08.02.2021.

¹³ Terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are also known as 9/11 attacks.

¹⁴ FBI: East African Embassy Bombings. [<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/east-african-embassy-bombings>], read 13.04.2021.

¹⁵ FBI: USS Cole Bombing. [<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/uss-cole-bombing>], read 13.04.2021.

On August 11, 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. On behalf of the United Nations (UN), ISAF's primary goal was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security throughout the country and to create a new Afghan security force so that there would no longer be terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan. Since 2011, responsibility for security has gradually shifted to the Afghan forces, who led security operations throughout the country by the summer of 2013. The transition process was completed and Afghan forces took full responsibility for security at the end of 2014, when the ISAF mission was completed.¹⁶

On January 1, 2015, a new, smaller non-kinetic Resolute Support (RS) mission was launched to provide further training, advising and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions. A total of 28 NATO countries and 14 countries from among the coalition partners have participated in the international coalition since the beginning of the operation in Afghanistan. From the creation of ISAF in 2003 to the present day, NATO has played a leading role in implementing plans and actions during the operation.¹⁷

Now it is difficult to predict when the operation might end completely. For example, US President Donald Trump expressed his intention to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan, and in February 2020 even reached certain agreements. Despite President Trump's expressed desire to withdraw troops, many observers believe that a full-scale US withdrawal will lead to the collapse of the Afghan government and possibly even regain control of the Taliban.¹⁸

In addition, the development of the operation in Afghanistan may be affected by the implementation of the South Asia Strategy announced by President Trump in 2018. It is expected that the implementation of strategy will provide an opportunity to end the conflict in Afghanistan in a way that promotes the core US interests in the fight against terrorism and demonstrates that a moderate Islamic state is compatible with the international community.¹⁹

¹⁶ NATO website: *ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)*. [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm], read 25.11.2019.

¹⁷ NATO website: *ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)*. [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm], read 25.11.2019.

¹⁸ Congressional Research Service: *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief*. Updated September 19, 2019.

¹⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Review of President Trump's South Asia Strategy: *The Way Ahead, One Year In*. December 11, 2018.

1.2 Research situation

In general, Afghanistan has been the subject of frequent research in various fields and dimensions. The topic itself cannot be called little-known, since it has already been noted earlier that it is relevant and offers rich soil for research in the future. As the operation is still ongoing, many sources are still inaccessible to researchers due to the security classification. Perhaps, over time, after the finalization of the operation, the situation may change and the information may become more accessible.

Looking through the available academic research on the topic of Afghanistan it is clear that a large number of works have been written in the military field on tactical topics regarding the use of units in operations as part of the international coalition forces in a foreign mission. Another publicly available research group includes various training and information manuals and pamphlets on the tactical, operational, and strategic use of troops in operations. There are also publicly available studies conducted by educational or research institutes with the aim of learning lessons and summarizing the experience of participating in operations in Afghanistan. Such studies have been and are being carried out by educational or analytical institutions at both national and international levels.

The analytic researches and products of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) are an example. The CRS works for the US Congress, providing political and legal analysis for committees and members of the House and Senate. CRS is well known for its authoritative, confidential, objective and impartial analysis. Its primary concern is to ensure that Congress has ongoing access to data of interest.²⁰ Also of note are the analysis and reports of the organization "Army University Press", which is one of the leading multimedia organizations in the US Army. The work of this organization is focused on promoting ideas for military specialists. The Army University Press is the starting point for cutting-edge ideas and discussions on topics important to the US Army and national defense. Through set of platforms for publications and educational services, the publisher provides timely and relevant information to leaders of the military, government and academia.²¹ In addition, a series of reports by the US Department of Defense (DoD) on progress in security and stability in Afghanistan provide fairly detailed and comprehensive information about the US operation and the international coalition as part of the ongoing operation.

²⁰ Congressional Research Service. [<http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>], read 20.09.2019.

The Afghan Assessment Group (AAG), which is part of Headquarters (HQ) of RS mission, conducts professionally performed analytical reports and conducts analysis on a topics of interest. However, not all AAG materials and analytical products are open and accessible for readers and researchers, since these materials are primarily intended for internal use within the RS mission, as well as for the leadership of the United States and the international coalition.

1.3 The role of research, research problem and methodology

This thesis is written for the Department of Warfare of the direction of strategy. In its composition, the research proceeds from the principles of security policy and international relations, which are part of the areas of strategic study. The concept and structure of the thesis is based on the analysis of the available open information of the Afghan operation, starting from its beginning in 2001. The thesis focuses on the actions of the United States and the international coalition under the command of NATO.

Describing the theoretical foundations of the study in the field of strategy, it is worth noting that generally the research indicates the key elements and most significant interactions that emerge from specific events²². The research itself is planned, discussed, decided and implemented, founded on the tasks set to achieve certain goals²³. Based on the theoretical fundamentals of research, it could be considered that the main challenge of research in the field of strategy is the instrumental sequence of actions and methods to achieve the desired effect²⁴. For example, a strategist is looking for a strategic effect for the sake of political effect. When studying the strategy and security policy of the research topic, the objects of study are in constant complex interaction with each other as well as with a diverse international environment. On the other hand, security strategy and policy provide the researcher with limited tools for setting and achieving research goals in the field of strategy.²⁵ When conducting research, it is necessary to clearly express the purpose and scope of the thesis and then proceed to the available resources in order to account for the entire breadth of the topic of the thesis.

²¹ Army University Press. [<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/>], read 20.09.2019.

²² Gray, Colin S.: *The strategy bridge: Theory for Practice*. Oxford University Press 2010, p. 142.

²³ Sivonen, Pekka (ed.): *Suomalaisia näkökulmia strategian tutkimuksen*. Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, Strategian laitos, Helsinki 2013, p.151.

²⁴ Gray (2010), p. 63.

²⁵ Sipilä, Joonas & Koivula, Tommi: *Kuinka strategiaa tutkitaan*. Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, Strategian laitos, Helsinki 2014, p. 9.

In the study of the field of strategy, there are two different approaches to understanding the international opportunities and motives in play. The first asserts that the main goal in international relations is the achievement of power. According to the second approach, the primary goal in international relations is to achieve peace.²⁶ When it comes to researching the operation in Afghanistan, both approaches are presented, although they seem to be contradictory. These can be summarized as the struggle for power between government structures and the Taliban, the struggle for power between a number of Afghan politicians, and also the goals and objectives of the operation to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan. Both approaches affect the course of the operation and the performance toward the assigned objectives. This research focuses on an analysis of the use and relationship of these factors with the aim of extracting the strategic experience of the operation.

When looking for answers to these research questions it is essential to use a generalized, comprehensive approach to understand the complexity of the strategic experience, rather than focusing on certain individual functions. This approach makes it possible to define and analyze the achievement of the strategic goals of the operation in Afghanistan.

The methods in this thesis are based on a qualitative content analysis of available open sources. According to theoretical guidelines for academic research, research methods are tools used to answer questions, and the choice of method largely determines the way of learning²⁷. Therefore, the choice of methods are an important component in the research process. The methodology for this thesis is a qualitative study. This method involves the thorough analysis and comparison of open sources, various documents, and publications from previously conducted research in the field of the Afghan operation. The most common structural research methods are chronological and thematic, and both are presented in this thesis.

The research task is to find the answer to the main question: What strategic experience can be learned from the operation in Afghanistan? This research problem is solved by addressing several sub-questions. These form the general structure of this thesis:

1. What are the objectives of the operation in Afghanistan?

²⁶ Арсенян, А.З.: *Эволюция концепций «национальной безопасности» в современных международных отношениях*. Вестник РГГУ 2012, p. 25. [<https://cyberleninka.ru/>], read 16.09.2020.

²⁷ Sippilä & Koivula (2014), p. 45.

2. What methods were used in order to achieve the objectives of the operation?
3. What were the reasons for the creation of ISAF and the international coalition?
4. Why was ISAF converted to RS mission?
5. How effective were the processes and actions of the United States and the international coalition over the course of the operation?
6. What factors have affected the achievement of the goals and objectives of the operation?

It is important to understand "strategic experience" as a concept of the strategic level of warfare "Strategic experience" is determined by the measure by which the state or a certain nation achieves the set goals and objectives, or the reasons that impede the achievement of the set goals are identified, while national or international resources are used to achieve the goals²⁸. This thesis searches for answers to research questions focusing on the strategic experience of states and the international coalition in the Afghanistan campaign. In this case, the thesis groups actions according to the following contextual dimensions: Ends, Ways, Means, Measurement, Constraints and Assumptions.

One of the key elements of research is the definition of the strategy's structure. Conceptually, strategy is defined as the relationship between goals, methods and means. Ends are goals or objectives pursued. Funds are resources available to achieve goals. And the ways or methods are how resources are organized and applied. Each of these components involves a related question. What do we want to achieve (Ends)? With what (Means)? How (Ways)?²⁹ Measures, Constraints and Assumptions support the analysis of the degree of effectiveness of the means and methods, as well as the level of the achievement of objectives. They also highlight the factors influencing non-achievement of the desired result. The presented sub-questions of the thesis can be thematically grouped as follows:

- Political, economic, social and military Ends (question 1),
- Ways and Means in order to achieve objectives (questions 2-3),
- Measurement (question 4),

²⁸ DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, June 2020, p. 203.

²⁹ Cerami, Joseph R.; Holcomb, James F. Jr (eds.): *U.S. Army war college guide to strategy*. February 2001, p. 11.

- Constraints and Assumptions (questions 5-6)

In order to understand the specifics of the operation in Afghanistan, the answers to these questions will be found not only at the strategic, but also at the tactical and operational levels. This is due to the fact that actions at lower levels affect the achievement of strategic goals.

1.4 Concepts, perspective and limitation of the research

This study supplements previous research and will take its own place in a number of other works on the topic of Afghanistan, which can be used as a source of information to continue of the study of the topic. The thesis, in fact, is a study of the experience gained and the lessons learned by the coalition members and the United States, as well as the processes that influenced the events and results of the armed conflict. The concept of the thesis is based on the analysis of the political, military, economic and social sectors of security policy and international relations.

Why these areas were chosen? The answer to this question can be found by considering an example from the field of theory research on strategy. The introduction to the first part of "Security Studies" provides an innovative systematized list of strategic research sectors: military, political, economic, environmental and social factors: "... Military security concerns the two-tier interaction of the offensive and defensive capabilities of the state and the perception by states of each other's intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns the issue of access to resources, finance and markets necessary to maintain levels of wealth and government power. Social security considers issues of sustainability within the framework of acceptable conditions for the evolution of traditional norms of language, culture, religion, national identity and traditions. Environmental security views the maintenance of the local and planetary biosphere as an important support system on which the functioning of humanity depends. These five sectors do not function in isolation from each other. Each of them defines an important section of security issues and ways of setting priorities, but linked together."³⁰

³⁰ Арсенян (2012), p. 25.

The presented thematic sectors can be transferred from the plane of a theory to the plane of a concrete study and can be applied to the operation in Afghanistan. At least four of the five cited sectors: political, military, economic and social factors, are leading components necessary for the implementation of the goals and objectives of the operation, and affect the success or failure of the entire operation. The environmental component is an important factor of strategic research, however, based on the nature of the operation, this aspect is not decisive and does not have a significant influence.

Applying the presented thematic factors to the research concept, it is possible to derive the following fundamental conceptual aspects of the research:

1. Military activities:

- From the outset of the operation in Afghanistan, the objectives were to eliminate the terrorist threat posed by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as to create a deterrent against further terrorist attacks and to punish terrorists for the 9/11 attacks. The fulfillment of the assigned tasks was impossible without the initiation of hostilities on the part of the United States and its allies;
- In the following stages the strategic goals of the operation shifted to ensuring the security of stabilization processes, counterinsurgency, counterterrorist activities and providing a multilateral assistance to Afghan security forces.

2. Political governance and relations:

- As the operation developed, the main political and strategic tasks of the operation were shifted to include the change of a radical regime to a democratically elected majority government, focused on cooperation with the international community and other countries of the region;
- The elected government was to initiate the stabilization processes in the country and begin building the Afghan state and society based on a democratic model of state structure with the support and political influence of the international community and international organizations;
- The relationship of Afghanistan with the United States and Pakistan exerted a certain influence on the political processes. Also, the construction of a civil society de-

pended on the implementation of a policy of reconciliation, which could possibly create the preconditions for resolving the conflict by political methods;

- UN resolutions created the legal basis for the formation of the government of Afghanistan, and also contributed to the international recognition of Afghanistan by the international community.

3. Reconstruction, economic and social support:

- During the rule of the Taliban regime Afghanistan's economy and living standards fell to an even lower level, and the country decreased in many economic indicators. Therefore in order to achieve the goals of the operation and stabilize the situation, political and military success alone was not enough. It was necessary to provide Afghanistan with economic, as well as social assistance and support.

The research examines these thematic factors over the time-period starting with the United States operation in 2001 to the present. The thesis covers the main stages of the operation, known as:

- Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF);
- ISAF;
- RS mission.

The combination of the presented chronological and thematic factors forms the general concept of the thesis, which drives the main direction of the research. Due to the complexity of the operation, the actions of the United States and the international coalition should be viewed from a comprehensive approach, since all processes are interrelated and dependent on each other.

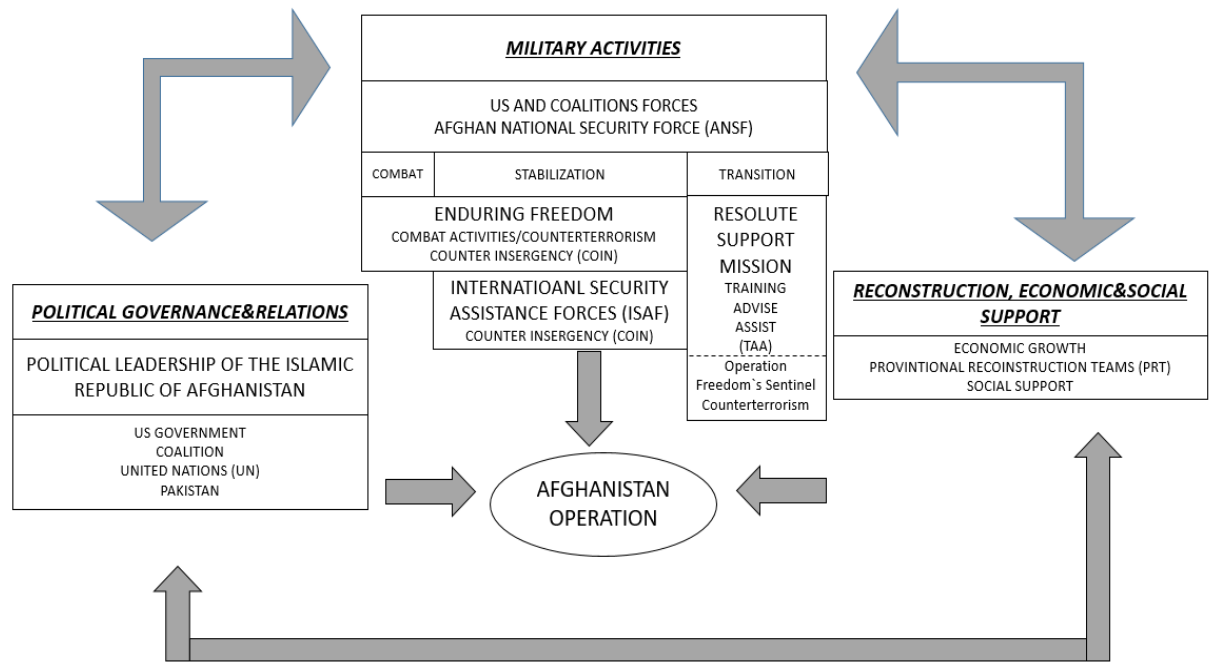


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the concept of research

This research uses thematic structuring. Accordingly, each chapter covers a separate topic that provides answers to the sub-questions of the research. The thesis is divided into five chapters, in which the first and the last chapters are respectively the introduction and summary. The main three chapters are divided according to research topics, and at the end of each chapter, thematic findings of the presented data are displayed.

The thesis uses abbreviations because it shortens the length of the text, avoids unnecessary repetition and is the generally accepted way of writing thematic texts. A glossary of all abbreviations is provided in ANNEX 1.

This research can by no means be called a complete study, since the situation in Afghanistan is not unambiguously simple and predictable, and the situation in the country can repeatedly change either in a favorable or unfavorable direction. The ongoing development of the operation provides a basis for further analysis and research on this topic.

1.5 The presentation and critic of used sources

As stated before, this thesis is based solely on open source resources. This was primarily due to the desire to make the research available to as many interested persons as possible and support additional research without any restrictions. Within this limitation, the research focuses on the actions of the US and the international coalition in Afghanistan, as well as the processes that directly affect the achievement of the operational objectives.

The sources are divided into primary and secondary ones. The primary sources are the accessible publications, texts of political documents and international treaties at the governmental and intergovernmental levels at the level of political leadership, ministries, international organizations, and alliances. Secondary sources include scientific papers, research and publications by experts on the topic of operations in Afghanistan.

The research also included reports compiled on the subject of the operation, conducted by competent research analytical groups and HQ ISAF and RS mission.

The materials used as primary sources are contain statistical data and reports on events and planning of operations. The secondary sources provide analysis of the events that have taken place and the implementation of plans, and also give an assessment of their effectiveness. This combination of selected sources is necessary in order to provide more detailed and comprehensive information, as well as to avoid one-sidedness and subjectivity. This makes the study broader and more versatile, and also makes it possible to look into the problem more deeply and with an open mind.

In general, sources on the topic of Afghanistan can be found in very large quantities, as this topic is popular and provides an interest to many researchers. Such wide availability has led to the need to limit the material used to the most valuable and objective information from the researcher point of view. The challenge in limiting sources in this way is that it possible to overlook some valuable information on the topic, which could be used for a more detailed analysis. On the other hand, this problem can be solved through additional research using newly identified sources.

The research focused on English-language sources, which, given the language chosen for writing the thesis, reduces the possibility of misinterpretation of the use of data due to translation.

On the other hand, the use of mostly English-language materials may lead to a somewhat one-sided, Western point of view, however, this may not be a serious issue.

2 MILITARY ACTIVITIES

This chapter provides information about the purpose, goals, preparation and the implementation by the military throughout the operation in Afghanistan. The chapter provides an overview and analysis of the actions of the US troops and coalition partners, the organization of the command and leadership and the processes and challenges that have a direct impact on the achievement of the objectives of the operation.

The development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the role of the international coalition in providing comprehensive support to the Afghan forces is an important factor in reaching the objectives of the operation throughout all phases. This chapter will describe the dynamics of development, as well as the problems and difficulties that arose during the formation and development of the ANSF.

To better understand the actions of the US, international coalition and Afghan forces, this chapter also describes the activities and tactics of insurgents and the Islamic State (ISIS) and explains the relationship between ISIS and the Taliban.

2.1 Military campaign

The immediate cause of the US military operations in Afghanistan was the connection of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 with al-Qaeda, which trained and operated under the protection of the Taliban in Afghanistan. In his speech at the joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush announced the US demands for the Taliban's actions, warning: "The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share their fate". On October 7, 2001, following the Taliban regime's refusal to terminate the al-Qaeda shelter, the US government launched military operations in Afghanistan with the declared goal of undermining the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and attacking on the military capabilities of the Taliban regime.³¹

³¹ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p .4.

Less than 24 hours after al-Qaeda attacked the World Trade Towers in New York, NATO allies declared Article 5. NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson subsequently informed the United Nations Secretary General of the Alliance's decision. On September 12, 2001, the first, and to date only, reference to Article 5 was noted.³² The entire planning process for the Afghanistan operation in the United States was completed in a short time frame. The operation was named Enduring Freedom. The concept of operations was based on the US military and political leadership's vision of military transformation, including greater reliance on advanced technology and precision weapons to enable the deployment of smaller conventional ground forces. Military operations were preceded and complemented by the work of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with Afghan opposition groups on the ground. Initial operations in the United States were based on the use of Special Operations Forces (SOF), supported by aviation, working with and through local partners, in particular with the Northern Alliance.³³

The Northern Alliance, also known as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA), was a coalition of militias seeking to overthrow Taliban rule throughout Afghanistan. The Alliance was formed in 1992 to counterbalance the communist government of then President Najibullah. Despite the victory, this group disintegrated until September 1996, when Taliban forces took over Kabul province. The Northern Alliance began operations again in 1996, serving as a military front assembled by the leaders of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The organization consisted of an ethnically and religiously diverse group of resistant movements waging a defensive war against the Taliban, composed mainly of three non-Pashtun ethnic groups - Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. The group had several famous leaders, the most famous of whom was Ahmad Shah Massoud.³⁴

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld tasked the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) to develop a full range of military options for Afghanistan, from air and missile attacks to all-out ground invasion. Initially, President Bush was presented with two alternatives:

- The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) advocated for the deployment of several American divisions in Afghanistan for action against the Taliban;

³² Atlantic Forum: *18 Years of NATO in Afghanistan*. [<https://atlantic-forum.com/content/18-years-nato-afghanistan>], read 02.09.2019.

³³ CRS Report for Congress (2011), p. 4.

³⁴ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism: *The Northern Alliance (or United Islamic Front for Salvation of Afghanistan - UIFSA)*. University of Maryland, October 25, 2014. [<https://www.start.umd.edu>], read 10.10.2019.

- The CIA recommended the partnership of American Special Forces and local forces for a faster clearing of the Taliban from the country.³⁵

The CIA plan won. Rumsfeld clearly advocated an "unconventional" approach. He believed that the advantages of the United States in command, control, communications, and intelligence, as well as the advantages of mobility, firepower, and accuracy, would enable the United States to successfully conduct the operation - quickly and efficiently. The initial refusal to start a full-scale operation was associated with two factors:

- First, a full-scale war in landlocked Afghanistan was logistically challenging. Also, Afghanistan's neighbors, led by authoritarian leaders, were either hostile to the American presence (Iran), or were only willing to offer their help at a high price. Although the US military acquired the privileges of basing and transporting in border countries, especially in Pakistan in the east, and Uzbekistan in the north, they nevertheless had to face difficulties caused by the vast distance, harsh terrain and extremely poor Afghan infrastructure. All these factors made it difficult to quickly move American personnel and materials to the war zone.
- Second, the war in Afghanistan, involving large American occupying forces, can easily become counterproductive. Geography and topography, as well as flexible and fragmented opposition, worked against classic American advantages in scale and heavy weaponry: "The size of the country and the dispersed population required a mobile force to provide effective security that could conduct operations and insert, supply, support and evacuate by helicopter". In addition, a large US footprint could offend local and nationalist sensibilities - as the Soviet presence once had - and possibly intensify opposition to the US presence throughout the Islamic world.³⁶

The resulting plan became historic, since it was the CIA, not the US military, who led the planning for the conduct of fighting. George Tenet, the CIA director, and Kofe Black, his counter-terrorism chief, laid out the basic plan to the president and the National Security Council (NSC) just two days after the 9/11 attacks. With the support of Rumsfeld, CENTCOM provided 3 possible options for the operation:

- Cruise missile attacks;

³⁵ Lebovic, James H: *Planning to Fail: The US Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan*. Oxford University

- Cruise missile attacks in connection with strategic bombing; and
- Some combination of both options in combination with aircraft gunners (for targeting) and special operations forces to obtain intelligence data and provide other assistance to the Northern Alliance.

CENTCOM approved the latter, as did President Bush. The President approved the general plan ten days after the 9/11 attacks.³⁷

The operation was scheduled to begin on October 7, 2001. The objectives of the operation were as follows:

- Remove the Taliban from power so that Afghanistan can no longer accept al-Qaeda;
- Destroy elements of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan;
- Capture Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.³⁸

Subsequently, the operational objectives were transformed into strategic tasks with a wider range of responsibilities and actions, not only in the military sphere, but also in other areas.

Before the start of the operation, the Americans analyzed Russia's actions in Afghanistan and Chechnya, as well as Israel experience in combating irregular terrorist groups. They concluded that innovative concepts and the use of advanced technologies could solve the problem of unconventional warfare. During the first months of the operation, they planned that the Taliban would lose control of the situation, all major cities would come under the control of the opposition forces, and al-Qaeda would be forced to leave its training camps.³⁹ After the completion of the operation, the troops would withdraw in order to avoid all the burdens of the occupation. Rumsfeld's reflections found support in the United States administration. George W.

Press 2019, p. 12.

³⁶ Lebovic (2019), p. 129-130.

³⁷ Lebovic (2019), p.129.

³⁸ de Wijk, Rob: *The Art of Military Coercion: Why the West's Military Superiority Scarcely Matters* (2nd edition). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, p. 260.

³⁹ de Wijk (2014), p. 260.

Bush, back in the 2000 presidential campaign, clearly expressed his reluctance to (post-war) nation-building; he passed this on again to his advisers at the start of the Afghan operation.⁴⁰

About two weeks after the 9/11 attacks, the first group of CIA operatives, drawing on the CIA's longstanding ties with the Afghan opposition, arrived to Afghanistan to gather intelligence, build local alliances, and lay the groundwork for a US-led operation. The CIA were followed by the US Special Operations Forces. When everything was ready to begin the operation, a group of 100 CIA operatives and 300 SOF operatives teamed up with local militias from the Northern Alliance to attack the numerically superior Taliban forces. The local militia units were not just an armed group of people, but a relatively well-organized fighting force capable of uniting opposing forces. The Northern Alliance controlled the northeastern part of the country with the help of some 12,000 troops supported by artillery and mortars, 55 tanks and some helicopters purchased from Russia in 2001. The alliance also fought behind enemy lines in the north and center of Afghanistan. The decision to join forces with other field commanders, such as the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostam and the Tajik Ustad Atta Muhammad, was important for victory. Also, the Pentagon was ready, if necessary, to more fully involve the US military in the conflict. On September 20, they announced the start of a military build-up for the participation of ground forces and air assets in Afghanistan.⁴¹

The military campaign began on October 7 with the launch of 50 cruise missiles from British and American ships. The strikes were directed at Taliban headquarters, airfields, air defense and other key targets.⁴²

In general, hostilities unfolded as planned. In the early days of fighting, American aircraft and cruise missiles targeted a limited Taliban air defense network, training bases, and other military targets. During the first week of the air strikes, American aircraft, after gaining air superiority and destroying existing military installations, focused their fire on the Taliban forces. But the Taliban deployed an "unconventional" army; it was neither a centrally directed nor a cohesive fighting force. It was rather a "scattered conglomerate" of local militias and foreign fighters, which included fighters associated with al-Qaeda. The United States and the allied forces could not defeat them by striking command centers or capturing the Afghan capital. Thus, the

⁴⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 129.

⁴¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 130.

⁴² de Wijk (2014), p. 260.

planned targets were several buildings used by the leadership of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, some training bases of al-Qaeda and several tactical aircraft and anti-aircraft batteries. Based on all this, the United States had no choice but to attack the Taliban groups across the country.⁴³

Since it was practically impossible to use logistics bases near landlocked Afghanistan, the US had to rely on long-range bombers, sometimes operating from the US, and transport them by sea in the south. SOF, operating with the Northern Alliance, collected intelligence and provided air support to direct precision-guided munitions to targets. They called on the air force to launch real-time attacks on Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. This technical feature was extremely useful. Direct air support was provided not only by helicopters and attack aircraft, but also by heavy bombers. From the outset of the war, the United States made extensive use of the strategic bombers to destroy reserves, air defenses, air defense systems, and command and control of the Taliban. These bombers were also used during the tactical air campaign to destroy the field forces.⁴⁴

On October 20, about 100 US Army Rangers conducted the first commando raid into Kandahar, the Taliban's political and religious center. The next day, the US bombed the front edge of the combat area north of Kabul for the first time. Special Forces were used to control air traffic in front of the airport north of Kabul. Attacks, however, remained limited. The challenge for the United States was to first find a political solution to the post-war situation to avoid a new power struggle following the overthrow of the Taliban by al-Qaeda. For this reason, the Northern Alliance agreed not to attack Kabul until an interim government was established. On October 25, the United States and the United Nations reached an agreement that air strikes on Taliban front lines would be prevented until an agreement was reached on a transitional government in Kabul. However, the diplomatic process was not very successful. As a consequence, there was a clear danger that the pace of the operation would slow down and the initiative would be lost. Very soon the warlords of the Northern Alliance made it clear that they had no desire to wait. Therefore, from 17 to 20 October, they decided to launch an offensive against Mazar. This offensive was interrupted due to a successful counter-attack by the Taliban.⁴⁵

⁴³ Lebovic (2019), p. 131.

⁴⁴ de Wijk (2014), p. 260.

⁴⁵ de Wijk (2014), p. 261.

Despite the lack of diplomatic progress, the Americans picked up the pace on October 30. In the first week of November, the United States launched its most intense air campaign to the Taliban and al-Qaeda south of Mazar-i-Sharif. Here the United States carried out carpet bombing of the advanced troops. At the same time, the United States and Russia supplied troops to the Northern Alliance. On October 24, Russia reportedly dispatched over 100 armored vehicles. This paved the way for the second offensive against Mazar, which began on November 4. On November 9, the city fell. According to one observer, three key elements contributed to the victory: the intensity and precision of the relentless bombing of Taliban and al-Qaeda positions; the high level of coordination between the attacking forces achieved by the United States; and attacks on key Taliban defenses in the remote areas of Zaare, Ak Kupruk, Keshend and Sholgar. After they fell, there was no second line of defense.⁴⁶

After the operation to capture Mazar-i-Sharif, a model of warfare in Afghanistan was developed. A small US ground presence conducted air strikes on enemy positions, opening them up for attacks by local militias of the Northern Alliance, which systematically moved towards establishing control over cities and territories in the north country and the capital, Kabul. The Taliban opposed the US military by concentrating their forces on vulnerable positions outside the major cities. Accurate air strikes and powerful bombs inflicted damage on Taliban fighters.⁴⁷

After the defeat of the Taliban in the north, the US military turned its attention to the south and east of the country, where the Taliban reigned, and ethnic hostilities did not allow the United States to rely on the forces of Tajiks and Uzbeks, based on the ethnic composition of the southern and eastern provinces. The US military benefited enormously from the backing of Pashtun leaders, especially Hamid Karzai, who would become Afghanistan's first post-Taliban president.⁴⁸

The fall of Mazar-i-Sharif led to a "domino-like collapse" of the Taliban forces, first across the north and then across Afghanistan as a whole. Kabul fell on November 12; by mid-November, the United Front controlled half of Afghanistan. On December 2, at a meeting of Afghan groups in Bonn, an agreement was reached on a post-Taliban government that would rule the country for six months. Five days later, on December 7, the Taliban left their political and reli-

⁴⁶ de Wijk (2014), p. 261.

⁴⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 131.

gious center of Kandahar, marking the end of the first phase of the war. Two months later, the goal of removing the Taliban from power was achieved.⁴⁹

Following the regime change phase, OEF focused on the two remaining objectives outlined above, namely the destruction of Al Qaeda, including its leadership, in the mountains as they continued to fight US and coalition forces. Meanwhile, US Navy ships had launched a stop and search operation in the Arabian Sea on all ships leaving Pakistan as part of the search for al-Qaeda elements seeking to leave the region.⁵⁰

After being removed from power, the Taliban regrouped and continued their armed resistance, moving to remote mountainous areas. The coalition forces were left with no choice but to fight the remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in these areas.⁵¹ The specifics of the fighting and the difficulties faced by the coalition forces during the second phase of OEF can be seen in two typical examples, such as the Tora Bora operation and the Anaconda operation.

The battle for Tora Bora took place in December 2001⁵². It took place in tunnels and cave complexes used by al-Qaeda in eastern Afghanistan. US Special Forces, primarily Delta Force, entered the area with British Special Forces, while the US Air Force dropped heavy bombs and fuel-air explosives for cave complexes. The difficulty of destroying hardened underground targets has also led to renewed interest in the use of ground-penetrating nuclear weapons to engage hard and deeply buried targets. For these reasons, the report urged the development of new nuclear weapons "with a much lower performance than would be required for surface weapons"⁵³.

After the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda terrorist group were forced out of Kabul and the fortified cave complex Tora Bora, some of the militants retreated to the Gardez region in southeastern Afghanistan. The experience of the operation in Tora Bora clearly demonstrated that it is impossible to destroy an enemy who has taken shelter in numerous extended mountain caves with only massive airstrikes. In early 2002, the American command received intelligence that the militants were regrouping in the Shahi Kot valley, Paktika province. Anticipating the actions of the Taliban forces the Americans decided to conduct an air-to-ground operation. However, the

⁴⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 131.

⁴⁹ de Wijk (2014), p. 261.

⁵⁰ de Wijk (2014), p. 262.

⁵¹ de Wijk (2014), p. 263.

⁵² Lebovic (2019), p. 131.

strength and determination of the enemy to fight was not adequately assessed. The Taliban forces opposing the international antiterrorist coalition previously avoided direct and prolonged combat contacts.⁵⁴

Preparations for Operation Anaconda began in early February 2002⁵⁵. In the course of its implementation, the plan was to land helicopter assault forces in eight key places of the valley, cut off all escape routes, and then destroy the enemy with air strikes. The formations of the Northern Alliance (more than 1000 Afghans) were to enter the valley, and three American battalions and special forces of the USA, Australia, Germany, Denmark, Canada, Norway and France (several hundred troops) were to block all exits from it, which would provide an encirclement of the enemy.⁵⁶

From the very beginning of the operation on March 2, things did not go as planned. Instead of running in panic and hiding after Americans bombing, the Taliban started fighting with skill, using the situation and terrain features. The SOF's attempt to move deeper into the valley met with fierce resistance from insurgents. It became clear that a surprise attack would not work against the Taliban's well prepared defense. Only by March 12, after a massive bombing raid, did the joint American and Afghan forces succeed in driving the enemy out of the valley, although sporadic clashes in the area continued until March 18.⁵⁷

After the completion of Operation Anaconda, the American military leadership drew appropriate conclusions. Much attention was paid to improving the coordination of joint actions between different branches of the armed forces and communication between them. And most importantly, all subsequent operations of this kind were authorized only after a thorough study of intelligence received from multiple, independent sources. Despite the logistical problems, the neutralization of US air weapons due to unfavorable mountain topography, unforeseen resistance, miscalculations of intelligence and underestimation of the enemy, they came out victorious. American troops killed or captured hundreds of insurgents and scattered the rest.⁵⁸ Reg-

⁵³ de Wijk (2014), p. 262.

⁵⁴ Военное обозрение: Операция «Анаконда». Выпуск 08.11.2016.

⁵⁵ More about Operation Anaconda: Lester W. Grau; Dodge Billingsley: *Operation Anaconda America's First Major Battle in Afghanistan*. Modern War Studies.

⁵⁶ Военное обозрение (2016).

⁵⁷ Военное обозрение: Операция «Анаконда». Выпуск 08.11.2016.

⁵⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 131.

ular US forces were also involved in addition to the SOF for the first time in the Anaconda operation. Two thousand soldiers of the 101st airborne and 10th mountain divisions were assigned to fight at high altitudes with an unknown enemy.⁵⁹

In general, the military campaign of OEF removed the Taliban from power and prevented Al Qaeda from using the entire country as a refuge. The regime change operation was a clear victory for the coalition. The outcome of the main hostilities of OEF was seen as a quick success for the Northern Alliance, the United States and international partners, but in reality the problems were far from over. The new Afghan leadership was faced with the serious political challenge of consolidating state-building, with very limited resources. The new leaders also faced potential threats from both a resurgent al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders who were defeated but not eliminated. There were also certain challenges from various Afghans who were unhappy with the loss of their own influence in the emerging post-Taliban order.⁶⁰

Critics of OEF argue that the US military turned over the mission to find bin Laden - and possibly more than a thousand al-Qaeda fighters with him - to local forces. Lacking the initiative and commitment, they made a deal with al-Qaeda, allowing them to slip across the border and take shelter in the tribal areas of western Pakistan. The Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and the CENTCOM commander General Franks refused to put the boots on the ground, despite requests from Henry Crumpton, the CIA's Afghanistan coordinator. He even spoke directly to President Bush and Vice President Cheney, but to no avail. Because of this, a critical opportunity was lost to inflict a potentially decisive blow on the enemy.⁶¹

Nevertheless, the US military fulfilled its task by using its mobility, firepower, and arsenal of precision guided missiles to crush the enemy. The quick result reinforced US leadership conviction that technological advantages have changed the general understanding of how the United States should fight wars. However, a swift, relatively painless victory should have raised critical doubts.⁶² The concept that inflicting a decisive blow on the al-Qaeda network would bring complete victory over the terrorists can be challenged, however, the refusal to put the US boots on the ground enabled the radicals to preserve the combat capability of their units.

⁵⁹ de Wijk (2014), p. 263.

⁶⁰ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 5.

⁶¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 132.

US policymakers did not look further "than immediate success in Afghanistan to anticipate the challenges ahead or the longer-term costs of US intervention", much less ponder whether the overarching US goals required those costs. There were plans to prevent a possible humanitarian crisis after the US military intervention took place, but no detailed concept of Afghanistan's transition from Taliban rule to a stable state was proposed. As a result, the Taliban - weak and disorganized at the end of the main stages of the operation - later became a formidable and elusive adversary when transitioning to an insurgent strategy.⁶³

According to NATO's Supreme Commander, General Clark, a complete military victory in Afghanistan was impossible, because all the fundamental principles of modern warfare were ignored. There was no single effort, because there was no single command. Operational plans were difficult. The concentration of combat forces in central points was impossible. The economic use of funds was disordered. The objectives could not be accomplished by offensive actions and maneuvers. For all these reasons, the Americans decided to act alone during OEF. Even the closest ally, the United Kingdom (UK), joined the operation, but was used as support for US actions rather than being fully integrated into the operation.⁶⁴

Within the coalition (see ANNEX 2 for a list of countries involved), the differences between the US and Europeans how to conduct expeditionary warfare became clear. Also most Europeans were focused on preventing conflicts and building peace, and refused to use force. This led to a serious mismatch between the US and European military forces. European contingents had very limited capabilities to conduct forward expeditionary warfare, as defined by the ability to conduct large-scale conventional and unconventional combat operations in remote parts of the world with minimal risk to friendly forces and an acceptable level of collateral damage.⁶⁵

However, regardless of these challenges many US defense experts viewed combat operations as an important demonstration of operational unity between national militaries. The closest allies of the United States, such as the UK and Australia, deployed troops to support the main phase of the fighting, and dozens of other countries have granted basing, access and overflight possibilities.⁶⁶

⁶² Lebovic (2019), p. 132.

⁶³ Lebovic (2019), p. 132.

⁶⁴ de Wijk (2014), p. 309.

⁶⁵ de Wijk (2014), p. 294.

⁶⁶ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 5.

Also during the main stages of the operation, other NATO countries provided units to support the combat operations of the US troops⁶⁷. For example, the rapid deployment to Kabul of a multinational brigade under the leadership of the UK in the winter of 2001-02 helped budding Afghan authorities restore security in Kabul. It is worth noting that such tactical victories rarely achieved strategic effects. The primary reason for this was the insufficient and inconsistent management of the strategy within the operation as a whole.⁶⁸

In general, the lack of coordination and unity of command among coalition troops made synchronization of effort to achieve the goal difficult. For this reason, the Americans argued that the mission should define the coalition. With their vital interests at stake, they took the lead in conducting the operation. Coalition partners were welcome, but used in a support role.⁶⁹

By 2002, the Taliban was in disarray, seriously weakened in their ability to engage in combat with American troops. The US military continued its operations to target residual Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country. In the spring of 2002, following a reorganization of the command structure in Afghanistan, CENTCOM continued to assume that the military would transfer all security responsibility to the Afghan leadership within twelve to eighteen months. This decision was made to support a change in priorities toward the impending war with Iraq.⁷⁰

This strategy proved to be untenable and had a negative impact on the United States. Subsequently, the Americans tried to return the US mission to a favorable situation for themselves, but they could not withstand the consequences of such a strategy. The shortcomings in achieving the goals of the operation were revealed in the following:

- Insufficient funding for the stabilization and development of Afghanistan;
- Underestimating the challenges to building an Afghan security force;
- Unjustified optimism about the capabilities of the Afghan government;
- Poor assumptions regarding the military contribution of the US allies;
- Underestimating the full threat of the Taliban.⁷¹

⁶⁷ CNN Editorial Research: Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts. December 24, 2019. [<https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html>], read 25.10.2019.

⁶⁸ Barry, Ben: *Harsh Lessons: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Changing Character of War*. IISS The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2017, p. 138.

⁶⁹ de Wijk (2019), p. 310.

⁷⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 133.

⁷¹ Lebovic (2019), p.133.

There were also a number of unforeseen new problems that arose from the operation up to this point. Ultimately, the Taliban and al-Qaeda mutated and continued their armed resistance. Internal tensions in Afghanistan threatened to turn the central government of the country into the government of only Kabulistan. Islamic extremism spread to the countries of Central and South Asia. Later, the Taliban themselves and other insurgents began to conduct offensive operations against foreign troops and government forces of Afghanistan. In 2006, the Taliban controlled a third of Afghanistan, and in 2009, two-thirds. When in 2006, the north was relatively calm, then in 2009 there were only a few safe pockets in the north. It is believed that the most critical mistake was that the Americans diverted their attention to Iraq in 2003 and transferred the command of the operation in Afghanistan to NATO.⁷²

The military operation entered the stage of asymmetric war, when a military victory can be practically meaningless without successful nation building at the political, economic and security levels. The operation in Afghanistan passed into its next stage - the stage of the stabilization operation. Such an operation is much more difficult than fighting conventional military forces.⁷³

2.2 Ensuring of safety and stability

On August 11, 2003, NATO established the ISAF in Afghanistan. On behalf of the United Nations, the main goal of the ISAF was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security throughout the country and to develop a new Afghan security force to ensure that Afghanistan is never again a safe haven for terrorists.⁷⁴ By this, the UN meant the creation of a sustain level of security that would remain at the same level without international support and foreign military presence.

Initially ISAF forces were deployed to provide security in the capital and around Kabul⁷⁵. The United Nations sanctioned the creation of ISAF on December 20, 2001 (see ANNEX 3). A British general was appointed commander of the force, as UK forces made up the bulk of IS-

⁷² de Wijk (2014), p. 264.

⁷³ Cordsman, Antony H: *The war after the war: strategic lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C. 2006, p. 66.

⁷⁴ NATO website: ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived). [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm], read 25.11.2019.

⁷⁵ NATO website: ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived). [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm], read 25.11.2019.

AF, augmented by representatives from eighteen countries. Initially the ISAF was supposed to include up to 5,000 troops. It was a multinational infantry brigade under the command of the UK, and later under the command of NATO, which had been deployed to support the Afghan authorities in maintaining security in Kabul.⁷⁶

In October 2003, the United States Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) was formed by the Americans in Kabul. CFC-A oversaw two US-led, two-star coalition units, as the training team for ANSF; and a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), which lead conventional forces in eastern Afghanistan. CFC-A was operational until ISAF assumed responsibility for the security of all of Afghanistan in February 2007.⁷⁷

The reasons for the emergence of ISAF and the transfer of responsibility for the operation were described in the previous section. However, it is worth repeating that after their change of focus from Afghanistan to Iraq, the United States had no other alternative but to create an international coalition and transfer control of the operation to NATO. The entire US strategy in Afghanistan came to be based on seeking consensus where possible, compromise when necessary, and relying on coalitions to underpin almost all actions. As the operation progressed, ISAF's presence gradually expanded to cover the entire country by the second half of 2006 (see ANNEX 4). As ISAF expanded east and south, its forces became increasingly involved in the fight against the growing insurgency.⁷⁸ The United States could have fought both wars without the help of other countries, but it would have had to increase the already significant requirements of American troops. The participation of additional countries in the international coalition demonstrated international support for the operation, but simultaneously created military and political tensions and risks, especially for the commanders of multinational forces.⁷⁹

To help the Afghan authorities and the UN, CFC-A Commander Lieutenant General David Barno developed a new Coalition Concept of Operations centered on the Inter-Agency Approach to Counter Insurgency (COIN) (see ANNEX 5). Barno transferred responsibility for the regions of Afghanistan in which American troops were stationed to American military commanders. This meant that the US conventional forces stopped their temporary deployment

⁷⁶ Barry (2017), p. 20.

⁷⁷ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 27.

⁷⁸ NATO website: ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived). [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm], read 25.11.2019.

for raids to find and destroy the Taliban across the country, and instead focused their efforts within their assigned Afghan provinces.⁸⁰

ISAF has become one of the largest coalitions in history and remains NATO's most complex mission to date. As the stabilization operation progressed, the largest force was over 130,000. The international force included representatives from 51 NATO and partner countries. UN-sanctioned ISAF international coalition troops have helped Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) expand and exercise its power and influence in Afghanistan and create conditions for stabilization and reconstruction. ISAF's primary missions have included assisting GIROA in expanding its mandate, conducting stability and security operations in coordination with the ANSF, mentoring and supporting the Afghan National Army (ANA), and supporting GIROA's programs to disarm illegal armed groups. ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) have played an integral role in the international community's comprehensive approach to Afghanistan, supporting reconstruction and development efforts and democratic institutions.⁸¹

According to its structure, Afghanistan was initially divided into five, later into six, Regional Commands (RC), with each region under the command of a separate country of members of the ISAF coalition (see ANNEX 6), which were subordinate to Commander of ISAF (COMISAF)⁸². Each RC has supported the Afghan provincial leadership in organizing stability and reconstruction. For this purpose task forces were created, which included the military component and the PRT.⁸³ Within the PRT, the civilian component carried out efforts in the areas of economic development, humanitarian support and provincial reconstruction. The actions and objectives of the PRT are clarified in the chapter 4 on economic development and reconstruction.

ISAF, though originally mandated to support Afghanistan's security efforts only in Kabul and its immediate vicinity, expanded its geographic reach in four phases and by October 5, 2006

⁷⁹ Barry (2017), p. 62.

⁸⁰ Barry (2017), p. 21.

⁸¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 28.

⁸² CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 24.

⁸³ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 27.

became responsible for maintaining security throughout the country⁸⁴. The chain of command of the operation was as follows:

- Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers of Europe (SHAPE), led by the Supreme Allied Powers in Europe (SACEUR), provided strategic command and control;
- Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFCBS) provided general operational oversight including many administrative responsibilities;
- The ISAF itself, which reported to SHAPE through JFCBS, exercised operational theater command from the four-star jointing HQ ISAF based in Kabul;
- The North Atlantic Council (NAC) provided political leadership to the mission.⁸⁵

NATO's command of the operation in Afghanistan made the operation difficult. Formally, the chain of command ran from the ISAF commander through the headquarters of the NATO JFCBS, and then to SHAPE and SACEUR. However the JFCBS commander had little practical authority and the headquarters lacked the resources to provide much support for the Afghan theater. By subordinating ISAF to JFCBS at the operational level, NATO command implied that ISAF was tactical. This did not make much sense before the founding of the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), which freed ISAF's top headquarter to maintain an operational and strategic focus. Bypassing JFCBS in NATO's chain of command may have seemed reasonable or advisable in terms of national resources and protocols, however, this practice would negatively affect NATO's command structure.⁸⁶ Moreover, the four-star American commanders in Afghanistan, in their national capacities, reported to the US CENTCOM commander, who could provide substantial support resources and was equal to the US European Command commander, SACEUR (see ANNEX 7).

One of the main findings of the Initial Assessment in 2009 was that both the unity of command in ISAF and the unity of efforts of the entire international community in Afghanistan needed to be improved. One of the important steps in this direction was the creation in October 2009 of the IJC- an operational level headquarters under the leadership of a three-star commander,

⁸⁴ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 23.

⁸⁵ CRS Report for Congress (2011), p. 23.

⁸⁶ Johnston, Seth: *NATO's Lessons from Afghanistan*. The US Army War College Quarterly Parameters, Autumn 2019.

which was subordinate to ISAF itself. The rationale for the creation of the IJC was that it would allow HQ ISAF to look top down that is, to focus on strategic issues, including partnerships with senior Afghan leaders, relations with neighboring states, civil-military coordination at the national level and liaison with the military units of the national capitals and NATO headquarters. In the meantime, the IJC could look from the bottom up, leading day-to-day operations across the country and focusing on partnerships with Afghan and international partners.⁸⁷ Experience has shown that for the successful planning and conduct of operations it was important to separate the high-level military-political headquarters from the headquarters of the ground campaign⁸⁸.

After the finalizing of military campaign phase, OEF also entered a stage of stabilization along with ISAF, and US forces remained in Afghanistan as part of both OEF and ISAF. Despite certain differences in the tasks of OEF and ISAF, a unified command of the operations was carried out by the United States. This principle was applied to improve coordination between OEF and ISAF. Such a command structure was believed to ensure synchronization of US and ISAF forces and proper coordination of ANSF development efforts within the broader COIN strategy.⁸⁹ In the area of command support, the United States has worked with NATO allies to improve coordination through participation in various committees and working groups at NATO headquarters. Much of this coordination was arranged by the US Military Delegation during discussions in the NATO Defense Committee and the US Mission to NATO.⁹⁰

While ISAF and OEF supported the overarching COIN strategy, they undertook slightly different but complementary missions in Afghanistan. By nature, OEF played a more aggressive counterterrorism role, while the ISAF concentrated on stability and reconstruction operations, including the PRTs command. Unlike OEF, ISAF was not mandated to provide any training to the Afghan National Police (ANP). However, the training and education of the ANA was carried out jointly by ISAF and OEF.⁹¹

Considering the effectiveness of the organization of such an allied command, it is worth noting that a greater number of tasks and posts and appointments did not always have a reinforcing

⁸⁷ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress, March 9, 2011, p. 23.

⁸⁸ Barry (2017), p. 58.

⁸⁹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 27.

⁹⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 28.

⁹¹ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 27.

effect. Without additional resources, such use of all personnel or organizations was ineffective, and the inevitable practical effect was the establishment of priorities for some roles and inattention to others. This issue particularly affected US military personnel, who were relatively less familiar or experienced with NATO doctrine and standards than their counterparts in other Allied countries. The situation changed when in 2009 General Stanley McChrystal significantly increased the integration between ISAF and OEF. This change was in no small part due to McChrystal's authority, as well as his understanding of NATO's mission and approach to COIN. However, as commendable as this integration was, one of the leading methods of achieving it was the use of command personnel in several positions at the same time, which was not always constructive.⁹²

Over the course of stability operations, the importance of providing international commanders on the ground with the greatest possible flexibility has been consistently emphasized to ensure that they can carry out their mission as quickly as possible, while minimizing risk and loss of life.⁹³ Although US forces cooperated with allied countries - foreign troops were part of the US forces as part of the OEF operation, and in turn, the US troops joined ISAF forces under NATO command. This operational independence, and sometimes lack of coordination, generated conflicts between coalition members. As an example, sometimes night combat raids by US SOF units undermined the local stabilization efforts of ISAF contingents. Equally important, the ISAF forces themselves were also not always a well-coordinated force. At times there was a conflict of strategic goals without clear consensus when faced with the dual tasks of state-building and COIN. Often, for political reasons, NATO members avoided providing their national contingents for active combat, using national caveats for this.⁹⁴

The specific national caveats were classified information⁹⁵. However as an indication of the magnitude of this issue, it was noted that more than half of the allies in ISAF had some form of caveats associated with the geographical and/or functional deployment of their forces. Some allies did not have written documentation of their caveats, but acted on the basis of them. This limited ISAF commanders' ability to plan and execute operations effectively and efficiently. To handle this, the United States insisted that its allies and partners give their commanders maximum flexibility in deciding when, where, and how to use troops. Allied command operations in

⁹² Johnston (2019).

⁹³ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 28.

⁹⁴ Lebovic (2019), p. 142.

⁹⁵ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 25.

the NAC were briefed on a regular basis and encouraged countries to remove limitations. The Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC) and International Military Staff (IMS) briefings for the NAC also emphasized the need to remove caveats on ISAF coalition troops. This had some effect, particularly in the period from April to September 2008 when several countries lifted national caveats on their troop contributions.⁹⁶

ISAF has undoubtedly suffered from these varied and changing caveats. The scattered and fragmented command structure led to a lack of sufficient equipment and personnel to project forces into violent parts of the country and thus, weakening ISAF as a combat.⁹⁷ This manifested in multiple ways such as: members often not fulfilling their obligations to the troops; RC headquarters being unable or authorized to effectively perform the functions of an operational headquarters; and regional operations essentially transformed into national enclaves. In the end, the countries participating in ISAF tried to gain a foothold in the designated areas of responsibility, and, having anchored there, remained in place and carried out stabilization operations without going outside these zones.⁹⁸

Since the conditions of the situation varied across Afghanistan, the campaign plan was interpreted differently in each province. The countries have interpreted ISAF's Rules of Engagement (ROE) in different ways with regards to policies for investigating local population complaints and compensating damage, injury or death resulting from military operations.⁹⁹ Also the approaches used by the national contingents were different. There were various factors that influenced the participation of countries in the coalition. Some countries, such as the UK, sought to maintain their military-strategic partnerships with the United States and leveraged their large contingent to influence the plans of the entire operation. Other members of the international coalition, such as Georgia, contributed troops to ISAF to increase their chances of joining NATO, and while they did not play a leading role in the military campaign, they gained political benefits for themselves.¹⁰⁰ The exception was Estonia, since Tallinn sought to maximize its influence in NATO by not introducing any national caveats¹⁰¹. National legislation was also an important factor influencing the use of national contingents. Few countries were as willing to risk suffering casualties as the United States. For example, the death of ten French soldiers in

⁹⁶ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 28.

⁹⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 142.

⁹⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 142.

⁹⁹ Barry (2017), p. 63-64.

¹⁰⁰ Barry (2017), p. 63.

¹⁰¹ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 25.

August 2008 prompted Paris to order an immediate reduction in operational activities, followed by the withdrawal of the French contingent earlier than planned.¹⁰²

As the situation escalated, ISAF forces continued to carry unequal burdens of the operation. The United States, the UK, Canada and the Netherlands fought in volatile southern Afghanistan, while France, Germany, Spain and Italy refused to send their forces there. Negotiations within the coalition to resolve differences were carried out constantly, but the only concessions in national caveats were made by the countries with contingents. For example, the Netherlands, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Denmark, Greece, Hungary and Luxembourg have agreed to loosen their caveats while France, Germany, Spain, and Italy stood their ground refusing to send their forces south, except in extreme circumstances.¹⁰³

While the United States managed to bypass caveats and restrictions in Iraq, however in 2009 they became a serious military and political problem in Afghanistan. ISAF commanders also noted that national caveats adversely affected ISAF's relations with partners from the ANSF.¹⁰⁴ As the experience of warfare has shown, the US as a leader of the coalition seriously overestimated the ability and willingness of their allies to bear the military burden and underestimated the military threat of the insurgency.¹⁰⁵

Due to the weak influence of the Kabul government, the Taliban was able to restore their networks in Afghanistan during the period of 2002-2005, resisting ISAF's efforts to achieve the goals of their stabilization operations. The Taliban's armed resistance against the international coalition continued.¹⁰⁶ Insurgents groups infiltrated Afghanistan from Pakistan, rebuilding its military and political networks. The Taliban exploited widespread discontent with corruption and extortion by government officials, as well as the deaths of Afghan civilians caused by US and coalition forces. Insurgent attacks against ANSF and government targets gradually intensified.¹⁰⁷

In the fall of 2004, the Taliban began active recruitment in the Pashtun regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan, profiting from illicit deals (including the opium trade) to fund operations and build a support base. The Taliban slowly developed their offensive and defensive capabilities.

¹⁰² Barry (2017), p. 63.

¹⁰³ Lebovic (2019), p. 143.

¹⁰⁴ CRS Report for Congress (2011), p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Lebovic (2019), p. 143.

¹⁰⁶ Barry (2017), p. 112.

¹⁰⁷ Barry (2017), p. 21.

The radical movement that once faded in front of US firepower transformed in a short time to become a different adversary. The Taliban began to rely on hit-and-run tactics and improvised explosive devices (IED), using indirect fire to target coalition forces and then hitting them with small arms and grenades, stopping attacks until air support arrived, and taking cover with local support. By exerting military influence on foreign troops and hitting soft government and public targets to enhance political effect, the Taliban were able to increase the cost of foreign intervention, as well as weaken the influence of the Afghan government, and thereby gain time. According to Taliban leaders, the coalition forces would begin to tire of countering the tactics of the insurgents and reduce support for the government, which would then stagger and eventually collapse.¹⁰⁸

From 2004 to 2006, security conditions in Afghanistan deteriorated significantly. During this period, the number of security incidents increased many times. The number of casualties in the coalition forces more than tripled.¹⁰⁹ Over the course of the operation, the Taliban in southern Afghanistan turned out to be much stronger than expected, leading to intense fighting in which coalition forces held their positions only through the intensive use of aircraft, which led to collateral damage and civilian casualties¹¹⁰. In 2006, the Taliban launched a prolonged offensive with attacks in the south and to a lesser extent in the east¹¹¹. This, combined with an inadequate understanding of local cultural, political and tribal dynamics, led to a further deterioration in security in southern Afghanistan¹¹².

Nevertheless, ISAF forces have made efforts to turn the tide in their favor, using available military capabilities¹¹³. The Taliban suffered heavy casualties from ISAF forces during the 2006-07 campaign, with insurgent commanders constantly attacked by NATO SOF. Between 2006 and 2009, ISAF and ANSF achieved some degree of stability in Kabul, as well as in northern and western Afghanistan.¹¹⁴

In response, the Taliban changed tactics, stepped up the training of their fighters and intensified propaganda among the radicalized, vacillating and dissatisfied part of local population. The insurgency sought to improve their command and control, increase the resilience of their net-

¹⁰⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 144.

¹⁰⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 144.

¹¹⁰ Barry (2017), p. 23.

¹¹¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 144.

¹¹² Barry (2017), p. 23.

¹¹³ Barry (2017), p. 23.

¹¹⁴ Barry (2017), p. 112.

works to intelligence gathering, and conduct targeted assassinations of government officials.¹¹⁵ In the south and east, the Taliban's strength increased despite ISAF's repeated offensive operations. The coalition efforts usually succeeded in eliminating the insurgents, but the lack of sufficient troop numbers meant that international forces could not hold the whole country. As a result the coalition has not been able to achieve sufficient security gains in order to wrest the strategic initiative.¹¹⁶

Initially, the insurgents used the tactics of classic maneuver warfare and the use of firepower, but their capabilities could not be compared with Western forces. Therefore, the insurgents gradually switched to asymmetric tactics. The Taliban often resorted to murder, suicide attacks and the use of IED.¹¹⁷ Also insurgents took control of rural areas and increased number of attacks and acts of violence against the ISAF and GIROA officials and facilities. All this time, the Taliban were recruiting and replenishing their ranks.¹¹⁸

Eventually, the Taliban began to attack representatives of the international coalition from within, by infiltrating the ANSF. In 2012, there was a significant increase in attacks by Afghan soldiers on representatives of the coalition forces, the so-called "green on blue" attacks. These attacks attracted the attention of high-ranking officials from the Western and Afghan governments. Although statistically small compared to the number of deaths associated with IEDs, "green-on-blue" attacks accounted for 20 percent of the ISAF casualties. These attacks began to influence strategy in Afghanistan. The concept of training new Afghan recruits working with US SOF was revised and the procedure for pairing small coalition forces with Afghan forces for joint patrols and ground operations changed.¹¹⁹ The increase in "green-on-blue" attacks further contributed to increased mistrust and tensions between the coalition and local security forces, which did not help stabilize the country as a whole. Such attacks had a psychological effect among the coalition members working directly with the ANSF units.

By 2007, the United States and its allies were facing full-blown insurgency. In the same year, 232 foreign military personnel were killed in Afghanistan, the highest annual figure since the start of the operation. By the end of 2008, the annual losses reached 295 foreign troops. At the end of the same year, the United Nations reported that, on average, there were 740 "security

¹¹⁵ Barry (2017), p. 112.

¹¹⁶ Barry (2017), p. 24.

¹¹⁷ de Wijk (2014), p. 265.

¹¹⁸ Lebovic, (2019), p. 144.

¹¹⁹ Allen, Lisa M: *The Surge in "Green-on-Blue" Attacks in Afghanistan*. Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, Vol. 4, No. 11 (November 2012), p. 7-9.

incidents” in Afghanistan each month, up from 573 in 2007 and 428 in 2006. With their attacks on non-American contingents, the Taliban undermined and weakened the political ties between the countries of the coalition members, because countries were not ready to suffer heavy combat casualties. Also the US and allied forces efforts to curb collateral civilian deaths by reducing reliance on firepower supported Taliban strategy. The Taliban were able to effectively use civilians as hostages to reduce kinetic operations.¹²⁰

Despite the general increase in violence, the number of US troops in Afghanistan grew slowly. From 2001 to 2009 the total number of US troops in Afghanistan increased by only about a couple thousand troops a year.¹²¹ In June 2009, as the tide in Afghanistan appeared to turn against the United States, General Stanley McChrystal was given command of the ISAF and OEF. According the Encyclopedia Britannica: "Under McChrystal's command, the broad strategy for the Afghan theatre changed from the "light footprint" counterterrorism operation conceived by Rumsfeld in 2001 to the comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign proposed by President Barack Obama in March 2009. In order to support that mission, McChrystal requested the deployment of an additional 30,000 troops, which Obama approved; this brought the total U.S. force commitment in early 2010 to almost 100,000 troops. McChrystal advocated a "hearts and minds" approach to interaction with the Afghan people, with the goal of reducing civilian deaths and promoting security and development at the local level."¹²² According to McChrystal's estimation the center of gravity of the conflict was the Afghan population itself, which had to be protected from insurgents and threat of collateral damage¹²³. General McChrystal's personal assessment of the war showed that a successful counterinsurgency strategy would require 500,000 soldiers and five years of combat. The number of troops deployed in the operation increased, although not in the same proportions as McChrystal's estimate had envisioned.¹²⁴

General McChrystal adapted ISAF's strategy to improve ISAF's effectiveness through a closer partnership with the ANSF, prioritize responsible and accountable governance,¹²⁵ rebuild COIN initiative, and focus resources on the most vulnerable. General David H. Petraeus, who took

¹²⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 145.

¹²¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 145.

¹²² Ray, Michael: *Stanley McChrystal*. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., [<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stanley-McChrystal>], read 23.02.2021.

¹²³ Barry (2017), p. 25.

¹²⁴ de Wijk (2014), p. 265.

command of ISAF in August 2010, issued guidance echoing McChrystal's position, which the Afghan government also supported.¹²⁵

Since the Taliban proved to be the most effective and powerful in the South of the country, the main task of ISAF after the increase in the contingent was to expand the control of the Afghan government over densely populated areas in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. The campaign began in February 2010 with Operation Musharak, involving US, British and Afghan forces in Helmand province. The operation resulted in significant security improvements in the center of Helmand. In June 2010, the main focus was on Operation Hamkari, which aimed to clear the city of Kandahar and surrounding areas. Heavy fighting by American, Canadian and Afghan forces cleared and held the Panjwai, Jari and Arghandab areas.¹²⁶ The increase in the number of troops meant a six fold increase in the operations of the SOF. The most significant success was the assassination of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011 during a special operation carried out by the CIA and US Navy SEALs¹²⁷ in Pakistan.¹²⁸

Prior to 2009 international efforts to develop ANSF through mentoring, training and equipping programs were insufficient to overcome the deteriorating security situation. Then in 2009, shortly after his appointment as ISAF Commander, McChrystal emphasized the importance of the ANSF capacity building, which helped to form the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A) and ensured a significant increase in personnel and resources.¹²⁹ After the NTM-A was established in 2009, the creation of ANA became a more focused effort¹³⁰. The training plans were based on the principle that the Afghan government requires capable security forces to establish and maintain Afghanistan's security and independence and to ensure the rule of law in the country¹³¹.

To help create a more effective ANA, ISAF partners deployed 42 Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT). In 2003 the ANA had approximately 52,000 military personnel participating in major operations with ISAF forces. By the end of ISAF and the commencement of

¹²⁵ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-26.

¹²⁶ Barry (2017), p. 25.

¹²⁷ Navy SEAL, SEAL in full Sea, Air, and Land, in the U.S. Navy, a member of a special operations force trained to engage in direct raids or assaults on enemy targets, conduct reconnaissance missions to report on enemy activity (especially prior to beach landings), and take part in action against terrorist groups. [<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navy-SEAL>], read 28.03.2021.

¹²⁸ de Wijk (2014), p. 265.

¹²⁹ Barry (2017), p. 102.

¹³⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 139.

¹³¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 18.

the RS mission in 2015, the ANA had an end strength of approximately 164,000 military personnel.¹³² A key component to improve the level of efficiency and coordination between the ISAF and ANSF was the concept of "embedded partnering". This was aimed at uniting the two armed forces into a single command using ISAF combat power and technology as well the ANSF situational awareness. This concept was been applied at every level, from government ministries to patrols and checkpoints. For example, in 2010, the Afghan corps headquarters took the lead in the third phase of Operation Mosharak, and orders from Afghan rather than NATO commanders initiated later phases of Operation Hamkari.¹³³

Despite the increased numbers of ANA and all efforts made by the coalition, the preparation faced serious problems. Afghanistan lacked of basic military infrastructure. Widespread illiteracy; low pay and difficult working and living conditions and limited motivation of troops led to desertion, long absences from units and a low level of retention. There continued to be a lack of foreign teaching staff to help the effort due to various military restrictions, including restrictions on participation in combat, of foreign citizens entrusted with training. Units were plagued with military factionalism based on ethnic division, favoritism, little incentive for professionalism and bribery and theft of available military resources. The bureaucratic Afghan command system created bottlenecks and inefficiencies that held back initiative. The Afghan government strongly resisted reforms that could jeopardize existing relationships of influence and disrupt patronage networks. Military units had constant communications with the country's warlords and their militia. Furthermore, pressure from the higher command to focus only on troop numbers exacerbated the problem. Troop quality was lost, and long-term troop strength suffered in favor of "infantry, not logistical, medical and other support personnel."¹³⁴

As of February 3, 2011, ISAF consisted of approximately 132,000 military personnel, including NATO allies and non-NATO partners¹³⁵. On June 22, 2011, President Obama announced that 10,000 troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2011 and that an additional 23,000 troops would have left the country by summer 2012. Over the next three years, there was coordinated action to gradually shift leadership of operations to the Afghan forces as ISAF began to downsize. According to the initial plans, all the troops of the coalition countries

¹³² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 57.

¹³³ Barry (2017), p. 102.

¹³⁴ Lebovic (2019), p. 139.

¹³⁵ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 24.

would leave Afghanistan during 2014 and ISAF's combat role would end by 2015.¹³⁶ The termination of foreign participation was based on the concept that the ANSF is strong enough to take responsibility for the security in the country on their own. However, despite numerous tactical and operational successes, the coalition failed to ensure security and stability. Despite a number of successes, Afghanistan had not become a politically stable and secure country. The fear that Afghanistan would become as unstable as Iraq and Libya after Western interventions was justified.¹³⁷ Another key factor supporting the completion of the ISAF mission was the growing unpopularity of the operation in a number of coalition countries due to combat losses and a decrease in faith in achieving the mission through military operations. This political and social pressure on the governments of these countries impacted the contribution of necessary resources for military operations in Afghanistan.

In terms of financial costs, the United States, as the largest contributor to military operations in Afghanistan, spent US \$ 518 billion between 2001 and 2014. In 2009 the costs amounted to US \$ 47 billion, and in 2010 it jumped to US \$ 77 billion. In 2011, expenses increased again to US \$ 97 billion, and in 2012 they stayed relatively stable at US \$ 98 billion.¹³⁸ The peak of funding fell on 2012. With such financial costs, the decision by President Barack Obama to reduce the US military contingent is understandable. In a general sense, despite this financial cost ISAF forces were at parity with the insurgents and further fighting would not have changed the situation. This meant that stability was present in the places where the ISAF troops were located, and outside of that the Taliban could act freely with the support of the local population. As a result, plans shifted to the finalization of combat stabilization operations by coalition troops and the transition to a non-combat training RS mission.

The start of this phase of the operation was scheduled for January 1, 2015. According to the goals and objectives, the entire responsibility for conduct of operations was assigned to the ANSF, while the coalition troops took the role of instructors and advisers. In order to achieve the new tasks, an international military presence remained in the country.

¹³⁶ Barry (2017), p. 24-26.

¹³⁷ de, Wijk, p. 266.

¹³⁸ BBC news, 7 April 2020: Afghanistan peace deal: Taliban walk out of 'fruitless' talks. [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52199398>], read 25.02.2021.

2.3 Transition of authority

2.3.1 Training, advice and assist

On January 1, 2015, the US and coalition forces began a new phase of operations in Afghanistan with the launch of the RS Training, Advisory and Assistance (TAA) mission of NATO. After 13 years of hostilities and stabilization operations, the NATO-led ISAF mission officially ended on December 31, 2014. Simultaneously, the United States Forces in Afghanistan (USFOR-A) switched from OEF to Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). As with ISAF, the US has participated in both the NATO led RS mission and the ongoing US counterterrorism efforts against the remnants of al-Qaeda. In accordance with agreements at the NATO summits in Lisbon in 2010 and in Chicago in 2012, the ANSF assumed full responsibility for the country's security.¹³⁹

This transition was a development of the US strategy with the support of the countries of the international coalition, to directly support efforts to improve the security and stability of Afghanistan¹⁴⁰. The RS mission has not become as an extension of ISAF, although it is built on it, but demonstrates NATO's commitment to Afghanistan, contributing to the development of a capable, self-sufficient ANSF¹⁴¹. The UN Security Council unanimously welcomed the RS mission by adopting Resolution 2189 of December 12, 2014 (see ANNEX 8). As planned, the RS mission officially began on January 1, 2015 with a focus on functional support for ANSF, advisory work focused on functions, system processes and organizational development to achieve sustainable systems in Afghanistan's security ministries.¹⁴²

The US and coalition forces have stopped providing advice at the brigade level and below, with the exception of tactical advice to the Afghan Special Forces (ASF) and the Afghan Air Force (AAF). Under provisions of this mission, US forces provided support to the ANSF in limited combat operations to prevent destructive strategic consequences.¹⁴³ Coalition advisors have focused TAA's mission in security ministries on building, utilizing and maintaining capabilities, providing guidance to the ANA and the ANP. The advisers continued to emphasize

¹³⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 1.

¹⁴¹ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 12.

¹⁴² US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 3.

¹⁴³ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 12.

and ensure financial transparency on the part of the Afghan government and its accountability with donor resources.¹⁴⁴

Later, at the NATO summit in Brussels in July 2018, allies and partners in RS mission reaffirmed their shared commitment to the long-term security and stability of Afghanistan. Countries pledged to support non-combat RS mission and extend funding to ANSF until 2024, and welcomed Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as RS mission's operational partners. As of May 2019, the RS mission consisted of military personnel from 39 countries (27 NATO allies and 14 partner countries). The United States remains the largest contributor to the mission.¹⁴⁵

More than 1,000 military and civilian advisers have begun working with their Afghan counterparts to address issues within Afghan organizations, systems and functions. The functionally based ANSF includes three levels of consultation:

1. Advisers work with their Afghan counterparts on a permanent (usually daily) basis at the corps' permanent locations or in the immediate vicinity.
2. Advisers work with their Afghan counterparts less frequently (determined by commanders) to ensure their further development. The frequency of this interaction varies with the proximity and capabilities of their Afghan counterpart, the level of threat to the advisers, and the resources of the coalition.
3. Consultants are no longer co-located with their Afghan counterparts, instead educating, advising and assisting their Afghan counterparts from a centralized location. Expeditionary advisor packages and visits are planned and coordinated with Afghan counterparts to periodically provide assistance in terms of operations and/or life support.¹⁴⁶

As planned, the US and NATO troops were withdrawn from combat missions in 2015. The ANSF end strength had grown to 352,000 military personnel, however they still relied on NATO for a number of functions that were lacking or at a low level of effectiveness. The NATO training mission focused on building the capacity of Afghan forces in underdeveloped areas, such as strengthening medical capabilities, countering IEDs, developing intelligence capabilities, and developing the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Min-

¹⁴⁴ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 12.

istry of Interior (MoI).¹⁴⁷ Since the beginning of the RS mission, this NATO-led mission in Afghanistan has consisted of 17,000 personnel¹⁴⁸. It was originally planned that the international coalition forces would begin to phase out in the period between 2015 and 2016¹⁴⁹.

The transition from combat operations to non-combat TAA missions included the transition of RCs to Train, Advise and Assist Commands (TAAC). Coalition personnel supporting the RS mission were allocated in four regional TAACs, led by “framework nations” in the north, south, east and west, with one central TAAC in Kabul (see ANNEX 6).¹⁵⁰ The United States leads TAAC-South in Kandahar and TAAC-East in Jalal-Abad; Germany leads TAAC-North in Mazar-i-Sharif; Italy leads TAAC-West in Herat; Turkey heads TAAC-Capital in the Kabul region¹⁵¹.

The staff of each TAAC began providing TAA to their Afghan counterparts in accordance with the needs identified by the coalition and their Afghan partners¹⁵². TAAC commanders became responsible for the development of the territorially designated ANA corps and the development of the ANP by assessing combat functions and five functional pillars: leadership, joint operations, command and control, training and support¹⁵³. Regional TAACs began to cover five of the seven ANA corps and some provincial headquarters of the ANP. TAACs and Task Forces (TF) serve as the main liaison between Afghan ministries and field forces. Field teams began playing a central role in the coalition's ability to assess the effectiveness of its advisory efforts, to determine the ability of ministries to support ongoing ANSF security operations, and to provide security for the coalition. In addition, the coalition forces started providing to the ANSF limited non-combat support, primarily Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and Medical evacuation (MEDEVAC).¹⁵⁴

The main objectives of the TAA were divided into eight main essential functions (EF), which addressed the most important development functions of Afghanistan:

- EF 1: Multi-year Budgeting and Execution of Programs;
- EF 2: Transparency, Accountability, and Oversight (prevent corruption);

¹⁴⁷ Barry (2017), p. 26.

¹⁴⁸ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 3.

¹⁵¹ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 14.

¹⁵² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 11.

¹⁵³ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 21.

- EF 3: Rule of Law and Counter-Corruption;
- EF 4: Force Generation (recruit, train, and equip the force);
- EF 5: Sustainment (supply and maintenance);
- EF 6: Strategy and Policy Planning, Resourcing, and Execution (plan, resource campaigns);
- EF 7: Intelligence;
- EF 8: Strategic Communication.¹⁵⁵

Based on the command structure of the RS mission, a designated general officer or member of the US DoD Senior Executive Service became the leader for each of the eight EFs. They started being responsible for TAA in corps and police units and above. All advisers, whether at the corps, institutional or ministerial level, were organized under the leadership of the EFs in order to consolidate advisory efforts at all levels. The aim within each individual EF was that all tasks would be achieved at the lowest possible level.¹⁵⁶

The RS HQ structure consists of two basic elements: Security Assistance and Operations. Security Assistance focuses on ministerial consultation, institutional development and resourcing, equipping and supporting the ANSF. Under the leadership of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), these efforts continued providing an effective and sustainable ANSF and building long-term institutional capacity to ensure the security of the Afghan population. The effectiveness of the operations has been enhanced by coordinating staff elements directly related to TAA at the corps level and consolidating one-time planning for all TAACs. The tasks of the advisers were to improve operational efficiency and to integrate strategic and institutional leadership at the operational level.¹⁵⁷

Due to the non-combat nature of the mission, operations in the United States have become more narrowly focused. In partnership with Afghanistan, US forces have launched counter-terrorism operations against al-Qaeda and its mediator networks. While US forces no longer target individuals on the basis of membership or association with a group other than Al Qaeda,

¹⁵⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Craig E. L. Sgt 1st class: *Resolute Support trains its people, improving advisor training*. Resolute Support Headquarters, 26.06.2017.

¹⁵⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 19.

they were allowed to take action against individuals who posed a direct threat to US and coalition forces. For example, US forces could no longer target individuals solely on the basis of their Taliban affiliation, however, if a Taliban member threatened the US or coalition forces, or provided direct support to al-Qaeda, the US forces could take appropriate action.¹⁵⁸

As part of the RS mission at a tactical level with ANSF and AAF, the US and coalition forces were able to accompany their Afghan counterparts in missions with an advisory role. All of these operations were led by Afghans. To ensure the safety of US personnel escorting Afghan forces, the US forces provided support, for example, direct air support, as needed, to ensure the collective self-defense of these forces. US military personnel were also allowed to provide combat support to Afghan unilateral missions (conventional forces and SOF) in limited circumstances to prevent detrimental strategic consequences for the campaign.¹⁵⁹

To ensure coordination with the ANSF, RS HQ organized a series of joint personnel planning events that facilitated synchronization of the overall TAA and the active support of the ANSF. A key planning event for RS mission personnel was the Operations Design Meeting (ODM), which was a venue for analyzing information, setting objective priorities, allocating assets, and synchronizing operations. In addition, RS mission began holding weekly safety meetings with MOD and MOI planners after the ODM to review all operations and assess progress.¹⁶⁰

The RS HQ became more dependent on ANSF operational reporting as the presence of coalition units with Afghan units decreased. The ANSF developed a working system for monitoring and recording national security trends that were monitored by RS mission personnel. Due to differences in collection and entry methods, the quality of the data was different than in previous years when Afghan forces collaborated with coalition forces. Most of the Afghan reporting had to be translated from Dari to English, leading to reporting delays and translation errors. Overall, however, the data collected and compiled by the ANSF was still considered useful and valid.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2019), p. 6.

¹⁶¹ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 27.

The initiation of the RS mission did not stop the hostilities, and the intensity has even increased¹⁶². In 2015, more Afghan military and civilians were killed than ever before. Although the ANSF retained control of most of the key population centers, it continued to exhibit deficiencies in leadership, command, control and coordination. The Taliban have identified these shortcomings. For example, insurgents attacked and captured Kunduz, and held the city for two weeks. In general, the level of real combat readiness of the ANSF turned out to be lower than expected. Due these factors, President Obama announced that US troops would remain in Afghanistan beyond 2016.¹⁶³ The delayed US withdrawal would provide military commanders flexibility¹⁶⁴. However, delays in the decision on the size of the US forces caused a several month postponement in the formation of the Afghan government, the signing of the US and Afghanistan bi-lateral agreement and the NATO-Afghanistan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

In October 2017, NATO's annual force generation process re-evaluated how many coalition troops and from which countries would deploy to the RS mission. Most coalition countries increased their commitments to total approximately 700 additional troops while the US contributed approximately 3,500 additional troops for the RS mission and the OFS. From this additional personnel 2,500 US soldiers were assigned to the RS mission. Coalition countries, including the United States, met approximately 93 percent of NATO's total Afghanistan needs by 2018, resulting in a deficit of about 1,000. Much of this deficiency lies in advising ASF and AAF, as well as facilitating expeditionary consultations. In 2017, there were about 14,000 US troops in Afghanistan, of which about 8,500 were in the RS mission, while the rest were in OFS. The RS mission also included 8,700 military personnel from coalition countries.¹⁶⁵

Although the Taliban suffered significant casualties by the time the RS mission began, the Taliban remained combat-ready, maintained or consolidated its influence in traditional rural strongholds, and launched attacks with the same frequency as during the ISAF era¹⁶⁶. In general, the situation began to deteriorate after the start of the RS mission. In September 2016, the Taliban clashed with Afghan forces in a surprise attack on the provincial capital of Uruzgan, Taryn Kot. In the weeks that followed, armed attackers also targeted significant sites in Kabul

¹⁶² Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Barry (2017), p. 26.

¹⁶⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 26.

and detonated bombs around the capital. Dozens of people were killed, including a number of high-ranking security officials. By October 2016, eighty-five percent of Helmand province came under Taliban control, and the Taliban began to launch attacks on the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah.¹⁶⁷ By April 2016, at least 20 percent of the country's territory, located in large pockets in the north, south, east and west, remained contested or controlled by the Taliban. Although the Taliban did not yet control the large provincial cities, they maintained safe havens throughout the country from which to threaten those cities. Increasing violence was marked by the internal displacement of civilians. In the first six months of 2016 alone, some 150,000 people fled their homes to escape violence.¹⁶⁸

Despite the escalation of the conflict, the increasing intensity of hostilities and the increase in violence after the completion of the ISAF mission, the number of incidents involving coalition forces decreased. Direct IED attacks accounted for the majority of incidents. The insurgents focused more on fighting the ANSF. They began to carry out high-profile and complex attacks on individuals, settlements and outlying areas.¹⁶⁹ The Taliban also continued their efforts to use Afghan soldiers and police to carry out insider "green-on-blue" attacks as a means of undermining confidence between the coalition and its Afghan partners. While the number of insider attacks decreased since their peak in 2012, they still remained a serious concern, and pose a strategic threat to the campaign by jeopardizing the relationship between the coalition and Afghans.¹⁷⁰ Although all insider attacks cannot be prevented, the coalition forces, the ANSF and the Afghan government have continued to take a comprehensive approach to mitigating insider threats through a range of measures aimed at improving threat understanding, improving force training through cultural situational training, supporting ANSF verification, and strengthening force protection measures¹⁷¹.

This comprehensive approach was expected to reduce the threat of insider attacks. Many of the previous ISAF measures remain in place for the RS mission. For example, the RS mission forces continue to employ Guardian Angels (GA), the protection personnel of the RS mission's advisors and commanders, composed of NATO troops. The only responsibility of the GA is to ensure the physical safety of RS mission personnel during joint operations with ANSF. In addition, the Theater Defense Force and Insider Threat Mitigation Standard Operational Proce-

¹⁶⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 163.

¹⁶⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 161.

¹⁶⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 27.

¹⁷⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2015), p. 29.

¹⁷¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 25.

dures (SOP) provided concrete guidance on countering insider threats and established procedures for investigating and analyzing insider attacks.¹⁷²

The ANSF have also been at risk of internal attacks within their own forces (otherwise called "green-on-green" attacks). The RS mission consultants engaged both the MoD and the MoI regarding the requirement to include the formal selection of personnel in official policy at the national level. On September 8, 2017, the Minister of Defense of Afghanistan signed a new policy to protect forces from insiders. The policy has improved training and procedures for the protection of Afghans and coalition members. The MoI has developed a similar policy.¹⁷³

The policy reduced, but did not stop attacks on coalition members and ANSF representatives. For example, between December 1, 2018 and May 25, 2019, the Afghan government reported 25 "green-on-green" attacks by insiders on Afghan personnel. However, compared to 2017, the number of insider attacks on ANSF has decreased by more than 50 percent, and the number of deaths caused by these attacks has decreased by almost 20 percent.¹⁷⁴ The measures were effective, but did not fully stop the insider threat.

With the ongoing hostilities and attacks on members of the international coalition, US military officials began publicly declaring in early 2017 that the conflict was "largely deadlocked". Further, as time passed, instead of positive changes associated with the RS mission, in most cases the scale of the territory controlled or contested by the Taliban increased. In a report dated January 30, 2019, the Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SIGAR) said that as of October 2018, the proportion of government controlled areas or influence had dropped to 53.8%. This figure indicates a decrease in the control of territories by the government compared to November 2015, when they began to monitor the situation in Afghanistan. In 2015, 12% of districts were under insurgent control or influence, and the remaining 34% were disputed.¹⁷⁵

In general, the preparation of the ANSF, despite all efforts, left much to be desired. Without the support of American troops and their logistical, intelligence, reconnaissance and air support, Afghans often chose to remain at their bases or at checkpoints. By October 2015, the ad-

¹⁷² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 30.

¹⁷³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 25.

¹⁷⁴ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2019), p. 25.

¹⁷⁵ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 5.

verse effects of the transition to Afghan control were evident: the Taliban began to hold more territory in Afghanistan than at any time since 2001, and Afghan forces were under increasing stress. In the first seven months of 2015 after initiation of the RS mission more than 4,000 Afghan security personnel were killed and nearly double the number were wounded. As a barometer of conflict, the civilian death toll reached even higher levels. In 2014, more than ten thousand civilians died as a result of violence. The numbers were an order of magnitude higher than five years previously across the country - almost twice as high in the east, about two and a half times higher in the south, and more than four times higher in the north.¹⁷⁶

Al-Qaeda remained active throughout Afghanistan and was not limited to one region. General Austin Miller, commander of RS mission and USFOR-A, has confirmed by several analytical studies that al-Qaeda covers all regions of Afghanistan.¹⁷⁷ The data obtained on the situation in Afghanistan clearly showed that al-Qaeda and associated terrorist groups are still operating on Afghan soil with the approval of the Taliban. These terrorist organizations often operate in areas controlled by the Taliban, and jihadists have often have died alongside Afghan Taliban members. By 2019, the coalition, the US and Afghan forces have launched at least 373 operations against al-Qaeda terrorist groups in 27 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.¹⁷⁸

Due to the decreased security level, President Obama revised the timetable for US force withdrawal after a reassessment of the situation. American troops have remained at bases in Bagram, Jalal-Abad and Kandahar to train Afghan troops and conduct counterterrorism operations. As part of this, President Obama backed down from his original commitment to reduce the US combat role.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, in June 2016, Obama allowed American troops to accompany Afghan forces in hostilities, indirectly confirming that the presence of the United States and the transition to counterterrorism operations meant that the Afghan security forces were unable to independently fight the insurgents. US ground personnel were now able to call for air strikes, and commanders had more authorities.¹⁸⁰ The US troop cutback schedule slowed. After reviewing plans, President Obama planned to retain 8,400 troops in Afghanistan through the end of his term, maintaining six major bases.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Lebovic (2019), p. 161.

¹⁷⁷ Cordesman, Anthony H: *Afghanistan: A War in Crisis*. Center for Strategic & International Studies, September 10, 2019, p. 186.

¹⁷⁸ Cordesman (2019), p. 186.

¹⁷⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 162.

¹⁸⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 162.

¹⁸¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 162.

By 2016, it became clear that the focus on the non-combat component of RS mission within the TAA was not enough. The situation demonstrated the ANSF could not perform full combat missions themselves, and they faced serious difficulties with independent conduct of hostilities. Some of the key reasons for this were communication problems, lack of coordination, poor leadership and lack of commitment in order to accomplish the assigned tasks.¹⁸² Based on the realities of the situation, the international coalition and the United States increased their own counterterrorism operations in order avoid yielding control to the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the new terrorist organization which appeared in Afghanistan - the Islamic State Organization's Khorasan group (ISIS-K or IS-K¹⁸³).

2.3.2 Counterterrorism

The US counterterrorism (CT) operations were not a separate mission, but operated within the OFS and supplemented the RS mission. CT operations have become an important link in the entire Afghan operation and are carried out to this day along with TAA activities. The US forces have taken the lead in CT operations, leaving coalition units in charge of the NATO-led TAA of the ANSF. Based on this, USFOR-A is currently conducting two well-defined and complementary missions. First, through the OFS, US forces continue their CT mission against al-Qaeda and its supporters, as well as operations against ISIS-K. Second, in partnership with NATO Allies and Operations Partner Countries in the RS mission, the US provides TAA to the ANSF.¹⁸⁴

The Special Operations Joint Task Force - Afghanistan (SOJTF-A) was created to coordinate joint actions between the US and ANSF forces. The group was tasked with supporting the US through TAA with the ANSF and accompanying the ASF in certain operations. SOJTF-A TAA efforts continue to focus on building ASF capabilities in logistics, command and control, fire support, intelligence analysis and exchange, aviation, and ASF/conventional armed forces interaction. The new RS mission operational design further synchronized the CT and TAA efforts. The ASF's leadership of offensive operations with conventional ANSF in a supporting

¹⁸² Lebovic (2019), p. 163.

¹⁸³ ISIS-K or IS-K- the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province is a branch of the militant Islamist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Khorasan group's area of operations also includes other parts of South Asia, such as India where individuals have pledged allegiance to it. However, its main activity is in the border region of eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Center for Strategic and International studies: Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K). [<https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/islamic-state-khorasan-k>], read 20.09.2020.

¹⁸⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 4-6.

role, as well as better integration of operations with USFOR-A, has increased its impact on Taliban and ISIS-K leaders and networks.¹⁸⁵

Based on the worsening situation, strengthening OFS has been a priority for US CENTCOM since the release of the South Asia Strategy. This strategy can be characterized by the concept of R4+S: Reinforce, Realign, Regionalize, Reconcile, and Sustain. This prioritization allowed the DoD to move necessary resources and tools from Operation Assignment in Iraq and Syria to OFS and RS mission. The strategy in Afghanistan is based on the assumption that commanders on the ground continually assess the current conditions and provide the necessary recommendations to achieve their goals and objectives.¹⁸⁶

Since its inception in Afghanistan, ISIS-K has managed to gain a foothold in the eastern part of Afghanistan¹⁸⁷. Currently, ISIS strongholds in Afghanistan are located in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Lagman. The total number of ISIS in Afghanistan in 2019 was estimated from 2,500 to 4,000 fighters. There was also evidence that ISIS controlled some training camps in Afghanistan and set up a network of cells in various Afghan cities, including Kabul.¹⁸⁸

As part of CT security, the coalition and the Afghan government have begun to closely monitor ISIS's attempt to expand its activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. To date, the US forces have seen some evidence of limited expansion and recruitment efforts. As a result, several people previously associated with other insurgent groups "renamed" themselves as members of ISIS in Khorasan province. This rebranding is most likely an attempt to gain media attention, attract more resources and increase recruitment. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has publicly declared its support for ISIS as the leader of the global jihad, however, the Taliban said they would not allow ISIS to enter Afghanistan. The presence and influence of ISIS in Afghanistan has been the subject of scrutiny and analysis and remains at an early stage for now.¹⁸⁹

In its CT activities, the United States has directed a significant part of its operations to fight ISIS-K. ISIS and Taliban forces have sometimes fought for control of territory, because of political or other differences. US officials are reportedly monitoring attempts by ISIS fighters to

¹⁸⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2019), p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2019), p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Cordesman (2019), p. 185.

¹⁸⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 27.

leave Iraq and Syria to enter Afghanistan, which may represent a more favorable environment. Some US officials say ISIS-K is seeking to launch attacks in the west, although there are reported disagreements within the US government over the nature of the threat. The ISIS has also claimed responsibility for a number of large-scale attacks, many of which targeted Afghanistan's Shiite minority.¹⁹⁰

Some operational analysts suggest that some Taliban supporters may make concessions to ISIS if Taliban leaders agree to a political settlement or accept the US presence in Afghanistan¹⁹¹. However, operational analysis and assessments conducted by US forces reported that the level and potential of ISIS-K's cooperation with the Taliban remains low. In 2017, a possible coalition of ISIS-K and the Taliban was of concern, but USFOR-A intelligence officials found no evidence of cooperation. In fact, ISIS and the Taliban continue to fight each other, especially in Nan-Garhar and Jowzjan provinces.¹⁹²

The appearance of ISIS-K in Afghanistan did not mean that al-Qaeda had lost interest in attacking US and coalition forces. Al Qaeda regularly continues to support the Taliban, as well as train and work with them. Even if a successful political settlement with the Taliban is reached, al-Qaeda, ISIS-K and an unknown number of Taliban hardliners will pose a serious threat to the Afghan government and its citizens, as well as to the United States and coalition partners.¹⁹³

Since the beginning of the transfer of power and despite the increased intensity of hostilities, the Afghan government has retained control over Kabul, the main population centers, most of the key transit routes, provincial capitals and most regional centers. However, the Taliban and ISIS-K continue to prioritize terrorist attacks, especially in the capital region, in order to attract media attention, create a sense of widespread insecurity and undermine the legitimacy of the Afghan government. From June 1, 2019 to October 31, 2019, there were 19 high-profile attacks in Kabul and 88 across the country, up from 17 in the same period in 2018.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 7.

¹⁹² Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operation: Operation Freedom Sentinel. Quarterly report to the United States congress October 1, 2017–December 31, 2017, p. 30.

¹⁹³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2019, p. 16.

The local ISIS leadership maintains close contact with the group's core in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Central management makes critical appointments and coordinates the publication of promotional videos. Following the assassination of ISIS leader Abu Sayed Bahauri on July 14, 2018, the governing council of ISIS in Afghanistan appointed Mawlawi Zia ul-Haq (aka Abu Omar Al-Khorasani) the group's fourth "emir" since its inception. ISIS carried out an estimated 38 terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2018, many of which were high profile, including in Kabul. ISIS targets include ANSF troops, the Taliban, NATO troops, diplomats, United Nations, non-governmental organization personnel, journalists, medical institutions, and religious minorities that ISIS regards as soft targets.¹⁹⁵

In the fight against ISIS-K, USFOR-A units intensified their air strikes and ground operations, and the ANSF also launched an extended campaign against ISIS-K. These efforts forced the insurgents to withdraw south. In addition, the ongoing fighting between ISIS-K and the Taliban puts additional pressure on ISIS-K's efforts to capture and hold territory.¹⁹⁶

By 2019, ISIS-K was heavily affected by OFS CT operations in northern Afghanistan. As was already mentioned the Taliban also fought against ISIS, what simplifies the US ability to conduct OFS due lack of unity and the presence of confrontation between groups. For example, in July 2018, 1,000 Taliban insurgents attacked ISIS positions in Jowzjan province, killing 200 ISIS fighters. At the same time-period 254 ISIS fighters surrendered to ANSF and 25 foreign terrorists surrendered to the Taliban. However, it is still premature to say that ISIS-K's presence and support in the north has ended. In some places, sympathy for the Islamic State among the Taliban remains. According to international coalition experts, the ISIS presence in Jowzjan province has been eliminated, while elsewhere in the north, a minority of the Taliban remain sympathetic to ISIS.¹⁹⁷

As part of the CT operations, the RS mission operational plan envisions a joint effort by US, coalition and Afghan forces to strengthen the security of populated and key areas, while also focusing on Taliban and ISIS-K leaders and networks. Operationally, CT actions are aligned with the following priorities: suppression of high-profile attacks in Kabul; operations against the Taliban and ISIS in order to destroy their command and control nodes, as well as supply

¹⁹⁵ Cordesman (2019), p. 185.

¹⁹⁶ Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operation: Operation Freedom Sentinel. Quarterly report to the United States congress October 1, 2017–December 31, 2017, p. 30.

¹⁹⁷ Cordesman (2019), p. 185.

areas; and support to TAA's efforts. In addition to the physical realm, the operational plan includes the ANSF information operations against ISIS-K.¹⁹⁸

Due to the current situation, the United States has increased the number of American troops in Afghanistan and expanded its offensive powers since 2017. In particular, US forces expanded the military campaign to include airstrikes on the Taliban's drug processing and trafficking infrastructure in an effort to deprive the Taliban of one of their main sources of income. By the end of 2017, USFOR-A units reported that they had dismantled Taliban drug processing facilities from approximately 400-500 laboratories in the country. USFOR-A estimates the strikes cost the drug dealers \$ 80 million in revenue, of which \$ 16.5 million would go to the Taliban. Due to the actions of the US forces against drug trafficking, the coalition began to influence a serious source of funding for the Taliban. The US Drug Enforcement Agency estimates that the Taliban receive 20 percent of the cost of drugs that travel through its territory.¹⁹⁹

The beginning of a political dialog between the Afghan government and the Taliban have left their mark on CT activities. The United States has increasingly begun to conduct CT operations designed to establish suitable conditions for negotiations. The ANSF completed independent operations, primarily aimed at expanding security around settlements and clearing the area. The US and Afghan forces have begun to engage in joint action, which has allowed increased military pressure across the country on Taliban and ISIS-K leaders and networks. The largest number of such operations took place first in the south and southeast, and then in the north and east. Roughly ten percent of the operations were focused on Kabul to prevent high-profile attacks.²⁰⁰

In analyzing the nature of military and CT operations in general, it is apparent that they have common features, despite the different time periods and specific tasks. The fighting in Afghanistan has been going on since 2001 and, in principle, all military phases of operation have ended in victory for the US troops and the international coalition due to the overwhelming effect of their the organization, power and technology. From the military point of view, the international coalition is undeniably gaining the upper hand over the Taliban, al-Qaeda and ISIS-K.

¹⁹⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operation: Operation Freedom Sentinel. Quarterly report to the United States congress October 1, 2017–December 31, 2017, p. 19-20.

²⁰⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2019), p. 6.

However, these victories also have consequences that are valued in human lives and financial costs. From the initiation of US operations in Afghanistan in October 2001, to October 31, 2019, 1,901 US military personnel were killed in action (KIA) and 20,664 were wounded in action (WIA)²⁰¹. On the financial side, the United States has spent US \$ 778 billion for military operations in Afghanistan between October 2001 and September 2019²⁰². By using the example of the United States as the biggest contributor to the operation, it is clear that military activities in Afghanistan definitely cannot be called easy for US and international coalition.

2.4 Conclusions

The operation in Afghanistan was the result of al-Qaeda attacks on targets in New York and Washington DC, which are known as 9/11. The tasks of the operation were initially reduced to the forceful overthrow of the existing state system and the ruling regime, which included removing the Taliban from power and terminating the shelter of al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan.

Given the chronology of events preceding the operation, as well as the scale of actions, it can be concluded that the entire operation was prepared and launched in a very short time. Moreover, the preparation also included the initiation of NATO's Article 5 on collective security, which was activated at the next day after the September 11 attacks. Actions of this scale and speed presuppose the implementation of existing plans, so to speak, "off the shelf" or extremely rapid and effective planning. The development of the above events makes it possible to assume that the leadership of the United States could have foreseen the possibility of such an operation in Afghanistan even before the 9/11 attacks. Perhaps the military and political leadership had certain templates and developments in case these plans need to be initiated when certain circumstances arose. Nevertheless, even with the existing developments and primary plans for initiating and carrying out an operation of this level, it is necessary to take into account a number of factors and possible problematic features that can affect the achievement of the result. While planning operations of this level in an extremely tight time frame, one must be prepared for possible miscalculations and errors in planning, as well as be able to quickly respond to changes in the environment.

²⁰¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2019, p. 18.

²⁰² BBC news, 28 February 2020: Afghanistan war: What has the conflict cost the US?, [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821>], read 26.02.2021.

At the planning of the Afghan operation, preference was given to the use of modern technology, high-precision weapons and special operations forces. This was to reduce the deployment of conventional forces on a large scale. The operational plans took into account the use of local militias formations, who were fighting against the Taliban regime. This was seen as an example of operational unity with local paramilitary formations, where different services worked together to achieve the goal. Moreover, the involvement of the closest allies of the United States, such as United Kingdom and Australia, and agreements with a number of other countries on the use of their territory and airspace to support the operation were critical.

A separate place in the preparation of regional operations is the Comprehensive Preparation of Operational Environment (CPOE). Such preparation provides detailed information about the theater of war in order to avoid unnecessary losses and achieve goals and objectives within the allotted time frame and with the desired result. In the case of Afghanistan, earlier, similar operations provided an opportunity for analysis before the start of the operation. However, given the time-frame for preparing operations, it can be concluded that analytical groups were only capable of conducting a superficial analysis.

As the sources describe, the initial analysis assumed kinetic effect on the enemy without further transition of operations to the sphere of stabilization and the enemy's transition to the methods of guerrilla warfare. As a result, the US troops and allied countries, achieved their initial tasks, but did not account for the Taliban regrouping and using local conditions to remain a sufficiently combat-capable formation using asymmetric methods of armed resistance.

An example of the flexibility of leadership and the preparedness of the Taliban for such changes can be seen in the Operations Tora Bora and Anaconda. In the course of these operations, despite their numerical and technological superiority, the Americans failed to destroy the enemy. In order to achieve tactical success in Operation Anaconda, it was necessary to divert from the initial strategy of the operation by involving a larger formation of conventional US and allied troops.

The operations in Tora Bora and Anaconda clearly show how tactical operations have a strategic effect that affects the nature of the entire operation, or at least the military component of it. Subsequently, with the emergence of ISAF and the transition to the stabilization phase under NATO command, the importance of the CPOE using various methods in the training of international contingents prior to and while serving in Afghanistan increased.

One of the critical factors of the operation was the change of the United States' focus from Afghanistan to Iraq and the associated transfer of the military efforts to NATO. This was due to the fact that the political leadership of the United States did not view the events in Afghanistan as long-term and the objectives of the OEF were mainly limited to overthrowing the Taliban and ending the Taliban's support for Al-Qaeda. Therefore, when planning the military intervention, no plans were considered for possible phases of the operation after the completion of the main stages of OEF.

The shift in focus from Afghanistan to Iraq was influenced by the inaccurate conclusions and optimism of the Americans regarding their ability to strengthening the ANSF as well as the real capability of the coalition to support these efforts. While by the end of active military campaign the Taliban was militarily weakened and disorganized, throughout the course of the stabilization phase, the Taliban was able to reorganize and start their own successful campaign, based on unconventional methods of warfare. The actions of the Taliban ultimately led to a stagnant state in the military component of the operation, which in turn forced the United States to shift its focus back to Afghanistan in order to turn the tide in favor of the coalition. The price of the shift in focus was an increase in the military presence in Afghanistan, resulting in increased costs and combat losses.

Describing the events in Afghanistan, it is necessary to consider separately Article 5 regarding NATO's collective security. This is the first and only time that this article has been applied in the history of NATO. Thus, the readiness of NATO member states to participate in the military campaign in Afghanistan serves as an indicator of the capabilities of NATO as an international military alliance to participate in a joint contingent under joint command in other possible theaters operations.

By own nature, ISAF operations was less kinetic and aggressive in comparison to OEF. ISAF's operations were limited to creating conditions under which was possible to achieve the goal of the operation. The implementation of the plans provided for the establishment of stability in the country and the strengthening of the Afghan security forces. Initially, when the ANSF was smaller, ISAF undertook independent operations, gradually integrating Afghan forces to carry out joint actions, and later on independent actions.

The overall command of the operation was conducted through three main channels: ISAF operations were implemented through the NATO chain of command, OEF was commanded by

US CENTCOM, and finally the command of national contingents was implemented through the national military and political chain of command. Such a complex command structure was less effective, since it required constant coordination and resolution of controversial issues in the conduct of combat, stabilization and reconstruction operations in which the national contingents of the coalition were involved.

The complications of leadership at strategic, operational and tactical levels throughout the operation were resolved by the creation of Headquarters at each level of the operation. This contributed to the orderliness of actions and increased efficiency through the entire NATO command axis. However, exercise of command of the national contingents of the coalition countries was a rather serious problem for the success of the whole operation. This was primarily due to national caveats and the sensitivity of the political leadership of the countries to the combat losses arising in the course of operations. The combat losses have influenced public opinion and a decrease in support for the political leadership of the countries involved and the emergence of anti-war sentiments in society. This, in turn, forced decisions towards reducing the participation of national contingents in combat operations and even redeploying contingents to more calm regions of Afghanistan. To increase the effectiveness of the operation, the NATO command tried to influence countries in the direction of softening or reducing national caveats. This had only a limited effect, in which only a few countries agreed to revise the caveats, but in general terms, the restrictions still remained in force, which had a negative effect on the operation as a whole and also the solidarity of countries within the alliance.

This trend did not go unnoticed by the Taliban, and the insurgents began to make efforts to influence the national contingents of the coalition partner countries by increasing casualties among the military personnel and thereby forcing political leaders to make decisions mainly guided by their own national interests. Such decisions were generally acceptable to the insurgents, both militarily and politically, which contributed to the strengthening of the Taliban and the transition of the operational initiative to the insurgents.

Increased pressure on the national contingents and intensity of hostilities forced the United States to increase its contingent to control the situation and turn the initiative towards the international coalition. The return of the focus back to Afghanistan undoubtedly increased the burden on the United States, but from a strategic point of view it was necessary to do so before the situation became completely out of control, since the Taliban had become stronger militarily and their asymmetric tactics were so successful. Along with the increase in the con-

tingent of American troops, the general approach to the operation also changed. The center of gravity of the operation shifted to the aid and support of the Afghan population and the increase the scale of support for the ANSF. The change of approach and increase of US troops had a positive operational effect, which influenced operations and achieved a balance in the distribution of national contingents among regional commands.

Due to the increased number of coalition troops and the associated force ratio and technical superiority over the insurgents, local hubs of stability existed in the places where ISAF and OEF troops were present. On the other hand, in places where their presence was limited or had no influence or capabilities for long-range impact, the insurgents had almost complete freedom of maneuver. This led to a state of military parity, where there were no winners or losers. Therefore, the decision to end the combat missions of ISAF and OEF were expected and even obvious. This was due to the fact that such a state could last for an unlimited period of time with no visible result. Moreover, in the countries of the coalition partners, anti-war sentiments were growing and the unpopularity of the Afghan mission led to the reduction or withdrawal of some countries.

The RS mission, which began and continues to this day, provides for the strengthening of training and mentoring activities to increase ANSF's combat capability. The RS mission involves international contingents of the countries of the coalition members included in ISAF. In addition to TAA activities the United States continued CT operations through their OFS, which is part of the RS mission.

After the initiation of the RS mission and the end of the combat phase of operations, the hostilities did not stop, but on the contrary, the intensity only increased. This is primarily due to the refusal of the coalition forces to engage in fighting and the fact that the real combat capability of the ANSF remained at a low level. In some places, the insurgents regained their positions which were lost in previous years, thereby increasing their influence in the regions and in the country as a whole. The deadlock that had developed by the end of ISAF remained unresolved and the general situation was not in favor of the ANSF and the coalition.

The emergence of such a situation can be attributed primarily to the inability of the ANSF to conduct independent large-scale military operations and maintain the rule of law and order throughout the country. This situation arose despite all the efforts of the RS mission to organize ANSF training process and provide comprehensive assistance aimed at achieving the as-

signed tasks. This is primarily due to the peculiarities of the Afghan society in general and the ANSF in particular, since the security forces are a cross section of the whole society and reflect the processes taking place at the national level and affecting the society as a whole. The ANSF, as in their society, corruption is rampant, the personnel are illiterate and there is low motivation towards success in fighting against insurgents.

Due to the prevailing unstable situation and the ongoing hostilities Afghanistan has also attracted the attention of ISIS that has appeared in the country and is trying to gain a foothold and the support of the population. This, in turn, led to an increase in the intensity of combat activities, in which the coalition forces, primarily the American contingent, were forced to resume independent and joint CT operations against Islamic State formations. This fact did not contribute to the improvement of stability and achievement of the set goals of the operation, but rather added intensity to the conflict. The participation of the coalition in CT operations became a forced, but necessary measure, which was necessary to prevent Afghanistan from being drawn into the regional war with ISIS, which is already taking place in Iraq and Syria. In this regard, the United States is making efforts to prevent proliferation of the Islamic State in Afghanistan. However, ISIS enmity and military confrontation with the Taliban is a favorable factor in the fight against Islamic State.

At this point in time, it is clear that the conflict has become protracted, without visible the prerequisites to resolution, relying on the military methods of the coalition forces and the ANSF. An important fact remains that ANSF forces do not show readiness and maturity for independent, effective and successful military actions, capable of positively influencing the resolution of the conflict as a whole. The renewed participation of coalition forces in the combat operations in order to achieve stability does not coincide with the nature of the RS non-combat mission, however, the coalition has no other choice in terms of counterterrorist activities against ISIS.

Analyzing the nature and results of military actions and operations described in this chapter, it is obvious that despite having superiority in human and material resources, the troops of the international coalition and the United States failed to achieve the objectives of the operation by relying mainly on military methods and on training Afghan security forces. Despite successful combat operations at the tactical and operational level, investment of resources and significant efforts toward the goals and objectives, military actions were not crowned with success regarding the strategic concept and Afghanistan did not become a stable country. The Taliban move-

ment remained a force with strong influence in the country as a whole and among the population in particular.

3 POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONS

This chapter presents information explaining the effect of the political component of the operation. In particular, the chapter describes the foundation, formation and strengthening of statehood in the country, as well as the processes that have affected the functioning and effectiveness of political leadership and government structures. While examining the political processes, the chapter gives an overview of the actions of the global community, in particular those of the US government and international organizations, as well as the relationship between the political leadership of the United States and Afghanistan.

Pakistan's national interests, have the greatest regional impact on the foreign and domestic policy of Afghanistan. Additionally, Pakistan also has significant influence on the actions of the insurgents and stabilization within Afghanistan. For these reasons, this chapter describes Pakistan's political and strategic role. Additionally, the chapter examines the implementation of the national reconciliation policy of the people of Afghanistan, and the associated reduction in the military presence of US troops and the international coalition.

3.1 The international coalition's support of political governance development

In order to establish and strengthen political governance in Afghanistan, the United States and the international coalition provided advisory services and conducted training for political leaders and legislators of the state²⁰³. This followed the appointment of Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's interim president in December 2001 through United Nations mediation between prominent Afghan leaders. The United Nations also supported Afghanistan in drafting a new constitution and arranged for international donors who pledged billions of dollars in aid to support reconstruction, development, drug control and new security forces in Afghanistan.²⁰⁴

The political structures of Afghanistan started receiving foreign support through advisory assistance, based on the same principle of assistance for the development of the ANSF. The international community contributed to the development of critical infrastructure such as public schools, clinics, roads, bridges and other facilities for societal development and state sustaina-

²⁰³ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 16.

²⁰⁴ Barry (2017), p. 20.

bility.²⁰⁵ Those providing assistance expected that their political assistance to GIROA would increase the pressure on the Taliban, which in turn will lead into positive changes for the whole country²⁰⁶.

As in the military component of the operation, the United States took a leading role in the political settlement of conflict and in assisting GIROA in the formation of effective leadership of the state. It was believed that, with its forces leading military operations, the United States would effectively lead the development and implementation of the political strategy, with NATO playing a supportive role.²⁰⁷

The involvement of NATO into the operation has provided political legitimacy to member- and non-alliance partner-states. NATO summits became the venues for the North Atlantic Alliance to reaffirm its political and military commitment to Afghanistan, often announcing key strategic milestones and initiatives.²⁰⁸ The international support was important for the GiroA, because despite the legal legitimacy conferred on the operation by the resolutions of the UN Security Council and NATO, it was also important to have political legitimacy from the international community²⁰⁹.

The strategic goals of the United States and the entire international coalition were that Afghanistan would:

- Never again become a safe haven for terrorists, but instead be a reliable and stable ally in the war on terror;
- Remain moderate and democratic, with a thriving private sector economy;
- Independently manage their territory and borders;
- Respects the rights of all its citizens.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 16.

²⁰⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2018, p. 5.

²⁰⁷ Barry (2017), p. 61.

²⁰⁸ Barry (2017), p. 61.

²⁰⁹ Barry (2017), p. 127.

²¹⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 15.

Based on the GIRoA's political and advisory strategy of support, it was envisaged that an effective and competent government in Afghanistan would become a productive partner in countering the insurgency and ensure the trust and loyalty of the Afghan people. Good governance will discourage support for insurgents and encourage investment and participation in a legitimate economy. The US Government Assistance Strategy aimed to build capacity in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, support subnational governance and fight against corruption.²¹¹

When the COIN concept was adopted, the creation of an effective Afghan government became an integral part of the concept. GIRoA would bear the primary responsibility for protecting the population, providing public services and ensuring the economic growth. The coalition would improve the efficiency of the government by providing assistance in increasing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of key institutions and political processes at all levels of government. The support was organized around the following areas:

- Rule of Law;
- Policy development;
- Policy Implementation and Public Service Delivery;
- Government Accountability;
- Democracy and Human Rights.²¹²

The international experts noted that to achieve a positive outcome of state governance, GIRoA needed to improve its ability to identify critical policy issues, set priorities, design effective policy solutions and track and evaluate the results²¹³. It was also vital to expand and improve the capacity of the Afghan government at the national and subnational levels²¹⁴. It was assumed that building a functional political administration would depend entirely on success in other areas of activity. For instance, the Afghans would trust the judicial system and obey the authority of the courts, if there was a sufficient level of security, or that reducing benefits from corruption would minimize drug trafficking. In addition, collection and use of tax revenue for reconstruction of the political system and economic development of the country would allow GIRoA to provide for itself.²¹⁵

²¹¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 20.

²¹² US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 20.

²¹³ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 21.

²¹⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 48.

²¹⁵ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 20.

All these initiatives were essential to the Afghan government's efforts toward winning the trust of the Afghan people and strengthening their legitimacy both domestically and internationally²¹⁶. At this time the international community and the coalition member-states believed that a democracy was the best way to govern Afghanistan. Therefore, they worked to ensure that credible elections were held in the country with broad support for the presidential and Provincial Council elections.²¹⁷ In order to support and develop of the democracy in Afghanistan, they worked in the following areas:

- Strengthening democratic institutions;
- Building electoral potential at the national and subnational levels;
- Educating the public as to their rights;
- Strengthening representation and citizen engagement;
- Strengthening Civil Society.²¹⁸

In order to strengthen the democratic principles of governing, the coalition created conditions for exercising control over the actions of the government. The principle was to assist the GIRoA in establishing and applying international standards of accountability and transparency, including the fight against corruption. The experts focused on capacity building in three main areas:

- Leadership;
- Legislative oversight and budgeting;
- Corruption prevention and anti-corruption enforcement.²¹⁹

It was assessed that accountability promoted "better governance on the part of government officials and more confidence and participation in the democratic process on the part of the general population". For true government accountability officials must understand and be willing to enforce the law. Due to this fact, mentors have initiated training and mentoring of Afghan leaders and legislators and expanded the oversight and budgeting powers of the National Assembly. There was also an effort to fight a corruption through reform of the justice sector and

²¹⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 48.

²¹⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 22.

²¹⁸ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 22.

²¹⁹ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 21.

civil service.²²⁰ Over time, ISAF and USFOR-A established a control mechanism for proper funds consumption. If their criteria were not met, funding could be terminated or suspended pending corrective action. These enforcement mechanisms were at the heart of the message to the Afghan leadership that they needed "to demonstrate greater accountability and transparency in spending donated funds".²²¹

Corruption has hampered the political development of Afghanistan, as with all other areas of a progress, and it continues to be a serious problem for the entire Afghan society. In the international community, quite a lot of attention is paid to the topic of combating corruption, resulting in the creation of a number of fundamental documents, such as the UN convention against corruption presented in ANNEX 9. The widespread corruption in Afghanistan and the fight against it has attracted extensive attention. According the sources: "Coalition established a number of initiatives in order to support the Afghan government in its efforts to reduce corruption and organized crime". These initiatives included:

- Sustained engagement, capacity building and technical assistance in key Afghan ministries;
- Expanding interagency efforts to develop assessments of organized crime and corruption in key sectors as a basis for action;
- Creating joint sponsored forums to facilitate interagency coordination and the development of specific anti-corruption recommendations;
- Developing investigative ties and other forms of support for trusted Afghan law enforcement, investigative and oversight agencies.²²²

Corruption was a significant obstacle to the positive outcome of the operation. It undermined the effectiveness, cohesion and legitimacy of the Afghan government, alienated elements of the population and caused discontent. The corruption has also discouraged investment, diverted international aid, and hindered legitimate economic growth, which allowed criminal networks to influence government institutions and functions. Finally, the corruption has contributed to the drug trade and other transnational threats emanating from Afghanistan.²²³

²²⁰ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 22.

²²¹ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 75.

²²² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 78.

²²³ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 78.

In order to fight the corruption, ISAF founded the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force (CJIATF)-*Shafafiyat*, which was strengthened by direct contracts with the United States and its allies. The contracting processes helped to solve the issue, however, most of the corruption took place at a high level in the GIRoA, where it was difficult to distinguish corruption from political patronage.²²⁴ As the operation has shown, corruption has penetrated quite deeply into Afghan society, and therefore the efforts of the international coalition to eradicate corruption have not had much success.

In 2009, President Obama decided to send additional US troops to Afghanistan. While making this decision, Obama discussed US strategy with the National Security Council and assessed multiple factors affecting the operation. The National Security Council scrutinized and challenged military recommendations for implementing COIN doctrine and the need for a US troop build-up. They called on Vice President Joe Biden to propose an alternative strategy to resolve the situation in Afghanistan. Through these processes, the US political leadership took the opportunity to better understand and analyze the strategic situation, check the available options and revise the strategic plan for the operation.²²⁵

Increasing of the number of US troops influenced the course of the operation in general and political support in particular. In 2010, the United States' annual summary of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan emphasized that the situation in Afghanistan was shifting in a positive direction. Also at the political level, the United States began to say that the actions of the coalition were beginning to bring positive changes. However, as was also noticed by observers there was no criteria to measure the extent of the progress. It was noted that the United States identified goals for the effort, however those goals were more like lines of action than the end-states themselves.²²⁶

For that reason, the coalition took action to develop criteria for measuring the progress of the operation. The criteria were to include a set of minimum conditions that would enable Afghanistan to maintain stability with relatively limited support from the international community. Also coalition indicated the approximate thresholds at which these conditions would be considered to be successful. In order to support the political resilience, these minimum conditions took in-

²²⁴ Barry (2017), p. 105.

²²⁵ Barry (2017), p. 48.

²²⁶ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 75.

to account "relevant aspects of Afghanistan's political architecture and its foundations for economic development, as well as the immediate security environment". Without such a stated vision of success, it would be hard to measure whether progress seen to date is leading Afghanistan towards sustainable stability, or what further efforts might be required.²²⁷

In concluding the topic of political support of the GIRoA, it is worth noting that the support from the United States and the international coalition continued throughout all phases of the operation from the beginning. At the present time, the political support defined in this section is carrying out within the TAA at RS mission and is incorporated into several EF's as described in Chapter 2, such as:

- EF 1: Multi-year Budgeting and Execution of Programs;
- EF 2: Transparency, Accountability, and Oversight (prevent corruption);
- EF 3: Rule of Law and Counter-Corruption;
- EF 6: Strategy and Policy Planning, Resourcing, and Execution (plan, resource campaigns).²²⁸

According to the principles and goals of the RS mission the EF's approach helps to balance and control the resources allocated to the implementation of support, and allows for sufficient control over the process. Moreover, consultations with representatives of the political leadership of Afghanistan at the governmental and ministerial level are still ongoing on interstate and bilateral basis.

3.2 The effectiveness of the political governance in Afghanistan

Since there was no international recognition of the Taliban government, the international community organized a temporary assembly of Afghans and created a temporary political organization for establishing the government of Afghanistan. Particularly this organization- "The Afghanistan Interim Arrangement Agreement Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions", or better known as the Bonn Agreement, has also called for the creation of an international force to assist Afghanistan, which the UN has codified as ISAF.²²⁹

²²⁷ CRS Report for Congress (2011), p. 75.

²²⁸ Craig E. L. Sgt 1st class: *Resolute Support trains its people, improving advisor training*. Resolute Support Headquarters, 26.06.2017.

²²⁹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-7.

The Bonn Agreement of 5 December 2001 laid the foundation for the Afghan government. A six-month term was set for the interim government at the end of which an emergency *Loya Jirga* would convene²³⁰ to determine the role and composition of the interim body of political administration, which would rule the country for the next two years.²³¹ The agreement called for the convening of the *Loya Jirga* in 2003 to draft and adopt a constitution by 2004²³². The *Loya Jirga* was also supposed to create conditions for national presidential and government elections. Only Prominent Afghans were allowed to participate at this meeting. The “Prominent Afghans” meant militia warlords and members of nationalities divided by ethnicity, geography and religion.²³³

The new constitution was adopted in January 2004; the following October Karzai was elected as the President of Afghanistan. The international community has agreed on very ambitious long-term goals for reconstruction, development and reform, especially for the ANA and the ANP. The Karzai government was intended to be weak outside Kabul and often relied on co-opting and empowering local security officials and militia warlords.²³⁴

The Afghan presidential election in 2004 was widely touted by the American administration as a key condition for progress and success in the country, possibly because it simultaneously symbolically marked the formal end of the Bonn process. This event was used by Americans to achieve domestic political goals and strengthen the Bush administration, because the program of "democratization" of Afghanistan coincided with the internal elections in the United States.²³⁵

The new Afghan constitution did not really resolve the country's development crises that began to engulf the Afghan state. A Brussels-based think tank criticized the initial draft, because the constitution would fail to provide full democratic governance, including power sharing, checks and balances, or mechanisms to increase the representation of ethnic, regional and other minor-

²³⁰ Loya Jirga, or grand council, traditionally is a gathering of male representatives from different tribes and factions in Afghanistan. The representatives are selected by their local leadership. ABC News Network, 6.01.2006: Michael S. James, What Is a Loya Jirga?. [<https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79066>], read 09.03.2021.

²³¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

²³² TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-7.

²³³ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

²³⁴ Barry (2017), p. 21.

²³⁵ Bird, Tim; Marshall, Alex: *Afghanistan How the West lost its way*. Yale University Press and New Haven, London 2011, p. 140.

ity groups.²³⁶ Similarly, the constitution was controversial within Afghanistan right from the start. This was due the fact that the constitution provided for a strong central government, a moderately representative legislative branch, and a judicial system heavily dependent on the executive branch.²³⁷

Subsequent drafts of the constitution were slightly amended, however, the final document has still required Afghanistan to hold extremely frequent and very expensive elections at least six times a decade, with the attendant danger of voter exhaustion. Also the constitution was found to allow an ineffective and corrupt legislature, as well as an overly centralized presidential administration.²³⁸

As a country, Afghanistan is subdivided into 34 provinces, 300 districts and over 30,000 villages. Within these entities, local leaders, whether tribal, religious or military tended to exert significant influence over the local population. Despite the adoption of the new constitution, Afghanistan continued its history as a nation without a strong central government. Despite the widespread presence of the ANSF and international coalition troops, the GIRoA clearly could not effectively manage from Kabul.²³⁹ The country in reality has been controlled by various and sometimes opposing groups from various parts of Afghanistan without real influence from the central government²⁴⁰.

In its structure, the GIRoA has three main branches: legislative, executive and judicial (see ANNEX 10). This form of governance reflects a Western mentality, however, the relationship between the roles of the government and the tribal traditions of Afghan society remains controversial.²⁴¹ The GIRoA acts as a legitimate, tribal, representative, but is vulnerable and therefore ineffective government. When planning and conducting political support for Afghanistan, the representatives of the international coalition had to initially recognize the fact that the tribes dominate Afghanistan politically, and they are not focused on the government of the "national" level.²⁴²

²³⁶ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 140.

²³⁷ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-7.

²³⁸ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 140.

²³⁹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-11.

²⁴⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

²⁴¹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-7.

At the local level, a *Jirga* was an effective governing body, which can be described as a very democratic gathering where the affected population, usually local, can discuss issues. The *Jirga* usually has no formal structure, but those with significant influence tend to lead the discussion. When participating in a *Jirga*, it is important to assess the political power of the assembled group, otherwise the consequences and decisions made as a result of the meeting will be minimal.²⁴³

At its core, the *Jirga* is an influential governing body in Afghan society, as it is a gathering of village elders and reflects the rituals of a traditional Pashtun gathering that gathers villagers and valley representatives to discuss and resolve disputes and make collective decisions on important social issues. According sources: "The *Jirga* consists of three main decision-making powers: "elders", "people with gray beards" and "people with white turbans" or *mullahs*. Gray beards are knowledgeable in "folk Islam" or *narkh*, that is, in the customary law of the village or valley. The elder, gray beard and *mullah* represent a special center of social power. This does not mean that the young people of a village or valley are removed from power or decision-making, and not every gray beard is a *khan*, *malik*, tribal leader or solidarity group leader. Some *mullahs* are closely associated with the leadership of a particular village or valley, and some are not. *Jirgas* are most common in Afghanistan and among the Pashtuns in Pakistan near its border with Afghanistan, but other ethnic groups sometimes use them as well. There are three types or levels of jirgas: *maraka* (local *Jirga*), *qawmi* (tribal *Jirga*), and the *Loya Jirga* (the national assembly)."²⁴⁴

Another important element of Afghan governance at the local level is the *shura*²⁴⁵. Afghans can convene the *shura* to discuss various issues and make decisions at the tribal and intertribal level, which is also another effective element of traditional government in Afghan society and often has a religious context. The *shura* should be seen as a higher level of the representative organization of the tribes, which includes leaders, councils, advisers and influential representatives of several tribal groups for the purpose of consultation and mediation between the tribes. Decisions are made in *shura* by consensus and reflect the ability of tribal leaders to forge alli-

²⁴² TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-2.

²⁴³ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-14.

²⁴⁴ Steven Pressfield: *Tribal Engagement Tutorial: The Jirga and the Shura*.

[<https://stevenpressfield.com/2010/03/tribal-engagement-tutorial-the-jirga-and-the-shura/>], read 10.05.2020.

ances and convince other tribal elders. The *shura* has no "leader" in the Western sense of the word. An authoritative family based on lineage could be appointed as the moderator, spokesman, or representative of the council. Remarkably, any dissenting tribe may decide to remove itself from the *shura*, essentially “vote with their feet” and form their own *shura*.²⁴⁶

In the eyes of Afghans, the GIROA acts *de facto* as another tribe. Among themselves, the Afghans call the GIROA a *Jirga* that makes deals and shows power. Many Afghans see the GIROA as a dysfunctional and disorganized tribe. Knowing this, the Taliban exploit the lack of influence of the GIROA by engaging political and religious leaders and suppressing any local efforts to ensure their own security or autonomy.²⁴⁷

The Afghan government's capacity and the expansion of good governance and the rule of law have been constrained by several factors, including widespread corruption, limited human capacity, and an uneven concentration of power among the judiciary, legislative, and executive branches. It should be noted that at the time of the final phases of ISAF the governance and development failures continued to slow the consolidation of security gains and threaten the Afghan government's legitimacy and long-term viability.²⁴⁸ In essence, there have been no significant changes in this area during the stabilization period.

At the local level support of GIROA varies by region and is related to the level of basic service provision and security that the government can provide. The corruption, patronage systems and lack of significant representation weaken public support for initiatives by municipal, district and provincial governments. In addition, subnational policies have limited impact on subnational governance structures in the short term due to limited communication and planning coordination between Kabul, regional and local levels.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Shura is an Arabic word for “consultation” or “council”. Steven Pressfield: *Tribal Engagement Tutorial: The Jirga and the Shura*. [<https://stevenpressfield.com/2010/03/tribal-engagement-tutorial-the-jirga-and-the-shura/>], read 10.05.2020.

²⁴⁶ Steven Pressfield: *Tribal Engagement Tutorial: The Jirga and the Shura*.

[<https://stevenpressfield.com/2010/03/tribal-engagement-tutorial-the-jirga-and-the-shura/>], read 10.05.2020.

²⁴⁷ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-14.

²⁴⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 6.

²⁴⁹ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 72.

From the perspective of the Afghan population, the United States and its allies in the international coalition look like another force in a long line of foreign interests in the region. From a political point of view, the history of Afghanistan has previously shown the use of foreign power and political power to achieve political goals in their own internal struggle for power, for example, in the long-standing intertribal rivalry between Pashtuns and Uzbeks.²⁵⁰ In the eyes of the citizens of Afghanistan, the GIRoA does not solve significant problems. This happens due to the fact that the centralized government does not demonstrate any control over what is happening in the country, that is, the GIRoA has no honor in the eyes of its people. Many Afghans are suspicious of the Kabul government due to their historical fear of centralized power. This in turn makes the Taliban's message very powerful, as they advertise ever-growing control and influence as opposed to the weak GIRoA. According to the Taliban narrative, the GIRoA is doomed to be defeated due to being a puppet of outside forces without being supported by Afghans.²⁵¹

Since the GIRoA has more influence in cities than in rural areas, where most of the country's population lives, rural Afghans are more susceptible to Taliban influence, and historically, the rural population of Afghanistan decides the fate of Afghanistan. Taliban-influenced Afghans see the recognition of the GIRoA as a loss of their honor and dignity. The population would accept the fact that Afghan leaders are corrupt, but any Afghan who is successfully painted as a foreign puppet becomes unbearable for the Afghans, and that person loses trust with his people. In addition, based on the tribal structure of society, Afghans consider any leader immoral if he does not provide for his tribe, even with corrupt means. This cannot be ignored by the international coalition while providing a political support in Afghanistan. In the propaganda against the GIRoA, the Taliban use their religious ties to Islam to offer Afghans the security, pride and dignity which are especially attractive to the Pashtun population.²⁵²

With nearly 40 years of constant warfare, the growth of the civil society in Afghanistan has shown that corruption is rampant, the rule of law is limited, and law enforcement is highly distrusted. This makes governance almost unthinkable and distant to many Afghans.²⁵³ The corruption is the main reason for the weakness of the GIRoA as it permeates the entire country.

²⁵⁰ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-17.

²⁵¹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-14.

²⁵² TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-1.

²⁵³ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-15.

According available reports: "Although levels of corruption vary by location, sector and ministry within the Afghan government, the corruption remains endemic and undermines the overall effectiveness of the government." By international standards, the GIROA acts as one of the most corrupt national governments on the planet. Despite efforts to fight corruption, a high level of corruption is likely to persist in Afghanistan for many years. The corruption undermines confidence in government, the rule of law, and spoils almost every interaction between society and government.²⁵⁴

In fact the influx of drug money and international aid into historically weak institutions creates enormous opportunities for corruption. The report from Integrity Watch Afghanistan found that most Afghans believe the Karzai government is more corrupt than the Taliban, *mujahideen* or communist era, and corruption directly aggravates mistrust in the government. The Transparency International report has scored Afghanistan 1.4, what means "very corrupt" on the latest 0-10 Corruption Perception Index. Although a small group of people control the drug trade, they hold politically important positions. In addition, the police and military apply arbitrary justice, often based on the offender's ability to pay bribes.²⁵⁵ According to observers, the power in Afghanistan is exercised through networks of criminal patronage, which include both influential figures and some government officials who spend public resources and distribute patronage, alienating many Afghans. Some political experts have speculated that such a system - and such alienation - could prove highly detrimental to the whole Afghan operation.²⁵⁶

3.3 Features of the political leadership and relations with the United States

As can be seen from the previous chapter, the nature of the political leadership in Afghanistan differs from the democratic system of the Western world. This differences are related to the specifics of the country's political culture, the high profile of the corruption, and the multinationalism of the state with a high level of influence from tribal communities at both the local and national levels.

²⁵⁴ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-16.

²⁵⁵ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-2-16.

²⁵⁶ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 77.

Due to these circumstances, it seems that the Western political leaders were overly optimistic that the Afghan government supported by foreigners would unite, reform, and build sufficient capacity to sustain governance. In fact, even with the support of the United States and the world community throughout the operation, the GIROA did not become a political body capable of running Afghanistan.²⁵⁷

During the Bonn Agreement the Bonn participants proved unwilling to compromise their own interests to serve the common good. They settled instead for a “division of the spoils”. With the Northern Alliance insisting that it hold the three key ministries— defense, foreign affairs, and interior— and three-quarters of ministries overall, the parties accepted a compromise, enabled by an increase in the number of ministries. The conference selected Hamid Karzai to chair the interim government and divided its roles among the conference participants. Ministries within the government were apportioned among the membership so that everyone received their “fair share”. According to the text of the agreement: “Each member, except the Chairman, may head a department of the Interim Administration for the next six months an Interim Administration comprised of twenty- nine department heads plus a chairman would govern Afghanistan.”²⁵⁸

The distribution of departments in accordance with this agreement pursued two major political goals. First, it held the fragile coalition together, as stated in the agreement, “Departments had to be distributed as rewards to the various factions that took part in the conference, and there had to be enough rewards to get around them.” Second, it reaffirmed and strengthened the existing balance of power between the rival *mujahedeen* commands in the country. More than half of the key positions were given to the Northern Alliance, including all major ministries such as defense and internal affairs. In fact, even the distribution of top-level posts strengthened the position of the Northern Alliance and its key factions both in government and throughout the country. Tajiks were significantly overrepresented in senior positions in major ministries, and various leaders controlled their own militias and provinces.²⁵⁹

The result may have been inevitable, according analyst’s report: “With the various factions controlling the departments, with a significant allegedly overlapping responsibilities of the vari-

²⁵⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 139.

²⁵⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

²⁵⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

ous agencies, and with the donor money coming in as a share to be fought for, the stage was set for a state to be weakened by the tough complexity and fierce competition between various ministers, ministries and officials". In 2004, Karzai was supposed to unite the government and the country. He did this by forging and maintaining alliances, keeping some public distance from his foreign patrons, bribing the corrupt and self-interested, and employing harsh methods that permeated and in fact perpetuated the system. He expanded his power by appointing loyal provincial and district officials. Moreover, Karzai pooled potential competitors and supported the Pashtun technocratic elite by ousting Tajik and Uzbek leaders from their government posts, buying votes to support parliament.²⁶⁰

The structure of the Afghan state is a balance "between centralization and decentralization". Although the Bonn Agreement created a highly centralized state structure, the policy of subnational governance was aimed at transferring some powers to the subnational level. According reports: "Some experts argue that the Afghan state could function more efficiently with a decentralized structure more closely reflecting its history, as well as being more closely linked to traditional tribal culture". A national reconciliation process could involve giving former insurgent leaders subnational leadership roles, and the structure of government would determine the influence they can exercise in such positions.²⁶¹

In assisting the formation an Afghan government, "the US officials mistakenly assumed that a competent government would emerge quickly". According sources: In reality the US government had to work around Afghanistan's ineffective and corrupt governing institutions". For example, they sought to rely on various international parties or engage in reconstruction efforts and build up local security forces directly, to avoid the inefficiencies, unresponsive-ness, and theft that would result from making the Afghan government an intermediary. In the words of analyst research, "positions in government are routinely sold to the highest bidder, who then sells subordinate positions— and the process ends with Afghan citizens having to pay bribes for virtually all government services". Corruption of that magnitude undercut all efforts to build governmental capacity through the diversion of public resources, distortion of government policies, and rewarding of official venality and incompetence. Building the capacity of a

²⁶⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 140.

²⁶¹ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 75.

corrupt Afghan government has created additional problems by allowing the corrupt politicians to extend their reach, further alienating the citizenry.²⁶²

The relationship of the United States and the international coalition with the political leadership of Afghanistan can hardly be called problem-free, due to the above presented reasons. However, based on the strategic objectives of the operation the international coalition had to cooperate with the existing GIRoA and be supportive to the existing political leadership.

American politicians have made efforts to ensure that the GIRoA must eventually assume full responsibility for running the country. However, encouraging Afghans to do it themselves and delegating the responsibility of managing local government institutions, the American experts could not give an unambiguous answer to the question: "can these institutions not succumb to the diseases of the Afghan government and society?" This created some tension in the relationship and difficulties in providing the support.²⁶³

Since Karzai's first election, the Bush administration has continued to develop its relationship with the Karzai government ignoring the president's corrupt actions. For example, despite efforts in late 2005 to reform the police and the MoI, Karzai canceled elections for provincial police chiefs and appointed his own staff to the field. As a result, fourteen of the new appointees had failed the police entrance exam, and the rest were involved in human rights violations and various types of criminal activity.²⁶⁴ Regardless of this kind of examples the United States continued the support of Karzai government.

After his election to the post of President, Karzai chose the authoritarian system of "one inflexible vote" in political decision-making, which was previously used only in isolated cases. By distributing seats in provinces according to their intended population, this system actively worked against the emergence of coordinated national political parties. The result was a strictly presidential system that provided relative autonomy as long as he retained the support of various warlords, religious elders, and drug dealers. By 2009, when Karzai won a second term due the massive election rigging, even American experts began to admit that Afghanistan's constitutional system was deeply flawed to the point that it actively undermined long-term political stability.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Lebovic (2019), p. 140-141.

²⁶³ Lebovic (2019), p. 141.

²⁶⁴ Lebovic (2019), p. 141.

²⁶⁵ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 141.

Over time, relations between Karzai and the American administration did not improve, but only get worse. Karzai acted as he thought was necessary to secure his power base: he bought support, protected and promoted friends and bribed corrupt officials across the government. All this time he tried to divert the blame for failure from himself. He focused his criticism on the United States and other foreign organizations for their interference and insufficient contribution to the development and troubles of his country. He criticized the American military, in particular, for their ruthless indifference to Afghan civilians and, for example, insisted that US SOF units stop their night raids. In 2010, due to an increase in the number of US troops, he demanded that the United States begin to withdraw its troops by the following year. Then, in 2012, he insisted that foreign troops retreat to their bases within the next year and effectively hand over security to Afghan forces. In 2013, Karzai refused to sign a long-term security agreement with the United States, covering basic US rights and the protection of US military personnel who as he claimed have committed crimes in Afghanistan.²⁶⁶

Pursuant to the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the United States and Afghanistan, signed in May 2012, the participants made fundamental agreements and commitments regarding US assistance and governance of Afghanistan. The SPA included a joint commitment to complete the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) instead of the SOFA from 2003. Under the BSA the United States gained access to Afghan facilities, was able to participate in CT operations and provide TAA to the ANSF after 2014. The agreement was supposed to outline in detail where the United States would have bases and the conditions under which the US military would operate in Afghanistan, so the BSA created the necessary base for the United States and its NATO allies to continue the military operation.²⁶⁷

The absence of signed bilateral political agreements was disrupting the further planning of the entire operation for the United States, and this could become a problem in the upcoming presidential elections in 2014 in Afghanistan. Karzai, in turn, saw in the absence of agreements the possibility of political pressure on the United States, pursuing his own goals and trying to maintain the existing levers of power. In 2013, he tried to oblige the United States to defend Afghanistan from external threats, which could require the United States to attack the Taliban

²⁶⁶ Lebovic (2019), p. 164.

²⁶⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 164.

insurgents' hideouts in Pakistan. Karzai also feared that the United States would end its support and could begin political negotiations with the Taliban unilaterally.²⁶⁸

Based on these fears, Karzai suspended negotiations with the United States to sign the BSA. Ultimately, this prompted Obama in 2013 to start seriously considering a "zero option" for a complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. The controversial US-Afghan negotiations finally led to a positive decision and progress towards the signing of the BSA in late 2013, after US Secretary of State John Kerry personally intervened. However, Karzai insisted on obtaining written guarantees from President Obama in which he would ensure that American troops would not enter Afghan homes, except in exceptional circumstances for self-defense, and would apologize for the US role in the suffering of the Afghan people during the war. The plan was to read Obama's letter to a specially convened *Loya Jirga*, which gathered to decide the fate of the BSA. Ultimately, Karzai received the required guarantees, however, without an apology.²⁶⁹ Karzai's reluctance to sign the BSA could be due to the fact that he did not want to give his successor the opportunity to blame him for all the problems, and, moreover, without a signed agreement, Karzai looked less like an American proxy.

After Karzai committed to abide by the decision of the *Loya Jirga*, he changed course when, after four days of deliberation, it voiced strong support for the immediate signing of the agreement. However, Karzai insisted on renegotiating the agreement and threatened to annul it if American troops raided even one more Afghan house. Much to the disappointment of the Obama administration, Karzai did not sign the agreement and left the actual signing to his successor. By refusing to sign the BSA, Karzai sought to negotiate with the Taliban at the expense of further deteriorating US-Afghan relations. He insisted that the United States release Taliban prisoners and charged the United States with war crimes. Karzai did not agree to back down, although billions of US dollars and the security of the entire country were at stake. For whatever reason, ideological, political or personal, he could not bring himself to legitimize the expansion of the US military presence.²⁷⁰

In 2014, the Afghan authorities, with the support of the security forces, held two consecutive rounds of the presidential elections. According sources: "The presidential election was full of controversy and drama". In the first round of elections, two candidates were nominated among eight: Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah. The results of the second round of elections in June were

²⁶⁸ Lebovic (2019), p. 164.

²⁶⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 164.

marred by widespread vote-counting fraud. Both candidates declared victory and then feuded over independent scrutiny, the terms of any power-sharing agreement, and the actual meaning of the agreed terms. In the face of a debilitating stalemate, the Obama administration, through Secretary Kerry, put strong pressure on the candidates to compromise. Ultimately, the parties accepted a power-sharing agreement that made Abdullah the executive prime minister with the promise of a future amendment to the Afghan constitution. The agreement, with its vaguely defined division of responsibilities, nonetheless split appointment powers, promised electoral reforms, and gave Abdullah some role in policy decisions and implementation.²⁷¹

With Ghani's election, relations with the United States improved significantly. Ghani immediately signed the BSA and a parallel agreement with NATO forces. He also lifted restrictions on US SOF regarding overnight raids and pledged to take steps to create a more inclusive and less corrupt government. It seemed that Ghani was indeed looking forward to a partnership with the United States in the future.²⁷²

Despite Ghani's pledge to prioritize the fight against corruption, the political problems escalated during his first year in office. Any success that Ghani achieved through his efforts was due to his growing isolation and disagreements with the political elite, which together could undermine the stability of the government. Even as Ghani mended his relationship with Abdullah, he faced parliamentary opposition against his leadership style and actions, which alienated various political groups. In November 2016, parliament reacted strongly to Ghani's actions by dismissing seven cabinet ministers. For the Obama administration, the uniting the Afghan government became a challenge.²⁷³

The controversy between Ghani and Abdullah flared up in 2016, when Abdullah challenged plans for October elections for district councils and parliamentary seats. He criticized the lack of necessary electoral reforms and the inability of the *Loya Jirga* to meet to create the position of prime minister for him, as was required within two years of the 2014 power-sharing agreement. In April 2016, Secretary of State Kerry flew to Afghanistan to re-negotiate a compromise solution. Ghani's supporters insisted that a compromise agreement without a constitutional basis should be reassessed. In turn, Kerry insisted that the agreement was valid for the full five years of the term of the current president. The result was an uneasy truce in exchange for

²⁷⁰ Lebovic (2019), p. 165.

²⁷¹ Lebovic (2019), p. 165-166.

²⁷² Lebovic (2019), p. 166.

²⁷³ Lebovic (2019), p. 166.

endless competition and stalemate. By May 2016, key government posts, including the post of defense minister, remained unfilled because candidates did not receive parliamentary approval.²⁷⁴

Subsequently the relationships only deteriorated. The presidential elections, originally scheduled for April 2019, were postponed to 28 September 2019. Ghani was re-elected as president. Following the announcement of the results, Ghani appeared among supporters in Kabul, where he emphasized the importance of peace talks with the Taliban, stating that it was time to unite Afghanistan and his team would bring peace to the country. Subsequently, Abdullah disagreed with the election results and challenged them, and promised to form his own parallel government.²⁷⁵

In the presidential election, which took place amid threats from the Taliban to disrupt the process, nearly a million of the initial 2.7 million votes were invalidated due to violations. As a result, only 1.8 million votes were counted, which was negligible considering the estimated population of 35 million in Afghanistan and 9.6 million registered voters. According to experts, turnout stayed low due to insecurity in some parts of the country, which prevented many Afghans from voting for their candidates. However, it is also true that Afghans lost hope in the effectiveness of electoral processes in the country in general.²⁷⁶

The unstable state of Afghan politics complicates the implementation of the US strategy for Afghanistan and impedes positive progress²⁷⁷. Lack of improvement and dysfunctionality of the prevailing form of Afghan political governance have led to the search for new ways to stabilize the conflict in Afghanistan. Therefore, all participants in the operation have demanded the transition to a policy of reconciliation by reaching political agreements with the Taliban. Achieving a ceasefire could increase the possibility of stabilization and the formation of a renewed government of national reconciliation.

²⁷⁴ Lebovic (2019), p. 166.

²⁷⁵ Al Jazeera and News Agencies, 18.02.2020: Afghanistan's presidential election: Ashraf Ghani declared winner. [<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/18/afghanistans-presidential-election-ashraf-ghani-declared-winner>], read 06.05.2020.

²⁷⁶ Al Jazeera and News Agencies, 18.02.2020: Afghanistan's presidential election: Ashraf Ghani declared winner. [<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/18/afghanistans-presidential-election-ashraf-ghani-declared-winner>], read 06.05.2020.

²⁷⁷ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 1.

3.4 The policy of reconciliation and possible finalizing of the international military presence

During his presidency, Karzai called for a comprehensive solution to the conflict through a policy of reconciliation with the Taliban, and in June 2010 announced an agenda of peace and integration. Through this program, the GIROA expected to finish the war, remove the insurgents from the battlefield and reintegrate them into society.²⁷⁸

The US administration supported this initiative as well. According CRS reports: "Both governments have emphasized that the criteria for those willing to be reunited with a peaceful society should include renouncing al-Qaeda and violence and adopting the Afghan constitution. Some observers have called for accelerated reconciliation efforts with a view to achieving at least a minimally acceptable settlement in the relatively near future. The proponents of the acceleration assumed that it could bring savings in terms of resources and, more importantly, human lives. Other practitioners and observers argued that while reconciliation should be part of an over-all campaign, reconciliation efforts should give due consideration to a range of issues and factors that can shape prospects for long-term success."²⁷⁹

These issues and factors included:

- To what extent do the proposed settlement agreements address the concerns of northern Afghans who are not Pashtuns, who may fear a renewed Taliban influence in the Afghan state and society? Some northern non-Pashtun Afghans, faced with the prospect of a "bad deal," may be tempted to mobilize around their own patronage networks, relying partly on relationships with the Northern Alliance and partly on the networks built during the operation.
- Does the reconciliation process include the involvement of Afghan women in the discussion, and does it take account for women in settlement agreements?
- To what extent does the reconciliation process require active input, rather than simply participation, from the Afghan population across the country and from all sectors of society?

²⁷⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 81.

²⁷⁹ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 75.

The High Council for Peace took the first steps to engage the population by visiting some provinces.

- What will the state structure of Afghanistan look like, to which the "reconciled insurgents" will return? Key practitioners believed that the stronger and more resilient the state, including the capabilities of its key institutions and, especially, the responsiveness and accountability of its officials to the people, the easier it would be to absorb some potentially discordant factors.²⁸⁰

The United States with the international coalition support has insisted on conditions for involving the Taliban in peace negotiations. Therefore, in order to "open the door to an Afghan-led peace process" and to support the policy of reconciliation they have used extensive contacts in Afghan society and the region.²⁸¹ Also in terms of support of this initiative a series of top-level international dialogues have been held. Pakistani Foreign Minister Har paid a visit to Kabul in February 2012, which was followed by President Karzai's visit to Islamabad in the same month in order to attend a trilateral summit with the leaders of Iran and Pakistan. The tripartite declaration expressed support for the peace and reconciliation process. Following Karzai's visit, Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani called on the Taliban leadership, as well as all other Afghan factions, to participate in the intra-Afghan process of national reconciliation and peace. Finally, on March 25, 2012, delegations from the United States, Pakistan and Afghanistan gathered for a meeting in Dushanbe.²⁸²

In supporting the program of reintegration and reconciliation, the United States has identified three pillars of American policy in Afghanistan: "a strong military effort to defeat al-Qaida and support Afghans as they secure their sovereignty; a civilian push to promote economic development and good governance; and a diplomatic surge to support an Afghan-led reconciliation process designed to end 30 years of war." Based on sources: "As part of the diplomatic surge, the United States used a wide range of contacts at many levels throughout Afghanistan and in the region, including preliminary work with the Taliban."²⁸³

²⁸⁰ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p. 75.

²⁸¹ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. p. 82.

²⁸² US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 82.

²⁸³ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 82.

The policy of reconciliation, the reintegration of the Taliban fighters who decided to return to Afghan society, was an important part of this program. There was a belief that if some insurgents were tired of fighting and ready to lay down their weapons, then they would be ready to reunite with the society. This could happen, if the insurgents were confident that their own and their families' safety would be guaranteed, and if they had an opportunity to earn enough money to provide for their families. At the local level, authorities started development of programs to offer a path to peace in the regions.²⁸⁴

After Taliban officials announced in July 2015 the death of longtime Taliban leader Mullah Omar and Mullah Mansour's efforts to consolidate the movement, there was an expectation of possible changes in the implementation of the policy of reconciliation. However, despite the reconciliation efforts, the Taliban continued to demonstrate their determination to continue fighting. Moreover, the subsequent rise of radical leader Siraj Haqqani as deputy to Mullah Mansour sent a signal that the formations under the Haqqani command would remain a critical and radical component and the policy of reconciliation would not be crowned with success.²⁸⁵

Despite the lack of visible success in the implementation of the policy, the governments of the United States and Afghanistan continued to adhere to the line that the best way to ensure lasting peace and security in Afghanistan is reconciliation and a political settlement with the Taliban. As a positive sign that the insurgent groups could participate in the peace process, GIRoA and the formation Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin signed a peace agreement on September 22, 2016.²⁸⁶ This could happen due to the death of Mullah Mansour on May 21, 2016, when the Taliban appointed Mullah Haybatallah Akhundzad as their new leader. Since then, the Taliban have largely rallied around Haybatallukh with limited public divisions or strife. However, this appointment did not have any effect on the actions of the Taliban movement, and there was no change in the policy of reconciliation.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2018, p. 6.

²⁸⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2015, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2016, p. 7.

²⁸⁷ US DoD report to Congress (December 2016), p. 2.

Nevertheless, attempts to find a compromise in the implementation of the policy of reconciliation did not stop. After President Trump announced the launch of a new South Asia strategy in a nationwide televised address in August 2017, many Afghan and American observers interpreted the strategy as expanding US military force in Afghanistan and increasing pressure on Pakistan (see ANNEX 11).²⁸⁸

The development of the South Asian policy was likely intended to influence the Taliban and pressure them to enter into a dialogue regarding a compromise with the GIROA in terms of reconciliation. On February 14, 2018, the Taliban sent an open letter to the American people, outlining their vision of the world. From the Afghan side, Ghani announced his own unconditional peace offer to the Taliban. Furthermore, on May 11, 2018, the trilateral Conference of Ulema religious scholars from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia issued a declaration in support of the GIROA peace proposal and strongly condemned both terrorism and violent extremism.²⁸⁹

Despite all sorts of diverse dialogues and after few years of stalemate in Afghanistan, in July 2018 the Trump administration announced direct negotiations with the Taliban without including the GIROA. This marked a dramatic change in US policy that had previously been aimed at supporting the Afghan government-led peace process.²⁹⁰ This could have happened due to the current situation in the country, as well as the ongoing confrontation between Ghani and Abdullah. In parallel to this initiative to conduct the direct negotiations, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul was founded the Peace and Reconciliation Advisory Group (PRAG) in the second half of 2018. The group was responsible for synchronizing the ongoing efforts to start peace negotiations between the GIROA and the Taliban at the governmental level with efforts to terminate the violence and hostilities throughout the country. The PRAG included representatives from GIROA, the US Embassy and USFOR-A.²⁹¹ In other words, Americans did not exclude the possibility of achieving a peace agreement between the GIROA and the Taliban and continued the support the policy of reconciliation.

²⁸⁸ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2018, p. 5.

²⁹⁰ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 2.

²⁹¹ US DoD report to Congress (December 2018), p. 6.

President Trump's announced bilateral talks between the Taliban and the United States took place in the Qatari capital Doha in March 2019 and lasted more than two weeks, but ended without a breakthrough. According to the American side, the parties were close to a final agreement on one critical element of the basis for finishing the long war - to end terrorist attacks. The Americans also declared that they had made significant progress on the second element - the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. According to the chief US spokesperson Zalmay Khalilzad, the parties have made progress, and in the course of detailed discussions, they reached an understanding on difficult issues.²⁹²

During the negotiations, the parties reached an agreement on organizing intra-Afghan talks, but the date remained unscheduled amid disputes over a possible prisoners exchange and ongoing violence. The situation was further complicated by the unstable state of Afghan politics, expressed in the confrontation between Ghani and Abdullah. In any event, Afghan government officials did not participate in the talks between the US and the Taliban, prompting some observers to interpret the actions as the United States prioritizing troop withdrawal due to difficulties in a political settlement that could undermine the social, political and humanitarian improvements made since 2001.²⁹³

It also remained unclear what kind of political agreement could satisfy both Kabul and the Taliban if the latter abandoned its armed resistance. In response to American talks with the Taliban, Ghani promised that GIROA would not accept any settlement restricting the rights of Afghans. He warned that any US withdrawal agreement that "does not include Kabul could lead to catastrophe, pointing out the civil unrest of the 1990s that followed the fall of the Soviet-backed government which led to the rise of the Taliban."²⁹⁴

Afghans have also expressed a concern that after the possible withdrawal of US troops and the end of the international military presence, there would be little incentive for the Taliban to comply with the terms of the agreement, and the possibility of a political settlement will be lost. The Taliban themselves likewise gave contradictory messages and did not describe in detail their vision of Afghan governance after the settlement. In addition, they called the reconciliation process the subject of intra-Afghan negotiations. Initially, many Afghans, especially wom-

²⁹² *The New York Times*, 12.03.2019: 2 Weeks of U.S.-Taliban Talks End With 'Progress' but No Breakthrough.

²⁹³ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 1.

²⁹⁴ Congressional Research Service (2020), p. 6.

en who remembered the Taliban, opposed the policy of reconciliation and remained suspicious. However, over time, according to the results of opinion polls, their opinion has changed in favor of reconciliation. A poll conducted in December 2019 showed that a “significant majority” of Afghans are aware (77%) and strongly or partially support (89%) efforts to conclude a peace deal with the Taliban.²⁹⁵

After direct negotiations the process of preparing a peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban began, and by August 2019, the process was completed. Numerous reports have detailed the outlines of an emerging agreement between the US and the Taliban. According CRS reports: "In a September 2, 2019 interview with Afghanistan's TOLO news, Special Representative Khalilzad confirmed “we have reached an agreement in principal” in which the United States would withdraw about 5,000 of its 14,000 troops from five bases within 135 days if the Taliban reduced violence in two key provinces. US troops would be gradually withdrawn from Afghanistan completely within 16 months or by the end of 2020. The withdrawal of foreign forces was a key Taliban demand. However, it was less clear what specific concessions the Taliban would make in return. As part of the tentative deal, the US officials reportedly expected the Taliban to enter direct negotiations with the Afghan government after the withdrawal began. However, the Taliban have not publicly reversed their long-standing refusal to negotiate with Kabul, and the US perhaps has little leverage to compel them to do so once the withdrawal takes place."²⁹⁶

It is worth noting that as part of conducting CT operations, the United States has participated in diplomatic efforts in order to end the war through direct negotiations with the Taliban. That was a significant change from the previous US policy. In January 2019 the Taliban negotiators and the US reached a draft framework of the agreement, which included the statement that the Taliban would prohibit terrorist groups from operating on Afghan soil in exchange for a possible withdrawal of American troops. However, despite the apparent positive dynamics of the reconciliation process, on September 7, 2019, President Trump suddenly announced that he terminated the negotiations.²⁹⁷

President Trump announced that on September 5, 2019 the Taliban conducted an attack in Kabul killing several people, including US soldiers, and therefore, he unilaterally canceled sched-

²⁹⁵ Congressional Research Service (2020), p. 6.

²⁹⁶ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated September 19, 2019, p. 3.

²⁹⁷ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 1.

uled joint meetings with Taliban leaders and the Afghan president and also finished the peace talks. Trump declared that he was ready to meet with them, but separately. Such an unexpected announcement caught even some senior White House officials by surprise and raised questions about the future policy of the Trump administration. In a follow-up interview the next day, Secretary of State Pompeo said that: “We were close, but the Taliban failed to fulfill some of their commitments, which prompted President Trump to abandon the deal”.²⁹⁸

Pompeo also stated that the withdrawal of US troops in accordance with the above method and conditions was still possible. Former national security adviser Bolton, who advocated a reduction in the US military without a deal with the Taliban, endorsed this course of action. Also some analysts who supported Pompeo’s view have noticed that if the United States decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, there is no reason to make any deal with the Taliban for that.²⁹⁹

It is not clear why the September 5 attack prompted President Trump to cancel negotiations, since by September 2019 17 US military personnel had been killed in the fighting and even during bilateral negotiations in March 2019 the Taliban continued to attack civilian targets. The reason may have been negative reactions to the proposed deal from some members of the US Congress.³⁰⁰

Regarding the consequences of the end of the military presence, many experts believed that a full-scale US withdrawal and/or the termination of aid would lead to the collapse of the GIROA and, perhaps, even to the restoration of Taliban control over Afghanistan. This opinion was based on the fact that in 2019 the Taliban was in a stronger military position than at any other moment since 2001.³⁰¹ Furthermore, some US analysts argued that Trump's public desire to withdraw US troops undermined talks with the Taliban. Anti-Taliban Afghans have expressed concern that, in the absence of US military pressure on the Taliban, there will be little incentive for the parties to comply with the terms of the agreement, where the most important aspect is a comprehensive political settlement.³⁰²

Despite various disagreement between the parties involved in the policy of reconciliation and the organization of peace negotiations with the Taliban, the next bilateral talks were held on

²⁹⁸ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 3.

²⁹⁹ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 3.

³⁰⁰ Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 3.

³⁰¹ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 1.

³⁰² Congressional Research Service (2019), p. 4.

February 29, 2020, again in Doha. The US special representative to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Taliban representative, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, signed a historic peace agreement. The agreement is expected to end the 18-year war in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of the US and its allies in exchange for guarantees of Islamist security and a promise to negotiate with the Afghan government about the country's future. Under the terms of the agreement, the United States and its allies must withdraw their troops from Afghanistan within 14 months if the Taliban abide by the terms of the agreement. Initially, the United States will reduce its troop strength to 8,600 within 135 days of the agreement and will completely dismantle five of the 20 military bases. In exchange for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the Taliban must fulfill a series of security promises and negotiate with the Afghan government.³⁰³

The agreement came after a week of reduced violence designed to test the Taliban's ability and will to enforce a largely respected ceasefire. In turn, the Taliban have pledged not to allow members or other groups, including al-Qaeda, to use Afghan soil to threaten the United States or its allies, including by preventing recruitment, training and fundraising for such activities. The agreement is accompanied by classified annexes of concern to some members of the Congress. US officials signed the proposed withdrawal based on the fulfillment of conditions. However, the US representatives did not specify exactly which conditions might stop, cancel or otherwise change the terms set out in the agreement.³⁰⁴

The signing of the treaty after more than a year of formal negotiations between Taliban representatives and US laid the foundation for the withdrawal of US military forces from Afghanistan and for negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban. Subsequent events, including increased violence and the continued stalemate in talks between the Taliban government and Afghanistan, have raised questions about the deal and broader US policy towards Afghanistan in the future.³⁰⁵

Following the signing of the peace agreement, US Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, stressed that the US would not hesitate to withdraw from the deal with the Taliban, if the Islamists will not respect security guarantees and refuse to negotiate with the Afghan government. If the agreement is implemented, the United States will not threaten or use force against Afghanistan

³⁰³ AFP-AP-BNS, 01.03.2020: USA ja Taliban allkirjastasid Dohas rahuleppe.

[<https://www.err.ee/1058340/usa-ja-taliban-allkirjastasid-dohas-rahuleppe>], read 27.03.2020.

³⁰⁴ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 1.

³⁰⁵ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 2.

in the future and will not interfere in its internal affairs. In addition to the peace talks, the US and the Taliban agreed to exchange thousands of prisoners as a "confidence-building measure" at the start of talks on March 10, 2020 between the Taliban and Afghanistan. In accordance with the agreement, the United States promised to review the existing sanctions against the Taliban with the aim of lifting them by August 27, 2020. Washington also has announced the start of diplomatic activities with members of the UN Security Council and the GIRoA for removing the Taliban from the sanctions lists.³⁰⁶

The signed agreement commits the Taliban to not allow groups, including the Islamic extremist al-Qaeda, to use Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies. The Taliban will not allow such groups to "recruit, train and collect money" and will not deploy them in Afghanistan. The agreement did not stipulate that the Taliban should publicly condemn or formally sever relations with al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, after signing the agreement in Doha, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on the Taliban to "keep their promises and sever ties with jihadist groups". In the agreement, the US and the Taliban have promised to try to establish positive relations with each other, including with any government that emerges because of negotiations in Afghanistan. The United States pledged to "strive for economic cooperation" to rebuild Afghanistan together with the country's elected government.³⁰⁷

The scheduled bilateral talks between the GIRoA and the Taliban did not take place, as the Taliban refused them. A Taliban representative said the first personal talks with the government were "fruitless". Negotiations were thwarted by a prisoner exchange negotiated between the US and the Taliban. This was supposed to be a step towards ending the war, but the Taliban accused the government of postponing the release of the prisoners, to which Afghan officials replied that the insurgents' demands were unfounded.³⁰⁸

A member of the government's negotiating team said the Taliban wanted the government to release 15 commanders believed to have been involved in the high-profile attacks. "We cannot release our people's killers", he said. However, a Taliban representative accused the Ghani administration of delaying the release of prisoners "under one pretext or another". The govern-

³⁰⁶ AFP-AP-BNS, 01.03.2020: USA ja Taliban allkirjastasid Dohas rahuleppe. [<https://www.err.ee/1058340/usa-ja-taliban-allkirjastasid-dohas-rahuleppe>], read 27.03.2020.

³⁰⁷ AFP-AP-BNS, 01.03.2020: USA ja Taliban allkirjastasid Dohas rahuleppe. [<https://www.err.ee/1058340/usa-ja-taliban-allkirjastasid-dohas-rahuleppe>], read 27.03.2020.

ment says it is willing to release up to 400 low-threat Taliban insurgents as a gesture of goodwill in exchange for a significant reduction in violence. The prisoner exchange, which was part of the agreement between the US and the Taliban, was supposed to be a sign of trust between the two sides. However, President Ghani refused to release 5,000 prisoners under the terms of an agreement with the United States, saying the Afghan government had not entered into such an agreement. Instead, he offered to release 1,500 prisoners.³⁰⁹

Such a violation of the agreements reached by the Ghani administration impacts the execution of the reconciliation policy in general, and may contain risks that other agreements will remain unfulfilled due to the impossibility of accomplishing the clauses of the treaty and the lack of political consensus.

Despite the Taliban's refusal to hold talks in the spring, the talks between the Taliban and the Afghan political leadership began on September 12, 2020 in Doha, Qatar. The representatives of the United States took part at the negotiations as well. During the talks, the parties touched upon the themes of a peaceful settlement, exchange of prisoners and issues of freedom of religion. The Taliban also pledged not to harbor terrorists in controlled territories and to continue dialogue with the GIROA. In his speech, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed the hope that women's rights will be preserved in the Afghan society and warned that the negotiation process between the warring parties will require a lot of hard work and concessions.³¹⁰

3.5 The role of Pakistan in stabilization processes in Afghanistan

As described in previous chapters, the United States together with the international coalition provides a multifaceted effort to develop political support and resolve the conflict in Afghanistan. The development of the Strategy for South Asia prioritizes regional engagement, including safeguarding the GIROA and international consensus for peace. However, in addition, Pakistan also influences and plays a key role in the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ BBC news, 7 April 2020: Afghanistan peace deal: Taliban walk out of 'fruitless' talks. [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52199398>], read 25.04.2020.

³⁰⁹ BBC news, 7 April 2020: Afghanistan peace deal: Taliban walk out of 'fruitless' talks. [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52199398>], read 25.04.2020.

³¹⁰ *Postimees*, 13.09.2020: Правительство Афганистана и "Талибан" начали прямые переговоры впервые за 20 лет. [<https://rus.postimees.ee/7061087/pravitelstvo-afganistana-i-taliban-nachali-pryamyeperegovory-vpervyye-za-20-let>], read 13.09.2020.

³¹¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2019, p. 4.

Pakistan is a state of central importance in South Asia, with significant ability to influence the situation due to "its shared border with Afghanistan, its status as a nuclear power and its role in the fight against al Qaeda and the Afghan insurgency"³¹². Today it is clear that no strategy in Afghanistan and the emerging security issues and challenges can be successful if Pakistan's interests are not taken into account. Developing an effective strategy for Afghanistan requires an understanding of Pakistan's strategic vision. This is based on the fact that the country's attitude towards Islamist radicals is ambiguous and complex, which can be understood only in the context of the nature of Pakistan's security interests.³¹³

When seeking solutions to security problems in Afghanistan throughout the operation, the West has faced difficulties in deciding whether Pakistan is an ally or an obstacle. The US fluctuated between understanding the need for financial support and dissatisfaction with the seeming duplicity of Pakistan's Afghan policy. Western politicians are still uncertain whether Pakistan is an irreplaceable contributor to a long-term settlement in Afghanistan or key part of the problem.³¹⁴

Actually, with regards to regional security policy, Pakistan has two important concerns. The first is internal fragmentation and possible disintegration of the country, and the second is the looming presence of India. The combination of these factors underlies Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan and insurgent groups at the border region, which is a matter of concern for the international coalition.³¹⁵ This is due to the fact that Pakistani violent extremist organizations dislocated at the border to Afghanistan have the intention and ability to attack both across the border in Afghanistan and inside Pakistan³¹⁶.

In order to solve the problem of insurgent groups sheltering in the frontier areas, the Pakistani security forces initiated military operations against them in June 2009³¹⁷. Additionally according DoD reports: "the Government of Pakistan (GoP) has developed a comprehensive COIN

³¹² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 104.

³¹³ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 186.

³¹⁴ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 186.

³¹⁵ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 186.

³¹⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 88.

³¹⁷ US DoD report to Congress (November 2010), p. 88.

“Frontier Strategy” that includes economic and social development, and the strengthening of effective governance in the border areas in order to extend Islamabad’s authority and deny extremist safe havens.” To implement this strategy, the GoP developed a nine-year, two billion dollar Sustainable Development Plan in the tribal areas to improve existing social and economic conditions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by providing services, upgrading infrastructure, and bolstering commercial activity. The US Government has agreed to assist Pakistan in implementing its COIN strategy. The Department of State (DoS) started assisting with governance and social development; DoD initiated assisting Pakistan’s security forces.³¹⁸

US DoD continued "to work with Pakistan to improve the capabilities of the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps"³¹⁹. US DoD has agreed "to support Pakistan through a six-year Security Development Plan (SDP) to enhance Pakistan’s ability to secure the border, deny safe havens to violent extremist organizations, and create a secure environment for the population that will allow development investment to achieve its goal". According sources the SDP consisted of the following: "A train and equip program for the Frontier Corps; a train and equip program for special operations units of Pakistan’s Army; establishing and manning Border Coordination Centers (BCC) with Pakistan, Afghan, and coalition liaisons; enhancing Pakistan security forces aviation units and establishing Frontier Corps Sector headquarters".³²⁰

In course of time Pakistani counterinsurgency operations have become selective, and in some cases Pakistan has even begun offering shelter to the insurgents. This shift in Pakistan's approach to cooperative border operations was associated with deteriorating relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan following a series of border incidents in 2011, which culminated in a cross-border incident on November 26, 2011 that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. This ultimately led to a reduction in bilateral cooperation. Following this incident, Pakistan canceled its participation in the International Afghan Conference in Bonn, Germany. According reports: "The Pakistani government also decided to conduct a comprehensive review of its relationship with the United States and released its finding in April 2012 following a parliamentary debate. Paki-

³¹⁸ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 100.

³¹⁹ The Frontier Corps is a paramilitary unit consisting of ethnic Pashtuns with the cultural, linguistic and geographical skills that they must fulfill as an effective security force with the functions of border control and drug control. These units carry out missions to destroy or capture costly extremist targets and support the army during significant clashes in the border zone. US DoD report to Congress (January 2009), p. 101.

³²⁰ US DoD report to Congress (January 2009), p. 101.

stan indicated that it is seeking to negotiate new terms for its relationship with the United States by defining Pakistani sovereignty red lines and seeking written agreements to define bilateral cooperation in a number of critical areas."³²¹

Another significant issue related to the operation in general and the border issue in particular is the problem of refugees, due to the fact that approximately 3 million Afghan refugees are located to Pakistan. Addressing long-term issues associated with the large Afghan refugee population in Pakistan also continues to affect bilateral relations negatively.³²² Since "Pakistan is host to a sizable population of Afghan refugees who have been returning in large numbers to Afghanistan", Afghanistan's efforts to secure human settlements continue to be "complicated by changing demographics at their intended destinations and increasing security risks"³²³. Also the refugee issue made it easier for extremists to recruit displaced persons³²⁴.

The GIRoA and GoP, with US support, entered into "bilateral and trilateral dialogue at the government level and through the *Jirga* process to improve relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and ensure stability in areas along their mutual borders". According to the Tripartite Voluntary Repatriation Agreement with the GIRoA and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Pakistan commits to voluntary rather than forced repatriation of refugees back to Afghanistan. However based on sources: "The Afghans who have been registered as refugees with the Pakistani authorities are eligible for a registration confirmation card that allows them to stay in Pakistan for a specified time. In order to generate jobs and offer alternatives to recruitment by extremists, the GoP supports the concept of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Afghanistan and Pakistan as proposed by the United States."³²⁵

Despite all difficulties in bilateral relations, meetings and talks between officials and political leadership have continued. This has led to improvement in cooperation between the two countries. For example, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khara's visit to Afghanistan on February 1, 2012 was followed by President Karzai's visit to Pakistan later that month, indicating progress in Af-

³²¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 104.

³²² US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 100-101.

³²³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2017, p. 19.

³²⁴ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 100-101.

³²⁵ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 100-101.

ghan efforts to mobilize Pakistani support for peace efforts with the Taliban. Following President Karzai's visit, Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani issued a public statement urging the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents to participate in the Afghan-led reconciliation process, a significant improvement over Pakistan's previous reluctance to support this process. In addition, a trilateral US-Afghanistan-Pakistan border meeting on February 8, 2012 set the initial conditions for progress in cross-border cooperation. Several military border working groups, designed to enhance cross-border cooperation and mitigate the threat of future attacks, have met since then.³²⁶

The Afghan-Pakistani border cooperation developed at the tactical level through constructive dialogue and informal border management mechanisms. The RS mission continued to facilitate meetings between Afghanistan and Pakistan through its tripartite Joint Operations Center located at the RS HQ in Kabul. To support effective de-escalation of border incidents, Afghanistan and Pakistan established telephone hotlines for corps commanders and initiated calls between corps headquarters, allowing corps commanders to better decentralize border incidents.³²⁷

Generally the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to be complex and contentious. When improving bilateral relations, Pakistan uses the similarity of the ethnic composition of the population to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan in a direction that is beneficial to its political interests. Pakistani leaders worry that Pakistan may be left alone to confront an unstable, unfriendly or Indian-influenced Afghanistan on its borders. Therefore, it is best for Pakistan that GIROA leads Afghanistan, in which the Pashtuns have a strong influence and which limits the influence of India.³²⁸

To increase its influence on the situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan allows the preservation of insurgent safe havens in the border areas, providing safe havens for the Afghan Taliban and associated militant groups. In doing so, Pakistan seeks to play a key role in the peace and reconciliation process to advance a political settlement that considers Pakistan's interests.³²⁹ This

³²⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 104.

³²⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2017, p. 19.

³²⁸ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 105.

³²⁹ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 105.

shows that Pakistan remains the most influential external actor influencing stability in Afghanistan as well as the operations of the international coalition. Similarly, Afghanistan remains an important link for Pakistan in the broader regional struggle with India. Pakistan believes that the influence on Afghanistan is in its vital national interests and therefore remains a significant player with regard to regional policy goals.³³⁰

Although Pakistani military operations have destroyed some insurgent hideouts, some extremist groups, such as the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, have been able to cross over and continue to operate in and out of Pakistan. In the context of the operation, Pakistan's support for Afghanistan-oriented radicals seriously impedes bilateral cooperation.³³¹

This state of affairs has not been favorably received by the international coalition and the United States. President Trump pledged to put pressure on Pakistan to improve the effectiveness of the fight against insurgents in the border areas. In response to such pressure, the GoP warned the United States that, despite their efforts toward cooperation, the country would not give in to the pressure. This ultimately worsened US-Pakistani relations. Trump accused Pakistan of "lying and deceiving" and deplored the billions of dollars in US aid that previous administrations had "foolishly provided" to the country. Shortly thereafter, the United States announced a suspension of aid to Pakistan. Despite the pressure exerted by the US administration, Pakistan continued sheltering Afghan terrorist groups, and even more so, using the insurgents to maintain control over Afghanistan.³³²

On October 3, 2017, detailed information on the Trump administration's strategy in South Asia and its five main principles was presented. Among others points, it was mentioned that it was necessary to put pressure on Pakistan to eliminate the shelters of terrorists and insurgents in Pakistan, as well as to push India to increase economic and development assistance to Afghanistan.³³³ Including the question of India was extremely undesirable and un-acceptable for Pakistan, in terms of the country's policy and interests. Such a move is unlikely to improve bilateral relations between the United States and Pakistan and will affect security in the region, and in particular in Afghanistan.

³³⁰ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 214.

³³¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2017, p. 18.

³³² Lebovic (2019), p. 175.

Pakistan has significant influence the process of finding an exit strategy for the United States due to its control over the Taliban. It should be recognized that the strategic interaction between Pakistan and NATO and the United States led not only to the strengthening of Pakistan's strategic position, but also contributed to the escalation of violence and instability in the region itself.³³⁴ Despite its challenging relationship with Pakistan, the United States continues to work with international partners and regional actors, including Pakistan, through a policy of reconciliation and to create the conditions for a possible Afghan-led, Afghan negotiated and peaceful settlement with the Taliban.³³⁵

3.6 Conclusions

The process of political settlement in Afghanistan initiated after the first objectives of OEF were achieved and the preconditions for the foundation a new state structure appeared. Political support to effective, democratic governance included mentoring and mediation by the UN and financial donations. As the Afghan operation within the framework of ISAF developed, the number of countries participating in the processes of reconstruction and transformation of Afghanistan has increased. This favorably influenced the development of the operation, and accomplished the prerequisites for further development of the operation towards the fulfillment of the political objectives.

The increased number of countries has also increased the assistance and funds for the transformation of Afghanistan. In the development of the military component of the operation, it became clear that political development is an important piece of the stability and security of the state. To this end, in the activities of ISAF, as well as in the COIN operations, the international coalition and the United States paid special attention to political support of the government.

The United States and the international community expended significant effort to create an effective system of assistance and support to the Afghan government. Critical to this was the creation of an effective mechanism for measuring and controlling the implementation of reforms and the use of allocated financial resources. The criteria for measuring progress made it

³³³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. December 2017, p. 17.

³³⁴ Bird and Marshall (2011), p. 215.

possible for the coalition to understand and analyze the development of political governance, as well as to identify trends and areas in need of support. In the RS phase of the mission, relief and support efforts were organized into specific actions under the categories of the Essential Functions. This approach helped to balance efforts and allow for an adequate assessment of the effectiveness of support to GIRoA from the international coalition and the United States. This became more doable after the US focus shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan, since it realigned the required funds and resources.

Control over the use of the funds was primarily due to the corruption and limited efficiency within GIRoA and helped to align funds to support systemic reforms of political governance. The fight against corruption has had special attention from the international community, because this phenomenon still pervades Afghan society at all levels and is not considered by them to be criminal. This is closely linked to the characteristics of society, the management of state structures and the influence of tribal ties on political governance, since an official or politician at any level was primarily guided by the interests of his tribe and people. Corruption issue involved not only the financial aid, but also the money received from the drug trade. In the end, fighting corruption bore little success, primarily because corruption resides at almost all levels of society and, one might say, is part of the culture.

A number of political efforts were made by the coalition and the international community. However the cultural and social features of the Afghan society made change less effective than desired. Despite the existence of a central government in Kabul, in reality at the lower levels, local rulers, representing the various tribes, maintain the real power and influence in the local population. The effectiveness of the GIRoA in these regions is influenced by the support of foreign forces from the United States and the international coalition. The attitude of the Afghan population towards foreigners has always been and remains, if not openly hostile, then at least cautious. This was due to the historical context where Afghanistan has constantly been an arena for the presence of a foreign force acting in the name of its interests. Therefore this presence was not perceived by the local population as a positive factor. On this basis, representatives of the central government do not enjoy the confidence of the local population, since they cooperate with foreigners or from their point of view even with invaders. From other side the Taliban has an influence among the local population with their own political propaganda

³³⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2017, p. 19.

and make every effort to increase the ineffectiveness of the GIRoA and reduce its authority and influence among the local population.

Since Afghanistan is a multi-tribal and multinational state with provincial and regional divisions, each with their own leaders and elders, the local government representatives are more influential than representatives of the central government from Kabul. This is especially so when taking into account the level of corruption. In the context of political governance, corruption impacts not only the personal interests of individual officials, but also the adoption of activities that are beneficial to a specific target group, tribe or nationality. At the local level in Afghanistan, political leadership is conducted in a context-specific manner at general meetings known as *Jirga* and *Shura*. Since these meetings have a strong influence on the organization of political life in the country, the decisions made there prevail, even if they contradict the official decisions of the GIRoA. This is due to the belief that Kabul is geographically far away and the decisions do not meet the interests and needs of the local level, therefore, they are not binding.

The low efficiency of local government is also associated with the personal ambitions and interests of political leaders. The process of political settlement is influenced by political rivalries between individual political, tribal groupings and the associated confrontation. This inter-tribal political rivalry has a long history, and the confrontation continued after the overthrow of the Taliban as well. It is possible that the emergence and growth of such a confrontation was associated with the excessive optimism of international experts, who believed that a capable government would emerge quickly and immediately begin to function in the name of achieving national goals. Nevertheless, that did not happen.

The relations between the Afghan leadership and the United States also directly affected the execution of a systemic reform of the political structure of Afghanistan and the achievement of effective governance of the country. These relations did not develop dynamically and not always constructively. This is largely due to the attempts of the Afghan political leaders using relations with the United States in their personal interests to assert their power and strengthen their personal authority, gaining an advantage over their political rivals. Sometimes this led to serious complications in bilateral relations, which in turn forced the American leadership to plan to curtail the operation and withdraw American troops from the country unilaterally. De-

spite the negative impact on the outcome of the operations, conflict with the United States also achieved political dividends for the Afghan leaders personally and for their political parties in the struggle for influence in the country. Certainly, such a political game could not constructively influence the general situation in the country, as well as necessary relationships between Afghans and representatives of the international coalition.

The struggle for power between the political opponents within the Afghan elite led to periodic attempts to involve the United States in their antagonism by opposing the role and goals of the coalition in the national interests of Afghanistan. Such actions were no more than a political game based on attempts to create a dialogue with the insurgents, allegedly for the sake of achieving peace in the country. This conclusion is based on the fact that given the general ineffectiveness of the government and the strengthening positions of the Taliban, the political leadership at that time directly depended on political support and the military presence of foreign contingents. In fact, these actions were nothing more than an attempt to establish themselves at the top position of power in the country by opposing the leading country of the international coalition and by flirting with a radicalized part of the population.

Over the course of the operation, it became obvious that the Afghan political leadership would not achieve success in the confrontation with the Taliban, even with the support of the United States and the international coalition. Given the difficulties of the current situation in Afghanistan, the influential parties developed a policy of reconciliation and searched for a political compromise that would terminate the armed confrontation. The main goal of the policy is to integrate former Taliban and insurgent members into society and provide them an opportunity to return to regular. The implementation of the reconciliation policy was supported by the United States. The start of the reconciliation policy coincided with President Trump's announcement of a new South Asia strategy that extended US strategic focus to the broader region which included Afghanistan. Therefore, a positive resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan became important to the United States' ongoing regional strategy.

The reconciliation strategy envisions finding a political solution in Afghanistan by starting negotiations with the Taliban and reaching agreements and commitments toward resolving and ending hostilities in the country. Despite ongoing efforts to reach certain agreements on the withdrawal of US and coalition troops from Afghanistan, the release of imprisoned insurgents,

and other peace initiatives, the ongoing negotiation process has struggled. The key parties have complicated the process by asserting their own political interests to create the most favorable and promising conditions for themselves. Therefore, the negotiations were repeatedly postponed, the agreements reached were canceled, and the parties came to mutual accusations of unwillingness to reach a peaceful settlement.

The policy of reconciliation continues to develop, since all parties to the conflict are interested in a positive result. The reconciliation policy proposes steps to integrate the insurgents and thereby consolidate Afghan society through a political compromise and agreement with the Taliban. At the present time finalizing of the long-term confrontation through achieving the strategic goals of the operation in Afghanistan by political negotiation, and not by force is possible. At this time, there is no other alternative for ending the war in Afghanistan, since the conflict has dragged on and, to some extent, has become unpromising for all parties. Based on this, all parties are making efforts to find a political solution to the conflict. Moreover, the success of the policy of reconciliation would create conditions for a solution to the conflict while saving face, retaining Afghanistan's identity and providing terms that benefit multiple parties.

In the search for a solution that would achieve the goals of operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan's position and actions play an important role. This is due to the fact that Pakistan is a strong regional player with the status of a nuclear power and its own political, regional interests and ambitions. The large Pashtun population with close family ties across the Afghan-Pakistan border is another important factor in Pakistan's interests and involvement.

Pakistan's political position during the Afghan operation has been ambiguous. The international coalition to this day does not have a clear idea of Pakistan's role - whether Pakistan is an ally or an adversary. Such a dual role is associated with the internal political situation in the country itself, the domestic and foreign policy pursued, as well as regional rivalry and confrontation with India, which is important for Pakistan. The fact that the territory of Pakistan is the rear for the insurgents also makes Pakistan directly involved in the conflict in Afghanistan in the eyes of the international community.

Bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are also ambiguous and range from partnership to hostile. This situation is largely due to the significant number of Afghan refugees as well as shelters and camps of Afghan insurgents in Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan uses the current situation for its own purposes to strengthen its positions in political dialogue with the United States and to achieve its state goals and protect national interests.

Pakistan has the ability to influence the processes in Afghanistan, based on the ethnic similarity of the population of the two countries and their ability to influence and pressure the Taliban groups located in the bordering territories of the country. The success of the policy of reconciliation definitely depends on Pakistan's readiness and willingness to cooperate with Afghanistan and the United States at the regional and interstate levels. This makes Pakistan an important and long-term political component in achieving the strategic objectives of the operation in Afghanistan, which cannot be ignored.

4 RECONSTRUCTION, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

This chapter presents the economic and social component of the operation with its goals and objectives. The chapter covers the tools and processes of reconstruction, as well as the relations within the coalition and with Afghan counterparts in terms of strategic goal achievement. The section on economic development considers the factors of the country's economic growth, agricultural development, as well as the role of the international community, coalition and governmental organizations.

The chapter offers a description and analysis of factors that have had both a positive and a negative impact on the development of economic growth and achievement. Additionally, the chapter gives an overview of the activities of the coalition, governmental organizations and the international community in such key areas as health, education, and gender equality. These social areas stand out as having the most significant influence in the improvement of society and contributing to the achievement of goals and a favorable outcome of the entire operation.

4.1 Provincial reconstruction teams

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were formed by the US-led coalition as part of OEF in 2002 following the overthrow of the Taliban. Originally known as the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells, these small (ten to twelve people) military teams provided key humanitarian information to US military commanders and implemented small projects funded by the US DoD to build trust and confidence in local communities.³³⁶

In August 2003, when ISAF officially became a NATO-led force and the UN Security Council expanded its mandate, ISAF soon took over the leadership of the first German-led PRT in Kunduz³³⁷. Subsequently, when ISAF assumed responsibility for all of Afghanistan in October 2006, it took over command of all PRTs deployed in the country³³⁸. Through the PRT, ISAF members were able to pursue their own national visions for the stability and development of

³³⁶ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 57.

³³⁷ Lebovic (2019), p. 135.

³³⁸ US DoD Report to Congress (June 2009), p. 57.

Afghanistan, as well as gain political support and justification for military action from their own populations.³³⁹

PRTs have been an essential civil-military tool in countering insurgency in Afghanistan and building the capacity of GIRoA. These groups could use diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of the United States and coalition allies to support three main areas of activity: security, governance and reconstruction and development. As part of a comprehensive approach, PRTs supported GIRoA and coordinated with key partners in the international community.³⁴⁰

Due to differences in regional contexts and the approaches of the leading PRT countries, a “one size fits all” concept was neither appropriate nor feasible. Specific strategies, goals, priorities and funding were the responsibility of each leading country. As announced at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 and reaffirmed at numerous PRT conferences hosted by ISAF, all major countries recognized the need to integrate and align the core functions and tasks of PRTs with GIRoA priorities as written in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). To this end, NATO agreed with the PRT Policy Implementation Manual to ensure maximum transparency and coherence in NATO's efforts. The United Nations pledged to work with the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Kabul to improve coordination among the PRTs and to establish mechanisms that enabled GIRoA and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to play an active role in that coordination.³⁴¹

Since the inception of PRT, innovative organizations have invested hundreds of millions of dollars per year across Afghanistan to support a wide range of projects such as building roads and bridges, building school houses, and training and equipping local police. American PRTs used a special US model. They were largely composed of military personnel, located with combat units for security purposes, and supported projects with quick impact that contributed to the development of goodwill and local governance. Consequently, the US PRTs served the US military goal to improve the security situation in the less stable parts of the country.³⁴²

With their provincial focus and civilian and military resources, the PRTs have had a unique mandate to enhance security, support good governance, and accelerate provincial develop-

³³⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 135.

³⁴⁰ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 57.

³⁴¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 74.

³⁴² Lebovic (2019), p. 135.

ment. The combination of international civilian and military resources also allowed ample room to fulfill its mandate. The PRT had to be able to operate in less secure areas of the country.³⁴³

The PRT's mandate covered the following areas:

- Interact with key government, military, tribal, rural and religious leaders in the provinces, while monitoring and reporting on important political, military and reconstruction developments;
- Work with Afghan authorities to ensure security, including supporting key events such as the constitutional *Loya Jirga*, presidential and parliamentary elections, and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of insurgent forces;
- Assist in the deployment and mentoring of ANA and ANP units assigned to provinces.³⁴⁴

The PRT typically covered one province in Afghanistan, but in some cases, one team covered more than one province. During the period of ISAF, 26 PRTs operated in Afghanistan (see ANNEX 12). The PRT included United States Agency for International Development (USAID) staff who worked on service delivery programs in the less secure or underserved areas of Afghanistan. USAID staff were stationed with 19 PRTs throughout Afghanistan. As USAID's main provincial representative, field program officers oversaw all US reconstruction and development efforts in the PRT responsibility area and implemented PRT-focused program delivery. USAID staff members were responsible for building relationships with local leaders, identifying local needs, and communicating important events.³⁴⁵

In 2009, the United States, through its embassy in Kabul, announced intentions to build civilian capacity and efforts in provinces and districts. This was done to adapt civic representation in existing PRTs and other new models to better reflect the political, security and development environment, and GIRoA priorities. A key component of this proposal was the allocation of authority and financial resources to enable implementation of local programs with strategic and

³⁴³ USAID from the American people: Provincial Reconstruction Teams. [<https://www.usaid.gov/provincial-reconstruction-teams>], read 20.06.2020.

³⁴⁴ USAID from the American people: Provincial Reconstruction Teams. [<https://www.usaid.gov/provincial-reconstruction-teams>], read 20.06.2020.

³⁴⁵ USAID from the American people: Provincial Reconstruction Teams. [<https://www.usaid.gov/provincial-reconstruction-teams>], read 20.06.2020.

operational impact in support of the US mission and campaign plan. The proposal was in line with the level of US COIN efforts.³⁴⁶

PRTs were the main instrument for adapting American programs to local realities and increasing the visibility, effectiveness, and accountability of the institutions that had the greatest impact. The list of planned changes included:

- Significantly increase the number of civilian technical consultants in key line ministries in the provincial and district centers;
- Implement of a new strategy of restructuring civil-military agriculture to deprive insurgents of new recruits and drug profits;
- Expand capacity-building efforts at the subnational level through new civil-military initiatives such as District Development Working Groups and District Support Groups;
- Promote the revitalization of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms while strengthening the formal justice system;
- Target drug dealers and their networks rather than poor farmers by eradicating poppy crops;
- Support GIRoA efforts to reintegrate Taliban who renounce al Qaeda, cease violence, and accept the constitutional system;
- Develop a new communication strategy to counter al-Qaeda and Taliban propaganda, and provide media and other resources to Afghans so that they can shape their own political narrative.³⁴⁷

PRTs have become multipurpose groups of "military and civilian personnel, including diplomats and development agency staff, as well as other experts in areas such as policing, agriculture, and justice". From the provincial capitals, they worked to expand the Afghan government's outreach at the provincial and district levels, using US and international funds to promote local recovery and development.³⁴⁸

When the PRT concept worked well, it combined development and military efforts, but there was always the risk of addressing short-term projects that made the presence of an international force more acceptable than sustainable, long-term development. In particular, the PRT's ef-

³⁴⁶ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 62-63.

³⁴⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 57.

³⁴⁸ Barry (2017), p. 69.

forts could either overwhelm the capacity of Afghan local government or inadvertently empower the opposing actors. However, as fighting in Afghanistan intensified, PRTs were often the only source of development assistance in disputed areas, as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) found it difficult to operate.³⁴⁹

Despite the increase in civilian personnel, there were restrictions on the ability of civilians to work in hazardous conditions. As a result, the military provided most of the development and reconstruction experts within the PRT, who were able to operate where civilians could not. It was assumed that once the environment became less hostile, they would be able to better coordinate efforts for military and civilian reconstruction and development.³⁵⁰

The PRTs have been successful in their core missions and have played an important role in efforts such as training, drug control and electoral support. However, there were some differences between the groups. Some PRTs under the command of coalition states have been risk averse and overly controlled by their country's military-political leadership. Therefore, the question arose at ISAF whether these PRTs would be able to perform as well as the PRTs run by the United States and United Kingdom.³⁵¹

These problems highlighted the fact that there were conceptual differences in the coalition that prevented the process of stabilization and development. Coalition partners have imposed geographic and operational restrictions (caveats) - such as limited work to daylight hours - to keep their citizens from participating in hostilities. Non-American PRTs also rejected the American model of organization. For example, the German PRTs used a much larger, predominantly civilian headquarters and distanced themselves from military operations. The German government prioritized development aid for infrastructure projects that will bring longer-term benefits, such as clean drinking water, primary education and rural development. As a result of these differences, the actions undertaken by the US and ISAF were disconnected in the early years and were not properly coordinated. Even the process of unifying the development and stabilization plan for the country turned out to be problematic. The American allies had their own visions for organizing PRT operations, which was different from the American's, which led to the allies using their PRTs as national enclaves.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Barry (2017), p. 70.

³⁵⁰ Barry (2017), p. 71.

³⁵¹ Feickert, Andrew: *U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia*. CRS Report for Congress, August 26, 2005, p. 10.

³⁵² Lebovic (2019), p. 136.

During its operation, PRTs in different regions faced similar strategic problems: lack of funding for infrastructure project maintenance, sustainability of projects, lack of Afghan experience in design and budget planning and the difficult security situation³⁵³. Problems also included a shortage of supplies, trained specialists to deliver services, knowledge of local needs and resources, civilian participation, timely release of money to finance projects, consistency in staff, and control and accountability for money spent. Additionally, there was still limited access to parts of the country due to their geographical remoteness, poor roads, security threats, and the involvement of military personnel in combat operations.³⁵⁴

Reconstruction programs were difficult to manage. Despite the funds spent, PRTs initiated projects without due regard to their sustainability, interaction with other projects or in accordance with a comprehensive national plan. These programs have sometimes been mixed blessings, bringing progress that, in some respects, amounted to regression. Working with provincial governors and chiefs of the police, PRTs helped build goodwill and institutional capacity, but also helped empower the corrupt warlords and mediators who contributed to the country's instability.³⁵⁵

Despite all challenges, during the final phase of ISAF and the transition of authority, the PRTs became essential elements to ensure the success of the transition. Every province in the first tranche of the transition period, with the exception of Kabul, had a PRT. Based on sources: "This presence was important given that management capacity remained the most challenging aspect of the transition, even in areas where improved safety would have allowed for increased the ANSF capacity."³⁵⁶

Practitioners and observers alike assess PRT's success to date in different ways. According reports: "Some argue that while the PRTs have done useful work, they have not received sufficient resources to meet the requirements. This may be especially true for some Allies, such as Lithuania, which generally had fewer resources for international relief efforts. Others, including senior Afghan officials, argued that the PRT did not coordinate their efforts with the Afghan authorities. In November 2008, during a visit to Kabul by a US Security Council delegation, President Karzai stated that the PRTs were creating "parallel governments" in rural areas, and

³⁵³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. October 2011, p. 94.

³⁵⁴ Lebovic (2019), p. 135.

³⁵⁵ Lebovic (2019), p. 135.

³⁵⁶ US DoD report to Congress (October 2011), p. 94.

he subsequently reiterated this claim. In February 2011, at the Munich Security Conference, President Karzai called for an early dismantling of the PRTs, on the grounds that they were an obstacle to the spread of Afghan power. Other Afghan officials reportedly stated that international resources channeled through the PRT are often lost between multiple layers of contractors and subcontractors before they reach the Afghan people.³⁵⁷

Since the PRTs were structurally part of ISAF, the PRT operations were disbanded at the beginning of the next stage. Further support to government and state structures was then carried out through the RS mission and coordinated by representatives of the coalition at the local provincial level within the TAA processes.

4.2 Economic growth and development

Economic development is critical for achieving long-term stability in Afghanistan, but remains a major challenge due to current fiscal differences, the immaturity of most Afghan economic sectors, widespread corruption and underdeveloped infrastructure. Although average economic growth of Afghanistan is 8.5 percent per year, this figure is primarily due to the economic support of donor countries and countries that are members of the international coalition.³⁵⁸ From 2001 to the present, the international donor committee has provided huge amounts of assistance to finance projects around Afghanistan. The introduction of funds and support has helped build national institutions and, through a wide range of projects, has had a positive impact on local communities across the country.³⁵⁹

Four factors pose the greatest risks to macroeconomic growth and stability in Afghanistan:

- Low internal income;
- High inflation;
- Lack of structural reform;
- Weak economic policy and governance.³⁶⁰

In terms of economic development, Afghanistan is highly dependent on foreign aid and investment. Afghanistan imports much more than it currently exports and also has a high external

³⁵⁷ Congressional Research Service: Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief. Updated March 11, 2020, p. 26.

³⁵⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 88.

³⁵⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 167.

debt. The Afghan economy itself is fragmented, largely undocumented and practically unregulated.³⁶¹ Despite the fact that Afghanistan has established its own national banking system, most of the money is still moved by the traditional *hawala* method³⁶², which makes it difficult to track the movement of funds throughout the country, encouraging corruption and illegal activities.³⁶³

Afghanistan's weak economy remains the main source of its internal conflict. The almost complete lack of economic development in Afghanistan, especially in the south, leads to insurgency and weakens the Afghan central government. The legal Afghan economy practically functions at a subsistence level and provides at best only the essentials for the population. Most Afghans rely on international aid, crime or the opium trade.³⁶⁴

The well-being of the population certainly influences economic development. Afghanistan has serious problems with this. According to DoD reports: "The national poverty level in Afghanistan is about 35 percent, or about nine million Afghans who are unable to meet their basic needs. Poverty rates vary between provinces, ranging from 20 percent in Helmand, Farah, Javazjan and Baghlan to over 55 percent in the southern and central provinces of Paktika, Paktya, Logar and Wardak. In some provinces, the poverty rate is as high as 90 percent."³⁶⁵ Also according to available sources: "Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is estimated to be around US \$ 300, making Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world. However, given the low overall level of national income, it is difficult to measure poverty rates in Afghanistan. A National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) survey conducted in the spring of 2007 showed that approximately 50 percent of the Afghan population lives below the poverty line. An additional 20 percent of the population is concentrated close to the poverty

³⁶⁰ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 91.

³⁶¹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-1.

³⁶² Hawala is a popular and informal value transfer system based not on the movement of cash, or on telegraph or computer network wire transfers between banks. In the most basic variant of the hawala system, money is transferred via a network of hawala brokers, or hawaladars. It is the transfer of money without actually moving it. In fact, a successful definition of the hawala system that is used is "money transfer without money movement". The unique feature of the system is that no promissory instruments are exchanged between the hawala brokers; the transaction takes place entirely on the honor system. As the system does not depend on the legal enforceability of claims, it can operate even in the absence of a legal and juridical environment. Trust and extensive use of connections are the components that distinguish it from other remittance systems. Hawaladar networks are often based on membership in the same family, village, clan, or ethnic group, and cheating is punished by effective ex-communication and "loss of honor"—leading to severe economic hardship. [<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/hawala.asp>], read 26.06.2020.

³⁶³ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-1.

³⁶⁴ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-2.

³⁶⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 73.

line and is at risk of falling into poverty. Poverty may be even higher among rural and nomadic populations."³⁶⁶

Given these economic indicators, it is clear that Afghanistan will continue to rely on foreign aid and assistance before the incomes of the population reach a level sufficient to support the government. The successful exploitation of Afghanistan's rich natural resources can bring economic growth and stability to the country, but this requires security and a significant reduction in corruption. Security and a successful economy go hand in hand; Afghanistan cannot get one without the other. Furthermore, Afghanistan has the capacity to produce considerable amounts of food, but many fields are currently used for illegal poppy production instead.³⁶⁷

To support the development of the economy the ANDS has been developed, which provides a comprehensive framework within which the GIRoA and the international community coordinate their reconstruction and development efforts. The GIRoA developed the ANDS over a three year period in close collaboration with the international community. However, the implementation of the ANDS "was hampered by a lack of coordination and political will". Three divisions of GIRoA were entrusted with the implementation from ANDS: the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and the Government Coordinating Committee.³⁶⁸

To enhance the achievement of positive results in economic development, the United States has settled four priorities for economic management:

- Carrying out economic policy of the free market at the highest government levels;
- Increasing public resources;
- Fighting inflation;
- Implementation of structural reforms.³⁶⁹

These priorities supported ANDS's goals as well as development activities that support the overall COIN strategy. This required political will, sound policies and structural reforms on the part of GIRoA, without which recovery and development efforts would not be able to reach their full potential.³⁷⁰ In July 2009, the UNAMA and the US Embassy in Kabul held a donor

³⁶⁶ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 64.

³⁶⁷ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-1.

³⁶⁸ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 48.

³⁶⁹ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 92.

³⁷⁰ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 92.

meeting to call for increased contributions to Afghanistan and better coordination of reconstruction and development efforts.³⁷¹

It should be noted that over the course of the operation, Afghanistan has not received funding to fully implement the ANDS. Initially, US \$ 20 billion was promised to support ANDS, but in fact they only received US \$ 14 billion. The GIRoA itself estimates the cost of fully completing ANDS at US \$ 50 billion.³⁷²

Since Afghanistan is essentially an agricultural country, it was assumed that in order to achieve significant progress in economic development, Afghanistan urgently needed to improve the productivity of its agricultural sector. In this regard, the US and the international coalition have made efforts to develop the agricultural and rural economy in Afghanistan. These efforts were focused on:

- Creating markets for legal agricultural products;
- Developing agricultural infrastructure that will enable Afghans to occupy these markets;
- Building human capital that will enable the agricultural sector to sustain and improve.³⁷³

This support came from the belief that a strong agricultural sector would improve the economic well-being of millions of Afghans, which in turn would reduce the production of illegal drugs, give citizens a stake in peaceful, constitutional governance, and maintain long-term security and stability in Afghanistan³⁷⁴. Since 2008, USAID has supported the growth of commercial agriculture and strengthened partnerships with the private sector and private and public distribution services, leveraged the experience of US universities in agriculture and water supply, built and improved market infrastructure and improved access to capital through a new loan guarantee program.³⁷⁵

USAID developed Alternative Development and Agriculture (ADAG) programs that have created legitimate alternatives to poppy production, helping communities to effectively promote legal crops, products and services. ADAG began to operate throughout the country in "both poppy and non-poppy areas, promoting and accelerating the economic development of agricul-

³⁷¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 38.

³⁷² US DoD Report to Congress (June 2009), p. 48.

³⁷³ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 16.

³⁷⁴ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 24.

³⁷⁵ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 68.

ture". According reports: "The ADAG programs have partnered with a variety of organizations, including the GIROA institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, other donors, PRTs, and the US military."³⁷⁶

Despite ongoing efforts, agriculture in Afghanistan has generally remained at the subsistence level, with few products aside from poppy destined for export. Agriculture remains the central pillar of the Afghan economy as it generates 31 percent of its GDP, but Afghanistan remains a land-scarce country. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 12 percent of Afghanistan's land is arable, but Afghans use only half of that for the agriculture. Therefore, food imports remain vital, as the World Food Program reports that the majority of Afghans are food insecure, lacking consistent reliable access to necessary food.³⁷⁷

The creation of bilateral enterprises can be cited as positive examples of supporting the development of the Afghan economy. In December 2010, and with the support of NTM-A/CSTC-A through the Afghan First program, an Afghan firm and an Austrian firm signed a US \$ 5 million joint venture agreement to manufacture and certify power transformers and other electrical equipment. This created new jobs and supported the local production. This was followed in March 2011 by a second joint venture for the production of fire doors and windows, involving two Afghan firms and an Indian company.³⁷⁸

In January 2010, the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO³⁷⁹) launched operations in Afghanistan to identify and create economic opportunities to directly support the civilian and military COIN strategy. It remains a key organization for promoting economic growth in Afghanistan.³⁸⁰

The TFBSO's mission was to reduce violence, increase stability, and restore economic normalcy in areas where insecurity had led to economic hardship. The TFBSO used a number of programs that encouraged US and international business investment; promoted industrial development; and accelerated the development of banking and financial systems, agricultural revital-

³⁷⁶ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 68.

³⁷⁷ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-6.

³⁷⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2011, p 48.

³⁷⁹ The TFBSO was created by the US Department of Defense in 2006 to use the US and international economic power as a strategic tool for promoting economic stability in Iraq. See more: [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1243/RAND_RR1243.pdf], read 30.03.2021.

ization and the development of Afghanistan's natural resources.³⁸¹ In 2010, TFBSO conducted "over 60 separate site visits throughout Afghanistan, assessing many critical sectors of the Afghan economy".³⁸²

The TFBSO concluded that for economic growth, Afghanistan must develop its own independent sources of local income. The mining industry has been specifically identified as a key area for TFBSO's economic development because of its potential to attract foreign investment and generate significant government revenues. The group noted that accelerating this development will create a local income stream for Afghanistan and, ultimately, economic sovereignty.³⁸³ Although Afghanistan has limited exploration for minerals and other natural resources, the small amount of research that has been completed has produced promising results and directions for the future³⁸⁴.

The US and donor countries have helped build an efficient infrastructure for Afghanistan. According to experts, the existing infrastructure can be maintained and remain functional, even with a possible reduction in aid. However, this can only happen because of the available and renewable resources, experience and support provided by sustainable economic growth. Insecurity, declining donor funding, and a reluctance to invest or keep money in the country all contribute to the economic recession.³⁸⁵

According available sources the main challenges to achieving economic stabilization are lack of financial stability and the transition from a state, "command economy to market economic growth". Also the degree of progress will depend on tangible results in the creation and implementation of the legal and regulatory framework necessary to stimulate private investment; completion of major infrastructure projects in the field of energy, road, rail and air transportation; financial sector reform; and increasing the availability of credit, the agricultural and agroindustry value chain, extractive manufacturing and small and medium-sized enterprise development in key sectors that can contribute to employ creation, trade and commerce.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁰ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. October 2011, p. 96.

³⁸¹ US DoD report to Congress (October 2011), p. 96.

³⁸² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 64.

³⁸³ US DoD report to Congress (April 2010), p. 65.

³⁸⁴ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 72.

³⁸⁵ Lebovic (2019), p. 167.

Donor countries are currently continuing to work with "the Afghan government to implement economic reforms to boost economic growth and government revenue". Further international support for economic development builds on the Afghan government's progress on economic and social reforms needed to remove restrictions on private sector investment to spur economic growth and employ creativity.³⁸⁷

The Afghan economy has improved significantly since 2001, but the overwhelming majority of Afghans still survive at the subsistence level. Drug production and trade as well their impact on the development of economy, government corruption and poor security indicate the gravity of the situation.³⁸⁸ As the planned withdrawal of US troops and reduced support approaches, low economic growth looks quite ominous, given the high level of poverty in Afghanistan and the focus of US assistance in the vast majority of cases being the security sector³⁸⁹. These negative assessments could be counterbalanced by significant increases in living standards in Afghanistan and public finances as well as the development of key industries over the past few years. Historically, Afghanistan has served as an economic crossroads between Asia and Europe, but now the country faces a similar crossroads, where a failure of security could derail economic development or economic development could drive gains in political stability and security.³⁹⁰

Without further economic improvement in Afghanistan, the Taliban will probably never stop resisting. Afghanistan's largest potential assets include its central location between Asia and Europe and its untapped mineral wealth. The exploitation of the natural wealth and economic benefits of its geographic location will take decades and will require significant improvements in the security situation.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 88.

³⁸⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2019, p. 83.

³⁸⁸ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-16.

³⁸⁹ Lebovic (2019), p. 167.

³⁹⁰ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-16.

³⁹¹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 3-16.

4.3 Support from international coalition in the social domain

4.3.1 Social conditions in the country

Afghanistan does not have a single, clearly defined social hierarchical network. Various competitive hierarchies exist throughout Afghanistan, especially since ISAF began helping the development of the GIRoA. The GIRoA exists as a powerful organization in the metropolitan area, but weakens every kilometer further from Kabul. In rural areas and cities outside Kabul, the ability to influence social change revolves around male heads and their families, various tribes and their leaders and religious leaders.³⁹²

Afghanistan is facing a socially unstable environment due to several factors. First, the Afghan people are under pressure from a conflict created by influential people in their; namely the insurgent groups, the GIRoA and the traditional system of tribal and religious leaders. Second, Sunni and Shiite Islamic groups are still fighting over the rift that occurred more than 1,300 years ago. Third, the ANSF are showing improvements in their military effectiveness, but still have to prove they can protect Afghan citizens from insurgents. Many Afghans fear that the ANP, part of the ANSF, will only defend their ethnic group, because ANP members often come from a predominantly local tribe rather than the entire community such as the ANA. Finally, some Afghan tribes still continue historical feuds against other local tribes.³⁹³

Characterizing the social picture of the country, it should be noted that historically tribal and religious culture prevails in Afghanistan, which contradicts the semblance of Western democratic ideas imposed by the national government. Most Afghans are Muslim and follow many Muslim practices, but the extent to which they do so varies dramatically between tribes and subsections of each tribe. The 2010 Global Peace Index ranked Afghanistan at 147 out of 149 countries, making it the third least peaceful country among the countries included in the study. Afghanistan is among the least developed countries in the world, which makes living conditions for most of the country very poor, with limited access to education, housing, work and health care. Many Afghans rely on readily available and inexpensive opium to cope with the stresses of their lives and reduce the pain of injury and illness; adults even give it to sick children, which

³⁹² TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-13.

³⁹³ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-6.

creates a cycle of addiction. Women's rights exist in words and politics, but the Afghan government rarely enforces their rights.³⁹⁴

Much of Afghanistan faces dire social conditions, especially women and children, who are exploited by religious and traditional systems without consequences. Rampant poverty, lack of a stable, effective government, corruption and insurgency fosters a society that is continually unable to meet the basic needs of many of its inhabitants. On the other hand, historians and analysts acknowledge that the tribal system, rampant drug culture and other local cultural practices favor certain groups, especially warlords, drug lords and others, who are now identified as insurgents.³⁹⁵

To improve social conditions in the country and support the GIRoA, the forces of the international coalition have made efforts since the beginning of the operation in Afghanistan to develop social stability and improve the situation. To do this, international groups and NGOs provide advisory assistance, extend financial support and partner with representatives of the GIRoA and state structures in many areas of the social sphere. Due to their importance to achieving the goals of the entire operation, the international coalition focuses on the development of health care, education, and gender equality.

4.3.2 Healthcare development

Many Afghans suffer from poor health related to a lack of hospitals, poor drinking water, high risk of infectious diseases and drug use. While poor health care affects men, women and children, the consequences devastate women and children the most. Approximately 109 children are born for every 1000 adolescents aged 15-19 in Afghanistan each year. Twenty percent of children die before the age of five. Most women do not receive medical care during pregnancy or childbirth, which contributes significantly to the high mortality of mothers during childbirth. Further complications arise from the fact that most women are young and malnourished. Approximately 97 percent of women in Afghanistan do not use birth control because men do not allow it. Even if Afghan women choose to engage in family planning, they will need access to a clinic for birth control.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-1.

³⁹⁵ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-2.

³⁹⁶ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-7.

The ANDS in the medical field stipulated that by 2010, the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) should be available to at least 90 percent of the population³⁹⁷. This meant that significant international assistance, including funding, staffing, mentoring and assistance, was required to continue to provide the level of services and to develop a plan for a self-sustaining health system³⁹⁸.

To improve the situation, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has developed a program that includes maternal and newborn health, child health and immunization, catering, infectious diseases, mental health, disability, and the supply of essential drugs. In September 2008, 80 percent of the population had access to BPHS, up from 8 percent in 2001. In the summer of 2008, USAID and the GIRoA signed a five-year agreement to provide up to US \$ 236 million to fund additional health services in 13 Afghan provinces, leveraging and managing funds through GIRoA's internal processes. Building on this precedent, the European Commission also decided to start funding through GIRoA-driven processes.³⁹⁹

Further work continued with the MoH to improve its ability to plan and manage activities, allocate resources, build human capacity and strengthen the health information system. The United States, international support and Afghan efforts have made it the first line ministry in Afghanistan to be eligible for direct funding from the US government. This made the MoH a model for good governance and *Afghanization*. The agreements have allowed the ministry to spend US \$ 6 million over a five-year period beginning in 2010 on health interventions, allowing the GIRoA to make its own decisions when purchasing NGO services to provide health care to Afghans.⁴⁰⁰

Improvements in equipment have led to improved availability of medicine. In 2002, only 9 percent of the population had access to basic health care within the MoH's target of two hours' walk. In 2012, 68 percent of the population was able to reach a health facility (public or private) within one hour on foot or by animal conveyance. In urban areas, health care is much more affordable (97 percent); however, access to them for Afghans in rural areas (63 percent) and among the nomadic population (46 percent) is declining. Overall, 85 percent can reach a health facility (public or private) within one hour by any form of transport (100 percent of the

³⁹⁷ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 55.

³⁹⁸ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 71.

³⁹⁹ US DoD Report to Congress (January 2009), p. 71.

⁴⁰⁰ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 81.

urban population, 81 percent of the rural population, and 81 percent of the nomadic population).⁴⁰¹

The impact of increased access to essential health services has led to dramatic improvements in health outcomes, according to the MoH's 2011 mortality survey. The under-5 mortality rate fell from 257 to 97 deaths per capita. The infant mortality rate decreased from 172 to 77 per 1000 live births. Family planning increased as contraception prevalence increased from 10 percent to 20 percent and the total fertility rate fell from 6.3 to 5.1. The maternal mortality rate has dropped sharply from 1,600 to 327 per 100,000 births. Maternal health indicators improved as antenatal care coverage increased from 16 percent to 60 percent, and skilled attendance at births also increased from 14 percent to 34 percent. While these statistics are based on imperfect reporting mechanisms and are not yet fully developed, they nevertheless point to promising trends in the availability and quality of health care in Afghanistan and the quality of life of the Afghan population.⁴⁰²

Afghanistan has made significant strides in the health sector since 2001 with support from the United States and other donors. The introduction of the BPHS in 2004 and the Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) in 2005 are largely responsible for the improvement in the quality and accessibility of health care in Afghanistan. By 2012, 2,136 medical facilities had been opened across Afghanistan, up from 498 in 2002. In addition, 104 mobile health teams and over 12,000 health posts have been established, complementing Afghanistan's health system in more remote areas. The internet and communication technologies are also used to a limited extent to provide access to health care through e-health and telemedicine initiatives, including text message reminders for vaccinations and remote diagnostics.⁴⁰³

Despite increasing access to health care, Afghanistan still lacks the human capital to meet the health needs of the Afghan population. The World Health Organization recommends one doctor for every 600 people. In Afghanistan there is currently one doctor for every 5000 people. However, access to quality education has increased for all levels of care: doctors, community health nurses, midwives and nurses. In addition, the ministries of health and social development

⁴⁰¹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 85.

⁴⁰² US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 85.

⁴⁰³ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 84.

are supporting the development of a medical council that will work to establish a licensing and accreditation system for health employees and hospitals.⁴⁰⁴

Despite the improvements noted above, significant challenges remain. For example, Afghanistan continues to have some of the poorest health indicators in the world. The health status of women and children remains dire, especially among nomadic and rural populations, as well as in disadvantaged areas. Currently, two out of three women give birth at home without qualified medical professionals and in unsafe conditions, one in ten Afghan children dies before age five, one Afghan woman dies every two hours from pregnancy-related causes, and only 56 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water.⁴⁰⁵

4.3.3 Development of education

The low level of education in Afghanistan makes it difficult to advance in modern society. In 2011, only about 28 percent of the Afghan population over 15 years old could read and write in any of the regional languages. About 43 percent of Afghan men had basic literacy skills, but only 12 percent of women were literate. According to the CIA World Factbook, male children attend school for 11 years, but women receive only four years of formal education.⁴⁰⁶

Insecurity in several key areas of Afghanistan continues to impede progress, forcing school closures. In areas where Afghans feel safe, more children are attending school. Improvements in security are essential to create a sustainable and viable educational program. Delays in the approval of the Minister of Higher Education are limiting progress, as many decisions of the high level of education await this confirmation. Some of these important issues include the establishment of key committees and a donor coordination group to support the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Higher Education.⁴⁰⁷ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that attacks on schools in Afghanistan have increased. In 2006, the number of attacks more than doubled since 2005 from 98 to 220. From 2008 to 2009, the number of attacks almost doubled again, when they increased from 348 to 610.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. October 2011, p. 98-100.

⁴⁰⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 85.

⁴⁰⁶ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-7.

⁴⁰⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 82.

USAID and the US DoS continue to work with the Afghan government to improve access and quality of education in Afghanistan, with a focus on improving basic education, supporting higher education, enhancing youth and adult literacy, and developing and/or providing the necessary resources such as textbooks, schools and teachers to support these areas. To ensure the level of teaching, as well as to address the acute shortage of teachers, the international community has provided assistance in the development of the human resources management system. This included assistance in the design and implementation of a teacher certification system, as well as salary reform.⁴⁰⁹

According to ANDS, the GIRoA guaranteed access to primary education for all children by 2020 and ensured that high school attendance is affordable. Access to higher education must be made readily available, and the government must support university graduates in getting jobs. The lack of clear census data makes it difficult to measure progress towards these goals, although it is clear that the number of children in school has risen sharply since the fall of the Taliban. Under the Taliban, about 900,000 boys (and not a single girl) attended school. Today more than six million students attend school, one third of them women. However, Taliban attacks on educational institutions and teachers are diminishing the achievements and investments that have been made in education in Afghanistan.⁴¹⁰ A survey conducted in 2009 by IS-AF found that nearly 80 percent of boys and 58 percent of girls are in school. However, the same survey found that school access varied significantly across provinces.⁴¹¹

In 2010, approximately two-thirds of school-age children were attending primary school. However, access to secondary school was minimal and the quality of education remained low at all levels. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) took the initial steps towards education reform by issuing a new education strategy. When developing the strategy, it was envisaged that the education system should provide the population with the basic skills necessary for the development of the economy. There was also reason to expect the Ministry of Education (MoE) to pursue policies and programs to modernize the education system and create a national vocational education system.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-7.

⁴⁰⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 81.

⁴¹⁰ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. January 2009, p. 72.

⁴¹¹ US DoD Report to Congress: Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2009, p. 55.

⁴¹² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 70.

The MoE has sought to improve its capabilities through strategic planning, organizing teacher registration and improving curricula and materials. Notably, over 50,000 teachers in 11 provinces are participating in on-the-job training. Major donors, including USAID, have initiated working with the MoE to provide provincial teacher training colleges, as well as educational institutions and pre-training courses across the country to keep up with growing student numbers.⁴¹³ During the 2011 school year, more than 70 percent of students had primary education, including over 37 percent of girls. More than 13,000 schools are open throughout the country. These schools employ more than 170,014 teachers who have been trained according to Afghan government standards with the support of USAID.⁴¹⁴

However, despite significant growth, the increase in number of teachers continues to lag behind that of students. The MoE reports that as of the start of the school year in March 2011, 539 schools remain closed due to security, maintenance and administrative issues. Teachers are also leaving because of the beginning of the poppy harvest, staff salary problems and natural disasters, which ultimately deprive some 115,000 children of access to education, mostly in high-risk areas in the southern part of the country.⁴¹⁵

Although the quality of teaching and education remains uneven, the educational level of girls and women in the southern and eastern regions of the country has increased. The education system has been expanded to provide vocational training for young people and literacy for Afghans of all ages. More than 38,190 students were enrolled in 142 schools of technical and vocational education and training in 2012, which is 13,000 more students and 45 more schools compared to the previous school year.⁴¹⁶

Based on the ongoing processes and the ability to carry out general education reforms, it was predicted that, by the start of the RS mission in 2015, Afghanistan would provide access to basic education for more than 77 percent of the school age population. In this regard, the budget assistance programs proposed by USAID with the MoE and the MoHE were aimed at improving access to basic and higher education, increasing literacy, and providing people with

⁴¹³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. October 2011, p. 98-100.

⁴¹⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 86.

⁴¹⁵ US DoD report to Congress (October 2011), p. 98-101.

⁴¹⁶ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 86.

the knowledge and skills that increase their ability to contribute to sustainable economic growth.⁴¹⁷

To date, it is clear that these forecasts have not fully come to fruition. Progress has definitely been made, but not the projected 77 percent by 2015. In 2011, the education level was 31.7 percent, and according to studies conducted in 2018, the adult literacy rate in Afghanistan had increased to 43 percent. The actual growth in educational attainment was 11.3 percent.⁴¹⁸

4.3.4 Support for gender equality

From the point of view of Western civilization, Afghanistan's historical, religious and cultural way of life has disadvantaged women. The international coalition has insisted on involving the female population in stabilization processes, as well as government management and participation in state structures on an equal footing with men.

Under the Afghan constitution, women were given equal rights. While evidence of progress for Afghan women exists across the country, in particular that the National Assembly is 25 percent female, as required by law, many gender inequalities cloud progress. In rural areas, many women still do not even know that the approved constitution gives all Afghan women equal rights. Tribes, local governments and insurgents regularly prosecute women for moral crimes, and women are not allowed to defend against their prosecutors.⁴¹⁹

Afghan women face many barriers to employment. According to 2010 statistics, among those surveyed, only 7 percent of Afghan women are employed, compared with 81 percent of Afghan men. Almost 60 percent of working women earn less than US \$ 100 a month, which is barely enough to support themselves. Even if an Afghan single mother with children can find work, she probably won't be able to earn enough to support her family. Social support for women in employment varies by gender and location. About 73 percent of urban Afghan women support women's employment, but only 29 percent of rural men do the same. Comparatively, 50 percent of urban men support the right of women to work outside the home.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 86.

⁴¹⁸ World Data Atlas: Afghanistan-Adult (15+) literacy rate.

[<https://knoema.com/atlas/Afghanistan/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate>], read 15.08.2020.

⁴¹⁹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-14.

⁴²⁰ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-12.

Slow progress in improving treatment of women may be the result of fear of backlash if women try to assert all of their constitutional rights. Because of centuries of tradition, Afghan men are unlikely to quickly change their attitudes towards women in society. Often women who try to assert their new rights are punished and beaten because they dishonor their families in accordance with the Islamic faith. Until now, the Muslim tradition for women to wear the *burqa* is controversial in Afghanistan, since its citizens consider the *burqa* to be both protective and repressive. In a 2009 poll, 58 percent of Afghan men believed that women should not decide for themselves whether they should wear the *burqa*, but 55 percent of Afghan women believe they should make their own decision.⁴²¹

The empowerment of women is inextricably linked to the achievement of assistance goals for Afghanistan, including improving security, economic opportunities, governance and social development in Afghanistan. The promotion of women's rights is integrated into the overall strategy, and all key programs, including education / literacy, health care, security, rule of law, political participation, and economic development, are described in the US State Department's Regional Stabilization Plan. The US Embassy in Kabul works with the coalition and the Afghan authorities to ensure that reintegration efforts include elements of these programs and continue to protect women's rights. As an example of assistance, the US provided approximately US \$ 153 million to Afghan women in 2009. In 2010, assistance to women totaled more than US \$ 175 million.⁴²²

Investments are being made in girls' education, with aid focused on 25 provinces benefiting more than one million women and girls by expanding the recruitment and training of female teachers. Women's access to health care has increased dramatically since 2001. The number of midwives able to assist in childbirth has quadrupled; the number of health facilities employing female health workers has more than doubled. Existing programs were expanded in the areas of health services, essential medicines, family planning, and antenatal and postnatal care, so that women have access to the services and information they need to be healthy.⁴²³

Between April and June 2010, the Ambassadorial Small Grants Program awarded 109 quick-impact grants to women-led civil service organizations totaling US \$ 696,000. The program al-

⁴²¹ TRADOC G2, May 2011: Operational Environment Assessment (OEA): Afghanistan, p. 1-4-12.

⁴²² US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 71.

⁴²³ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2010, p. 71.

so awarded its first Targeted Sustainability Grant to the Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC). This allowed all women's groups to benefit from this important program. Since the beginning of the program, USAID has awarded 157 grants totaling US \$ 1.4 million.⁴²⁴

Under the Defense Ministry Advisers program, two senior trainers on gender mainstreaming in NTM-A were appointed. They are responsible for mentoring the Afghan ministries of defense and internal affairs on gender mainstreaming and human rights issues. Mentors provide oversight over the development of long-term strategic plans to improve gender inclusion, human rights/dignity and equality issues.⁴²⁵

As part of ANSF's training and development plans, the ANA has created its own female combat groups, which were founded through support of the United States Marine Corps (USMC). Also, female personnel were recruited to escort military patrols to engage local Afghan women and communities in open communication, thereby fostering civil-military interaction and building trust, cooperation and security. The Afghan Special Unit selected the first 11 women in 2010 to form Cultural Support Teams (CSTs) in support of their strike force. The Afghan CST promotes the *Afghanization* of night operations as they interact with the population and help care for the women and children encountered during special operations.⁴²⁶

To reduce discrimination and violence against women, the GIROA passed a law prohibiting violence against women and adopted a policy to eliminate discrimination against women. However, an implementation of these agreements has been slow, and violence against women and girls remains widespread. In March 2012, a statement by the Council of Ulema, endorsed by President Karzai, set out stricter standards of conduct for women than the Afghan constitution. This raised concerns about its negative impact on the advancement of the rights of Afghan women and the possible halt to the development of gender equality.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 83.

⁴²⁵ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 93.

⁴²⁶ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 93.

⁴²⁷ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. April 2012, p. 93.

Despite ongoing social efforts, where improvements in education, health and women's political participation are visible, violence against women and girls continues, and women's health indicators remain some of the worst in the world.⁴²⁸

Women and girls in Afghanistan continue to face widespread discrimination and human rights violations. The country ranks among the least favorable in terms of gender inequality, and the literacy rate for women is one of the lowest in the world. Violence against women and girls is common. With women making up at least 50 percent of Afghanistan's population, progress on gender equality is critical to the country's future and the stability of the nation.⁴²⁹ The problems of poverty, illiteracy and poor health care continue to affect women disproportionately, and will require long-term and sustained efforts to address them⁴³⁰.

4.4 Conclusions

The international coalition made various efforts throughout the operation in the areas of economic development and social support. Most prominent among these efforts is the PRT, particularly during the stabilization phase of the operation.

By their nature, PRTs were not a homogeneous entity, operating according to a pattern and uniform organization among all teams. This diversity was primarily due to the heterogeneity of Afghanistan itself, which was due to regional differences in the country. Another important factor was the organization of the leadership of the PRTs themselves, which were part of the comprehensive approach of the international coalition to the stabilization and reconstruction processes.

Despite common goals and efforts, the teams were directed by different countries participating in the international coalition. This disaggregation influenced the specifics of the leadership and management of PRTs. In some teams, the presence of military personnel prevailed, and in some, preference was given to civilian personnel with different emphases in performing tasks and organizing actions. These differences were due not only to the characteristics of national governance and the associated caveats, but also to the level of stability and security in the provinces.

⁴²⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. November 2010, p. 83.

⁴²⁹ UNICEF: Gender focus, Gender equality for girls and boys. [<https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/gender-focus>], read 02.05.2020

Due to the fact that the level of security in the provinces directly affected the functionality of the PRT, reconstruction and stabilization operations depended on the presence and effectiveness of military units at the local level. This created an interconnection between the military and civilian sectors of the operation. As in the case of military operations, some representatives of the coalition were quite sensitive to the degree and level of risk, being unwilling to expose PRT personnel unnecessarily. The factor of national caveats and sensitivity to risk was used by the insurgents for their own interests and therefore reduced the coalition's effectiveness.

The Americans shift of focus back to Afghanistan had a positive impact on the effectiveness of PRTs, as it attracted more competent personnel to the reconstruction process improved the effectiveness of joint actions with USAID and increased, albeit locally, the overall level of security in provinces. The changes made it possible to expand the level and effectiveness of programs to support the population at the provincial level and to keep accountability of actions in cooperation with local authorities and the population. These changes and improvements in efficiency ultimately aligned with the goals and objectives of the entire operation.

The plans and programs for reconstruction were aligned with established relations with representatives of local authorities and leaders, including the security forces. The coalition relationships with local leaders were not always clear and constructive, primarily due to the high level of corruption in society and state structures. Consequently, the PRTs' efforts for reconstruction and stability involuntarily helped to establish and strengthen the corrupt, who used international support in their interests, unrelated to the ongoing reconstruction programs. Sometimes the corrupt officials were the only representatives of the legitimate government at the local level, leaving the PRTs with no other choice than to cooperate with them when implementing reconstruction projects and programs.

Since the beginning of the Afghan operation, substantial financial resources have been donated to the country, although not in always the levels originally planned and was needed. Furthermore, a number of countries and international organizations have been making efforts to build a strategy to increase overall economic performance and development of the country in the long term with the involvement of representatives of local political and economic spheres. The processes of economic support for Afghanistan have remained an important link in achieving the goals and objectives of the operations, and are directly dependent on international assistance and support. If donor countries stop or reduce the current amount of support, this will

⁴³⁰ US DoD report to Congress (April 2012), p. 93.

significantly affect the country's economy, which will aggravate instability and further reduce the influence of an already ineffective government, especially in regions of unrest. Conversely, the general level of security in Afghanistan affects the overall economic development and the country's prospects for potential investor and donor countries in the long term.

Since Afghanistan is an agrarian country, the level of agriculture directly affects the economy and the implementation of food programs that could provide for the population. On the other hand, the Taliban's finances largely depend on drug trafficking, and the insurgents oppose the development of agriculture and the resulting decrease in poppy fields, in order to maintain the overall intensity of the armed fight against the coalition and GIRoA. Consequently, the level of security and the presence of armed confrontation in the poppy regions of Afghanistan disrupts the development of agriculture and thus the progress of the country's economic development.

The international community, represented by the coalition, NGOs and USAID, have made numerous efforts to increase agricultural growth and the amount of arable land. Financial resources were allocated for the implementation of the programs. Despite these efforts, agriculture has remained practically at the same level. This state of affairs is directly related to the ineffective struggle surrounding the opium poppy, the level of corruption in government structures and weak political will for the implementation of economic projects.

The level of security, or rather the lack of security, as well as the destructive influence of corrupt officials on government decisions directly affect the growth of priority and promising areas of the economy. As an example, one can cite the topic of the development of mineral deposits, in which Afghanistan is rich. Despite the presence of deposits, active mining exploration and development is not carried out and, in general, an important resource from an economic point of view remains unused. Perhaps in the future there will be shifts in this area, when, improved conditions allow. However, it is worth stating that in the near future the situation is unlikely to change significantly enough to allow the development of these promising sectors of the economy.

Analyzing the development of the Afghan economy, a picture similar to other areas of the operation can be traced. Economic development and the attraction of international assistance from donors and investors directly depend on the level of security and the effectiveness of political leadership. On the other hand, economic development leads to an improvement in the welfare of the population, and thereby a decrease in the level of influence of the insurgents on

the local population. Thus, economic improvements increase the effectiveness of stabilization processes.

Considering the processes taking place in the field of economic development, one can make an unequivocal conclusion that the international community can continue to attract resources and develop strategies for the development of the economy. However, without effective political leadership and stability in the security domain, these efforts will lack effective results. Therefore, improving the economic development of Afghanistan requires first and foremost efforts in the areas of political reform to improve the effectiveness of political leadership, as well as ensuring security and stability. Ultimately, these actions will create preconditions for improving the economic situation in the country, which in turn will make Afghanistan attractive for investors and create preconditions for real growth in economic development.

The effectiveness of the Afghan operation is influenced by social factors and processes taking place in the country. The combination of these processes and factors affects the formation and development of the population as a society. The international community and the coalition are making a number of efforts in the social sphere to create favorable social development for various essential segments of the population.

Afghanistan in the social domain remains a complex country with its own specific way of life, religious culture and social relations between tribes and nationalities. These factors affect the general social background in the country, which must be taken into account when planning and implementing projects in the social domain. Ignorance of the specifics of Afghan society and the inability to develop favorable relations with Afghans at the tribal level can eliminate results in providing assistance and support for social projects.

Since Afghanistan has an unfavorable level of health care, the development of Afghan medicine and the availability of medical services is an important part of social projects from the United States and the coalition partners. In general the support in this domain has led to an improvement in the general health indicators of the population and made it possible to provide health care at the local level.

The overall dynamics of the development of the health care system in the country is positive, which creates the preconditions for further development. The efforts have improved the situation, but a number of problems and challenges also remain. Due the fact that the medical condi-

tion in the country was at the lowest position in the world ranking, it is necessary to further attract significant financial and human resources. Given the limited resources compared the level of need, it will take time for the situation to change. Moreover, as with economics, an important factor in the development of health care is the general security situation in the regions, limiting the availability of medical services in troubled areas with a strong insurgent presence.

The education system, given the general level of illiteracy of the population, is another complex situation. In the perspective developing Afghan society into a self-sufficient and stable state, the development of the education system is an extremely important component. With an insufficient level of education and literacy of the population, it is impossible to talk about the creation of effective state, power and public structures. Examples, such as an adult Afghan being forced to use a fingerprint as a signature because of his inability to read and write can be found everywhere in Afghanistan.

The development of educational is also affected by the security situation throughout the country. The insurgents oppose the organization of the educational process of the local population and conduct attacks on educational institutions everywhere, including capital. Such attacks in the country are associated with attempts by radical insurgents to intimidate both the local population attending schools and higher educational institutions, and teachers conducting classes and engaging in educational activities.

The intimidation tactics are yielding results. Despite positive trends in the number of educational projects and the activities of the coalition and international organizations, the level of attendance at educational institutions and the total number of qualified teachers still remains low and does not meet expectations and goals. Administrative and cultural factors affect the level and scale of the organization of the educational process. For example, there are different opinions about appropriate education levels between girls and boys. However, these factors are secondary and completely surmountable with proper organization of the educational process. The real challenges influencing the processes are the issues associated with safety and the organization of educational institutions.

Reflecting on the level and necessity of education for girls and boys, the topic of gender equality and the general status of women in Afghan society is unwittingly raised. This is due to long-term cultural and religious traditions in which women were given a diminished place in Afghan society. Indeed, the issues of gender equality have a long history based on the well-established

customs and traditions of individual tribes and nationalities. However, during the reign of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the situation with gender equality worsened.

When providing support to GIRoA in constructing a state, the United States and the international coalition, using Western liberal and democratic models of state structure, insist that women have equal rights and opportunities with men. As a result of these efforts, the situation of gender equality has improved in some regions of the country, primarily those where women's rights have not historically been extraordinary. Also, at the national level, women's rights began to be recognized and a number of gender projects began to develop successfully. However, overall the effort remains ineffective and has not brought the desired results. This is largely due to conservative, centuries-old cultural and religious traditions, especially in remote areas, where these traditions still have a strong influence and the local population sees no reason to change.

In terms of gender equality Afghanistan still remains in the lowest position in terms of world rankings. Changing the established situation will require a lot of effort and additional resources. The process of introducing the ideas of gender equality a great deal of time, during which it is necessary to change the ingrained centuries-old traditions and foundations. The issue of gender equality can best be resolved by actively involving authoritative and influential public and religious figures in the communities and tribes, because the whole process is associated with a change in the established social norms of Afghan society.

In general it is essential to widely involve the Afghans themselves in solving the issues of social development of society, because only this can lead to positive changes. Otherwise, the actions of the coalition will have no effect, but rather, on the contrary, will lead to the opposite results, since they will be perceived by Afghans as attempts to impose norms and morals alien to them. This, in turn, will lead to rejection, which the insurgents will certainly use to attract sympathy and support of the local population to their side.

5 SUMMARY

5.1 Afghanistan as an object of research

Afghanistan is a rather specific and peculiar country with its own characteristics and differences. The roots of the uniqueness of Afghanistan as a country and a society go deep into history. From the point of view of historical analysis, a certain recurring model of the development of society in relation to the foreign presence is traced, which, starting from ancient times and regardless of the state system, invariably leads to a similar result. Due to this cyclical process taking place in Afghanistan, it is called "graveyard of empires". This term can still be found in use by a number of international experts when assessing the effectiveness of the coalition as part of the ongoing operation in Afghanistan. This statement is conditioned by the fact that, although there are no more empires in the modern world, the actual development of events in Afghanistan affects the political and social processes in the countries participating in the coalition.

Returning to the study of the Afghan operation, it should be noted that, despite the extremely tight timing for preparation, the analysis of the historical experience of similar operations in Afghanistan and in other countries was conducted in advance. After a couple of decades it is possible to say that given the time-frame required for a full analysis of the situation and assessment of the operation, the preparation was not enough. A number of analytical errors and omissions have been made, and the operation itself has turned from a short-term military campaign into a long-term and resource-intensive set of activities and events that has continued for 20 years.

These historical events and processes naturally led to the coming of the Taliban regime to power, the appearance of al-Qaeda representatives in the country and the organization of terrorist attacks on 9/11, which later became the trigger for the start of the operation in Afghanistan.

The aim of the presented thesis is to find answers to the main question: What strategic experience can be learned from the operation in Afghanistan? The research involves analyzing events and actions by searching for available information from open sources. As described in the first chapter, the study itself displays a set of actions and factors that can be grouped according to the following contextual dimensions: Ends (goals and purposes), Ways, Means, Measurement, Constraints and Assumptions.

Research questions are grouped thematically and divided into four categories. Below are generalized answers to the questions posed, which constitute a complex answer to the main question of the thesis.

5.2 Goals and purposes of the operation

The tasks of the operation were initially reduced to the violent overthrow of the existing state system and the ruling regime, which included removing the Taliban from power, ending the shelter of terrorists in Afghanistan and neutralizing the leadership of al-Qaeda, primarily Osama bin Laden, who, after the 9/11 attacks became a symbol of the confrontation between radical Islamism and the world of Western democracies.

Thus, from the moment the operation began for the United States, and then for the international coalition led by NATO, the main tasks of the operation were to remove the Taliban regime from power in Afghanistan and then replace it with a democratically elected government focused on cooperation with the international community. Such a government was supposed to initiate stabilization processes in the country and start building the Afghan state and society, based on a democratic model of state structure with the support of the international community and international organizations.

Based on the general political and strategic situation in the country, the change in the political system and government at the time of the start of the operation could not occur without the activation of hostilities in order to overthrow the Taliban regime. To carry out the primary military phase of the operation, the US SOF and their closest allies joined the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. Subsequently, regular conventional army formations of the US Armed Forces and NATO allies were involved in the operation in the framework of Article 5 of the alliance's collective security. Initially, the plans and means of the operation did not include widespread use of conventional forces, but the circumstances and real strength of the Taliban forced them to change the initial goals. Therefore, the operation began with forceful methods with the subsequent transition to stabilization processes in various spheres of society and the organization of a political settlement of the conflict in order to establish a constitutional political system in Afghanistan with a steadily developing society and economy.

5.3 Ways and Means in order to achieve objectives

During the tenure of the Taliban regime, the Afghan economy declined and the general standard of living of the population, which was already poor, fell into decay, and the country slipped to the bottom in many economic indicators. To achieve the objectives of the operation and to satisfactorily stabilize the situation in the country, military success alone was not enough. It was necessary to provide Afghanistan with political and economic assistance, as well as support for government initiatives in the social sphere. In order to bring the country out of the crisis, it was necessary to provide comprehensive assistance, which could allow launching the mechanisms of political and economic formation of the state and constitutional democracy as a form of government. Reforms and assistance were important in terms of separating the country from the ideas of religious radicalism and an authoritarian dictatorial form of government. Furthermore, based on the negative economic and social ratings and indicators, it was necessary to launch assistance mechanisms in the economic and social spheres to create a favorable environment for economic growth and increase the welfare of the population.

The operation in Afghanistan should be viewed as a complex process in which various domains are involved in order to achieve common goals. The process of political settlement in Afghanistan began immediately after the initial results were achieved in the military campaign, thereby creating the preconditions for the start of building a new democratic state system. With the mediation of the UN, funds began to be allocated to Afghanistan to build an effective and democratic system of power, which could begin to lead the country in order to create a stable and efficient state. Funds were provided for the creation of state structures based on programs for reconstruction.

The operation itself can be divided into three main phases: OEF, ISAF and RS mission. Despite the fact that the United States shifted their focus from Afghanistan to Iraq, the actions of the American troops to ensure security and stability within the OEF operation continued under this separate command, but were still coordinated through ISAF and NATO. During the period of stabilization operations in a strategic sense, the OEF was part of a unified set of actions together with ISAF. Subsequently, Operation Freedom Sentinel supplemented the RS mission as OEF had supplemented ISAF, which remains to this day and also forms a coherent whole in the context of the entire operation.

Based on the comprehensive approach of the coalition to achieve the goals and objectives of the operation, the actions of the military contingents of the countries of the coalition members, as well as international civil and political organizations, acted jointly at all levels from the operational-tactical to the political-strategic. This approach made it possible to better coordinate joint actions.

The international coalition has invested efforts in the development of various branches of government and security structures. The range of assistance provided included a large number of actions and activities. Efforts were made to establish government structures at all levels down to the local level of government. Assistance was also provided in the development of the local security structures as well as the economy and social spheres of society. For this, structures and teams were created for the reconstruction and organization of the state structures of Afghanistan. Donor countries and international organizations have provided financial assistance and funds for the implementation of projects and programs for stabilization and reconstruction. After finalizing the military campaign to removal the Taliban from power in the country, the international community provided substantial assistance to support Afghanistan in the political, economic and social domains within the framework of the operation.

5.4 Measurement and reasons for the transformation of the main stages of the operation

5.4.1 The reasons for the creation of ISAF and the international coalition

The OEF was conducted under US command with partial Allied integration in the planning and execution of the operation. The allies were involved by the Americans in the operation in order to demonstrate military unity in the framework of collective security and strategic interaction. The OEF itself conducted complex military actions with the aim of eliminating the Taliban as a military force and removing the regime from power by force. Initially, the US political leadership did not consider the actions of the Americans and the coalition to be a long term commitment.

During the initiation of the operation in Afghanistan, certain differences appeared between the Americans and the Europeans in the conduct of combat operations by the expeditionary forces in isolation from the centers of support and control. The differences in approaches influenced the joint actions and the effectiveness of the operations. To improve the operational effect during joint operations, synchronization of actions and unity of command were required. The

Americans, as the lead nation and initiator of the OEF, took command of the entire operation, and it remained that way for the remainder of the operation.

After a series of military victories and the general success of the Americans, it was believed that the armed groups of the Taliban were militarily disorganized and no longer posed a serious threat. This opinion was reflected in the progression to the next phase of the operation and the emergence of confidence that the Americans could transfer responsibility for the operation to their allies without negative consequences for themselves. This allowed them to shift their focus from Afghanistan to Iraq.

After the change of focus, the Americans helped build an international coalition under NATO command. They took the role of a participant with a reduced military contingent both under the ongoing OEF and ISAF actions. This course of events allowed the United States to concentrate its efforts on Iraq and made it possible not to significantly disadvantage the main forces into two theaters of military operations.

5.4.2 ISAF's conversion to RS mission

Initially, ISAF operations focused on efforts to organize security and stability in the capital region, as well as organizing the training process for the ANSF. Subsequently, ISAF's actions expanded to other regions and covered the entire territory of the country.

As ISAF expanded, the insurgents also increased their activity and opposition to the coalition. This led to an increase in the intensity of hostilities, the involvement of the coalition in an open armed confrontation with the insurgent forces and a general deterioration of the situation, which began to negatively impact the effectiveness of the stabilization and reconstruction processes. All this forced the Americans to reconsider the importance of the operation in the military and political context and draw appropriate conclusions. Ultimately, this led to the fact that President Obama decided to significantly increase the number of American troops to improve the effectiveness of ISAF and stabilize the situation.

This approach made it possible to turn the tide in favor of the international coalition and seize the initiative. Thus, the coalition was able to continue to take action to implement plans for stabilization and reconstruction. The increase in the number of coalition troops, especially the increase in the composition of the American contingent, also came at a price. The increase in

the intensity of hostilities increased the total costs of the entire Afghan operation, to include the number of combat losses, which were influential in the context of the formation of public opinion. All this led to a sharp increase in anti-war sentiment in the international community and the emergence of pressure on the political leadership of the coalition member-countries in order to curtail hostilities in Afghanistan and switch to another form of the operation.

Contrary to existing plans and expectations during the OEF and ISAF, Afghanistan has not turned into a stable country with a strong, capable and popularly supported political power and state structure. The overall level of security was based entirely on the international and, above all, the American military presence. The level of activity and effectiveness of the insurgents depended on the activity and initiative, as well as the qualitative and quantitative superiority of the international forces over the insurgent forces. The level of skills, knowledge and training of ANSF remained low without seeming to make progress. The entire operation became a costly enterprise that could last for decades without significant changes in the direction desired by the international coalition. In fact, by the end of ISAF, a stalemate arose in Afghanistan that played into the hands of the Taliban rather than the international coalition. This was due to the growing discontent and anti-war sentiments in the world, the amount of human, financial and technical resources allocated for the operation, as well as the difficult relationship between the United States and the political leadership of Afghanistan.

Since ISAF's actions and the ongoing stabilization and reconstruction processes did not lead to the desired result, the nature of the operation needed to change. It was decided to shift the focus of the operation to a mentoring and training plane, as well as to stop the participation of coalition forces in hostilities, giving the Afghans themselves the opportunity to act independently. The international coalition was assigned the role of advisers and instructors in Afghan state institutions and power structures without involvement in hostilities and with a gradual planned withdrawal of coalition troops from the country. That is, while planning and carrying out the RS mission, the conditions were developed for successfully completing the operation within the specified time frame and saving face. The end of the RS mission sent a signal to the international community that Afghanistan had become stable and capable of independent state management of the country with the prerequisites for the end of a long-term armed confrontation and conflict. For the international coalition, the new vector of the operation in Afghanistan made it possible to optimize the allocated resources, reduce the number of combat losses and reduce the degree of anti-war sentiments in the international community. For Afghans, the initiation of the RS mission allowed them to start making decisions on their own and

take responsibility for everything that happens in the country, and receive the necessary support from the international community.

5.5 Constraints and assumption regarding the effectiveness of the operation

5.5.1 The effectiveness of the processes and actions since the start of the operation

Initially, the general plan of action in Afghanistan did not include plans for long term expenditures for the development of Afghanistan. This approach of the United States influenced the overall course of events and gave the Taliban and al-Qaeda an opportunity to gain time, draw their own conclusions from what happened and change the conceptual order of warfare.

The insurgents' new strategy was aimed at reorganizing for continuing conflict over the long-term with the United States and the international coalition. Therefore, they chose a strategy of attrition to organize their armed confrontation, which made it possible to conduct long-term hostilities aimed at inflicting maximum losses on the coalition at acceptable costs and favorable conditions for the insurgents themselves. This allowed the Taliban and al-Qaeda to regroup and then continue the armed confrontation in their desired direction.

The Taliban succeeded in their chosen attrition strategy because it proved effective for the insurgency. The conflict became protracted, forcing the coalition to spend and more and more resources without real chances of improving the situation and achieving the desired strategic effect. Discontent also grew and support within the coalition itself diminished, which in turn led to a fall in the popularity of the Afghan operation and an increase in anti-war sentiment globally. In addition, it can be said that the strategy chosen by the insurgents, as well as the unproductive activities of the coalition, only increased the influence and support of the Taliban by the local population.

The resulting situation forced the United States and the coalition to repeatedly change their actions and plans. The counterbalance against the growing influence of the insurgents and to change the situation in a favorable direction was a significant increase in the number of American troops. This approach had a positive effect on the course of the operation, as it made it possible to turn the tide in their favor. However, such a development of events could not continue for the long-term, because this significantly increased the funds allocated to ISAF's needs and expenses. Ultimately, this forced the coalition to look for other ways of developing the operation, aside from relying solely on force methods and an increased military presence.

In parallel with the hostilities, stabilization and reconstruction actions were carried out in the non-military component of the operation. This was due to the importance of supporting the political leadership of the country, and facilitating the required reforms, economic and social transformations of an integrated approach. Given the complexity of actions and the division of responsibilities among coalition partners, the growing number of coalition member countries has had a favorable effect on the volume of assistance offered. In the field of reconstruction processes in the economic and social domains, the actions of the PRTs proved to be effective, especially after the Americans returned their focus to Afghanistan.

Despite all its efforts, PRT still remained a more effective tool at the local rather than national level, and could not significantly affect the overall course of the operation. This was due to the fact that PRTs were heterogeneous in their structure and tasks, had different powers and national caveats, and acted in accordance with the national interests of the countries that led the PRT. In addition, the attitude of the Afghan political and administrative leadership has not always been constructive and positive in relation to the actions of the PRT. Because of the level of corruption and the frequent unwillingness to implement reforms of Afghan government organizations, cooperation between PRT and Afghan partners was not always effective.

In general, corruption and the ambitions of the political leadership and the associated power struggle, directly influenced the effectiveness of reforms. There were also attempts by Afghan leaders to use representatives of the coalition to achieve their goals, guided by either their own personal or tribal interests. It is important to note that the United States and the coalition took a number of actions and measures to reduce corruption and influence on political leaders through compromises and making concessions, but this did not always have a positive effect. Many issues arose from the fact that the United States and the coalition built the state and society of Afghanistan in the style of Western democracies and state structure and Afghanistan was not ready for a Western style democracy. In general, Afghan society did not want to change the centuries-old civil and social foundations, and the associated cultural and social values.

5.5.2 Factors affecting the achievement of the objectives and goals of the operation

The most important factors for the success of the operation are: the level of security, the duration of the operation, the organization of political governance, the level of corruption, Pakistani-Afghan relations and the features of Afghan society.

Of all the above factors, the most important factor affecting all processes taking place in Afghanistan and the effectiveness of the coalition's actions is security. The issue of security manifests in all areas and is an absolute condition for the effectiveness of reforms and the implementation of plans for stabilization and reconstruction. To ensure an adequate level of security, the operation involved the troops of the international coalition, as well as ANSF.

In terms of its composition, the coalition is a multinational entity, which for the first time in NATO history was created within the framework of Article 5 of the Alliance to ensure collective security. Therefore, the level of combat readiness seen in this operation is in a way an indicator of NATO's readiness to participate in joint forces in combat anywhere in the world. This level of combat readiness of international forces is applicable to NATO's deterrence policy in relation to possible opponents of the alliance. The successes or failures of the coalition forces in Afghanistan therefore provide a basis for strategic and operational analysts' research around the world.

The level of the coalition forces' combat readiness for joint operations was directly influenced by the organization of the command of the joint coalition forces, as well as the conditions for the use of national contingents. In addition to the NATO command, national chains of command and national caveats interfered with cohesive actions in joint operations. The caveats dictated the geographic location of the contingents, level of authorities and involvement into combat actions as well as the structure and nature of the PRT's actions in the reconstruction processes. At the same time, the countries were not always guided by the goals and objectives of the operation, and often they proceeded from their national interests. Additionally, the organization of NATO's chain of command along the CENTCOM /JFCBS- ISAF/RS HQ- IJC-RC/TAA axes has undergone significant functional and structural changes throughout the operation. Such actions influenced the planning and execution of security operations, as well as the organization of the training process of the ANSF.

For the entire time of the operation, special attention and resources were allocated to the implementation of the training of ANSF. Funds and resources were allocated for these purposes. The troops of ISAF and OEF were involved in the implementation of the training process, and with the initiation of the RS mission, the preparation of the ANSF became a priority. Despite the efforts made, the real strength and level of combat readiness of ANSF remained low, and the competence to plan and conduct independent operations to ensure and enforce law, order and security remained at an unsatisfactory level. This led to the fact that after the termination

of combat operations of the coalition forces, the overall level of security fell to the level that existed before ISAF, and the initiative in a number of provinces passed to the insurgents.

The low level of training and combat readiness of the ANSF is not associated with an unsatisfactory organization of the training process and mentoring or the low level of skills of instructors from the coalition. This is primarily due to the low quality level of the ANSF staff, in which, as in the entire Afghan society, corruption flourishes, the overall level of motivation remains low, and the level of literacy remains extremely low to this day. Also, representatives of the ANSF remain open to the influence of the ideas of radicalism, which is used by the insurgents for their own purposes. This is reflected in the presence of internal attacks on representatives of the coalition and the ANSF from the Afghan security forces.

Since the operation became protracted, it has been quite obvious that the emergence of new threats and challenges in the region permeated the operation as a whole. With the emergence of the Islamic State in the Middle East, it was only a matter of time before ISIS appeared in Afghanistan. The emergence of ISIS complicated the already difficult situation in Afghanistan and returned the international coalition, represented by the American contingent within the framework of Operation Freedom Sentinel, to counterterrorist actions. In fact this led to the resumption of fighting, however with a new enemy. It is noteworthy that the appearance of ISIS in Afghanistan has been hindered not only by the coalition, but also by the Taliban itself, because it undermines the process of reconciliation in the country on political terms favorable to the Taliban.

The reconciliation policy increased in importance as the Taliban skillfully took advantage of the situation, using time to their advantage. If in the initial stages of the operation the question a peaceful settlement was not of interest, the course of events constantly increased its importance and at this point in time it is a prerequisite for ending the conflict. This gives the moderate Taliban the right to political decision-making and, in the long run, to a possible entry into the national government, which is undoubtedly a success for the opposition.

Over the years of the operation, the international community has made significant efforts to assist the government and create an effective political leadership. In this regard, attempts were made to build Afghanistan in the manner of Western democracies. Such actions did not lead to the desired result. Stable and effective political governance does not benefit from the interne-cine struggle for power. Political ambitions also dampened attempts to build relations with the

United States. The confrontation between President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, as well as the difficult relationship between the political leadership of Afghanistan and the United States, are notable examples of political struggles that ultimately undermine the effectiveness of political reforms and governance in the country as a whole.

The operational challenges for the reformation of political governance are related both to the reluctance of the Afghan society to follow the model of Western democracy, and to the extremely high level of corruption in the country. Corruption is represented at all levels of state institutions, and also exists widely in society. Based on the level of corruption, it is extremely difficult for representatives of the coalition to provide objective assistance to political leaders who are deliberately corrupt or act in the name of their interests and in directions that are not constructive for the coalition.

The corruption of Afghan society has a destructive effect not only on political processes, but also on economic ones. Corruption hinders the development of potentially promising areas of the economy and agriculture. The widespread cultivation of opiates instead of crops, as well as the endless and ineffectual struggle against poppy fields, are the clearest examples of the development of the level of corruption in the country. The international coalition has been conducting a long-term fight with this area without any clear result, since no particularly remarkable achievements have been achieved over the 20 years of the operation.

Interstate relations with neighboring countries, primarily with Pakistan, have a strong influence on achieving stability and resolving the conflict in Afghanistan. The ability of the insurgents and refugees of war to use the territory of Pakistan for their camps and shelters, as well as the presence of border conflicts along the Duran line, periodically escalates into armed clashes. Additionally, Afghan-Pakistani relations are affected by the tribal similarity of the population, in which Pashtun families in some cases are divided on different sides of the border, and who are not satisfied with the current situation.

The factor of Afghan-Pakistani relations is quite skillfully used by Pakistan, manipulating the situation in its national interests and opposing India's ambitions to consolidate its position in the region, and in particular in Afghanistan. This forces the coalition to reckon with the interests of Pakistan, building regional relations and planning the coalition's actions in Afghanistan, taking into account Pakistani interests.

National features and forms of political governance in Afghanistan have a direct impact on the achievement of the assigned tasks and the overall effectiveness of foreign presence. Even during the British intervention in Afghanistan in the 19th century, it was noted that for achievement of desired result, it is easier for foreigners to cooperate with local leaders who have the support of the local population of the country. On the other hand, attempts to establish centralized control over the entire country are inevitably doomed to failure due to the administrative and tribal heterogeneity of Afghanistan and the lack of popular support. A historical example would be the actions of the Soviet Union and the Soviet supported socialist government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) in the 1980s.

The key to success for international operations and foreign presence in Afghanistan historically lies in the disposition and loyalty of the local population to foreigners. The people of the country were and still are the Center of Gravity of any operation conducted in the country. Without the support of the local population, all activities in Afghanistan are doomed to failure. This rule was relevant in the past, and it remains at the present time in the conditions of modern realities. Based on this, a very important factor influencing the course of the operation is the uniqueness of the Afghan society. This is expressed in the attitude towards foreigners that has developed over a centuries-old history, associated with this distrust of representatives of the coalition and rejection of social reforms emanating from the coalition, which is skillfully used by the insurgents for their own purposes.

Afghan society is intertribal and multiethnic, existing according to its own code of honor, for example, the *Pashtun Wali*, as well as having its own form of government and decision making within local community and on state level through structures such as the *Jirga* or *Shura*. This has a strong influence on the way of life and the organization of society based on customs and social values that are not always acceptable to representatives of Western civilization. The peculiarities of society and attitudes towards foreigners, along with the security factor, have a critical influence on achievements in the social domain. The success in providing social reforms is an important component in the context of the entire operation, since it shapes society and creates a social base for further transformations and achieving a positive operational effect and desired results.

5.6 Feasible further progress of the operation

From the initiation of the operation the general direction and main tasks remained unchanged. However by this time the conditions and emphasis of actions to achieve the set goals have changed, with the addition of new factors and actors. Based on the characteristics of Afghan society and the country as a whole the coalition came to the understanding that in order to achieve the goals and to finalize the operation in the shortest time frame, it is necessary to give to Afghans themselves as much freedom of action and decision-making opportunities as possible.

Likewise for coalition became quite clear that it was worth giving up the attempt to build an Afghan society without attracting moderate opposition representatives.

The international coalition came to this understanding through successes and mistakes, through a series of recoverable and irreparable losses. Over the years of the operation, the attitude towards the enemy changed in the direction of understanding that the coalition was opposed by a well-organized and motivated enemy, and not just a group of terrorists who lacked the support of the population. They also had to abandon the plans that to resolve the conflict, it would not be enough to only train and arm one of the opposing sides, but that they would need to support their actions with heavy weapons, aviation and special operations forces.

Over the past 20 years, the coalition's actions have transformed from a military oriented operation into a comprehensive approach in various domains. Over the years it became obvious that the key to resolving the conflict is in the hands of the Afghans, and without the support of the local population, it is impossible to finalize the conflict. The Afghans themselves must resolve this conflict, having for this purpose capable state structures and institutions of government, which are capable of bearing responsibility for the stabilization and integration processes in the country.

It cannot be said that all transformation processes within the RS mission were smooth and flexible, since the situation and the operating environment are constantly changing. The United States and the international coalition have reacted to changing conditions, for example, the timing of the complete withdrawal of troops from the country and the end of the RS mission has repeatedly changed due to the instability of the situation. Also, the coalition has confronted new challenges and difficulties on a regional scale, as they manifest themselves in Afghani-

stan, for example, counter-terrorism actions aimed at fighting the Islamic State. In the context of the operation, one thing remains unchanged - this is the nature of the actions of the Americans and the coalition, which has a direction to finish the conflict and search for solutions by using political methods. Without this, the conflict will drag on for a long time without the prospect of positive resolution and success.

It is possible that the policy of reconciliation currently being implemented will continue in order to normalize the situation and search for a political solution. The negotiation process between representatives of the Afghan government and moderate Taliban representatives mediated by the United States will continue with positive dynamics, since all parties to the conflict remain interested. The timing of the withdrawal of the international contingents, which has been changed more than once due to the instability of the situation, will continue to be negotiated, and the final withdrawal of troops after a normalization of the situation may take place.

It is difficult to determine if the settlement of the conflict is possible, since terrorist attacks aimed at representatives of state structures and the local population are repeated regularly and the situation remains unstable. Based on the current situation, further escalation of the conflict at this stage is simply not beneficial to the Taliban, although they have not abandoned terrorist activities. It can be assumed that ISIS is behind most of the attacks, since, in general, the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan is in its interests. Given the regularity of attacks and the presence of ISIS groups in the country, one should not expect an early normalization of the situation in Afghanistan.

The activities of ISIS requires a response from the Afghan security forces and counterterrorism units of the US troops and the international coalition. Therefore, the operation in Afghanistan will probably not finalize soon. It is possible that the Afghan operation could continue after the end of the RS mission, with a subsequent bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and any coalition partner or partners. Given the implementation of the new South Asia strategy, it is likely that Afghanistan and the United States will move to bilateral relations as part of the development of this strategy and the coordination of counterterrorism actions, even if there is a partial or complete withdrawal of the military contingent.

The date announced by President Biden as the end of the operation and the withdrawal of American troops from the country, September 11, 2021, joins a number of other dates that were previously agreed upon between the parties. This date is unacceptable to the Taliban,

since they are guided by previous agreements with President Trump.⁴³¹ How seriously one can take September 11, 2021 as the end date of the operation, only time can tell. The fact remains that the situation in the country has not returned to normal, so it is difficult to talk about the possible end of the conflict.

As a conclusion it is important to note that the ongoing operation and the events taking place in the country offer an extensive basis for research in various fields of academic studies. Throughout the whole operation the situation in the country over the last two decades has repeatedly changed. However, these processes are not finalized, the operation is still ongoing and the situation continues to evolve. Consequently, the ongoing progress and development of the whole operation still provides a rich ground for the further research.

⁴³¹ The Washington Post, 13.04.2021: Biden will withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, 2021. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-us-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan/2021/04/13/918c3cae-9beb-11eb-8a83-3bc1fa69c2e8_story.html], read 30.04.2021.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS**A**

AAF	Afghan Air Force
AAG	Afghan Assessment Group
ADAG	Alternative Development and Agriculture
ACE	Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ASF	Afghan Special Forces
AWEC	Afghan Women's Education Center

B

BCC	Border Coordination Center
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement

C

CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJIATF	Combined Joint Interagency Task Force
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CMC	Chairman of the Military Committee
COIN	Counter Insurgency
COMISAF	Commander of International Security Assistance Force
CPOE	Comprehensive Preparation of Operational Environment
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan
CT	Counterterrorism

D

DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

E

EF	Essential Functions
EPHS	Essential Package of Hospital Services

F

FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
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G

GA	Guardian Angels
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GoP	Government of Pakistan

H

HQ	Headquarters
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I

IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
IMS	International Military Staff
IPS	Indo-Pacific Strategy
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIS	Islamic State
ISIS-K	Islamic State Organization's Khorasan group
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance

J

JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JFCBS	Joint Force Command Brunssum

JRS	Joint Regional Strategy
K	
KIA	Killed in Action
M	
MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
MJ	Meshrano Jirga
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MSME	Micro, small, and medium enterprises
N	
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSC	National Security Council
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan
O	
OAPA	Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs
ODM	Operations Design Meeting
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OFS	Operation Freedom's Sentinel
OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams
P	
PMESII-PT	Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time
PRAG	Peace and Reconciliation Advisory Group

PRT Provincial Reconstruction Team

R

RC Regional Command

ROE Rules of Engagement

RS Resolute Support

S

SACEUR Supreme Allied Powers in Europe

SDP Security Development Plan

SHAPE Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers of Europe

SIGAR Special Inspector for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan

SOF Special Operations Forces

SOFA Status of Forces Agreement

SOJTF-A Special Operations Joint Task Force - Afghanistan

SOP Standing Operational Procedures

SPA Strategic Partnership Agreement

SRAR Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation

T

TAA Training, Advisory and Assistance

TAAC Train, Advise and Assist Command

TF Task Force

TFBSO Task Force for Business and Stability Operations

U

UAE United Arab Emirates

UIFSA United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan

UK United Kingdom

UN United Nations

UNAMA United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

US United States

USAID United States Agency for International Development

USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFOR-A	United States Force in Afghanistan
USMC	United States Marine Corps

W

WIA	Wounded in Action
WJ	Wolesi Jirga
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

COUNTRIES AND A NUMBER OF COALITION TROOPS CONTRIBUTED TO OEF IN A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1. October 26, 2001 - UK Secretary of the Armed Forces Adam Ingram informs the House of Commons that the UK is sending 4,200 troops to Afghanistan.
2. November 1, 2001 - Turkey announces troop deployment.
3. The governments of Australia and Canada have announced their agreement to send forces.
4. November 6, 2001 - German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder offers up to 3,900 troops.
5. November 7, 2001 - The Italian government announces that it will provide 2,700 military personnel.
6. November 9, 2001 - The Netherlands announces that it is ready to send up to 1,400 troops.
7. November 16, 2001 - French troops complete the redeployment of troops.
8. November 22, 2001 - Poland agrees to provide up to 300 soldiers.⁴³²

⁴³² CNN Editorial Research, December 24, 2019: Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts. [<https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html>], read 25.10.2019

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1386 (2001)

The text of this annex is taken from open sources⁴³³ and is presented in an unmodified form:

"The Security Council,

- Reaffirming its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, in particular its resolutions 1378 (2001) of 14 November 2001 and 1383 (2001) of 6 December 2001,
- Supporting international efforts to root out terrorism, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirming also its resolutions 1368 (2001) of 12 September 2001 and 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001,
- Welcoming developments in Afghanistan that will allow for all Afghans to enjoy inalienable rights and freedom unfettered by oppression and terror,
- Recognizing that the responsibility for providing security and law and order throughout the country resides with the Afghan themselves,
- Reiterating its endorsement of the Agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions, signed in Bonn on 5 December 2001 (S/2001/1154) (the Bonn Agreement),
- Taking note of the request to the Security Council in Annex 1, paragraph 3, to the Bonn Agreement to consider authorizing the early deployment to Afghanistan of an international security force, as well as the briefing on 14 December 2001 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on his contacts with the Afghan authorities in which they welcome the deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations-authorized international security force,
- Taking note of the letter dated 19 December 2001 from Dr. Abdullah Abdullah to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/1223),
- Welcoming the letter from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Secretary-General of 19 December 2001 (S/2001/1217), and taking note of the United Kingdom

offer contained therein to take the lead in organizing and commanding an International Security Assistance Force,

- Stressing that all Afghan forces must adhere strictly to their obligations under human rights law, including respect for the rights of women, and under international humanitarian law,
- Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan,
- Determining that the situation in Afghanistan still constitutes a threat to international peace and security,
- Determined to ensure the full implementation of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force, in consultation with the Afghan Interim Authority established by the Bonn Agreement,

Acting for these reasons under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United

Nations,

1. Authorizes, as envisaged in Annex 1 to the Bonn Agreement, the establishment for 6 months of an International Security Assistance Force to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment;
2. Calls upon Member States to contribute personnel, equipment and other resources to the International Security Assistance Force, and invites those Member States to inform the leadership of the Force and the Secretary-General;
3. Authorizes the Member States participating in the International Security Assistance Force to take all necessary measures to fulfil its mandate;
4. Calls upon the International Security Assistance Force to work in close consultation with the Afghan Interim Authority in the implementation of the force mandate, as well as with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General;
5. Calls upon all Afghans to cooperate with the International Security Assistance Force and relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and welcomes the

⁴³³ United Nations: Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001) adopted by the Security at its 4443rd meeting, on

commitment of the parties to the Bonn Agreement to do all within their means and influence to ensure security, including to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of all United Nations personnel and all other personnel of international governmental and non-governmental organizations deployed in Afghanistan;

6. Takes note of the pledge made by the Afghan parties to the Bonn Agreement in Annex 1 to that Agreement to withdraw all military units from Kabul, and calls upon them to implement this pledge in cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force;

7. Encourages neighboring States and other Member States to provide to the International Security Assistance Force such necessary assistance as may be requested, including the provision of overflight clearances and transit;

8. Stresses that the expenses of the International Security Assistance Force will be borne by the participating Member States concerned, requests the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund through which contributions could be channeled to the Member States or operations concerned, and encourages Member States to contribute to such a fund;

9. Requests the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force to provide periodic reports on progress towards the implementation of its mandate through the Secretary-General;

10. Calls on Member States participating in the International Security Assistance Force to provide assistance to help the Afghan Interim Authority in the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces;

11. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter."

THE EXPANSION OF ISAFTable 1: The expansion of ISAF⁴³⁴

Phase Nr.	Date	Achieved result
Phase 1	October 1, 2004	Expansion north of Kabul, taking responsibility for the German-led PRT and creating new PRTs
Phase 2	September 1, 2005	Expansion and taking responsibility for western Afghanistan.
Phase 3	July 31, 2006	Expansion and taking responsibility for southern Afghanistan.
Phase 4	October 5, 2006	Expansion and taking responsibility for eastern Afghanistan. ISAF become responsible for maintaining security throughout the country

⁴³⁴ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p.23.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE COIN DOCTRINE

The example of the COIN doctrine presented in this Annex is the British version and is fundamentally the same as the American version. The doctrine was developed based on the principles of the joint doctrine of United Kingdom and major allies, in particular the United States, Canada and Australia.

The text of this annex is taken from open sources ⁴³⁵ and is presented in an unmodified form:

1. Counterinsurgency is Warfare

"Until recently, the word counterinsurgency appeared to be synonymous with low-intensity operations, or operations other than war. It conjured up images of British soldiers in the Malayan jungle, or on the streets of Northern Ireland. The U.S. military's experience in Iraq 2003-2008, and the British campaign in Helmand Province in Afghanistan since 2006 have demonstrated that military operations against irregular insurgents can be as intense as combat in conventional warfare. The intensity of operations is not the issue at stake. Insurgency and counterinsurgency are two sides of a very complex form of warfare, where a group or groups resort to violence and take up arms to achieve political objectives. Typical objectives are replacing an existing government, securing the status quo and challenging a nascent or emerging state.

Today's hybrid threats – any adversaries that simultaneously and adaptively employ a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the same battlespace to obtain their political objectives – are constantly seeking to exploit what they perceive to be the vulnerabilities of regular forces. They do this by using terrorism and subversion, by blending into the population amongst which security forces operate, and by exploiting their most effective weapon, which is the influence that they can extend through the media. Counterinsurgency is warfare; it is distinctly political, not primarily military; and it involves the people, the government, and the military. The strength of the relationship between these three groups generally determines the outcome of the campaign."

2. The principles for counterinsurgency:

- Primacy of political purpose.

- Unity of effort.
- Understand the human terrain.
- Secure the population.
- Neutralize the insurgent.
- Gain and maintain popular support.
- Operate in accordance with the law.
- Integrate intelligence.
- Prepare for the long term.
- Learn and adapt.

3. Security

"The principal security task is to secure the population from violence. By securing the population and by stabilizing the situation, governance can be re-established for the benefit of the population. A stable, sustainable security situation is a pre-requisite for improving both governance and the population's prospects. Securing the population has several essential elements. While it may be possible to take some risk with each of them, experience shows that delay is dangerous. The essential security elements of counterinsurgency are:

3.1 Security for the Population

The success or failure of an insurgency is largely dependent on the attitude of the population. Insurgents use force to bring parts of the population under consensual or involuntary control; the host government's task is to secure the population from such influence. This requires active security measures, which include controlling movement, imposing curfews in times when the threat is high, conducting a census to establish who the people are, introducing positive identification methods such as identity cards and biometric measurement, and building security infrastructure such as gated.

3.2 Presence

In counterinsurgency, presence matters. The population has to be secured where it lives, and it must be secured on a permanent basis. This means that the military commander must establish and maintain a continuous and effective presence on the ground. The accepted rule of thumb is 20 security personnel (soldiers, police, para-militaries and auxiliaries) for every 1000 people in the area of operation. If insufficient security personnel are available, commanders may have to devise plans to reduce areas of operation to provide the optimum force ratio. Experience

⁴³⁵ Countering Insurgency, Army Field Manual, Volume 1- Part 10: January 2010, p. 1-1- 1-3.

shows that it is easier to deal with insurgents when the security forces live amongst the population than when they have to deploy to an area on a temporary basis.

3.3 Continuity

The population is the one constant in the equation and so continuity of approach to the population is essential. Continuity helps to avoid mistakes being repeated, it allows relationships between the population and the security forces to be developed and maintained, and acknowledging the need for continuity addresses in part the fact that the long-term solution to an insurgency rests with the host nation, its government and its people. Continuity also helps build confidence with allies. The use of purpose-designed standing HQs manned on a trickle basis, together with individual officer and soldier tours of as long duration as is acceptable will promote continuity.

3.4 Intelligence

Intelligence is essential in any operation but especially so in counterinsurgency. It ensures that the insurgents are correctly targeted and neutralized by whatever means is most appropriate. Good intelligence also helps avoid civilian casualties or infrastructure damage. Intelligence depends as much on the tactical level pattern of life in each area of operations as it does on the topdown feed of intelligence from operational and strategic levels. Intelligence has to be integrated at every level of command and across and between agencies engaged in counterinsurgency.

3.5 Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR)

Effective counterinsurgency depends on efficient and persistent ISTAR coverage. Airborne surveillance offers considerable advantages both in terms of the situational awareness that it provides to ground forces in their task of securing the population, and in the deterrent effect on the insurgents. Airborne platforms give the commander a distinct advantage over the insurgent; for that reason, they are crucial in counterinsurgency.

3.6 Embedded Training Teams

Host nation forces invariably require training and development. Where British training teams are deployed, experience proves that they are at their most effective when they are embedded with the unit or formation that they are training, and when they bring with them the enabling capabilities of ISTAR, joint fires, command and control, and CSS, particularly medical and logistics. Training the host nation's security forces and partnering and mentoring them on opera-

tions is an essential part of achieving long-term security which the host nation can sustain. Those selected to train host nation security forces themselves require to be trained in cultural awareness and theatre specifics so that they can fit in with their charges from the outset.

3.7 Influence

Counterinsurgency is about gaining and securing the support of the people both in the theatre of operations and at home. Influence activity therefore underpins everything which coalition forces undertake because counterinsurgency is as much about the battle of perceptions as it is about military operations targeted against insurgents.

3.8 Education

Those who have to put counterinsurgency doctrine into practice have to know what the doctrine says. This requirement is not limited to UK doctrine; commanders must also be versed in the doctrine of other nations with which they are likely to operate. They need to have the knowledge and confidence to adapt doctrine to meet the challenges that they face. Without flexibility and pragmatism in its application, doctrine becomes dogma. Counterinsurgency warfare is complex and is not at all suited to learning the basics in the heat of the campaign. That is the time to adapt the approach to meet the demands of the situation based on a clear understanding of the doctrine, approaches, and best practice. This places a clear onus on the Army and Defence to provide comprehensive education for counterinsurgency."

4. A Framework for Counterinsurgency

"A number of conceptual frameworks have been developed which provide a way of thinking about the principal themes or tasks in counterinsurgency. The framework adopted in this manual is a general model of Shape-Secure-Develop, which groups together the main tasks which forces may be called upon to carry out during the campaign under each of its three headings. The emphasis will shift between the three dependent on the security situation and campaign progress. For example, if the threat is high, 'secure' operations may dominate. If the situation is more stable, 'develop' activity may be the focus. It is important to note that Shape-Secure-Develop is a general model; operational commanders may well develop an approach which reflects the specifics of their campaign or the doctrine of a non-UK superior commander."

5. The Continuum of Operations

"The campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere have shown that as the host nation builds up its own security capacity, UK armed forces are required to operate effectively across the

continuum of operations. Combating insurgents can be, at times, as fierce, demanding, chaotic and violent as warfighting. While this form of combat is undesirable, particularly if it takes place among the population that the security forces are in place to protect, all forces should be prepared for periods of intense fighting. No counterinsurgency exists at just one point on the continuum of operations. Its intensity will vary in time and place. At any one point in the campaign there might be a humanitarian crisis in one district, and a violent outbreak by insurgents in another. At any one place in the theatre of operations, in one week there might be an operation to clear, secure and hold a village, and a development task to restore electricity and water supplies the week after."

6. Stabilization and Counterinsurgency

"Figure 2 illustrates the likely link between stabilization and counterinsurgency. It shows how a counterinsurgency operation sits within the three major sectors of a stabilization campaign: Governance, Security, and Development. Although the provision of security contributes to all three sectors, it will inevitably be the main effort, particularly in the initial stages of a campaign. The size of the 'COIN bubble' will depend on the scale of the insurgency and it will vary as the campaign develops. How it changes will depend on the capacity of other government departments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. These depend, in turn, on the contribution that security forces can make to developmental and governance activities. A key aspect of all stabilization tasks will be to prepare the host nation to take responsibility for its own security, development and governance. Within this sector, the security forces will inevitably have a significant role to play in training and mentoring, through embedded partnering, the host nation's security forces to provide security."

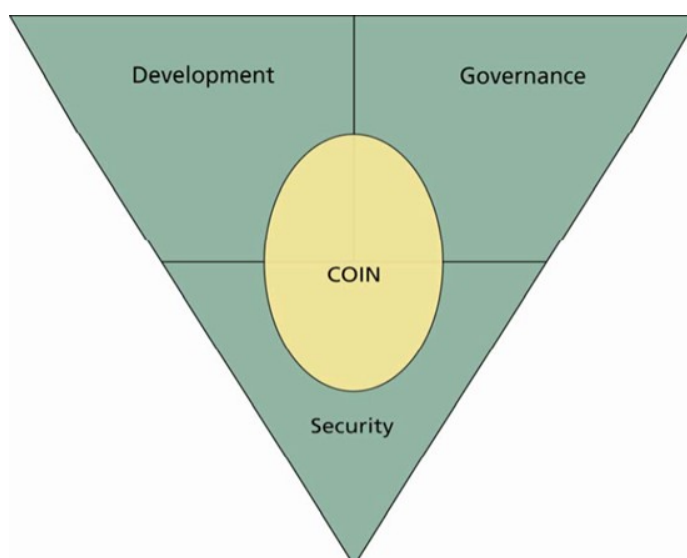


Figure 2: Stabilization and Counterinsurgency

RC/TAAC LOCATIONS AND LEAD/Framework NATIONS



Figure 3: Map of Regional Commands and administrative boundaries⁴³⁶

Table 2: RC HQ locations and lead nations⁴³⁷.

RC	HQ Location	Lead Nation
Capital	Kabul	Turkey
East	Bagram	USA (Army)
South	Kahdahar	USA (Army)
Southwest	Helmand	USA (USMC)
West	Herat	Italy
North	Balkh	Germany
Troops from other Allies and some non-NATO partners served under these RCs		

Table 3: TAAC HQ locations and framework nations⁴³⁸.

TAAC	HQ Location	Framework Nation
Capital	Kabul	Turkey
East	Jalalabad	USA
South	Kahdahar	USA
West	Herat	Italy
North	Mazar-e-Sharif	Germany

⁴³⁶ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan. April 2011.

⁴³⁷ CRS Report for Congress: War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress. March 9, 2011, p.24.

⁴³⁸ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan. June 2015, p. 14.

ISAF COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE

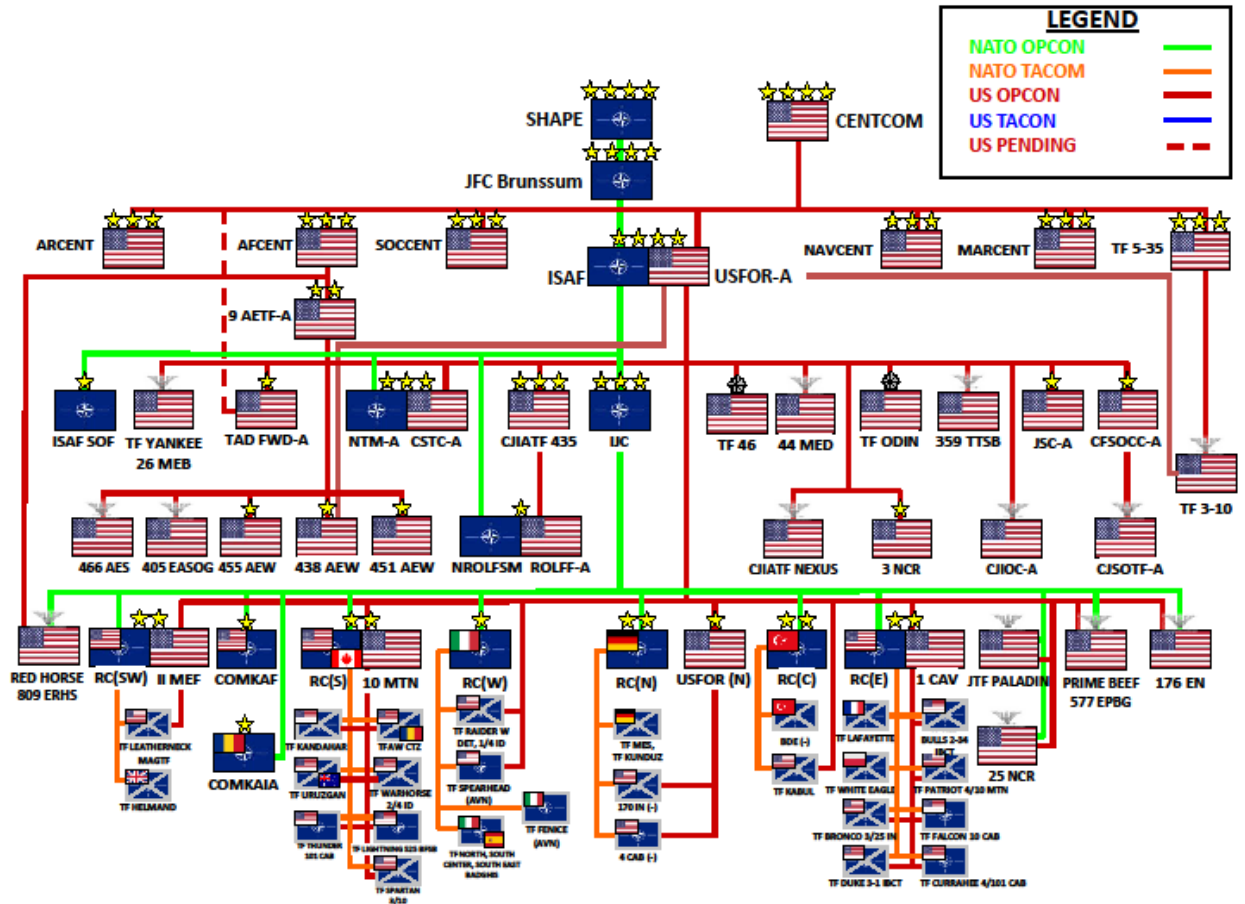


Figure 4: ISAF command and control structure (as of September 30, 2011)⁴³⁹

⁴³⁹ US DoD report to Congress: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces. October 2011, p. 8.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2189 (2014)

The text of this annex is taken from open sources ⁴⁴⁰ and is presented in an unmodified form:

"The Security Council,

- Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan,
- Recognizing Afghanistan's gains since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, in particular on democracy, governance, institution building, economic development and human rights,
- Condemning the ongoing violent and terrorist activities by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other violent and extremist groups, illegal armed groups, criminals and those involved in the production, trafficking or trade of illicit drugs,
- Reaffirming the importance of sustainable progress on security, development, human rights, in particular for women and children, democracy, governance, the fight against corruption, economic development, taking all appropriate measures to ensure the protection of civilians, and of addressing the crosscutting issue of counter-narcotics,
- Underscoring the importance of continued international support for Afghanistan, and in this regard, welcoming and emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation on Afghanistan, as well as the process by which Afghanistan and its regional and international partners are entering into long-term strategic partnership and other agreements, aimed at achieving a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan,
- Emphasizing the important role that the United Nations continues to play in support of Afghanistan's full assumption of leadership and ownership in the areas of security, governance and development, welcoming, in this regard, the continued role the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and noting that the Secretary-General reports to the Security Council every three months on developments in Afghanistan,

⁴⁴⁰ United Nations: Security Council Resolution 2189 (2014) adopted by the Security at its 7338th meeting on 12 December 2014. [<https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11697.doc.htm>], read 23.04.2021.

- Acknowledging the contribution of Afghanistan's partners to peace and security in Afghanistan, Welcoming the increased capacities and capabilities of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, looking forward to the completion of security transition at the end of 2014, after which Afghan authorities will assume full responsibility for security, noting the conclusion of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) at the end of 2014, and underscoring the importance of sustained international support to continue building the capacities and capabilities of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces,
- Taking note of the Secretary-General's letter of 28 November 2014 transmitting the final report on ISAF operations in Afghanistan,
- Underlining the significance of the Lisbon, Bonn and Chicago Declarations on Afghanistan which stressed the long-term commitment, beyond 2014, to lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan,
- Underlining the significance of the NATO Wales Summit Declaration on Afghanistan of 5 September 2014, which outlined the role of NATO and contributing partners in supporting lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan beyond 2014, including the non-combat Resolute Support Mission to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, the contribution to the financial sustainment of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, and the long-term NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership,
- Noting the signing of the Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Bilateral Security Agreement) on 30 September 2014, and welcoming the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and NATO on 30 September 2014 and as ratified by the Parliament of Afghanistan on 27 November 2014,
- Noting that the bilateral agreement between NATO and Afghanistan and the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan to NATO to establish Resolute Support Mission provide a sound legal basis for Resolute Support Mission,

1. Underscores the importance of continued international support for the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and of further enhancing the capabilities and capacities of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces in order for them to maintain security and stability

throughout the country, and in this regard, welcomes the agreement between NATO and Afghanistan to establish the post-2014 non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which will train, advise and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces at the invitation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan;

2. Looks forward to the leadership of Resolute Support Mission working with the Government of Afghanistan and in close coordination and cooperation, where relevant, with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan;

3. Welcomes the commitment of the international community to continue providing substantial support to the Afghan Government and people, and notes in this regard the long-term NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership, Afghanistan's bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreements and other bilateral agreements with other countries;

4. Affirms its readiness to revisit this resolution in the context of the Council's consideration of the situation in Afghanistan."

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION⁴⁴¹

The text of this annex is taken from open sources⁴⁴² and is presented in an unmodified form:

"The General Assembly,

- Recalling its resolution 55/61 of 4 December 2000, in which it established an ad hoc committee for the negotiation of an effective international legal instrument against corruption and requested the Secretary-General to convene an intergovernmental open-ended expert group to examine and prepare draft terms of reference for the negotiation of such an instrument, and its resolution 55/188 of 20 December 2000, in which it invited the intergovernmental open-ended expert group to be convened pursuant to resolution 55/61 to examine the question of illegally transferred funds and the return of such funds to the countries of origin,
- Recalling also its resolutions 56/186 of 21 December 2001 and 57/244 of 20 December 2002 on preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such funds to the countries of origin,
- Recalling further its resolution 56/260 of 31 January 2002, in which it requested the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption to complete its work by the end of 2003,
- Recalling its resolution 57/169 of 18 December 2002, in which it accepted with appreciation the offer made by the Government of Mexico to host a high-level political conference for the purpose of signing the convention and requested the Secretary-General to schedule the conference for a period of three days before the end of 2003,
- Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/13 of 24 July 2001, entitled "Strengthening international cooperation in preventing and combating the transfer of funds of illicit origin, derived from acts of corruption, including the laundering of funds, and in returning such funds",

⁴⁴¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 31 October 2003 (58/4).

⁴⁴² UN General Assembly 58th session: 2003-2004, United Nations Convention against Corruption: resolution/adopted by the General Assembly. [<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/505186>], read 23.04.2021.

- Expressing its appreciation to the Government of Argentina for hosting the informal preparatory meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption in Buenos Aires from 4 to 7 December 2001,
 - Recalling the Monterrey Consensus, adopted by the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 18 to 22 March 2002, in which it was underlined that fighting corruption at all levels was a priority,
 - Recalling also the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in particular paragraph 19 thereof, in which corruption was declared a threat to the sustainable development of people,
 - Concerned about the seriousness of problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law,
1. Takes note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption, which carried out its work at the headquarters of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, in which the Ad Hoc Committee submitted the final text of the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption to the General Assembly for its consideration and action, and commends the Ad Hoc Committee for its work;
 2. Adopts the United Nations Convention against Corruption annexed to the present resolution, and opens it for signature at the High-level Political Signing Conference to be held in Merida, Mexico, from 9 to 11 December 2003, in accordance with resolution 57/169;
 3. Urges all States and competent regional economic integration organizations to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption as soon as possible in order to ensure its rapid entry into force;
 4. Decides that, until the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention established pursuant to the United Nations Convention against Corruption decides otherwise, the account referred to in article 62 of the Convention will be operated within the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Fund, and encourages Member States to begin making adequate voluntary contributions to the above-mentioned account for the provision to developing countries and countries with economies in transition of the

technical assistance that they might require to prepare for ratification and implementation of the Convention;

5. Also decides that the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption will complete its tasks arising from the negotiation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption by holding a meeting well before the convening of the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention in order to prepare the draft text of the rules of procedure of the
6. Conference of the States Parties and of other rules described in article 63 of the Convention, which will be submitted to the Conference of the States Parties at its first session for consideration;
7. Requests the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to address the criminalization of bribery of officials of public international organizations, including the United Nations, and related issues, taking into account questions of privileges and immunities, as well as of jurisdiction and the role of international organizations, by, inter alia, making recommendations regarding appropriate action in that regard;
8. Decides that, in order to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it, 9 December should be designated International Anti-Corruption Day;
9. Requests the Secretary-General to designate the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to serve as the secretariat for and under the direction of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention;
10. Also requests the Secretary-General to provide the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime with the resources necessary to enable it to promote in an effective manner the rapid entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to discharge the functions of secretariat of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, and to support the Ad Hoc Committee in its work pursuant to paragraph 5 above;
11. Further requests the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the High-level Political Signing Conference to be held in Merida, Mexico, in accordance with resolution 57/169, for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session."

51st plenary meeting

31 October 2003

STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL AND JUDICIAL AUTHORITY IN AFGHANISTAN

The text of this annex is taken from open sources⁴⁴³ and is presented in an unmodified form:

1. Parliament

"The National Assembly consists of an upper and lower house and composes the GIROA's legislative branch. The GIROA calls their upper house the Meshrano Jirga (MJ) or the House of Elders and the lower house the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) or the House of People. No Afghan can serve in both houses simultaneously. The National Assembly in its current form convened for the first time in December 2005."

1.1 Meshrano Jirga Roles – House of the Elders

"The MJ serves as the upper house of the GIROA National Assembly with 102 members, some elected and others appointed. The 34 directly elected provincial councils elect two members each for a total of 68 while the president appoints the other 34 members. Intended to serve as an advisor to the WJ, the MJ can veto legislation. The president's power to appoint a third of the MJ means the president has a significant influence on MJ and, by extension, WJ proceedings."

1.2 Wolesi Jirga Roles – House of the People

"Afghans elect representatives to the WJ through direct elections for five-year terms with subsequent elections held 30-60 days before the end of each term. The nomadic Kuchis elect through a single ethnically based constituency, while the other seats represent geographic districts. Each province receives proportionate representation in the WJ based on its population."

2. President

"The president serves as the head of the GIROA's executive branch. The president is the head of state and the commander of Afghanistan's armed forces. The executive branch contains the Offices of the President, the First Vice President, the Second Vice President, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice, and an additional 25 ministers, as well as several independent bodies and other central government agencies."

3. Executive Authority

"The GIRoA finds itself highly centralized with significant power vested in the office of the president. The presidency, a directly elected position, appoints many other governmental officials with executive authority and, in the cases of justice and defense, significant ground combat power. Additionally, the executive maintains a large staff, and 25 ministries."

Ministry:

1. Ministry of Agriculture
2. Ministry of Border & Tribal Affairs
3. Ministry of Commerce & Industry
4. Ministry of Communications
5. Ministry of Counternarcotic
6. Ministry of Defense
7. Ministry of Economy
8. Ministry of Education
9. Ministry of Energy & Water
10. Ministry of Finance
11. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12. Ministry of Hajj & Islamic Affairs
13. Ministry of Health
14. Ministry of Higher Education
15. Ministry of Information & Culture
16. Ministry of Interior
17. Ministry of Justice
18. Ministry of Agriculture
19. Ministry of Mines
20. Ministry of Public Works

21. Ministry of Refugees & Repatriation
22. Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development
23. Ministry of Transportation
24. Ministry of Urban Development
25. Ministry of Women's Affairs

4. Courts and Judicial Authority

"Judicial authority in Afghanistan comes from two sources- the Constitution and Islamic legal teaching. In conflicts between the Constitution and Islamic law, the latter takes precedence over the former. Afghanistan normally uses the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence for its decisions.

The Afghan court structure reflects a variety of historical and legal influences. Because of this confluence of influences, Afghanistan maintains several highly unique elements to the legal process and the court structure. Generally speaking, the closer an Afghan lives to the capital or a city, the more formalized the legal structure in existence. Afghans consider Islamic jurisprudence co-equal to civil jurisprudence, and graduates of either education system can serve as judges. Like much of the GIRoA, the legal system suffers from a generalized perception of corruption and incompetence from the local population."

4.1 National court

"The Constitution of Afghanistan provides for a Supreme Court, Stera Mahkama, comprised of nine members, appointed by the president and confirmed by the WJ. These Justices serve for ten year terms. In addition to maintaining the classic role of high court, the Stera Mahkama is responsible for the administrative support to its subordinate courts at the national, provincial, and district levels. The GIRoA national level judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court, High Courts, and Appeal Courts. The Supreme Court contains nine members appointed by the president for a period of ten years with the approval of the WJ.

Also, the Afghan high court possesses four subordinate subdivisions called dewans that handle specific criminal, national security, civil rights, and commercial matters."

4.2 Local/regional court

"Like the national court, the district courts contain four dewans as above, plus a court for traffic offences. An additional subset of courts, referred to as Primary Courts, handles security, civil cases, and other cases. Security concerns, however, make the administration of justice problematic in many areas.

A prosecutor's office initiates criminal cases while an attorney at the appropriate Ministry of Justice (MOJ) office files civil cases. These cases start at a Primary Court, with the ability to appeal to the Courts of Appeal. The Courts of Appeal, as in most legal systems, can have their decisions reviewed by the Supreme Court, who can either overturn or uphold the rulings of lower courts, or return the decisions for review. In addition, captured insurgents are remanded to the MOJ.

The insurgents attempt to make the distribution of justice a prime element of their civil military affairs campaign. In the absence of GIRoA judicial systems that possess an unenviable reputation for corruption within many areas, the insurgents often use their administration of law and the application of Sharia law to bolster their concurrent Information Warfare messages of central government corruption/indifference and the Islamic purity of the insurgency."

5. Local/regional government

"The decentralized structure of Afghanistan's government complicates and frustrates national governance from Kabul. Afghanistan is subdivided into 34 provinces, 300 districts, and more than 30,000 villages. Despite the introduction of a new Constitution, Afghanistan continues its history as a nation without strong central government. Local authorities, be they tribal, religious, or warlord, tend to possess significant influence over the local population. Combined with a wide dispersion of combat power and a variety of actors with significant military power at their disposal, the GIRoA finds it obviously difficult to govern effectively from Kabul, if at all.

President appoints the governors that lead each Afghan province. This appointment serves as a means for the central government to put a direct voice in provincial affairs, but the appointment also tends to alienate local populations who see the governors as President's stooges.

Local political power finds itself highly fractured, with the players in perpetual conflict with each other. The national government, outside the ANA and the ANP, do not serve as significant players in most of Afghanistan. When combined with, or due to the lack of a strong central legal system, tribal structures fill the vacuum of power. Regional leaders and warlords exert substantial control over some provincial governors in their area of influence. Some governors maintain direct associations with known warlords in their provinces or even serve as warlords themselves."

6. Districts government

"Each Afghan province further subdivides its territory into districts with administrative arrangements between province and districts similar to those between Kabul and the province. Provincial officials, however, operate with relatively little discretion with regard to districts, as the central ministry in Kabul determines district staffing allocations. The MOI oversees municipalities with significant influence by the governor in some provinces. The MOI approves staffing numbers and budgets in each municipality, despite the fact that municipalities can collect and retain their own taxes. In some provinces, such as Herat and Kandahar, rural municipalities also possess a reporting relationship with the provincial municipality, although this is contrary to the established government structure.

The central government finds itself especially weak at the local level as former warlords, corrupt officials, and even drug traffickers dominate the politics. Because of failures in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, many regional warlords continue to possess local militias that allow them to maintain their political power and force their way into new democratic institutions."

THE US SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The text of this annex is taken from open sources⁴⁴⁴ and is presented in an unmodified form:

1. Executive Statement

"The State Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Asia (Asia Bureau) and USAID Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) will calibrate engagement in South and Central Asia according to the Administration's South Asia and Indo-Pacific Strategies, to best protect the United States and advance its economic interests. The Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) seeks to advance a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region where all nations, including the U.S., may continue to prosper and resist political and economic coercion. The South Asia Strategy seeks to increase stability in South Asia, particularly Afghanistan, and supports regional connectivity, viability, and independence of Central Asian Republics. SCA, Asia Bureau, and OAPA developed the South and Central Asia Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) to integrate these two strategies and adequately prioritize them for the entire SCA region, in order to guide development and diplomacy efforts for the period of 2019-2021. The JRS includes five goals related to increasing engagement and cooperation within the region, as well as management sub-objectives relevant to the State/SCA Bureau. These goals acknowledge the often interrelated nature of USG activities and seek to ensure that diplomatic and development efforts are complementary and strategic. The goals are as follows:

- Increase countries' stability, security, sovereignty, integrity of national borders, and freedom of navigation;
- Achieve self-reliance through sustainable and inclusive economic growth, good governance of natural resources, increased fair and reciprocal trade and investment, and increased domestic economic independence;
- Bolster more inclusive, transparent, and accountable democracy and governance based on international norms, free from malign influence;
- Support efforts to achieve and sustain an inclusive political settlement that ends the conflict and ensures that Afghanistan no longer serves as a haven for international terrorism; and

- Support India's emergence as a global power and U.S. partner, which contributes regionally to security, stability, and development.

Expanding security cooperation with SCA partner countries will allow the United States to maintain a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region; confront partners' mutual threats, such as terrorist organizations, most prominently from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (especially nuclear weapons); mitigate cybersecurity risks; combat transnational organized crime; and counter illicit human and narcotics trafficking. Moreover, fostering greater cooperation and interoperability between the U.S. military and security forces in the region will improve burden sharing, increase support for global peacekeeping operations, and help promote key U.S. values, such as civilian control of the military and respect for human rights.

The rapidly expanding markets in the region provide lucrative opportunities for U.S. businesses while raising millions out of poverty. Targeted U.S. foreign assistance resources will expand opportunities for bilateral trade with the United States and support broad-based, private sector led growth and a more stable, secure, inclusive, and prosperous region. SCA remains one of the least economically integrated regions in the world, and USG development programs and diplomatic initiatives will strengthen cross-border cooperation, connecting vital sea lanes in South Asia with burgeoning trade routes and energy flows in Central Asia. For example, the "C5+1" diplomatic and assistance initiative engages the five countries of Central Asia to help the region address common challenges. These efforts will help to better integrate the region into the global economy and foster greater security and stability, particularly in the critical countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Democracy and an active civil society are critical for the region's long-term stability and prosperity, but remain fragile in certain countries. Targeted U.S. support will help improve governance and the rule of law, reinforce democratic processes, strengthen civil society, enhance government accountability, and ensure human rights to improve quality of life for all citizens of the region. U.S. engagement on democracy, rights, and governance will support peace and stability within these countries, and allow us to cooperate on external security threats and increased

⁴⁴⁴ State Department Bureau for South and Central Asia USAID Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs USAID Bureau for Asia, Joint Regional Strategy, South and Central Asia. Approved: February 27, 2019, p. 3-7.

economic opportunities. They will also help to inhibit practices that lead to unsustainable and unviable infrastructure projects that create debt burdens and put at risk governments' financial position and sovereignty.

The United States works with the Government of Afghanistan and international partners to support a peaceful settlement to the country's conflict and develop a coordinated, post-settlement economic plan to help sustain peace. SCA and USAID work closely with the State Department Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) to negotiate a final, Afghan-led, Afghan-owned settlement. SCA and USAID are involved with ensuring smooth Afghanistan elections that reflect the legitimate will of its people. For a post-settlement economic plan, connectivity between countries in the South and Central Asian corridor is vital, especially for Afghanistan's long-term economic growth and success. The United States will help integrate Afghanistan economically within the region by encouraging increased trade (goods, services, information, and energy) and connectivity with its neighbors and competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) associated with export-oriented value chains. Specifically, the United States will work with the Afghan government to help implement its new National Export Strategy, improve its trade policy and business regulatory environment, improve its export infrastructure, and promote exports. We will also expand opportunities for key export-oriented sectors by supporting the private sector as it develops competitive value chains—products and services that meet the quality standards of local and world markets at prices that are low enough to compete with similar products and services and provide adequate returns on the resources employed or consumed in producing them—and by increasing the skills of the Afghan workforce, which will enable the continued productivity and growth of these sectors.

India's role as a regional security provider and global leader is essential to advancing U.S. interests. The Indo-Pacific Strategy envisions the U.S.-India strategic partnership as critical to advancing the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free and fair trade. An expanding strategic partnership with India also features prominently in the South Asia Strategy, particularly India's role as the fifth-largest donor to Afghanistan. India will play a central role in efforts to facilitate energy and infrastructure investment and development across the South and Central Asia region.

The Department of State has three sub-objectives to enhance SCA management and platforms to carry out diplomatic, development, and security activities that advance U.S. interests. Aligning staff to support U.S. interests, maximizing resources to meet evolving needs in high-risk areas, and increasing the safety of personnel and security of facilities are key priorities to help advance the goals and priorities described above.

This triennial JRS outlines the shared vision of the Department of State and USAID for the future of U.S. policy, diplomatic engagement, and development assistance in South and Central Asia. SCA, the State Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (ACE), SRAR, USAID Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA), and USAID Bureau for Asia, in addition to functional bureaus, had a role in shaping this JRS."

2. Goals and objectives of the strategy

"Goal 1: Increase countries' stability, security, sovereignty, integrity of national borders, and freedom of navigation

- Objective 1.1: Prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related technology and materials to other actors and encourage states with nuclear weapons programs to adhere to their WMD-related commitments and exercise restraint in this area
- Objective 1.2: Strengthen bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism cooperation to prevent and counter the ability of violent extremist organizations to operate, raise funds, and recruit in the region
- Objective 1.3: Enhance regional partner security and peace process sustainment capabilities, ensure equitable access to sea lanes and border security, and address destabilizing non-military security threats such as crime and trafficking networks, cyber threats, and natural disasters
- Objective 1.4: Support South and Central Asian countries' sovereignty by strengthening their ability to resist economic and/or political pressures or meddling in their internal affairs by other countries
- Objective 1.5: Assist displaced persons and their affected host communities, and support a peaceful, safe, and dignified long-term solution

Goal 2: Achieve self-reliance through sustainable and inclusive economic growth, good governance of natural resources, increased fair and reciprocal trade and investment, and increased economic independence

- Objective 2.1: Advance global standards and environmentally sustainable practices in economic development, including for infrastructure development and financing; and advance the creation of a resilient regional power market based increasingly on clean, reliable energy generation
- Objective 2.2: Promote U.S. economic interests and private sector led growth; enhance economic connectivity to increase rules-based trade, competitiveness and cross-border economic cooperation
- Objective 2.3: Improve the health, education, and economic opportunities of all people in the region

Goal 3: Bolster more inclusive, transparent, and accountable democracy and governance based on international norms, free from malign influence

- Objective 3.1: Promote and protect basic human rights through adherence to international norms, including upholding the rights of women
- Objective 3.2: Strengthen civil society and improve access to independent media and unbiased information
- Objective 3.3: Strengthen rule of law; promote government responsiveness, transparency, and accountability; and combat corruption
- Objective 3.4: Encourage peaceful political competition; representative and transparent political processes; and governments that resist ethnic fracture

Goal 4: Support efforts to achieve and sustain an inclusive political settlement that ends the conflict and ensures that Afghanistan no longer serves as a haven for international terrorism.

- Objective 4.1: Engage and encourage regional powers to help Afghanistan achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict; support local-level reintegration of Taliban insurgents; and reduce the capabilities of destabilizing terrorist proxies
- Objective 4.2: Promote a stable, inclusive, and democratic Afghan government that resists ethnic fracture, governs accountably, and upholds the rights of women
- Objective 4.3: Build Afghanistan's economy and increase its economic integration within the region to help ensure its economic viability and promote better relations with its neighbors

Goal 5: Support India's emergence as a global power and U.S. partner, that contributes regionally to security, stability, and development

- Objective 5.1: Expand defense and security cooperation with India to help India provide security to the Indo-Pacific region and beyond
- Objective 5.2: Champion India's rise as a like-minded strategic partner in international fora, including the UN
- Objective 5.3: Foster India's capacity and commitment to rules-based economic development in the SCA region and beyond"

- Pol-e Khomri, Baghlan (Hungary);
- Meymaneh, Faryab (Norway).

3. RC West:

- Herat, Herat (Italy);
- Farah, Farah (USA);
- Qala-e Naw, Badghis (Spain);
- Chaghcharan, Gowr (Lithuania).

4. RC East:

- Bamyan, Bamyan (New Zealand);
- Bagram, Parwan (USA);
- Nurestan, Nurestan (USA);
- Panjshir, Panjshir (USA);
- Gardez, Paktia (USA);
- Ghazni, Ghazni (Poland, USA);
- Khowst, Khowst (USA);
- Sharan, Paktika (USA);
- Jalalabad, Nangarhar (USA);
- Asadabad, Kunar (USA);
- Mihtarlam, Laghman (USA);
- Wardak, Wardak (Turkey);
- Logar, Logar (Czech Republic).⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶ Institute for The Study of War: Provincial Reconstruction Teams.
 [http://www.understandingwar.org/provincial-reconstruction-teams-prts].