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Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Insecure Environments: Learning from Afghanistan

Major Gen (ret.) Andrew Mackay, Mark Sedra and Geoff Burt[1]

INTRODUCTION

The uneven impact of security sector reform (SSR) in Afghanistan, despite nearly a decade-long commitment and billions of dollars invested, demonstrates the immense and perhaps insurmountable challenge of effectively implementing the process amidst an active conflict.[1]The SSR model was largely developed for post-conflict and post-authoritarian environments featuring favorable political conditions for reform. In Afghanistan, the SSR project and the Bonn political dispensation has faced progressively greater levels of violence with each passing year, reaching the level of a full-blown war covering large parts of the country by 2008. In the absence of a genuine

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[1]Major General Andrew Mackay CBE was the commander of British Forces in Afghanistan and led Task Force Helmand from October 2007-April 2008. He also served as the Commanding General of the Iraqi Civilian Police Advisory Training Team for nine months beginning in February 2004. Mark Sedra is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) in Waterloo, Canada where he leads projects on Security Sector Governanceand Afghanistan. He is also a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Waterloo. Geoff Burt is a Research Officer at CIGI where he manages the Security Sector Reform Resource Centre.

political settlement with the Taliban and other stakeholders, the SSR process has been conceived of and applied as a means to confront the growing insurgency, rather than as part of a larger state building and democratization project, as it was intended. It is difficult to imagine a more inhospitable environment for SSR than the one that confronted Afghan and international state builders in the wake of the Taliban's ouster in late 2001. Over two decades of intense civil war left little institutional infrastructure and human capacity to build upon; public attitudes toward the state and security sector were marked by mistrust and suspicion; and insecurity, whether caused by insurgent activity, crime or inter-communal violence was widespread.

It is perhaps understandable that this immensely challenging situation had the effect of distorting the priorities of SSR in Afghanistan, making its chief focus, both in terms of strategy and resource allocation, the construction of a strong army supplemented by paramilitary police capacity, rather than the creation of an effective, accountable and rights respecting security and justice architecture subordinate to the rule of law and under democratic civilian control. These security forces were expected to provide the critical mass required for successful counter-insurgency operations, progressively shouldering the majority of the burden for the war against the Taliban so that the international community could safely and confidently draw down its military commitment. This overwhelming focus on getting "boots on the ground" pushed to the side or indefinitely postponed numerous rule of law development initiatives, governance reforms, and civilian reconstruction activities in the name of expediency and in favour of a military effort that at times seems more focused on winning the short-term fight than the long-term reconstruction effort. This military-centric approach, while intuitive in a conflict-affected environment like Afghanistan, ran in the face of previous experience in places like the Balkans, which helped to form the SSR orthodoxy.

The SSR process in Afghanistan has been forced to compromise, and in some cases jettison, core SSR principles.[2] The pressures of conducting SSR in the midst of a violent insurgency have unbalanced and skewed the process, with the training of the army and a militarized police taking precedence over the building of institutional capacity in the line security and justice ministries; the imperative of regime security prioritized over expanding human security; and military-strategic objectives elevated above civilian reconstruction goals.

In many ways the security assistance program in Afghanistan defies the SSR moniker. SSR is not merely a new generic term for traditional security assistance; it is rooted to particular norms, principles and practices—such as its prioritization of governance and its holistic outlook—which are simply absent in the Afghan case. This is hardly unique, with numerous security assistance programs around the world currently being advanced under the guise of SSR in name only. One of the core arguments of this paper is that a new security assistance approach in Afghanistan, better grounded in SSR principles and with much broader civilian engagement—while at the same time reflective of the innate challenges of the context—is required in order to give the Afghan SSR process a chance at enduring success. In short, real SSR, adapted to the local context, may be

the most effective mechanism to bring about positive, sustainable change to the Afghan security and justice systems.
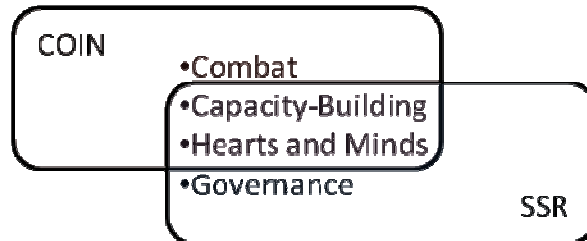
Despite its contextual peculiarities, the Afghan case offers a number of general lessons and cautionary notes for the application of SSR programs in other insecure and conflict-affected states. After an overview of the problems and tensions that SSR programming has faced in Afghanistan, the paper will identify lessons for future SSR initiatives facing comparable conditions.

The Afghan Experience

The escalating Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan has not only invited the militarization of the SSR process, but has also forced the military into roles (such as police trainer and justice advisor) for which it is ill suited. Further exacerbating this distortion of approaches, goals and stakeholder roles, the insecure environment has severely limited the number of civilians willing to work in the country, altering the character and limiting the scope, for instance, of civilian police training and Ministry of Interior mentoring. The following section examines three particular ways in which a conflict environment can stymie SSR initiatives.

Emphasis on Counter-Insurgency

Conditions in Afghanistan have not been conducive for SSR. International military forces are directly engaged in a large-scale counter-insurgency (COIN), making the incremental development (the optimal pace) of Afghan security and justice institutions impossible. Moreover, the political settlement is contested; the two parties to the conflict, as well as a range of other partial and full spoilers, disagree on many fundamental questions about how Afghanistan should be governed. In this context, international assistance to Afghanistan's security sector balances four overlapping activities. First, combat operations endeavor to actively confront insurgent groups in order to hold or recover disputed territory. Second, an array of training and development measures aim to improve the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) so that they can take the lead in fighting the Taliban and eventually manage security in Afghanistan as international forces withdraw.[3] Third, 'hearts and minds' initiatives aspire to increase the legitimacy and popular support of the Afghan government. Finally, efforts to improve the governance of the security and justice institutions are intended to embed core democratic principles of transparency, accountability and respect for fundamental rights. The first three activities are important elements of the counterinsurgency (COIN) effort and the last three are key to SSR, rendering the second and third activities central to both but often pulled in different directions (see figure and table below for an illustration of the overlap of SSR and COIN goals).[4]

Activity:	COIN goals:	SSR goals:
Capacity-Building	-Rapid deployment for service in military operations. -Quantity of 'boots on the ground'.	-Sustainability -Quality of forces
Hearts and Minds	-*Narrow:* eliminate Taliban influence in communities (recruiting, support, sympathy, etc…) and buy support for the government.	-*Broad:* improve state-society relations through service provision to communities (security and justice). - Create foundation for new social contract.

SSR is most often performed in (and primarily designed for) post-conflict or post-authoritarian transition settings where reforms are part of a broader project of state building, democratization and political reconciliation. Because of the ongoing insurgency, international assistance has attempted to pursue COIN and SSR simultaneously, implicitly assuming that the two are mutually beneficial. As a result, the SSR process has primarily been focused on increasing the combat readiness of the police and the armed forces for deployment in COIN and counter-terrorism operations.

Successful COIN operations have always required a certain critical mass of military and police assets to provide presence, engagement and endurance in a conflict where the primary goal is not to defeat the enemy but to secure the support of the civilian population through the provision of protection and the facilitation of economic development and political representation. This set of priorities has wide-ranging implications for the broader SSR process, fundamentally altering its core focus, particularly with respect to the pace, character and scope of security force training. SSR in many ways has been transformed into an assembly line geared to getting boots on the ground quickly and getting the COIN ratios of counter-insurgent to insurgent forces right.[5]

In adapting SSR processes for implementation in insecure, unstable and contested environments a balance must be struck between training indigenous forces quickly, to get as many troops and police as possible into the fight, and training them gradually, to ensure that they are fully qualified to perform their duties in line with international norms

and in conformity with established domestic standards. Accelerated training and deployment can lead to the forces unraveling when pushed; in contrast, very slow development can lead to failure to make an impact. It is the classic dilemma faced by security sector reformers of quantity and speed versus quality and sustainability. In Afghanistan, the process was skewed toward the former, with the training of local security forces predominantly guided by the desire to rapidly form a counter-insurgent force capable of bolstering and eventually leading COIN operations against the Taliban. The urgency to quickly field an Afghan security presence ultimately complicated and set back various facets of SSR programming.

Rapidly fielding indigenous security forces limits the quality of education and training that they can receive, the result being poorly trained forces that often create more problems than they solve. Rushing nascent security forces 'into the fight' before they are able to receive in-service training and experience can erode discipline, morale, combat effectiveness and cohesion. It also undermines the vetting process, opening the door to corruption, criminality and insurgent infiltration. There is now a firm consensus in Afghanistan that the quality of recruits is as vital as the quantity; however, this has not resulted in the type of strategic shift in the security force development approach that is needed. As Anthony Cordesman writes, NATO and US training programs "must not create units where there are inadequate mentors, partner units, facilities, equipment, and training capacity"[6]

Under-Resourced and Militarized Police Reform

The use of the Afghan National Police (ANP) as "little soldiers"[7]—as a paramilitary force engaged in frontline COIN operations—has generated a casualty rate three to four times higher than the Afghan National Army (ANA).[8] The ANP have been used "to man isolated checkpoints and establish a government presence in rural villages," even though "[o]perating in small groups with no means of communication and no backup, they were no match for insurgent groups that targeted their convoys, checkpoints and bases".[9] The ANP has few armoured vehicles and often patrols in open-bed pickup trucks. As a result, they are preferred "soft" targets for roadside bombings and other insurgent operations, losing more personnel than both the ANA and NATO combined in recent years.

There should be a clear delineation of roles between the ANA and ANP, with the ANA taking the lead in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. ANP uniformed police should only be deployed to contested areas when they can receive support from the ANA. Their mandate should be "to […] build rapport with local citizens" and enforce the rule of law, not hold territories militarily and prevent Taliban infiltration.[10] Whereas the ANA's involvement in the broader counterinsurgency campaign is essential for long-term regime security, the bulk of the police force should assume a complementary role by providing tangible human security benefits to citizens, a responsibility which will remain grossly unfulfilled as long as the ANP are co-opted into paramilitary operations. This does not preclude the option of expanding the paramilitary or rapid reaction corps of the ANP, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), which has proved

effective in the field but which has suffered from high attrition rates.[11] ANCOP units could fill the middle ground between unformed police units responsible for community law and order and ANA units engaged in counter-insurgency operations. In other words, they could provide support to both sides of the domestic security spectrum.

The emphasis on war fighting in Afghanistan, particularly in the early years of the conflict, has diverted attention from the reform of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Until November 2009, the majority of police were deployed without receiving basic training. The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A) *Year in Review* report for 2009-2010 stated that, "although this approach was understandable given the immediate operational need for large numbers of [Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP)], it had a corrosive impact on the quality of the AUP and fostered a negative public opinion of the Afghan police in general".[12]Without any training, "the majority of police did not know the law they were responsible to enforce…Not unexpectedly, most Afghans had come to view the ANP as lawless armed men, rather than trusted law enforcement officials".[13]The performance of the ANP has done little to dispel this notion: "nearly 200 policemen were accused of murder and just over 4,600 were involved in crimes in 3,026 separate cases sent to the Attorney General in Kabul…" in 2010.[14]

The training that the police do receive has been focused too narrowly on strengthening its ability as a fighting force rather than a community service deliverer. The ANP's training curriculum and the balance between civilian police and military advisors "needs to be adjusted to emphasize civilian police skills and the relationship between civilian police and their communities".[15] Currently, the ANP's training is largely conducted by military advisors. In 2009, there were just over 500 civilian police advisors[16], compared to more than 1,000 military mentors focused on police development.[17] The neglect of community policing and investigation skills has produced a police force that is unable to fulfill its mandate to protect and serve Afghan communities.

Surveys of the Afghan population demonstrate that Afghan priorities extend beyond security from insurgent attack. According to a 2008 report, "in contrast to western pre-occupation with narcotics and anti-government forces, a number of polls and on-the ground testimony suggest that everyday crime and disputes are the predominant concern of much of the Afghan population".[18]In 2009the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime surveyed 7,600 Afghans across 12 provincial capitals and over 1,600 villages. Surprisingly, more respondents cited corruption as Afghanistan's primary problem (59 percent) than insecurity (54 percent).[19]Among the more disturbing trends to emerge from the survey were that one quarter of the respondents had paid at least one bribe to a police official in the previous year, and only nine percent of urban respondents had *ever* reported an act of corruption to authorities. Most astonishing of all, the survey found that police, court, and customs officials request a bribe on approximately 50 percent of the occasions in which they are approached by civilians.[20] These findings underscore the essential need for governance reform alongside capacity-building measures.

The ANP's poor performance is a critical problem because police officers are the most visible representatives of the state to most Afghans. When they are corrupt and predatory, they deeply undermine the state's legitimacy. As retired Lieutenant General and US Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry explains, "ten good police are better than 100 corrupt police and ten corrupt police can do more damage to our success than one Taliban extremist".[21] The police play a vital role in population-centred COIN strategies. As a UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report emphasized, "the police force, through its regular contact with the general population, has greater potential to change popular perceptions about the legitimacy of the Afghan government than the ANA".[22]

Beginning in March 2010, the NTM-A training model changed from "recruit-assign-intend to train," to "recruit-train-assign"—in other words, from that point forward all new police recruits were to receive at least some training before assuming policing duties. The old model saw 60-70 percent of the force hired and deployed with no formal training.[23] Moreover, the lack of quality standards meant that "all trainees present on graduation day typically graduated", regardless of their performance and assessed aptitude during the training period.[24] The commitment to ensuring a baseline level of training for all recruits will at least create a shared set of guidelines and expectations for ANP officers, and is a credible first step in developing a moral, ethical institutional ethos. Another encouraging development is the NTM-A's recent commitment to achieving a baseline level of literacy for all ANP recruits. Illiterate recruits cannot perform many basic tasks including recording incidents and reading maps. These conditions have forced NTM-A to become the largest adult educator in the country: each month, there are approximately 21,000 ANP in mandatory literacy training, each of whom receives 64 hours of instruction.[25] This is the right approach; it may take boots off the ground in the short-term but it will improve the quality of their performance over the long-term.[26] The dividends of this strategy will accumulate over time.

Capacity-Building Must Emphasize Institution-Building

Capacity building is a multifaceted task with a wide range of target areas, from the skills of the individual security force member at the village level to the governance capabilities of national-level institutions. After more than two decades of war, Afghanistan's security and justice institutions in 2001 featured abysmally low capacity, both in terms of human capital and physical infrastructure.[27] The demands of war fighting over the past decade have generated robust capacity-building initiatives to rapidly develop the operational effectiveness of the security forces, but the process has largely neglected the institutional structures and governance mechanisms needed to sustain and manage those forces over the long term.

In Afghanistan, the challenge of building local capacity extends beyond the training and equipping of the security forces. A central part of an effective SSR program is the expansion of the host country's capability to administer the security architecture and develop and oversee security policy. Yet, in Iraq and Afghanistan, as Robert Perito

explains, "the United States went directly to the task of training indigenous police, giving little thought to the interior ministry— the institution to which the police would report".[28]

Consequently, police officers that graduated from US and NATO training programs in Afghanistan found themselves reporting to an institution, the Ministry of Interior (MoI), which was corrupt, mismanaged and torn by internal political divisions.[29] A July 2010 public opinion survey found that 42 percent of Afghans considered the MoI to be one of the three most corrupt institutions in the country, out of 18 possible choices; this number has scarcely improved since 2007, when it reached 43 percent.[30] At the start of the SSR process, the MoI lacked basic administrative systems for personnel, procurement and logistics as well as the capability to oversee police operations, yet the German police assistance mission assigned only one adviser to it in 2003. The initial failure to dedicate sufficient effort to the reform of the Interior Ministry stifled efforts to remake the Afghan National Police.[31]

Creating the structures and systems needed to support security personnel and units in the field—clear lines of authority, comprehensive logistics systems, rational pay and rank guidelines, as well as facility and equipment management structures—entails a long-term development process that will invariably lag behind security force training schedules.[32] However, creating capability amongst those at the front end of the security apparatus, the "tip of the spear", but neglecting those at the management and oversight level, the brain of the system, will render any tactical advances irrelevant and paralyze the institution over the long-term.

In the first five years of the Afghan SSR process, there were some efforts to provide mentors for senior MoI officials, but "these were relatively *ad hoc* and piecemeal rather than comprehensive in scope".[33] A much more systematic approach is now in place to provide advisors and mentors to senior officials. A February 2011 NTM-A document lists all senior personnel in the MoI and their assigned advisor.[34] Encouragingly, the document reveals few vacant positions. It also highlights the continuing reliance on military personnel and private security companies (PSCs). Advisors drawn from the US military and PSCs (MPRI and DYNCORP), for instance, greatly outnumber those of the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL), a civilian entity. When military personnel are used, short rotations significantly limit institutional memory and force trainers to constantly re-establish critical personal relationships with mentees. Moreover, some senior officials have multiple advisors from different NATO states, fostering confusion and mixed messages.

The lack of capable civilian advisors, mentors and trainers deployed to Afghanistan to support SSR—due both to challenges of recruitment and security restrictions imposed by donor states—also contributed to the lack of progress to develop bureaucratic systems and structures in the security and justice spheres. The US and its coalition allies readily acknowledge the problem of capacity-building supply in conflict-affected environments and have explored solutions ranging from the formation of rapidly deployable civilian expert pools to the creation of specialized institutions focusing on

stabilization and reconstruction. Clearly, more innovative approaches and tools are needed to address existing gaps and problems in difficult SSR contexts.

The need for an infusion of experienced and capable civilian experts to support SSR programs in conflict-affected environments like Afghanistan is acute. Civilian expertise is particularly important with respect to teaching community policing skills, civilianizing over-militarized security and justice structures, developing management and oversight instruments, instilling principles of good governance and democratic civilian control, and developing rule of law institutions. According to the UK approach to stabilization, the military's main role is to establish a sufficiently safe and secure environment for non-military actors to operate. A 2008 report by the UK Stabilisation Unit put this well: "as civilian as possible, as military as necessary," depending on the permissiveness of the context.[35]

Finding qualified civilian experts willing to work in dangerous environments is a challenge for every SSR program in a conflict-affected context. To address this shortfall, the US and other donors have increasingly turned to PSCs, specialized private consultancies and individual private contractors. While PSCs in particular can provide valuable expertise and meet a significant human resource gap, questions have been raised about their effectiveness and lines of accountability.[36] Nonetheless, they are a fact on the ground and greater attention must be placed on expanding the ability of donors to better harness and manage their contributions, along with other forms of private sector technical assistance, to SSR programming.

The Way Forward

The many shortcomings of the Afghan SSR process, which has strayed considerably from SSR orthodoxy, do not justify the jettisoning of the fundamental principles of the ideal-type SSR model. While there is a broad consensus in the international donor community on the model's core principles, SSR is almost always applied in less-than-ideal circumstances. The inherent challenge facing security sector reformers today is to adapt the ideal-type model to messy contexts like Afghanistan. This demands some difficult compromises and priority setting, but the fundamental tenets of SSR need not be abandoned.

Afghanistan offers an instructive case study of the challenges and constraints donors face in seeking to implement an SSR agenda in unstable and violent contexts, in this case without the level of local adaptation needed to make it legitimate and effective. It reveals a fundamental dilemma for security sector reformers: without an adequate security buffer from an insurgency, it is practically impossible to prioritize and pursue ideal-type SSR objectives, such as democratic civilian control, good governance and a human security approach. Conversely though, without pursuing ideal-type SSR goals, any gains made by COIN activities in consolidating an effective security sector within a democratic order will likely prove ephemeral rather than sustainable. Beyond the litany of mistakes and missteps, the Afghan experience provides some samples or glimpses

of innovation in programming that could inform future initiatives and approaches in other conflict-affected environments.

Start Planning Early

The impulse to make the best of difficult situations is a commendable and indispensible trait of military actors. It is what enables militaries to operate in challenging environments and rapidly develop tactics and strategies to address complex problems and changing conditions. This short-term, crisis-oriented, problem-solving approach may be effective in combat situations, but is not the best way to manage SSR or civil-military reconstruction efforts.

The SSR process in Afghanistan has suffered, in general, from a willingness to let planning wait until the reality of implementation sets in. The process has been more reactive than deliberate. This is especially problematic because mistakes made at the beginning of any process of institutional development and reform, can linger and reverberate throughout its duration, in some cases distorting the foundations of the institutions being formed. This does not mean that the process cannot be adapted in response to changing conditions and circumstances over time; flexibility is a necessity. Indeed, inadequate planning and preparation can constrain the ability of SSR programs to mitigate risks and innovatively tackle problems. This is why SSR orthodoxy places such great emphasis on the preparatory phase of the model, from conducting environmental scans and needs assessments, to consensus building and strategy development. Despite the difficult conditions and inherent uncertainty presented by ongoing conflict, SSR should remain a carefully planned process bolstered from the outset by realistic expectations and sufficient resources.

In modern conflicts, the locus of military decision-making is migrating down the chain of command, giving lower-ranking soldiers responsibility for decisions with strategic, rather than merely tactical, consequences. SSR, even in ideal contexts, tends to be "discussed at the conceptual level at the headquarters and delivered and funded at the tactical level in the field".[37] In Afghanistan, the approach to training has been "bottom-up," not only in the sense that training has focused on the deployment of large numbers of lower-ranking Afghan soldiers and police, but also because training approaches and curricula have (until recently) lacked coordination and consensus. This approach to SSR has led to inconsistent and incoherent programming as trainers struggle to implement different, and sometimes incompatible, training regimes. The policy-practice divide is especially difficult to manage in Afghanistan, where the military is involved in many different areas of the conflict and reconstruction effort, ranging from combat operations to less familiar roles such as police training and stabilization assistance through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

Much of the blame for the international donor community's lack of coordination in the early stages of the training mission belongs with the lead nation system instituted at the 2001 Bonn conference, which divided responsibilities for Afghanistan's SSR agenda

into five pillars: military reform (US-led); judicial reform (Italy-led); counter-narcotics (UK-led); disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) (Japan-led); and police reform (Germany-led). This approach was eventually abandoned, but not before several critical projects—notably police and justice reform—were allowed to languish due to insufficient resources and poor coordination.[38] Pay and rank reform within the police, another area that has been subject to several mid-stream adjustments,[39] would have paid substantial dividends had it been initiated effectively from the outset of the reform process. Perhaps an even more telling example of the early myopia of the process and its short-term focus was the policy of the Coalition forces, under the auspices of Operation Enduring Freedom, to sponsor armed warlords as proxies in military operations against the Taliban. This common practice entrenched non-state security structures at the same time that the state with international support was aiming to break them down, and, in turn, obstructed the development of the new national security architecture, complicating the state's efforts to establish even a rudimentary monopoly of force.

Make Mentoring a Priority

Embedding mentors, trainers and advisors with indigenous security forces and institutions is critical to ensuring meaningful reform and to sustainably inculcate personnel with a new ethos and institutional culture. If mentors do not embed, communication tends to be one-way and have marginal impact. Coalition forces must live and serve alongside Afghan forces if they are to lead by example, improve effectiveness and shape patterns of discipline and behavior. Former NATO Commander Stanley McChrystal's *COMISAF's Initial Assessment* called for "radically expanded and embedded partnering".[40] According to McChrystal, ISAF forces should "physically co-locate with the ANSF, establish the same battle-rhythm, and plan and execute operations together".[41] More recently, General Petraeus's *COMISAF COIN Guidelines* stated that troops should "live, eat, train, plan, and operate together. Depend on one another. Hold each other accountable at all echelons down to trooper level".[42] The relationship between external and local forces must be one of partnership and not superiority.

If embedding is so critical to the success of the mission, one could ask why this was neglected in the early phases of the SSR process? First, embedding with the ANSF carries risks, both to individual ISAF soldiers and to the broader operational security of the NATO mission. Involving the ANSF in the planning of operations increases the likelihood of intelligence breakdowns and infiltration. However, while more risk-averse strategies may limit casualties, they will not lead to improvements in the quality of ANSF personnel, nor enhance their capability to plan and lead operations in the future.

Another significant impediment to embedding is the lack of capacity on the part of donor militaries and governments. Beginning in 2008 the US Department of Defense (in accordance with the 2008 *National Defense Authorization Act*, section 1230, public law 100-181) began issuing semi-annual reports on *Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* to Congress, which includes assessments of training requirements. The

chart below reveals persistent capacity shortfalls in three different areas of embedded training.

Table 1: Embedded Trainer Shortfalls

	US ETTs* (in personnel), under CSTC-A			NATO OMLTs* (in units)			PMTs (in personnel)/ POMLTs* (in units)		
Info as of:	Need:	Capacity:	Shortfall:	Needs:	Capacity:	Shortfall:	Need:	Capacity:	Shortfall:
March 2008	2,391	1,062	1,329	71 committed	31	40	2,358	921	1,437
November 2008	2,225	1,138	1,087	103 committed by 2011; approx. 70 immediately required	42	28	2,375	886	1,489
May 2009	3,313	1,175	2,138	65	55	10	2,375	992 (as of Jan. 2009)	1,383
April 2010	CSTC-A and NTM-A commands combined.** ETTs included in NATO figures			180 required for 2010	163	17	475 POMLTs required	367	108
November 2010	ETTs included in NATO figures			180	146	34	475	336	139
May 2011	ETTs included in NATO figures			180	156	24	475	321	154
*Note: ETT stands for Embedded Training Team; OMLT stands for Operational Mentor and Liaison Team; PMT stands for Police Mentoring Team; POMLT stands for Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team.									
**In November, 2009, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) and the US-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) were combined under the NTM-A flag, with the NTM-A Commander also serving as the Commander of the CSTC-A.									

Sources: US Department of Defense (2009-2010); NATO (2010); NATO (2011)

As of November 2009, the training mission continued to experience serious shortfalls of training personnel, with some training facilities having only 25 percent of the personnel required. The trainer-to-trainee ratios for the ANA were excessively high (1:79 overall, with some reaching 1:466).[43]Since these statistics were recorded, the situation has improved considerably. A May 2010 internal review found that staffing levels had risen to 70 percent overall,[44] while the ANA trainer-to-trainee ratio had come down to 1:24 by November 2010.[45] Despite this progress, at the end of 2010 staffing shortfalls were still acute for the police and specialized ANSF departments; the NTM-A was only 56 percent resourced for police training and, tellingly, 0 percent resourced for logistics.[46]In November 2010, 275 (18 percent) of 1,495 training positions were unfilled and lacked pledges to be filled; of 281 critical training positions (identified as priorities by NTM-A), 101 (36 percent) were unfilled and lacked pledges to be filled.[47] As of June 2011, over 1,500 trainers from 33 nations were training the ANSF, with a shortfall of 490 trainers (an improvement over the 770 shortfall in the first quarter of 2011).[48]

While mentoring is critical, it faces an additional challenge: the mentors themselves are often most familiar with well-developed, well-financed and professional security institutions, not the impoverished, dysfunctional forces they are mandated to transform. Linguistic and cultural differences as well as poor levels of basic education and literacy within the ANSF also encumbers basic mentoring. Standardized pre-deployment training for all NTM-A mentors could help by providing some situational and cultural awareness, moderating expectations and identifying common challenges.

Develop deployable civilian capacity

The two largest donor countries in Afghanistan, the US and UK, have recognized the importance of greater civilian involvement in SSR and reconstruction efforts, both as a means to mitigate the militarization of reconstruction activities and to ensure that the right array of civilian expertise is available to facilitate transitions. To meet this goal, both have emphasized the development of a deployable cadre of civilian specialists to complement their military missions.

In the UK, recruitment is managed through the Stabilisation Unit (called the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit or PCRU until 2007) which is a joint project of the Department for International Development (DFID), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The UK has created a Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) through the Stabilisation Unit, which includes 800 deployable civilian experts, 200 members of the Civil Service Stabilisation Cadre drawn from over 30 departments and agencies, and a Stabilisation Volunteer Network. Members of the Group can be deployed in as little as 24 hours to conduct reconstruction and stabilization work, and presently operate in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.[49]

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In the US, President Obama has led a renewed effort to increase civilian recruitment, as part of what he calls a "civilian surge" in Afghanistan, a policy that could be replicated in future operations. The program, also referred to as a "civilian uplift," is conceived as the key to "an increase in civilian-led efforts to build Afghan governance capacity, improve the rule of law, and initiate sustainable economic growth, primarily through agricultural development. The strategy also focuses on advancing these efforts at the sub-national, or field, level".[50] The civilian uplift is led by The Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), and its Civilian Response Corps (CRC) program, which first received funding in 2008.[51] Since then, its numbers have grown steadily, from just 25 in March 2009, to 200 in late summer 2009, to 719 in March 2010.[52] By July 2010, the number had grown to over 1,000 civilian responders,[53] and the project's funding will enable an eventual end target of 2,264 members.[54] Sixteen US agencies have provided personnel, though 91 percent of the total civilians came from the US Department of State, USAID and the US Department of Agriculture.[55] As of May 2011, the Department of State has authorized 1,223 civilians for deployment, a figure that will rise to 1,516 by January 2012.[56] Critically, over half of the civilian staff deployed to Afghanistan through the program are positioned outside of Kabul.[57]

The international capacity to deploy necessary civilian expertise as part of security sector assistance is thus improving in Afghanistan, and will likely benefit future SSR initiatives. Nonetheless it will always be difficult to attract the right number of skilled SSR practitioners for SSR programs in insecure environments, particularly in the long time frames required to make meaningful change. The physical risks and psychological strain presented by such deployments will always make it hard to attract the right people.

CONCLUSION

Western militaries will inevitably play a central role in achieving SSR goals in Afghanistan; however, their mandate must change to help rebalance or reconcile some of the priorities of SSR with the pressing concerns of COIN. Both are ultimately focused on winning over populations rather than killing the enemy, but while COIN is concerned with the immediate insurgency, SSR focuses on building the effective and democratic security institutions that can consolidate and sustain COIN victories. The military's approach must be population focused rather than enemy focused, with a central mandate to win and retain the support of the Afghan population. To accomplish this, military commanders must try to incorporate human security imperatives and a population-centered approach into all of their kinetic and non-kinetic operations.

Conducting SSR in ongoing conflict situations will invariably require the military to assume unfamiliar roles and priorities. However, SSR practitioners must not allow the propensity for militarization inherent in so many SSR programs to take root and produce an unbalanced approach to SSR. Conducting "SSR under fire" in Afghanistan has caused two main distortions of the SSR process in relation to commonly accepted best

practices. First, it has distorted the overall objectives of the SSR process, privileging military objectives such as the training of the armed forces and paramilitary police units to assist with counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism. This imperative has reduced the international community's emphasis on rule of law institutions, including the ANP, but also, critically, the reforms of the justice and prison systems. Protecting the Kabul regime against the Taliban threat too easily overshadows human security goals of providing reliable, legitimate and effective security and judicial services to the population. The latter will do more to safeguard and stabilize the Karzai regime than any military operation. If SSR processes are to enjoy the local ownership and legitimacy they require to achieve sustainable effects, they must take a service delivery approach, demonstrating to local elites and the general population alike that reform programs can deliver genuine positive change.

The second distortion, a natural consequence of the first, is an overreliance on the military to achieve SSR goals. The mandate of foreign militaries now extends to all areas of SSR and has not been adequately balanced by the civilian expertise that often better suited to SSR tasks. Efforts to involve more civilians in police training and reconstruction should help address these issues. The establishment of a civilian expeditionary corps by major donor governments can help to rebalance the composition of external reform missions in conflict-affected areas like Afghanistan. In such contexts, the military's most valuable contribution, and its comparative advantage, may be to facilitate or enable the work of civilian actors, like police trainers and reconstruction experts, rather than bear the responsibility for the gamut of reconstruction tasks from security and development to reconstruction and reform.

A fundamental question raised by this discussion is whether SSR *can* be conducted within a conflict environment, or whether the tensions generated by SSR under fire suggest that a conflict must end before SSR can commence. The Afghan case study alone is not sufficient to answer such a broad and important question. Despite the many tensions and setbacks that the Afghan SSR process has endured, it has yielded a number of lessons and innovations that will help chart the way forward for the SSR model.

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[1]While international security assistance does not always use the term 'security sector reform', much of it conforms directly to the substance of SSR programming, especially as set out in the OECD-DAC Handbook. For example, see Caldwell, 'Commander's Vision.'

[2]For more critical analysis of the early development of the Afghan SSR process see Sedra, 'Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan'.

[3] Indeed, training the ANSF represents the international community's exit strategy. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has stated that "[the Taliban] might think they can wait us out. But within a year or so, there will be over 300,000 Afghan soldiers and police trained and ready to defend their country. And they can't be waited out." NATO Monthly Press Briefing, June 2010.

[4] This table may risk oversimplification, but captures the chief emphases of COIN and SSR in Afghanistan. For example, COIN clearly benefits from high quality troops just as SSR often seeks to increase force levels, but the ultimate priority of each remains as listed.

[5]The most commonly-cited requirement for successful COIN is a counterinsurgent to insurgent ratio of 10 to 1, though some authors (Thiel, "COIN Manpower Ratios") have suggested that the number could be as low as 4 to 1. Regardless, the preoccupation with training a certain critical mass of Afghan security forces to achieve these ratios is a puzzling strategy, considering that the US Army's 2004-2006 Counterinsurgency Operations Manual explicitly states that "No objective force level guarantees victory for either side...In reality, research has demonstrated time and again there are no valid ratios that, when met, guarantee victory" (US Army, *Counterinsurgency Operations*).

[6] Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces,* vi.

[7]For further discussion of this concept, see Bayley and Perito, *The Police in War*.

[8] Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces,* 72.

[9] Bayley and Perito, *The Police in War*, 28.

[10] Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces*, 13.

[11] As of March 2010, the ANCOP accounted for only five percent of the total ANP force, with 5,365 members, but had the highest rate of attrition of any ANP segment (67 percent, compared to an average of 25 percent for the entire ANP), despite being the best trained and most educated units (Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces*, 123, 145).

[12] NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), *Year in Review*, 12.

[13] NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), *Year in Review*, 18.

[14] Harooni, "Billions spent on Afghan police."

[15] Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces,* 13.

[16] Increasing the number of civilian trainers does not guarantee success, however; the civilian advisors that the ANP do receive are often inexperienced, with few of the trainers having held "senior executive positions in major city or state police departments" (Cordesman, 2009: 14).

[17] Chilton, Schiewek and Bremmers, *Evaluation of the Appropriate Size of the Afghan National Police Force.*

[18] RUSI and FRPI, *Reforming the Afghan National Police*, 14

[19] UNODC, *Corruption in Afghanistan*, 3.

[20] UNODC, *Corruption in Afghanistan*, 9.

[21] Doucet, "Afghanistan: A job half done."

[22] UK House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Eighth Report Global Security,* 1.

[23] US DOD, *Report on Progress,* 118.

[24] NTM-A, *180 Day Internal Review and Way Forward*.

[25] Shourie, 'Beyond Brunssum*',*4.

[26] Caldwell and Finney, 'Building the Security Forces that Won't Leave', 76.

[27] Rathmell, 'Reframing SSR for COIN'*,* 98-99.

[28] Perito, *The Interior Ministry's Role in Security Sector Reform,* 1.

[29] Interior ministries almost always prove more problematic to reform than ministries of defence. Beyond simply being a matter of resources, this may reflect the reality that police reform is inherently more difficult and complex than military reform: "Building up institutions that…are to some degree insulated from society (e.g. militaries) can be achieved with relative ease. However, where public institutions are deeply embedded in

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society and are deeply involved in day to day social relations and conflicts, as are police institutions, then reform is much harder to achieve" (Rathmell, 2007: 4).

[30] Integrity Watch Afghanistan, *Afghan Perceptions,* 30.

[31] Sedra, 'Security Sector Reform and State Building in Afghanistan', 193–96.

[32] Stabilisation Unit, *Stabilisation Issues Note*, 7.

[33] Wilder, *Cops or Robbers?,* 37.

[34] NTM-A, *Ministry of Interior: Advisor and Mentor Laydown*.

[35] Stabilisation Unit, *The UK Approach to Stabilisation*, 50.

[36] PSCs, for their part, have complained that the government has not provided them with a clear mandate or training curriculum.

[37] OECD, *The OECD-DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR),* 23.

[38] The clearest example of a lack of international coordination was the effort to train the ANP. Fundamentally, the German and US-led training programs had different focuses and different goals. While the German program was focused on the long-term development of senior officers and the reform of the Ministry of Interior, the US program was designed to train a critical mass of low level officers to restore security and support COIN operations. Another way to conceive of the difference is that the German approach identified what they thought the ANP's role *should be*—community policing—and tailored their training to suit that role; the US, on the other hand, looked at the role the ANP was playing—COIN—and devised a training program to help them develop war fighting and survival skills. While most experts would agree that, in a context like Afghanistan, both training programs provided useful skills, the two programs were unable to coordinate with one another or with the various bilateral police training programs advanced through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The end result was duplication, mixed messages and confusion.

[39] In an attempt to improve retention and address corruption, police pay in Afghanistan has steadily increased from US$25-30 per month from 2002-2005, to US$70 in 2006, to a starting salary of US$165 for a second patrolman in 2010, with additional pay based on years of experience and deployments (CIGI, 2010: 8). The reform was even more pronounced at the officer level, where rank reform undertaken in 2008-2009 reduced the number of officers from nearly 18,000 to just over 9,000, while at the same time increasing pay for Lt. Generals 600 percent, from $107 per month to $750 (US GAO, 2009: 10). Before the reform, Lt. Generals had only earned $40 per month more than Second Lieutenants.

[40] McChrystal, *COMISAF's Initial Assessment*, 23.

[41] Ibid, 23.

[42] Petraeus, *COMISAF COIN Guidelines*.

[43] NTM-A, *Year in Review,* 7.

[44] NTM-A, *180 Day Internal Review.*

[45] US GAO, *Afghan Army Growing*, 26.

[46] NTM-A, *Year in Review,* 26.

[47] US GAO, *Afghan Army Growing*, 25-6.

[48] SIGAR, *July 30, 2011Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 56.

[49] Stabilisation Unit, 'About Us'. In November 2010, the Stabilisation Unit released a report identifying lessons learned for developing, staffing, coordinating and supporting a deployable civilian expert roster (see Stabilisation Unit,*Responding to Stabilisation Challenges in Hostile and Insecure Environments*).

[50] SIGAR, *U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan*, 1.

[51] Behrendt and Nutt, *National Capacities,* 9.

[52] Bruno, 'Waiting on a Civilian Surge in Afghanistan'.

[53] Clinton, *Remarks To The Civilian Responders Workshop.*

[54] Bruno, 'Waiting on a Civilian Surge in Afghanistan'.

[55] SIGAR, *U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan*, 5.

[56] See SIGAR, *July 30, 2011 Quarterly Report to Congress,* 34; SIGAR, *U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan*, 6.

[57] SIGAR, *U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan,* 9.