

Post Seminar Report

Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Counterterrorism in Pakistan: Sharing Experiences

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Foreword by Dean, RDDC

Conflicts and instability have often been the main focal point of Western research on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Central Asian Region. Therefore the project and the conference, of which this report is the output, are also born out of the war in Afghanistan. Though this was an important aspect of the research project, it is equally important to stress the project's joint aspects. The experiences shared between a Western country, such as Denmark, engaged in Afghanistan and a key regional actor, such as Pakistan, leave me with optimism in relation to future policy development for sustainable peace building initiatives. Certainly much more needs to be done, and for Denmark, as well as Pakistan, security challenges are not likely to decrease in the near future.

The conference in October 2015 focused particularly on one aspect of response to these security challenges, namely how insurgents and terrorists are countered in a manner that supports the general strategy of creating peace through military means and building peace through cooperation between military and civilian efforts. The key findings presented in this report address a variety of possibilities for initiatives directed at sustainable peace building and trust building among Afghanistan and Pakistan. Whether these key findings and policy recommendations will transform into lessons learned will be left to political and military decision makers in the two countries as well as other NATO countries.

Seen from my chair at the Royal Danish Defence College, the conference was not merely more proof of successful cooperation with Pakistan's National University; it also serves as a stepping stone for a continuous, enhanced relationship between Pakistan and Denmark. The presence of the Danish Vice Chief of Defence, Lt Gen Per Ludvigsen, certainly underlines the level that our cooperation has reached and this of course strengthens future initiatives on joint projects involving trust building and efforts to promote regional stability in general.

The execution of the conference was handled excellently, and I will take this opportunity to thank my counterpart at the NDU, Noel I. Khokhar, and his staff for successful cooperation at the conference as well as on the first-ever joint publication between the NDU and RDDC. I am convinced that this path of cooperation between professional military educative institutions will add a progressive dimension to trust building. Facilitation of cross-border networks between Afghanistan and Pakistan will further remain a central criterion for sustainable peace building in the region is to succeed. Therefore this will continue to be a prioritized matter from a RDDC perspective.



Ole Kværnø
Dean, RDDC

Foreword by DG ISSRA, NDU

At hand, is the result of a joint effort of a dedicated team of people belonging to two different parts of the world. What started as a broad-based mutual understanding and agreement between defence institutions in two countries, Denmark and Pakistan, to increase collaboration and cooperation, resulted in a multi-pronged outcome. First was an almost two-year-long research project that finished in the form of a jointly authored and published book titled 'Counterinsurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Sharing Experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan'; second came an international trilateral seminar titled 'COIN in Afghanistan and Counterterrorism in Pakistan: Sharing Experiences' that offered an appropriate forum for launching the book and additionally, bringing up shared understanding of an adverse environment and circumstances commonly faced by all. Above all, this enterprise led to a transcendent, pervasive and further strengthened belief, amongst the participants, in the process of dialogue and sharing perspectives to increase our understanding of the world we live in today.



**Maj Gen Noel I Khokhar HI(M)
DG ISSRA, NDU**

On the backdrop of the 2014 withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan and Pakistan's ongoing fight against terrorism, there was indeed a strong need for carrying out a dispassionate retrospective analysis of the threats faced by those fighting the anti-government forces and the ways adopted by governments to meet the challenges emanating from these threats for common benefit. In this respect, we are deeply satisfied that two prestigious institutions such as the Royal Danish Defence College (Denmark) and National Defence University (Pakistan) took up the challenge and made it a success story.

I would like to extend heartfelt my gratitude to all those who participated in this endeavour, especially the speakers and Chairs for the seminars from Denmark, Afghanistan and Pakistan, for sharing valuable insight on given topics along with the authors of the first NDU-RDDC joint publication.

Needless to say that this joint venture has played a significant role in giving yet another message of hope to the international community which is that despite all divergences in opinions and differences in experiences and understanding of our environments and events, there still remains considerable common ground to be traversed and walked through with open hearts since our enemy is the same, i.e. terrorism and militancy. A peaceful, stable and prosperous world is a shared dream of humanity, and every effort to bring it about needs to be complemented and built upon to achieve the desired goal.



Introduction

The war on terror has left Afghanistan and the entire Central Asian region in a state of turmoil. The increase in militant and terrorist activities has had a major impact in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. As a result regional as well as international actors have been forced to adapt and develop new strategies to face the rising threat. In order to counter this threat, the Peace and Stabilization Fund (PSF), located at the Danish Ministry of Defence and the Joint Danish Defence Command, provided the financial resources for enhancing dialogue and trust building in order to facilitate regional dialogue and hereby promote stability in the Central Asian Region. The conference Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Counterterrorism in Pakistan: Sharing Experiences was one of two larger projects funded by PSF in 2015. Pakistan's National Defence University (NDU) and the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC) would like to thank the PSF for supporting the project. Also praiseworthy is the encouraging and facilitative role played by Joint Staff Head Quarters in Pakistan, which helped this project materialize.

The objective of the conference was to share lessons identified by Pakistani armed forces in Pakistan with the Danish armed forces in Afghanistan, in relation to Counter-terrorism (CT) and Counterinsurgency (COIN) respectively, along with sharing the Afghan perspective on the

subject. The asymmetric warfare of anti-government forces has engaged both nations for an extended period, and has compelled them to attempt new approaches. The new lessons learned should be equated and analysed in order to find a system or best-practice for future engagements.

With the winding down of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO's engagement in Afghanistan has changed, and the current Resolute Support Mission (RSM) has been launched in order to support the continued capacity building of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), who are now in the operative lead of the security in the country. The security situation, however, still faces challenges, and further development and continued focus on capacity building of the ANSF is required.

It is of course also important to stress that the security problems of Afghanistan are also fuelled by the fact that problems in Afghanistan are a part of a regional setting where a web of regional grievances directly impacts stability and peace building in the country. Among many factors the launch of the Pakistani military operation Zarb-e-Azb in FATA has been one of the largest counter-terrorism efforts in Pakistan's history, which has strengthened cooperation among the regional states and between Pakistan and NATO in countering terrorism and insurgency in the region. This of course underlines the importance of sharing lessons and

experiences across the border in order to enhance regional dialogue at a track II level and coordinate future measures of sustainable initiatives on regional peace building.

It was evident that Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Denmark could all benefit from sharing experiences in CT and COIN during the conference. Though many of the experiences of the Danish and Pakistani side were identical, the sharing of lessons enriched both countries' academic as well as military knowledge of the subject. Furthermore, exploitation of this situation in terms of facilitating and creating common ground for positive relations and educational links between Afghanistan and Pakistan was also an important objective and overall outcome of the project.

The conference, and the book that was released in connection with it, was due to the joint effort of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis, National Defence University (NDU) and the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC). The conference was greatly assisted by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

as well as the Danish Ministry of Defence especially through the great effort exerted by the Defence Attachés in Kabul and Islamabad. Both the NDU and RDDC would like to thank the attachés and all personnel at the Danish embassies in Islamabad and Kabul that have supported and contributed to the process. Likewise, the NDU and RDDC would like to thank the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs for facilitating participation from abroad.

This report should be seen as one part of the project's output document, the other being the book launched at the conference. It is founded on excerpts from the sessions in conjunction with considerations and analysis of the reflections and arguments made at the conference. Initially an executive summary gives emphasis to the recommendations made by the moderators of each session. The subsequent chapters are organized in accordance with the conference program, with each session being introduced with reflective remarks on the key points given by the respective session chairs, as seen from an RDDC and NDU perspective followed by an excerpt of each presentation.

Executive Summary

The conference was entitled "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and counterterrorism in Pakistan: Sharing Experiences" and took place at the NDU in Islamabad on October 19-20, 2015. A large number of scholars and officers participated in the conference, from Afghanistan, Denmark and Pakistan. A constant theme during the conference was the importance of cooperation across borders in the Central Asian region as a means to fight the insurgency and terrorist groups present throughout the region. In addition to the official programme, the interactive sessions, as well as the coffee breaks and dinners, provided a conducive environment for networking and exchanging ideas. The informal setting of these occasions apart from the conference itself further facilitated a sincere dialogue the influence and value of which should not be underestimated.

The two-day conference was set in motion a day in advance at an icebreaker event with the attendance of Lt General Per Ludvigsen, Vice Chief of Danish Defence, Major General Noel I. Khokhar HI(M), DG ISSRA of Pakistan's NDU, and the heads of the Afghan Danish delegations Mr. Bakht Mohammad Bakhtyar and Colonel Nicholas Veicherts. The event was also attended by Danish Chargé d' affairs Ms Helle Nielsen, the Chairs for all sessions, speakers and the organizing team of the NDU and RDDC for the seminar.

Policy recommendations

The last session of the conference consisted of a summary containing the key findings from the other sessions. In the closing session Maj Gen Noel I. Khokhar, HI(M) DG ISSRA, NDU, and Chief Guest Lt Gen Per Ludvigsen both closed the session by emphasizing the importance of the conference along with the work that the NDU and RDDC have jointly undertaken with the conference and the book. DG ISSRA expressed that the problems with militancy in the South and Central Asian regions would not easily be solved, and it would take great commitment from all the afflicted nations.

The work between the RDDC and NDU would hopefully aid a lot in understanding and defeating the asymmetric enemy. Per Ludvigsen stressed the fact that the conference and book was only one step in the right direction and that we need to remember that the killing of enemy insurgents or terrorists is only one part of the solution. The military cannot achieve the goal on its own; society as a whole is needed to root out insurgencies. Both speakers thanked the participants for their input to the conference and their hard work.

Recommendations by Major General Noel I. Khokhar DG ISSRA, Sessions I & II

In the book presentation session, the authors shared their thoughts about the situation on the region, according to the findings they had made, and their intricate knowledge of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Noel I. Khokhar stressed that the solution for the problems of the region are not easily achievable, and highlighted the authors' views of difficulties and possible solutions to the situation:

- COIN and CT operations are per definition slow, and it takes dedication to successfully undertake such operations, which combines poorly with domestic politics and elections of coalition members. Home front demands to 'get the boys home' go poorly with a slow and dedicated approach.
- In the case of Afghanistan, with its porous

borders and fragile state, the importance of regional powers and neighbouring countries needs to be emphasized. The solution for peace cannot be imposed by a coalition from outside the region; the regional players are necessary to achieve more stable conditions.

- The wording of 'counterterrorism' might lead to unintended complications, and the change to 'counter-militancy' would add more dimensions to the word.
- The importance of going from lessons to actual tactics/strategies cannot be underestimated. Making the locals decide the area of focus for the intervention and COIN operation will be more productive, thereby allowing Afghanistan to benefit more from a bottom-up approach.

Session II

- The role of Pakistan in the peace process in Afghanistan is still under discussion, and Afghanistan needs to define what they expect of Pakistan, to build on the understanding already existing between the two countries.
- We should all be aware of the narratives of both allies and enemies, as they can have a great effect on the fighting spirit of friends and enemies and might limit understanding between would-be allies if one nation has a negative narrative of another.

Recommendations by Colonel Nicholas Veicherts

Session III

Nicholas Veicherts emphasized the importance of coming together, sharing experiences, viewpoints and thoughts, discussing what is important for the future of the whole region, but at the same time maintaining a respectful tone and achieving a good discussion. He thanked his panel as well as the audience for delivering such an experience at the conference, with the resulting key findings:

- Continued support for Afghanistan, both for its armed forces and society in general, is necessary for achieving the wanted end state of a secure Afghanistan and a stable region.
- For future operations in Afghanistan, or other stabilization interventions in the future, it is important for the coalition partners to remember to work for a common goal, strategy and execution of the strategy. The intervention in Afghanistan illuminated the difficulties of coalition, and this needs to be addressed for future operations.
- Demands for highlighting root causes of



former enmity between the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan leads nowhere. We need to focus on the substance on which we know we do not disagree.



Recommendations by Lt Gen (Ret'd) Asif Yasin Malik, HI(M)

Session IV

Asif Yasin Malik expressed that he believes that the worst part of the military operations in both Afghanistan and North Waziristan is in the past, and that the focus in the future should not be on the military track but on the civilian track. To achieve a civilian victory the whole of the Pakistani society needs to face the challenge, and the coalition partners need to support Afghanistan, as the society there is not yet able to carry that burden by itself. The key findings of the session were:

- Local ownership is very important and may help avoid the problems that ISAF faced of employing own culture or values. Local culture should be seen as an opportunity instead of a hindrance.
- The success of military forces could create new problems for Afghanistan, with IS interested in expansion, and a weak Taliban, and insurgent forces.
- The solution must be crafted by and for the whole region. The problems are region-wide and the solution must be so as well to properly deal with them.
- The equipment needed by the ANSF, such as planes, should be supplied by the coalition forces as soon as possible, to



enhance their capacity, and through it strengthen the security in the country.

- Militancy is a state of mind and cannot simply be destroyed through the use of military means. The mindset needs to be destroyed through education and knowledge, which are the just demands of much of the local society, with schools and infrastructure being the key components.



Opening Session:



The Seminar comprised six sessions, including the opening and wrap-up/closing sessions.





The event started off with an opening session, attended by the Danish Vice Chief of Defence, who delivered opening remarks for the Danish side.



After the introductory remarks given by DG ISSRA Maj Gen Noel I. Khokhar HI(M), President of the National Defence University of Pakistan Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder HI(M) delivered the opening remarks for the Pakistani side.



The Chief Guest for the occasion was Lt Gen (Retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Government of Pakistan. A synopsis of his speech is given below:

It gives me unique pleasure to come to my alma mater, the National Defence University. I also deeply appreciate the research-based joint collaboration carried out between the Royal Danish Defence College (Denmark) and the National Defence University. For this, I commend both institutions and their teams for making it a successful endeavour.

In our contemporary era, the nature of threats to the sovereignty and integrity of nations, as well as methods of conducting warfare, have transformed. The threats to states today can no longer be understood in only kinetic and conventional terms. Consequent to these transformations, governments are required to re-evaluate threat scenarios and formulate policies and strategies to deal with the emerging challenges.

Pakistan faced similar challenges externally and internally after 9/11. The era following the declaration of the Global War on Terror by the US and its allies saw the South Asian region undergo great instability and turmoil due to an increase in militant and insurgent activities, primarily in Afghanistan. Consequently, all the regional actors had to develop new strategies to deal with the unrest and instability. An elusive and

unpredictable enemy, difficult geographical terrain, politico-diplomatic upheavals, and public resentment over governments' decisions to engage in asymmetric warfare haunted the states with prospects of a never-ending military engagement at home or abroad.

However, the centuries-old historical and geographical connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan accorded a unique set of challenges to Pakistan afterwards. The instability in Afghanistan was bound to have spill-over effects on Pakistan, owing to the geographical contiguity, the shared 2500-km-long porous border, tribal settlements and Pashtun tribes straddling both sides of the border, along with the outpour of Afghan refugees coming from war-torn Afghanistan since the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The ensuing issues concerning easement of rights and challenges connected to refugee rehabilitation and repatriation were left to Pakistan to deal with on its own.

Pakistan did not have the luxury of running away from its neighbourhood or abandoning its Afghan brothers, who were victims of the protracted war, trapped in the harsh terrain at the mercy of an adverse geographic environment. In addition, Afghanistan, being a landlocked country,

had already been overwhelmingly dependent on Pakistan for all its socio-economic activities, trade and transportation of goods for many centuries. At the same time Pakistan was faced with the traditional opponent and threat from its eastern borders, mainly owing to the unresolved Kashmir issue. The unprovoked hostile posturing in the neighbourhood only made matters worse for Pakistan.

Other challenges faced by Pakistan – the sixth most populous country of the world with a population of approx. 190 million, inhabiting an area covering approximately 800,000 sq. km – emanate from socio-economic inequality, governance-related issues and the spread of diverse ideologies espousing socio-political narratives.

Accordingly, the government of Pakistan formulated effective policies to curb the menace of terrorism and militancy. The most significant of these initiatives was a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-pronged state response in the form of the National Action Plan, established in January 2015 and backed by Parliament and the Supreme Court. Through the National Action Plan the nation demonstrated a consensus for zero tolerance for militancy, terrorism and extremism. Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan, carried out by the valiant armed forces of Pakistan, spearheads Pakistan's campaign against terror and is now fast achieving its objectives.

I am optimistic that Pakistan soon will rid itself of this menace, Insha'Allah. But let me add

that the regional environment needs to be made stable and peaceful. This effort is one in which the international community should fulfil its role. There is a strong need to resolve longstanding issues like Kashmir, which are the real obstacles for ensuring stability in the region. Owing to the criticality of the Kashmir issue, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has put forward a new initiative in the UN General Assembly by proposing a four-point plan for a peace with India, which also illustrates that Pakistan is a peace-loving and peace-promoting nation that desires "peaceful-co existence" and cordial relations with its neighbouring states, focused on cooperation rather than conflict.

To conclude, I congratulate the RDDC and NDU on the book launch, which is the fruit of their collaboration. All three authors deserve praise for a wholehearted and dedicated effort in this regard. I am sure that their research will add new insights into the issue at hand and will open new opportunities for cooperation between the two institutions in the time to come. I will ask the President of the NDU to share the findings of this seminar with the government, and I assure you, on behalf of my government, that the recommendations will be given full consideration when formulating policies in the future.

With this, a warm thanks, once again, to you for providing me an opportunity to be a part of this venture. Allah hafiz

After the address by the Chief Guest a short book launching ceremony was held.



The Book Launching Ceremony

Before the launching of the book, Ms Mahroona Hussain Syed, on behalf of all the authors, presented an overview of the first-ever joint research publication between defence institutions in Denmark and Pakistan to the Chief Guest and participants. This project also represents the National Defence University's (Pakistan) first-ever jointly published book with any foreign institution. The book was authored by Maj Thomas Galasz Nielsen (Military Analyst at the Danish Institute of International Studies), Ms Mahroona Hussain Syed, PhD fellow and Research Associate (Internal Studies Branch, ISSRA) representing National Defence University, and Mr David Vestenskov (Consultant-RDDC). The Royal Danish Defence College undertook the publication, printing and distribution of the book. Its objectives have

been to identify lessons and shared experiences in relation to asymmetrical warfare, especially Counterinsurgency (COIN) and Counterterrorism (CT), between Pakistan and Denmark; and to build sound foundations for further joint research in the field of COIN and CT by Pakistan and Denmark. The book is based on the interviews, experiences and insights of practitioners, policymakers and learned scholars from both countries.

The Danish Chargé d'Affaires Ms Helle Nielsen presented the jointly written book to the Chief Guest, Vice Chief of Danish Defence Lt Gen Per Ludvigsen, President NDU Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder HI(M), DG ISSRA Maj Gen Noel I. Khokhar HI(M) and the Head of the Afghan Delegation Mr. Bakht Mohammad Bakhtyar, followed by a group photo of the dignitaries and the authors of the book.

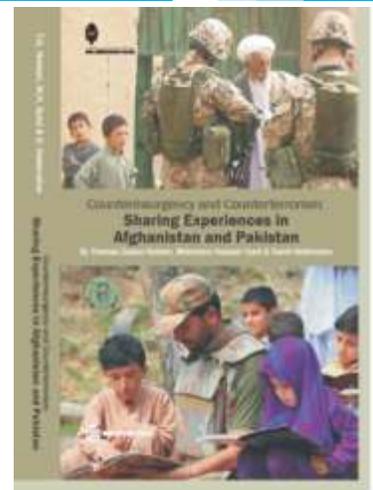


About the Book

The book titled "Counterinsurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Sharing Experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan" contains five chapters, followed by appendices, and a bibliography. The Chapter distribution is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction (jointly written), **Chapter 2:** Entering Afghanistan: Historical overview, the stages of the ISAF mission and understanding the basics of COIN and the opponent (*by Thomas Galasz Nielsen & David Vestenskov*), **Chapter 3:** Counter-militancy Operations in Pakistan: Through the prism of COIN and CT: (*Mahroona Hussain Syed*), **Chapter 4: (Part 1)** Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan (*Joint Analysis by the authors*), **Chapter 4: (Part 2)** Counter-terror Operations in Pakistan (*Joint Analysis by the authors*), **Chapter 5:** Conclusion (jointly written), **Appendices** including the Complete list of lessons identified (Appendix 1), questionnaire (Appendix 2), Transcriptions of interviews from both sides (Appendix 3&4)

Bibliography





Session I

Counterinsurgency & Counterterrorism
in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Book Presentation



Session I: Counterinsurgency & Counterterrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Book Presentation



The first session included a presentation of the book, and gave the authors an opportunity to speak their mind on the subject of CT and COIN. Major General Noel I. Khokhar DG ISSRA presented the book, and the new cooperation between the NDU and RDDC. The authors themselves talked of the work that lies behind the

book, both the successes and setbacks, and new ideas or thoughts in hindsight. The session contained an introduction of CT and COIN from a historic perspective, as well as the Danish and Pakistani experiences with the asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan and North Waziristan (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), respectively.

David Vestenskov: Project outline, COIN theory and practice throughout history

David Vestenskov, consultant at the Dean's office of the RDDC, began the session by pointing out that the book in itself has only begun to scratch the surface of what can be learned regarding CT and COIN experiences. He emphasized the difficulties of conducting CT and COIN operations, as well as the challenge presented by limited time and resources.

The experiences gained independently by different countries in dealing with asymmetrical warfare stress the need to assess and analyse the experiences from COIN and CT in order to improve and develop the approach in future engagements. The sharing of experiences by Pakistan and Denmark, based on lessons identified in strategies and operations, is a small

but important step in the needed cooperation within this field of research. The intention behind the whole project – which the book is part of– has also been to enhance the ties between the international community and the regional actors, especially between the states of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The book at hand seeks specifically to identify lessons and share these between Pakistan and Denmark. In order to guide the study to common analytical ground, two fundamental objectives were initially developed:

- 1) To identify points of convergence and divergence between the perceptions of Denmark and Pakistan regarding COIN and CT through the process of sharing

experiences.

- 2) To build sound foundations for further research in the field of COIN and CT between Pakistan and Denmark.

The project relied on qualitative research methodology based on data collection from Pakistan and Denmark through interviews. Generally the interviews consisted of six basic and open-ended questions that were developed in order to stress the importance of perceptions of countering insurgents and terrorists.

An important priority for the authors has been the two analytical chapters, along with the data collection itself, which was conducted jointly, as this particular part of the book is based on the core objective of attempting to locate lessons identified without a bias to personal preferences or perceptions. In my view this has been attained not only in the two analytical chapters but also in the concluding chapter.

A second priority was to prove that the perception of what COIN and CT signify differs in the eyes of both the interviewees, as well as in the literature.

From the beginning, it was agreed that this book in no manner should be an attempt to impose one or the other side's perception. The important thing was as objectively as possible to view the end, ways, and means of whatever strategy the two countries used, have been using, and plan to use in order to extract valuable lessons for future strategies on COIN and CT.

This was then combined with the interviewees' personal and subjective perceptions and opinions of finding areas where lessons could be identified. The interviews could in this way be used to extract information on areas where personal experiences collided with or supported the official perception of the strategies in NATO – in this instance represented by the Danish Case – and in Pakistan.

In addition, information about the tools used to reach the objectives at the tactical level provided further insight into the coherence between political strategy and actual tools



applied on the ground. This approach did give us the possibility of finding lessons identified at the strategic level while at the same time analysing the reasoning behind these findings.

Interviewees from Pakistan and Denmark shared a lot of the same lessons identified despite the two countries' very different strategic starting points and geographical challenges, and despite the labelling of their different approaches to counter the enemies: be they defined as insurgents, terrorists, or simply as militants. As suspected from the start of the project, labelling an enemy is not that important at the operational and tactical levels because the tools implemented to reach the strategy's objectives are much the same in any case. It is, however, important that the political level create a narrative about whom or what the strategy is addressing. This is especially the case if the strategy is supposed to address multiple objectives in a comprehensive and coherent manner with a focus on a strategic end-state. Only then will the lower levels be able to act in accordance with the strategy.

In conclusion, the greatest lesson of all in this study is the need for an overarching strategy which should be resourced in accordance with political ambition. In the end this must be implemented and directed by objectives and allocated resources - not by time.

Mahroona Hussain Syed: Pakistani Counter-Militancy Operations

The talk given by Mahroona Hussain Syed, Research Associate at the Internal Studies Branch-ISSRA, and PhD fellow at NDU, on 'Counter-Militancy Operations' in Pakistan was based on an exhaustive research work supported by historical evidence, which gave credence to her talk and research work presented in the book 'Counterinsurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Sharing Experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan'. She gave a brief overview of the Pakistani experiences with fighting 'militant' forces in FATA and especially North Waziristan. Her focus was on the problems of labelling the enemy 'terrorist', and the actions of the Pakistani armed forces for Counterterrorism.

The major assertion in the analysis is that the term 'Counter-militancy' is far more accurate in describing Pakistan's efforts against militancy and terrorism than the terms CT (Counterterrorism) or COIN (Counterinsurgency) operation. The current official discourse on the subject has quite a few anomalies—from simply classifying the opponent to planning and adopting approaches to deal with him. Since 'COIN and 'CT are the more popular labels to describe internal conflict situations in the world these days, many people use these terms interchangeably, which is theoretically inappropriate on various grounds. COIN is, however, used very rarely as compared to CT in Pakistan.

Ever since 9/11 Pakistan has found itself stuck in the middle of the 'with us or against us' debate, which left Pakistan no other choice but to take an unpopular decision of joining hands with the international community. Amidst the geostrategic complexities and competing interests of key players in the region, the decision to join the war on terror has become a Gordian knot for Pakistan. A new form of internal enemy appeared within the state of Pakistan: militants using terrorism to further their ideology. But the majority of Pakistanis have never agreed with such a strict interpretation of religion. Thus Pakistan had to formulate its own strategy, which could be described as a counter-militancy strategy. The term 'counter-militancy' caters to all perspectives and types of opponents involved in the asymmetric conflict that Pakistan has had to deal with, while at the same time, it encompasses the entire range of activities undertaken by the government of Pakistan, especially the Pakistani armed forces.



As far as the Pakistani government's current counter-militancy drive is concerned, Pakistan is finally witnessing a new and desirable phase of historical transition after experiencing the War on Terror being waged in the region for more than a decade. Consequent to the state's decision to launch Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the armed forces started a full-scale operation to root out militant and terrorist havens from the tribal belt of Pakistan in 2014. The Operation is unique, being result of a national consensus built across civil-military leadership in particular and the nation in general. It is strongly backed by the first-ever National Internal Security Policy (NISP) in the country's history. It is also simultaneously backed by across-the-board targeted operations in other areas infested with terrorism, without making distinctions between militants as 'good or bad Taliban'. Equally important is the fact that the entire government policy and ensuing strategy has been ratified by the Parliament through a 20-point National Action Plan, followed by a constitutional Amendment; and the Supreme Court has also recently backed this amendment in the wake of the special circumstances being faced by Pakistan.

However, Pakistan faces abundant challenges in its continued efforts in counter-militancy and CT. Military action should not be perceived as the panacea for all of the region's troubles. The situation in FATA was as much an issue of protracted mal-governance and inconsistent government policies, as it was an issue of terrorism that had aggravated the plight of the people of FATA. So, more than a state-centric approach is needed; what is called for is rather a multi-pronged/comprehensive, population-centric approach to the resolution of issues

of the people of FATA.

As of today, without sounding apocalyptic, the spectre of internal rifts and instability in Afghanistan and the prolonged delays and cancellations in talks with the Taliban haunt Pakistan with the looming shadows of a déjà vu of the post-soviet withdrawal era of 1990s in Afghanistan. Embroiled in its own internal issues, Pakistan fears that sustaining the long term effect of this achievement will still be a challenge. This fear is rooted in the threat from the terrorist TTP's Chief Mullah Fazlullah, the mastermind behind the shooting of the Nobel-prize-winning Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai besides numerous other terrorist activities, along with other key leaders living in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the sacrifices already made by specifically the Pakistani army in carrying out counter-militancy operations, ever since the US War on Terror started, outnumber the casualty rate, costs due to loss of infrastructure, and socio-psychological impacts of the war, of those of NATO/ISAF and the US all combined together. At the same time, Pakistan is hosting about 1.5 million (registered) Afghan refugees, with unregistered numbers exceeding current estimates (approx. 3 million). Pakistan's country profile for 2015, given by UNHCR, shows that Pakistanis hosting the world's largest protracted refugee population, meaning thereby that Pakistan will be providing jobs, healthcare, land, schooling, and even birth certificates (around 800,000) to children from the Afghan refugee families.

Furthermore, continuous and deliberate distractions posed by relentless brinkmanship and hostile posturing in its neighbourhood has the potential to distract Pakistan from its ongoing counter-militancy efforts. Therefore, peace and stability in the

region, especially in Afghanistan, through broad-based engagement is needed. The same need exists for promoting reconciliation, normalization of relations with India and efforts for conflict resolution, especially a just resolution of Kashmir dispute in the light of several UN resolutions. The eradication of militancy and terrorism not only from FATA but the entire length and breadth of the region will be needed. Pakistan on its part is making efforts for regional peace building and economic rejuvenation, not least through another mega-initiative, i.e. the CPEC (China –Pakistan Economic Corridor) for building connectivity, economic prosperity and regional stability.

In the long run, no matter what the outcome, timings, and duration of counter-militancy efforts, civilian capacity and capability to deal with problems of governance and socio-economic development will be the sine qua non for future operations. One needs no nirvana to realize that pure reliance on conventional campaigns at the expense of introducing governance-related reforms will prove to be anathema for any efforts at finding long-term solutions to this issue.

At the same time, whether one agrees or not, all nations, whether developed or developing, have inalienable and equal rights to safeguard their sovereign interests, and have ambitions for their progress and to take what they perceive as their rightful place in the comity of nations. Treating some cultures as inferior and therefore in need of some proactive military intervention for bringing stability through some far-fetched, alien cultural values to replace the existing system is not only unfair, it is against the interests of the citizens of the world. This is so because, in the contemporary world, we must realize that the whole world has to deal with the aftermath of such an excursion and not just one country.



Thomas Galasz Nielsen: Danish COIN Operations in Afghanistan

Reflecting on the Danish contribution to ISAF in the Helmand province, Thomas Galasz Nielsen pointed out the many difficulties and victories the Danish forces had had, and by extension of these the lessons identified by the troops. Throughout his presentation he focused on the need for military-civilian cooperation and the need to strengthen such cooperation. He also focused on legitimizing and strengthening the local government.

The lessons identified for Denmark are so many that we will not get to them all, which is why my focus will be on the lessons that can be applied to the whole region. We need to make sure that the lessons learned are used in the future. If we do not have a solid system to pass on the lessons learned, we are doomed to repeat our failures.

Four distinctive areas

1. We must support local governance – not the government as such - especially in an environment where the locals do not necessarily see the government as a positive entity. Thus, we must support what is going on at the local level, even at the cost of the top-down approach. We need to manage projects through the local government and to start developing a social contract between the local government and the population. COIN is not about reaching military goals but about reaching political ones. ISAF handed out millions of dollars, but the money only fuelled a malfunctioning system. Thus, the banditry was supported by ISAF although it had not been created by ISAF. Projects must be developed in cooperation with the local government and have to be sustainable also in the long run.
2. We need cooperation between the civil and military sides to create a secure environment for both the local population and the local government. A COIN force must prioritize local security forces with focus on quality, training, and sustainability – not numbers. The local government must have ownership in the responsibility of local security. One way is



to educate the government in working together. Another is to accept that counterinsurgency is time-consuming and must be done in cooperation with the host government.

3. We have to integrate civilian and military operations even better than we did in Afghanistan. And we have to get it right. One of the problems is that the military – over time – seems to improve its ability to conduct military operations in the hostile environment, while the civilian side apparently does not seem to display the same type of progress over time in hostile environments. We have to merge the two efforts in a fashion so that the military does not run away from the civilians. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan tried to merge the two very different entities together in order to coordinate efforts, but they had rather mixed results. The military side became frustrated over the lack of progress and support from the civilian side – and the civilian side had difficulties with supporting a great number of secured areas, which almost all only served a short-term military purpose rather than a long-term civilian purpose. In the end, much of the Provincial Reconstruction Team's operations only had a thin layer of cooperation and most of the efforts were “business as usual”. This is not the way forward. Plans and strategies must be comprehensive at all times and the

military and civilian side must be trained together in order to understand each other. And all operations must be in support of the political goals, not just short-term gains.

4. Cultural awareness and cultural respect must be moved further up in the education system of a counterinsurgency force. Without awareness and respect, a counterinsurgency force will never be able to become a credible and

trustworthy partner for both the locals and the local government. A counterinsurgency force is an alien element in the eyes of the local population, regardless of how much the government wants us to help. And the local population does not necessarily want to interact with foreigners. Thus, it would be best if the counterinsurgency is as invisible as possible – which points at supporting the local government instead of conducting own operations.





Session II

Strategic Approaches to Security Challenges



Session II: Strategic Approaches to Security Challenges



The second session was dedicated to the methods and policies used to counter the new security challenges. The moderator, Lt Gen (Ret'd) Khalid Rabbani HI(M), stressed the need for stability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to strengthen the whole region.

The presentations focused on a greater view

of the whole situation in the region, and the comments, questions and general discussion afterwards denoted the interstate problems in the regions.

The discussion was heartened and passionate but gave the participants a view of and respect for their different standpoints.

Jan Werner Mathiasen: Addressing Global Security Challenges: The Danish Contribution to the ISAF-Mission in a Strategic Perspective

The first presentation of the session described the evolution of Danish strategy in a historical perspective. The presentation continued with describing Danish strategy in Afghanistan and took a look at how the future strategy of Denmark might evolve. A focus throughout the presentation was on both the reasons for Danish commitment to NATO and how the views of how to interact with, within or without NATO have changed dramatically, along with the goals of Danish policies.

Major Jan Werner Mathiasen emphasized three main subjects in his presentation: Danish strategy in general, the Danish integrated approach in Helmand, and finally the global security challenges. He described the general Danish strategy as protecting Denmark and Danish

interests and promoting Danish values. He pointed out how Danish strategy has been affected by history, changing from the use of soft power during the Cold War to hard power after its end, with a focus on being a “good ally”. The Danish integrated approach concept was developed in 2004 in order to integrate the efforts by the military and humanitarian organizations in regard to stabilization processes. It was stated that the process faced multiple problems in the absence of cooperation and a lack of qualifications from local civilian advisors; support from Copenhagen was also a problem, and the cooperation between Danish ministries was not been sufficient.

Danish efforts followed a “Clear – Hold – Build – Train” strategy, but the Danish forces in Helmand

initially focused too much on the tactical level and cooperation with ANSF was initiated too late. The strategic level (political end-states from Copenhagen) had a greater focus on women's rights and education, which were very costly to implement and often not in sync with the inadequate numbers of civilian advisors.

It was also stated that future global security challenges will be influenced by the lack of "will" to deploy a great number of troops for a longer period, so there need to be some guiding principles for the

future stabilization operations. Focus should be on reducing the influence of national values (in a coalition) and supporting existing local parliamentary institutions.

He underlined that security issues must be addressed as regional problems with a global reach and that solutions should be developed and implemented multilaterally, which naturally calls for joint (global) comprehensive solutions.

Masood Khan: Building Narratives at Strategic Level for CT Operations: Challenges for Pakistan

The presentation by Masood Khan stressed the importance of Narrative building, and how there has been a lack of will to commit to it. He said that Afghan-Pakistani relations should be improved, as he believed most of the problems in the relationship were based on false accusations. He also described the way narratives were formed and disseminated by the state and the militants in Pakistan along with difficulties that should be addressed.

Ambassador (Retd) Masood Khan expounded upon the cause and casus belli of terrorism as respectively being violence and propagation of a particular world view. In the case of Pakistan, conducting War against Terrorism, the state narrative is very sound but one has to understand that many people including those in the West try to supplement the tale of the terrorist by proposing that if the terrorists have a narrative then we must have to come up with a counter narrative. This only makes the issue more complicated because if the state's narrative is the mainstream narrative, then terrorists should be on the defensive and not on the offensive. The first thing to be addressed in this context is whether these terrorists and militant 'Muslims' are projecting the message of Islam? If our answer is 'no', it means we are rejecting their narrative and this rejection is not per se a counter narrative. When it comes to building a narrative we do not have to become defensive. Tracing the origin of terrorism after the end of the Cold War, Muslims are considered in the West and even in America, in fact all over the world, as a hostile force. Such profiling causes Muslims to become unnecessarily



defensive and forces them to give too many explanations to reject this notion.

In this regard, a number of questions prick the mind, e.g. would there have been an al-Qaida if Saddam had not been encouraged by the US to take on Iran? This in fact germinated the seeds of terrorism. Then, would there be an al-Qaida and Osama bin laden if there had been no Gulf War? Would there have been an ISIS if there had not been a massive attack on Iraq in 2003? Would there have been a Taliban if the US and its allies, including Pakistan, had not mobilized their forces against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? Would al-Qaida have moved to our neighbouring Afghanistan if there had not been any Taliban to provide them with safe heavens? Had there not been any kind of external interference, would there be ethnic, sectarian and communal violence in Pakistan on

such a large scale?

The exegesis of these questions will help explain even the most sublime narratives of the Taliban, according to whom the West is evil and the rulers in the Middle East are corrupt puppets of the West, facilitating the exploitation of the Muslims. He identified another general view held in Pakistan that if we have cordial relations with China, then we must have hostile attitude towards US and the West, and vice versa. Anti-western attitudes are rampant in Pakistan and are definitely a hurdle to having a trust-based relationship with US. This vacuum of mistrust provides an opportunity for extremists. Then there are also some external factors, such as some countries having openly declared that they would weaken Pakistan from within through terrorism and subversion because they see Pakistan as a hostile country. Pakistan's nuclearisation has also compounded its problems, since its nuclear status has not been fully approved of or digested internationally; hence another reason to propagate the narrative that portrays Pakistan as an epicentre of terrorism. Another example comes from Afghanistan which considers Pakistan as a

cause of all the ills on its own soil.

To tackle this menace, we have to work on further improving civil-military relations and governance. All types of violence, either from within or externally motivated, have to be controlled. To develop the counter narrative to fight against terrorism, we need to develop theories not through the prism of the West but dig into our own Islamic history to see how kharijites and takfeeries were dealt with. This means that in order to cope with the challenge of terrorism, we have to come up with some indigenous thinking. We also have to focus on media and think tanks in Pakistan, which are weak and need to be strengthened.

In Pakistan and other developing countries, people presume that states are omnipotent, possessing all the required information. But the reality is that the states that are succeeding in this regard have mobilized their whole nations for fighting the challenges posed against them. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the whole nation to become a part of the effort against militancy because it cannot be the responsibility of a single institution.

Brig Hassan: addressing National Security Threats: Counter-Militancy and CT Operations in North-Waziristan

Brig Hassan from the Military Operations Directorate, GHQ, gave a comprehensive description of the operations that have been and are still being undertaken in North Waziristan in FATA (Pakistan), focusing on the situation after 9/11 up until today. As well as claiming great territorial gains in the fight, he also stressed the fact that he believed that the fight would not be won by military might alone.

Brig Hassan talked about the strategic context of the threat response and challenges. He said that the decade from 1979 to the late eighties was the hotter end of the Cold War when, during the time of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a strategic alliance was formed between Pakistan and the free world to support the resisting forces against the Soviets. During this decade, the Soviet Union disintegrated and withdrew from Afghanistan. Following this, there was an internecine war in Afghanistan, while at the same

time Pakistan faced strategic indifference from the free world, followed by a set of sanctions, the rise of Taliban and the establishment of al Qaida. These were the main events of the decade. Following these events came the era of uni-polarity and the emergence of non-state actors. Then the incident of 9\11 happened and the US and ISAF forces intervened in Afghanistan. After some years, the US focus shifted towards Iraq and the forces were diluted in Afghanistan. As a result of this the Afghan Taliban resurged. Today, non-state extremist forces like Daesh are active in the Middle East and under the patronage of TTP, different terrorist organizations in the bordering region of Pakistan and Afghanistan have joined hands and tried to keep their links with sectarian militants in the mainland of Pakistan. These non-state actors have some external backing, and the regional tensions and the role global powers play provide conducive grounds for these non-state actors to exploit.

The Pakistani state has taken steps to tackle the menace of terrorism. As part of the internal effort, military operations are being undertaken in the troubled areas, the national narrative has been resettled, and a comprehensive national action plan has been formulated. As part of the external effort, we are seeking support from friendly and allied countries in the domain of politico-military and intelligence cooperation. From 2001 to the end of 2015, different military operations have been launched against the militants in which many casualties have been sustained. Until 2008 many operations ended in favour of the extremists instead of the state, so in 2008, the military campaign was overhauled, and we subsequently took back the Bajaur agency, the Mohmand agency, Swat and the Orakzai agency. Operation Zarb-e-Azb is the final blow to the menace of terrorism in our land. The guidelines given by Chief of Army Staff for Operation Zarb-e-Azb include indiscriminate elimination of terrorism, respect of local culture, avoidance of collateral damage and protection of human rights, etc. The desired end results include elimination of all terrorist networks, defeating the terrorist narrative comprehensively, effective border management, and provision of a suitable environment for sustainable development. As a result of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, terrorist networks have been dismantled, about 89% of the area has been cleared of extremists. The major recoveries made during this operation include weapons and ammunition, caches, tunnel defences, training facilities, literature, and training manuals.

The Pakistan army undertook a three-

pronged approach in the pursuit of a sustainable development in the area. The approach is based on development, de-radicalisation and promising employment opportunities for youth to turn them into useful citizens.

Under the provisions of the National Action Plan, along with the operation in North Waziristan, Intelligence-based Operations (IBOs) have been conducted in all the provinces and about 17,000 suspected people were apprehended and screened. The forces of disorder have been dealt with successfully and all terrorist organizations have been weakened significantly with over 3,400 terrorists killed. The cumulative loss caused to the terrorists' economy is about Rs 13.943bn, and about 200 tons of explosive material has been recovered from them. Apart from this, their narrative has been defeated and their recruitment nurseries have been destroyed. Since 2001, more than 66,000 soldiers and civilians have been martyred and injured.

The challenges the state still faces include firmly establishing ascendancy of the state narrative, socio-political and economic reforms in FATA, education and madrassah reforms, sustaining Afghan refugees, the emerging Daesh threat and management of the Pak-Afghan border etc. Summing up, one would say that terrorism is bred from ideology, spaces left in governance, and financial support. To counter these, you must have a counter narrative from the state, effective military operations, international assistance and cooperation. Strict controls over financial support are also required. Apart from this, local grievances should also be addressed in the terror-afflicted areas.



Session III

Building Coherence at the Strategic Level



Session III: Building Coherence at the Strategic Level



Session III, held on the second day, comprised the COIN narratives that have been and are being used in Afghanistan by the Danish and Afghan sides. The session gave the Afghan presenters the opportunity to explain the situation in their country from their viewpoint, as well as a chance to appeal for greater support from ISAF

participating countries and to make an appeal to go beyond differences in the interstate politics of the region for the sake of peace.

There was a description of the general viewpoints on military intervention in Danish and western narratives, as well as the problems regarding them.

Bismillah Ranjbar: Addressing National Security Challenges: Afghanistan's Perspective

The first presentation in the session described the current situation in Afghanistan after the drawdown of ISAF forces. Bismillah Ranjbar, researcher at the Centre of Academy of Sciences, focused on the internal problems of the country but pointed out that they could not be solved without solving the external problems as well, with Afghanistan being seen as a playing field for the contest between regional powers.

Mr. Bismillah Ranjbar talked of the national security challenges of Afghanistan describing four of them in particular: First the border areas, second the ethnic challenges, third the challenges from other political powers, and the fourth and



last challenge being the regional power struggles.

He described especially the border areas as being a source of threats to security, as well as regional power struggles. Afghanistan's historical background remains a problem. Afghanistan is still, as it has been before, a buffer state between competing powers. Previously it was competition between the British and the Russians, and now it is between Iran, Pakistan and India, the problem being their ability to support and supply insurgent groups in order to promote their own national priorities. This continues to destabilize the country, which also implies that Afghanistan is unable to resolve the problems on its own. The problems have a regional magnitude, which requires that the solutions must be handled on a regional level in order to succeed.

Governmental problems in Afghanistan, according to Mr Bismillah, are a lack of jobs and reasonable pay for all pay grades, as better salaries among some insurgent groups turn out to be a spoiler in themselves as the better pay attracts civilians to these groups. Also there is a problem with solving cases from the government side, as the government in some places is unable to

enforce the laws of the constitution, which results in greater support for the insurgents. He stated that the situation in Northern Afghanistan after the attack on Kunduz is problematic though the attacks are being handled well by security forces. The security forces are fighting well despite the strategy made for fighting the insurgents having been ineffective. He also underlined that some of the insurgencies are results of regional problems and the solution therefore cannot be found in Afghanistan. The problem lies in the setback regarding productivity and effective government outreach in the region. He stressed that the government has been unable to fight the insurgency so far, and that they should invest in local grassroots organizations that are against Taliban.

At the end, he requested that the regional powers should stop intervening in Afghanistan in support of different insurgent groups so that the Afghan state can get on with the peace building. He told that the Taliban might increase attacks in the north, their long-term goal being to challenge and shake government control there, and the response from the government must be resolute.

Jeppé Plenge Trautner: Danish COIN Narratives in Afghanistan

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Bakht Mohammad Bakhtyar: Afghan Experiences with Building State Narratives in COIN Strategy

In the last presentation of the session, Bakht Mohammad Bakhtyar outlined the problems of identifying and labelling the enemies of Afghanistan. He also pointed out the lack of coherency in the operations conducted by international forces in Afghanistan and the lack of cooperation with the local government that might have been a better approach.

Bakht Mohammad Bakhtyar emphasized that this seminar in itself demonstrated the interest and willingness of Afghanistan's partners, Pakistani brothers and neighbouring countries for synergy and collective action to solve the problems that Afghanistan is facing. Afghanistan is the main victim of war and terrorist activities, the government of Afghanistan is wholly committed to defeat insurgency and terrorist groups. Mr. Bakhtyar is sure that the government of Pakistan shares the Afghans' concerns, because the security and peace in the region is a common cause and all countries will benefit from defeating the insurgency and terrorist groups.

Mr. Bakhtyar talked of the experiences with narrative building in Afghanistan. He stated that it is very difficult to divide the enemies of Afghan state into groups of terrorists or groups of insurgents, as insurgent groups often use terrorist acts as a weapon. The fact is that both groups are enemies of the state and therefore threaten the stability of the region. Regardless of whether these enemies are terrorists or insurgents, their basic roots stem from war, underdevelopment, illiteracy, lack of higher education, a contest for strategic interests among countries in the region,



etc. It was further stressed that terrorism is neither an Afghan phenomenon nor did it originate in Afghanistan. It has no territorial limits or boundaries. Terrorist groups kill people through various means and therefore we neither have the right nor the ability to divide them into good or bad terrorists.

Another problem with creating an effective narrative for Afghanistan was the problem with the lack of consensus from the international side with different strategies to guide operations, e.g. the US, along with some NATO partners, had antiterrorism as a focal point while other NATO states and the UN focused more on political and economic action. There were 24 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, each with their own views and agenda, which of course impeded consensus. In

addition there was too little regard for the Afghan government, which meant the chance of gaining local and even national knowledge was missed.

In general the mission can be divided into 4 different stages, each with changing strategic approaches:

2001 – 2002: During this period the focus was on counterterrorism in parts of Afghanistan and peace building in and around Kabul.

2003 – 2008: The enlargement to include peace building in all parts of country with a focus on reconstruction and stabilization through the PRTs.

2009 – 2012: The surge, with focus on counterinsurgency operations and state building.

2012 – 2014: Transition with focus on security development and capacity building.

The operations in Afghanistan were until 2006 primarily military driven, and the attempt to implement civilian elements was only made afterwards. Mr. Bakhtyar highlighted that from 2009, the Afghan COIN narrative began with the surge of US troops and the establishment of the

High Peace Council and Ulema (clergy) Council. Post 2014 the Afghan government narrative has mainly focused on:

- Peace initiatives
- Regional Approach
- Military measures
- Building a realistic and applicable narrative has been challenged by:
 - Corruption, lack of good governance and the rule of law
 - Foreign terrorists in Afghanistan
 - Continued financial and training support from outside the borders of Afghanistan
 - Afghanistan was obliged to respect and follow UN Resolutions and decisions
 - The lack of coordination among PRTs on one side and with government on the other.

Mr Bakhtyar believed that the only way forward and the only chance for succeeding is going beyond our differences, helping rather than blaming each other, good governance is needed and can only be achieved by working together in the region as a whole.





Session IV

Sharing Military Experiences:
Implementation of Strategy in Operations



Session IV: Sharing Military Experiences: Implementation of Strategy in Operations



In the last session of the seminar, the moderator, Lt Gen Asif Yasin Malik (Ret'd) HI(M), pointed out the errors made by ISAF in Afghanistan and all the hardship that the country has undergone.

The presentations in this session discussed cultural aspects in building capacities for military campaigns for foreign as well as local troops, along with Pakistan's experiences in dealing with militancy.

Poul Martin Linnet: Cultural implications in Military Capacity Building

Of the many challenges faced by ISAF in Afghanistan the problem with engaging with the local populace was important, Poul Martin Linnet described these challenges and their possible solutions. Defeating the insurgent enemy in armed combat has been a success, but denying them of recruitment grounds has been much more perplexing. The key to success lies in understanding and respecting the local culture.

Commander Poul Martin Linnet's presentation dealt with the cultural implications in military capacity building. Military capacity building and development of the Afghan National Security Forces has been a top priority for the coalition forces since ISAF took over the formal responsibility in 2009. Initially the focus was on training and organizing combat units, but this has gradually changed to a focus on Security Force Assistance under the principle of "Train-Advise-



Assist" in relation to the structures maintaining, supporting and directing ANA and ANP operations in establishing and maintaining security throughout

Afghanistan.

Two points were highlighted in relation to the concept of local ownership: 'Sustainability and 'do no harm'. Both points focus on ensuring that systems, processes and institutions are developed in sync with the society they must function in. In order to implement these, he emphasized the challenge when culture is perceived as a source of friction rather than as a means to inform military operations. At the Afghan National officers Academy, he argued, there is currently an uncertainty as to the vision for and implementation of local ownership, which gives rise to cultural frictions between mentors and Afghan mentees, as well as between mentors within the coalition force. The challenge here is how to balance the potential discrepancies between the promotion of Western values and the simultaneous emphasis on ensuring local ownership as reflected by the attempt to modify the British Sandhurst model to fit an Afghan context. Without clear guidelines this Afghanisation causes confusion amongst mentors and uncertainty as to the practical implementation.

He stated that in order to teach the Afghan security forces in a sufficient manner, you need to

counsel and coach them in a collaborative relationship, and not necessarily provide them with the answer to a problem, except as a last resort. To promote local ownership, Afghan solutions have to be implemented on Afghan problems. The guidelines on how local ownership is implemented in practice must be developed in collaboration with Afghan partners. Only through this process, will the Afghans gain ownership of their own education.

It was also stated that we (NATO/the West) need to move beyond the perception that culture is a problem. We need to develop a shared and specific notion of what local ownership entails and how this in practice is implemented. In this relation local actors must be recognised as agents of transformation and not something to be moulded.

He further argued that coalition forces tend to be viewed as a coherent whole and operate in accordance with a shared Western military culture. It should be recognized that coalition forces are from different cultures, and in order to minimize cultural frictions, he emphasized the need to avoid conflicting approaches. This challenge should be addressed through pre-deployment training in both (coalition) culture and mentoring, and these efforts should be done throughout the coalition, with an increased focus on education in mentoring.

Halimullah Kousary: Challenges for ANA Operations in Implementation of a Sound COIN Strategy

The second presentation of the session was marked by the attack on Kunduz, as a new and foreboding example of the ANA's challenges with insurgent forces. Halimullah Kousary described the capacity of the ANA and how it could be increased, and he implored the former ISAF nations to support the ANSF with the necessary equipment needed to uphold the security of Afghanistan.

Halimullah Kousary spoke of the challenges for ANA operations in implementing a sound COIN-strategy as an assessment of the operations conducted in Afghanistan. He emphasized the general situation in Afghanistan, which from his perspective is marked by a belief that Afghans will "not go back", referring to the years under the Taliban regime.

The population in general is more satisfied



with their living conditions, and they will fight to avoid ending up in a new Taliban regime, so the

problems are not on the civilian side but on the military side. He stated that the fall of Kunduz, as well as the work done by ISIS in the country, underlines the importance of a strong ANSF, and they must not be left to deal with the problems on their own.

Halimullah Kousary argued that a combination of factors are to blame for the current security landscape in the country, including exclusive focus on the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan's perpetual support for the Taliban. The former left the Afghan population unhappy with ISAF forces, while the latter enabled the fragmented remnants of the Taliban, back in 2002 and 2003, to evolve into a force that is now strong enough not only to fight across Afghanistan but also able to seize control of cities or districts.

He said that the Taliban-ISIS fight may hold back the latter from repeating its breakthroughs from Iraq and Syria in Afghanistan. Moreover, rifts within the Taliban following the death of Mullah

Mohammed Omar could leave it vulnerable to ISIS. However, this scenario does not appear to be helping to keep the two groups in check. The rise of ISIS provides a good example. ISIS operates in several states at an international level, and therefore they are an international problem but the fight against them is seen as a regional fight, and according to Halimullah, this hampers a sound solution. It is important that a solution must be an international solution as we are dealing with an international problem.

He stated that there are problems with the ANA but that they have come a long way. He listed three things that the ANA need in order to do a better job: 1. Better leadership 2. Being fully autonomous and capable 3. The resources to keep fighting. As an example he talked of the ANA's lack of air support, as they have been using transport planes as bombers because they have too few bombers. Halimullah stated that the identified problems faced by the ANA are a result of neglect among the coalition partners.

Shahid Hashmat: Pakistani experiences in dealing with militancy

During the last presentation of the session Dr Shahid Hashmat dedicated his time to the understanding of the enemy that Pakistan faces. He pointed out that to defeat militants you need to defeat the militant mindset, as well as the militant himself. He also stressed the importance of a regional approach since the mindset of militants easily crosses borders.

Dr Shahid Hashmat said that militancy is a mindset and something that deals with the whole of society and not only with a small segment of the people who are involved in terrorist or extremist activities. Unfortunately the lines are blurred between terms like militancy, terrorism, extremism, political extremism, and political violence, all of which are being linked with Islamic Jihad and Jihadism. Due to this, the world has unfortunately decided to close its eyes on some of very old issues related to freedom struggles such as the one in Palestine, Kashmir and a few other struggles in the world.

A militant mindset produces an aggressive and intolerant attitude, not ready to negotiate, understand or at all listen to others' points of view, which then turns into a violent reaction to actual



or perceived injustice. As long as injustice prevails in different societies, regions or at global levels, militancy will remain entrenched, and it will lead to the use of force and violence in attainment of political or religious objectives. It is the recourse of use of force for socio-economic change in the society from within the society. Militancy can be manifested at different levels of society but unfortunately, for about last two decades, the militancy label has been applied only to a small segment of the globe. This is despite the fact that it has become a transnational and trans-regional



phenomenon and must be seen in that context.

There are some structural causes of militancy such as oppression, a predatory socio-political system and exploitation, which lead to the socio-economic injustice and inequality, loss of hope for achieving your own political or any other demands through legitimate recourse. This means marginalization for many religious or ethnic reasons, fear of loss of identity and some religious motivation. Militancy can be triggered by some particular incidents or by some unjust decisions, and it could be a reaction to the use of violence by one society against another, by minority against majority or vice versa, or it can be a reaction to state terrorism as well. Militancy is closely linked with terrorism and extremism where militancy lies at the core and the militant mind eventually resorts to violence and uses terrorism as a tool.

Pakistan's experience can be divided into different phases. Until the 1970s, there was no form of militancy in Pakistani society. After the 1979 Iranian revolution, when the Saudi-Iranian struggle for increasing their political and religious influence started on Pakistani soil, it ultimately turned into a proxy war. Thereafter came the Russian invasion, Afghan resistance and foreign support by our friends the US, Saudi Arabia and many others, and the state policy in support of the Afghan struggle. These factors combined were responsible for introducing militancy in Pakistan. Later on the transition kept on going from Afghan mujahedeen to Taliban and ultimately ended up in Pakistan in the form of TTP. This serves as a lesson to those global powers that use non-state actors for their political objectives because they must realize that there has to be a plan for handling, regulating and terminating the non-state actors: you need to disarm and reintegrate them into the society. The rise and growth of TTP and its affiliates after the US and NATO intervention in Afghanistan and the Middle East has negatively affected our society.

Coming to counter-militancy, military operations alone are not enough. A comprehensive, holistic, integrated national response, not a disjointed or fragmented response, is required. This response must come in the shape of political, socio-economic, religious, justice and good governance-based actions and be backed by a correct narrative. The kinetic military response, though extremely important, is only one part of a counter-militancy strategy. It can only shape the environment for a comprehensive response in which other elements can work, otherwise military operations will not produce long-lasting, sustainable results to counter militancy.

Assessing the Pakistani counter-militancy strategy, Dr Shahid Hashmat said that the political strategy was disjointed and fragmented, marked by reluctance and ambiguous hesitation in taking the decisions. Talks, negotiation and appeasement should have complemented each other, but they failed, after which we went for law enforcement and military response, while the society on its part did nothing but lean back as a silent spectator. The legislature was very reluctant to develop new legislation, which was urgently required, keeping us dependent on the 1935 Act of India and Pakistan Penal Code. The judiciary was also hesitant and not listening to the cases, neither was the prosecution effectively pursuing the cases, even though anti-terrorism courts existed. Therefore, there is still a need for breaking the nexus between corruption, militancy, extremism and terrorism in the country. We need to build capacity of our law enforcement agencies primarily the police, civil armed forces, capacity of prosecution and judiciary. A comprehensive national response does require support and cooperation of regional players because militancy is a trans-national phenomenon. It needs clarity at the political level, a national resolve, which is extremely important to eradicate the root causes and finding indigenous solutions to the problems.

Conclusion

The closing speeches concluded the conference from the viewpoint of NDU, and RDDC.



The speeches were overall mutual in their view of the conference as a success, and the underlining of the conference only being a first step in a bigger plan. The information gained

through lesson sharing was crucial and the discussions and considerations made during the conference equally important. Excerpts from both speeches are given below:

Closing remarks by Chief Guest Lt Gen Per Ludvigsen, Vice Chief of Danish Defence

When reaching the end, we must ask the question: Was it worthwhile? The resources, hosting the conference, having to travel thousands of kilometres to be present for two days. That is always hard to answer. What did we set out to achieve with the conference? It is up to you yourselves to what degree this becomes a success. But I will offer you my own judgment at the end of my remarks. We have touched upon the root causes, and looked at whether the root causes are internal or external. It is very important that we discuss them and recognise them, no matter how unpleasant that might be. Dwelling on the role of the state, we work with the citizens of our respective states. It is about protecting the citizens. We need to live up to these standards, or persons or groups will find another way. We need



to deliver, and help each other, we are all in the same boat. Perception is really important; it doesn't matter if I'm right or wrong if the person I'm dealing

with doesn't believe me. We need to look at ourselves as well, we need to meet and talk to build up the necessary trust and the perception that is the foundation to enter into viable sustainable agreements.

We also have history. We need to determine how our history will affect our future and present. We need to find common solutions, so if it is just a way of blaming each other it should be buried. This is difficult, but we need to go on. If you are in a hole, then stop digging. History is beautiful, but you have to move forward. Constant change is a necessity; without change you will become more and more irrelevant. The world always moves on, just as our enemies do, so we also have to change. Only two things unite men, common interests and a common faith. We have much more common ground than the opposite. So it must be possible to find a common solution. Differences shouldn't be

seen as a hindrance to solutions, but we need to find common ground. We need to see differences as positive elements that will give us new perspectives. The fact is that you won't invent anything if you just copy each other and don't go further. We are different from the Germans and the Swedes, but we still find common solutions, and prosper through them.

The frank and open discussions have been good; they have been tense, but that is a positive thing. How will we proceed from here? Results need to be achieved, and not just in the books, but on the ground, and that is our responsibility. It is important to talk and so on, but we need to implement the solutions. We all have the same problems, even though we are far from the region.

***Thank you, everyone.
My view is, yes, that it has all been very worthwhile being here.***

Closing Remarks by President NDU

The just-concluded, thorough and intense deliberations have helped in contextualizing the ontological and epistemological positioning of counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and counter-militancy. It was indeed a highly encouraging endeavour, accomplished in a very objective manner. In the end, this is not about reaching the destination or achieving what we have set as our objective. Merely treading on the right path is the real success, and in that domain, we have actually achieved a lot of success, since we have certainly been treading on the right path throughout this endeavour. We may not find solutions immediately, but then we need to continue talking to each other. That is absolutely the way forward. The discourse and discussions held in these sessions enabled us to share thoughts and experiences which are vital to policy formulation. This effort will also help us in improving and defining the concepts of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency and counter-militancy, as well as in developing coherent strategic approach to deal with security challenges at various levels. The discussions during the seminar also gave us the glimpses of findings of the book jointly



written by scholars from Denmark and Pakistan, which was indeed a highly focused effort in the given context. The purpose of this seminar was to share and learn from each other's experiences while accepting and giving due respect to any difference of opinion, identifying and maximizing the common ground with regard to the views and perceptions concerning asymmetric threats and means and methods to deal with them. It is very encouraging to note that there is a marked consensus and unanimity

in views on most aspects of significance, indicating that common threats require a consultative approach and a common and collaborative response. There is also a general consensus on assisting and strengthening neighbours or other states facing similar threats and understanding that safeguarding respective national interests do not have to be mutually exclusive alternatives. While we must learn from history, we must not live in history. Past experience should serve as leverage in crafting future strategies rather than becoming a source of mistrust, which invariably leads to an unnecessary blame game between the states and in all such cases terrorists or the enemy is the sole beneficiary.

We are indeed thankful to the RDDC for this co-venture and also deeply appreciative of the efforts of researchers in ISSRA for arranging this seminar in a befitting manner. The post-seminar report will be particularly beneficial, as it will capture the diverse thoughts and comments. Finally I am thankful to the guests from Denmark and Afghanistan for coming here, for your valuable input, for making all this a reality. And I wish you all a safe journey home. Thank you.

This marked the successful culmination of an enriching experience. The NDU and RDDC thank all the participants for their enthusiastic participation and extremely valuable presence and input on all aspects covered in the seminar.

