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SUMMARY

What will be needed to make AFPAC work is something the British understood only too well in the nineteenth century – fighting power, staying power and paying power. The AFPAC strategy has eight essential principles which include an international approach, a regional approach, a joint civil-military approach, a better co-ordinated approach, and a long-term approach. However, the weaknesses of the strategy reflect the essential paradox of the position taken by the Americans and the wider West. AFPAC is a big place fractured into a thousand hatreds. For strategy to succeed requires a commitment to success that is normally only seen during major war. Therefore, in September 2010 severe questions remain given the financial and economic challenges faced by many Allied governments as to whether sufficient staying power and paying power is likely to be generated, let alone fighting power. Is the West still collectively prepared to invest politically or financially at a higher level of effort at a crucial moment? What to do?

ALL NECESSARY MEANS? GETTING AFPAC RIGHT

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As President Obama announces the end of combat operations in Iraq the American effort in Afghanistan is reaching its peak. However, 'success' will only be possible if the critical ground on either side of the Afghan-Pakistan border comes under an acceptable level of publicly acknowledged sovereign control by both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Therefore, Afghan and Pakistani state sovereignty in regions of both countries that have for centuries been subject to the informal sovereignty of tribes is the real goal of the so-called AFPAC strategy. Therefore, the critical issue for America and its NATO and regional allies is the not the infringement of non-existent sovereignties on both sides of the AFPAC border but rather its establishment. Only the establishment of such sovereignty will the end of the insurgent safe havens without which success will be impossible. The next two years will be the critical phase of this endeavour.

It is fashionable amongst the many armchair strategists (and this author has a particularly large armchair) that now infect the AFPAC question to suggest all is lost. One is reminded of the now well-worn Irish proverb that one would not wish to start from here to

get there. However, the plain fact is that the American-led West is 'there' and what matters at this critical juncture in the AFPAC strategy is how to get to where we need to go. If there has been a failing it has been one of omission rather than commission. In other words none of the allies gripped the importance, scale and nature of the challenge early enough and thus failed to invest properly in either strategy or solution. AFPAC at least in principle put that right. Sun Tzu famously advised that all war is ultimately about the maintenance of the Tao or cosmic harmony. Cosmic harmony is the most important public good but to protect it wars must sometimes be fought. However, when such action must be taken all necessary means must be employed swiftly and if necessary brutally to bring violence to an end.

So what to do? The Afghans have a saying; "You have the watches, but we have the time". What will be needed to make AFPAC work is something the British knew only too well in the nineteenth century – fighting power, staying power and paying power. As both Generals Petraeus and Conway have suggested, the July 2011 deadline for the beginning of the withdrawal of American forces has nothing to do with AFPAC and



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everything to do with the American mid-term elections. Therefore, if America and Britain are to succeed in establishing a minimum level of functioning institutions across the AFPAK region then it will only be possible by 2015 at the earliest. Indeed, by 2015 America and Britain are likely to be the only countries engaged in anything like strength across AFPAK a) because AFPAK poses a genuine security threat to both; and b) both Washington and London are fast giving up on allies as reliable partners, which is something those NATO states who have come to take American protection for granted might wish to consider.

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Why is the effort important? Former British Security Minister Baroness Taylor warned that 75% of all threats faced by Britain emanate from the Afghanistan/Pakistan (AFPAK) region. That is why British forces will thus stay in the region for the foreseeable future even though public support for the mission is waning. Therefore the increasing calls for a premature exit from Afghanistan are not only misplaced they are downright dangerous. Three things now matter if a security belt is to be tightened on both sides of the AFPAK border the epicentre of the effort. First, that something like a credible Afghan Government partner emerges from the electoral process. Second, that the writ of a reasonably competent and stable Pakistani Government is extended into places such as the Swat Valley in which poverty, lawlessness and fundamentalism are being tragically reinforced by the desperate suffering in the wake of the floods disaster. Who saves the people of Swat has now become a matter of strategic as well as humanitarian importance.

Therefore, at the very minimum a Coalition collective level of ambition and unity of effort is needed in what is going to be a critical period as the Americans surge continues to place the Taliban on the back foot and thus create the space for positive security, political and economic effect on the ground. Where new thinking is needed concerns effective and sustained engagement in hybrid war which itself will require more strategic patience (however politically uncomfortable that might be), recognition that in some form the West will be present for many years to come with a particular focus on efforts to positively support young Afghan (and Pakistani) unemployed men. In effect, the Afghan Government and its

coalition allies are competing with the Taliban and Al Qaeda for this critical reserve of manpower and any progress will ultimately and necessarily be measure in terms of progress with this group. Indeed, one only has to watch the television screens and see the influential role for good and ill played by young men in the tragic aftermath of the Indus floods to recognise their collective importance of this group. Win them and the war is won. This is a war and now is crunch time.

Very Well. Alone!

This background paper examines the AFPAK strategy to establish the essential linkage between where the strategy is at, where it needs to go, where it is succeeding and failing. The AFPAK strategy has eight essential principles which include an international approach, a regional approach, a joint civil-military approach, a better co-ordinated approach, and a long-term approach. However, the weaknesses of the strategy reflect the essential paradox of the position taken by the Americans and the wider West. AFPAK is a big place fractured into a thousand hatreds. For strategy to succeed in such a place requires a commitment to success that is normally only seen during major war. After almost ten years of Afghanistan and Iraq Western publics have little stomach for the kind of investment in lives and geld required to shape that landscape. That is why at such moments leaders must do what they are paid and lauded for – lead. Sadly, as the July 2011 faux deadline suggests America and its allies are trying to win a war on a peacetime effort and mindset, with too many allies doing only enough to keep America paying for their defence. Such consistent and persistent feet-dragging is already having a profoundly negative impact amongst Americans who need little encouragement to think ill of allies given the exaggerated view of their country's role in history they are fed from birth. One is reminded of David Low's famous cartoon on the eve of the Battle of Britain in 1940 which read almost with a sense of relief; "Very well. Alone!" (And which does much to explain the British character). It is certainly something the Dutch might now wish to ponder.

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Therefore, in September 2010 severe questions remain given the financial and economic challenges faced

by many Allied governments as to whether sufficient staying power and paying power is likely to be generated, let alone fighting power. Is the West still collectively prepared to invest politically or financially at a higher level of effort at a crucial moment? The answer to that question is apparently no. There are many reasons for this. One of them would appear to be the influence minorities are exerting on the foreign and security policies of western European governments fearful of the immigrant populations that have entered in such large numbers over recent years. This is not the fault of minorities because as members of national communities they have every right to express their opinion – it is called democracy. However, another problem looms. Whilst the armed forces are undoubtedly at war, neither government nor civil society seems to see the effort of the danger as sufficiently urgent to require the necessary sacrifice that 'success' demands. Consequently, a dangerous gulf is appearing between civilians and their soldiers that does not bode well for the future. This is a dangerous paradox because it is precisely unity of purpose and effort between civilians and military across the conflict, along the command chain and within society which is so vital to success. Indeed, if AFGPAK was indeed perceived to be as important as many governments claim then there would have been a much greater effort to generate real unity of effort across the Coalition backed up with the necessary resources and the political determination to ensure such resources are put to good use. For too long all the allies (including the US) have been too obsessed with announcing inputs without holding outputs to account. It is pay-back time.

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The tragedy is that AFGPAK has made the West look far weaker than it actually is and accelerated decline both in the minds of its people, partners and adversaries. Given that the West remains the strategic cornerstone of the West a very severe strategic price is thus likely to be paid for this folly of modesty. Moreover, within the Coalition there are either too many fiefdoms competing for limited resources and leadership rather than working together to craft a true civil-military campaign plan worthy of the name or seeking to influence all-important American strategy. Not surprisingly, the Americans are giving up on allies, although most are too polite to say so.

Getting Strategy Right

So what needs to be done to support American leadership at this critical moment? First, end the woolly thinking and duplicity that passes for strategy. Europeans need to stop being so politically correct about the past in the region and start using it to advantage. This is particularly important for the British. The new government in London must end the longest post-Imperial apology in history to better exploit the knowledge of and links with the region that no other Western society has. Moreover, even as an Afghan Government of sorts is fashioned from the political process (built around a stable Afghan National Army (ANA)) it is vital that talks take place with elements in the Taliban on both sides of the 'mythical' border to disaggregate them and if at times that means infringing meaningless sovereignties then so be it – the stakes are high enough. The American surge certainly is taking a toll on the Taliban and now is the time to talk. There are of course those who say that talking to the 'Taliban' is a waste of time. However, the Taliban is not a monolithic entity and nor are they ultimately the enemy so long as they do not support the export of fundamentalist terror. In a place where doing and breaking deals is a way of life and death the West must become a much more effective broker. Indeed, sufficient evidence exists that many Tier Two and Three Taliban motivated by a myriad of religious, national but above all local factors are not happy with the foreign fighters, many of whom seek their rights and property restored seized by regimes in both Islamabad and Kabul. They have a point. Indeed, the murder of some two hundred tribal elders by the foreign fighters suggests the famed pashtunwali code of hospitality to fellow Muslims may be being stretched.

Equally, no sound strategy can be based entirely on a fragile and pious hope of peace whilst the various Taliban leaderships in Quetta and Peshawar are sufficiently radical and firm in the belief that they are winning. No local is going to place their hope in the West whilst evidence of sustained stability is so hard for them to see. This is critical because the Taliban are becoming increasingly bold and sophisticated and they shift their efforts from places where they are under pressure to appear in parts of Afghanistan outside the traditional Pashtu Belt to which attests the August 2010 killing of eight Afghan policemen in Kunduz. Certainly, the British in particular could do more to exploit the traditional links with the Pakistani armed forces apparent to anyone who has had the pleasure of visiting the Pakistani Army's Headquarters to enhance the efforts of the Pakistani Army to put

pressure on the safe havens in north-west Pakistan critical to the success of the strategy.

Clearly, for all its many failings much will depend on the performance of Karzai's Afghan Government to which both carrot and stick must be consistently and firmly applied. The growing insurgency has been accompanied by increasing corruption and an increase in drug production and trafficking, much of it with the collusion of local warlords and officials in the Karzai Government. Afghanistan has become a virtual narco-state as a result. Indeed, the failure of the Coalition to wean farmers in the south off poppy represents a catastrophic failure of strategy and investment. With eighty-five percent of the population of the six provinces in the south dependent on agriculture for survival without such a substitution strategy that works it is hard to see any political reconciliation strategy working over the medium to long-term that does not address fundamental issues of security and economic well-being.

AFPAK Next Steps

Security and stability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan has historically required a balance between top-down efforts to create a central government, and bottom-up efforts to secure local support. Therefore, if the AFPAK strategy is to gain traction several steps will need to be taken and supported by allies and partners both in the region and the Alliance. Critically, Americans, Europeans and Afghans must finally agree a minimum definition of success. The political solution will look more like Kyrgyzstan (for all its own challenges) than Switzerland and strategy should be shaped to such an end. As the 2009 elections demonstrated the establishment of a truly functioning, democratic state is not feasible, at least not yet. Rather the focus now must be on basic but robust instruments of government that reinforce traditional structures in pursuit of a) a reasonable level of stability; and b) the prevention of the return of terrorists.

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That said those that despair of this mission are premature as the application of any strategy – be it to Afghanistan and/or Pakistan is a surprisingly recent phenomenon and it would thus only be polite to see if it can work. Indeed, it was only at the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit were four strategic principles laid

out – a long-term commitment to Afghanistan, Afghan leadership and civil primacy, a REAL comprehensive or whole of government approach and the all important regional engagement. This position was reinforced at the 2009 NATO Summit Declaration on Afghanistan which established some important specifics; the NATO training mission; the provision of more police trainers; support for ANSF in the run up to the elections; and critically the expansion of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) for expanding the ANA to 134,000. Additionally, it was also agreed to expand of the role of the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, enhance co-operation between Afghan and Pakistani governments, strengthening of the Integrated Approach with the UN to better synchronise cross country civil-military efforts as well support for the UN election fund. It should be noted that Afghan helicopters are supporting the effort to bring aid and succour to the victims of the Pakistani floods.

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Since 2001, the U.S. and international community have focused predominantly on top-down security efforts, including the re-building of an Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army. But the deteriorating situation and local nature of the insurgency requires time to be given for the enhanced effort to work with local tribes, sub-tribes, and clans to establish order and governance in rural parts of Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan. Indeed, only with a proper sub-national effort will the grand strategic effort implied by the AFPAK Strategy have a reasonable chance of success. That is after all the central plank of the people-centric approach to military operations adopted by General McChrystal and now General Petraeus.

Therefore, for AFPAK to work effectively unity of effort and purpose at all levels of the effort is as vital today as it has ever been. It is also important that grand strategy is seen as such, i.e. a clever, sustained and truly multinational effort. Therefore, it is as important for allies to focus on Washington as the region to influence American strategy. There are several areas of creativity and innovation that allies can offer. Indeed, central to the successful fulfilment of the Petraeus concept of operations (CONOPS) is ironically a European-inspired effort to promote creative civil-military effect within well embedded foundations of legitimate multinationality. This will help ease the

dangerously but understandably military parochialism of the Americans. Indeed, if there is a problem with the military effort (and there are a few) it is that much of the leadership comes from US Central Command (CENTCOM) and that has little time for Europeans (including the British who were seen by said Americans to quit in Iraq) and even less understanding of or liking for NATO (war by committee). This result is a tendency on the part of the Americans to use what European forces there are in a way that makes them appear less efficient than they actually are (which is saying something). At the heart of military effect in complex contingencies is the art and science of command and control in which forces must adapt continually, conceptually and structurally for such conflict in pursuit of campaign authority. However, small forces in big places trapped between the large American military, cautious national governments and a difficult host government have too often seen it sufficient simply to be there.

Therefore, at the heart of AFGPAK must an effective and adaptable campaign plan true to the spirit of Moltke. The essence of military command and control is timeless. It is about getting the right capability to the right place at the right time to deliver the right effect. This means understanding the problem, mission and constraints; planning, resourcing, directing and executing ALL forces under command, given who they are and the strengths and weaknesses they bring to the mission. Not only does such effect require clarity of strategic direction, but at the theatre and tactical level it means getting the operational design right and executing that design. Today, such a plan must also be crafted, shared and implemented with civilians of all size and shape – the Comprehensive Approach.

To foster such an end and through with the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) the Americans have effectively created a super-headquarters under which all American and Coalition forces will operate (which includes Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) which is the American national caveat) and NATO's International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF). However, simply emphasising control at the expense of co-operation may be counter-productive. This super-headquarters has to look upwards, sideways and downwards simultaneously across all political and military aspects of the mission. However, if not handled carefully such a headquarters could further undermine European support for efforts beyond 2012, as European forces become progressively removed from the control of NATO (whatever the rhetoric) and disaggregated across American commands. In such

circumstances, American commanders with little experience of working with Europeans could well a) become frustrated; and b) employ them poorly and then become frustrated. Certainly, it will make it harder for non-American civilians to work the campaign plan. Frankly, at present there is little alternative to the American approach but vigilance is vital.

Therefore, how best to organise and employ Europeans (and other allies) will remain a critical issue of strategy as the balance between 'taxation' and 'representation' remains as important for this coalition as any. Certainly, the Americans need to constantly consider the problem of the 'other'. The European strategic culture (such as it is) is built on a new joint civil/military venture, from top to bottom (partly because Americans have convinced Europeans that violent history has been a consequence of too much military). This is in line with demands on the ground but it is also the European way of doing war which now demands a different approach to command and control at all levels of war. In other words, for many Europeans hybrid conflict demand hybrid solutions, placing particular emphasis on the importance of putting civilian influence at the heart of operational design given the sensitivities of European leaders and publics.

What to do now?

Harmonise Strategic and Political Objectives

The strategic campaign plan at the heart of AFGPAK must be constantly and consistently reviewed to exploit new political alignments. The current concept of a three strategic phase approach (security, governance and rule of law capacity building, and Afghan civil primacy) is sound so long as it is matched by political commitment in capitals, and a resource and governance effort that can be measured across the region in such a way that it is relevant to the critical ground for THIS strategy – the Afghan people (and their Pakistani counterparts). In a sense what the existing doctrine needs (which has tended to emerge from practice) is a strategy worthy of the name.

Recognise the Importance of Regional Strategy

Stability in the region is as important to regional powers as it is the West. However, no Western strategy will succeed without a firm understanding of the interests of regional powers. Both China and Russia are concerned about Islamic fundamentalism. Iran is concerned by encirclement and entrapment. Above

all, it is vital that both Pakistan and India are convinced to de-link the struggles in southern Afghanistan and Kashmir. Indeed, Pakistani and Indian strategies are still too much at odds with AFPAC to make critical common cause with the West, whatever the efforts of Ambassador Holbrooke.

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COIN Ops and Capacity Building

Successful counterinsurgency efforts ultimately hinge on the competence of local security forces, not international ones. More international forces in Afghanistan may be helpful, but only if they are used to build Afghan capacity. One critical need is to address the international partnering gap that has plagued efforts to improve Afghanistan's police and army. There is currently a seventy percent shortfall in international mentors for the police and a fifty percent shortfall for the army (although that is falling). The AFPAC Strategy is easing this problem but is still reliant on partners willing and able to share the burden with the Americans. With the Dutch having departed in August 2010 there is still too much the sound of the shuffling of European feet on this issue, however eloquent and refined.

Promote International Institutional Ownership

Institutional ownership of AFPAC remains vital but civilian international organisations (IOs) such as the UN and EU still remain dangerously resistant to close co-operation. AFPAC should at the very least help to create the political context for civilian agencies to work more closely with their military counterparts. To that end, the thinking behind PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) needs to be revised. The current application of the PRT model in Afghanistan is undermined by national differences on the ground at the expense of strategic effect. Moreover, it is still unclear how PRTs relate to the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in AFPAC. One option may be to make virtue out of necessity by picking one PRT as the 'model' under the rubric of the AFPAC Strategy as a means to better harmonise the efforts of the various national actors. At the very least such a model would need to be reinforced with credible benchmarks that would also help to re-establish control.

Focus on Afghan and Pakistani State Sovereignty

Critical will be the extension of the purview of the Afghan and Pakistani states over the region divided by the Durand Line, the meaningless line of convenience drawn by the British in the late nineteenth century. There are three options. First, extension of the formal control of both Kabul and Islamabad into this area, which is unlikely. Second, the creation of a new state which would to all intents and purposes become a Pashtunistan, which is highly unlikely. Third, a form of autonomous self-governance in which new partnerships with and funding for the tribes in the region are backed up with a realistic punishment strategy so that defection is more costly than compliance and co-operation. The third option for all its many imperfections is most likely to lead to convergence of the interests of the West (denying the space to insurgents and Islamic terrorists), the two states (extension of state authority and security of borders), and the tribes (return to traditional local tribal governance supported by aid and development). The big losers would likely be the Taliban and Al Qaeda which after all is the reason for the struggle.

Changing the Game

However, whilst doing more of the same better is undoubtedly important what is needed at this stage is a game changing new idea. Real progress will be measured in terms of economy. Much has rightfully been made of the corrosive impact of narcotics on both the Afghan economy and governance. Narcotics linked corruption goes right to the heart of government and governance. However, any progress thereon will take a very long time and will not deal with the essential problem that is stalling progress. Namely, that ninety percent of under twenty-five year olds are unemployed. It is these people for which the Afghan Government, its Coalition partners and the Taliban are competing.

To win this battle a big economic idea is needed. To that end several major new infrastructure projects would help a) suck up this pool of the dangerously unemployed; and b) further embed both the Afghan and Pakistani economies in a new regional economic regional grouping involving both neighbours and Asian power partners. A Central and Southern Asian Economic Council would have positive benefits far beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. Indeed, by including China, India, Russia (and even possibly Iran in time) such an organ would help re-legitimise the security effort. It would also need to closely involve Central Asian partners who share an ethnic identity

with Afghanistan, particularly Pashtun, Uzbeks and Tadjiks because ultimately AFGPAK can and must only be seen as the epicentre of a regional stability strategy.

Furthermore, whilst any new major infrastructure projects would not be completed in the near future their very existence would help to reinforce stability and add significantly to economic confidence. Two projects come to mind. South of Kabul Afghanistan possesses what are probably the world's second largest reserves of copper. Afghan mineral resources have been calculated by the World Bank to be worth some \$6bn. The construction of a rail link from, say, Kabul to Islamabad and onto India (as well as the one already planned to China) would not only offer long-term economic benefits, it would plug Afghanistan into the vibrant Asian economic region and provide mass employment for Afghans and Pakistanis alike. Of course, it would be difficult for such a railway to be built and it would need to be protected. However, the region is not unused to such ambition or indeed such pragmatism. The British built the Indian railway network during the Raj for exactly the same reasons – economic exploitation and political stability.

Additionally, more roads are needed to serve the food zones which would not only reinforce Afghanistan's burgeoning non-poppy agricultural sector, but also help to control exports and help reinvigorate the nature entrepreneurship of the people. This would certainly be the case if such a network was reinforced by rail links plugging the Afghan economy into the wider region. China and India would be obvious beneficiaries but all Asian partners would likely benefit. Initial negotiations and preparatory work would need to start in 2010 with construction beginning in 2012. Critically, such a plan would also act as a natural focus for efforts by the UN, the World Bank and other key non-governmental and commercial organisations to move the narrative forward in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

All Necessary Means? Getting AFGPAK Right

Success will thus be defined when basic but robust pillars of state plus demonstrable progress are consistently established across AFGPAK. Afghanistan is well-placed, has significant natural capital that needs to be exploited, enjoys significant financial capital held outside the country by individuals and institutions of state are indeed emerging (ANA, National Solidarity Programme, National Telecoms Programme, the health sector to name but a few). It is thus time to

get real, not cut and run. Pakistan does not re-building but it does need help to make it function properly as a state. That will require that the West to stay 'there' for however long it takes to leave 'there', although the 'we' must over the next five years become markedly less military and efforts seen by all ever less through a military lens.

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Lessons for the future? The West may do well to heed my wife's sage words. Now known as the Corine Principle she suggests that in future we in the West only embark upon war if it is important enough for us to organise it properly and afford it! All necessary means - now there's a thought.

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