U.S. Air Force (Marc I. Lane)

Afghan National Police recruits receive weapons training during security course

Security Is More Than "20" Percent

BY RONALD E. NEUMANN

Security is only 20 percent of the solution; 80 percent is governance and development." "There is no military solution to insurgency."

These and similar statements have rightly refocused counterinsurgency doctrine and popular thinking away from purely military solutions to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet these catchphrases have become substitutes for deeper consideration of the role of security in the current conflicts and in insurgency in general, hiding some important points and leading to assumptions that are an insufficient basis for policy.

In some cases, military force alone has quelled insurgencies. The importance of security can shift as an insurgency grows. Whether security and stabilization/development are sequential or simultaneous may vary in different parts of the same country. However, at some point,

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whether security is 20 percent of the solution or 50 percent is less relevant than that it is an essential foundation without which none of the other factors can succeed. Moreover, since security in this sense is not only security of the population but also safety that locals see as a credible development, security involves the actions of local forces. This in turn requires a reexamination of several issues. One question is the ratio of local forces to the task at hand. Another is whether such forces are seen as providing freedom from oppression or are the source of oppression. A third is whether our current practice of trying to use local police to manage the gap between foreign forces and the time needed to build a competent local military is strategically sound. A fourth is whether we need to reexamine our current methods of building local forces—practices that are very different from many U.S. experiences of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These are the questions that this article considers and in some measure challenges.

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Use of Force in History

While I agree that military victory by foreign forces alone is not possible as a sole source of victory in Iraq or Afghanistan, it is intellectually useful to pull apart the belief that military victory against insurgencies is never possible.[1] James Dobbins points out in RAND's study of eight cases of nationbuilding that in the four cases that failed, either initially or totally, the basic cause of failure was in security.[2]

Security forces have historically ended a great many insurgencies from ancient times to modern. Spartacus's rebellion was ended by savage repression, negotiation having been refused. After many bloody years, insurgencies were thus crushed from the Muslims in Dutch Indonesia, to Abdul Khadar's 19th-century revolt against the French[3] in Algeria, to the late 20th-century insurgency in Algeria. Powerful Afghan rulers, such as Amir Abdul Rahman, who put down numerous rebellions in Afghanistan, would have found puzzling if not simply foolish the notion that insurgency could not be stamped out by force. The United States used force as a primary tool in suppressing revolts in the Philippines, Haiti, and elsewhere in the Caribbean in the early 20th century, although improvements in civil administration, health, and education also played a role.[4] The Greek civil war of 1943–1950 was ended by force of arms.[5] The long years of insurgency in Sri Lanka seem finally to have reached a military solution.

This is not to argue that military means are always successful, still less that they are the best means of dealing with all insurgencies. However, these cases are a reminder that one needs to think more deeply about what is at issue in a particular insurgency than simple sound bite logic might suggest.

Why have some insurgencies been suppressed by force while others have not? Each had its own specificity, but a few defining characteristics stand out. One is the use of methods generally not acceptable to Western public opinion today. Confining civilian populations in camps was a feature of separating them from the insurgents in campaigns such as those in Malaya and the Philippines. Brutal repression that made little distinction between the innocent and the guilty marked other campaigns. The approach "Kill them all—God will know

his own"[6] would not be found acceptable today. However, the Sri Lankan refusal to allow a ceasefire for beleaguered civilians in the final campaign to end the Tamil rebellion clearly put protecting civilian lives at a lower priority than the judgment that might be made by a Western army answerable to a different public opinion. All this is to note that means unacceptable to Western forces might still be used successfully by indigenous forces and can often present Westerners with difficult policy choices. In some cases, local forces can win using methods we would find impossible and repugnant. To observe this fact is not to advocate it, but it does remind one not to be too categorical in statements of what is possible.

Security in Modern Counterinsurgency

More important for America's role in insurgencies is to consider carefully the importance of security in the context of the repeated assertion that the majority of work in counterinsurgency is nonmilitary.

This statement requires some qualification. A RAND study of how terrorist groups end[7] examined 648 groups that existed between 1968 and 2000. It indeed concluded that the majority did end through political compromise, although some 7 percent did succumb to security means. But this generalization begins to change when terrorist groups expand into insurgencies. In such cases, 25 percent ended because of military force.[8] The same study showed that where terrorist groups had goals that precluded bargaining, security methods were most effective in ending such groups.

Thus, while policing, political negotiation, governance, and development all have their part, the importance of security grows as terrorism morphs into insurgency. The late Bernard Fall noted that in "revolutionary war," the objective is "to establish a competitive system of control over the population."[9] Fall noted that in the war against the French in Indochina, and later in the Vietnam conflict, substantial portions of the countryside were under insurgent civil control even as the French and then the Americans declared they were winning.

"When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being out-administered," Fall wrote.[10] The killing of village headmen, destruction of education, and control of taxation can take place when government security forces are unable to prevent insurgents from exerting control. Until security is sufficient to allow local government administration, the quality of that governance is irrelevant, although it may be crucial later. This lack of population security is very much the situation against which I and my civil and military colleagues struggled in my time in Afghanistan (2005–2007), and it is still the challenge today.

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all parts of counterinsurgency are at all times equally important, risks misunderstanding the importance of security as a foundation without which other elements cannot be built. When insurgency is weak, allegiance can be won through better and more just governance, development, justice, and so on. Thus, in some parts of Afghanistan where there is general calm,

good governance and economic development are extremely important. But in other areas, where insurgency can threaten and deliver death to those who accept the government's writ, the calculation changes.

Survival is the most basic requirement of people. Individuals may risk their lives for a greater cause, such as to protect loved ones or in the name of honor. But for people as a group to resist, they need to believe they can survive. When the insurgents can convince large elements of the population that survival can only be achieved through passive or active support of the insurgency, then none of the nonsecurity measures of counterinsurgency can come into effective play. This became the condition in parts of Iraq until a combination of local Iraqi resentment against al Qaeda, increased U.S. forces, and changed U.S. tactics came together in Anbar Province and then other areas to begin reestablishing security. That did not mean victory, or even an ending of violence. But it did create the space in which reconciliation, politics, governance, and development may play a part in bringing Iraq together in peace. Despite success, the point here is to understand how the role of security in counterinsurgency shifts depending on the situation. Buzzwords and catchphrases that treat security, development, and the other parts of counterinsurgency doctrine as fixed misunderstand the dynamic nature of insurgency's challenge.

It remains true that a government will be more stable and capable of resisting insurgency with the support of the people. It is not true, however, that such support can be built in the absence of security for the bulk of the population. As the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* recognized, "Without a secure environment, no permanent reforms can be implemented and disorder spreads."[11]

Population Security in Afghanistan

The current reorientation of policy in Afghanistan by the Obama administration to put security for the population at the center of strategy is undoubtedly correct. To repeat, protection of the people is the essential ingredient without which the other elements of development and governance are not possible. As John Nagl argues, "The populace must have confidence in the staying power of *both* [emphasis added] the counterinsurgency and the [host nation] government."[12] But the concept of protecting the population is one thing, and achieving it is something else.

How is population security to be achieved? Who can do it? What resources does it demand and where do they come from? These questions are beginning to be more sharply considered within strategic reassessments but are largely absent from popular discussion. There is no single answer for all times, but some central questions can be defined and the case of Afghanistan provides a useful template in which to draw them out.

Population security has several aspects. One is that people must be reasonably secure in their homes, workplaces, and travel. It also means that government can function. Teachers can be sent to teach, and they and their schools can survive. Administrators must be able to live and function in their towns and villages. Clinics must be open, supplied, and able to function. It is by measuring whether these things are happening without threats of assassination and disruption that we can judge whether security is being achieved.[13]

This leads to the question of who can provide population security. Initially, foreign forces can fill that role, but Iraq and Afghanistan both demonstrate limits to the capability and capacity of these forces. In neither case were foreign forces sufficiently numerous to deal

with assassinations, protect roads, and still manage the missions of taking the fight to the enemy. The intercommunal strife of Iraq and the daily harvest of bodies showing extensive torture were a commentary on the limitations of foreign forces as well as on the corruption of some of the Iraqi forces that were supposed to assist. One problem is numbers. Even if the United States had begun the Iraqi occupation with larger forces, it would have still been difficult to stretch far enough to deal with all the needs, especially once the insurgency began to gather strength.

In Afghanistan, the increased dangers of travel on major roads along with regular assaults on small Afghan government forces, especially police, testified to the loss of civilian security, as did the increase in roadside and suicide bomb attacks against military targets. But the problem was not only one of numbers. Even in areas largely considered cleared, the ubiquitous delivery of threatening "night letters" reminded Afghans that they were far from secure. One example was in the Arghandab District of Kandahar Province in 2008. After the natural death of Mullah Naquib, who had largely kept the district secure, the Taliban moved in. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and some Afghan forces were able to push them out.[14] However, while the district was considered secure, the Taliban were able to continue targeted threats down to the level of village bakers to warn against cooperation with ISAF and the Afghan government.[15] The insurgent ability to operate below the level of foreign control illustrates that the problem of local security is one not only of numbers but also of intelligence and awareness of who is who in an environment where villagers are likely to be too frightened to come forth and provide the necessary information.

Problems of Depending on Regional Forces

Local forces must be part of the answer to security, but they too have limitations. Even moderately trained armies need extensive time to develop. The situation may not wait for our methods of building forces. In Iraq when the second Shia revolt broke out in November 2004, the problem suddenly became acute. Moqtada al-Sadr's forces took the holy shrine of Imam Ali. While U.S. forces could fight their way close to the mosque, having foreign forces actually attack the shrine risked a major expansion of the revolt. Only three Iraqi army battalions had been formed, and they had to be extracted from other missions, given minimal training in fighting in a built-up area, and transported to Najaf. The delay was costly, particularly as it allowed Moqtada to withdraw from the shrine and go into hiding.

Limitations are also an issue of different types of local forces. Police have proven one of the weakest links in counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are a number of reasons for this, and as the problems are going to be difficult and time consuming to fix, we need to think strategically about the role assigned to police in the future.

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Local law enforcement makes a great deal of sense for community policing but suffers serious vulnerabilities when the problem becomes one of insurgency; we must focus more on this difference as we consider how to build, advise, and use indigenous police forces. In Algeria, where I served during an insurgency from 1994 to 1997, the police lived in the community,

U.S. Air Force (Angelita Lawrence)

Female members of Afghan National Police in women's affairs building in Zabul Province

which was effective for police work. However, their homes, lives, and families were easily targeted by the insurgents, and the police were virtually forced out of many communities as a result. Thus, other Algerian security forces, primarily military and intelligence elements, dominated in the bloody counterinsurgency campaign.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the police were not only vulnerable, poorly trained, and corrupt but also were or became the instruments of local political and militia leaders, who used their domination of the police to exert political control by force. Police suppression of dissent, along with turning a blind eye to or being part of criminal networks, reduced police effectiveness and created resentments and grievances that assisted insurgent recruiting. It took a number of years in each country for the U.S. Government to recognize that the political problems of the police could not be dealt with only by improving training and equipment. When the police are thugs, creating better trained and equipped thugs does not equal progress in counterinsurgency.

Since it was never possible to disband the police and start over, as we did with both the Iraqi and Afghan armies, we belatedly began the task of pulling apart and rebuilding police and interior ministries even as we tried to work with the existing forces. The result was that the local police, intended to fill the gap between foreign forces and the development of new armies, were not up to task.

If foreign forces cannot by their nature meet all the needs of population protection, local armies take a long time to build, and local police are manifestly weak for counterinsurgency, how is the

crucial need for population security to be met? There is no single answer, but among the issues to be considered is whether our model for building local security forces is best.

Different Models to Consider

Currently, we are struggling to implement a difficult model of force generation in which foreign forces must carry the brunt of the fighting for the years necessary to build local security forces that we advise but do not lead. The slow pace of the process in Iraq and Afghanistan is well known, as is the debate about force quality and readiness.

Because the process is long, there has been a constant search for short-term fixes to reduce the strain on our forces. The results are not inspiring. In Iraq, local police and civil guards recruited by the divisions were heavily sectarian. They fell apart during the Shia revolt of April 2004. I well remember standing on the roof of our beleaguered Coalition Provisional Authority outpost in Najaf to watch police and civil guards in uniforms and vehicles that we provided besieging us during the day and turning their guns on us at night.

In Afghanistan, we tried repeatedly to find a way of providing short-term reinforcements to counter offensives we knew were coming in 2006 and 2007. Police "rebalancing"[16] failed. So did our effort to use auxiliary police[17] to supplement the regular forces. We are trying other approaches now in Afghanistan. They may prove more successful, but it is important to understand that while we have theories modified by experience of what has not worked, we do not yet have a proven model for producing large numbers of effective police in the midst of an insurgency.

The point is not to criticize previous efforts but to illustrate the horrible problems of trying to bridge the gap between force generation and force readiness within the limitations of our advisory personnel and knowledge. Yet history has provided other models. While we may not be able to turn the clock back to use these lessons in Afghanistan, we should still consider them there—and for the future.

One alternative is to take direct charge of local levies, providing the officers and some of the noncommissioned officers ourselves and gradually turning the force over to the locals from the bottom up as the leadership matures. This was the model the British used in Jordan where British officers under Sir John Bagot Glubb (Glubb Pasha) commanded the Arab Legion. That force performed credibly against bandits and then, still under British loan officers, in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Even after all British officers left, the Jordanian forces for many years were the most efficient of Arab armies.

This was also the pattern American forces followed in the early years of the 20th century. U.S. officers commanded constabulary forces in the Philippines, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.[18] The results were impressive. It is worth considering whether the political problems of police in Iraq and Afghanistan might be different if we had chosen a similar model.[19] Perhaps a colonial model cannot be used in the 21st century because of the development of nationalism, but there are variations on the theme to consider. These could include expanding partnering with our forces to include integration of units, putting our personnel in direct command at lower levels, integrating the best foreign officers into our own forces, or taking command of some local forces for a period of time. It is not necessary to adopt a "one size fits all" model on a theoretical basis. What is necessary is to recognize the limitations of our current way of working and to seek new solutions.

Strategic Issues

Whatever the mix of solutions we adopt, we must think systematically about three related issues. One is the size of forces necessary for civilian protection as well as the other tasks of counterinsurgency. We need to think about force numbers in terms of security tasks rather than in terms of the enemy. We apparently are beginning to think on that basis in Afghanistan, but it is very late in the day.

Second, we need to be more explicit in considering how the various missions of counterinsurgency are to be shifted over time from foreign to local forces. We talk about this in generalities, but during my service in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am not aware that we integrated realistic local force planning and deployment into our consideration of the size for U.S. forces, nor did we until recently include extensive civilian protection in our calculation of force needs. The result was a gaping hole in planning.

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Whatever models and methods we choose in the future for building local forces, time will remain a limiting factor. Therefore, the third point is that we need to be realistic in understanding *and explaining publicly* the time lags for generating competent local forces. For many reasons, principally our own domestic pressures, we have repeatedly created unrealistic public expectations followed by disappointment and loss of credibility. Part of the reason lies in language usage.

We have used the word *trained* to mean fielding units with only the most rudimentary skills. Generally, the word was technically caveated to mean trained to a specific level, Corporate Management (CM)1 through CM4 being the usual terms for evaluating unit readiness to perform.[20] However, this distinction was largely lost in public discussion and briefings. General public expectations that "trained" meant the task was completed came up against limited performance and led to disappointment and a loss of credibility for official pronouncements.[21] We would have been much better off in the past and would be in the future if we underpromised and overperformed; instead, we have repeatedly done the reverse.

Having been more honest with ourselves about time constraints, we need to include realistic numbers for our own deployments. For this, we need equally to be honest with our own public about why forces of a necessary size are needed. If the public cannot support the needed sacrifice at the beginning of a struggle, they are most unlikely to sustain the project for the time needed for any counterinsurgency.

The focus of this article has been on rethinking not only what security must accomplish in a counterinsurgency, but also what it requires in planning to fill gaps until trained local forces are available. To focus thus on security is not to downplay the importance of the quality of governance and development. Ultimately, popular loyalty must be achieved if a government is to survive. A government that produces only repression of its own population is unlikely to be seen as conveying security. In the long term, if repression is linked to foreign occupation, the result may be to bolster the insurgency. Security is not an answer to everything. But we need to do it better to gain the time to make the rest work. And we need to explain better what we are

doing—and make good on the explanations—if we are to secure public support for the time needed to succeed in a project that joins counterinsurgency with armed nationbuilding.[22] **PRISM**

Notes

[1] Some of many examples of the maximum statement of the issue follow: "There can be no military solution to insurgency," in "Imran Khan advises US to strike a deal with Taliban," *Pak Tribune*, February 23, 2009; "There can be no military solution to counter-insurgency campaigns, and no talk of a military 'victory,'" in Richard Norton Taylor and Owen Bowcott, "Army learned insurgency lessons from Northern Ireland," *The Guardian*, July 31, 2007. The formulation that counterinsurgency is 80 percent political and only 20 percent military traces back at least to the French writer David Galula. That formulation was also cited officially, for example, in a speech of March 27, 2007, by then–Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman, "A Comprehensive Approach to Modern Insurgency: Afghanistan and Beyond," given at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany, March 27, 2007.

[2] James Dobbins, "Organizing for Victory," *PRISM* 1, no. 1 (December 2009), 51–62.

[3] John W. Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kadar, A Story of True Jihad* (New York: Monkfish, 2008).

[4] See Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). While in these cases the United States also worked to bring about more honest and effective governance, this was seen largely as a separate endeavor. Insurgency was ended by force of arms.

[5] It is often asserted that the end of the Greek civil war was caused by Josep Broz Tito's shutting the Yugoslav border, but as David H. Close and Thanos Veremis argue rather conclusively, the war had largely been won before the border closure came into play. See "The Military Struggle: 1945–1949," in *The Greek Civil War 1943–1950: Studies of Polarization*, ed. David H. Close (London: Routledge, 1993), 121.

[6] The quotation has been attributed to Abbot Arnaud Amaury, head of the Cistercian Order and papal legate, in response to how to differentiate between Catholics and Cathar heretics after the taking of the French town of Beziers in 1209. While the quotation's accuracy has been contested, the fact of the execution of all survivors of the town has not been—a dismal episode during the Albigensian Crusade. A summary account appears at <www.crusades-encyclopedia.com/arnaudamaury.hmtl>.

[7] Seth Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008).

[8] Ibid., 30.

[9] Bernard Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review* (Winter 1998), available at <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/navy/art5-w98.htm>.

[10] Ibid., 7.

[11] U.S. Army Field Manual 3–24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3–33.5, *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (CFM) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 42 (sec. 1–131).

[12] Ibid., 43 (sec. 1–134); see also John A. Nagl's foreword to CFM: "The key to success in counter insurgency is protecting the population" (xv).

[13] Fall's discussion of how rural control was lost in both Indochinese wars before battle was joined is instructive, as are the ways he was able to document this despite official French, Vietnamese, and U.S. pronouncements to the contrary.

[14] Noor Khan and Jason Strazuiso, "NATO, Afghans kill 36 in ops outside Khandahar," Associated Press, June 19, 2008, available at <www.militarytimes.com/news/2008/06/ap_afghanistan_061808/>.

[15] Author's conversation with a well-connected foreign worker who had extensive Kandahari contacts.

[16] There was a plan to move police billets from more secure areas in Afghanistan to the combat provinces and to disband the corrupt highway police and use the positions to reinforce the regular police. Not enough of the highway patrolmen would move and recruitments to replace them lagged.

[17] The Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) tried to recruit individuals, not militias, to man fixed posts under police control. It suffered from numerous problems, such as insufficient numbers of qualified police officers to supervise the ANAP, local attempts to politicize the force with militias, and a lack of resources, particularly trainers to maintain scheduled refresher training as well as other training programs to which we were committed in order to advance the training of the regular police.

[18] Boot, 99–155.

[19] The idea of U.S. officers taking command of local forces is neither new nor original. Fall suggested the same thing 44 years ago. See Fall, 3.

[20] *CM1*: capable of operating independently; *CM2*: capable of sustaining counterinsurgency operations at the battalion level with international support; *CM3*: partially capable of conducting counterinsurgency operations at the company level with support from international forces; *CM4*: formed but not yet capable of conducting primary operational missions.

[21] Anthony H. Cordesman has been detailed and correctly scathing in his criticism of public reporting of this and other aspects of military training in Afghanistan and Iraq. See, for example, Anthony H. Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping the Path to Victory* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], July 27, 2009); "The Afghan-Pakistan War: 'Clear, Hold, Build,'" briefing, CSIS, Washington, DC, May 21, 2009; and Erin K. Fitzgerald and Anthony H. Cordesman, *Resourcing for Defeat: Critical Failures in Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Resourcing the Afghan and Iraq Wars* (Washington, DC: CSIS, August 6, 2009).

[22] I first heard the term *armed nationbuilding* from Anthony H. Cordesman. It is an accurate formulation of the task we are attempting.