

EOIN MICHEÁL MCNAMARA

The Risk Society's Stabilisation Failure?  
An Analysis of NATO and the International  
Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan





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Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu

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I dedicate this work to the memory of Dr. James Flint.  
A friend that started my interest in Afghanistan and  
a friend that always stayed in touch.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	11
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	15
INTRODUCTION .....	17
1. REVIEWING THE RISK SOCIETY AT WAR: THE MAIN PARAMETERS .....	53
1.1. Introduction .....	53
1.2. Security policy and the concept of risk .....	54
1.2.1. A future focused concept .....	54
1.2.2. Differentiating ‘risk’ and ‘threat’ .....	56
1.3. War with a preventative focus .....	60
1.3.1. Problems in preventative warfare .....	60
1.3.2. Reflexive security dilemmas .....	64
1.3.3. Under-appreciating consequences .....	69
1.4. Debate on strategic ambition levels .....	73
1.4.1. Preventing the worst .....	73
1.4.2. Liberal and neoconservative ideologies .....	75
1.5. Risk and expeditionary operations .....	78
1.5.1. Military fatalities and combat risk .....	79
1.5.2. Utilitarian alternatives to national armed forces .....	81
1.6. Conclusion .....	84
2. THE RISK SOCIETY FROM WAR TO STABILISATION .....	86
2.1. Introduction .....	86
2.2. Complexities beyond war .....	87
2.2.1. Beyond prevention .....	88
2.2.2. Towards multidimensional stabilisation .....	90
2.3. Contours of stabilisation policy .....	92
2.3.1. A civilian and military amalgam .....	93
2.3.2. Utilitarian ‘milieu shaping’ .....	94
2.3.3. Supporting a utilitarian peace .....	98
2.4. Civilian contributions to stabilisation .....	102
2.4.1. ‘Safety first’ and humanitarian assistance .....	102
2.4.2. ‘Bunkerisation’ and conflict inequalities .....	106
2.5. Conclusion .....	108
3. RISK SOCIETY INFLUENCES ON NATO AND ITS MEMBERS .....	110
3.1. Introduction .....	110
3.2. Global influences on local conflicts .....	110
3.2.1. Global surveillance .....	111
3.2.2. Global PMSCs .....	113
3.3. Preparing NATO for global risks .....	115

3.3.1. Developing a global focus .....	116
3.3.2. Operational network focus .....	122
3.3.3. Continuous management or ‘endless wars’ .....	125
3.4. Tentative power .....	128
3.4.1. Turbulence of the risk society .....	128
3.4.2. The end of praetorianism .....	131
3.4.3. ‘Lite’ military systems .....	133
3.4.4. Blowback anxiety .....	134
3.4.5. War without passion .....	137
3.4.6. ‘Ready to kill but not to die’ .....	139
3.4.7. Underprepared for low-intensity warfare .....	140
3.5. Conclusion .....	142
4. DILEMMAS OF A ‘LIGHT FOOTPRINT’ INTERVENTION .....	143
4.1. Introduction .....	143
4.2. Utilitarian beginnings .....	144
4.2.1. Overthrowing Taliban rule .....	144
4.2.2. Battle of Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda .....	149
4.3. Reference points from past experiences .....	153
4.3.1. Quagmire anxiety .....	154
4.3.2. Debating the light footprint .....	156
4.4. Post-conflict politics and security .....	158
4.4.1. Misunderstanding Afghanistan .....	159
4.4.2. Seeking ‘big change’ with ‘small means’ .....	163
4.5. Cobbling together political compromises .....	166
4.5.1. Realist coaxing at Grand Assemblies .....	166
4.5.2. Warlords and public order .....	169
4.6. Conclusion .....	171
5. TALIBAN RECOVERY AND ENTANGLED ALLIANCE POLITICS .....	174
5.1. Introduction .....	174
5.2. Early problems for ISAF .....	175
5.2.1. Switching attention to Iraq .....	175
5.2.2. Weaknesses in civil-military coordination .....	177
5.3. Taliban recovery and evolution .....	180
5.3.1. Returning to militancy .....	180
5.3.2. Local sentiments and foreign influences .....	183
5.4. Pakistan and the GWOT .....	186
5.4.1. A duplicitous partnership .....	186
5.4.2. Utilitarian drawbacks .....	190
5.5. Alliance politics and ISAF leadership .....	191
5.5.1. European perspectives on ISAF expansion .....	191
5.5.2. French and German precautions .....	194
5.5.3. Tall ambitions but insufficient resources .....	196
5.6. Conclusion .....	201

6. REALIST RECOMMITMENT .....	203
6.1. Introduction .....	203
6.2. Ideology and change .....	204
6.2.1. Campaign outlooks .....	204
6.2.2. Just war rhetoric .....	206
6.3. Realism and caution .....	208
6.3.1. Debating realist change .....	209
6.3.2. Obama and ‘cosmopolitical realism’ .....	212
6.4. From GWOT to reflexive security .....	214
6.4.1. Struggling with contradictions .....	214
6.4.2. Reference points for new approaches .....	217
6.5. Tensions between civilian and military leaders .....	220
6.5.1. McChrystal and military recommitment .....	220
6.5.2. Civil-military relations and war planning .....	224
6.5.3. Reflexive security and civil-military tensions .....	227
6.6. Conclusion .....	231
7. CONFIRMING ‘THE SURGE’ .....	233
7.1. Introduction .....	233
7.2. A finalised plan .....	233
7.2.1. COIN and ‘counterterrorism-plus’ .....	234
7.2.2. Reference points from Iraq .....	236
7.2.3. Timetables and deadlines .....	239
7.3. Misreading societies in conflict .....	241
7.3.1. Recurring violence .....	242
7.3.2. Transferring battle tactics .....	245
7.4. ‘Global’ and ‘local’ in conflict protraction .....	246
7.4.1. Global fragmentation .....	247
7.4.2. Opium-eradication .....	248
7.5. Conclusion .....	251
8. FRAGMENTED RESOLVE .....	253
8.1. Introduction .....	253
8.2. Regional and global considerations .....	253
8.2.1. Plotting regional solutions .....	254
8.2.2. Global collective action .....	256
8.2.3. Partnership failure with Pakistan .....	258
8.3. Alliance expectations .....	260
8.3.1. Fragmented trust .....	260
8.3.2. US-UK disputes .....	261
8.3.3. German caveats .....	265
8.3.4. French indifference .....	267
8.3.5. Newcomer contributions .....	272
8.3.6. Global partnerships .....	281
8.4. Conclusion .....	283

9. CLASHING MILITARY AND CIVILIAN APPROACHES .....	285
9. 1. Introduction .....	285
9.2. Political impatience .....	286
9.2.1. Situational and cultural awareness .....	286
9.2.2. A final chance for COIN .....	288
9.3. A funding flood .....	290
9.3.1. Rushing to spend .....	291
9.3.2. Worsening corruption .....	293
9.4. Safety for civilian organisations .....	296
9.4.1. NGOs and COIN .....	296
9.4.2. Cooperation with militaries .....	298
9.4.3. Increased ‘bunkerisation’ .....	300
9.5. SSR failings .....	302
9.5.1. ANSF in crisis .....	303
9.5.2. A ‘train-and-equip’ approach .....	305
9.6. PMSC proliferation .....	307
9.6.1. Less political risks .....	307
9.6.2. Evading accountability .....	308
9.7. Drones for continued counterterrorism .....	314
9.7.1. Technological modernisation and strategic change .....	314
9.7.2. Downplaying ethics .....	317
9.7.3. Discarding stabilisation .....	321
9.8. Conclusion .....	323
CONCLUSION: WHEN ‘GOOD ENOUGH’ IS NOT ENOUGH.....	325
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN .....	352
CURRICULUM VITAE .....	361
ELULOOKIRJELDUS .....	365

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APPF	Afghan Public Protection Force
ASF	Afghan Security Forces
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CEO	Chief Operating Executive
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DoD	Department of Defence
DoS	Department of State
EDF	Estonian Defence Forces
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GOP	Grand Old Party (Republican Party [US])
GPS	Global Positioning System
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HTS	Human Terrain System
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IJU	Islamic Jihad Union
IR	International Relations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IT	Information Technology
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MNF	Multi-National Force (Iraq)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDS	National Defence Strategy
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
NSC	National Security Council

NSRA	National Security Risk Assessment
OAF	Operation Allied Force
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OMC – A	Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OUP	Operation United Protector
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service (US)
PME	Professional Military Education
PMSC	Private Military and Security Company
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
QDR	Quadrennial Defence Review
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SIGAR	US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SOFs	Special Operations Forces
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

# INTRODUCTION

## Prologue: the promise of the risk society concept

Based on a relatively small previous literature that flourished in the 2000s, the risk society concept retains promise to explain the factors that currently underpin Western security outlooks. Concurring with many risk theorists, the broader social sciences have indicated some profound social transformations affecting the Western nation-state in recent decades. In political science, it has been prominently argued that war originally crafted the nation-state.<sup>1</sup> However, this process then reversed in modernity when the characteristics of the nation-state formatively shaped approaches to war and security policy.<sup>2</sup> These characteristics are primarily forged by the societies within these nation-states. Consequentially, social analysis has been plentiful to suggest that some long-standing Western social preferences have changed or that the socio-political cohesion that previously reinforced the modern nation-state has diminished.

This change is central to many risk theory assumptions, possibly granting it some advantage to explain the origins of recent Western security policy decisions and perhaps allowing it to highlight insights otherwise unavailable to mainstream IR theories in realism, liberalism or constructivism. These IR theories offer competing visions of international politics, but in their most prominent versions, they still assume a sociologically coherent or ‘boilerplate’ nation-state. To the contrary, in risk theory, social cohesion within the nation-state is assumed to be diminishing due to acceleration in both individualisation and globalisation. If correct, this stands to seriously affect how public policy in general and security policy in particular might function.

Individualisation and globalisation undoubtedly create many benefits for Western societies. Topping the list of these benefits, individualisation has broadened personal freedoms and globalisation has boosted transnational connectivity and economic opportunities. Despite these benefits, in the risk society defined by Ulrich Beck, the West is portrayed as departing from industrialised modernity to a later post-industrial age where anxiety, hesitancy and reflexivity dominate social perceptions. This vision is diametrically contrary to the optimistic liberal ‘end of history’ narratives that have coexisted with the risk theory’s development from the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> The risk society’s acute anxiety, hesitancy and reflexive concerns are theorised as originating from a confluence of at least two specific social transformations. First, individualisation diminishes the collective solidarity that previously supported society’s sense of safety and security within the Western welfare state. Traditional collective institutions ‘ordained by religion,

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1990*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Howard, ‘War and the Nation-State’, *Daedalus*, vol. 108, no. 4, 1979, pp. 101–110.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, no. 16, 1989, pp. 3–18.

tradition or the state' reinforced collective solidarity and thus a stronger sense of safety. Individualised societies instead encourage 'precarious freedoms'.<sup>4</sup> Later modernity emancipates society from collectives previously imposed through 'clanship, tribalism, or religion' but social polarization has also increased between society's winners and losers. This polarization can create as many losers as it does winners.<sup>5</sup> Enabling what Beck and other theorists describe as 'the turbulence of the risk society', social and economic opportunities expand for some, but a nervous anxiety lingers for many.<sup>6</sup>

The gradual erosion of social protections in later modernity once provided by the traditional nation-state induces a nervous and anxious risk society. These fears increase society's yearning for safety above other social benefits. This a somewhat paradoxical pattern considering that it was these societies themselves that voluntarily reduced their security by dismantling social solidarity. Nevertheless, Western societies still perceive governments as primary safety providers, even though anxious citizens harbour uncertain thoughts about government security resources being enough to protect them from risks. Individuals and organisations with means can avail of opportunities from the market to nurse their anxieties by bridging government-provided security with protection purchased from private actors. Those with less have weaker agency to remedy safety concerns.

In earlier modernity, the industrialised nation-state had a tighter grip on the reins to effectively mobilise human and economic resources for military campaigns. Risk theory claims that individualisation accompanied by greater economic privatisation now robs the Western nation-state of the 'structural fitness' to hold similar traction. Social systems that once reinforced military action have buckled under the pressure of nation-state reconfiguration.<sup>7</sup> Since 1945, among the West's liberal democracies at least, social transformation has helped to shape a beneficial security community to disable devastatingly destructive wars between industrialised powers.

Globalisation is theorised as a second but more exogenous source of the risk society's anxiety. It might be inferred from risk theory that Europe's 'peace dividend' lasting from the end of the Cold War until Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 had surprisingly little effect to ease the risk society's concerns. According to Beck, 'the utopia of the risk society remains peculiarly *negative* and *defensive*'.<sup>8</sup> Following the Cold War, the risk society soon had cause to refocus on 'risks aggravated by globalisation' including concerns like global terrorism,

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<sup>4</sup> Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Darryl S.L. Jarvis, 'Risk, Globalisation and the State: A Critical Appraisal of Ulrich Beck and the World Risk Society Thesis', *Global Society*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2007, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge: Polity, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, Cambridge: Polity, 2009, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards A New Modernity*, London: Sage, 1992, p. 49. Original published in German language, Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986.

organised crime, uncontrolled migration and illicit WMD proliferation.<sup>9</sup> Anxiety over these twentieth-first century risks was seemingly confirmed by the global trail leading to the apocalyptic scenes in New York and Washington on 9/11. The West received a rude awakening. As well as liberal connectivity, globalisation might also be transforming asymmetric warfare with devastating consequences. For a brief ‘unipolar moment’ the US seemed secure as the world’s one remaining superpower. However, 9/11 highlighted that even a US holding unrivalled military resources remained exposed to unpredictable attacks from shadowy non-state networks. 9/11 triggered the GWOT, bringing fragile states in the Global South, like Afghanistan, into sharp focus for Western governments. Hindered by weak governance, these states were perceived as being unable to stop the emergence of global terrorism and other risks that could later mobilise to harm the West.

Redefining a security tool kit to prevent risks emerging from fragile states at distance became a priority for the risk society. Whereas war in earlier modernity might been motivated by geopolitical conflict, imperial prestige or economic profit, risk theorists emphasise that war or military intervention for the risk society is solidly about securing its citizens from risk. Contrary to past applications of risk theory in security policy, it has currently become untenable to see the West’s tool kit for security management as only confined to war alone. Managing risks from fragile states have involved a broad assemblage of civilian and military instruments of varying utility. Responding to this conceptual blindness, this dissertation re-conceptualises the risk society’s combined military and civilian emphasis on managing risks from fragile states through the lens of stabilisation policy. NATO’s failure in Afghanistan was not simply a failure of warfighting. For what the alliance defined as its Comprehensive Approach to crisis management, it was a wider stabilisation failure that involved civilian reconstruction and humanitarian relief among other policy components.

The risk society might prioritise stabilisation to manage risks from fragile states, but there is still no guarantee that it can perform this effectively. This problem represents intellectual terrain that risk theory has yet to explore. Later modernity is defined by some profound contradictions, prompting suspicions that, paradoxically, the risk society might struggle with stabilisation policy despite prioritising it. For example, the risk society’s acutely ‘safety first’ outlook creates demand for preventative military capabilities to stop risks at distance, but ‘safety first’ concerns also induce ‘post-heroic’ anxiety over soldier fatalities to stifle commitment that can possibly undermine these preventative operations. Beck theorises that the risk society is obsessed ‘with *preventing* the worst’ and with ‘self-limitation’.<sup>10</sup> When ‘safety first’ urgency combines with ‘self-limitation’ a contradiction is created to feed a compromise aiming for ‘good enough’ solutions that merely prevent risks without too much ideological finesse. This is a humble recline from many previous ideas of ‘victory’ in Western warfare that express

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<sup>9</sup> Yee-Kuang Heng, *War as Risk Management: Strategy and Conflict in an Age of Globalised Risks*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

intent to ideologically shape political order following a particular conflict. Such ideas dominated President George W. Bush's discourses on Afghanistan when the GWOT began in 2001. Risk theory would suspect these discourses were merely 'papering over' utilitarian actions to manage risks with more pragmatic means.<sup>11</sup> Such aims might alternatively be described as 'winning ugly' with short-term improvisation preferred to any grand strategic vision.

Danger from global risks travelling quickly stirs acute anxiety in the risk society, but the risk society might still see accelerated globalisation as a two-way street facilitating non-state benefits for managing risks. It can draw plentiful personnel, resources and expertise from a broad global network of NGOs and government agencies to support stabilisation. When security supported by national armed forces is stretched, the risk society has opportunities to supplement this by purchasing 'force-multipliers' from a thriving global PMSC 'market for force'. When it needs to undertake combat against some of its most dangerous enemies, it can do so in increasingly 'contactless' ways by utilising advanced military technologies like drones and robotics to reduce the risk of soldier fatalities. Western stabilisation policy is a complex eco-system. In addition to national military deployments, civilian NGOs and government agencies providing humanitarian relief and development assistance; PMSCs bridging security gaps; and advanced military technologies for 'contactless' warfare all feature prominently in Afghanistan. These non-traditional features in conflict zones were especially vivid in the later years of NATO's intervention in Afghanistan, marking a significant evolution in stabilisation policy that previous literature linking risk theory and security policy has not yet responded to. When examining why stabilisation failed, it can be suspected that some answers might be found in analysis of these aspects.

Previous risk theory literature has almost exclusively focused on conceptualising how later modernity has changed Western outlooks on war. However, if risk theory is to continue to have something serious to say about the main drivers contributing to eventual security policy outcomes as later modernity evolves, examination of how this change affects Western performance in security policy is an important area of enquiry. Building on previous literature linking the risk society with security policy, this dissertation undertakes theory-revision to integrate stabilisation policy and risk theory. This is done through interrogation of the respective risk theory and stabilisation policy literatures where compatibility between both is identified. The dissertation comprises nine chapters. Theory-revision follows the logic of first conceptualising the risk society's stabilisation policy preferences (chapters 1-3) before empirical analysis evaluates this conceptualisation against the record of NATO's stabilisation policy in Afghanistan (chapters 4-9). The dissertation's main argument is that the risk society's defining characteristics strongly influenced many policies leading to NATO's stabilisation failure in Afghanistan. However, some exceptions to conceptual expectations are also identified. This introductory chapter explains the dissertation's

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<sup>11</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

main research puzzle and research questions; it undertakes a short review of the general risk society concept; it provides some familiarisation with the risk society's defining characteristics; it includes a methodological discussion of 'crucial' single case studies in theory-revision; and it ends with a summary of the dissertation's structure and main arguments.

## Research puzzle and main research questions

US commentators frequently refer to the war in Afghanistan from 2001 until 2021 as 'the longest in US history'.<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan was not only a long series of military operations. It was a stabilisation effort combining military and civilian state-building components. Its aim was to relieve Afghanistan of fragile state status where a viable state possessing governance institutions broadly supported by Afghan citizenry would eventually become possible. Stabilisation reached its most intense phase when ISAF was transferred to NATO's command in 2003. ISAF was terminated in 2014, when RSM was established. Afghanistan is a land shrouded in historical innuendo and political intrigue. A series of powerful empires have experienced unsuccessful military campaigns there, unable to bend the Afghan people to their will. Afghanistan has been described as 'the graveyard of empires'.<sup>13</sup> Most prominently illustrated by the 'the great game' between Great Britain and Russia during the nineteenth century, competition between empires has historically dominated international politics in its wider region where Central Asia and Middle East intersect.<sup>14</sup>

Imperial interests contrary to the self-determination of Afghanistan's multiple ethnic groups crafted its national borders.<sup>15</sup> Many stereotypically derived explanations have been offered to account for Afghanistan's historically volatile politics. Brought into existence by imperial convenience, some have characterised Afghanistan as innately war-stricken ever since with its resolutely belligerent ethnic groups see as making stable centralised governance impossible. Efforts to enforce externally derived political order on Afghanistan have taught multiple great powers some rueful lessons, be it the UK, the Soviet Union or the US. Afghanistan's dramatically mountainous terrain makes navigation and communication connecting isolated ethnic groups difficult. Economic backwardness persists under feudal-type social systems in some rural areas outside Kabul that centre on local elders, 'strongmen' and warlords.

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<sup>12</sup> Doug Bandow, 'Afghanistan, the Longest War in American History', *The American Conservative*, 2 January 2019, available at: <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/afghanistan-longest-war-american-history> (accessed 21 June 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Milton Bearden, 'Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 6, 2001, pp. 17–30.

<sup>14</sup> See Martin Ewans, eds., *The Great Game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*, New York: Harper, 2009.

Emphasising these historical and social features popularises the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative. Such explanations give impressions that external interventions seeking to stabilise political order in Afghanistan are almost preordained to failure. However, these outlooks are problematic for multiple reasons. This logic is contradicted by other historical events. Afghanistan had a flawed but relatively stable and functioning governmental system from the 1950s into the early 1970s. This was destabilised first by a *coup d’état* against its monarchy in 1973 and then by the Saur Revolution in 1978 where a small cell of local communists seized power in Kabul. Attempts at communist reform soon provoked rebellion from traditional Islamic elements.

Amid the ensuing turmoil, the Soviet Union militarily intervened to support beleaguered Afghan communists. Afghanistan has suffered recurring cycles of violent civil war in the decades since, but its political situation prior to 1973 still diminishes claims that there is no legacy or tradition in Afghan society that can support common government between its various ethnic groups. More recently, after US military action overthrew the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan experienced a period where social violence dissipated without too much external enforcement until the Taliban revived itself as an insurgency after 2005. This was arguably a time when opportunities for stronger state-building were squandered.<sup>16</sup>

Discussion of ‘squandered opportunities’ for improved Afghan state-building help to introduce another alternative to this ‘graveyard of empires’ explanation for stabilisation failure. For many realist commentators in the US, intervention failure in Afghanistan was the result of a naïve ‘American maximalism’ encouraged strongly by Washington’s liberal ideological worldview.<sup>17</sup> Within this camp, John Mearsheimer has prominently criticised Washington’s ‘liberal delusions’ in aiming to expand the democratic West as provoking Russia to both illegally annex Crimea in 2014 and start a proxy-war in eastern Ukraine soon after.<sup>18</sup> However, he has also widened this perspective, arguing that US efforts to nurture a liberal international order that would pacify unruly elements within fragile states like Afghanistan was ‘bound to fail’.<sup>19</sup> While Mearsheimer understates ‘social engineering’ along liberal lines in far flung states as ‘difficult’, his reasoning for what he interprets as failed liberal principles in US foreign policy applied in places like Afghanistan highlights sharp ideological incompatibility

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<sup>16</sup> For a summary, see Katariina Mustasilta, Tyyne Karjalainen, Timo R. Stewart and Mathilda Salo, *Finland in Afghanistan 2001–2021. From Stabilization to Advancing Foreign and Security Policy Relations*, Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs Report 72, June 2023, pp. 57–92, available at: [https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/report72\\_finland-in-afghanistan-2001-2021.pdf](https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/report72_finland-in-afghanistan-2001-2021.pdf) (accessed 3 September 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Sestanovich, ‘American Maximalism’, *The National Interest*, no. 79, 2005, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 5, 2014, pp. 77–89.

<sup>19</sup> See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. And John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order’, *International Security*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2019, pp. 7–50.

as a major problem. Post-intervention, Mearsheimer envisages fragile states ‘in turmoil’ with occupying forces having to contend with an ‘alien culture that might even be hostile to liberal democracy’ where ‘nationalist sentiment’ is stoked, inflaming the risk of violent rebellion.<sup>20</sup>

Realists criticise ‘liberal maximalism’ as a naïve GWOT preference futilely aiming to rehabilitate Afghanistan and Iraq as stable liberal democracies to no longer endanger global security. This tendency was perhaps most prevalent in George W. Bush’s foreign policy where liberal democratic peace theory was argued as an important inspiration.<sup>21</sup> Many neoconservative policy staff serving under Bush believed that US military intervention could serve the needs of liberal democratic peace, if necessary. Robert Gilpin harshly interpreted policymakers and intellectuals of this mindset as ‘ideological amateurs’ failing to comprehend the narrow limits of military force.<sup>22</sup> Contrary to flourishing liberal democracy, ‘ideological amateurism’ is interpreted as being exposed when post-intervention Afghanistan and Iraq quickly deteriorated into violent turmoil. Seeing both GWOT interventions as central to a ‘liberal hegemony’ posture adopted by Washington, Barry Posen argues this as ‘costly, wasteful, and self-defeating’ for US national security.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond realist interpretations of ‘liberal delusions’, some contrasting arguments are raised within the ‘liberal peacebuilding’ literature. Contrary to realists, these arguments emphasise that if ‘liberal peacebuilding’ was undertaken properly by Western governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, stronger progress towards liberal democracy might have been experienced in these societies.<sup>24</sup> ‘Liberal peacebuilding’ emphasises ‘grassroots’, ‘local’ or ‘bottom-up’ engagement from donor agencies through initiatives that bring previously warring communities together. This creates a culture to gradually integrate former belligerents along liberal lines.<sup>25</sup> This ‘bottom-up’ local integration is often advocated as a vital prerequisite to build the legitimacy required to make national institutions responsive to citizens. Whereas realist outlooks offer a macro-level picture on the ‘delusions’ of US foreign policy to foster a liberal international order, ‘liberal peacebuilding’ outlooks enable questioning on whether a genuinely liberal approach was ever undertaken in Afghanistan. These arguments leave questions lingering on whether a stronger ‘grassroots’ focus or better executed

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<sup>20</sup> Mearsheimer, ‘Bound to Fail’, pp. 33.

<sup>21</sup> For connections between George W. Bush’s foreign policy and democratic peace theory, see Jack Snyder, ‘One World, Many Theories’, *Foreign Policy*, no.145, 2004, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important to be Left to Ideological Amateurs’, *International Relations*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp.10–12.

<sup>23</sup> Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup> Roland Paris, ‘Saving Liberal Peacebuilding’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010, p. 363.

<sup>25</sup> Roger MacGinty and Oliver P. Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2013, pp. 763–783.

liberal strategies would have left Afghan state-building in a more successful position?

Despite realist outlooks indicating flawed security strategies derived from liberal naivety, it remains doubtful whether the US or NATO were wholeheartedly committed to liberal ideology. Instead, the US ‘hyperpower’ that emerged after 9/11 is argued to have prioritised security over ideology as if it were a security-obsessed ‘addict’.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, rather than tangibly committing to spreading liberal democracy through state-building in Afghanistan, Washington soon abandoned this aim, swiftly moving on, aiming to enhance its security by intervening to disarm Saddam Husein in Iraq in 2003. This switch in emphasis to Iraq might have seen the US squander an important opportunity to promote liberal ideology in Afghanistan when enhanced ‘soft power’ resources might have made its state-building aims attractive to more Afghans. A popular liberal outlook, ‘soft power’ is conceptualised as ‘the power to attract’.<sup>27</sup> The US can be suspected of jettisoning this ideological opportunity in Afghanistan while aiming to eliminate a perceived security risk in Iraq as a higher priority.

This section has so far introduced popular ‘graveyard and empires’ rationales for stabilisation failure in Afghanistan as well as discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of different liberal outlooks on supporting security and governance in fragile states, many that were often raised in Western discourses during the GWOT. These alternatives remain as counter-propositions throughout this dissertation when risk theory explanations are evaluated against empirical evidence. ‘Graveyard of empires’ explanations are dubious because these merely offer the view that political conditions in Afghanistan inevitably presuppose failure by intervening powers. This squeezes out any role for policy action from intervening actors, be that action either proficient or poor. By contrast, some critiques perceiving a flawed liberal focus in US or NATO stabilisation policy indicate either an over-ambitious overstretch or ideological incompatibilities between the liberal West and societies within far flung fragile states. Advocates for ‘liberal peacebuilding’ might argue that policies for ‘grassroots’, ‘local’ or ‘bottom-up’ social integration have been badly executed or under-emphasised.

There might be stronger grounds to sympathise with the latter argument over the former, but ‘liberal peacebuilding’ arguments still rarely advance much detail on why Western governments either shy away from or poorly execute ‘grassroots’ strategies. A risk society approach might offer some accurate explanations on this. The risk society’s acute ‘safety first’ outlook can be suspected as precluding it from entering some of the more dangerous crevices of conflict societies where effective ‘grassroots’ engagement might otherwise support peace. The risk society’s utilitarian preferences might see it decline opportunities to exert stronger ‘soft power’ to support stabilisation at critical junctures in favour of solutions that satisfy its security obsession. Ultimately, the risk society is a

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<sup>26</sup> David S. McDonough, ‘Beyond Primacy: Hegemony and “Security Addiction” in US Grand Strategy’, *Orbis*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2009, pp. 6–22.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph S. Nye, ‘Soft Power’, *Foreign Policy*, vol. 80, 1990, pp. 153–171.

suspect for settling for solutions that are ‘good enough’ from its own perspective but might have many flaws when building security and governance in fragile states.

ISAF was designed and evolved by Western governments responsive to domestic political systems and societies. This brings the risk society’s characteristics and their possible influence on security policy into consideration. Risk society departs from social priorities in earlier industrialised modernity, its theorists conceptualise a society where anxiety, hesitancy and reflexive awareness are much more acute. As safety concerns usually accompany security policy discussions, these features can be expected to be especially resonant when security decisions are taken. Beck sees the risk society broadly developing in tandem with the post-industrial world, reifying it as a fully global phenomenon, but its defining circumstances are arguably most acute for Western societies. This dissertation takes a much more specific focus, taking a mid-level theoretical approach seeing the risk society as primarily a Western phenomenon. It examines risk society characteristics over NATO’s twenty-year stabilisation effort in Afghanistan. Changeover in political leadership over this period provides opportunities to observe evolutions in the risk society’s security thinking.

Previous literature linking the risk society with security policy narrowly focuses on how changing social trends influence different functions for war by Western governments. This relatively small literature stops short of analysing whether risk society characteristics affect performance in security policy. This dissertation builds on previous literature linking risk theory and security policy to address performance in stabilisation policy. This is a contribution towards ensuring that this literature can better comprehend US and wider Western strategic action in a unipolar world. Without any symmetric great power threat, but best signified by the asymmetric violence of 9/11, unipolarity continued to induce anxious concern in Western citizens and governments over risks ‘aggravated by globalisation’ mobilising from fragile states on the global periphery.<sup>28</sup>

Risk society anxiety after 9/11 drew NATO into a twenty-year effort to stabilise Afghanistan, but despite the long duration of this effort, its stabilisation failure was finally confirmed in August 2021. Long supported by NATO, the ANSF were routed by the Taliban returning to rule in Kabul. It is therefore important to examine whether the risk society’s contradictory characteristics weakened ISAF, thus paving the way towards stabilisation failure. Afghanistan was undeniably difficult physical and human terrain for Western intervention and stabilisation policies, but there were also numerous factors at play throughout ISAF’s tenure that would have also benefited its stabilisation aims. These included a favourable global geopolitical environment; the West’s unrivalled military power; its vast financial resources; its significant civilian and military state-building expertise; and its possession of sophisticated military technology and weaponry.

It is therefore a staggering puzzle that Afghanistan was not so much closer to stabilisation – where the Western-backed government in Kabul could exert an

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<sup>28</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 13.

uncontested sovereign monopoly on force – by 2021 as it was in the months immediately following US intervention after 9/11. Policy implementation must take a large share of the blame for this failure. Even as early as 2018, as Taliban insurgents advanced in Ghanzi province, it was claimed that it was ‘undefeated’ and that its organisation was ‘as strong as ever’ despite, by then, seventeen years of Western ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power spent on Afghan stabilisation.<sup>29</sup> By 2018, the Taliban had regained more control over territory than at any time since its overthrow in November 2001.<sup>30</sup> Reports also emerged in 2018 of US authorities again becoming acutely anxious that perpetual instability in Afghanistan could see it reemerge as a ‘haven’ for global terrorism.<sup>31</sup> This would have been unthinkable for Washington following initial intervention in late 2001.

A far more benign scenario seemed apparent at that early outset. Proxy interference from states rivalling the West aiming to undermine ISAF sometimes occurred, but more severe symmetrical interference from mirroring great powers could be ruled out. Geopolitical obstacles for Western aims were less severe than for previous Soviet military encroachment in Afghanistan, bringing torrid consequences for Moscow between 1979 and 1989.<sup>32</sup> With bipolar security competition, US proxy support for the *Mujahideen* worsened Soviet pain.<sup>33</sup> Figures suggest that Western stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan were substantially funded, if not vastly so. Between 2001 and 2016, the US alone contributed a massive \$783 billion towards stabilising Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> The situation in Afghanistan was a fluctuating priority for US policymakers. Military intervention that overthrew the Taliban marked Washington’s initial response to 9/11 beginning the GWOT, but the US soon moved attention away to tackle Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003.

With the Taliban inadvertently afforded an opportunity to revive as a formidable insurgency, Obama renewed US leadership aiming to finally extinguish its insurgency and reinforce better Afghan governance. He launched a ‘surge’ reinforcing ISAF’s stabilisation between late-2009 and mid-2011. At its peak, this ‘surge’ saw US troops stationed in Afghanistan rise to over 100,000.<sup>35</sup> Mili-

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<sup>29</sup> Mujib Mashal, ‘Why the Taliban’s Assault on Ghazni Matters’, *The New York Times*, 13 August 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/13/world/asia/why-the-talibans-assault-on-ghazni-matters-for-afghanistan-and-the-us.html> (accessed 21 June 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Mashal, ‘Why the Taliban’s Assault on Ghazni Matters’.

<sup>31</sup> Helene Cooper, ‘US Braces for Return of Terrorist Safe Havens to Afghanistan’, *The New York Times*, 12 March 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/12/world/middleeast/military-safe-havens-afghanistan.html?module=inline> (accessed 21 June 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979–89*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, ‘The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1999, pp. 693–708.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Rafferty, ‘The War in Afghanistan: By the Numbers’, *NBC News*, 22 August 2017, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/war-afghanistan-numbers-n794626> (accessed 21 June 2019).

<sup>35</sup> US Department of State, ‘US Relations with Afghanistan’, 26 July 2018, available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/> (accessed 21 June 2019).

tary combat to fully subdue Taliban violence was crucial, but only to allow a platform for other civilian and military stabilisation initiatives to ease Afghan state fragility. In 2011 alone, the US allocated \$110 billion in total financial assistance to Afghanistan. Between 2001 and 2011, Washington spent \$38 billion ‘training and equipping’ the ANSF, aiming to eventually create indigenous Afghan forces independently capable of protecting a non-violent public order.<sup>36</sup>

With ISAF providing the tutelage, the ANA grew to 200,000 personnel between 2002 and 2019. Political debate in the US has emphasised America’s human sacrifice in Afghanistan, but the 2,400 US soldiers that had died on the Afghan battlefield by early 2019 was still much less than fatalities suffered by the ANA over the same period, estimated at close to 62,000.<sup>37</sup> Beyond Washington’s substantial forces and resources working in tandem with ANSF manpower, US leaders could also avail of further stabilisation resources from NATO allies; global partner governments; a global NGO network; and a burgeoning global private security industry. During the ‘surge’ between 2009 and 2011, 100,000 US troops reinforced a total ISAF strength of 130,000 thanks to additional contributions from NATO allies and partners. Described as a ‘force multiplier’, US allies and partners also contributed considerable financial sums towards civilian stabilisation and reconstruction aims.

The early post-Cold War era extending from the 1990s to the early 2000s is often seen as the heyday for Western liberal interventions overseas. This dissertation casts some doubt on just how liberally conscious some of these interventions were. Nevertheless, this highpoint for Western intervention created a multitude of opportunities for NATO to source many apparent ‘multipliers’ to assist stabilisation from a diverse number of civilian and military non-state actors. Western interventions fostered global growth in civilian NGOs supporting state-building tasks including humanitarian relief; capacity for economic development; advice for ‘good governance’; and the provision of services like healthcare and education. Such tasks are also supported by some IOs, chiefly UN agencies.

Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq drove a global ‘market for force’ where governments could purchase additional ‘enablers’ from PMSCs to ease some military deficits. Civilian IOs and NGOs also availed of a burgeoning PMSC market to protect civilian personnel intermingled with hostile elements in conflict zones. Signalled by the Western RMA’s acceleration from the 1990s, major leaps happened in the development of ‘smart’ military technologies. Closer integration of IT, GIS and GPS software with military hardware and the rise of UAV and robotics technologies increased acuity in precision-strike, making it easier for NATO militaries to quickly identify and eliminate networks supporting an adversary. Development of such technologies has been propelled by risk society

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Cornwell, ‘Factbox: A Look at Costs of Afghan War to US Taxpayers’, *Reuters*, 27 April 2011, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-usa-costs-idUSTRE73P7L720110426> (accessed 3 September 2023).

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Victor, ‘Need a Refresher on the War in Afghanistan? Here Are the Basics’, *The New York Times*, 21 December 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/21/world/asia/afghanistan-war-explainer.html> (accessed 21 June 2019).

preferences to reduce fatality exposure for Western soldiers, while also reducing risks for civilian populations intermingled with combatant networks. This outlook on warfare prioritises high-tech weapons to reduce military ‘contact’ for human users.

Western intervention in Afghanistan benefited from unprecedented quantity and innovation in civilian and military stabilisation resources. Without knowing the history, this picture might prompt impressions that NATO had resounding momentum to successfully deliver stabilisation. This hypothetical situation adds further intrigue for this dissertation’s research puzzle to be further guided with two main research questions:

- Why – despite significant civilian and military resources applied – did NATO fail to stabilise Afghanistan?
- How did risk society preferences (reflecting in NATO policy) influence stabilisation failure?

Finding answers to these questions requires revision of risk society concepts linking to security policy. Previous literature making these links (to be discussed in detail in chapter one) has been limited to identifying risk society (a relatively new phenomenon) influences on Western approaches to war. This literature has not yet covered important questions on whether risk society influences can be inferred as enabling or disabling stabilisation policy.

This deficiency was even surprisingly overlooked in Yee-Kuang Heng’s 2018 reaffirmation of the ‘continuing resonance of the war as risk management perspective’.<sup>38</sup> Heng previously applied risk society concepts in the 2000s to illustrate how social change could impact security policy. His later 2018 affirmation includes more recent Western intervention dilemmas in the 2010s from Libya and Syria to Western counterterrorism concerns centred on Niger, Yemen and Somalia.<sup>39</sup> Evolution in ‘the language and grammar of risk’ in political discourse is highlighted. He also emphasises ‘continuing [Western] reliance on air power’ and a ‘managerial ethos’ as embodying a risk management approach to military intervention. However, Heng stops short of assessing whether the risk society is effective or ineffective at achieving its security priorities.<sup>40</sup>

This is a surprising ‘elephant in the room’ needing to be better uncovered and understood given recent Western stabilisation failures. Due to its development in the early 2000s, previous literature linking risk theory and security policy is mostly focused on how the risk society perceives initial intervention as a preventative option rather than the risk society’s management of the stabilisation phases to follow. Theory-revision in this dissertation integrates stabilisation con-

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<sup>38</sup> Yee-Kuang Heng, ‘The Continuing Resonance of the War as Risk Management Perspective for Understanding Military Interventions’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2018, pp. 544–558.

<sup>39</sup> Heng, ‘The Continuing Resonance of the War as Risk Management Perspective’, pp. 544–558.

<sup>40</sup> Heng, ‘The Continuing Resonance of the War as Risk Management Perspective’, pp. 544–558.

cepts with risk theory. Previous literature was also narrowly and overly militarily focused on 'war' as a risk management outlet. It is unable to capture possible risk society influences on the amalgam of civilian and military security assets that comprise stabilisation policy. Perhaps unavoidably, previous literature also selectively focused on some areas of Beck's original macro-sociological theory while ignoring other areas that might still be relevant for security policy. Beck's depiction of the risk society as anxiously future-focused enamoured risk theorists in security policy who understood these characteristics as propelling an impulse for preventative warfare. This dovetailed with empirical interest once the GWOT began when the US first intervened in Afghanistan and then in Iraq to prevent risks of further terrorism or WMD.

Prevention remains relevant, but some previously less-emphasised concepts in Beck's macro-sociological outlook retain promise to help better understand stabilisation policy. Risk society anxieties over the 'globality' of risks might have given some guidance to NATO's stabilisation policies. Beck theorises that the risk society perceives events along a 'global-local axis', although he says nothing to discount that a balance between 'global' and 'local' might sometimes become skewed.<sup>41</sup> NATO's utilitarian preference to do what was 'good enough' to prevent global risks reemerging from Afghanistan might have overrode a focus to better understand the deeper local roots driving conflict in that society. In its broadest form, the risk society literature captures many contradictions in later modern Western society likely to hinder or even paralyse security policy. To begin addressing this dissertation's research puzzle and main research questions, it is an important to introduce some general risk society concepts that Beck has pioneered and to summarise some general risk society contradictions.

## General risk society concepts

Risk society concepts were first synonymous in theories proposed by Beck and Anthony Giddens. Beck prefers the term 'risk society'. Giddens describes similar phenomenon through the concept 'reflexive modernity'. Both authors shy away from 'postmodern' labelling. Reflexive modernity or risk society is perceived as later modernisation where politics and social order have evolved beyond an earlier industrialised modernity of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Giddens sees reflexive modernity as contrary to postmodernism because it does not 'interpret politics as at an end'.<sup>42</sup> Politics is instead reinvented to both question and revise the flaws and obsolesces of the earlier industrialised age to create 'new meanings and subtleties'.<sup>43</sup> An obsession with the future differentiates later modernity from the social orders that preceded it, with Giddens claiming that

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<sup>41</sup> Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?*, Cambridge: Polity, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Giddens, 'Risk and Responsibility', *The Modern Law Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Giddens, 'Risk and Responsibility', p. 7.

reflexive modernity is ‘unlike any preceding culture’ because it ‘lives in the future rather than the past’.<sup>44</sup>

This obsession with the future has spawned the emergence of ‘risk’ as an important guiding feature for society. In Giddens’ words, reflexive modernity is ‘a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk’.<sup>45</sup> He affirms that ‘The idea of risk is bound up with the aspiration to control and particularly with the idea of controlling the future’.<sup>46</sup> Both the terminology of risk and stronger awareness of it are relatively recent phenomena. Up to medieval times, societies tended to understand manmade accidents and other hazards as acts of fate and not incidents that could be prevented or limited with prior safety precautions.<sup>47</sup> The term ‘risk’ emerged in the discourses of Western explorers from the 1400s onwards when describing ventures into uncharted waters.<sup>48</sup> Managing future risks focuses society on probabilistic thinking. Preparation for the management of ‘probable accidents’ is prioritised.<sup>49</sup> Risks rarely disappear, most evolve, and thus need to be ‘managed’.<sup>50</sup> This forces governments ‘to take a position where they have to continuously construct new means in order to manage risks’.<sup>51</sup> For Beck, ‘The centre of risk consciousness lies not in the present, but *in the future*’ and governments are thus propelled to prioritise ‘preventive actions’.<sup>52</sup>

Beck’s definition of modernisation closely intertwines with technological advancement as a driver for social change. Modernisation follows ‘surges of technological rationalisation and changes in work and organisation’.<sup>53</sup> However, this affects society in more profound ways than simple labour market transformations driven by technological innovation. For Beck, evolution or even revolution in modernisation are also responsible for social change including ‘change in societal characteristics and normal biographies, changes in lifestyle and forms of love, change in the structures of power and influence, in the forms of political repression and participation, in views of reality and in the norms of knowledge’.<sup>54</sup> He reminds us that ‘the plough, the steam locomotive and the microchip are visible indicators of a much deeper process, which comprises and reshapes the entire social structure’.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens. Making Sense of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity, 1998, p. 94.

<sup>45</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*, London: Profile Books, 2011, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> Giddens, *Runaway World*, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, pp. 29–30.

<sup>50</sup> Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, ‘Reflexive Security: NATO and International Risk Society’, *Millennium*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2001, p.286.

<sup>51</sup> Rasmussen, ‘Reflexive Security’, p.286.

<sup>52</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 50.

<sup>54</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 50.

<sup>55</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 50.

With social sensitivity to risk a central theme, Beck and Giddens separately theorise immense social change over recent decades. Both argue this as altering most social dimensions. Social scientists have applied risk society concepts in many policy contexts. Whether war is intrinsic to the human condition or not has been intensely debated down through the ages, but it remains a basic institution shared across human society.<sup>56</sup> The most direct affirmation of this is attributed to Thucydides describing war as ‘the human thing’.<sup>57</sup> Risk society concepts attempt to present a comprehensive picture of contemporary social transformation. They must therefore be considered as holding possible promise to explain change in society’s thinking on war. This dissertation expands scope for risk theory’s explanatory potential by investigating how risk society characteristics influenced the stabilisation policies that failed NATO aims in Afghanistan. Enquiry is widened beyond ‘war’ in a narrow sense to examine stabilisation policy where the Western risk society directs the application of military and civilian security provision for fragile states.

The risk society’s obsession with the future induces acutely anxious decision-making. Detailed risk identification and analysis for complex scenarios has become integral to policymaking. Thoroughly informed decision-making is welcome, but near-infinite information on different scenarios also risks overwhelming policymakers.<sup>58</sup> This makes policymakers increasingly reflective, hesitant and cautious. Discomfort induced by risk and complexity creates awareness of what Beck describes as ‘boomerang effects’.<sup>59</sup> ‘Visible primary effects which endanger’ make policymakers cautious and so do ‘unseen secondary effects’ likely to spring from earlier actions.<sup>60</sup> In Will Atkinson’s compact definition, ‘boomerang effects’ are ‘the reacting back of risks on those who produced them’.<sup>61</sup> Anxiety is worsened by concern that an initial action might lead to dangerous unintended consequences. Policymakers feel acute pressure. The ‘safety first’ risk society demands governments to have effective security policies but anxiety over dangerous unintended consequences creates hesitancy and caution that can delay or impede effective decisions.

Giddens differentiates between ‘external risk’ and ‘manufactured risk’. ‘External risks’ are independent of action from a particular agent. ‘Manufactured risks’ are reflexive, resulting from ‘the very progression of human development’

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. R. Brian Ferguson, ‘War Is Not Part of Human Nature’, *Scientific American*, 1 September 2018, available at: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/war-is-not-part-of-human-nature/> (accessed 20 February 2023).

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Coker, ‘Artificial Intelligence and the Future of War’, *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2019, p. 55.

<sup>58</sup> See Ole Hanseth, ‘Complexity and Risk’ in Ole Hanseth and Claudio Ciborra, eds., *Risk, Complexity and ICT*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2007, pp. 75–93.

<sup>59</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, 37–38.

<sup>60</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, 37–38.

<sup>61</sup> Will Atkinson, ‘Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class: A Critique’, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2007, p. 352.

as well as ‘the progression of science and technology’.<sup>62</sup> In earlier modernity, industry was celebrated, but celebration of technological progression has sometimes been muted in later modernity as dangerous ‘boomerang effects’ become apparent. With pollution from earlier industrialisation creating anxiety in later modernity, Giddens explains that ‘we [human society] stopped worrying so much about what nature could do to us, and we started worrying more about what we have done to nature’.<sup>63</sup> These ideas from Giddens seem meta-theoretical but once scaled down it can be interpreted that they still retain some security policy relevance. Policymaking anxieties might be heightened by officials fearing that they are ‘manufacturing risk’ when considering military intervention, acutely conscious of dangerous future ‘boomerang effects’ they might trigger. Military operations are sometimes transformed by technological advancements that make weapons more precise and sometimes more lethal. The risk society’s ‘safety first’ focus can be suspected as propelling governments to pioneer different ‘contactless’ military technologies to address security problems while limiting fatality exposure. Nevertheless, despite its best efforts, the risk society might still not have escaped some dangerous future ‘boomerang effects’ from the advanced weapons it has pioneered.

Beck theorises that societies in earlier modernity were class societies, but the risk society is becoming classless. Battles for social equality dominated modernisation in earlier modernity.<sup>64</sup> This had some socially liberal ideological connotations. Aspirations for ‘utopia’ in class societies involved expanding the liberal ‘common good’ by supporting ‘equal opportunities’ across different social cleavages.<sup>65</sup> For Beck, these were ‘*positive* goals of social change’ but with some acute anxiety and an obsessive emphasis on safety festering, the risk society is radically different.<sup>66</sup> According to Beck, ‘the utopia of the risk society remains peculiarly *negative* and *defensive*. Basically, one is no longer concerned with attaining something “good”, but rather with *preventing* the worst; *self-limitation* is a goal that emerges’.<sup>67</sup> He summarises this profound social transformation with the metaphor: ‘The dream of class society [earlier modernity] is that everyone wants and ought to have a share of the pie. The utopia of the risk society is that everyone should be spared from poisoning’.<sup>68</sup>

With these downscaled goals, the risk society seeks solutions that are utilitarian and pragmatic to limit risks. This is contrary to liberal guidance aiming for ‘good’ ideological outcomes. Beck can be interpreted as less explicit on nationalism’s role in the risk society. He discusses how politically conservative ideas that once reinforced the rigid nation-state are becoming untenable as societies are pushed to form more transnational governance institutions to better manage

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<sup>62</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>65</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>68</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

borderless global risks.<sup>69</sup> Nationalism underlying the cohesive Western nation-state previously galvanised social mobilisation for military campaigns in earlier modernity. Some argue that war crafted the nation-state before the nation-state subsequently crafted war.<sup>70</sup> It can be tacitly inferred from Beck's theorising that nationalism is now dilute and society's appetite for longer military campaigns is gone. Struggles for equality against class society in earlier modernity attributed much to material need. For the risk society, this is overridden by citizen insistence that governments provide for their safety.<sup>71</sup> For Beck, the 'driving force in class society' was 'summarized in the phrase: *I am hungry!*' but, in risk society, this is replaced with the phrase '*I am afraid!*'.<sup>72</sup> In Beck's theory, the risk society's '*commonality of anxiety*' substitutes earlier modernity's '*commonality of need*' to ensure that '*solidarity from anxiety*' is the main 'political force'.<sup>73</sup> It is probably fair to argue that the risk society is a concept more focused on 'society' than it is about 'risk'. Other social science approaches such as game-theory or prospect theory might focus more directly on risk and the element of jeopardy that policymakers face within confined scenarios. Risk analysis has also emerged as a more empirically driven-field seeking to identify the parameters that define certain risks. The important nuance that Beck's risk society concept offers compared to these other risk-focused approaches is an image of society that is obsessively anxious about safety and global change. If these interpretations are correct, both are likely to covert as dominant organising principles in security planning.

The impacts of accelerated globalisation on social change gained increased prominence in Beck's theories over time. Introducing phrases like 'globalising the risks of civilisation', Beck often used exuberant language to discuss how transnational risks integral to globalisation were creating more demand for governance beyond the nation-state.<sup>74</sup> A risk theory strength is its promise to capture many social contradictions likely to create policy problems, but this is also a weakness. Risk theory displays logical contradictions. The risk society attempts to organise 'solidarity from anxiety' but this can still have little effect to improve solidarity or even ease anxiety. Transnational risks induced by accelerated globalisation make the risk society's anxieties more acute. A dissolving nation-state has not yet been accompanied by effective transnational institutions to manage new global risks. Anxiety is worsened because of this 'vacuum of institutionalised political competence'.<sup>75</sup> Beck argues that the sovereign nation-state is without enough 'capacity to act' against global risks, be it those inter-

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<sup>69</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, Cambridge: Polity, 1998.

<sup>70</sup> Howard, 'War and the Nation-State', pp. 101–110. And Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*.

<sup>71</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>72</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>73</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 49.

<sup>74</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 36.

<sup>75</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 48.

secting with ‘environmental protection’; ‘global economic interconnections’; and/or ‘regional and global peacekeeping’.<sup>76</sup>

These problems are reflected in the NATO transformation debates, where the alliance often appears to fall between two stools. NATO has clung to its traditional structure as an intergovernmental alliance, but calls have sometimes emerged since the 1990s urging it to play a stronger global role to manage transnational risks. This started in 1993 when US Senator Richard Lugar remarked that NATO needed to go ‘out-of-area or out of business’.<sup>77</sup> Lugar’s comments were later followed by Senator John McCain advocating NATO transformation to follow a ‘league of democracies’ model to support global security if international institutions like the UN were ever impeded.<sup>78</sup> Such outlooks were interpreted cautiously by NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Speaking in 2008, he explained that NATO harboured little ambition to fully become ‘a global policeman’, but its leadership of ISAF in Afghanistan remained ‘about our [NATO] response to the global phenomenon of international terrorism’.<sup>79</sup>

Beck argues that the West’s Cold War ‘defence emergency’ against a clearly defined Soviet threat reinforced unity within and between NATO’s nation-states.<sup>80</sup> This political cohesion to respond was later weakened when the Soviet threat was replaced by ‘mobile enemies’ like terrorist networks and ‘rogue states’ in later modernity.<sup>81</sup> Sub-national social institutions once contributing to the nation-state’s strategic resolve are dissolving into increased individualisation. Risk society governments must make decisions within what Beck describes as a ‘cross-fire of criticism’.<sup>82</sup> Under these circumstances, the social unity and national resolve necessary for effective expeditionary military operations becomes difficult to maintain.

It remains possible for institutions, once useful in earlier eras, to irrationally linger as what Beck calls ‘zombie categories’ causing trouble into the next era.<sup>83</sup> Some NATO critics perceive the alliance in this way, highlighting it as a ‘dangerous dinosaur’.<sup>84</sup> These arguments are unconvincing. Better arguments

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<sup>76</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, p. 107.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Lugar cited in Mats Berdal and David Ucko, ‘NATO at 60’, *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2009, p. 59.

<sup>78</sup> For analysis on John McCain’s remarks see Rolf Mützenich, ‘The League of Democracies: A “League of Justice” or an “Unholy Alliance?”’, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Occasional Paper*, August 2008, available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/usa/05994.pdf> (accessed 24 February 2023).

<sup>79</sup> Alexis Crow, ‘“No Global”: NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at RUSI’, *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Commentary*, 19 September 2008, available at: <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/no-global-nato-secretary-general-jaap-de-hoop-scheffer-rusi> (accessed 27 February 2023).

<sup>80</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 150–151.

<sup>81</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 150–151.

<sup>82</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, p. 148.

<sup>83</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p. 27.

<sup>84</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, *NATO: The Dangerous Dinosaur*, Washington DC: Cato Institute, 2019.

suggest that institutionalised collective action supporting various military tasks (alongside diplomatic and civilian assistance) remains vital to manage global risks.<sup>85</sup> Beck and some collaborators make striking claims that global order is in the ‘midst of a fundamental change in the nature of society and politics. This change hinges around two processes: globalisation and individualisation’.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, NATO’s continued strategic effectiveness is sometimes portrayed as a matter of ‘globalisation or redundancy’.<sup>87</sup> Following from this analysis, connections Beck theorises between ‘globality’ and ‘globalisation’ can shed more light on NATO transformation.

Conceptualising ‘globality’, Beck insists that ‘we [human society] have been living for a long time in a world society’.<sup>88</sup> This ‘world society’ is ‘the totality of social relationships which are not integrated into or determined (or determinable) by national-state politics’.<sup>89</sup> Beck’s outlook is partially overblown here, nation-states retain importance but in a more dilute role compared to earlier modernity. Beck even acknowledges this elsewhere when defining globalisation as ‘processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks’.<sup>90</sup> Beck argues that ‘nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world’.<sup>91</sup> Every society must therefore adjust its outlook ‘along a “local-global” axis’.<sup>92</sup> Few places are as likely to have made NATO governments see security along a ‘local-global axis’ as Afghanistan.

It is difficult to decipher whether Beck is an optimist or a pessimist on whether global collective action can be successfully mobilised to manage transnational risks. He is unclear on which regions where risk society conditions might be most acute. The original *risk society* concept that Beck first developed in the 1980s was implicitly focused on Germany and the wider West. He attempted to expand this to *world risk society* in the 1990s.<sup>93</sup> Beck sees integration for global risk management driven by ‘*globalized anticipation...to prevent the future occurrence*’ of catastrophic events.<sup>94</sup> He argues that the ‘cultural perception of risk is becoming blurred’ across the globe.<sup>95</sup> It is likely to create more ‘imagined

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<sup>85</sup> Pascal Vennesson, ‘Military Strategy in the Global Village’, *New Global Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2010, pp. 1–41.

<sup>86</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Cottey, ‘NATO: Globalization or Redundancy?’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2004, pp. 391–408.

<sup>88</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>90</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>91</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk*, Cambridge: Polity, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Beck, *World at Risk*, p. 10.

<sup>95</sup> Beck, *World at Risk*, p. 11.

communities of global risk' to emerge as pragmatic 'cosmopolitanism'.<sup>96</sup> Penetration from global risks means that 'distant others' are no longer looked upon as 'poor strangers' but instead 'as partners in a common cause: both "us" and "them" tied together in the interests of survival, in the challenge of mastering global risks'.<sup>97</sup> Conversely, Beck does not always seem too convinced about this. He claims elsewhere that cosmopolitan collective action to manage global risks is likely to remain obstructed by 'non-integration' reinforced by 'difference' and 'multiplicity'.<sup>98</sup>

Beck envisages a global 'conflict of the future...between the countries, regions and groups involved in primary modernization and those that are attempting to relativise and reform the project of modernity self-critically, based on their experience of it'.<sup>99</sup> This depicts conflict between those mostly in the Global South trying to achieve industrialised modernity previously experienced in the West and Western societies moving on to later modernity. This outlook strikes some similarities with claims that Western military interventions seeking to stabilise violence in the Global South are problematic because, contrary to modernised Western statehood, the early-modern-type wars of state-building that started Europe on the path toward industrialisation have started much later in the Global South after decolonisation in the 1950s.<sup>100</sup>

Resonating with the cliché 'one man's terrorist is another's man's freedom fighter', through this vision it seems that gaining broad consensus for global collective action to stabilise violent risks might remain elusive.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, it was possible to interpret such ambitions in US discourse at the GWOT's outset. Barry Buzan argued that possibilities for the GWOT to dominate global security patterns in US unipolarity similar to the Cold War in previous bipolarity where 'everything is subordinated to a single [counterterrorism] purpose' might depend on Washington's leadership to persuade and mobilise others.<sup>102</sup> Early GWOT ambitions were eventually pared back to a focus on stabilisation in Afghanistan. However, as this dissertation finds, NATO continued to take a global focus when seeking stabilisation inputs for ISAF and in its security concerns over conflict outputs.

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<sup>96</sup> Ulrich Beck, 'Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities of Global Risk', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, no. 10, pp. 2011, pp. 1347–1348.

<sup>97</sup> Beck, 'Cosmopolitanism as Imagined Communities', p. 1357.

<sup>98</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>99</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*.

<sup>100</sup> Mohammed Ayooob, *The Third World Security Predicament*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995.

<sup>101</sup> Boaz Ganor, 'Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?', *Police Practice and Research*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2002, pp. 287–304.

<sup>102</sup> Barry Buzan, 'Will the "Global War on Terrorism" Be the New Cold War?', *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 6, 2006, p. 1106.

## Distilling propositions and summarising contradictions

This dissertation reconstructs and revises risk theory linking to security policy. Concepts from risk theory hold promise to capture some important contradictions inherent in contemporary Western society that facilitate security policy failings. Nevertheless, for research, conceptual contradictions also create pitfalls where it might be difficult to capture patterns in the risk society's logic. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett define theories as 'probabilistic statements that do not specify the causal process that leads from the independent variables associated with the theory to variance in the outcomes'.<sup>103</sup> Jeffrey Checkel lists many social theories as suffering from allegations of being 'too structural'; 'under-determined'; and 'unrealistic'.<sup>104</sup> It would not be surprising if similar allegations were not levelled at Beck's large-frame macro-sociological risk theory in its most abstract incarnations. Therefore, to ensure a precise research focus, this section introduces five important risk society characteristics as conceptual propositions for decisive influences on stabilisation preferences.

These general risk theories majorly of Beck and minorly of Giddens create background for theory-revision. However, a relatively small literature specifically linking the risk society with security policy inspired by the earlier work of both general theorists emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s. Making a further link with stabilisation policy as an instrument likely to be favoured by the risk society, this dissertation primarily engages in a dialogue with that literature and proposes aspects to revise. This dialogue begins in chapter one to follow, but for a sense of introduction, it is now important to briefly elaborate on five risk society characteristics as conceptual propositions that this dissertation distils as decisive influences on stabilisation preferences. Contradictions inherent to each are highlighted. The dissertation aims to reformulate theory on the risk society; then examine if theoretical propositions guided NATO policymakers when designing stabilisation policy; then examine if policies that might have been intended to reduce risks in fact paved the way to stabilisation failure. Five propositions are central to this dissertation's research design for theory-revision combining some theory-proposing with some theory-testing.

- **The risk society puts 'safety first'.**

Ensuring safety is an acute concern for the risk society where military operations present a problematic paradox. On one hand, some expeditionary missions are perceived as necessary to manage risks at distance before risks spread further. On the other hand, the risk society is unwilling to accept the same sacrifices as Western society in earlier modernity. Minimising soldier fatalities overbears on security planning. When stabilisation policy integrates

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<sup>103</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005, p. 209.

<sup>104</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Process Tracing', in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.114.

military and civilian dimensions, 'safety first' practices also guide the actions of civilian organisations from the risk society contributing to reconstruction in fragile states.

- **The risk society prioritises utilitarian outcomes.**

'Safety first' preferences cause the risk society to prioritise utilitarian outcomes over ideological guidance. Stabilisation is implemented with realist policy action. Being 'good enough' to simply 'prevent the worst' is satisfactory. Ideological justifications, notably Western liberal peacebuilding discourses, merely 'paper over' utilitarian intent. Strategic situations where mundane 'non-events' are produced suffice for success.

- **The risk society is future-focused and emphasises prevention.**

Risk manifests from a future mindset. The risk society emphasises probabilistic policy logic and focuses on mitigating harm from future risks. Danger might not always be imminent, but risks are more complex and abstract than direct threats and are more difficult to define. This instils more anxiety in the risk society. The risk society favours preventative action to avert danger. Preventative military action from the US in the 2000s dominates the previous literature that links risk theory and security policy, but less analysis has been generated for the risk society's preventative focus during later stabilisation phases.

- **The risk society seeks to continually manage risks.**

Risks are rarely eliminated. They are instead perceived as requiring constant 'management'. This puts the risk society on track for a problematic contradiction where, with heightened social anxiety, governments find themselves under pressure to recreate 'new means' to continually manage risks, but where societies are also impatient and quickly tire of supporting stabilisation in fragile states. This is worsened by the risk society's increased individualisation, described as making public opinion more 'irregular, sporadic, [and] unpredictable'.<sup>105</sup>

- **Risks 'aggravated' by globalisation are an acute concern.**

Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen theorises that the Cold War's traditional bipolar security dilemma was replaced in post-Cold War unipolarity by a 'reflexive security dilemma'. The US and NATO must formulate security policy without 'a serious military threat from any [competing] power'.<sup>106</sup> Policymakers face open-ended situations with few urgent or pre-defined reference points to guide them. Rasmussen theorises that this induces uncomfortable and cautious debate, reflection and self-rationalisation on 'what conflicts, or security issues in general, are important to one's security'.<sup>107</sup> Decision-making turns into a 'hall of mirrors' with 'endless reflection on what one is doing'.<sup>108</sup> Tentative

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<sup>105</sup> Mark Deuze, 'The Changing Context of News Work: Liquid Journalism for a Monitorial Citizenry', *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 2, 2008, p. 853.

<sup>106</sup> Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'": 9–11, Security and Globalization', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2002, p. 328.

<sup>107</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 328.

<sup>108</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 328.

self-reflection might generate ‘half-hearted’ policies more likely to fail. Another risk society contradiction, its domestic decision-making is theorised as uncomfortable, elaborate and tentative, but it outwardly perceives risks ‘aggravated by globalisation’ with many fast-moving ‘changing targets’. Western governments worry about multiple de-territorialised risks including global terrorism, WMD-proliferation, human-trafficking, illicit smuggling and ecological degradation.<sup>109</sup> Dramatically signalled by 9/11, Western states are acutely concerned that if such risks are not prevented at distance, accelerated globalisation will soon bring them to Western doorsteps. This thinking made stabilising fragile states a priority for the risk society aiming to prevent global terrorism.

At least six serious contradictions can be identified in these risk society characteristics. First, as Coker theorises, the risk society is ‘increasingly anxious, and at the same time, less strategically ambitious’.<sup>110</sup> It sometimes perceives military operations as an option to strengthen security, but it is reluctant to suffer the sacrifices or pay the costs that such operations might entail. Second, in a Western context, while risk society governments might guise actions in liberal ideological discourse, stabilisation actions in fragile states will be driven by utilitarian priorities. Action minimising risk will override ideological guidance. Third, a fifty-year ‘defence emergency’ ended with the Cold War, but without any looming geostrategic threat, anxiety in risk society is becoming more acute. Actualisation of danger is uncertain, risks are vaguer than threats, but as knowledge on a multitude of risks proliferates, so does social worry.

Fourth, the risk society emphasises prevention. This is illustrated in concepts like the ‘precautionary principle’ instilling belief that it is ‘better to be safe than sorry’. This might polarise policy action into a problematic binary. On one hand, Washington’s preventative interventions in the 2000s saw it portrayed as an over-reacting military ‘hyperpower’. On the other hand, subsequent stabilisation failings might have resulted from a hesitancy to risk enough military or civilian resources. Fifth, risks are rarely eliminated. To secure populations from harmful eventualities, governments in risk society are pressured to repeatedly invent ‘new means’ to continuously manage risk. However, when implementing stabilisation policy, governments will feel equal pressure from restlessly impatient or war-weary public opinion. Sixth, facing an open-ended ‘reflexive security dilemma’, risk society attempts to form reference points to guide policy induces elaborate, tentative and cautious decision-making sometimes clashing with security policy needs for a fast-paced ‘runaway world’.

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<sup>109</sup> Kalevi J. Holsti, ‘The Decline of Interstate War: Pondering Systemic Explanations’, in Raimo Väyrynen (ed.), *The Waning of Major War: Theories and Debates*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005, pp. 135–159.

<sup>110</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.12.

## Methodology: Theory-revision with a crucial case

It is often practical to combine theory-proposing and theory-testing.<sup>111</sup> Previous literature linking risk theory and security policy is largely theory-proposing. This literature portrayed how the arrival of the risk society changed Western outlooks on war. Few focus on testing risk theory propositions against empirical evidence. With this literature flourishing in the early 2000s, it remains curious that risk theory explanations have not developed beyond this time despite plentiful empirical information emerging. This dissertation contributes towards remedying this deficit. Beck and Giddens present the risk society as a continually evolving product of later modernity. The risk society's influential characteristics are likely to have evolved over time. Such discussions bring contention on causality in the social sciences into focus. Beck's theory originates from sociology, but it has been applied in a wide multidisciplinary setting. Crossing disciplinary boundaries can create occasional scope for confusion where some theoretical meanings might get 'lost in translation'. From an IR or security policy perspective, some of Beck's comments on his own theory-building might seem confusing. He sees theory-building not as an 'either-or option' between positivist ontology or interpretivist ontology (constructivism) before making a striking claim that he is 'both a realist and [a] constructivist' when he theorises.<sup>112</sup>

Positivism understands knowledge as 'objective' with an epistemology that stresses 'natural laws' or 'social facts'. It understands these as detached from a researcher's own subjectivities, 'out there' for the researcher to discover or observe.<sup>113</sup> Claudia Aradau and Rens Van Munster seek to clarify this indecision from Beck on the risk society's theoretical underpinnings. According to both, conforming to positivist ontology, Beck's theories sometimes perceive risks as objective and 'out there' to be discovered by researchers or policymakers. Nevertheless, Beck's theorising often goes beyond positivism to align with ontological interpretivism on how actors 'select [risks] for treatment'.<sup>114</sup> Beck argues that once the 'objective' parameters of a risk are identified, 'cultural, subjective and social categories' underpin an actor's perception to affect its risk management approach.<sup>115</sup> This two-part understanding synthesising some positivist and interpretivist dimensions can be argued as a plausible outlook on social order.

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<sup>111</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *A Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 89–90.

<sup>112</sup> Ulrich Beck, 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes' in Barbara Adam, Ulrich Beck and Joost van Loon, eds., *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000, pp. 211–212.

<sup>113</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, 'How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction' in Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, eds., *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>114</sup> Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (Un) Knowing the Future', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, p. 96.

<sup>115</sup> Aradau and Van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk', p. 96.

According to Beck, this eclectic combination allows concepts to develop that capture ‘new and contradictory experiences’ in today’s ‘age of global risks’.<sup>116</sup>

Such contradictions can be eased with the understanding that Beck develops his theory within the sociological tradition where risk management is viewed as a practice. From this, it can be theorised that policymakers might not be directly aware of the label ‘risk society’, but its social patterns continue to shape their behaviour, habits and customs. As a practice, risk management becomes an application of ideas or beliefs that policymakers exude. For these reasons, risk theory does more than describe certain practices. The risk society can be theorised as constitutive to practices fundamental in security policy. This conceptual framing is important for a risk theory account of NATO’s stabilisation failure in Afghanistan.

Concepts are simplified abstractions that are unlikely to fully depict reality. In the historical reality that this dissertation’s case study examines, deviations from theoretical predictions are likely. Policymakers, governments and underlying social preferences can sometimes contradict what is expected to prevail. Risk society can be determined as a strong or weak concept for explaining the formation of NATO stabilisation preferences if either the strong regularity or absence of the risk society’s defining characteristics are observed behind these preferences. Strong regularity indicates the risk society as an important influence determining stabilisation with continued absence indicating its influence as inconsequential. It is important to stress that this dissertation remains more problem-driven than theory-driven. While open to counter-propositions in its empirical analysis, this dissertation aims to evaluate its re-conceptualisation of the risk society concept in security policy in its response to the main research puzzle inquisitive as the why despite having significant civilian and military resources did NATO fail to stabilise Afghanistan? This puzzle extends to the dissertation’s first research question. The ability of this dissertation’s re-conceptualisation of risk theory for stabilisation policy to provide strong or weak explanations for how NATO failure occurred guides recommendations for theory-revision as defined by the dissertation’s second research question. In sum, this is logic that connects this dissertation two main research questions.

This dissertation’s first three chapters focus on theory-revision, aiming to reconstruct risk theories linking with security policy. Some concepts from previous literature with continued explanatory relevance are retained. Dimensions with less explanatory potential are downsized. Some risk theory concepts are downplayed or omitted in previous security policy literature. A number of these have renewed explanatory potential and are re-introduced. For example, anxiety from the ‘globality’ of risk is a major theme in Beck’s original theories, but this has not been prominently integrated in previous risk theories linking to security policy. Overall, an inability to thoroughly account for performance in Western stabilisation policy after military interventions in the early 2000s undermines risk theory’s continued explanatory relevance. Moving beyond previous theory’s

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<sup>116</sup> Beck, ‘Risk Society Revisited’, pp. 211–212.

narrow focus on ‘war’, this dissertation integrates stabilisation as a risk society preference for conflict management.

For theory-testing, this dissertation utilises historical evaluation with primary and secondary sources to critically assess theory. A detailed single case study focused on ISAF’s development from late 2001 until 2014 is executed from chapter four until chapter nine. Some reflection on the post-ISAF RSM between 2014 and 2021 is integrated into later chapters. James Mahoney outlines historical explanation as an effective method for addressing the ‘generic question, “What Xs caused Y in case Z?”’.<sup>117</sup> It is executed in two phases; the first being the ‘theory construction task’ seeking ‘the possible Xs that might have caused Y in case Z’.<sup>118</sup> In this dissertation, theory (re-) construction takes place over the first three chapters. Presented upfront in this introduction, this details and develops the risk society’s defining characteristics influencing its security preferences. Once these ‘Xs’ from risk theory are propositioned to have propelled failed stabilisation policies, the dissertation’s subsequent chapters then proceed with a ‘theory-testing task’.<sup>119</sup> This method creates an ‘attempt to trace empirically the within-case fingerprints left by the activities of entities for each part of a process’.<sup>120</sup> Single case designs enable a thorough ‘within-case’ focus important for theory-building the risk society’s ISAF management over time. This also empirically details consistencies and contrasts in different US presidential administrations and other NATO governments overseeing the mission.

Rigidly positivist language is sometimes used to discuss the advantages of historical explanation, process tracing and related methods used for small-n case studies. Benedict Wauters and Derek Beach argue that theory-testing with a small-n case ‘involves testing whether a hypothesised mechanism links an intervention with an outcome’.<sup>121</sup> Checkel outlines that process tracing and related methods provide ‘the how-we-come-to-know nuts and bolts for mechanism-based accounts of social change’.<sup>122</sup> Offering a slightly less rigid outlook, Gudmund Hernes argues that evolutions in the social world are fluid and do not always correspond with the logic of ‘causal mechanisms’. He explains that ‘wheels and cogs’ is a better metaphor when societies have ‘wheelwork or agency by which an effect is produced’.<sup>123</sup> This clarification is more suitable for the risk

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<sup>117</sup> James Mahoney, ‘Process Tracing and Historical Explanation’, *Security Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2015, p. 201.

<sup>118</sup> Mahoney, ‘Process Tracing and Historical Explanation’, p. 201.

<sup>119</sup> Mahoney, ‘Process Tracing and Historical Explanation’, pp. 201–202.

<sup>120</sup> Benedict Wauters and Derek Beach, ‘Process Tracing and Congruence Analysis to Support Theory Based Impact Evaluation’, *Evaluation*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2018, p. 289.

<sup>121</sup> Wauters and Beach, ‘Process Tracing and Congruence Analysis’, p. 289.

<sup>122</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, ‘Process Tracing’, in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, eds., *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 115.

<sup>123</sup> Gudmund Hernes, ‘Real Virtuality’, in Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg, eds., *Social Mechanisms an Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 74–101.

society, even when its specific characteristics allow its ‘wheelwork’ to malfunction to reduce stabilisation performance. Unlike ‘nuts and bolts’ that either remain firmly in place or buckle under pressure, ‘wheels and cogs’, like many social processes can move forward or reverse and/or move at different speeds depending on political circumstances.

Many single small-n research designs emphasise a ‘crucial case’, with John Gerring noting that ‘crucialness’ in a case does not only concern ‘empirical properties’ but also the ‘formal properties’ for the theory being investigated.<sup>124</sup> For ‘crucial case’ designs to be ‘amenable’ to testing, Gerring argues that selection must emphasise a theory that is ‘law-like in structure’ while rejecting vague theories.<sup>125</sup> A ‘crucial case’ must be genuinely ‘risky’ on whether it can eventually confirm or not confirm theoretical expectations.<sup>126</sup> Karl Popper stresses that a strong theory must make ‘risky predictions’ that may or may not be validated with empirical testing.<sup>127</sup> This logic is heeded in this dissertation’s theory and case selection.

Beck’s ontological and epistemological thinking is that positivism alone is unlikely to fully capture the contradictions shaping the risk society’s behaviour. Providing a structure for empirical analysis, contrary to rigid hypotheses, this dissertation applies propositions for the risk society’s main characteristics. Positivism does not have a monopoly with case studies, successful theoretical investigation has also been executed with post-positivist and interpretive designs.<sup>128</sup> Risk society characteristics proposed as likely guiding stabilisation preferences remain like ‘law-like’ principles favoured in positivism, but historical evaluation and critical source analysis still creates scope to examine how characteristics might have evolved to shape policy over time.

‘Risky’ case selection leaves empirical analysis open to alternative explanations contrary to theoretical explanations.<sup>129</sup> Historical explanation can examine the extent to which risk society characteristics theorised as influencing stabilisation preferences actually did so in empirical reality. Some characteristics might be confirmed as more influential than others.<sup>130</sup> Theoretical weaknesses exposed through historical evaluation can then support revisions to strengthen risk theory’s explanatory relevance. For Harry Eckstein, ‘Testing is, in a sense, the end of the theory-building process’, but, for this dissertation, a nuanced

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<sup>124</sup> John Gerring, ‘Is There A (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2007, p. 232.

<sup>125</sup> Gerring, ‘Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, p. 233.

<sup>126</sup> Gerring, ‘Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, p. 233.

<sup>127</sup> Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1963, p. 36.

<sup>128</sup> See Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, eds., *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

<sup>129</sup> Harry Eckstein, ‘Case Study and Theory in Political Science’, in Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley and Peter Foster, *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts*, London: Sage Publications, 2000, pp. 127–128.

<sup>130</sup> Wauters and Beach, ‘Process Tracing and Congruence Analysis’, p. 289.

adaptation of this sees theoretical implications from testing serve to inform theory-revision.<sup>131</sup>

Gerring defines a single case study as ‘an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalise across a larger set of units’.<sup>132</sup> Explaining utility in a ‘crucial case’ for theory-testing, Eckstein stresses that the case ‘must [either] closely fit a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory’s validity, or, conversely, must not fit equally well any rule contrary to that proposed’.<sup>133</sup> For Gerring, ‘A case is crucial in the strongest sense when it can be explained precisely by a theory; no other theory can explain the facts of that case, and the theory is invariant (deterministic)’.<sup>134</sup> Results exactly matching this description are rare if not impossible, but a case can still be selected as crucial to ‘some [comparatively] weaker’ degree, if it is ‘most or least likely to fulfil a theoretical prediction’.<sup>135</sup> Jack Levy uses the ‘Sinatra inference’ nickname to outline how ‘most-likely [single] case’ and ‘least-likely [single] case’ designs illustrate strong or weak outcomes to assist theoretical explanation.

In a ‘least-likely’ design, a theory’s main expectations might indicate the opposite to what a case supposes, but after testing, the theory’s main predications are validated: ‘if it [the case] can make it there, it can make it anywhere’.<sup>136</sup> This logic reverses in ‘most-likely’ designs. If a theory that, at the beginning, appears to have expectations likely to match a particular empirical case, but, after testing, is shown to be explanatory weak, then this theory is unlikely to make it anywhere else.<sup>137</sup> Gerring stresses that explanatory strength is maximised by an ‘extraordinary fit between the theory and a set of facts in single case’ but this is usual.<sup>138</sup> An ‘extraordinary fit’ is hypothetically possible, but it is more probable that findings display a combination of strong and explanatory weak explanations, although this balance is uncertain at the beginning.

Such combinations are welcome for theory-revision. Observations highlighting areas where a theory is explanatorily weak are generated, allowing opportunities to suggest improvements. For Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, small-n case designs have four purposes for theory development: ‘conceptual validity’; ‘driving new hypotheses’; ‘exploring causal mechanisms’; and ‘modelling and assessing complex causal relations’.<sup>139</sup> ‘Conceptual validity’ and ‘exploring causal mecha-

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<sup>131</sup> Eckstein, ‘Case Study and Theory’, pp. 127–128.

<sup>132</sup> John Gerring, ‘What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?’, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2004, p. 341.

<sup>133</sup> Harry Eckstein, ‘Case Studies and Theory in Political Science’, in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science. Political Science: Scope and Theory*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, p.118.

<sup>134</sup> Gerring, ‘Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, p.232.

<sup>135</sup> Gerring, ‘Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, p. 232.

<sup>136</sup> Jack S. Levy, ‘Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference’, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2008, p. 12.

<sup>137</sup> Levy, ‘Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference’, p. 12.

<sup>138</sup> Gerring, ‘Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?’, p. 235.

<sup>139</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, pp. 19–21.

nisms' have the most relevance for this dissertation's research design. Small-n cases have strong capacity for 'conceptual innovation' because they allow for detailed evaluation of generalised theoretical expectations.<sup>140</sup> A small-n design enables balance between theory and empirical analysis, allowing focused assessment on 'whether and how a variable mattered to an outcome'.<sup>141</sup> Addressing 'arguments about causal necessity or sufficiency', small-n designs are suited to 'identifying the scope conditions of theories'.<sup>142</sup>

Sceptics of theoretical generalisation from single case studies argue that an absence comparative variance risks 'indeterminate' results, but this scepticism is contested.<sup>143</sup> Charles Ragin affirms that there is little to methodologically obstruct multiple inferences of theoretical and/or empirical significance being generated from single-case designs.<sup>144</sup> Bent Flyvberg argues propositions that single-cases offer poor generalisation are flawed, perhaps controversially insisting that generalisation is 'over-rated' in scientific discourse, coming at the expense of the 'power of the example'.<sup>145</sup> For Lee Peter Riddin, not only are strong generalisation possibilities retained in single-case designs, but even a narrowly specific single case can still contribute to later theory development within the wider research community.<sup>146</sup> The problem of being steered towards monocausal explanations is another problem associated with single-case studies. This dissertation navigates this problem through its openness to counter-propositions or alternative explanations to those proposed in risk theory. Its deep empirical analysis plays the main role in this regard. From a falsification perspective, if plentiful 'real world' evidence examined from primary and secondary sources on Afghanistan fails to confirm or only highlights nebulous links to risk theory propositions then the explanatory potential of risk theory falls away.

ISAF's centrality in NATO policy between late 2001 and 2014 strengthens this dissertation's 'crucial case' argument. It is a 'risky' contention that political and military leaders disagree on whether resources allocated to ISAF were enough to deliver stabilisation, but, in terms of stated ambition, it was still a stabilisation mission on unprecedented importance for NATO. Overlapping with a relatively benign era in great power politics gave ISAF more advantages to succeed. The 'why and how' of NATO not successfully achieving stabilisation

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<sup>140</sup> Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, 'Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2007, p. 180.

<sup>141</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory*, p. 25.

<sup>142</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory*, p. 25.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, 208–211. And George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, p. 31.

<sup>144</sup> Charles C. Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 68–69.

<sup>145</sup> Bent Flyvberg, 'Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 219–228.

<sup>146</sup> Lee Peter Riddin, 'You Can Generalize Stupid! Social Scientists, Bent Flyvbjerg, and Case Study Methodology', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2006, p. 800.

are important curiosities worthy of investigation. This dissertation seeks to generalise for theory-revision. However, considering the importance of Afghan policy over ISAF's thirteen years for NATO, its single-case design has potential to detail a powerful example to understand risk society influences on stabilisation preferences.

Historical assessment draws from primary and secondary sources. The most illuminating documents selected are arguably from SIGAR, the US government agency created as an autonomous accountability watchdog for reconstruction policies in Afghanistan. These documents were selected because they facilitate broad and candid insight into the thinking of many civilian and military policy-makers that contributed to ISAF in Afghanistan through 'lessons learned' interviews. Not meant for publication in raw primary form (at least not this early), these documents were released in 2019 after a three-year legal battle between the US government and *the Washington Post*. Dubbed 'the Afghanistan papers', in addition to these SIGAR documents, the same collection also includes the Pentagon memos of US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld who served from 2001 until 2006. These Rumsfeld memos have been nicknamed 'snowflakes' and provide direct insight into the thinking of an influential US policymaker during the early stabilisation effort in Afghanistan and, to some extent, the views of other US policymakers that he interacted with through these memos.

These primary sources inform the case study with insider insights. Critically engaging with secondary sources remains important to ensure that both the case study and theory-revision builds on research done by others on stabilisation in Afghanistan. The value of secondary sources and media reporting to inform well-developed explanations should not be dismissed. Discussing the value that media reporting sometimes lends to conflict research, Christopher Farrington argues that media correspondents often have more access to conflict parties, generating insights with 'raw material in abundance, which can then be utilised in more sophisticated ways'.<sup>147</sup> Separating primary from secondary sources is argued as 'fluid and depends on the question that one poses to the material'.<sup>148</sup> Tomislav Dulić argues that evaluating if 'the source was intended for a particular audience or aimed at achieving a specific effect may have influenced its content, presentation and wording' is vital when establishing context.<sup>149</sup> A general rule might stipulate 'Archival documents, diaries, interviews and other frequently unpublished sources' as primary sources but 'books, reports and other materials that are authored by scholars, journalists or other individuals' are secondary.<sup>150</sup>

This dissertation's case study consults a diverse range of sources. It includes speeches from leading NATO politicians and policymakers; declassified archival

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<sup>147</sup> Christopher Farrington, 'Unionism and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 8, no.2, 2006, p. 279.

<sup>148</sup> Tomislav Dulić, 'Peace Research and Source Criticism: Using Historical Methodology to Improve Information Gathering and Analysis', in Kristine Höglund and Magnus Öberg, eds., *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, p. 36.

<sup>149</sup> Dulić, 'Peace Research and Source Criticism', pp. 40–41.

<sup>150</sup> Dulić, 'Peace Research and Source Criticism', p. 36.

materials; official policy documents; memoirs from key political and military leaders; and reports from governments, IOs and NGOs, some declassified and others intended for immediate publication. Even completed SIGAR reports intended for immediate publication to inform the wider public contain many critical (sometimes scathing) perspectives expressed on US and wider NATO policies. This highlights that in democratic countries where demand for accountability is high despite occasional lapses, government agencies can be candid even when political leaders might wish otherwise.

## **Structure and main arguments**

This dissertation comprises nine chapters. The first three chapters focus on building conceptual propositions for risk society characteristics shaping security policy. A research design for theory-revision combining theory-proposing with theory-testing is developed. A risk theory model for stabilisation policy is designed. Some theoretical dimensions from previous literature remaining relevant for stabilisation policy are retained. Those with less explanatory relevance are downsized. Other potentially relevant general risk society concepts under-emphasised or omitted in previous literature are developed.

Chapter one reviews previous risk society literature in security policy. Chapter two provides conceptual development integrating stabilisation policy with risk theory. Chapter three integrates some relevant risk society concepts under-emphasised or omitted in previous literature linking risk theory with security policy. Beginning the dissertation's case study, chapter four discusses immediate post-intervention mistakes made by Western governments in Afghanistan after 2001 that put stabilisation on the backfoot. Chapter five discusses distracted US attention from Afghanistan to Iraq after 2003, tracing Taliban recovery, analysing acrimony in the US-Pakistan partnership and assessing entangled alliance politics complicating ISAF's early expansion. Chapter six discusses shifting strategic discourses as Obama succeeded Bush as US president. Media fervour framed Obama's Afghan policy as a liberal 'good war', but renewed realism and caution dominated his strategic outlook instead. Hesitancy and risk-aversion within the Obama administration created friction with US military leaders.

Chapter seven examines how Obama finalised his 'surge' policies for Afghanistan beginning in late 2009. It details tense internal debates on the length of military campaign required to deliver stabilisation. Chapter eight analyses Obama's efforts to reinforce ISAF with strengthened global partnerships, arguing that contributions from European allies and democratic partners elsewhere often underwhelmed. Chapter nine examines clashes between ISAF's civilian and military organisations that weakened stabilisation. Obama's 'surge' failed because NATO was unwilling to commit to a sizable military presence for long enough. The 'surge' was truncated by risk society insistence that soldier fatalities remain at low levels.

MOOTW later replaced direct combat from ISAF. As the 'surge' dissipated, SSR with a utilitarian 'train-and-equip' outlook failed to transform the ANSF into forces capable of securing Afghanistan. Obama's 'surge' prompted a rush that flooded reconstruction efforts with funding for civilian assistance. This fuelled further corruption in the Afghan government that was counterproductive for stabilisation. Reconstruction was sometimes undermined by civilian agency 'bunkerisation' in various guises that alienated Afghans. The risk society's 'safety first' civilian agencies were also big customers for PMSCs that were perceived with distain by many Afghans.

This dissertation concludes with discussion responding to both research questions. For the first research question, contrary to Afghanistan's 'graveyard of empires' reputation, its geography and social composition making NATO's stabilisation challenge insurmountable, it is argued that choices made by NATO members largely conditioned failure. With ISAF in its infancy, NATO governments made a series of mistakes that immediately put stabilisation on the back-foot. Some mistakes originated from the risk society's acute 'safety first' concerns. The Powell Doctrine's advice on 'overwhelming force' during early intervention was abandoned for 'evasive warfare' to avoid manoeuvres more likely to risk a drawn-out 'quagmire' with higher soldier fatalities. Taliban rule was quickly overthrown, but 'evasive warfare' failed to stop many dangerous Al-Qaeda and Taliban members escaping to 'havens' and later revitalising insurgency networks. Between late 2001 and 2005, the Taliban was diminished and demoralised, gifting NATO a window of opportunity for stabilisation that it subsequently squandered.

Not enough 'soft power' was wielded with civilian reconstruction to shape closer cooperation between ISAF and the wider Afghan population. Ignoring the pull factor of 'soft power' to support Afghan state-building, OEF's intrusive SOF raids aiming to extinguish Al-Qaeda as a global risk was a simultaneous push factor alienating many Afghans. Afghan anger was compounded when the Western presence delegated governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban 'strongmen' and warlords that in-turn exploited and abused the population. Washington experienced unexpected turmoil after the US intervened in Iraq in 2003. NATO's European allies promised to take more stabilisation responsibilities as ISAF expanded in Afghanistan. Between 2003 and 2008, weaknesses in European military and civilian security provision facilitated many gaps in ISAF's posture, as acute 'safety first' preferences of many allies stipulated national caveats to limit combat exposure. This restricted wider military cooperation and mobility within ISAF. By 2009, under Obama, the US refocused on Afghanistan with a 'surge' in civilian and military resources. This rested on a cautious compromise. Upscaled resources were allocated over a strict and short timetable to ensure soldier fatalities remained at acceptable levels for domestic public opinion, but stabilisation remained elusive as the 'surge' drawdown began in 2011.

NATO perceived partnerships with governments beyond the Euro-Atlantic area as a 'force multiplier' for ISAF, but partnerships with democracies like Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea ultimately raised only most

resources. ISAF's partnership with Pakistan created more harm than good. Pakistan acquired some strategic benefits from GWOT cooperation with the US, but rivalry with India remained its priority. Islamabad saw Taliban extremists as an irregular weapon for reversing deficits in conventional power with New Delhi. Clandestine support from Pakistan made the Taliban resilient to some setbacks that ISAF inflicted. Pakistan's relations with ISAF were tempestuous, but ISAF needed Pakistan to facilitate vital supplies for its stabilisation effort, making it difficult for Western governments to coerce Islamabad into line.

Sometimes seen as equally important to warfighting, ISAF also comprised MOOTW including peacekeeping, protection for civilian authorities and SSR for local forces. SSR was seen as crucial to make state-building secure for an independent Afghan government. ISAF supported the ANSF with a utilitarian 'train-and-equip' model aiming to get Afghan forces into battle without much delay. To state-building's detriment, allegiances between the ANSF, Afghan society and government institutions were neglected. 'Train-and-equip' failed to stem the ANSF's chronic problems with defection and desertion. Its forces quickly collapsed when the Taliban ramped up its military campaign throughout 2021. Opium revenues had funded the Taliban's insurgency, with ISAF having few effective answers to stop this after a fragile Afghanistan re-emerged as a global source of illicit opium after 2001.

'Safety first' instincts saw ISAF reluctant to directly intervene against opium producers, fearing that this could stoke more Afghan anger. Alternatively delegating counter-narcotics to an inept ANSF proved ineffective. Tentative 'safety first' concerns were not exclusive to military operations. Similar preferences hampered civilian reconstruction as a state-building 'centre of gravity'. Protective cordons; fortified compounds; and sizable PMSC presences arose from the 'bunkerisation' mentalities of civilian agencies. 'Bunkerisation' alienated Afghans, weakening ISAF's 'hearts and minds' message. PMSC protection invited by civilian agencies was especially controversial. Widespread PMSC abuses greatly undercut civilian agency 'soft power' through political, humanitarian or development assistance.

Responding to the second research question involved theoretical investigation of how risk society preferences influenced stabilisation failure. Overlapping with empirical arguments, the risk society's acute 'safety first' concerns were ubiquitous in many stabilisation failures. As elaborated in paragraphs before this, such preferences directed many formative early failures. 'Overwhelming force' was jettisoned for 'evasive warfare' with concerns that the former might create a 'quagmire' multiplying soldier fatalities. This decision left gaps allowing some Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders to escape. 'Safety first' did not always mean less military force. Intrusive SOF raids aiming to root out Al-Qaeda as a global risk equated to the risk society putting counterterrorism first to the detriment of ISAF's 'soft power' ties with Afghan populations. Perceiving southern Afghanistan as precarious but peripheral, the risk society was content to ignore liberal principles, outsourcing governance to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen'. 'Safety first' preferences resonated further in attitudes of some NATO allies

willing to deploy military forces to Afghanistan but concurrently restricting their exposure to combat with national caveats. This made ISAF less effective, creating a 'two-tiered' mission where solidarity within NATO was politically undermined.

Previous risk theory literature in security policy was confined to military operations. This dissertation illustrates that organisations contributing to civilian reconstruction also displayed the risk society's acute 'safety first' preferences. Many civilian agencies were reluctant to assist the Afghan population without physical or personnel protections, but subsequent 'bunkerisation' then made it difficult to gain local trust necessary to enhance performance. Contracting protection from PMSCs was not unique to civilian agencies, diplomatic and military organisations sought these services too. Nevertheless, 'safety first' demands of civilian agencies significantly increased Afghanistan's enormous PMSC presence. Unprofessional behaviour was rife among PMSCs and inflammatory between ISAF and local populations.

Acutely 'safety first' risk society priorities defined ISAF's utilitarian 'train-and-equip' SSR approach. Rather than a more patient or elaborate training outlook to instil stronger loyalties within the ANSF's ranks to the Afghan government and citizens, ISAF (and RSM) hastily emphasised the basics for battle with the Taliban. When ISAF reduced its combat role after 2011, it shifted more fatality risks onto ANSF's underprepared ranks. Similarly acute 'safety first' sentiments underpinned the risk society's eventual disillusion with stabilisation. Disillusion from failure to achieve stabilisation was a factor driving innovation in surveillance and combat UAVs as 'contactless' military technologies. These began to reshape Western counterterrorism outlooks in the 2010s. Precision-strike was made more exact. To prevent global terrorism, 'targeted killing' of terror suspects or insurgents was eventually prioritised to stabilising fragile states.

ISAF paid greater attention to the Afghan population as an important 'centre of gravity' than later drone campaigns, but most of its actions remained guided by utilitarian preferences. It modestly attempted to do what was 'good enough' without striving for much liberal *grandeur*. Some lukewarm commitments led to stabilisation catastrophes. Compounding the West's delegation of governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen', international mediators courted similar undesirables to nurture Afghan support for Karzai's government after 2001. Acute 'safety first' preferences then defined ISAF's utilitarian presence that soon took shape from this. As aforementioned, this included 'bunkerised' civilian agencies unwilling to risk personnel safety for enhanced humanitarian or development outreach. Civilian demand for enhanced protection flooded Afghanistan with PMSCs. ISAF's 'train-and-equip' SSR ignored the need to integrate the ANSF with wider state-building. Drone strikes later became an acutely utilitarian counterterrorism solution, replacing stabilisation for fragile states in the risk society's 'safety first' mindset. This further minimised liberal influences on the risk society's security perspectives.

The risk society's anxious focus on prevention underpinned some serious stabilisation flaws. Opportunities to gain a strong state-building foothold existed between 2001 and 2005 when Taliban interference was weak. The risk society's

preventative thirst for intelligence on terror suspects with intrusive SOF raids overshadowed efforts to build stronger 'soft power' links with Afghan populations. Its emphasis on intelligence for 'safety first' counterterrorism smothered possibilities for parallel intelligence for Afghan state-building preferences. An Afghan intelligence deficit increased ISAF's dependence on Pakistan. Reliance on Pakistan created as much harm as it did benefit, reducing NATO's leverage to halt Islamabad's duplicity, cooperating with ISAF while galvanising the Taliban in secret. When the 'surge' drawdown began in 2011, the risk society's efforts to prevent risks mobilising from Afghanistan evolved to combine SSR for the ANSF with 'contactless' drone strikes against Taliban insurgents and other terror suspects. While drone strikes might have reduced some militancy, SSR for the ANSF was exposed as a spectacular failure when Afghan forces capitulated to the Taliban in 2021.

Acute anxiety about safety internalised by the risk society is theorised as pressuring governments to continuously manage risk. This characteristic focused concerns on 'risks aggravated by globalisation' that prolonged failing stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan. Over twenty years, the risk society feared that a premature withdrawal would facilitate new risks mobilising from Afghan territory. Despite harbouring this serious concern, NATO was true to the risk society's contradictory character by remaining 'half-hearted' on many stabilisation commitments. This contradiction structured ISAF's lengthy failure, resonating closely with Coker's outlook on the risk society as 'increasingly anxious but less strategically ambitious'. Anxiety over 'risks aggravated by globalisation' are amplified by a 'globality' lens dominating the risk society's strategic vision. 'Strategic globality' defined the US response to 9/11. This problematically blindsided US leadership to many 'grassroots' local factors important for stabilisation in Afghanistan.

Tackling the wider 'axis of evil' – Iran, Iraq and North Korea – was quickly made a US priority. In a ruefully shortsighted move, Afghanistan was quickly downsized to a mere first stop in a wider GWOT campaign. Support for a centralised government in Kabul was reinforced by perceptions of GWOT convenience coming before 'grassroots' state-building centred on stronger regionalised or 'bottom-up' governance. Overemphasising 'globality', the risk society perceived assistance from the global NGO community as a 'force multiplier' for winning Afghan 'hearts and minds' for stabilisation aims. More controversially, it saw a global PMSC 'market for force' as a problematic remedy for public safety deficits in Afghanistan. This widened inequality where the wealthy enjoyed more security than the poor. Many PMSCs were undisciplined and abusive, inflaming divides between ISAF and wider Afghan populations.

The dissertation finds that many risk theory expectations are confirmed when evaluated against empirical evidence, but no theory completely reflects reality. Some deviations between risk theory and empirical events concern expectations that utilitarian pragmatism will dominate over ideological preferences. Overall, strong utilitarian preferences guided NATO's stabilisation policies, but some traces of liberal ideology were also influential. Contrary to some theoretical

expectations, during early intervention, liberal fragments combined with the risk society's otherwise dominant utilitarian outlook. This did not necessarily assist stabilisation. Military intervention was undertaken with some naïve liberal intent. This naiveté soon proved consequential when 'maximalist' liberal policy action failed to materialise despite ideological intervention discourses. A large disconnect between liberal intervention discourses and utilitarian policy action between 2001 and 2005 allowed an uncertain security vacuum to fester in Afghanistan. Failure to fill this gap with a more comprehensive state-building effort was later exploited by a recovering Taliban. By 2009, the US refocused on stabilising Afghanistan, justifying this a liberal 'good war' worthy of renewed strategic attention. Obama's ambitious 'surge' rhetoric merely 'papered over' a modest and temporary upscaling of policy that ultimately failed to deliver stabilisation.

Afghanistan's re-emergence as a global opium producer from 2001 was a constant thorn in ISAF's side. Liberal stubbornness constrained its response. Due to ideological sensitivities, ISAF did not endorse 'joint extraction' between opium producers and Afghanistan's regional governments. This alternative might have reduced violence 'bad for business' while increasing revenues for Afghan public services. Nationalist ideology also retained a role in NATO's 'safety first' outlook when its attitudes on fatality risk for national forces are compared to attitudes on PMSC or ANSF fatalities. ISAF's casualties created anguish to the brink of possible withdrawal for some NATO governments, but similarly acute concerns were rarely displayed for ANSF deaths that dwarfed ISAF's fatalities.

Likewise, with PMSCs, contractor deaths never received the same attention as those for national forces. Shorn of nationalist sentiment, PMSC personnel were completely perceived by the risk society as 'professionals going about their jobs' at their own personal risk. PMSC protection is insatiable for the 'safety first' risk society. An absence of nationalist concern made it easier for governments to shift some dangerous risks to PMSCs, a temptation that incurred further problems for stabilisation. Contrary to Beck's prediction that many global risks will be perceived with de-nationalised universalism, some risk society concerns continue to 'follow the flag'. While lopsided in balance, contrasting liberal and utilitarian layers still defined stabilisation more so than the risk society's later alternatives aiming to manage 'risk aggravated by globalisation'. Stabilisation included some liberal undertones with humanitarian and development outreach, even if marginal and delivered with modest 'good enough' intent. Residual liberalism was gradually dropped as the West's stabilisation era faded after 2011 with 'contactless' drone strikes for counterterrorism prioritised to prevent risks.

# 1. REVIEWING THE RISK SOCIETY AT WAR: THE MAIN PARAMETERS

## 1.1. Introduction

This chapter critically assesses how the existing literature linking risk theory and war seeks to explain war outcomes. As this literature seeks to capture how contemporary social change influences the approach to war taken by Western actors including the US and NATO, it is an important starting point in formulating a framework that can insightfully guide a response to this dissertation's main research puzzle. This chapter focuses on the most prominent theoretical propositions that have previously emerged from this literature, focused primarily around the works of Yee-Kuang Heng, Christopher Coker, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen and Michael Williams respectively. This literature closely coalesces around the early 2000s military interventions undertaken by the US as it led the GWOT following the 9/11 attacks. This chapter is divided into six sections. Section two discusses the idea of risk as a future focused concept and examines the concept's growing popularity as a vital reference point in security planning. Section three explores the pre-eminence that the existing risk theory literature reserves for preventative warfare, it is argued that this literature has not moved far beyond analysis of an initial intervention phase guided by preventative anticipation of risk. This section therefore further examines how the 'probabilistic thinking' that propels preventative warfare becomes problematic once post-intervention stabilisation phases commence. The challenge of the 'reflexive security dilemma' for NATO policymakers is examined while Heng's proposition that security planners in the risk society are especially sensitive to the later consequences of their actions is evaluated from different theoretical angles.

Section four examines the strategic repercussions of the risk society's 'safety first' preference, reviewing Coker's proposition that Western societies 'have become increasingly anxious, and at the same time, less strategically ambitious'.<sup>151</sup> This contradiction can be proposed as underlying shortcomings in NATO policy. Section five examines how inequality in military risk-sharing within NATO during ISAF can be suspected as creating operational weaknesses that have undermined the mission's effectiveness. This section also argues that the risk society's contradictory expectations are tightly connected to the Western strategic embrace of PMSCs; contactless military technologies; and external 'risk-shifting' to proxies. It will be investigated in this dissertation's later chapters whether these increasingly prevalent Western military practices actually improve or undermine stabilisation objectives. Section six concludes by distilling five claims from the literature that links risk theory and military strategy that assist in response to the main research puzzle.

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<sup>151</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.12.

## 1.2. Security policy and the concept of risk

Much of the literature that theorises the Western perspective on war through the lens of Beck's risk society concept is formed from case studies centred on the early GWOT during the 2000s. While the literature linking risk theory with contemporary warfare is a relatively small collection, it has still been boldly claimed that this theoretical approach holds 'great relevance to understanding the impetus, ethos and outcomes of contemporary war'.<sup>152</sup> As both civilian and military elements have defined the mission in Afghanistan, this dissertation goes beyond the confines of the concept of war to more broadly examine the risk society's approach to stabilisation policy. Nevertheless, the claim that risk theory can generate important insights to explain the 'outcomes of contemporary war' remains a particularly important theoretical claim.

### 1.2.1. A future focused concept

As military conflict has transformed over the post-Cold War period, risk theory's central claim has been that Western governments have increasingly come to see war as an instrument for risk management. With a case study focused on US security strategy during the early 2000s, Heng has argued that a significant distinction had developed between Western outlooks on war at that time compared to previous rationales for military conflict. Heng claims that a 'more orthodox understanding of war' dominated the strategic behaviour of both superpowers during the Cold War. As distinct from risk management, US military strategy against the Soviet Union was guided by "'net assessment" and the need to react to "real" or imminent material threats'.<sup>153</sup> In contrast to this logic, claims that insist that war has become a risk management task instead outline that war is now about 'proactively averting probabilistic scenarios, leading to preventive strategies'.<sup>154</sup> For Heng, Western demand for preventative military action has been caused by 'pre-existing security risks aggravated by globalisation and end of Cold War constraints'.<sup>155</sup>

The need to 'proactively' avert probabilistic scenarios, a challenge that post-Cold War security system has imposed on security planners has therefore undermined the 'net assessment' process once integral to policy planning during the Cold War.<sup>156</sup> Different definitions have been provided to explain 'net assessment': For some, this is an intelligence gathering exercise examining a potential enemy's military-strategic strengths and weaknesses, eventually measuring these

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<sup>152</sup> Yee-Kuang Heng, 'The "Transformation of War" Debate: Through the Looking Glass of Ulrich Beck's World Risk Society', *International Relations*, vol. 20, no.1, 2006, p. 69.

<sup>153</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.2.

<sup>154</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.2.

<sup>155</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.13.

<sup>156</sup> Yee-Kuang Heng, 'The Return of Net Assessment', *Survival*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2007, pp.137–138.

against one's own.<sup>157</sup> For others, 'net assessment' is an analysis of 'combat effectiveness', conducted through statistical or computational modelling, with one's own military capabilities simulated against those of a rival.<sup>158</sup> Both outlooks see 'net assessment' as intricately detailed, linear and structured. It is a mode of analysis that is arguably most effective when attempting to capture the precise measure of a stationary threat. While Western governments continue to commission 'net assessment' reports, Heng argues that the less predictable patterns of the post-Cold War security system have often 'undermined' the relevance of this exercise for effective policy planning. A faster and more unpredictable progression of events renders many 'net assessments' outdated upon delivery. Security planners now have to instead rely on often hastily contrived risk assessments to construct the reference points needed as a guide in the policy formation process. The margin for error with this more makeshift process is arguably greater compared to what 'net assessment' once provided during the Cold War.

It is never explicitly clarified in the literature linking risk theory and military strategy whether this theory only applies for Western actors or if the theory is supposed to be universal. However, because previous theoretical applications are predominately centred on Western case studies – either US or NATO strategic behaviour – it is safe to ascertain that this literature has always had a strong Western-centric orientation. With a focus on the US and NATO at war, previous applications of risk theory have coalesced around the most high-profile Western-led wars of the late 1990s and the early 2000s: NATO's air campaign in Kosovo in 1999 followed by initial events of the GWOT that included the US military's overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 and Washington's subsequent removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003. These are focal case studies, from which previous risk theorists have illuminated conceptual insight on the transformation of war. However, from a 2021 perspective, it can be argued that this set is now too narrow to fully capture the changing security strategies adopted by Western states.

While varying in their 'impetus and ethos', each of these three military campaigns has been dominated by a preventative narrative. In Kosovo, NATO advanced 'probability thinking' under the logic that if it did not militarily intervene against Serbia, the risks of both major genocide in Europe and a serious refugee crisis would soon arise. As the world's focus quickly switched to Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks, Washington insisted that if it did not remove Taliban rule in Kabul, Afghan territory would remain a 'haven' for transnational terrorist networks that could soon again wreak havoc for international security. In Iraq, the Bush administration justified the US military invasion with the narrative that, if Saddam remained in power, it was a dangerous possibility that he would use WMD and thus threaten the populations of the US and its allies. While these three Western-led wars occurred in quick succession around the millennium, some risk

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<sup>157</sup> Heng, 'The Return of Net Assessment', pp. 137–138.

<sup>158</sup> Heng, 'The Return of Net Assessment', pp. 137–138.

theorists have argued that an emphasis on war as a preventative instrument extends further back into the post-Cold War era. Despite seeming to contrast at first glance, a second look at the foreign policies enacted by the Clinton and later George W. Bush administrations might have sometimes had similar underpinnings. Both foreign policies advanced ‘probabilistic thinking’ to formulate preventative measures in counterterrorism policy and the effort to limit WMD proliferation. Both administrations were guided by a strong preventative focus; the Bush administration was simply more fervent in selecting military options, while the Clinton administration more often preferred diplomatic solutions in response to the problems that this focus defined.<sup>159</sup>

Expressing a point of theory that links together with this emphasis on ‘probabilistic thinking’, Rasmussen outlines that the ‘presence of the future’ is a vital guiding condition for the risk society. According to Rasmussen, the ‘presence of the future’ is a social condition that ‘describes how scenarios for the future guide politics’.<sup>160</sup> An emphasis towards future scenarios is common to most definitions of risk. This is stressed in Beck’s headline definition that ‘risk is the modern attempt to foresee and control the future consequences of human action’.<sup>161</sup> Following the explanation that a strong social focus exists to perceive risks as future scenarios that could ultimately cause harm, it is then a logical extension that prevalent social anxiety and buoyant social demand for ‘safety first’ policies from governments will result. Coker argues that a ‘risk society is necessarily a safety society, one that is permanently on the defensive’.<sup>162</sup> There is however some debate among risk theorists as to just how future focused Western societies actually are. Coker argues contrary to Rasmussen that today’s societies are impatient and non-committal, they thus live more in the present instead of in the future.<sup>163</sup> This is a theoretical observation that might shed some light towards this dissertation’s research puzzle. Transferring from sentiments in wider society to government policy, it is plausible that impatience and limited commitment can be suspected as a source of NATO’s incoherent stabilisation policies in Afghanistan.

### 1.2.2. Differentiating ‘risk’ and ‘threat’

While disagreement exists on whether risk is a near- or more distantly-future focused concept, it still holds other important dimensions that need to be better defined. Williams differentiates ‘risk’ from other concepts that it can regularly become problematically enmeshed with, including concepts like ‘danger’ and ‘threat’. Distinct from ‘risk’, ‘danger’ instead exclusively denotes ‘a negative

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<sup>159</sup> Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War: Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 91.

<sup>160</sup> Rasmussen, ‘Reflexive Security’, p. 386.

<sup>161</sup> Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 26.

<sup>163</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 22–23.

outcome'.<sup>164</sup> 'Risk' holds a more nuanced meaning, according to Williams, 'risk' is a subjective 'social construct, an attempt to control the future' and, because of this, when 'a risk is realised'; it is no longer a risk but a 'catastrophic event'.<sup>165</sup> For security policymakers, whose initial task it is to first ascertain a 'risk's' main parameters, a subsequent step in the policy formation process might involve designing 'an equation or estimation of the odds that danger will be realised or that a given course of action may have an adverse effect'.<sup>166</sup> The identification of a 'risk' does not inevitably have to spell 'danger'. To the contrary, an accurate calculation of risk can routinely be the first step in the attempt to actually prevent, mitigate or manage a particular set of circumstances that might otherwise lead to danger. It is important to see 'risk' as a concept that assists governments and societies to foresee and to avert danger, or in William's words, 'risk' is a notion that has been engineered as a 'medium between security and destruction' in today's society.<sup>167</sup> It is theoretically tenable for risk management to produce positive outcomes that can be understood as danger-aversion. However, if recent Western-led wars are perceived through the risk management prism, it can also be argued that while a focus on 'risk' might galvanise the momentum towards a war aiming to avert danger, errors and oversights in the risk identification and management processes can then later lead to serious stabilisation failures. Under this guise, the transformation of war in line with a preventative focus is therefore a problematic development.

The difference between a 'risk' and a 'threat' is a crucial separation. Confusion of this distinction is sometimes evident in government documents. Such sources might well describe policy problems as diverse as terrorism and climate change as 'threats', when this rhetoric is actually displaying the future-focused anticipation more appropriate for 'risks' likely to undermine society.<sup>168</sup> Labelling such problems as 'threats' even deviates considerably from the conventional definition of a 'threat': the directed intention to cause harm, matched with the power and capabilities to do so.<sup>169</sup> Williams argues that this tendency has become a mistaken habit among Western media outlets, governments, and security organisations. In the NATO context, Williams argues that few or none of the security problems that the alliance anticipates in its official strategy documents will actually meet this strict definition of a 'threat'.

If post-2014 tensions between NATO and Russia are left to one side, it would indeed be spurious to claim that any among 'Terrorism, weapons proliferation, climate change, disease, migration and inequality' – all routinely stressed as problems for NATO in its post-Cold War Strategic Concepts – as strictly conforming

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<sup>164</sup> Michael J. Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society: Modes of Alliance Representation Since 1991', in Mark Webber and Adrian Hyde-Price, eds., *Theorising NATO: New Perspectives on the Atlantic Alliance*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, p.189.

<sup>165</sup> Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society', p. 189.

<sup>166</sup> Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society', p. 189.

<sup>167</sup> Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society', p. 188.

<sup>168</sup> Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society', p. 189.

<sup>169</sup> Williams, 'NATO and the Risk Society', p. 189.

to the conventional definition of a ‘threat’ under most circumstances.<sup>170</sup> To be sure, none of these issues are benign in terms of the human suffering or physical damage at stake. However, as Williams argues, these issues are considerably more ‘amorphous and ambiguous’ in terms of directed intent when compared to a rigid definition of a ‘threat’. Cold War security circumstances once shaped NATO’s *modus operandi* as a reactive alliance. This is evident in the logic of early NATO doctrines such as ‘massive retaliation’ and ‘flexible response’. As it has transformed to meet the demands of post-Cold War change, Williams claims that NATO has by contrast instead reformed as a proactive, future focused and actively anticipatory alliance. NATO was once prepared to react ‘against aggressive action targeted at allies’.<sup>171</sup> The alliance has now reconfigured its focus ‘to manage security risks that might, at some point, come to pose a danger to the Alliance, but are not yet a direct danger’.<sup>172</sup>

While Williams highlights regular confusion between ‘risk’ and ‘threat’ in both media and official policy discourse, the language of ‘global risks’ has still grown immensely popular in the recent strategic discourse articulated by NATO and/or its framework allies. Formally introducing a ‘global’ focus, NATO’s 1999 Washington Summit saw the US begin to intensify its diplomatic push for NATO to become a more effective international security manager by improving its expeditionary capabilities.<sup>173</sup> During an era of uncontested uni-polarity, and seeking better burden-sharing from its European allies, this policy was an extension of Washington’s priority to more ‘proactively’ wield its military and diplomatic power to better reframe international order in line with its interests. Agreed at the Washington Summit, NATO’s 1999 Strategic Concept highlighted the ‘appearance of complex new risks to Euro-Atlantic peace and stability, including oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction’.<sup>174</sup> NATO’s Strategic Concept was next refreshed in 2010; this came soon after the 2008 Russia-Georgia War and the document does raise the importance of NATO needing to react for the territorial defence of its eastern allies. However, the 2010 Strategic Concept still prominently advocates that NATO must proactively anticipate ‘major global effects’ reverberating from ‘extremism, terrorism, and transnational illegal activities such as trafficking in arms, narcotics and people’ as

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<sup>170</sup> Williams, ‘NATO and the Risk Society’, p. 189.

<sup>171</sup> Williams, ‘NATO and the Risk Society’, p. 186.

<sup>172</sup> Williams, ‘NATO and the Risk Society’, p. 186.

<sup>173</sup> Michael E. Brown, ‘Minimalist NATO: A Wise Alliance Knows When to Retrench’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1999, p. 206.

<sup>174</sup> NATO, ‘The Alliance’s Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington DC’, Press Release, 24 April 1999, point 3, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm) (accessed 14 August 2021).

well as from ‘conflict or instability’ occurring in the wider vicinity of the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>175</sup>

As well as in the Strategic Concept documents that aim to bridge policy between NATO allies, the ‘amorphous and ambiguous’ description of today’s security environment that is often synonymous with risk discourse can also be plentifully observed in the individual post-Cold War strategy documents of NATO’s leading members. The Obama administration’s 2010 US QDR emphasises a ‘future challenges risk’. This beholds a strong anticipatory emphasis, calling on all state agencies contributing to US defence policy to focus on the need to ‘hedge against shocks’.<sup>176</sup> A later QDR published by the Pentagon in 2014 continues to highlight a strong anticipatory and preventative focus, warning about risks to America’s ‘military advantage’ anticipated from falling financial investment in ‘aging combat systems’ and compounded by other possible strategic competitors investing more to improve their advanced weaponry.<sup>177</sup>

From 2018, the Trump administration decided to replace the Pentagon’s series of QDRs with the NDS. Nevertheless, the first NDS released by the US DoD in 2018 continues to provide insight into the evolution of the US government’s approach to risk. Although broadly positive for social development, the NDS warns that today’s advanced technologies will also have residual effects that ‘ultimately, [change] the character of war’.<sup>178</sup> The NDS anticipates that this will fashion opportunities for states seeking to rival the US as well as galvanizing non-state actors liable to harm US security interests. According to the NDS, the economic globalisation that facilitates the development and spread of these technologies therefore also ‘risks eroding the conventional overmatch to which our Nation [the US] has grown accustomed’.<sup>179</sup> Referencing risk and uncertainty in a more positive context, the NDS proposes that Washington must take better advantage of these circumstances to ‘foster a culture of experimentation and calculated risk-taking’ to retain an advantage against those seeking to undermine US security interests by pioneering the technological solutions required for

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<sup>175</sup> NATO, ‘Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of The Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon’, Press Release, 19 November 2010, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_82705.htm?](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm?) (accessed 25 July 2019).

<sup>176</sup> US Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, US Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington DC, 2010, pp. 90–95, available at: <https://archive.defense.gov/qdr/QDR%20as%20of%2029JAN10%201600.pdf> (accessed 28 July 2019).

<sup>177</sup> US Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington DC, 2014, pp. 62–63, available at: [https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf) (accessed 26 May 2020).

<sup>178</sup> US Department of Defence, *Summary of the National Defence Strategy. Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge*, Washington DC, 2018, p. 3, available at: <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2020).

<sup>179</sup> US Department of Defence, *Summary of the National Defence Strategy*, p. 3.

Washington to retain its place at the summit of international military affairs.<sup>180</sup> As a further example of the buoyancy of risk thinking in Western security policy, when the UK Houses of Parliament published its latest SDSR in 2015, the document devoted a major section to explain the benefits of the NSRA. The SDSR describes the NSRA as a thorough anticipatory exercise in identifying the risk parameters that UK security policy is likely to encounter over the next ‘five- to twenty-year time-frame’, anticipated risks were categorised into three tiers of severity.<sup>181</sup>

### 1.3. War with a preventative focus

The Cold War hinged on hostility between two superpowers that perceived their primary strategic interests at the core of the international system. By contrast, the next globally-centred war to be proclaimed in the West in 2001, the US-led GWOT, redirected Western focus towards locations on the international periphery troubled by state fragility and political violence. Unstable regions of the international system have been regularly emphasised by the US, EU and NATO as cultivating violent elements, most prominently terrorist networks with transnational capacity. The chain of events leading to 9/11 attacks has led unstable peripheries like Afghanistan to be perceived as places where ‘informal violence’ can be globally mobilised to devastating effect to strike at target locations in the international core.<sup>182</sup> This emphasis on security risks as a globalising phenomenon was highlighted from a NATO perspective by Jamie Shea in 2012, when he explained that there was agreement within the alliance that NATO needed to anticipate threats ‘at distance’ before these could be allowed to gather momentum and cause problems closer to the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>183</sup>

#### 1.3.1. Problems in preventative warfare

The logic that Shea expresses has been always central as a guide in NATO’s transformation. In 1993, US Senator Richard Lugar famously outlined NATO’s post-Cold War choice as either ‘out-of-area or out of business’.<sup>184</sup> As he retains threat-specific language, Shea’s outlook might still be another instance of policymaker confusion between ‘risk’ and ‘threat’, But while these are distinct

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<sup>180</sup> US Department of Defence, *Summary of the National Defence Strategy*, p. 7.

<sup>181</sup> UK House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, p. 33, available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtnatsec/153/153.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2020).

<sup>182</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ‘The Globalization of Informal Violence, Theories of World Politics, and the “Liberalism of Fear”’, *Dialogue IO*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2002, p. 31.

<sup>183</sup> Jamie Shea, ‘Keeping NATO Relevant’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook*, 19 April 2012, available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/19/keeping-nato-relevant-pub-47872> (accessed 15 August 2018).

<sup>184</sup> Lugar cited in Berdal and Ucko, ‘NATO at 60’, p. 59.

concepts; his perspective nevertheless presents an opportunity to further clarify the important linkage that can still exist between both. Adding a further dimension to the definition of ‘risk’, Christopher Dandeker argues that, unlike ‘threats’, ‘risks’ exist without specific direction to allow harm against another, and ‘risks’ are therefore ‘capacities that have the potential to cause harm to one’s security’.<sup>185</sup> Under this guise, ‘risks’ might be interpreted as circumstances that could still later be manoeuvred by certain actors to initiate a ‘threat’. From the mid-1990s until 2001, political instability in peripheral Afghanistan under Taliban rule was not perceived as posing much of a threat to the US or anybody else. It was only when Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda began to harness the opportunities for terrorism that Afghanistan’s unstable circumstances provided from the late 1990s onwards that threat perceptions arose. Having largely ignored the turmoil in Afghanistan in the years immediately after the country ceased being a host for its proxy-war with the Soviet Union in 1989; the US was made readily aware to the threat of terrorism following the Al-Qaeda bombings of its embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998. This threat came specifically from Al-Qaeda as a non-state actor, but the Clinton administration responded to it with cruise missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan, two states that it rationalised as enabling terrorism.<sup>186</sup>

The 1998 attacks were a mild experience of terrorism compared to the devastation caused by the 9/11 attacks. Both experiences were milestones culminating in the Bush administration’s reasoning that if governments do not intervene to prevent risks, these could be later manoeuvred into threats to national security and the lives of US citizens. For risk theorists, this policy logic corresponds with the ‘better safe than sorry’ inclination of contemporary Western societies. The engrained presence of this inclination is a feature that most risk theorists agree on. Heng argues that a strong ‘safety first’ mentality is inherent to risk societies.<sup>187</sup> Coker explains that this social inclination subsequently translates into a ‘safety state’ that coordinates foreign and security policy.<sup>188</sup> In the same context, Rasmussen makes the argument that military strategy has historically been seen by the state as a novel policy area, but this has begun to change over recent decades as the logic that underpins military-strategic thinking has gained in similarity to other ‘normal’ or ‘routine’ policy areas such as ecological protection and crime control.<sup>189</sup> The risk theory advanced by Rasmussen is the most elaborate in proposing that logic uncannily similar to the ‘precautionary principle’ – originally popularised in the area of ecological protection – can also be readily

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<sup>185</sup> Christopher Dandeker, ‘Building Flexible Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, in Giuseppe Caforio, eds., *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, New York: Springer, 2006, p. 407.

<sup>186</sup> Ryan C. Hendrickson, ‘Clinton’s Military Strikes in 1998: Diversionary Uses of Force?’, *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2002, pp. 309–332.

<sup>187</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>188</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.11.

<sup>189</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, pp. 6–7.

detected in the thinking of Western leaders as they decide on contemporary military operations.<sup>190</sup>

Carrying strong preventative connotations, ‘better safe than sorry’ logic is central to the ‘precautionary principle’. In the area of ecological politics where it first originated, the ‘precautionary principle’ has been formulated to advocate that immediate action be taken to reduce carbon emissions before a time arrives when the consequences of climate degradation spiral beyond the control of government policymakers.<sup>191</sup> President George W. Bush was noteworthy for his intransigence to multilateral climate protection provisions such as the Kyoto Protocols. However, perhaps ironically, as the Bush administration developed its military strategy for the GWOT, it was the ‘better safe than sorry’ sentiments of precaution similar in logic to the discourse of ecological protection campaigners that informed its military strategy. The Bush administration took the outlook that, in today’s era of intensified globalisation, a US ‘safety first’ approach would have to utilise military means if necessary to prevent risks from later being mobilised into threats to America’s national security.<sup>192</sup>

Under US leadership, NATO is collectively endowed with overwhelming military power. This is an obvious asset to enable adversaries to be preventatively coerced into line with Western-led international order as well as in stabilising corners of the international system that become unruly. Writing in 2002, Niall Ferguson perceives the US as an imperial stabiliser for an international order that minimises global risks, remarking that: ‘Even recent [post-Cold War] American foreign policy recalls the gunboat diplomacy of the British Empire in its Victorian heyday, when a little trouble on the periphery could be dealt with by a short, sharp “surgical strike”’.<sup>193</sup> However, the US-led effort to stabilise international order over recent decades has proven to be far more arduous than Ferguson suggests here. It would not be too much of an over exaggeration to suggest that this optimistic outlook that Ferguson espouses might well have been naively shared by many US government officials as decisions were made to embark on war in Afghanistan and Iraq during the early 2000s. Studies on President Bush’s foreign policy outlook have categorised it as a perspective defined by ‘low conceptual complexity’.<sup>194</sup> As an important starting point for how the risk society’s approach to stabilisation policy may have compounded NATO’s failure to stabilise Afghanistan, Bush’s under-complicated outlook likely had a bearing on his leadership of an administration that both over-exaggerated the benefits and over-simplified the difficulties when utilising war as a preventative instrument. Afghanistan was a war with a message: those responsible for aiding and

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<sup>190</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>191</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>192</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>193</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, London: Basic Books, 2008, p. 368.

<sup>194</sup> Yi Edward Yang, ‘Leaders’ Conceptual Complexity and Foreign Policy Change: Comparing the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Foreign Policies Toward China’, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2010, 415–446, p. 427.

abetting terrorist organisations threatening US security would receive a severe reprimand from Washington. This was accompanied by the Bush administration's vision of a continuing terrorist haven in Afghanistan as a dangerous 'probabilistic' scenario. This ultimately led to the over-optimistic and over-simplified solution that Washington would leave the country as a stable US partner once the Taliban was overthrown.

The post-intervention experience since faced by the US and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan highlights many of the difficulties that come with war as a 'safety first' means to prevent future danger. Risk theory's emphasis on war as a preventative instrument has undoubtedly been enriched by a constructivist outlook.<sup>195</sup> If war is used for prevention, it is a logical next step to assume that the onset of this war will hinge on the acceptance of social constructions, namely the discourses and images that frame future scenarios. This was visible in the Bush administration's message in the direct lead-up to the Iraq war in 2003.<sup>196</sup> Its discourses and images of future dangers were framed in Secretary of State Colin Powell's infamous presentation at the UNSC in early 2003 that attempted to convince the world that Saddam needed to be disarmed by force if necessary.<sup>197</sup> It was also discourses about future stability to be cultivated from the peaceful reconstruction of Iraq that galvanised Washington's course towards initiating war. Washington acted as if a novice to war as risk management, as pre-war US policy discourses delineating Iraq's future soon proved to be both naive and deeply flawed. These discourses were disastrously out of touch with the tumultuous reality that subsequently transpired in Iraq after 2003. With some caveats, a broadly similar account can be reported from post-intervention Afghanistan after 2001. The era of preventative warfare that the Bush administration spearheaded during the early 2000s has paved the way for many negative events to subsequently occur. Nevertheless, in theory at least, preventative military engagement may not just produce negative outcomes. With the distinction between 'preventative' and 'pre-emptive' strategies sometimes confused or conflated, Lawrence Freedman argues that 'preventative' approaches are likely to be multifaceted while taking place over the long-term. A state might seek to manage a perceived security risk by either coercing or incentivising an adversary to desist by first utilising political, economic, legal or military instruments short of direct military conflict.<sup>198</sup>

Only when these options have been exhausted might a decision to initiate military conflict be contemplated.<sup>199</sup> Freedman emphasises that 'preventive'

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<sup>195</sup> Karen Lund Petersen, 'Risk analysis – A Field Within Security Studies?', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2011, pp.704–705.

<sup>196</sup> Dirk Nabers, 'Filling the Void of Meaning: Identity Construction in US Foreign Policy after September 11, 2001', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2009, pp. 191–214.

<sup>197</sup> David Zarefsky, 'Making The Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations', *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2007, pp. 275–302.

<sup>198</sup> Lawrence Freedman, 'Prevention, Not Preemption', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2003, p. 107.

<sup>199</sup> Freedman, 'Prevention, Not Preemption', p. 107.

strategies ‘intend[s] to deal with a problem before it becomes a crisis’ while ‘pre-emptive’ strategies can only be contemplated at a later stage when a crisis is already ongoing.<sup>200</sup> In a crisis, ‘pre-emption’ can be contemplated as an urgent action to eliminate an advantageous strength or capability held by an adversary before that adversary has the opportunity to utilise it.<sup>201</sup> Whether the Bush administration’s strategies to manage risk with preventative warfare actually synchronise with Freedman’s distinction is unclear. The terms ‘pre-emptive’ and ‘preventative’ have been used interchangeably and confusingly to discuss this era in US foreign policy. However, contrary to what Freedman suggests, US military action in Iraq was not undertaken to ease an already existing crisis. This invasion was instead the event that inadvertently started the crisis that later unfolded.

Beyond Washington’s priorities to prevent a hostile Iraq under Saddam possibly endangering international security or state fragility allowing Afghanistan to re-emerge as a terrorist haven, the US blueprint for the post-intervention political future in both states under occupation was problematically vague and imprecise. Connecting this to the theoretical divergence existing between Rasmussen and Coker on whether the risk society is conditioned by a ‘presence of the future’ or by an ‘impatient present’, the latter seems more accurate for the Bush administration’s preventative wars against Saddam and Taliban rule. Militarily preventing the dangers that both were perceived as presenting was insisted as an urgent necessity, but planning on how the US could thereafter safely reposition these states within the broader international security context existed within underdeveloped confines.

### 1.3.2. Reflexive security dilemmas

Holding unrivalled military power, the beginning of the post-Cold War era saw the US and NATO stand without a global peer-competitor. As an inherently complex task, expeditionary military engagement cannot be expected to always achieve satisfactory results. However, accumulating from the 1990s and 2000s, the expeditionary record from both US-led coalitions and NATO has been tarnished by a repeated tendency to overestimate the political utility that military power holds to manage risk on the global periphery. The Cold War centred on polarised deadlock entrenched by a symmetrical conventional security dilemma between two nuclear-armed superpowers. In a conventional security dilemma, defensive preparations undertaken by one state will likely provoke insecurity amongst others.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, while fraught with danger and hostility, the ‘tight’ conventional security dilemma that some perceive as defining the Cold War still provided clear reference points, guiding both superpowers towards coherent and cautious policy doctrines. Against a predicable Soviet adversary, US policy action was consistently guided by coherently ‘codified’ policy

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<sup>200</sup> Freedman, ‘Prevention, Not Preemption’, p. 107.

<sup>201</sup> Freedman, ‘Prevention, Not Preemption’, p.107.

<sup>202</sup> Paul Roe, ‘Actors’ Responsibility in “Tight, Regular or Loose” Security Dilemmas’, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2001, pp.104–105.

doctrines such as ‘containment’; ‘flexible response’; and ‘détente’.<sup>203</sup> By contrast, the ‘sense of order’ that allowed these policy doctrines to be successful during the Cold War has given way to a dramatically more unpredictable military-strategic environment over the post-Cold War years.<sup>204</sup> Instead of trying to frustrate predictable Soviet motives behind different crises, uni-polar hegemony means that Western actors, the US, EU and NATO have been pressured to stabilise unruly areas of the international system to ensure that security risks do not spiral. Some have normatively pointed to the need to respond to a complex entanglement of social, cultural, economic, political and military causes, a task that is likely to create many problematic ‘changing targets’ for those that intervene with the aim to manage risk.<sup>205</sup>

Contrary to the Cold War’s predictable symmetry, Charles Krauthammer argues that many of the post-Cold War’s asymmetric security problems surfacing for the US before and after 2001 have been ‘undeterrable and potentially undetectable’.<sup>206</sup> As well as transnational terrorism, these problems have included the prominence of broadly globalised organised crime syndicates and the trafficking of WMD. Air Marshall Sir Brian Burridge has expressed similar sentiments from a UK perspective, arguing that the Cold War security system had by 2004 given way to a form of ‘military postmodernism’.<sup>207</sup> For Burridge, Cold War predictability made it ‘possible to practice [the same defence planning] over and over again’.<sup>208</sup> ‘Military postmodernism’ instead holds a more disruptive ‘tempo’ and a set of reference points that are more ‘variable and complex’.<sup>209</sup> According to Burridge, Western security planners can no longer rely on the ‘codified’ policy responses that once guided them through the Cold War, instead he recommends that policymakers embrace greater ‘improvisation’ to achieve major strategic objectives.<sup>210</sup> These policy-orientated observations provide some insight into how the security environment faced by Western policymakers has changed. With a focus on the challenges that uni-polar strategic conditions have caused for security planners, the risk theory literature offers further precision in this area. As the Cold War ended, Rasmussen argues that US strategic perspective once guided by a symmetrical conventional security dilemma, reinforced,

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<sup>203</sup> Lawrence Freedman, ‘International Security: Changing Targets’, *Foreign Policy*, no. 110, 1998, p. 48.

<sup>204</sup> Freedman, ‘International Security: Changing Targets’, p. 48.

<sup>205</sup> Freedman, ‘International Security: Changing Targets’, p. 48.

<sup>206</sup> Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Unipolar Moment Revisited’, *The National Interest*, no. 70, 2002/03, p. 9.

<sup>207</sup> Brian Burridge, ‘The Principles and Practice of Military Intervention in the Post-Modern World’, *St. George’s House Annual Lecture*, 2004, available at: [https://www.stgeorghouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/2004\\_Annual\\_Lecture.pdf](https://www.stgeorghouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/2004_Annual_Lecture.pdf) (accessed 25 July 2019).

<sup>208</sup> Burridge, ‘The Principles and Practice’.

<sup>209</sup> Burridge, ‘The Principles and Practice’.

<sup>210</sup> Burridge, ‘The Principles and Practice’.

switched to the management of a more uncertain and open-ended ‘reflexive security dilemma’.<sup>211</sup>

This ‘reflexive security dilemma’ begins with the US and its allies not yet having to contend with ‘a serious military threat from any [competing] power’.<sup>212</sup> This creates an open-ended situation for security planners with few urgently crucial reference points to focus policy attention on. Policymakers must thus debate and self-rationalise ‘what conflicts, or security issues in general, are important to one’s security’.<sup>213</sup> Concurring with this explanation, Coker expresses in broader sociological terms that ‘What is specific to many of our own [risk society] anxieties is that they exist in the absence of any looming historical disaster’.<sup>214</sup> Heightened anxiety as a persistent feature of the risk society frequently stems from the increased complexity of later modernity. Timothy Edmunds has remarked that, ‘If there are two words that have become synonymous with the contemporary western security environment, they are “complexity” and “uncertainty”’.<sup>215</sup> Edmunds argues that security problems defining the risk society age that include ‘international terrorism, climate change, cyber attack, the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction, and the spread of new, potentially transformative, military and non-military technologies’ are all ‘inherently complex’ because ‘they have multiple, frequently interrelated, causes and are likely to be multifaceted and unpredictable in their consequences, with cascading effects’.<sup>216</sup> Contrary to ‘threats’ which probably hold some ‘real’ or physical existence, Claudia Aradau argues that ‘anxieties in the risk society reside in the [future-focused] imagination’, adding that ‘The nonlinearity of complex systems can only create a future of continuous emergence and adaptation to new realities’.<sup>217</sup>

According to Edmunds, when continuous risk management is required to respond to fluidly evolving and complex security circumstances, both government and society can be overwhelmed with possible policy options and thus formulating national security interests ‘around a powerful organising idea’ can then become an elusive task.<sup>218</sup> This frames a context where it becomes ever more difficult to agree a coherent or sustained policy response. It is still a matter of some debate whether today’s security scenarios are in fact measurably more ‘complex’ or ‘uncertain’ compared to those of earlier modernity, but, as policy-making has become ever more professionalised and expertise-based, today’s scenarios have certainly become perceived as such. Additional information and

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<sup>211</sup> Rasmussen, “‘A Parallel Globalization of Terror’”, p. 328.

<sup>212</sup> Rasmussen, “‘A Parallel Globalization of Terror’”, p. 328.

<sup>213</sup> Rasmussen, “‘A Parallel Globalization of Terror’”, p. 328.

<sup>214</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 73.

<sup>215</sup> Timothy Edmunds, ‘Complexity, Strategy and the National Interest’, *International Affairs*, 90, vol. 3, 2014, p. 528.

<sup>216</sup> Edmunds, ‘Complexity, Strategy and the National Interest’, p. 529.

<sup>217</sup> Claudia Aradau, ‘Review of War in an Age of Risk, by Christopher Coker’, *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, pp. 110–111.

<sup>218</sup> Edmunds, ‘Complexity, Strategy and the National Interest’, p. 530.

expertise have been welcomed by policymakers, but this still dramatically increases the prospective policy reference points that security planners might need to contemplate. The increased policy complexity that governments face frequently induces a decision-making approach that is uncomfortable, hesitant and cautious. Increased complexity and uncertainty makes the ‘self-conscious reflection’ of security planners even more acute, especially when this concerns the likely negative knock-on consequences of policy action, or ‘boomerang effects’ as these are defined in risk theory – ‘the reacting back of risks on those who [originally] produced them’.<sup>219</sup>

Outside the risk theory literature, the difficulties of this ‘uncertain’ and ‘complex’ security planning context have been outlined by authors taking a more empirical focus. Emily Goldman has argued that the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a strategic competitor did not relieve US governments of the duty to develop an effective strategy to safeguard national security.<sup>220</sup>

Writing in 1994, Goldman argues that the post-Cold War world has been defined by ‘strategic uncertainty’ for Western security planners. Political complacency could follow the retreat of Cold War tensions, and the resources essential to keep militaries effective could diminish as a result. Post-Cold War ‘strategic uncertainty’ would also present new challenges for military force development, ‘operational uncertainty’ would be a logical follow-on because of an information deficit on the ‘type of conflict to prepare for’.<sup>221</sup> Sten Rynning introduces a similar perspective where NATO once perceived security competition with the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact as a ‘strategic challenge’; problems were serious but still neatly-definable, and it was easier for policymakers to accurately ‘inform themselves’ about the strategic responses required.<sup>222</sup> The strategic uncertainty ushered in by the end of the Cold War has instead ensured that NATO security planners must now ‘plan in the abstract’ and where ‘security management’, a term indicating continuous action to respond to fluidly evolving security circumstances, has become the favoured approach.<sup>223</sup> Security planning tasks have ‘broadened’ and ‘management’ implies that many security problems are unlikely to be fully overcome, the traditional ideas of military ‘victory’ and ‘defeat’ therefore become irrelevant.<sup>224</sup>

On one hand, the absence of a significant strategic competitor is a welcome situation. On the other hand, responding to the ‘reflexive security dilemma’ created by post-Cold War uni-polarity has by now led to many controversial setbacks for Western actors. As well as being an obvious asset, the unrivalled military power at the disposal of the US and its allies might also be argued as an

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<sup>219</sup> Atkinson, ‘Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class’, p. 352.

<sup>220</sup> Emily O. Goldman, ‘Thinking About Strategy Absent the Enemy’, *Security Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1994, p. 42.

<sup>221</sup> Goldman, ‘Thinking About Strategy’, p. 43–44.

<sup>222</sup> Sten Rynning, *NATO Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 10–11.

<sup>223</sup> Rynning, *NATO Renewed*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>224</sup> Rynning, *NATO Renewed*, pp. 10–11.

unexpected liability. The US has often been accused as acting the part of an unrestrained 'hyperpower' in its military behaviour, and its European allies have occasionally contributed to this criticism.<sup>225</sup> Open-ended strategic conditions compounded by the absence of a serious peer-competitor have allowed Washington to copiously utilise military power to intervene abroad sometimes with negligible caution and without much consideration for the repercussions that might later occur.<sup>226</sup> This disproportionate US emphasis on military solutions to post-Cold War foreign policy problems aligns with Abraham Maslow's psychological metaphor: 'if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail'.<sup>227</sup> From a risk theory perspective, the perception of war as a preventative instrument is likely to exacerbate this tendency.

The height of the US 'hyperpower' era is marked by military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq during the early 2000s. As the US went 'unchecked' in the absence of a peer-competitor, international strategic circumstances of that time were permissive of this behaviour. However, domestic-social factors – a focus for risk theory – should not be discounted as a further cause propelling Washington towards these interventions. Coker argues that a major contradiction in the risk society is that 'We [the risk society] have become increasingly anxious, and at the same time, less strategically ambitious'.<sup>228</sup> While the level of strategic ambition is a point of contention to be examined in the next section, it is here possible to link US 'hyperpower' behaviour with the risk society's 'safety first' preference. Heightened by the 9/11 attacks, increased social anxiety was a prevailing condition that reinforced the preventative utility that the Bush administration's perceived in military force. 'Safety first' can be suspected as structuring the outlook of political leaders to perceive risk minimisation ranging from terrorism to stopping 'tyrannical governments' wielding WMD as an appealing advantage of preventative wars. However, linking to this dissertation's research puzzle, experiences from either US-led or NATO operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya vividly exemplifies that conducting war on a preventative basis also harbours profound disadvantages. Heng argues that the initial surveillance phase is crucial for informing decisions on preventative action.<sup>229</sup> Robert Jervis uses the Bush Doctrine's preventative logic to argue that such strategies are 'unsustainable' as they rely heavily on the state intelligence apparatus to constantly provide accurate evaluations of the main risks to national security.<sup>230</sup> Even the most sophisticated intelligence gathering exercises are flawed and mistakes will

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<sup>225</sup> John R. Deni, 'Still the One? The Role of Europe in American Defense Strategy', *Orbis*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2016, p. 39.

<sup>226</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'Alliances in a Unipolar World', *World Politics*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2009, pp. 94–95. And Posen, *Restraint*, p. 65.

<sup>227</sup> Abraham Maslow cited in Eric Dion, 'Canada's *Comprehensive Approach* in Afghanistan: A Critical Review of Literature, 2001–2011', *Defence Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2014, p. 196.

<sup>228</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.12.

<sup>229</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 14

<sup>230</sup> Jim George, 'Leo Strauss, Neoconservatism and US Foreign Policy: Esoteric Nihilism and the Bush Doctrine', *International Politics*, vol.42, no. 2, 2005, p.191.

inevitably occur.<sup>231</sup> As Coker hints, technological advancement extending from the RMA may have allowed Western military organisations to hold a false confidence that they were edging closer to ‘full-spectrum dominance’ and ‘information superiority’ that would grant near-flawless efficiency for ‘precision-guided missions’.<sup>232</sup> This thinking interprets that superior intelligence, matched with precise military technologies could allow Western states to meet preventative strategic objectives in a quick and risk-efficient manner.

### 1.3.3. Under-appreciating consequences

To draw from Williams’ risk theory framework, identifying the precise parameters of a risk is an essential task when creating policy that acts as a medium to guides a state towards obtaining ‘security’ and away from the possibility of ‘destruction’ in any form.<sup>233</sup> Preventative warfare imposes especially severe pressure on the vulnerabilities inherent to intelligence gathering. Responding to the open-ended, ‘reflexive security dilemma’, military interventions in the post-Cold War era has seen Western actors wrongfully distort many reference points for risk, leading to policies that have not always enhanced security and the forgiveness for these errors has been minimal in many instances. The US infamously over-estimated the security risks that Iraq under Saddam could pose with WMD in 2003. The fatality and financial costs of this failure centre on the US military having to remain in Iraq as a stabilisation presence, embroiling itself in torrid conditions as violence spiralled. In 2011, NATO leaders under-estimated the risk of anti-regime militias being unable to form a stable governing authority in post-Gaddafi Libya; weak central authority has been unable to prevent violent turmoil there ever since. Despite these failures, identifying the main parameters for a risk as a step to anticipate possible causes of future harm remains an important practice for security planners in today’s era of ‘strategic uncertainty’. This routine can provide the essential reference points around which effective policies can be formed, as Rasmussen puts it: ‘The concept of risk as the new guiding principle of strategy makes it possible to connect a number of events, policy initiatives and technological developments, which would otherwise seem random’.<sup>234</sup>

To expand on the preventative purpose of military action as an important dimension of risk theory covered in this chapter, Heng has outlined three ‘tell-tale’ signs to further decipher war as a form of risk management. He stresses that, in combination with this preventative focus, the risk society can be expected to strictly contemplate the consequences that a possible management action might cause for its interests. According to Heng, war in a risk management guise will embrace:

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<sup>231</sup> Robert Jervis, ‘Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot be Sustained’, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.120, no. 3, 2005, pp. 351–377.

<sup>232</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.11.

<sup>233</sup> Williams, ‘NATO and the Risk Society’, p. 188.

<sup>234</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p.7.

“active anticipation” and “reflexive” consideration of possible adverse consequences that have yet to occur [this] drives preventive policy. The precautionary principle guides policy-makers in managing ill-defined risks’.<sup>235</sup>

This emphasis on ‘active anticipation’ has also received prominence in the policy outlooks expressed by US leaders. When discussing the military transformation approach that post-Cold War globalisation required, Donald Rumsfeld, serving a second stint as US Secretary of Defence between 2001 and 2006, made the striking argument that:

We must promote a more entrepreneurial approach: one that encourages people to be proactive, not reactive, and to behave less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists; one that does not wait for threats to emerge and be ‘validated’ but rather anticipates them before they appear and develops new capabilities to dissuade and deter them.<sup>236</sup>

With pertinence for this dissertation’s research puzzle, with reference to the basic narrative of long-term Western military experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, these claims of ‘active anticipation’ stand as contentious theoretical propositions. It is plausible to accept the risk theory propositions that ‘probabilistic’ thinking and precautionary ‘better safe than sorry’ logic guided the US and its allies towards the initial military intervention stage in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. However, considering how each intervention progressed after the initial phase, it would be dubious to claim that careful and comprehensive consideration of the consequences at stake dominated the thinking of Western leaders.

The initial risk leading to intervention in each case was clearly contemplated and understood. However, if one focuses analysis on the months and years following from the initial intervention, many weaknesses in stabilisation arose because the coordinating actors did not devote enough consideration to the consequences triggered by initial military action. For example, once Iraq was occupied; US security planners led by Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld have been blamed for their inept appreciation of the consequences that extended from the quick decision to disband the Iraqi military once controlled by Saddam’s Ba’ath Party. This inadvertently led to a further weakening the monopoly of force held by central authority in Iraq that soon facilitated a spiral into violent turmoil.<sup>237</sup> The US military comfortably overthrew Taliban rule in Kabul in late 2001. However, as events progressed after this, it can be suspected that the NATO leaders that planned Afghanistan’s stabilisation did not fully comprehend the consequences likely to evolve from military engagement. As an indication of this, Coker recounts a question-and-answer session between the military leader that

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<sup>235</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 14.

<sup>236</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, ‘Transforming the Military’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2002, p. 29.

<sup>237</sup> James P. Pfiffner, ‘US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army’, *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2010, pp. 76–85.

spearheaded OEF, General Tommy Franks, and junior officers attending a seminar at the US Naval Academy. When asked what the ‘nature’ of the war being fought by the US in Afghanistan was, Franks replied that this ‘was a great question for historians’.<sup>238</sup> It can be inferred from Coker’s reading that Franks did not actually know the answer to this question, and was thus ignoring the wise warning from Clausewitz to avoid any war whose broad nature is unknown.<sup>239</sup> This warning can be interpreted to include a wariness of the consequences that are likely to unfold after early military engagement. NATO did not take the consequences of operating in Afghanistan seriously enough between 2001 and 2008. This was displayed in both the ISAF and the OEF military presences having to severely suffer from a ‘lack of significant manpower on the ground’.<sup>240</sup> This was a fateful error as it left the door ajar for the Taliban to recover as a formidable insurgency to later oppose NATO’s military presence.

When the aforementioned examples are considered, it becomes possible to doubt Heng’s theoretical assertion that risk sensitive security planners are cautiously guided by the consequences that are likely to unfold as the strategic environment evolves. Mistakes and setbacks regularly occur for those planning military operations, this is an occupational hazard. When one considers the litany of errors that have defined Western military experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, it becomes readily possible to doubt if policymakers are especially sensitive to the evolving consequences of military action. On one hand, it can be argued that Heng might be over-exaggerating the attention that security planners devote to future consequences. This is a critique that can be strengthened by claims that highlight Western policymakers as emphasising strategic transformation that takes a ‘proactive’ or ‘head on’ approach when responding to risk. Through this lens, it is the risk society’s ‘safety first’ and ‘probabilistic’ thinking that propels an urgency to engage in preventative wars without taking enough care to account for longer-term repercussions.

On the other hand, rather complementing Heng’s outlook, further theorists have indicated a puzzling contradiction that complicates the risk society’s outlook on future consequences. Rasmussen argues that unlike the ‘single, means–end rationality’ of earlier modernity, the ‘reflexive security dilemma’ that Western security planners must confront today is instead ‘a hall of mirrors offering the possibility of endless reflection on what one is doing and what one might do on seeing the issue from another point of view’.<sup>241</sup> Coker theorises that ‘Today we [the risk society] are more sober about both progress and the future. For, although we still accept that things may progress, we now recognise there is

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<sup>238</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.22.

<sup>239</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 22.

<sup>240</sup> Benjamin Schreer, ‘The Evolution of NATO’s Strategy in Afghanistan’, in Håkan Edström and Dennis Gyllensporre, eds., *Pursuing Strategy: NATO Operations from the Gulf War to Gaddafi*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.144.

<sup>241</sup> Rasmussen, “‘A Parallel Globalization of Terror’”, p.328.

a price to be paid'.<sup>242</sup> According to Coker, as a risk society we are 'increasingly wary of the consequences of our own actions', this is a society that is no longer prepared to 'take progress on trust'.<sup>243</sup> The risk society is thus a "more modest modernity", a sign of modernity coming to terms with its own limits'.<sup>244</sup> In his original macro-sociological risk theory, Beck has referred to nuclear energy as social progress once hailed as a technological breakthrough to solve many of the most serious problems associated with industrialised modernisation; this option could significantly reduce carbon emissions while still crucially ensuring an economically affordable energy supply.<sup>245</sup> However, as demonstrated by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, the Fukushima meltdown in 2011 and other accidents, society's own modernisation experience with nuclear energy has since revealed the terrifying limits of this technology: the side-effect that any error, negligence or sabotage pertaining to nuclear energy management risks gravely endangering human habitation.<sup>246</sup> Combined with obsessive reflection, a strong awareness of the side-effects that are likely to result from society's own actions allows decision-making in the risk society to be theorised as highly cautious, often verging on doubtful and hesitant, concerning the consequences that a particular action might trigger.

Drawing on Stephen Toulmin's arguments, Coker outlines that periods of earlier modernity culminating with WWII for Western European states and later the Vietnam War for the US were the final occasions when these societies fought wars in an 'unselfconscious manner', where the public initially consented to the large-scale mobilisation of social resources to enable a war effort.<sup>247</sup> Emphasising a feature of the risk society that is likely to structure incoherent security policies, Coker theorises that self-conscious reflection as a now dominant social condition has meant that the 'western world no longer has the courage of its convictions'.<sup>248</sup> This claim can be scaled down to security planners becoming increasingly self-conscious about the 'boomerang effects' that could result from the many options that they oversee. The 'boomerang effect' is an element of risk theory that will undergo closer examination in chapter three, but one that Rasmussen simplifies as 'You do something and are stuck with the consequences'.<sup>249</sup> Therefore, as the theoretical indicators sometimes point in opposite directions, it

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<sup>242</sup> Christopher Coker, 'Globalisation and Insecurity in the Twenty-First Century: NATO and the Management of Risk', *Adelphi Paper*, no. 345, 2004, pp. 57–58.

<sup>243</sup> Coker, 'Globalisation and Insecurity in the Twenty-First Century', pp. 57–58.

<sup>244</sup> Coker, 'Globalisation and Insecurity in the Twenty-First Century', pp. 57–58.

<sup>245</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>246</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>247</sup> Christopher Coker, *Humane Warfare*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 42. And Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 160.

<sup>248</sup> Coker, *Humane Warfare*, p. 42.

<sup>249</sup> Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'Afghanistan and the Boomerang Effect', in Cheryl Benard, Ole Kværnø, Peter Dahl Thruelsen and Kristen Cordell, *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2007, p. 18.

remains important to question whether it is ‘proactive’ urgency within the risk society that leads to rash and hasty policies that undermine stabilisation policy, or if policy shortcomings are instead caused either by paralysation or ineffective ‘half-hearted’ measures extending from overly-reflective, doubtful and hesitant decision-making.

## 1.4. Debate on strategic ambition levels

As his second ‘telltale’ sign to understand war as a form of risk management, Heng argues that those conducting war will pursue ‘Minimalist goals [that] involve simply trying to prevent the worst’.<sup>250</sup> This ‘utilitarian’ approach emerges from the risk society’s ‘safety first’ preference, and it is argued as ‘coexist[ing] uneasily’ with liberal ideological principles aiming to do ‘good’ such as to uphold justice or promote liberal democracy.<sup>251</sup> Liberal discourse might veil the rationale for war, but Heng argues that this only ‘papers over’ actual policy action that downplays ideological guidance when the need to ‘prevent the worst’ becomes a pressing concern.<sup>252</sup> A ‘safety first’ approach will prioritise a utilitarian approach ahead of ‘moral questions such as justice, guilt and [the] motivations of “high-risk” individuals, or rehabilitation of failed/failing states’.<sup>253</sup> Heng’s ideologically sparse theorising of risk management can be interpreted as uncannily similar to *realpolitik* and this has been elaborated by other risk theorists.

### 1.4.1. Preventing the worst

The Bush administration contained many prominent proponents of neoconservatism, an ideology perceiving military power as an effective instrument to support liberal democratic transformation under particular circumstances.<sup>254</sup> However, Coker has also argued that the Bush administration simultaneously harboured a less acclaimed realist dimension. Contrary to arguments claiming a US-led effort to oversee a liberal democratic transformation in the Middle East, Coker instead believes that Bush was a proponent of ‘the new American realism’, the first post-Cold War president to take the US to war without the ‘prospect of a New World Order’.<sup>255</sup> This pragmatic outlook was underscored by Condoleezza Rice while Secretary of State under Bush, as she outlined that the administration’s worldview sought ‘to make the world ultimately safer. Not perfect,

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<sup>250</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>251</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>252</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>253</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>254</sup> Jean-François Drolet, ‘A Liberalism Betrayed? American Neoconservatism and the Theory of International Relations’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2010, pp. 89–118.

<sup>255</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 12

just better'.<sup>256</sup> Williams argues that 'safety first' preferences have also influenced a realist form of selective engagement for military interventions among the broader set of NATO members. NATO leaders have insisted that military actions in the former Yugoslavia, culminating in OAF in Kosovo in 1999 were motivated by humanitarian principles, but, according to Williams, this explanation is correct only insofar as the alliance's Western governments anticipated some severe risks to their national security emerging from wider regional destabilisation. A stream of refugees coming from continuing violence was perceived with the most concern.<sup>257</sup> The US or NATO did not perceive the same risks to their own security as extending from other catastrophic humanitarian emergencies, this was tragically demonstrated by Western inaction during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and with the famine in Sudan's war stricken Darfur region throughout the 2000s. When no risks to Western security interests have been anticipated, neither the US or NATO has felt the urgency to militarily intervene.<sup>258</sup>

Realism continues as a theme for Heng's third 'telltale' sign that outlines war as risk management will not aim to achieve 'perfect solutions, but [will] more modestly [seek] to reduce risks and prevent hypothesised future harm', with this objective, 'Non-events are thus indicators of success'.<sup>259</sup> Influenced by 'safety first' risk societies, the utilitarian realism in military engagement that Heng outlines through his three 'telltale' signs contains much plausibility. However, to perceive what Heng proposes as dominating the Western approach to stabilisation would be to contradict a large body of literature that upholds the guiding role for liberal ideology in this process. It is worth considering whether Heng actually misrepresents risk management as an overly utilitarian and realist practice, empty of any tangible ideology. There are contradictions in Heng's own work on this very point: while his three 'telltale' signs were elaborated in 2006, in a 2015 article published with Kenneth McDonagh, he claims that, contrary to being a 'sterile' or 'technical' procedure without ideology, risk management is instead closely guided by the Western state's 'power and ideology'.<sup>260</sup> As well as Heng's possible indecision, disagreement is also present within the broader risk theory literature. As a candidate in the 2000 US Presidential Election, George W. Bush was a prominent critic of the Clinton administration's attempts to conduct nation-building abroad to fulfil the aims of US security strategy. Sometimes equated with 'foreign policy as social work', strong liberal ideological connotations have been attributed to the US approach to nation-building

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<sup>256</sup> Cited in Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 13

<sup>257</sup> Michael J. Williams, *NATO, Security and Risk Management: Paradoxes and Possibilities*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, pp. 56–57.

<sup>258</sup> Williams, *NATO, Security and Risk Management*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>259</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 14.

<sup>260</sup> Kenneth McDonagh and Yee-Kuang Heng, 'Managing Risk, the State and Political Economy in Historical Perspective', *International Politics*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2015, p. 408.

both by its critics and by its proponents.<sup>261</sup> Despite campaign promises to the contrary, once Bush was elected president, Rasmussen argues that he ‘soon found that fighting and winning wars in the twenty-first century is about nation-building and the management of risk’.<sup>262</sup> It can be inferred from this statement that Rasmussen is including nation-building attempts as forms of risk management. However, with a focus on operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Coker doubts that the US genuinely practiced true nation-building. Aligning with Heng’s proposition that liberal rhetoric will ‘paper over’ more utilitarian efforts aiming to ‘prevent the worst’, evidence indicating US-led liberal nation-building intentions as often superficial comes with Western references to the Afghan and Iraqi conflict environments as ‘complex adaptive systems’.<sup>263</sup> Such mechanical ‘systems’ thinking is known to omit ideological subjectivities to instead emphasise technical problem-solving.

#### 1.4.2. Liberal and neoconservative ideologies

Whether risk management is predominantly guided by technical problem-solving or political ideology is point of major disagreement within the relevant literature. This discrepancy has only been exacerbated by more recent trends in US security strategy. While formulated on evidence presented by the early GWOT during the 2000s, Heng’s utilitarian theoretical proposition that intervening actors will choose a strategy that ‘prevents the worst’ over ideological concerns perhaps unintentionally better reflects the security strategy actually implemented by the US in 2021. As civil wars today rage in Syria and Yemen, the US has externally engaged with a thread-bare utilitarian ‘safety first’ approach. Washington has been hesitant to engage with direct military contact. US strategic objectives have instead been primarily pursued by supporting proxy factions fighting against a mutual enemy. Despite occasional international pressure, Washington has ruled out conventional ground force deployments, the form of warfare most prone to soldier casualties and the political risks likely to emanate from these. The Obama and Trump administrations have instead reinforced proxies with air power, or with contactless engagement using advanced military technologies, most prominently UAV strikes aiming to destroy adversary networks.<sup>264</sup> As a contemporary risk society, this US approach to war beholds a tightening of the structural contradiction that Coker outlines, anxiety about security risks remains in US society, but the level of strategic ambition continues to decline. Much of this has accumulated from America’s agonising military commitments to stabilisation in Afghanistan and Iraq. The utilitarian approach that Washington

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<sup>261</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, ‘The Imperial Lure: Nation Building as a US Response to Terrorism’, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2006, p. 38. And Michael Mandelbaum, ‘Foreign Policy as Social Work’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 1, 1996, pp. 16–32.

<sup>262</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p. 92.

<sup>263</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 150–154.

<sup>264</sup> Andreas Krieg, ‘Externalizing the Burden of War: the Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East’, *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no.1, 2016, pp. 97–113.

now employs appears far removed from the ‘American maximalism’ that, after a brief initial period of indifference, many claim that the Bush administration embraced as its strategy for the GWOT.

This further highlights the disagreement within the relevant literature on whether ‘maximalism’ underpinned by liberal ideological principles guided US security strategy during the 2000s, or if this was mere rhetoric concealing Washington’s more modest intention to ‘prevent the worst’. Stephen Sestanovich argues that Bush’s policy ‘maximalism’ for the GWOT foresaw that ‘a new and better international framework was the only means by which [Bush era] policy-makers expected to prevent the erosion of America’s position’.<sup>265</sup> US focus centred on rehabilitating Afghanistan and Iraq as stable democracies that would no longer present security risks for others. Contrary to a merely ‘preventing the worst’, Sestanovich argues that the Bush administration sought ‘to attack problems headon – not “manage” them at some acceptable level of cost and risk, not pretend that gradualism would work’.<sup>266</sup> While this deviates from what Heng proposes, this divergence with Sestanovich might still be partially reconciled. Jack Snyder argued that liberal democratic peace theory was an important influence on Bush’s foreign policy.<sup>267</sup> While a vision that never came to fruition, this foresaw that once liberal democratic transformation was achieved in Afghanistan and Iraq, ‘worst case scenarios’ would thus be sustainably reduced for US interests in a region of critical strategic importance.

This was an ideological perspective that many argue created the momentum for US interventions during the 2000s and while many in the Bush administration saw the military-assisted cultivation of liberal democracy in the Middle East as a strategic solution, others have argued this as a serious problem and the origin for many US foreign policy failures. Despite much advice from within the US military that was sceptical of any urgent risks coming from Baghdad in 2003, Robert Gilpin argues that most of the neoconservative policy staff that dominated the Bush administration’s preventative strategy were ‘ideological amateurs’ harbouring distorted notions that mistook the utilities of war.<sup>268</sup> This included the politically attractive, but deluded understanding that the US would hardly be drawn into a quagmire in post-intervention Iraq, as policymakers supporting the war first believed that ‘the Iraqi people would welcome US forces as liberators and greet them with “open arms”’.<sup>269</sup> Barry Posen points to a post-Cold War US security strategy striving for ‘liberal hegemony’ as the fault for most imbroglios encountered by Washington, with the failures in Afghanistan and Iraq having been especially damaging. For Posen, striving for ‘liberal hegemony’ has been ‘a costly, wasteful, and self-defeating grand strategy’.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Sestanovich, ‘American Maximalism’, p. 21.

<sup>266</sup> Sestanovich, ‘American Maximalism’, p. 21.

<sup>267</sup> Snyder, ‘One World, Many Theories’, p. 54.

<sup>268</sup> Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important’, pp.10–12.

<sup>269</sup> Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important’, p.13.

<sup>270</sup> Posen, *Restraint*, p. 65.

Heng doubts the ideological sincerity that has focused other studies, arguing that risk managers will seek to ‘reshape’ an external political situation only to reduce ‘opportunities for harm over addressing causes’.<sup>271</sup> When linked to this dissertation’s research puzzle, this theoretical proposition is both important and contentious, as it directs attention towards questioning whether NATO over-prioritised the effort to reduce harm at the expense of a stabilisation approach for Afghanistan that could thoroughly address the most acute causes that allowed violence to continue. A first glance might dismiss this prospect. In nominal terms, NATO’s stabilisation policy in Afghanistan had many social, political and economic layers in addition to military security provision. This multi-layer approach favoured by Western actors throughout the early post-Cold War era is sometimes referred to as ‘complex stabilisation’.<sup>272</sup> NATO officially prefers the term Comprehensive Approach, while emphasising that it is essential to conduct crisis management by combining ‘political, civilian and military instruments’.<sup>273</sup> NATO insists that it is a security organisation well-suited to coordinating this mode of crisis management because of its ‘expertise in civilian-military interaction’.<sup>274</sup>

With its broad military, political and economic scope, the Comprehensive Approach claims a focus on resolving the complex causes for conflict. Many contemporary civil wars have a strong ethno-political dimension, and contrary to the Clausewitzian proposition perceiving war outcomes as hinging on a decisive battle between belligerent factions, contemporary civil wars might instead better resemble ‘complex political emergencies’ in the eyes of external actors seeking to intervene and manage.<sup>275</sup> Jonathan Goodhand and David Hulme argue that stabilising a ‘complex political emergency’ requires political, economic and civil society strategies in addition to the application of military force in different forms.<sup>276</sup> This idea closely converges with many of the principles outlined in NATO’s Comprehensive Approach. Societies bitterly divided by ethno-political violence often develop as hosts for ‘predatory social formations’, meaning warlord politics, organised crime, human trafficking and other regressive ills.<sup>277</sup> Sometimes accelerated by intensified globalisation, these problems

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<sup>271</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.14.

<sup>272</sup> Toby Dodge, ‘Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding: The Application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 39, no.5, 2003, p. 1189.

<sup>273</sup> NATO, A “Comprehensive Approach” to Crises’, Press Release, 26 June 2018, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_51633.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_51633.htm) (accessed 29 June 2018).

<sup>274</sup> NATO, A “Comprehensive Approach” to Crises’.

<sup>275</sup> Ian Roxborough, ‘Clausewitz and the Sociology of War’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1994, p. 623.

<sup>276</sup> Jonathan Goodhand and David Hulme, ‘From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies: Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1999, pp. 16–17.

<sup>277</sup> Goodhand and Hulme, ‘From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies’, pp. 16–17.

are regularly compounded by the human and financial exchanges flowing into conflict areas through insecure and porous international borders.<sup>278</sup>

NATO's Comprehensive Approach is the organisation's main toolkit to manage conflicts that form in this way. However, a closer second glance at NATO's actual experience with the Comprehensive Approach in Afghanistan might fall more within Heng's expectation that the alliance held a preference to 'reduce harm' and 'prevent the worst' that overrode efforts to more thoroughly address the conflict's causes. The Comprehensive Approach can therefore be suspected as underperforming during the stabilisation effort, an instrument that merely 'papered over' many deeper problems. Since 2001, military and civilian 'load factors' have fluctuated over ISAF's duration, it is therefore difficult to make the argument that it was actually as utilitarian an effort as risk theory might suggest. The US and NATO and their broader global networks have nominally delivered a vast quantity of civilian and military resources in support of Afghan stabilisation. This might not appear as modest or utilitarian at first; to the contrary, one could be forgiven for suggesting participant mobilisation levels as brimming with ambition and 'maximalism'. However, this is a suggestion that evidence from the literature on NATO burden- and risk-sharing in Afghanistan partially diminishes. While the West's 'safety first' risk societies expect their governments to protect them from security risks, this preference is often undermined by a reluctance to devote enough military or financial resources to security management. Western societies have grown risk-averse about soldier fatalities, with the effect that their governments have become increasingly cautious because of the political risks that fatalities suffered on expeditionary deployments might create. Different strategic calculations have compelled NATO governments to contribute to ISAF, be this actual counterterrorism considerations linked to turmoil in Afghanistan or the motivation of a 'side-payment' to improve ties with the hegemonic US.<sup>279</sup> While nominal participation was high from NATO allies, many militarily contributing to ISAF have also imposed strict national caveats that restrict armed forces engaging with the mission's more dangerous combat dimensions.<sup>280</sup>

## 1.5. Risk and expeditionary operations

During the 2000s and continuing into Obama's first presidential term from 2009 until 2012, US-led military engagement in Afghanistan was not as realist or utilitarian as what followed over later years. NATO's approach was instead an uncomfortable combination of liberal 'maximalist' and realist utilitarian

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<sup>278</sup> Goodhand and Hulme, 'From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies', pp. 16–17.

<sup>279</sup> Nik Hynek and Péter Marton, 'Introduction: What Makes Coalitions S/Tick?', in Nik Hynek and Péter Marton, eds., *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, pp. 5–6.

<sup>280</sup> James Sperling and Mark Webber, 'NATO: from Kosovo to Kabul', *International Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2009, pp. 507–508.

elements. As well as civilian security provision, during the US military-led ‘surge’ between 2009 and 2011, NATO and its partner governments doubled the size of the military contingent tasked with stabilisation from 64,000 to 132,000.<sup>281</sup> However, an increased military presence did not mean that the politics of ‘safety first’ had a reduced influence on the mission’s performance. Responding to US leadership, many NATO allies and partners felt politically compelled to militarily contribute to Afghanistan’s stabilisation. Despite more active participation, many states still retained strict national caveats regulating military functions.<sup>282</sup> For example, Benjamin Schreer highlights Germany as both a high-profile and ‘reluctant’ participant in NATO’s stabilisation in Afghanistan. As the US furthered its calls for a ‘fairer’ distribution of military burden-sharing tasks in NATO, Berlin increased its scepticism of NATO’s broader military mobilisation for US-led ‘wars of choice’.<sup>283</sup> Peter Forster and Stephen Cimbala define burden-sharing as the ‘distribution of costs and risks among members of a group in the process of accomplishing a common goal’.<sup>284</sup>

### 1.5.1. Military fatalities and combat risk

While willing to take over the command of ISAF after 2003, Germany confined its participation to relatively benign operational locations in north Afghanistan, rather than the more combat risk-intense southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. With a message of ‘common burden-sharing and alliance solidarity’, Washington has appealed to Germany to allocate more military resources to volatile combat locations requiring stabilisation.<sup>285</sup> These have not been entertained by Chancellor Angela Merkel, as many ‘German security commentators’ saw flexibility in ISAF participation where ‘each ally could choose his individual force contribution according to his own interests and risk assessment’.<sup>286</sup> Popular caveats for many NATO allies have been to restrict combat exposure by: limiting military engagement after snowfall; during darkness hours; and while transporting ANA units by helicopter.<sup>287</sup> Reflecting US frustrations at these convoluted trends within NATO in 2011, Secretary of Defence Robert Gates warned of the grave problem of NATO becoming a ‘two-tiered’ alliance, divided between allies that can make a tangible military contribution and others unable

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<sup>281</sup> *The Guardian*, ‘Afghanistan Troop Numbers Data: How Many Does Each Country Send to the NATO Mission There?’, 21 September 2009, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/sep/21/afghanistan-troop-numbers-nato-data> (accessed 8 July 2020).

<sup>282</sup> Sperling and Webber, ‘NATO: from Kosovo to Kabul’, p. 507.

<sup>283</sup> Benjamin Schreer, ‘The Reluctant Ally? Germany, NATO and the Use of Force’, in Janne Haaland Martlary and Magnus Petersson, eds., *NATO’s European Allies: Military Capability and Political Will*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 162.

<sup>284</sup> Peter K. Forster and Stephen J. Cimbala, *The US, NATO and Military Burden-Sharing*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, p.1.

<sup>285</sup> Schreer, ‘The Reluctant Ally?’, p. 170.

<sup>286</sup> Schreer, ‘The Reluctant Ally?’, p. 170.

<sup>287</sup> Sperling and Webber, ‘NATO: from Kosovo to Kabul’, p. 509.

to do so.<sup>288</sup> The politics of risk has played a central role in this alliance rupture. The US seeks a more equal distribution of the military risks within NATO, the undertaking of which Washington perceived as essential for Afghan stabilisation, while profound risk-aversion means that many European allies remain hesitant. Linking to this dissertation's research puzzle, widespread caveat imposition can be suspected as creating additional operational complications for ISAF's planning structure, this troubling the mission's stabilisation performance.

ISAF's military fatality counts have been heavily politicised. As the mission's leading states, counts taken at different intervals routinely place the US and the UK within the top five most affected participants. Other regulars in this bracket have included Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands, smaller states where a relatively low number of fatalities can still produce a large per capita figure.<sup>289</sup> Among NATO's larger members, owing to less combat exposure, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain all display significantly lower military fatality rates per capita.<sup>290</sup> Following this pattern, the burden-sharing literature has begun to pay closer attention to the idea of risk. NATO alliance politics on burden- and risk-sharing have never historically been without controversy. Current difficulties could still just as well be summed up by the 1970 view expressed by US Permanent Representative to NATO, Harlan Cleveland, that described NATO as 'an organised controversy about who is going to do how much'.<sup>291</sup> Nevertheless, NATO's transformation from Cold War deterrence to expeditionary operations from the 1990s onwards has still broadened its burden-sharing focus. Cold War burden-sharing analysis was preoccupied with defence finances as the 'input side', but NATO's switch to expeditionary operations has instead meant that the 'output side' emphasising the political and military risk-sharing required to meet stabilisation tasks now receives better scrutiny.<sup>292</sup> Objecting to some of the terminology in the NATO burden-sharing debates, Wallace Thies argues that the term 'burden-sharing' is an inaccurate descriptor of the process that actually takes place, instead proposing 'burden-shifting' as a more appropriate phrase.<sup>293</sup> Contrary to 'sharing', 'burden-shifting' consists in members 'persuading the others to do more of the work necessary for the alliance to succeed while fending

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<sup>288</sup> Robert M. Gates, 'Remarks by Secretary Gates at the Security and Defense Agenda, Brussels, Belgium', US Department of Defence, Press Release, 10 June 2011, available at: <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4839> (accessed 1 July 2019).

<sup>289</sup> Steve Coll, 'Burden Sharing', *The New Yorker*, 11 March 2010, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/steve-coll/burden-sharing> (accessed 2 September 2019)

<sup>290</sup> For constantly updated data on NATO military fatalities in Afghanistan, see "iCasualties", available at: <http://icasualties.org/App/AfghanFatalities> (accessed 7 July 2020).

<sup>291</sup> Harlan Cleveland cited in Tomáš Valášek, 'A New Transatlantic Security Bargain', *Carnegie Europe*, 23 May 2017, available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/05/23/new-transatlantic-security-bargain-pub-70050> (accessed 23 July 2018).

<sup>292</sup> Jens Ringsmose, 'NATO Burden-Sharing Redux: Continuity and Change after the Cold War', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2010, p. 320.

<sup>293</sup> Wallace J. Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2003, p. 7.

off requests from the others to do more itself'.<sup>294</sup> To further evolve this terminology, it is a tenable argument that the politics of 'risk-shifting' have dominated ISAF's internal politics.

Linking to this dissertation's research puzzle, as it compounds inequality in risk-sharing, 'risk-shifting' can be suspected to have been a significant cause for NATO's political division and military incoherence in Afghanistan. This 'risk-shifting' pattern has not just been the sole preserve of NATO's internal politics; the alliance long attempted to 'shift' many of the military risks to the Afghans themselves. Receiving tutelage and direction from NATO and its partners, the ANA grew to 200,000 personnel between 2002 and 2019. The ANA was the military force that NATO leaders anticipated would carry the mantle for Afghanistan's baseline security as the alliance's military contingents gradually withdrew. While NATO insisted on the need to 'transfer responsibility' to the Afghan authorities, this 'risk-shifting' strategy might be argued as premature if stabilisation aims were not being achieved.<sup>295</sup>

### 1.5.2. Utilitarian alternatives to national armed forces

When all agencies participating in the COIN campaign against the Taliban are considered, the ANA's ranks suffered the highest number of soldier casualties and by considerable distance. By 2019, it was estimated that approximately 2,400 US soldiers had died over the course of the war. This number is dwarfed by the same estimation for the ANA over the same period; its fatalities were close to 62,000 personnel.<sup>296</sup> NATO's sponsorship did not prevent the ANA from becoming a disparate and chaotic military organisation; it suffered massively from desertions and even defections to the Taliban.<sup>297</sup> More recent literature has highlighted Western risk-avoidance through flexible and *ad hoc* SOF mentorship for supported proxies such as the SDF during Syria's civil war. NATO's work with the ANA contrasts moderately by comparison as it has entailed a greater commitment accompanied by a more ambitious future vision perceiving eventual transfer to the ANA as a baseline protector of public order. While this vision for 'risk-shifting' satisfied a domestic political preference to allow NATO governments to negate 'worst case' scenarios by putting less troops into combat, the claim still cannot be made that this has been a successful policy to allow tangible stabilisation.

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<sup>294</sup> Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, p. 7.

<sup>295</sup> NATO, 'NATO and Afghanistan', Press Release, 08 July 2020, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_8189.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm) (accessed 19 August 2020).

<sup>296</sup> Daniel Victor, 'Need a Refresher on the War in Afghanistan? Here Are the Basics', *The New York Times*, 21 December 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/21/world/asia/afghanistan-war-explainer.html> (accessed 21 June 2019).

<sup>297</sup> Stefanie Gliniski, 'Resurgent Taliban Bode Ill for Afghan Peace: Four Months after the U.S.-Taliban Deal, The Militant Group is Growing – and Growing Bolder, While Its Al Qaeda Ties Remain', *Foreign Policy*, 7 July 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/07/taliban-al-qaeda-afghanistan-united-states-peace-deal-resurgence/> (accessed 8 July 2020).

The risk society's predilection for 'safety first' still does not mean that Western societies are developing a utopian or pacifist outlook on war. Western governments have instead evolved their approach to war, avoiding some military operations likely to agitate strong 'safety first' elements in society. This will obviously leave gaps in any military strategy and, as their utilitarian approach has developed, Western governments have increasingly put their faith in proxies, PMSCs and contactless military technologies as risk-efficient solutions that can fill these. Caroline Varin argues that 'Boots on the ground will always be required for certain jobs the machines [robotics, UAVs] cannot do'.<sup>298</sup> NATO governments have not completely abandoned risk-taking and will sometimes prefer their national armed forces over PMSCs or proxies because they will be better suited to certain military tasks. However, where proxies, PMSCs or advanced military technologies were once often auxiliary to the role of national armed forces in security planning, it now becomes plausible to suggest whether risk-averse Western strategists are beginning to instead envisage proxies, PMSCs and contactless military technologies as more to the forefront with national armed forces becoming auxiliary. Where liberal ideology factors in, all this is unclear; writing in 1995, Thomas Risse-Kappen already saw the West's liberal democracies as 'Janus-faced' in their outlooks on war.<sup>299</sup> While democratic peace theorists argue that liberal societies abstain from war with each other, Risse-Kappen argues that these societies still remain remarkably 'warlike' towards non-democracies and their participation in 'militarised disputes' is thus not uncommon.<sup>300</sup> Contrary to 'preventing the worst', under this explanation, ideological 'self' and 'other' tension influences the decisions of Western societies to engage in wars.<sup>301</sup> While the West's liberal societies might be galvanised to support wars to remove authoritarian regimes perceived as committing humanitarian misdeeds, this still does not rule out that there are contradictions with this ideology as far as what these societies will tolerate once war begins to be waged.

Andreas Krieg's analysis of the West's most recent expeditionary military involvements in Libya, Syria and Yemen have indicated increasing signs of utilitarianism derived from 'safety first' risk-aversion. In 2011, NATO leaders insisted that no conventional ground troops were to be deployed for OUP, this mission instead relied on airpower to support rebel factions battling Gaddafi's regime.<sup>302</sup> For its even more peripheral involvements in Syria and Yemen, the US again shied away from conventional ground force deployments. In additional

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<sup>298</sup> Caroline Varin, 'Flying Without Risk: The Norms on Warriors and Their Application to Drone Pilots', *St. Antony's International Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2007, p. 105.

<sup>299</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?: A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, pp. 491–517.

<sup>300</sup> Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?', pp. 491–517.

<sup>301</sup> Risse-Kappen, 'Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies?', pp. 491–517.

<sup>302</sup> BBC News, 'Libya: US, UK and France Attack Gaddafi Forces', 20 March 2011, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12796972> (available at: 7 July 2020).

to conventional airpower, the US has militarily engaged either with contactless technologies such as combat UAVs; relying on SOFs to coordinate proxies fighting directly in conflict; or by contracting PMSCs to do so.<sup>303</sup> Varin argues that ‘courage, loyalty and sacrifice’ were traditional twentieth century traits expected by Western societies of their national military service personnel.<sup>304</sup> Mercenaries – today sanitised as PMSCs – were also discouraged during the twentieth century under the social perception that these were devoid of ‘courage and reliability’.<sup>305</sup> The contradictions of the ‘safety first’ risk society mean that these outlooks have now changed. US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq during the 2000s began the resurgence in the Western appetite for PMSC services, a trend that has since evolved and flourished.

It is plausible to suggest that the risk society’s perceptions differentiate service personnel from national militaries from those employed within PMSCs. The latter are defined by the logic of politicisation contrary to the former defined by commercialisation. Anxious risk-aversion has led national military deployments to now become unbearably politicised. Shunning the ‘sacrifice’ element once expected of Western service personnel, the risk society now expects the state to put ‘safety first’ and undertake responsibility to ensure that national military deployments are minimally exposed to fatality risk. The same politicised ‘safety first’ emphasis fades when swapped with the commercial relationship between procuring governments and PMSCs. Many Western governments perceive PMSCs as an attractive ‘force multiplier’ to fill deployment gaps left either by caveat restrictions that are politically imposed on national militaries or by that force’s operational shortcomings.<sup>306</sup> While the risk society will hold its government responsible for the safety of national armed forces, once commercial outsourcing to a PMSC is undertaken, a neoliberal employment model then shifts the responsibility for personal safety to each individual that is employed.<sup>307</sup>

Contracting to a PMSC is a decision that can relieve political risk resulting from soldier fatalities. Today’s risk societies have been hesitant to accept fatalities within national armed forces on expeditionary deployments. In the US experience, some have seen this in a widespread attempt to elevate the campaign in Afghanistan since 2001 to that in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, even though the US military casualties with the former are much lower in comparison.<sup>308</sup> The contracting state is not burdened with the same political responsibility for PMSC employees; their service is not based on a citizen’s loyalty to the state, but on the commercial decision of the individual contractor. Risk theory

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<sup>303</sup> Krieg, ‘Externalizing the Burden of War’, pp. 97–113.

<sup>304</sup> Varin, ‘Flying Without Risk’, p. 106.

<sup>305</sup> Varin, ‘Flying Without Risk’, p. 106.

<sup>306</sup> James Stavridis and Evelyn N. Farkas, ‘The 21st Century Force Multiplier: Public–Private Collaboration’, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2012, pp. 7–20.

<sup>307</sup> Carolyn Gallaher, ‘Risk and Private Military Work’, *Antipode*, vol. 44, no.3, 2012, p. 783.

<sup>308</sup> David T. Jones, ‘Afghanistan is Not Our Longest War’, *American Diplomacy*, October 2017, available at: <http://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2017/10/afghanistan-is-not-our-longest-war/> (accessed 10 August 2020).

holds considerable promise to capture the domestic political pressure that creates government demand for PMSC procurement and contactless military technologies as increasingly popular forms of warfare. Both are risk-efficient options that enable governments still striving to meet ‘safety first’ objectives. However, with this dissertation’s research puzzle in mind, what is less clear is that while both options might shelter governments from the risk society’s domestic pressures, do these options improve or impede NATO’s ability to provide stabilisation abroad? This is what this dissertation’s research will address.

## 1.6. Conclusion

This dissertation forms a research puzzle that is inquisitive about risk theory’s ability to explain the inadequacies of NATO stabilisation policy in Afghanistan. This chapter has sought to critically assess how previous applications of risk theory have explained war outcomes. The previous literature that connects risk theory and war closely coalesces around a small number of cases around the millennium. This literature has been primarily focused on the motives for war initiation that emanate from risk society conditions, rather than how the same social conditions might actually contribute to risk management decisions over the course of a military campaign. Undertaking a detailed reading of the main literature that links risk theory with military strategy, this chapter has identified at least five claims that intersect with NATO’s policy shortcomings in Afghanistan. First, most risk theorists agree that Western societies have become acutely ‘safety first’ in their strategic outlooks. This has increased social demand for preventative security strategies. However, support for preventative wars has fluctuated over the past twenty years, with social support especially buoyant in the US immediately after the 9/11 attacks. Influenced by the ‘probabilistic thinking’ that propels preventative warfare, US strategists could also rely on unrivalled military might. The removal of Taliban rule in Kabul in 2001 and Saddam’s regime in Baghdad in 2003 were easily accomplishable feats. Nevertheless, the risk theory literature does not have too much further to add on the risk society’s influences over the US-led inability to manage the violent turmoil that followed after the initial intervention. With ‘probabilistic thinking’ always subject to politics, one might propose that after the initial danger perceived has been reduced, today’s risk societies do not possess the long-term commitment for the protracted and arduous stabilisation effort that often follows. As seen in the discourses of the US and UK governments as they outlined their flawed blueprints for intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, a political hesitance to more realistically consider pessimistic post-intervention scenarios may have also been to neglect some crucial aspects of the later stabilisation phases. Heng theorises that risk managers will be sensitively attentive to the consequences of their actions. This proposition is contrary to the US-led stabilisation experience in Iraq and Afghanistan; one might instead propose that stabilisation in each case

suffered because Washington did not more realistically anticipate the consequences that their initial military intervention would create.

Second, risk theorists propose a 'reflexive security dilemma', arguing that a uni-polar international system has led the US and its allies to grapple with 'strategic uncertainty' from the 1990s onwards. Security planning has become far more open-ended without many stationary reference points that made it easier to formulate coherent policies. Western policymakers have mistakenly exaggerated the severity of some risks, while other risks have been wrongly underestimated. Risk theory would suspect that this wider margin for error created by 'strategic uncertainty' has contributed to flaws in NATO's stabilisation policy. Third, Coker theorises that risk societies have 'become increasingly anxious, and at the same time, less strategically ambitious'. If this is correct, it can be expected that this contradiction will maintain social pressure on governments to provide security, but while having a social reluctance that frequently obstructs the allocation of financial and military resources to ensure this. This contradiction will continually propel some military engagement, but without the thorough means required to fully achieve stabilisation and this will result in policy shortcomings. Fourth, as well as creating political frustration within NATO, disputes around military risk-sharing can be suspected as also creating operational shortcomings for ISAF that weaken stabilisation effectiveness. Fifth, the 'increasingly anxious, but less strategically ambitious' social contradiction that Coker outlines can be connected to a tighter Western strategic embrace of: PMSCs; contactless military technologies; and 'risk-shifting' to proxies as preferred choices in warfare. It is still however unclear if an increased reliance on these practices actually culminates in an improvement or and undermining of stabilisation policy.

## 2. THE RISK SOCIETY FROM WAR TO STABILISATION

### 2.1. Introduction

The literature that has previously linked risk theory with military strategy has centred on how ‘war’ has been approached by the risk society. By critically reviewing the NATO-led effort to prevent further risks emerging from Afghanistan as a fragile state, this chapter argues that this literature’s sole focus on ‘war’ is problematically incomplete. Contrary to ‘war’ under its conventional definitions, it is more accurate to discuss NATO’s risk management effort in Afghanistan as a broader stabilisation policy that combined different civilian and military aspects under an aim to prevent the re-emergence of security risks. ‘War-fighting’ has remained important; traditional military combat was a crucial instrument for the select group of NATO members that sought to defeat the Taliban insurgency in southern Afghanistan, but this was still only one of many primary tasks in support of the ISAF stabilisation presence. This mission extended beyond the military defeat of insurgents to embrace a stabilisation effort that was also focused on: the creation of effectively functioning Afghan state institutions; building capacity in the ANSF so that these forces could receive the transfer of full responsibility for maintaining public order; and for providing ODA and humanitarian assistance to a large swath of the Afghan population suffering from abject poverty. While these three further tasks deviate from the formal pursuit of ‘war’, this does not mean that the risk society’s most important formative conditions still cannot be suspected as exerting a conspicuous influence on the conduct of NATO’s broader stabilisation policy.

This chapter is divided into five sections that examine the risk society’s influence on broader stabilisation policy. Section two provides some preliminary conceptualisation for stabilisation policy, arguing that this can be strongly interpreted as a risk management approach because of its policy purposes. When compared to Clausewitz’s conventional understanding of ‘war’, the ‘stabilisation’ concept involves a broader set of aims. Contrary to the former; it is argued that most of today’s Western-led military operations better resemble a form ‘policing’ to stabilise risks to uni-polar international order. It is argued that, at first glance, ‘stabilisation’ appears to have a highly ambitious and ‘maximalist’ policy purpose that seeks to reconstruct most dimensions of public order in the host society. Nevertheless, deeper critical assessment of the literature on NATO’s Comprehensive Approach finds that internal political compromises within the alliance ensured that its stabilisation policy in Afghanistan was often ‘cobbled together’ and that this obstructed longer-term coherence, creating strong suspicions that ISAF had many fundamental shortcomings that ultimately undermined its performance. Section three further conceptualises stabilisation policy as an approach that aims to be an amalgam of civilian and military security provision. Statements from NATO leaders may have ambitiously outlined the importance of humanitarian assistance and ODA to assist a reconstruction of Afghan society that closely conformed with liberal democratic public order principles, but further

examination reveals that NATO stabilisation policy can be suspected as instead guided more by pragmatic utilitarian and ‘safety first’ tendencies that are predicted in risk theory. Contrary to instilling deep-rooted liberal democracy, NATO’s stabilisation policy may have instead settled for a less ambitious ‘negative peace’ that de-escalates violence and thus reduces the likelihood of risks mobilising from a conflict area, but while neglecting to resolve the conflict’s deeper factional divides. Section four examines humanitarian NGOs as vital non-military contributors to stabilisation policy in fragile states. It is argued that while locked together during the stabilisation process, divergent preferences and organisational cultures often cause a tense atmosphere between military and civilian organisations; this creates further momentum to undermine stabilisation objectives. Humanitarian NGOs often blamed the necessity of an overly close association with NATO’s military forces in Afghanistan as dangerously singling them out as targets for insurgent violence. The security concerns that resulted from this can subsequently harm NGO contributions to civilian relief and stabilisation. However, as a factor that can largely be detached from direct relationships with military organisations, it is argued that NGOs working in conflict areas are themselves autonomous social agents influenced by the risk society’s ‘safety first’ condition and this can create problematic tendencies such as ‘bunkerisation’ that undermine NGO performance in humanitarian and development outreach. Section five concludes with a discussion of this chapter’s main arguments.

## 2.2. Complexities beyond war

The literature that has previously connected risk theory with military affairs has focused on ‘war’ as the main unit of analysis. However, as NATO undertook the ISAF command in 2003, the strategic objectives that the alliance formed extended past the concept of ‘war’ as it is conventionally understood. Published in the early 1800s, the ideas of Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz have long upheld the traditional definitions of ‘war’. Clausewitz’s most famous maxim has been the expression that ‘war’ reflects ‘politics by other means’.<sup>309</sup> Richard Betts thus argues that the ‘Clausewitzian problem’ in war is focused on the question of ‘how to make force a rational instrument of policy rather than mindless murder’.<sup>310</sup> While best known for this reasoning, Ian Roxborough outlines that Clausewitz has provided further important theorising for ‘war’ as a military phenomenon with a binary classification that differentiates between ‘absolute war’ and ‘real war’. ‘Absolute war’ is theoretical possibility that is unlikely in reality, conceptualised as ‘untrammelled violence, the utmost effort to defeat the

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<sup>309</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976 [1832].

<sup>310</sup> Richard K. Betts, ‘Should Strategic Studies Survive’, *World Politics*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1997, p. 8.

enemy decisively'.<sup>311</sup> This contrasts with 'real war' encountered when belligerents must limit the 'aim and scope' of violence to varying extents and for different reasons.<sup>312</sup>

### 2.2.1. Beyond prevention

Politics and violence are intrinsic to the Clausewitzian vision, and it is important to focus on this 'real war' tenet that stresses the instrumentalisation of violence for political purposes as usually having many limits imposed. A further interpretation of Clausewitz's outlook also emphasises that 'war' is an instrument serving a broader strategy that aims to either 'decisively defeat' a battlefield adversary or to make a relative gain at the expense of a strategic competitor. Taking a grand strategic perspective, a mismatch becomes clear when this interpretation of Clausewitz's outlook is compared to most military interventions undertaken by the US and NATO during the post-Cold War era. Propelled by uni-polar hegemony, these interventions have been defined by profound asymmetry rather than by competition with a strategic counterweight. Corresponding with Heng's claim that the West's post-Cold War security planning perceives military operations as instruments to manage the risks that are 'aggravated' by globalisation, Amitav Acharya argues that the international restructuring that has taken place since the 1990s has regularly been determined by Western strategic priorities caused by events in the peripheral Global South, a trend that has been upheld by US-led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq during the early 2000s.<sup>313</sup>

The early 2000s saw the West's main powers seek to expand the zone of peace that they controlled through NATO and EU enlargement. Despite some success with this policy, the Euro-Atlantic area has been far from strategically insulated, it remains situated within a wider international system eclectically defined by disparate densities of liberal peace; pragmatic economic cooperation; and the security competition and limited governance that increases military conflict risk.<sup>314</sup> Therefore, rather than an effort to 'decisively defeat' or outmanoeuvre an adversary as Clausewitz once understood the purposes for 'war', Alexander Astrov has argued that most of today's Western-led military interventions instead better reflect a form of 'policing' in support of a uni-polar international order.<sup>315</sup> With the post-Cold War distribution of conventional military power over-

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<sup>311</sup> Ian Roxborough, 'Clausewitz and the Sociology of War', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1994, pp. 623–624.

<sup>312</sup> Roxborough, 'Clausewitz and the Sociology of War', pp. 623–624.

<sup>313</sup> Amitav Archarya, 'The Periphery as the Core: The Third World and Security Studies', in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, London: UCL Press, 1997, pp. 299–328.

<sup>314</sup> Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 9.

<sup>315</sup> Alexander Astrov, 'Great Power Management Without Great Powers? The Russian–Georgian War of 2008 and Global Police/Political Order', in Alexander Astrov, eds., *The Great Power (Mis) Management: the Russian–Georgian War and its Implications for Global Political Order*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 3.

whelmingly in its favour, the US has sought to enforce the form of international order that it prefers. Converging with this logic of ‘policing’, Washington and its allies have often sought to utilise military power to bring unruly states and non-state actors operating in areas of the international system’s unstable peripheral corners into line with their preferences of international order. This outlook co-exists with the argument stressing Western military assets as being utilised to improve stabilisation as a ‘public good’ benefiting the broader international system. Those advocating this strategic logic are concerned by the disadvantages brought by today’s era of accelerated globalised mobility: if violence through limited governance in unruly areas of the international periphery are not brought under control, risks from these areas can quickly mobilise to harm the security of Western states.

Those harbouring this outlook highlight the 9/11 attacks as a rueful lesson. The devastating atrocities committed by Al-Qaeda terrorists were facilitated by a transnational path that linked Afghanistan, Germany and the US as central nodes.<sup>316</sup> NATO’s precautionary ‘better safe than sorry’ discourses have emphasised that it is wise to manage risks directly at the point of source in places like Afghanistan and not take the chance that a risk transforms into a more tangible threat to the alliance closer to home. Seeking to maintain domestic public support for military participation in Afghanistan, this logic can be found in the ‘strategic narratives’ expressed by some NATO governments. For example, Denmark’s government justified taking the military risks integral to ISAF participation with the preventative argument that contributing to stabilisation abroad would destroy a platform for terrorist organisations to mount attacks on European cities, including the Danish capital Copenhagen.<sup>317</sup> These explanations indicate patterns contrary to Clausewitzian expectations. The military operations that contribute to stabilisation or the ‘policing’ of international order are instead both dimensions of risk management. Intensified globalisation tightens security interdependence between a stable international core and its unstable periphery. Western military operations have thus increasingly taken place under a future-focused outlook concerned that if violent turmoil in the periphery is not stabilised or ‘policed’, then it will support further threats mobilising to harm the Western core.

The risk society’s preventative focus has dominated previous risk theory perspectives on military strategy. This dominance was once justifiable during the early 2000s as the US and its allies sought to actively anticipate further risks to national security after the 9/11 attacks. However, the lengthy post-intervention experience since undergone by Western actors in Afghanistan and elsewhere over the past twenty years means that the same theoretical emphasis on prevention can

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<sup>316</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, ‘Global NATO’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 5, 2006, p. 109.

<sup>317</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, “‘For Our Own Security and That of the Afghans’: How the Danish Public was Persuaded to Support an Unprecedented Costly Military Endeavour in Afghanistan”, in Beatrice De Graaf, George Dimitriu and Jens Ringsmose, eds., *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War: Winning Domestic Support for the Afghan War*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, pp. 138–156.

no longer be justified as strongly. Perceiving NATO as a composition of risk societies, preventative action is now just one of a number of approaches that the alliance has employed when seeking to manage conflict risk in Afghanistan. As NATO maintained ISAF as a risk management presence, it has also engaged in practices that further depart from the Clausewitzian definition of ‘war’. ISAF relied on a substantial non-military security dimension while many of the military tasks that NATO has supported still cannot be classified as ‘war-fighting’. In its aims for ISAF, NATO stresses the ‘practical support for reconstruction and development efforts as well as support for humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by other actors’, which is primarily a civilian security task.<sup>318</sup> These tasks have been combined with a non-combat military coordination effort that supported ‘the Afghan government and [the] international community in security sector reform, including mentoring, training and operational support to the Afghan National Army (ANA)’,<sup>319</sup> Any surface interpretation of NATO’s Comprehensive Approach would credit the aims underpinning ISAF as highly ambitious, with NATO holding the vision to eventually withdraw its presence from a successfully functioning Afghan state. This plan has included the ultimate transfer of responsibility for law enforcement and public order to a competent ANSF, while NATO also sought to facilitate the creation of an effective legal system; socially responsive political institutions; and a more economically prosperous Afghan society.<sup>320</sup>

### 2.2.2. Towards multidimensional stabilisation

While ‘maximalist’ in its *stated* aims, still corresponding with an important risk theory expectation, the Comprehensive Approach was a convoluted medium seeking to facilitate a preventative aim. NATO managed ISAF under the broad understanding that once Afghanistan’s security, society, economy and political institutions were successfully reconstructed, further political turmoil would be prevented and the country’s situation would no longer pose risks to undermine international security. As NATO formally agreed to undertake the ISAF command in 2003, its Secretary-General Lord Robertson communicated to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, that NATO ‘with the assistance of the international community, will be able to bring about a self-sustaining, stable and democratic Afghanistan’.<sup>321</sup> Advancing a claim that will be further examined later in this dissertation, Mats Berdal argues that NATO set some highly ambitious

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<sup>318</sup> NATO, ‘ISAF’s Mission in Afghanistan (2001–2014)’, Press Release, 1 September 2015, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69366.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm) (accessed 6 September 2020).

<sup>319</sup> NATO, ‘ISAF’s Mission in Afghanistan’.

<sup>320</sup> NATO, ‘ISAF’s Mission in Afghanistan’.

<sup>321</sup> UN S/2003/970, ‘Longer-Term Strategy for NATO in its International Security Assistance Force Role in Afghanistan’, Press Release, 8 October 2003, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/longer-term-strategy-nato-its-international-security-assistance-force-role> (accessed 7 October 2020).

objectives, but the alliance ultimately failed to effectively respond to the actual ‘drivers’ of the conflict and thus could not achieve its ambitions.<sup>322</sup> With hindsight, the strategic vision embodied in the Comprehensive Approach can be judged as heroically optimistic, but it would still be a mistake to argue NATO’s leadership as deluded, the alliance never downplayed the arduous complexity that Afghanistan’s stabilisation would involve. Advancing an internal NATO perspective that corresponds with the difficulties predicted in risk theory’s ‘reflexive security dilemma’, Shea has explained that: ‘delivering security [in an expeditionary context] is much harder than delivering territorial defence. Instead of one strategy and one set of military responses, there are a myriad of options to choose from and a multitude of capabilities – military and civilian – that must be brought to bear’.<sup>323</sup>

Adding to Berdal’s and Shea’s circumspect outlooks on the treacherous external difficulties involved when seeking to provide stabilisation in the Afghan theatre, Peter Viggo Jakobsen argues that the Comprehensive Approach was also seriously hampered by NATO’s internal difficulties. According to Jakobsen, there was no clear internal consensus within NATO on how the Comprehensive Approach would function.<sup>324</sup> Some allies were reluctant to fully engage in developing this policy programme, perceiving it as deviating too far from their preference that NATO remain focused on territorial defence; there were disagreements on whether the military should have either a strong or light role in the design of the Comprehensive Approach; and further division existed on whether it should support a COIN strategy as advocated by allies undertaking combat operations in southern Afghanistan or be moulded to suit the needs of lighter consent-based peace support as preferred by the allies implementing this in the country’s north.<sup>325</sup> These disagreements undermined the internalisation of clear ‘doctrine, procedures and thinking’ to guide the Comprehensive Approach, and without this, NATO’s coordination of civilian stabilisation tasks with other IOs and local actors operating in Afghanistan was diverted towards incoherence and confusion.<sup>326</sup> Cobbled together due to the political compromises that were required to manage these divides, the Comprehensive Approach came to fruition in 2006 at a time when NATO was still finding its feet as ISAF’s lead organisation. Consistent with this ‘papering over’ tendency that risk theory would expect, it can be suspected that the Comprehensive Approach was implemented as a far from optimal solution with some sharp structural flaws likely to undermine its main aims.

Explanations emphasising the crucial need for both civilian and military security resources were regular from NATO leaders throughout the ISAF years.

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<sup>322</sup> Mats Berdal, ‘NATO’s Landscape of the Mind: Stabilisation and Statebuilding in Afghanistan’, *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 18, no. 5, 2019, p. 527.

<sup>323</sup> Shea, ‘Keeping NATO Relevant’.

<sup>324</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, ‘Right Strategy, Wrong Place – Why NATO’s Comprehensive Approach Will Fail in Afghanistan’, *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 22, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>325</sup> Jakobsen, ‘Right Strategy, Wrong Place’, pp. 1–5.

<sup>326</sup> Jakobsen, ‘Right Strategy, Wrong Place’, p. 1.

This is how NATO sought to coordinate Afghanistan's reconstruction and thus the response to this dissertation's research puzzle must more closely examine the most important components that comprised the alliance's stabilisation policy. The risk society's ability to provide the components deemed essential for Afghanistan's stabilisation will need to be questioned. In this context, Coker has admonished NATO's constantly changing *modus operandi* for its ISAF leadership as a 'semantic nightmare'; he recollects that its leaders have regularly referred to this mission with contradictory terminology including, 'counterterrorist campaign, counterinsurgency war, nation-building, state-building, peacekeeping, peace support, policing, opium eradication, and stability-enabling' all as specified aims at one stage or another.<sup>327</sup>

It was politically necessary for some NATO governments to use separate and thus sometimes divergent narratives to domestically justify military participation in ISAF. This made it challenging for NATO to unify around a coherent purpose, an effect that harboured some serious strategic repercussions. Nevertheless, the 'semantic nightmare' that Coker outlines can also be deemed as an unavoidable reality of a multidimensional expeditionary operation where circumstances can evolve unpredictably and at a lightning pace to create 'changing targets' for security planners. 'Semantic nightmares' over the precise rationale for an expeditionary operation is not just a cause for confusion among NATO policymakers, in addition to Coker's long list of NATO purposes in Afghanistan, the broader security research community can also be accused of generating both a diverse and confusing number of labels to often describe the same post-intervention practices that expeditionary actors undertake in fragile states. While not always fixed, researchers influenced by the political left have favoured terms that include 'peacebuilding' and 'peace support' while authors within a more conservative tradition often favour the term 'stabilisation'.

### 2.3. Contours of stabilisation policy

While 'stabilisation' has not been the only term used, terminology carrying its specific connotations has still been common in NATO's official statements and those of other IOs. The original UN mandate approved for ISAF in 2001 outlines that NATO will conduct 'stability and security operations in coordination with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)'.<sup>328</sup> As planned its withdrawal from Afghanistan from 2011 onwards, NATO announced that a penultimate 'stabilisation' phase would first support a final phase enabling the 'transition' of 'security, governance, development and rule of law' from the ISAF presence to

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<sup>327</sup> Christopher Coker, 'Should the Troops Be In Afghanistan?', Presentation at the Stop the War Debate, London, 14 April 2010, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xod05E1auc&t=97s> (accessed 16 September 2019).

<sup>328</sup> NATO, 'ISAF Mandate', Press Release, 29 April 2009, available at: <https://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/> (accessed 17 September 2020).

the relevant Afghan authorities.<sup>329</sup> While sometimes used with a number of other terms to describe ISAF's purpose, the stabilisation message has also been prominently at the forefront of the mission statements separately expressed by NATO allies. The US Department of State outlines that the role of its Bureau of Conflict and Stabilisation Operations 'is to anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict that undermines the US national interest'.<sup>330</sup> The Bureau explains this as involving 'different aspects of the conflict cycle: 1) strategic prevention; 2) conflict resolution; and 3) security sector stabilisation'.<sup>331</sup> Summarising the rationale for its deployment in Afghanistan, the British Army states that Westminster along with 'international partners have committed significant resources in Afghanistan to help rebuild and stabilise the country'.<sup>332</sup>

### 2.3.1. A civilian and military amalgam

With Afghanistan as a long-term focal-point, the UK government's Stabilisation Unit has become especially prominent, with this state organ outlined as an 'agile, cross-government unit providing expertise to build stability, prevent conflict and meet security challenges internationally'.<sup>333</sup> The Government of Canada has established a similar Peace and Stabilisation Operations Programme that aims to provide 'strategic coordination' to guide Canada's 'responses to complex political crises', to involve 'conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding initiatives through both projects and deployments'.<sup>334</sup> A similar stabilisation emphasis has also been adopted by some smaller NATO members, for example; Denmark introduced a 'stabilisation policy' in 2013 with a 'stabilisation fund' and the formation of an 'inter-ministerial' structure to guide policy.<sup>335</sup> With ISAF as a specific focus, Denmark's MoD stresses that 'Danish efforts in Afghanistan is [sic] to contribute to national, regional and global security and stability by

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<sup>329</sup> NATO, 'President Karzai Announces First Phase of Transition', Press Release, 22 March 2011, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_71685.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_71685.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed 18 September 2020).

<sup>330</sup> US Department of State, 'Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations', available at: <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-conflict-and-stabilization-operations/> (accessed 20 September 2020).

<sup>331</sup> US Department of State, 'Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations'.

<sup>332</sup> British Army, 'The British Army in Afghanistan', Press Release, available at: <https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/afghanistan/> (accessed 18 September 2020).

<sup>333</sup> UK Government, 'Stabilisation Unit: About Us', Press Release, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/stabilisation-unit/about> (accessed 18 September 2020).

<sup>334</sup> Government of Canada, 'Peace and Stabilization Operations Programmes', Press Release, 17 August 2020, available at: [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_developpement-enjeux\\_developpement/response\\_conflict-reponse\\_conflits/psop.aspx?lang=eng#a1](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/psop.aspx?lang=eng#a1) (accessed 18 September 2020).

<sup>335</sup> Danish Ministry of Defence, 'Danish Stabilisation Effort', Press Release, 17 March 2020, available at: <https://fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/Comprehensiveapproach.aspx> (accessed 18 September 2020).

preventing the country [Afghanistan] from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists'.<sup>336</sup>

Frequent references to general 'conflict prevention' as well as the priority to prevent Afghanistan re-emerging as a base for terrorist activity closely correspond to the risk society's preventative warfare focus. However, moving beyond the minimal Clausewitzian definition of 'war', the stabilisation policies that NATO governments express frequently emphasise themes that include 'cross-government' action in response to 'complex political crises'. These concerns underscore the importance that civilian security provision has now garnered in Western stabilisation policy. In formulating international security burden-sharing measures between the US and the EU, Gustav Lindström argues that finding a precise definition for 'civilian security provision' has some challenges.<sup>337</sup> In today's conflict areas, civilian security provision is often delivered by a multitude of government agencies, NGOs and IOs.<sup>338</sup> As an allocation of resources that targets 'regional stability and state failure', Lindström offers a definition for 'civilian security provision' that separates ODA from humanitarian assistance. ODA is defined as 'bilateral grants, bilateral loans and contributions to multilateral institutions like the UN'.<sup>339</sup> ODA combines different financial arrangements that aim to underwrite stabilisation including 'technical cooperation, developmental food aid, emergency relief, and debt forgiveness'.<sup>340</sup> By contrast, humanitarian assistance is delivered under charitable auspices; it 'is frequently used to enhance health, nutrition, and security levels in areas torn by conflict'.<sup>341</sup>

### 2.3.2. Utilitarian 'milieu shaping'

Arnold Wolfers argues that foreign policy objectives can be divided into separate 'possession' and 'milieu' goals.<sup>342</sup> While 'possession' goals refer to exclusive gains, including a state's competitive acquisition of territory or financial capital, Wolfers' idea of a non-exclusive 'milieu' has relevance at the intersection of this dissertation's focus between security provision, risk management and humanitarian assistance. Broadened to include IOs and NGOs, 'milieu shaping' concerns a state's effort to influence a broader international environment that is desirable; this is an action that is mostly pursued in cooperation with others.<sup>343</sup> Lindström

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<sup>336</sup> Danish Ministry of Defence, 'The Danish Engagement in Afghanistan', Press Release, 1 August 2020, available at: <https://fnn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/TheDanishEngagementinAfghanistan.aspx> (accessed 18 September 2020).

<sup>337</sup> Gustav Lindström, 'EU-US Burdensharing: Who Does What?', *Challiot Paper*, no. 82, 2005, p.61.

<sup>338</sup> Lindström, 'EU-US Burdensharing', pp. 62–63.

<sup>339</sup> Lindström, 'EU-US Burdensharing', pp. 62–63.

<sup>340</sup> Lindström, 'EU-US Burdensharing', pp. 62–63.

<sup>341</sup> Lindström, 'EU-US Burdensharing', p. 67.

<sup>342</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962, pp. 67–80.

<sup>343</sup> Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, pp. 67–80.

highlights that financial or technical support for the relocation of populations displaced by conflict can be considered as humanitarian assistance, but this can also be perceived as ‘milieu shaping’ with the realist interest to prevent risk as an important background aim.<sup>344</sup> While the result of humanitarian catastrophes caused by wars in the MENA region, the European Immigration Crisis in 2015 demonstrated that the relatively sudden displacement of large populations due to violent conflict can create transnational upheaval that severely affects Western states. Taking a risk theory perspective, when ‘civilian security provision’ is being offered, the proposition exists where this assistance is guided less by normative liberal principles and more by an effort to ‘prevent the worst’ with altruistic ideological statements merely ‘papering over’ this as the main motive. This proposition is strengthened by Nicolas Lemay-Hébert’s argument that the ‘limits of traditional governance and capacity-building’ in politically fragile states is leading external actors like the EU and NATO to adopt ‘new risk mitigation strategies’ that are guided by concepts such as ‘resilience’, a term used abundantly in the 2016 EU Global Strategy as well as other recent IO policy documents.<sup>345</sup>

In a policy discourse laden with buzzwords, debate can reign on how ‘resilience’ and ‘stabilisation’ are connected. As US-led efforts have failed in their ambition to fully reconstruct Afghanistan and Iraq as liberal democracies, Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt argue that ‘resilience’ is a policy construction that instead aims for the ‘middle ground between over-ambitious liberal peacebuilding and the under-ambitious objective of stability’.<sup>346</sup> While this explanation of ‘resilience’ corresponds with the risk theory expectation that external actors like NATO will seek to ‘reduce harm’ in preference to more lofty ideological objectives, it still separates ‘resilience’ and ‘stability’ as separate concepts. This separation might not be as smooth as Wagner and Anholt make it sound. ‘Resilience’ can be perceived as a form of governance that reduces risks dispersing from state fragility with actions that still fail to meet some liberal democratic criteria. In some of the world’s most war-torn regions, actually achieving this flawed but often less risk-prone form of public order often comes subsequent to initial stabilisation, as Ray Murphy explains: ‘Unlike peacekeeping, which

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<sup>344</sup> Lindström, ‘EU-US Burdensharing’, p. 67. For discussion on “milieu shaping”, see Tobias Schumacher, ‘The EU, Middle Eastern Powers and Milieu-Shaping in the “Shared” Arab Mediterranean Neighbourhood: A Story of Mutual Neglect’, *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2018, pp. 46–64.

<sup>345</sup> Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, ‘From Saving Failed States to Managing Risks: Reinterpreting Fragility Through Resilience’, in John Idriss Lahai, Karin von Strokirch, Howard Brasted and Helen Warepp, eds., *Governance and Political Adaptation in Fragile States*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 75–101. And EU, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy*, Brussels: European Commission, 2016, available at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf) (21 September 2020).

<sup>346</sup> Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt, ‘Resilience as the EU Global Strategy’s New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2016, p. 415.

assumes a peace to keep, stabilisation implies military operations to stabilise a situation'.<sup>347</sup>

While illustrative, Murphy's definition only covers the first phase in the stabilisation process. Even when restricted to the military domain, NATO governments have regularly outlined stabilisation policy as progressing through a multifaceted series of phases. When Denmark supported the UK-led COIN campaign in Helmand, its military stabilisation outlook followed the plan of 'clear, hold, train'.<sup>348</sup> While military combat may have dominated the 'clear' phase, a transitional 'hold' phase envisages a metamorphosis in military operations to involve lighter peace enforcement or traditional peacekeeping tasks to facilitate a 'training' phase to mentor the ANSF so that this force could later hold full authority to maintain public order.<sup>349</sup> The broader US-led outlook on stabilisation that seeks to integrate both civilian and military components has emphasised the same logic of progression. As the Obama administration renewed Washington's commitment to Afghanistan's stabilisation after 2009, US policy logic has been outlined as a 'clear, build, hold, transfer' approach.<sup>350</sup> This was initially reinforced by a stronger US military presence, but it would have been inconceivable to envisage this strategy's later 'build' and 'hold' and even 'transfer' phases without the provision of humanitarian and development assistance for the local civilian population. Evolving stabilisation policy to finally support a 'transfer' of full authority to the Afghan authorities increased the pressure on NATO militaries to develop a range of stabilisation functions beyond 'war-fighting'. Before the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Timothy Edmunds argued that European armed forces were focusing less on national defence and more on restructuring military forces to assist across a broader spectrum of security tasks.<sup>351</sup> This has included preparations for expeditionary operations in 'war-fighting' mode, seen during the early phases of Western-led interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, but also when planning expeditionary operations involving a more benevolent peacekeeping mode. The military's purpose has been broadened to support other civilian government agencies when managing 'new' risks such as 'terrorism, drug smuggling and illegal migration'.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Ray Murphy, 'What Are Ireland's Army Ranger Wing Doing in Mali?', *RTÉ Brainstorm*, 25 February, 2020, available at: <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0909/1074853-why-are-irelands-army-ranger-wing-going-to-mali/> (accessed 21 September 2020).

<sup>348</sup> Peter Viggo Jackobsen and Peter Dahl Thruelsen, 'Clear, Hold, Train: Denmark's Military Operations in Helmand 2006–2010', in Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen, eds., *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2011*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2011, p.78.

<sup>349</sup> Viggo Jackobsen and Dahl Thruelsen, 'Clear, Hold, Train', pp. 79–80.

<sup>350</sup> C. Christine Fair, "'Clear, Build, Hold, Transfer": Can Obama's Afghan Strategy Work?', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, p. 113.

<sup>351</sup> Timothy Edmunds, 'What Are Armed Forces For?', *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 6, 2006, p.1059.

<sup>352</sup> Edmunds, 'What Are Armed Forces For?', p.1059.

For Edmunds, Europe's post-Cold War armed forces have been better prepared to support civilian authorities in coping with natural disasters and other emergencies.<sup>353</sup> These and other 'operations other than war' were perceived as essential for NATO's stabilisation vision that aimed to eventually 'transfer' full authority for public order to the Afghan authorities.<sup>354</sup> The distribution of combat risk essential for 'clearing' insurgents was a source of tense NATO alliance politics during the ISAF campaign and because of this the risk-sharing value of '500 soldiers in Kandahar [more volatile] [was] not quite the same as 500 soldiers in Mazari-Sharif [less volatile]'.<sup>355</sup> Nevertheless, an over-emphasis on the distribution of combat risk is also problematic, as this will lead to many 'softer' military skills essential for a successful stabilisation policy to be overlooked. ISAF was a 'blended mission' that required combat at the heavier end of the military spectrum, but many ISAF tasks also demanded strong soldier communication and consultation skills at the 'softer' end of the same gauge.<sup>356</sup>

Outlining the critical importance of these 'softer' aspects, British General Sir David Richards, ISAF's commander from May 2006 until February 2007, starkly stresses that 'if you [NATO] lose the consent of the people, you are going to lose [to insurgent aims]'.<sup>357</sup> It therefore becomes necessary for NATO armed forces to develop their 'soft skills' by encouraging 'patience, the confidence to delegate authority, [the] ability to engage with people outside the military, cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, communication skills and stress management' within their ranks.<sup>358</sup> Along with residents within the conflict area, to successfully coordinate stabilisation policy, NATO forces had to effectively interact with a diverse plethora of IOs, NGOs and PMSCs. Optimistic in retrospect, when NATO received the official UN mandate to lead ISAF in 2003, it was envisaged that the mission would be primarily based on the military's 'soft skills', as allied forces would mentor and thus gradually transfer responsibility for public order to an ever stronger ANSF. The official ISAF mandate did not explicitly foresee the need for the war-fighting campaign that later dominated much of NATO's focus in southern Afghanistan.<sup>359</sup>

Effective military-to-military interaction was essential for the aim to progressively transfer responsibility for enforcing public order from ISAF to the ANSF. In its specific mentorship of the ANA, NATO sought to guide SSR while

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<sup>353</sup> Edmunds, 'What Are Armed Forces For?', p.1073.

<sup>354</sup> Volker Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma: Civil-Military Cooperation in Stability Operations', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>355</sup> Martial Foucault and Frédéric Mérand, 'The Challenge of Burden-Sharing', *International Journal*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2012, p. 427.

<sup>356</sup> Ünsal Sığrı, Giuseppe Caforio and Ufuk Başar, 'Do Peacekeepers' Soft Skills Matter? The Case of EUFOR Operation Althea', *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, p. 49.

<sup>357</sup> David Richards, 'RUSI Interview with General David Richards', *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 152, no. 2, 2007, pp. 24–25.

<sup>358</sup> Sığrı, Caforio and Ufuk Başar, 'Do Peacekeepers' Soft Skills Matter?', p. 49.

<sup>359</sup> NATO, 'ISAF Mandate'.

facing a challenging balancing act. On one hand, similar to Afghanistan's other government institutions, the ANA was an object of broader state-building, and NATO was thus required to promote 'good governance'; respect for 'democratic oversight'; as well as 'accountability, transparency and professionalism' within its ranks.<sup>360</sup> On the other hand, the ANA had to acquire the military capabilities necessary to enforce a monopoly on violence and defend the state. Despite these objectives, the ANA's viability to enforce public order throughout Afghanistan's territory is still a distant prospect in 2021, as this force has suffered an alarming number of fatalities and desertions over the course of the NATO-led campaign. With this dissertation's research puzzle in mind, one can suspect that NATO's SSR objectives were confused and/or problematically propelled by 'risk-shifting' motives. The latter might have particular resonance to explain NATO actions as dangerously premature in assessing that responsibilities for public order could be transferred to the ANA without this seriously undermining the stabilisation effort.

### 2.3.3. Supporting a utilitarian peace

This linkage between civilian and military security provision invites further scrutiny towards the confusion in the literature that exists between the concepts of 'peace' and 'stability'. Colin Gray interprets Clausewitz's pronouncement that 'war is an instrument of policy' as indicating that victory is not an end in itself, but that a state belligerent's aim in waging war is to finally achieve an 'advantageous peace'.<sup>361</sup> Under risk theory's 'war as risk management' understanding, to be 'advantageous' means being durable enough to prevent the dispersal of risk, and thus the quality of the peace created after military engagement becomes crucially important. If a durable peace is not found, then the risks that encouraged the initial intervention are likely to persist or evolve. Concepts dealing with the quality of peace have long roots in the security literature. Writing in 1964, Johan Galtung coined the distinction between 'negative peace' as the narrow 'absence of violence, the absence of war' and 'positive peace' as the overcoming of post-conflict factionalism with a full 'integration of human society'.<sup>362</sup> What Galtung has defined as 'positive peace' has also been called a 'social peace' while the institutionalisation of a tense but stable 'negative peace' has been alternatively described as a 'security peace'.<sup>363</sup>

The Comprehensive Approach as a stabilisation policy programme occurred when Afghanistan dominated NATO's strategic priorities. Rolf Schwarz argued

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<sup>360</sup> David G. Haglund, 'From USSR to SSR: The Rise and (Partial) Demise of NATO in Security Sector Reform', in David Law (ed.) *Intergovernmental Organisations and Security Sector Reform*, Münster/Geneva: LIT Verlag/Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007, p. 104.

<sup>361</sup> Colin S. Gray, 'How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?', *Parameters*, vol. 35, no.1, 2005, p.18.

<sup>362</sup> Johan Galtung, 'An Editorial', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 1, no.1, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>363</sup> Sung Yong Lee, Roger MacGinty and Madhav Joshi, 'Social Peace vs. Security Peace', *Global Governance*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2016, pp. 491–512.

that ISAF's stabilisation success would be best served by ambitiously seeking to support 'positive peace' through the promotion of 'interdependence' between 'security'; 'welfare' and political 'representation'.<sup>364</sup> According to Schwarz, once military operations have generated baseline 'security', the improvement of 'welfare' for citizens and functional political 'representation' within a post-conflict society will soothe factional tensions and this will then allow liberal democratic norms to then develop and economic opportunities to expand.<sup>365</sup> Isaac Kfir takes a similar perspective, arguing that, beyond military operations, NATO needed to fervently emphasise 'human security' in Afghanistan. Perceiving NATO as a 'state builder' and a 'rights promoter', Kfir argues that 'political, civil, social and economic conditions in weak, fragile and undemocratic societies' have been a 'root cause' for the 'radicalism' that underpins most terrorist organisations.<sup>366</sup> Both Schwarz and Kfir argue that the final stage of Western intervention must be 'maximalist' reconstruction that reduces risk by promoting a durable 'positive peace'. However, while conceding that there was never any 'golden era' for this normatively ambitious security planning in Western intervention policy, Roger MacGinty argues that the high point in Western advocacy for such stabilisation outlooks already passed during the 1990s.<sup>367</sup>

According to MacGinty, more recent Western interventions have been dominated by far more modest utilitarian expectations.<sup>368</sup> This can be further highlighted by the reversal in Francis Fukuyama's thinking from his famously optimistic 'end of history' thesis in 1989, to the more sober outlook he proposed during the 2000s. At the end of the Cold War, Fukuyama originally perceived liberal democracy as the ideological victor that stood alone and was on the front foot to expand.<sup>369</sup> However, influenced by the stabilisation difficulties encountered by Western actors in Afghanistan and Iraq by 2005, he revised this outlook to a far more utilitarian position, advocating that the most basic tenet of state-building – a government's ability to first enforce a monopoly on force through its military and police – must be the primary priority before democracy promotion can begin.<sup>370</sup> These outlooks correspond with the broader empirical literature. Perceiving the Bush administration's military involvement in Iraq as an unnecessary mistake that overstretched US resources, Obama instead sought to renew America's commitment to Afghanistan's stabilisation during his first term in office. In narrowing Washington's focus, Russell Crandall argues that

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<sup>364</sup> Rolf Schwarz, 'NATO and Prevention of State Failure: An Idea Whose Time Will Come?', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2010, p.350.

<sup>365</sup> Schwarz, 'NATO and Prevention of State Failure', p. 350.

<sup>366</sup> Isaac Kfir, 'NATO's Paradigm Shift: Searching for a Traditional Security–Human Security Nexus', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2015, p. 226.

<sup>367</sup> Roger MacGinty, 'Against Stabilization', *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, vol. 1, no.1, 2012, p. 22.

<sup>368</sup> MacGinty, 'Against Stabilization', p. 22.

<sup>369</sup> Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', pp. 3–18.

<sup>370</sup> Francis Fukuyama, 'Building Democracy After Conflict: "Stateness" First', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2005, pp. 87–88.

Obama quickly began to reduce US foreign policy ambition as he believed that this had been ‘maxed out’ by his predecessor; under his direction America’s international role would instead be reformed in line with ‘restraint and retrenchment’.<sup>371</sup> The Obama administration’s ‘surge’ strategy can be seen as a last-ditch attempt to comprehensively stabilise Afghanistan between 2009 and 2011. The termination of this strategy lightened the direct US military footprint, but this still does not mean that Washington necessarily became less ‘warlike’ in its response to security concerns focused on Afghanistan thereafter. John Karlsrud argues that ‘large engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan were scaled back and exchanged for a new and more limited strategy where drone strikes, US special forces, and funding and training of local troops have been the main ingredients’.<sup>372</sup> This transformation in US military strategy indicates a more utilitarian direction in Washington’s approach to stabilisation. However, questions remain as to whether this more utilitarian approach can credibly deliver stabilisation without leading to some severe and negative side-effects.

If ‘positive peace’ is accepted as the most durable form of conflict resolution, MacGinty argues that, with its many utilitarian tenets, stabilisation policy actually ‘undercuts the distinctive value of peace’.<sup>373</sup> For MacGinty, stabilisation policy ‘suggests a conservative exercise of maintaining a controlled environment rather than emancipation or liberation’ and is thus ‘axiomatically connected with foreign policy stances that tend to prioritize national interests’ and thus as well as being subject to paralysis when the foreign policies of external security providers contradict, stabilisation policy marginalises ‘bottom up’ solutions that are necessary to erase social division.<sup>374</sup> In MacGinty’s reading, stabilisation policy is structured to ignore essential ‘grassroots peacebuilding’ and is thus a product of the ‘papering over’ phenomenon that risk theory expects.<sup>375</sup> As a further link with risk theory’s utilitarian expectations, MacGinty outlines that contrary to liberal intervention in a tangible sense, stabilisation policy has departed towards a ‘new realism’ advocating ‘good enough’ governance that functions to minimum standards but problematically still requires a vast expenditure of ‘blood, money and prestige’ by Western actors.<sup>376</sup>

This pragmatic but problematic ‘good enough’ outlook corresponds to the ‘papering over’ preference that risk theory expects, and it is in some of the contradictions that these practices create where some important NATO failings in Afghanistan can be pinpointed. First, this ‘good enough’ stabilisation outlook

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<sup>371</sup> Russell Crandall, ‘Maxed Out?’, *Survival*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2014, pp. 187–198.

<sup>372</sup> John Karlsrud, ‘From Liberal Peacebuilding to Stabilization and Counterterrorism’, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2019, p. 5.

<sup>373</sup> MacGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, p. 27.

<sup>374</sup> MacGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, pp. 21–26. And Roger MacGinty, ‘Everyday Peace: Bottom-up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies’, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 45, no. 6, 2014, pp. 548–564.

<sup>375</sup> Katie Roll, ‘The New Local: Reappraising Peacebuilding from the Grassroots’, *International Studies Review*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2016, pp. 542–547.

<sup>376</sup> MacGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, p. 21.

can be suspected as promoting a securitised form of conflict management that does not deal directly with social fractures and is thus ineffective when lessening the risk of violence re-erupting.<sup>377</sup> Second, while Western actors voice the virtues of liberal democratic governance, a ‘good enough’ or ‘papering over’ approach may have allowed ISAF under NATO’s leadership to downplay the corruption visible inside the Hamid Karzai administration that it supported.<sup>378</sup> A serious contradiction between official discourse and everyday reality was therefore perceived by the Afghan population and this led to a profound erosion of the vital local legitimacy that ISAF required. NATO’s failure to fully achieve legitimacy and thus local buy-in to its stabilisation tasks was compounded by the pursuit of a further ‘good enough’ solution when ISAF accepted the returning rule of many ‘warlords and strongmen’ formerly suppressed by the Taliban when in power between 1996 and 2001.<sup>379</sup> This ‘good enough’ solution became particularly attractive for NATO members between 2003 and 2008 as most were especially unwilling to support public order with a stronger civilian and military security footprint during the years when the US had diverted its policy attention from ISAF to Iraq. Ahmed Rashid argues that the decision to sometimes depend on the order upheld by non-Taliban ‘warlords and strongmen’ became ‘a cheap and beneficial way to retain US [and NATO] allies in the field who might even provide information about al-Qaeda’.<sup>380</sup> However, this delegation of responsibility came with the cost of depriving ISAF of considerable local legitimacy as those that NATO supported continued to orchestrate violence and exploit the broader population.

MacGinty summarises that the ‘mainstreaming of stabilisation’ inherent with this ‘new realism’ by IOs including the UN, NATO and the EU has ‘hollowed peace in international approaches to intervention’.<sup>381</sup> Demonstrated by the examples above, this ‘hollowed peace’ can also inadvertently expose these actors to often serious consequences that are both unintentional and counterproductive to the stabilisation aims stated at the outset. While MacGinty does not perceive stabilisation as a worthwhile approach for the pursuit of tangible peace, others have disagreed. While ‘maximalist’ engagement with a full repertoire of policy instruments for fragile state reconstruction has long been advocated as the most optimal response to ‘complex emergencies’, Christian Denny’s argues that the repeated failings of such attempts have led Western actors to change their minds on this approach as they instead embrace stabilisation policies that seek ‘contain-

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<sup>377</sup> MacGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, p. 24. And Siniša Vuković, ‘Conflict Management Redux: Desecuritizing Intractable Conflicts’, in Michael J. Butler, ed., *Securitization Revisited: Contemporary Applications and Insights*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019, pp. 145–167.

<sup>378</sup> Jon Boone, ‘WikiLeaks Cables Portray Hamid Karzai as Corrupt and Erratic’, *The Guardian*, 2 December 2010, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/02/wikileaks-cables-hamid-karzai-erratic> (accessed 14 October 2020).

<sup>379</sup> Berdal, ‘NATO’s Landscape of the Mind’, p. 535.

<sup>380</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: How the War Against Islamic Extremism Is Being Lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, London: Allen Lane, 2008, p. 129.

<sup>381</sup> MacGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, p. 27.

ment’ as a pragmatic alternative to the unrealistic goal of ‘positive peace’.<sup>382</sup> While others have argued that liberal democratic ‘maximalism’ is the best way to enhance legitimacy, Dennys instead insists that intervening in a more limited capacity will improve the local legitimacy that Western actors receive, as these actors now realise that they do ‘not have the right nor the ability, to extend open-ended interventions in what would essentially be a re-running of colonialism to impose peace’.<sup>383</sup> While MacGinty and Dennys disagree over stabilisation policy’s viability to eventually facilitate a durable peace, bridging with risk theory’s expectations, their respective viewpoints still display a common understanding that Western stabilisation policy has become a utilitarian practice.

## 2.4. Civilian contributions to stabilisation

Stabilisation policy is an amalgam of civilian and military objectives. Discussing what is sometimes referred to as the ‘development-security nexus’, Eamonn McConnon makes the debatable argument that the risk society perceives the provision of overseas development aid as a long-term preventative strategy distinct from the short-term need to counter a ‘threat’.<sup>384</sup> This claim corresponds with the risk society’s preventative focus, the allocation of humanitarian assistance or ODA as part of a stabilisation effort can be argued as mitigating the possible sources of future risks that could disperse from a fragile state. McConnon argues that Western development assistance for fragile states therefore becomes allocated in a narrowly self-interested way that excludes large swathes of the world that still encounter abject poverty but are not perceived as causing security problems.<sup>385</sup> In following this pattern, Western actors are pragmatic to ‘securitise’ their allocations of humanitarian assistance and ODA.<sup>386</sup>

### 2.4.1. ‘Safety first’ and humanitarian assistance

The concept of ‘human security’ that stresses a universal focus on human rights, individual welfare and the alleviation of personal hardship blossomed in the development policy literature during the 1990s.<sup>387</sup> It is argued that the ‘human security’ idea was never fully accepted, and the overseas development focus of Western states quickly reverted back to a ‘national security’ emphasis once the

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<sup>382</sup> Christian Dennys, ‘For Stabilization’, *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>383</sup> Dennys, ‘For Stabilization’, p. 3.

<sup>384</sup> Eamonn McConnon, *Risk and the Security-Development Nexus: The Policies of the US, the UK and Canada*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 187–188.

<sup>385</sup> McConnon, *Risk and the Security-Development Nexus*, pp. 187–188.

<sup>386</sup> Cai Wilkinson, ‘The Securitization of Development’, in Paul Jackson, ed., *Handbook of International Security and Development*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 2015, p. 43.

<sup>387</sup> Roland Paris, ‘Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?’, *International Security*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2001, pp. 89–90.

US began the GWOT after 2001.<sup>388</sup> With risk severity to national security perceptions again guiding policy, McConnon argues that Western development policy has largely ignored many regions that suffer sharp wealth inequality often compounded by accelerated economic globalisation.<sup>389</sup> A narrow development focus does not always reduce the exposure of Western states to security risks as these can still unpredictably emerge from areas beyond their immediate focus. As the Western governments are the main influencers that shape globalisation, in McConnon's reading, they are thus showing a surprising disregard for the negative consequences being produced by their own narrowly-defined 'securitised' development policies.<sup>390</sup> This error might nevertheless be explained by adherence to the risk society's 'safety first' principle with the logic that when resources for humanitarian and development outreach are limited, it is best that these have a targeted focus to reduce risk exposure. An overly-broad dispersal of the same assistance with a naive aim to satisfy universal 'human security' concerns will be perceived as ineffective in meeting the risk society's concerns. This profoundly utilitarian approach to development cooperation has been summarised by David Chandler with the explanation that: 'far from being an instrument of far-reaching intervention, [this approach] seeks to stress the limits of what can be achieved by external policy-making'.<sup>391</sup>

Once it is understood that the risk society will target ODA and humanitarian assistance to limit later exposure to security risks, it then becomes possible to examine where precisely these resources might be targeted within a micro-conflict setting. This examination highlights an important link between the risk society and the broader literature on the transformation of war. Those arguing that many of today's wars are post-Clausewitzian have claimed that the 'decisive battle' that Clausewitz insists as the 'real centre of gravity of the war' is now an irrelevant principle when seeking to understand most contemporary civil wars.<sup>392</sup> US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq brought the policy priority to 'win hearts and minds' to mainstream attention. Contrary to Clausewitz's focus on a 'decisive battle' between rival combatants as the reckoning for war, 'hearts and minds' logic instead emphasises that the attitude of the local civilian population within the conflict zone has now become the 'centre of gravity' that defines the outcome of many intrastate conflicts. Those planning COIN campaigns have thus begun to perceive support from the local population perceived as pivotal.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Eamonn McConnon, 'Security for All, Development for Some? The Incorporation of Security in UK's Development Policy', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 26, no. 8, 2014, p. 1127.

<sup>389</sup> McConnon, *Risk and the Security-Development Nexus*, pp. 187–188.

<sup>390</sup> McConnon, *Risk and the Security-Development Nexus*, pp. 187–188.

<sup>391</sup> David Chandler, 'The Security–Development Nexus and the Rise of "Anti-Foreign Policy"', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2007, p. 364.

<sup>392</sup> Herfried Münkler, *The New Wars*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005, p. 12.

<sup>393</sup> Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 'Hearts and Minds, Cultural Awareness and Good Intelligence: The Blueprint for Successful Counter-Insurgency?', *Intelligence and National Security*, 26, no. 4, 2011, p. 456.

With this transformation in warfare in focus and under the aim to tilt a conflict's 'centre of gravity' more in their favour, Jamie Williamson argues that Western military planners have considered tailoring the delivery of ODA and humanitarian assistance to preferentially benefit certain segments of the population. This is perceived as strengthening the COIN effort with rationale that if the populations within the conflict area are satisfied with the assistance, they will be less likely to support or enable an insurgency's aims.<sup>394</sup> While describing civilian assistance providers – including IOs, NGOs and PVOs – with military organisations as 'reluctant partners' in conflict resolution, Thomas Mockaitis argues that 'Winning hearts and minds through humanitarian assistance and development often produces the intelligence necessary to find terrorists'.<sup>395</sup> It is probably not unusual for military planners to take this perspective, but the idea that humanitarian assistance can be leveraged to advantage a military's COIN purposes is highly contentious for most humanitarian assistance organisations. Protesting against this outlook, development NGOs frequently refer to explicit international humanitarian law stressing that assistance 'must be given to those in need without any adverse distinction'.<sup>396</sup> It has been claimed that NATO's coordination of stabilisation efforts has not always followed this principle, and from a legal and ethical standpoint, favouring some sections of the population at the expense of others has dissatisfied many humanitarian NGOs, such as the ICRC.<sup>397</sup> Disagreements between military and civilian security providers on this matter can be suspected as causing two types of tension to undermine the broader ISAF stabilisation presence: one is normative while the other is operational.

ISAF was a complex stabilisation presence reliant on a plethora of actors each focused on their own nuanced and specialised aims. The 'safety first' leaning of the risk society might stress that humanitarian resources be directed to support COIN objectives that reduce risks from fragile states. However, distributing humanitarian assistance while guided by this 'safety first' objective will also likely clash with the liberal humanitarian principles that Western societies claim to abide by. This normative tension has the potential to feed down to negatively affect cooperation between civilian and military organisations at an operational level. Alexandra Gheciu argues that humanitarian NGOs and NATO's military forces are 'institutions with very different cultures and mandates' and while they contribute to stabilisation both 'find themselves in a situation in which they need to collaborate in unprecedented ways'.<sup>398</sup> Gheciu explains that the eagerness of NATO allies to leverage humanitarian assistance to directly support their military objectives has sometimes been perceived by NGOs as a 'fundamental attack on

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<sup>394</sup> Jamie A. Williamson, 'Using Humanitarian Aid to "Win Hearts and Minds": A Costly Failure?', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 93, no. 884, 2011, p. 1037.

<sup>395</sup> Thomas R. Mockaitis 'Reluctant Partners: Civil-Military Cooperation in Kosovo', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 15, no.2, p. 38.

<sup>396</sup> Williamson, 'Aid to "Win Hearts and Minds"', p. 1037.

<sup>397</sup> Williamson, 'Aid to "Win Hearts and Minds"', p. 1037.

<sup>398</sup> Alexandra Gheciu, 'Divided Partners: The Challenges of NATO-NGO Cooperation in Peacebuilding Operations', *Global Governance*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, p. 96.

the category of humanitarian space – as the space in which impartial actors seek to enhance the welfare of individuals and communities without any attention to, much less effort to promote, particular political agendas'.<sup>399</sup> Further inflaming this disconnect, Volker Franke argues that divergent internal 'institutional cultures' create further obstacles hindering cooperation between humanitarian NGOs and military organisations.<sup>400</sup> In Franke's comparison, 'humanitarian organisations tend to be less hierarchical, [and] place higher priority on process, i.e. how objectives are accomplished'.<sup>401</sup> While the contingency to use force as part of the stabilisation effort is intrinsic to military thinking, those working for humanitarian NGOs can instead perceive themselves 'as nonviolent people who have dedicated part of their lives to assist the less fortunate'.<sup>402</sup> Volker's observation once again reinforces the distinction between the concepts of 'war' and 'stabilisation'. While early phases in the stabilisation process might require 'war-fighting' capabilities, those contributing the civilian components essential for what is a combined process would hardly identify themselves as 'warriors', and many might even identify themselves in staunch opposition to this. IOs leading stabilisation missions might routinely stress civilian and military institutions as logical partners in a blended effort to ease risks emerging from fragile states. However, there are often steep mismatches in the preferences and behavioural expectations that exist between both.

Security planning that advocates humanitarian assistance to support military aims has been claimed by leading NGOs as putting the safety of their 'non-combatant' personnel 'at grave risk', encouraging NATO's adversaries to perceive humanitarian workers as partial in favour of the alliance.<sup>403</sup> When NATO first implemented its PRT structure to coordinate Afghanistan's socio-economic reconstruction after 2006, the civilian NGO personnel that worked in this system were perceived by Taliban insurgents as supporting the ISAF presence and were thus targeted with violence.<sup>404</sup> As ISAF's PRT structure dominated the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, Franke argues that one NGO, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, saw NATO coordination as a problem because it 'blurred the line between the civilian and military spheres' and it thus exposed NGO personnel as 'soft targets' for insurgent violence.<sup>405</sup> NGO criticism often found NATO's PRT framework to be overly dominated by military actors with arguments suggesting that this served to further undermine success in humanitarian and development outcomes as military leadership increased suspicions to diminish opportunities 'to establish the necessary local trust'.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Gheciu, 'Divided Partners', p. 96.

<sup>400</sup> Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma', p. 13.

<sup>401</sup> Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma', p. 13.

<sup>402</sup> Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma', p. 13.

<sup>403</sup> Williamson, 'Aid to "Win Hearts and Minds"', p. 1037.

<sup>404</sup> Michael J. Williams, 'Empire Lite Revisited: NATO, the Comprehensive Approach and State-Building in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2011, p. 69.

<sup>405</sup> Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma', p. 11.

<sup>406</sup> Williams, 'Empire Lite Revisited', p. 69.

### 2.4.2. 'Bunkerisation' and conflict inequalities

The prominent role now reserved for humanitarian NGOs in Western stabilisation policy creates some paradoxical scenarios with the risk society's 'safety first' preference at their base. While 'safety first' tendencies can cause Western NGOs to perceive risks when cooperating with military actors, these NGOs are also themselves direct products of the risk society and thus they internalise 'safety first' norms regardless of the partners that they cooperate with. While sometimes understandable, the blame offloaded on NATO by some civilian NGOs can also be either problematically one-dimensional or contradictory. As a contradiction, NGOs can argue that a close association with NATO's military presence has allowed their staff to be 'soft targets' for insurgent violence, but at the same time, NGOs have also blamed NATO for not providing stronger military protection to better guard the safety of their workers.<sup>407</sup> These complaints resulting from direct cooperation with NATO are not without foundation, but NGO performance also needs to be assessed in isolation. The risk society's influences can thus be expected to logically lead to NGOs developing their own particular 'safety first' tendencies. Whether these tendencies actually undermine NGO performance in responding to stabilisation tasks is an important question with this dissertation's research puzzle in mind. Sean Maloney argues that stabilisation operations have upset the linear pattern that once configured traditional peacekeeping. A conflict came to a tentative end when a ceasefire or peace settlement was agreed and an impartial peacekeeping force would then be mandated by the UN to monitor this.<sup>408</sup> According to Maloney, a stabilisation force operates under contrary principles. ISAF was, by definition, partial in its support for Afghanistan's Western-backed government.<sup>409</sup> With accusations that NATO often tacitly expected humanitarian and development assistance to support this principal aim, Mark Duffield argues that such 'politicisation of aid has made helping others increasingly dangerous'.<sup>410</sup> This reality further entrenches 'safety first' thinking, in Duffield's words, a tense 'risk aversion' tendency in humanitarian NGO practices has now created problematic practices that he describes as 'bunkerisation'.<sup>411</sup> The 'bunker' usually exists as a secluded and fortified compound where NGOs head-quarter their activities within a conflict area. This represents the 'modern' idea of physical protection; but this has been combined with the 'postmodern' idea of

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<sup>407</sup> Franke, 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma', p. 11.

<sup>408</sup> Sean M. Maloney, 'From Myth to Reality Check: From Peacekeeping to Stabilization', *Options Politiques*, vol. 26, no. 7, 2005, p. 45.

<sup>409</sup> Maloney, 'From Myth to Reality Check', p. 46.

<sup>410</sup> Mark Duffield, 'Risk-Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Everyday Life in Post-Interventionary Society', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2010, p. 453.

<sup>411</sup> Mark Duffield, 'Challenging Environments: Danger, Resilience and the Aid Industry', *Security Dialogue*, vol.43, no. 5, 2012, p. 475.

personal securitisation that shifts the responsibility for safety from the collective organisation to the individual humanitarian worker.<sup>412</sup>

Duffield argues that NGO field-security training practices now individualise safety awareness, instilling a routine ‘everyday’ outlook that becomes an effort to ‘govern aid workers through anxiety’.<sup>413</sup> The ways by which this transformation might weaken NGO contributions to stabilisation are sometimes unclear in the literature and will be investigated further in this dissertation, but by keeping personal anxiety at the forefront, Duffield argues that encouraging NGO workers to embrace individualised security practices replaces the ‘need for local knowledge’.<sup>414</sup> The latter was once advocated as a necessary prerequisite to integrate NGO activities with the host society and to build the local trust required to deliver humanitarian tasks successfully.<sup>415</sup> As it is a physical barrier, the ‘bunker’ entrenches ‘remoteness’ between NGO workers and the local populations that they are present to serve. However, the constant anxiety that Duffield claims as accompanying individualised security responsibilities creates a further psychological barrier. The routinisation of danger perceptions beyond the ‘bunker’s’ perimeters means that NGOs ‘construct the parallel world that exists within the fortified aid compound’.<sup>416</sup> According to Duffield, as the fortified compound can only be synonymous with security, it becomes ‘therapeutic infrastructure allowing for care of the self and a necessary refuge from a threatening world [beyond its perimeters] that aid workers no longer understand or feel safe in’.<sup>417</sup> Despite the compound’s ‘therapeutic’ benefits, Duffield argues that it continues to problematically isolate NGO workers while reinforcing a culture that is ‘paranoid, alienated and stressful’.<sup>418</sup>

It might be suspected that the anxious distance or ‘remoteness’ that Duffield discusses will problematically inhibit trust between an NGO and the local populace, but these tendencies can still not be viewed as enablers of success or failure in their own right. Jonathan Fisher argues that NGO ‘bunkerisation’ is a damaging practice because it can inadvertently entrench already profound inequalities in the financial wealth and public safety suffered by societies undergoing conflict. A ‘safety first’ emphasis ensures that NGO field missions are operated from fortified headquarters in major urban centres. From a logistical standpoint, this is the most cost-effective option as NGOs seek to ensure security for their organisation and workers, but this can also problematically restrict NGO engagement to ‘fly-in’ visits for many rural and peripheral areas often stricken

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<sup>412</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 475.

<sup>413</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 475.

<sup>414</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 487.

<sup>415</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 487.

<sup>416</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 487.

<sup>417</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 487.

<sup>418</sup> Duffield, ‘Challenging Environments’, p. 487.

with poverty and violence.<sup>419</sup> With ‘bunkerisation’, Western NGOs also project a poor example as they work within conflict societies; their opportunity to reside in ‘bunkerised’ safety is not just a marker of security, this can also further highlight the sharp income inequality that many conflict societies experience. Along with privileged political and business elites, NGO staff can enjoy secluded zones of security while the majority of the population remains exposed to violence and has no such access, this dynamic inadvertently reproduces protracted social divisions.<sup>420</sup> While this is general theorising on the problems of NGO ‘bunkerisation’, whether these tendencies cause any specific difficulties for NATO stabilisation in Afghanistan is a subject to be examined later in this dissertation.

## 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter argued that the literature linking risk theory with military strategy has been dominated by an exclusive focus on ‘war’, an outlook that is sometimes problematically incomplete with regard to the expeditionary aims of Western security actors like NATO. Contrary to ‘war’ under its conventional understanding, it becomes more accurate to discuss NATO’s risk management efforts in Afghanistan as a stabilisation policy that combined different civilian and military aspects. This policy was developed to prevent the re-emergence of risk from a fragile state. While crucial, ‘war-fighting’ was just one of a multitude of stabilisation tasks for NATO, ISAF did not just embrace the narrow aim to defeat the Taliban; it was a mission broadly focused on creating effectively functioning Afghan state institutions; training of the ANSF; and providing ODA and humanitarian assistance to many suffering from abject poverty. While these tasks deviate from the formal pursuit of ‘war’, the risk society’s formative features can still be readily suspected as influencing NATO’s stabilisation policy in Afghanistan.

Section two provided a preliminary conceptualisation for stabilisation policy, and the section argued this policy programme remains a risk management approach. ‘Stabilisation’ may at first appear to be a highly ambitious and ‘maximalist’ policy approach that seeks to comprehensively reconstruct public order in the host society. However, further critical assessment that centred on NATO’s Comprehensive Approach found that internal political compromises within the alliance ensured that many ISAF initiatives were indicated to be ‘cobbled together’, a flaw with much detriment for the mission’s long-term strategic coherence. Section three discussed stabilisation policy as a conceptual amalgam of civilian and military security components, from this angle, stabilisation policy continues to emphasise many of the utilitarian and ‘safety first’ tendencies that

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<sup>419</sup> Jonathan Fisher, ‘Reproducing Remoteness? States, Internationals and the Co-Constitution of Aid “Bunkerization” in the East African Periphery’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 11, no.1, 2017, p. 102.

<sup>420</sup> Fisher, ‘Reproducing Remoteness?’, p. 103.

risk theory predicts. Rather than instilling deep-rooted liberal democratic principles, a stabilisation policy enacted by the risk society might superficially use this rhetoric to ‘paper over’ its actions while instead supporting a ‘negative peace’. The latter aims to de-escalate violence and reduce the likelihood of security risks mobilising from a conflict area, but this happens without attention to a serious resolution of the conflict’s deeper fragmentation. Section four argued that humanitarian NGOs have become vital non-military contributors to NATO’s stabilisation policy. While civilian and military organisations are locked together during the stabilisation process, divergent preferences and organisational cultures often cause degenerative tensions between them. Humanitarian NGOs often blamed the pragmatic necessity of having a close association with the NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan as singling them out as targets for insurgent violence. Moreover, beyond cooperation with military organisations, NGOs operating in conflict areas can still be suspected as being deeply influenced by the risk society’s ‘safety first’ preference leading to ‘bunkerisation’ that can undermine broader humanitarian and development outreach and thus civilian contributions to effective stabilisation.

## **3. RISK SOCIETY INFLUENCES ON NATO AND ITS MEMBERS**

### **3.1. Introduction**

Beck sees globalisation as fundamentally responsible for creating later modernity and thus for the risk society's formation. However, previous literature specifically linking risk theory and military strategy has not integrated these conceptual aspects in much detail. This chapter aims to remedy this deficit with some conceptual development on how globalising processes might interlink with NATO's stabilisation outlook. Beck theorises that expanded globalisation strengthens transnational processes that 'criss-cross' Westphalian order where the risk society increasingly contemplates events 'along a "local-global" axis'. Global risks might then become a firm feature in security planning. This chapter argues that this effect can be observed in NATO's post-Cold War transformation debates. The risk society's acute focus on global risks extending from fragile states can be theorised as being heightened by the focus of various global actors on conflict areas. This includes a range of global NGO tasks from 'transnational surveillance' of military manoeuvres to civilian relief undertaken to the separate recruitment of global PMSCs to act as 'force-multipliers' supporting stabilisation.

This chapter examines how the effects of individualisation in risk society can be theorised as making NATO governments especially tentative, cautious and sometimes ineffective. According to Beck, individualisation convolutes government decision-making by creating a loud 'cross-fire of criticism'. Nationalism was a once powerful ideological influence to unify societies behind military campaigns, but the risk society can be theorised as following a 'post-heroic' military transformation that dilutes nationalist passion and thus society's cohesion to reinforce military operations. Citizens are much less committed to the sacrifices that longer military campaigns might involve.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section two examines recent phenomena involving global non-state actors operating in conflict zones diversely ranging from human rights NGOs to PMSCs. Section three outlines NATO's post-Cold War transformation debates, discussing alliance efforts to remain relevant to manage global risks. Section four discusses risk society individualisation and breakdowns in national cohesion in later modernity. This can be theorised as a social basis making NATO's leading members tentative powers that are unable to firmly commit to effective longer-term strategies with a stronger chance of stabilising fragile states. Section five provides the main conclusions.

### **3.2. Global influences on local conflicts**

Beyond claims that intensified globalisation 'aggravates' transnational risks, the literature linking the risk society and military strategy offers little more on how

globalisation might exactly influence stabilisation preferences.<sup>421</sup> Addressing this deficit is an important task because, in the general macro-sociological risk theory, Beck and others claim that global order is in the ‘midst of a fundamental change in the nature of society and politics’.<sup>422</sup> This ‘change hinges around two processes: globalisation and individualisation’.<sup>423</sup> Globalisation is a vast concept. Most of its social repercussions are well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, globalisation doubtlessly intersects with modes of contemporary warfare and stabilisation, even if its precise influences are sometimes difficult to pinpoint. Beck defines intensifying globalisation according to a de-bordered ‘world society’ that developed in the 1990s and 2000s. He perceives growing social influence from transnational processes as irreversible.

### 3.2.1. Global surveillance

Risk theorists see a ‘new politics’ shaping later modernity. Shlomo Griner defines this as ‘a [political] process of reflection by which the foundations of modernity are questioned and revised’.<sup>424</sup> Beck proposes the term ‘globality’ to acknowledge that ‘we [human civilisation] have been living for a long time in a world society’.<sup>425</sup> For Beck, ‘world society’ is ‘the totality of social relationships which are not integrated into or determined (or determinable) by national-state politics’.<sup>426</sup> Global collective action is theorised as essential for managing transnational risks. Demand for this action transcends the nation-state and ‘world society’ will be increasingly cosmopolitan. Beck admits that a cosmopolitan yet stable global order currently remains obstructed by ‘non-integration’ reinforced by ‘difference’ and ‘multiplicity’.<sup>427</sup>

Connecting with ‘globality’, Beck defines ‘globalisation’ as ‘the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks’.<sup>428</sup> This is transformative influence imparted on global order by a cacophony of globalised transnational processes. This includes the ‘geographical expansion’ of global trade; ‘the ongoing revolution of information and communications technology’; ‘universal *demands* for human rights’; the ‘stream of images’ produced by ‘global culture industries’; the ‘emergence of postnational, poly-centric world politics’ where transnational non-state actors (IOs, NGOs and TNCs) are ‘growing in power’; the ‘question of world poverty’; the ‘issue of global environmental destruction’; and ‘transcultural conflicts in one and the

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<sup>421</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p.13.

<sup>422</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*.

<sup>423</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*.

<sup>424</sup> Shlomo Griner, ‘Living in a World Risk Society: A Reply to Mikkel V. Rasmussen’, *Millennium*, vol. 31, no.1, 2002, p. 149–150.

<sup>425</sup> Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p. 10.

<sup>426</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>427</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>428</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

same place'.<sup>429</sup> For Beck, 'globality' across these domains means that 'nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world'; every society must adjust its outlook 'along a "local-global" axis'.<sup>430</sup>

When Beck's enormous macro-sociological framework is scaled down, some salient transnational trends can be theorised as influencing the risk society's stabilisation preferences. Many see NGOs offering humanitarian relief or monitoring violence within conflict zones as internally globalised. NGO personnel, operations and funding accumulate across many societies. These NGOs externally project 'globality' when contributing to how conflicts are perceived by global audiences. NGOs like HRW exist to evaluate human rights protection through 'transnational surveillance' of military operations. Pascal Vennesson argues that global NGOs like HRW might then convert this surveillance into power to stigmatise military actors into changed behaviour by 'naming and shaming' those that commit violations.<sup>431</sup> Domestic or international backlashes from shame can 'to some extent' influence a military's approach. Political caution might guide military planning that abandons some manoeuvres when wider transnational audiences perceive these as unethical.<sup>432</sup>

For van Creveld, this 'transnational surveillance' from NGOs, IOs and media organisations intersects with liberal values reified in the Western self-image. He claims that Western expeditionary forces are today subject to accountability 'as never before'.<sup>433</sup> In addition to NGOs and traditional media, social media depicting Western military behaviour can quickly 'go viral' for scrutiny before global audiences.<sup>434</sup> Gray argues that insurgents seek to 'win by not losing because he [the insurgent] believes that he can outlast' a conventional military. For Washington, COIN is 'not be won or lost in the local barrios and swamps, but in America's sitting rooms'.<sup>435</sup> Steven Metz reminds us that 'insurgency, after all, is a form of armed theatre'.<sup>436</sup> Outlooks from Gray and Metz respectively are broadly correct, but Gray's outlook remains too narrow in focus. Domestic public opinion is not the only pressure that Western governments at war will feel. Unipolarity means that intergovernmental and transnational stakeholders will also seek to affect US decision-making, including governments from allied and partner states; commercial lobby groups; and a multitude of domestic and global NGOs.

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<sup>429</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>430</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>431</sup> Pascal Vennesson, 'War Under Transnational Surveillance: Framing Ambiguity and the Politics of Shame', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2014, pp. 25–51.

<sup>432</sup> Vennesson, 'War Under Transnational Surveillance', p. 25.

<sup>433</sup> Martin van Creveld, *More on War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 184.

<sup>434</sup> Van Creveld, *More on War*, p. 184.

<sup>435</sup> Colin S. Gray, 'Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>436</sup> Steven Metz, *Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2007, p. 44.

While ethically desirable in democratic societies, political pressure from ‘transnational surveillance’ complicates security planning further. Transnational actors, most prominently NGOs and some IOs, pressure for military operations to be conducted within tight legal, normative and ethical constraints. All the while; the impatient risk society will insist that security is ensured with quick victories and minimal casualties. Restrictions influenced by ‘transnational surveillance’ sometimes create vulnerabilities exploited by guerrilla adversaries.<sup>437</sup> For van Creveld, guerrilla insurgents target ‘weaker links’ in a conventional adversary: ‘provoking him, surprising him, raiding him, harrying him, and hopefully driving him crazy as a horse is driven crazy by flies’.<sup>438</sup> Conflicts involving Western governments usually have what risk theorists stress as a strong ‘globality’ dimension. ‘Armed theatre’ and ‘provocation’ from guerrilla forces receive broad global prominence. If NATO forces ‘take the bait’ by reacting in haphazard frustration, deploying governments will likely face severe backlashes from domestic and global public opinion.

### 3.2.2. Global PMSCs

Mirroring neoliberal tendencies in domestic society, Western government outsourcing to commercial enterprises gathers many civilian and some military components needed for stabilisation.<sup>439</sup> Outsourcing to PMSCs is sometimes explained through terms like the ‘market for force’ and ‘corporate soldiers’.<sup>440</sup> Like global NGOs, many PMSCs can have an internally globalised structure and their external action can spread positive or negative globalisation into conflict situations.<sup>441</sup> Western governments regularly struggle to generate enough military manpower from national citizenry. Volunteer-based militaries compete for recruits within the wider civilian economy. When the US abolished ‘the draft’ in the late 1960s; President Richard Nixon claimed that its military was one of few social institutions ‘able to ignore the laws of supply and demand’, he argued that volunteerism would make military careers ‘more competitive with the attractions of the civilian world’.<sup>442</sup> Recruiting from a global commercial labour market, PMSCs do not face the same limits as national militaries.<sup>443</sup> Outsourcing to PMSCs might offer governments a ‘quick-fix’ to boost resources. Drawing from Beck’s theory, Elke Krahnmann claims that the risk society’s acute anxiety on

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<sup>437</sup> Charles Perrow, ‘Organizing to Reduce the Vulnerabilities of Complexity’, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1999, pp. 150–155.

<sup>438</sup> Van Creveld, *More on War*, p. 182.

<sup>439</sup> Walter F. Roche Jr. and Ken Silverstein, ‘Advocates of War Now Profit from Iraq’s Reconstruction’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 14 July 2004, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-jul-14-na-advocates14-story.html> (accessed 22 October 2020).

<sup>440</sup> Christopher Kinsey, *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>441</sup> Kinsey, *Corporate Soldiers and International Security*.

<sup>442</sup> Beth Bailey, ‘The Army in the Marketplace: Recruiting an All-Volunteer Force’, *The Journal of American History*, vol. 94, no. 1, 2007, p. 51.

<sup>443</sup> Gallagher, ‘Risk and Private Military Work’, pp. 783–784.

security creates an insatiable demand for additional PMSC services.<sup>444</sup> Citizens increasingly seek extra security from commercial sources because they feel doubtful that public order guarded by governments is enough to fully guarantee safety.<sup>445</sup>

Similar concerns have been raised by military leaders. Discussing NATO's shrinking ability to export stabilisation, British General Rupert Smith argues that military operations are often weakened by manpower scarcities. Western militaries now 'fight not to lose the force for the same reason that the guerrilla fights that way'.<sup>446</sup> Replacing soldiers lost on the battlefield is increasingly difficult. Adding additional insight for risk theory, Smith argues that 'safety first' governments often assess replacement levels based on 'what is politically sustainable in the circumstances'.<sup>447</sup> Coker theorises that political constraints imposed by risk society governments create some severe military difficulties that impede stabilisation, insisting that, 'Unfortunately, in a counter-insurgency campaign numbers matter'.<sup>448</sup>

Reports of manpower scarcities from NATO's military leaders in Afghanistan create further scope to theorise PMSCs as a tempting solution for the risk society. British General David Richards, ISAF commander from May 2006 until February 2007, led NATO's 'first real land battle', Operation Medusa against the Taliban.<sup>449</sup> Medusa shifted ISAF's focus from COIN to warfighting, but battlefield progress proved elusive despite stronger combat engagement. Richards even claims that Medusa might have concluded with an embarrassing defeat for NATO. It was only spared this because of its air-support advantage and because of some unforced errors by Taliban forces.<sup>450</sup> According to Richards, NATO ground forces were substantially less than what Medusa required: 'I had no new forces. Every soldier I had spare was committed to battle'.<sup>451</sup> When the risk society's military resources are thinly stretched, extra personnel or 'enablers' from PMSCs can reinforce national militaries, at least temporarily. This is politically attractive. For Anna Leander, the PMSC 'market for force' is often praised as a risk-efficient 'force multiplier' for governments needing national troops to be 'freed-up' for operations elsewhere.<sup>452</sup> Some PMSCs operate jointly with national forces; engage in SSR; and support civilian stabilisation components.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Elke Krahnmann, 'Beck and Beyond: Selling Security in the World Risk Society', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2011, p. 359.

<sup>445</sup> Krahnmann, 'Beck and Beyond', p. 357.

<sup>446</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, London: Allen Lane, 2005, p. 303.

<sup>447</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, p. 303.

<sup>448</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 23.

<sup>449</sup> Richards, 'RUSI Interview', pp. 24–25.

<sup>450</sup> Richards, 'RUSI Interview', p. 25.

<sup>451</sup> Richards, 'RUSI Interview', p. 25.

<sup>452</sup> Anna Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security: The Destabilizing Consequences of Private Military Companies', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 5, 2005, p. 607.

<sup>453</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 607.

However, doubts remain on whether PMSCs are ultimately more of a help than a hindrance. Legal status and regulation of today's burgeoning global PMSC industry are often ambiguously defined in international treaties. Widening legal definitions of 'the combatant' at war to better account for PMSC activity is difficult.<sup>454</sup> Leander argues that economic logic has an overbearing influence on PMSC behaviour. She theorises PMSC motives diverging from national militaries when responding to security aims. Market-led economic incentives can undermine PMSC security provision.<sup>455</sup> Competition for market share directs PMSCs to constantly advertise services to clients.

Military leaders might complain about insufficient personnel, but overloading with PMSCs might instead create an overbearing military presence that provokes tensions with local populations. Contracting governments do not have the same responsibility for the safety of PMSC personnel as they do with national soldiers. Marketplace competition allows plentiful choice for those contracting PMSC protection, what Leander describes as 'expansionary supply' that can dangerously distort or overly-militarise security planning.<sup>456</sup> Market-logic ensures that PMSC formation and reformation is 'fluid' where firms are continuously 'created, dissolved, branched, [or] merged', making it very difficult to hold PMSCs to account or even notice those responsible for past problems.<sup>457</sup>

PMSCs might offer higher salaries to attract better candidates. This can drain the best locally available military recruits from a fragile state's military and undermine SSR.<sup>458</sup> Risk theorists argue that globalisation and individualisation move most societies 'beyond class'.<sup>459</sup> However, when market globalisation dominates PMSC growth, a contrary proposition takes shape. Globalised PMSCs have been specifically theorised as widening class division in some conflict situations. According to Leander, PMSCs can entrench divisions between a conflict zone's diverse but privileged interests comprising 'local strongmen, "warlords", foreign firms, aid organisations and governments' – groups affording PMSC protection – and other less affluent classes remaining more exposed to violence.<sup>460</sup>

### 3.3. Preparing NATO for global risks

Beck theorises that outdated or ineffective institutions once responsive to earlier modernity can sometimes persist as problematic 'zombie categories' in later

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<sup>454</sup> Katherine Jackson, 'Not Quite a Civilian, Not Quite a Soldier: How Five Words Could Subject Civilian Contractors In Iraq And Afghanistan To Military Jurisdiction', *Journal of the National Association of Administrative Law Judiciary*, vol. 27, 2007, pp. 255–289.

<sup>455</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 605.

<sup>456</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 612.

<sup>457</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 614.

<sup>458</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 616.

<sup>459</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p. 30.

<sup>460</sup> Leander, 'The Market for Force and Public Security', p. 617.

modernity.<sup>461</sup> In a similar but more specific context, some realist IR theorists have portrayed NATO's post-Cold War persistence as 'irrational'.<sup>462</sup> These realists see NATO enlargement and expeditionary operations after 1991 as provoking unnecessary tensions with Russia and other non-Western powers.<sup>463</sup> Such interpretations follow Glenn Snyder's theorisation that '[military] alliances have no meaning apart from the adversary threat to which they are a response'.<sup>464</sup> These criticisms might be oblivious to a more eclectic post-Cold War security environment. Rasmussen's risk theory contains a more nuanced outlook, claiming that 9/11 redirected Western security planning towards 'strategic globality'. Contrary to a state-centric adversary, Al-Qaeda's devastating affront was facilitated by fluid global networks.<sup>465</sup> Martha Crenshaw saw 9/11 as signalling the 'globalisation of civil war' but contrary to 'war' in the Westphalian tradition, Western anxieties feeding the GWOT response reached well beyond strict military-to-military contact.<sup>466</sup> Rasmussen theorises that by weaponising civilian aviation, Al-Qaeda had realised 'a threat carried out by civilians of one state or community against civilians of another state or community'.<sup>467</sup>

### 3.3.1. Developing a global focus

Rather than extending US hegemony to limit state-based threats as NATO's realist critics understand, Western security institutions can be theorised as being partially reshaped to respond to the 'dark sides' of global networks.<sup>468</sup> Rasmussen categorises US and wider Western GWOT discourses into three contradicting outlooks: 'particularism'; 'imperialism'; and 'cosmopolitanism'.<sup>469</sup> 'Particularism' was a global 'clash of civilisations' where cultural tensions defined conflict between the West and Al-Qaeda's heartland in the Muslim world.<sup>470</sup> 9/11 worsened the risk society's anxiety about this problem. Separately, Washington might have had its 'imperialist' impulses updated for later modernity with its response to 9/11 justifying military interventions as necessary to stabilise global order and for reducing risks to its national security.<sup>471</sup> UK Prime Minister Tony Blair advocated another

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<sup>461</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p. 27.

<sup>462</sup> See Stephen M. Walt, 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse', *Survival*, vol. 39, no.1, 1997, p. 157. And Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War', *International Security*, vol. 25, no.1, 2000, pp. 29–31.

<sup>463</sup> See Walt, 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse', p. 157. And Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War', 2000, pp. 29–31.

<sup>464</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 192.

<sup>465</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 325–326.

<sup>466</sup> Martha Crenshaw, 'Why America? The Globalization of Civil War', *Current History*, vol. 100, no. 650, 2001, p. 432.

<sup>467</sup> Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "'It Sounds Like a Riddle": Security Studies, the War on Terror and Risk', *Millennium*, vol.33, no.2, 2004, p. 390.

<sup>468</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 325–326.

<sup>469</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 324.

<sup>470</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", pp.335–336.

<sup>471</sup> Rasmussen, "'A Parallel Globalization of Terror'", p. 336.

contrasting ‘cosmopolitan’ response to 9/11, stressing a need to collect as many states as possible for a coalition agreeing to combat terrorism as a common global risk. Blair envisaged this as a new opportunity to ease tensions between the West and the rest.<sup>472</sup> After Afghanistan became the GWOT’s opening focus in late 2001, fragments of these three ‘strategic globalities’ can be theorised among NATO’s aims to effectively perform stabilisation.

More general ‘strategic globality’ discourses have shaped NATO’s post-Cold War transformation. Patrick Morgan argues that NATO ‘de-nationalises’ security policy among its members. After NATO started to combine enlargement to support democratic stability in Europe with expeditionary operations to manage global risks, Morgan welcomed this as ‘doing [even] more’ to support security than at any time since 1949.<sup>473</sup> After NATO’s 2010 Strategic Concept formalised three strategic objectives: collective defence; cooperative security; and crisis management, Gheciu elaborated further ‘strategic globality’ in its *raison d’être*:

Instead of a clearly defined, negative other, the institutions of the transatlantic security community must now take preventive action on a global scale, targeting actors, be they states or non-state actors that are perceived as a source of actual or potential risk to international security.<sup>474</sup>

During the Cold War, NATO prioritised ‘specific assets’ for conventional or nuclear deterrence, but Celeste Wallander claims that it remained concurrently equipped with additional ‘general assets’ including ‘logistics infrastructure to air defence, control and reinforcement’.<sup>475</sup> These received elevated importance in NATO’s ‘diverse military missions’ after the Cold War.<sup>476</sup>

Specifically connecting NATO transformation with the risk theory in 2004, Coker argues that NATO has developed in three important phases.<sup>477</sup> ‘To keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down’ was founding Secretary-General Lord Hastings Ismay’s explanation for NATO’s founding.<sup>478</sup> NATO later transcended this to become a ‘pluralistic security community’. A concept introduced by Karl Deutsch; a ‘pluralistic security community’ decommissions war

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<sup>472</sup> Rasmussen, “‘A Parallel Globalization of Terror’”, pp. 340–341.

<sup>473</sup> Patrick Morgan, ‘NATO and European Security: The Creative Use of An International Organization’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2003, p. 62.

<sup>474</sup> Alexandra Gheciu, *Securing Civilization? The EU, NATO and the OSCE in the Post-9/11 World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 21.

<sup>475</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, ‘Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War’, *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2000, pp. 706–714.

<sup>476</sup> Wallander, ‘Institutional Assets and Adaptability’, p. 714.

<sup>477</sup> Coker, ‘Globalisation and Insecurity’, pp. 67–68.

<sup>478</sup> Lord Hastings Ismay quoted in Geoffrey Wheatcroft, ‘Who Needs NATO?’, *The New York Times*, 15 June 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/16/opinion/16iht-edwheatcroft16.html> (accessed 24 October 2020).

and institutionalises peace among its members.<sup>479</sup> When focusing on expeditionary operations during the GWOT, Coker argues that NATO entered a third transformation phase from a ‘security community’ to a ‘risk community’.<sup>480</sup> In this guise, NATO had reorganised its capabilities to manage global security risks.<sup>481</sup> Nevertheless, doubts remained on whether NATO had genuinely achieved this. Ringsmose explains internal disagreements persisting between ‘globaliser’ members advocating more expeditionary transformation for NATO to become ‘a hub of global security relationships’ and its ‘Article 5ers’ preferring collective defence as NATO’s central focus.<sup>482</sup>

Following Lugar’s ‘out-of-area or out of business’ advice in 1993, US commentators called for a ‘global NATO’ to boost continuing relevance. Ivo Daadler and James Goldgeier argued in 2006 that NATO ‘recognised that the best (and at times the only) defence’ against ‘remote dangers’ was to ‘tackle them at their source’ and that ‘forward defence often requires a global military reach’.<sup>483</sup> The idea of NATO as an important first responder to global risks is further highlighted in phrases describing its transformation as moving ‘from protecting some [in the Euro-Atlantic area] to securing many [globally]’.<sup>484</sup> This has some liberal ideological connotations connected to influential Western R2P discourses during the 1990s and 2000s. Seeing security through a ‘supply and demand’ rubric, Sherard Cowper-Coles concurs that NATO’s response to post-Cold War demands was a ‘slow metamorphosis from a club concerned mainly with the collective defence of its members’ territory to one preoccupied with the collective promotion of its members’ wider security interests’.<sup>485</sup>

Even beyond Afghanistan, Daadler and Goldgeier highlight that an increasingly global outlook was propelling NATO as it had:

trained security forces in Iraq, and given logistical support to the African Union’s mission in Darfur. It assisted the tsunami relief effort in Indonesia and ferried

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<sup>479</sup> Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957.

<sup>480</sup> Coker, ‘Globalisation and Insecurity’, pp. 67–68.

<sup>481</sup> Coker, ‘Globalisation and Insecurity’, pp. 67–68.

<sup>482</sup> Jens Ringsmose, ‘NATO’s Response Force: Finally Getting it Right?’, *European Security*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2009, p. 298.

<sup>483</sup> Ivo Daadler and James Goldgeier, ‘Global NATO’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 5, 2006, p. 105.

<sup>484</sup> Charly Salonijs-Pasternak, ed., *From Protecting Some to Securing Many: NATO’s Journey from a Military Alliance to a Security Manager*, Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs Report 17, 2007, available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46190/200712\\_From\\_Protecting\\_Some.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46190/200712_From_Protecting_Some.pdf) (accessed 23 September 2021).

<sup>485</sup> Sherard Cowper-Coles, ‘From Defence to Security: British Policy in Transition’, *Survival*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1994, pp. 145–159.

supplies to victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States and to those of a massive earthquake in Pakistan.<sup>486</sup>

From 1991 until Russia's aggression in Ukraine in 2014, commentators made frequent statements implying Beck's 'local-global axis' as deciding NATO's direction. Daalder and Goldgeier explain that 'interconnection means that developments in one place affect the security, prosperity, and well-being of citizens everywhere'.<sup>487</sup> Others perceived the need for enhanced 'globality' in transatlantic relations with R. Nicolas Burns, US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs between 2005 and 2008 claiming that 'US-European relations are increasingly a function of events in the Middle East, Asia and Africa'.<sup>488</sup>

Such was the 'demand' for NATO to 'go global'; some have even proposed radical transformation options extending well beyond Euro-Atlantic security. Tobias Bunde and Timo Noetzel argued that NATO might need a blend of 'functional globalisation' where it widens its 'spectrum of tasks and missions' and 'institutional globalisation' where it enlarges its membership to 'like-minded' democratic states outside the Euro-Atlantic such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Mexico and maybe even emerging democracies such as Brazil and South Africa.<sup>489</sup> The latter transformational blueprint had some supporters in Washington as it promised to develop the West's global security reach by increasing its pool of military assets and intelligence capabilities.<sup>490</sup> Such ideas might seem fanciful at first glance, but it might be claimed that ISAF represented a 'lite' version of this proposal. The mission centred on NATO but important assistance was received from a series of partners ranging from Pakistan to Australia. Broadening the pool of military and civilian security assets, the global response that NATO coordinated for ISAF also improved legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is claimed that ISAF's 'institutional globalisation' was unwieldy and sometimes overwhelmed NATO's decision-making structures.<sup>491</sup>

Charlotte Wagnsson highlights further 'globality' narratives in NATO transformation emanating from its leadership, most pertinently from Secretary-Generals seeking to ease internal divergence by clarifying NATO's evolving global security role. Wagnsson defines these roles as the 'watchdog'; 'fire-fighter'; 'good neighbour'; and 'seminar leader'.<sup>492</sup> While the 'watchdog' narrative expressed NATO's continued commitment to collective defence and deterrence; and

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<sup>486</sup> Daalder and Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', p. 105.

<sup>487</sup> Daalder and Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', p. 105.

<sup>488</sup> R. Nicolas Burns cited in Daalder and Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', p.109.

<sup>489</sup> Tobias Bunde and Timo Noetzel, 'Unavoidable Tensions: The Liberal Path to Global NATO', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol.31, no. 2, 2010, pp. 295–296.

<sup>490</sup> Bunde and Noetzel, 'Unavoidable Tensions', pp. 295–296.

<sup>491</sup> Andrew Cottey, 'NATO: Globalization or Redundancy?', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 25, no.3, 2004, pp. 403–404.

<sup>492</sup> Charlotte Wagnsson, 'NATO's Role in the Strategic Concept Debate: Watchdog, Fire-Fighter, Neighbour or Seminar Leader?', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2011, pp. 482–501.

the ‘good neighbour’ narrative connected with broader pan-European regional security, Wagnsson’s ‘fire-fighter’ and ‘seminar leader’ narratives emphasise a need to respond to global risks.<sup>493</sup> As a ‘fire-fighter’, NATO signals its suitability for global crisis management because it has the ‘military strength and ability of rapid response’ to be ‘an effective and militarily powerful globocop’.<sup>494</sup> It is the nature of ‘fire-fighting’ that responders rarely where the next fire or emergency occurs. Like risk management, planning for this unpredictability requires a broad and flexible organisational approach.

Wagnsson’s portrayal of NATO as a ‘seminar leader’ sees it as a central broker in a broad global network aiming to resolve transnational security problems.<sup>495</sup> NATO has ‘intent to nurture a good climate and, in the long run, a functional global security community’ under the expectation of ‘consultation and cooperation’ with a wide variety of partner states and IOs such as the UN and the EU.<sup>496</sup> Literature on Western ‘network-centric warfare’ sometimes likens conflict environments to ‘ecosystems’ that are acutely complex and chaotic by nature.<sup>497</sup> ISAF can be equated to a highly complex ‘eco-system’ for stabilisation, a ‘run-away world’ that NATO found difficult to control or coordinate, especially when NGOs and PMSCs were added to the partnership picture as non-state actors. Humanitarian idealism from some NGO personnel brought tension when matched with NATO’s military pragmatism, while PMSCs continued to carry stigma as a “‘necessary evil” – or an “evil necessity”” utilised by Western governments.<sup>498</sup> The impact of regression from such tension between multiple actors when trying to offer stabilisation is often missed in the ‘public goods’ literature that is popular for analysing NATO burden-sharing. This literature is founded on Mancur Olson’s *logic of collective action* from the 1960s and defines ‘public goods’ domestically as the ‘goods and services, such as defence, that the government provides in the common interest of the citizenry’.<sup>499</sup> When extended to global stabilisation efforts, those following this model tend to assume collective contributions of troops or other assets as automatically facilitating a positive impact.<sup>500</sup> Matters might not always be so linear. Mistakes, abuses or poor policies within

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<sup>493</sup> Wagnsson, ‘NATO’s Role in the Strategic Concept Debate’, p. 485.

<sup>494</sup> Wagnsson, ‘NATO’s Role in the Strategic Concept Debate’, p. 485.

<sup>495</sup> Wagnsson, ‘NATO’s Role in the Strategic Concept Debate’, 429–493.

<sup>496</sup> Wagnsson, ‘NATO’s Role in the Strategic Concept Debate’, 492–493.

<sup>497</sup> Michael Dillon, ‘Network Society, Network-Centric Warfare and the State of Emergency’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 19, no.4, 2002, p. 72.

<sup>498</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, ‘Private Security Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq: The Potential Impact of the Montreux Document’, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 17 November 2010, available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/private-security-forces-afghanistan-and-iraq-potential-impact-montreux-document> (accessed 13 September 2020).

<sup>499</sup> Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, ‘An Economic Theory of Alliances’, *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 48, no. 3, 1966, p. 267.

<sup>500</sup> See, for example, Todd Sandler and Hirofumi Shimizu, ‘NATO Burden Sharing 1999–2010: An Altered Alliance’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2014, pp. 43–60.

the collective stabilisation 'eco-system' can also create 'public bads' to internally undermine its aims.<sup>501</sup>

Contrary to a Westphalian emphasis on territorial defence, Wagnsson argues that 'In the present era, security is often about the prosperity and lives of Westerners, and perhaps even about protecting strangers'.<sup>502</sup> She argues that NATO's balance between collective defence and expeditionary missions might still have problematically reproduced an outdated 'zombie' outlook inhibiting its members from responding to 'non-traditional referent objects and actors in the sphere of security' such as protecting women and children and supporting humanitarian NGOs.<sup>503</sup> Wagnsson is concerned that NATO's Comprehensive Approach prioritising civilian security matters had not developed enough to be effective in these areas due to an emphasis on "quick fix" problem-solving.<sup>504</sup> Through a risk theory lens, this concern indicates utilitarian intent to 'prevent the worst' by doing what is 'good enough' to limit risks flowing from fragile states, but while leaving deeper humanitarian problems under-prioritised.

Opportunities for expanded networks and connectivity are integral to accelerated globalisation. Coker theorises that stabilisation outcomes might often hinge on 'network security'. He sees US failure to prevent Iraq's descent into violent turmoil soon after March 2003 as caused by Washington's inability to build networks to facilitate meaningful negotiation between opposing local factions.<sup>505</sup> In Afghanistan, it was questioned whether NATO's intergovernmentalism would be enough to effectively manage the wider networks that stabilisation required. Expanded networks often give clandestine strength to insurgents. Coker theorises that 'In a networked world, violence can become self-sustaining' because broader networks, supply-chains and recruitment opportunities ensure 'the transaction costs [enabling violence] are so low'.<sup>506</sup> Even the culturally localised Taliban was galvanised by expanding networks facilitated by globalisation.

With an interesting interpretation contrasting with claims that NATO has been reluctant to dispense with outdated Westphalian outlooks, Merje Kuus argues that NATO has been proficient in support of global networks centred on NGOs for youth education and entertainment.<sup>507</sup> For Kuus, this is not always positive; she argues this as promoting a 'cosmopolitan militarism' overemphasising 'military approaches to political problems'.<sup>508</sup> NATO might be suspected of problematically prioritising these global networks to superficially justify its persistence ahead of the less glamorous 'hard yards' of forming networks for effective

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<sup>501</sup> Gabe Mythen, 'From 'Goods' to 'Bads'? Revisiting the Political Economy of Risk', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2005, pp. 191–203.

<sup>502</sup> Wagnsson, 'NATO's Role in the Strategic Concept Debate', p. 495.

<sup>503</sup> Wagnsson, 'NATO's Role in the Strategic Concept Debate', p. 485.

<sup>504</sup> Wagnsson, 'NATO's Role in the Strategic Concept Debate', p. 487.

<sup>505</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.125.

<sup>506</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 125.

<sup>507</sup> Merje Kuus, 'Cosmopolitan Militarism? Spaces of NATO Expansion', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2009, p. 547.

<sup>508</sup> Kuus, 'Cosmopolitan Militarism?', p. 547.

stabilisation in Afghanistan. Emphasised as crucial for stabilisation, Williams claims that networking for multi-actor civil-military coordination still ‘does not come easily to the traditional structures of modernity’.<sup>509</sup> IOs like NATO or the UN were originally formed for a Westphalian purpose to manage the ‘balance of power’ but might not yet be as effective in responding to the ‘absence of power’ in fragile states.<sup>510</sup> For Williams, NATO struggled with stabilisation policy due to limited previous experience with civilian security networks: ‘As a result, the Afghan government found itself inundated with everyone ostensibly trying to help, but inadvertently overloading the nascent government’.<sup>511</sup>

### 3.3.2. Operational network focus

With a newfound role supporting civilian relief, NATO’s military forces needed to better adapt to MOOTW. Achieving ‘network security’ by gathering consent and trust with local populations was a vital aim. Multinational expeditionary operations are usually prominent sites for ‘global-local’ interaction, but some sharp contradictions were also created that needed to be eased. ‘Shock and awe’ of early intervention quickly gave way to ‘winning hearts and minds’ for stabilisation. After Saddam was overthrown in Iraq, by April 2003, Robert Egnell outlines that British forces ‘quickly adjusted from a warrior mindset to that of peace support operations...troops took off their helmets and flak jackets and started foot-patrolling as part of a more benign posture’.<sup>512</sup> Literature on operational military transformation presents some indications on why NATO forces might have attempted to better develop networking capacity.

In earlier modernity, Western mass militaries were formed from ‘conscripted lower ranks combined with a professional officer corps’.<sup>513</sup> These were focused on national defence and ‘war-orientated in mission’.<sup>514</sup> Stabilisation for fragile states obliges military units to operate in ‘increasingly complex military-political-social environments’.<sup>515</sup> Force structures and outlooks were later overhauled to favour a ‘postmodern military’ where all-volunteer professionalism is preferable for ‘multipurpose missions’.<sup>516</sup> Causing an ‘loosening of the ties with the nation-state’, these changes have encouraged a more spontaneous type of operational

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<sup>509</sup> Michael J. Williams, ‘(Un)Sustainable Peacebuilding: NATO’s Suitability for Postconflict Reconstruction in Multiactor Environments’, *Global Governance*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, p. 131.

<sup>510</sup> Williams, ‘(Un)Sustainable Peacebuilding’, p. 115.

<sup>511</sup> Williams, ‘(Un)Sustainable Peacebuilding’, p. 123.

<sup>512</sup> Robert Egnell, ‘Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan: What Now for British Counterinsurgency?’, *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 2, 2011, p. 298.

<sup>513</sup> Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams and David R. Segal, ‘Armed Forces After the Cold War’, in Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.1.

<sup>514</sup> Moskos et. al., ‘Armed Forces After the Cold War’, p. 1.

<sup>515</sup> Anthony Forster, *Armed Forces and Society in Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 5–6.

<sup>516</sup> Moskos et. al., ‘Armed Forces After the Cold War’, p. 1.

soldiering.<sup>517</sup> Rigid control from hierarchical military command is partially relaxed to empower some spontaneous agency or the ‘soldier-diplomat’ to facilitate better mediation with local populations.<sup>518</sup> Related concepts such as the ‘strategic corporal’ likewise signify some redistribution of responsibility from centralised command to individual soldiers, some even of junior rank.<sup>519</sup> US Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak argues that exclusive reliance on instructions from central commanders is sometimes insufficient and that ‘intuitive decision-making’ must be promoted for forces to be ‘flexible’ and ‘versatile’ to perform effectively in complex environments.<sup>520</sup>

Outside warfighting to subdue insurgents, Coker theorises that soldiering that more resembles ‘community policing’ is considered necessary to build local trust and consent for stabilisation.<sup>521</sup> Contrary to the Clausewitzian outlook on war as having a ‘centre of gravity’ to be won or lost, policing usually requires persistence, reaffirming the assertion that risk management through stabilisation is a continuous undertaking.<sup>522</sup> Policing by an occupying military force in support of non-violent stability extends far beyond risk theory. Britain and other empires maintained a ‘constabulary ethic’ to stabilise imperial control over colonial territories most pertinently in the nineteenth century.<sup>523</sup> This approach understood ‘that the use of threat of force would be carefully adjusted to the political objectives pursued’ where ‘non-coercion’ and ‘impartiality’ where possible to ease conflict rather than escalate it.<sup>524</sup> In whatever guise, continuous policing for ‘network security’ to support stabilisation is likely to be a long-term commitment that the impatient risk society will find difficult to contine. For example, Ben Buley argues that ‘To be fully effective [at stabilisation] the United States will need to have some of its people continuously abroad for years, so that they become familiar with the local scene and the indigenous people come to trust them as individuals’.<sup>525</sup> ‘Soldier-diplomats’ have other important functions in addition to building connections with local populations. This skill has an important role assisting multi-actor stabilisation. Discretion to understand situations when civilian organisations are better suited to leading over military forces might benefit stabilisation outcomes.<sup>526</sup> Relinquishing leadership might be difficult for some

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<sup>517</sup> Moskos et. al., ‘Armed Forces After the Cold War’, p. 1.

<sup>518</sup> Edward Burke, ‘Leaving the Civilians Behind: The “Soldier-Diplomat” in Afghanistan and Iraq’, *Prism*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>519</sup> Simon King, ‘Strategic Corporal or Tactical Colonel? Anchoring the Right Variable’, *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2003, p. 190.

<sup>520</sup> Charles C. Krulak, ‘Cultivating Intuitive Decision-Making’, *Marine Corps Gazette*, vol. 83, no. 5, 1999, pp. 18–22.

<sup>521</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 160–161.

<sup>522</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 160–161.

<sup>523</sup> Charles C. Moskos, Jr., ‘UN Peacekeepers: The Constabulary Ethic and Military Professionalism’, *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1960, pp. 388–389.

<sup>524</sup> Moskos, ‘UN Peacekeepers’, pp. 388–389.

<sup>525</sup> Ben Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, p. 133.

<sup>526</sup> Burke, ‘Leaving the Civilians Behind’, p. 27.

military organisations to accept in certain circumstances, but, as Edward Burke argues, having civilian relief providers at the forefront ‘helps to dispel the perception of the host population being under military occupation’.<sup>527</sup>

Stabilisation that promotes individualised soldiering concepts like the ‘soldier-diplomat’ and ‘strategic corporal’ nudge military transformation in a non-traditional direction. Earlier debates in domestic civil-military relations between Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz respectively might now also be considered from an international perspective. Advancing a ‘traditionalist’ view in the 1950s, Huntington believed that a ‘highly professional officer corps’ must be ‘immune to politics and respected for its military character’.<sup>528</sup> Janowitz later outlined a contrary view that ‘political education’ was essential to instil ‘a commitment to the democratic system and an understanding of how it works’ in military forces.<sup>529</sup> Expeditionary stabilisation to assist fragile states puts Janowitz’ outlook into the ascendency. Strong political knowledge and intuition to inform effective operational decisions is crucial to allow individual soldiers to build ‘network security’ to improve stabilisation prospects.

Conversive to Williams’ outlook and contrary to Beck’s claim that more transnational institutions are required to better manage de-territorialised security risks, others argue that NATO’s intergovernmental *modus operandi* actually preserves its effectiveness. Philip Cerny argues that ‘transnational governance structures’ have disappointingly developed only in ‘fragmented’ or ‘disarticulated’ forms.<sup>530</sup> The EU is a success, but even when its transnational ‘multi-level’ governance functions properly, its dilute legitimacy and convoluted structure can still cause ‘mistrust, paralysed governance and induced security incapacity’ to stifle strategic aims.<sup>531</sup> While memberships majorly overlap, contrary to developments within the EU, NATO members stubbornly retain an intergovernmental process. It is fair to agree with Rynning’s view that most NATO members still prefer ‘modernist’ security planning based on intergovernmental consensus to ‘governance by postmodern complexity’ which, within the EU, sees ‘intergovernmentalism diluted by elaborate European voting procedures, multiple levels of bureaucracy and overlapping competences’.<sup>532</sup> Rynning argues that ‘modernist’ security planning remains a better option when a rapid response to emergencies is required.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Burke, ‘Leaving the Civilians Behind’, p. 29.

<sup>528</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, New York: Vintage Books, 1957, p. 464.

<sup>529</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, New York: The Free Press, 1971, p. 439.

<sup>530</sup> Philip Cerny, ‘Neomedievalism, Civil War and the New Security Dilemma: Globalisation as Durable Disorder’, *Civil Wars*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1998, p. 42.

<sup>531</sup> Sten Rynning, ‘The Geography of the Atlantic Peace: NATO 25 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall’, *International Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 6, 2014, p. 1383.

<sup>532</sup> Sten Rynning, ‘The European Union: Towards A Strategic Culture’, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2003, p. 488.

<sup>533</sup> Rynning, ‘The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?’, p. 488.

Leo Michel argues NATO's intergovernmental 'consensus rule' serves an important political function to continually reinforce alliance durability. This has repeatedly 'helped NATO navigate difficult political and military situations' enabling 'allies to undertake the widest possible consultations to build support for their ideas'.<sup>534</sup> This still demands ample patience, intergovernmental consensus allows matters to be resolved to the satisfaction of all allies, but it can still weaken outward expeditionary effectiveness. Calling for NATO to be the centre of a 'global security web', Zbigniew Brzezinski argues that broad internal alliance consensus might no longer be optimal for the enlarged post-Cold War NATO.<sup>535</sup> He proposes that a 'senior allied group' reconsider NATO's consensus decision-making to allow operations when this choice 'would be shared by an overwhelming majority but not by everyone'.<sup>536</sup> This might make decision-making less tedious, but it also risks fragmenting NATO between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' when expeditionary operations are negotiated under pressure.<sup>537</sup> Nevertheless, as Rynning highlights, recent Western military interventions have been focused around coalitions spearheaded by a select number of 'willing' states providing the main military capabilities.<sup>538</sup> When stabilisation is the end aim, these coalitions then rely on some important political and military assets provided by 'big tent' organisations like the UN; from the EU and NATO more broadly; and from NGO, PMSC and TNC networks.<sup>539</sup>

### 3.3.3. Continuous management or 'endless wars'

As public backlashes against 'endless wars' escalate, continuous risk management by military means has been especially controversial. Risk theorists argue that war has become an instrument of risk management, but risk society demands for danger to be continuously managed still indicate multiple contradictions when contrasted with traditional ideas of strategy. 'Continuous management' of risk defined the GWOT, this challenged NATO to constantly 'adapt to new realities'. Unlike previous Western 'wars'; responding to terrorism presupposed open-ended transnational objectives with no clearly defined endpoint for when 'victory' could be tangibly realised. Coker theorises that military operations to prevent risks have the same *raison d'être* as everyday road traffic management; it is

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<sup>534</sup> Leo G. Michel, 'NATO Decision-Making: The "Consensus Rule" Endures Despite Challenge', in Sebastian Mayer, eds., *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics: The Changing Provision of Security*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p.110.

<sup>535</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 5, 2009, p. 15.

<sup>536</sup> Brzezinski, 'An Agenda for NATO', p. 15.

<sup>537</sup> Leo G. Michel, 'NATO Decision-Making: *Au Revoir* to the Consensus Rule?', *Strategic Forum*, no. 2, 2003, pp. 5–8.

<sup>538</sup> Sten Rynning, 'Coalitions, Institutions and Big Tents: The New Strategic Reality of Armed Intervention', *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no.1, 2013, pp. 53–68.

<sup>539</sup> Rynning, 'Coalitions, Institutions and Big Tents'. pp. 53–68.

accepted that accidents will occur, but continuous management can limit these.<sup>540</sup> For Rasmussen, security policy ‘in reflexive modernity is no longer the pursuit of ends, but how governments are forced to take a position where they have to continuously construct new means to manage risks’.<sup>541</sup> Demand for continuous risk management renders some zero-sum concepts in military discourse like ‘victory’ and ‘defeat’ irrelevant, even if Western societies are yet to fully understand this.<sup>542</sup>

Nevertheless, as Edmunds explains, while appearing logical and necessary in theory, in practice, multifaceted stabilisation aims seeking to continuously manage risk, i.e., during the GWOT, will likely become confused and overwhelmed:

Within the broad strategic narratives of stabilisation and insecurity management, in both cases [Afghanistan and Iraq] there was little specificity in terms of linking military means to clear policy ends. In each case, a number of different objectives existed alongside and sometimes in tension with each other, including tasks such as eliminating Al-Qaeda, defeating insurgency, supporting local governance capacities, protecting human rights, combating the narcotics trade and fostering the rule of law.<sup>543</sup>

Continuous risk management so that safety is increased as ‘new realities’ evolve remains entangled by some problematic paradoxes. The risk society’s precautionary ‘safety first’ principle has led Western governments to intervene in fragile states with the belief that this is necessary to prevent harm spreading. At the same time, while still expecting governments to protect it, the risk society is ever more distant and sceptical towards such operations. Policies proposing often essential long- continuity to manage risks are unpopular. An impatient risk society becomes further frustrated when complications connected to expanded globalisation affect stabilisation, with Vennesson claiming that:

in a more interconnected transnational environment, notably driven by economic and societal interdependence as well as information and communication technology, land power’s capacity to achieve control over territory and compliance with authority seems more lengthy and costly.<sup>544</sup>

When scepticism and frustration gathers within the risk society, Edmunds argues that governments routinely encounter problems of ‘how to articulate and legitimate security policy decisions among a general public that is both disengaged

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<sup>540</sup> Christopher Coker, ‘NATO’s Unbearable Lightness of Being’, *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 149, no. 3, 2004, p. 20.

<sup>541</sup> Rasmussen, ‘Reflexive Security’, p. 286.

<sup>542</sup> Coker, ‘NATO’s Unbearable Lightness of Being’, p. 20.

<sup>543</sup> Timothy Edmunds, ‘British Civil–Military Relations and the Problem of Risk’, *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 2, 2012, p. 276.

<sup>544</sup> Pascal Vennesson, ‘Military Strategy in the Global Village’, *New Global Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2009, p. 2.

from elite strategic discourse and sceptical of the efficacy of military force'.<sup>545</sup> Nevertheless, as demonstrated by ISAF (2003–2014); the US-led MNF (2004–2009); and the collection of stabilisation missions in Mali (2013–), Western risk societies still remain willing to accept longer-term missions in different forms.

While governments and broader society share a common preference to maintain security, widened civil-military distance makes it difficult for governments to mobilise support for expeditionary missions. However, paradoxically, when complexity reinforces distance between policymakers and society, this distance might also create situations that were once neatly summarised in a prominent media report reflecting on twenty years of America's 'longest war' in Afghanistan:

Ordinary Americans tended to forget about it [the war in Afghanistan], and it received measurably less oversight from Congress than the Vietnam War did. But its death toll is in the many tens of thousands. And because the US borrowed most of the money to pay for it, generations of Americans will be burdened by the cost of paying it off.<sup>546</sup>

Globalisation of financial markets expands debt financing to fund policies, as Gerd Häusler explains: 'At the wholesale level, national financial markets have become increasingly integrated into a single global financial system'.<sup>547</sup> While doing little to ease fatality counts, putting a war bill 'on the credit card' still partially reduces society's sense of material sacrifice.<sup>548</sup>

Coker argues that the contradiction in risk society expectations between impatience for quick 'victories' and an emphasis that risks be continuously managed to prevent harm spreading led NATO to undertake stabilisation operations without a coherent long-term strategy in Afghanistan. ISAF was unsuccessfully sustained with an ineffective piecemeal of 'tactically-driven' policies.<sup>549</sup> This continuous yet tentative stabilisation posture 'has led to the concept of a "long" or "never-ending war", an *astrategic*, tactically-driven risk management policy which locks the West into an endless process of risk management'.<sup>550</sup> NATO governments could only maintain lukewarm commitment for a domestically

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<sup>545</sup> Edmunds, 'Complexity, Strategy and the National Interest', p. 526.

<sup>546</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, 'Costs of the Afghanistan War, in Lives and Dollars', *Associated Press*, 17 August 2021, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f> (accessed 17 September 2021).

<sup>547</sup> Gerd Häusler, 'The Globalization of Finance', *Finance and Development*, March 2002, vol. 39, no. 1, available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2002/03/hausler.htm> (accessed 24 October 2020).

<sup>548</sup> Sarah Kreps, *Taxing Wars: The American Way of War Finance and the Decline of Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. And Uri Friedman, 'Fighting Terrorism With a Credit Card', *The Atlantic*, 12 September 2016, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/09/cost-wars-iraq-afghanistan/499007/> (accessed 18 September 2021).

<sup>549</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 26.

<sup>550</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 26.

unpopular ‘forever war’. Most governments felt firm domestic pressure to limit ISAF commitments.<sup>551</sup> This makeshift ‘tactically-driven’ compromise departs starkly from many traditional principles for prudent ‘strategy’ in war.

Gray defines ‘strategy’ as ‘the bridge that relates military power to political purpose’, while Michael Handel more broadly explains ‘strategy’ as ‘the development and use of all resources in peace and war in support of national policies to secure victory’.<sup>552</sup> Focusing on Gray’s definition, that the risk society struggles to synchronise military power with a consistent political purpose vital to maintain a coherent strategy. Contrasting with Handel’s definition, achieving stabilisation in fragile states has outmoded ‘securing victory’. The risk society is an opposite from societies in earlier modernity that perceived ‘total war’ as a necessity because it readily refrains from committing many resources ‘in peace and war’ to expeditionary missions.

### 3.4. Tentative power

Giddens explains later modernity as contrasting with postmodern theory because it does not ‘interpret politics as at an end, it instead embraces politics as a means to reinvent, question and revise some of the flaws and obsolesces of the industrialised age to create new meanings and subtleties’.<sup>553</sup> However, some concepts still overlap between both outlooks. These intersections might offer some further insight into the risk society contradiction of being increasingly anxious, but less strategically ambitious.<sup>554</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail refers to an overlap between the risk theory and postmodernism by arguing that ‘Globalisation, informationalisation, and risk society...have induced a postmodern geopolitical condition in world politics’.<sup>555</sup>

#### 3.4.1. Turbulence of the risk society

Coker alludes to some postmodern tendencies in the risk society with the argument that earlier modernity was driven by ‘hardware capitalism...obsessed with size and bulk’ and ‘tight impenetrable boundaries’ epitomised by the Westphalian nation-state.<sup>556</sup> Drawing from Zygmunt Bauman’s postmodern theory, he argues

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<sup>551</sup> Hunter DeRensis, ‘Veterans to Congress: End Forever Wars’, *The National Interest*, 18 November 2019, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/veterans-congress-end-forever-wars-97477> (accessed 18 November 2020).

<sup>552</sup> For Gray’s definition, see Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 17. For Handel’s definition, see Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, London: Frank Cass, 1996, p. 36.

<sup>553</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 7.

<sup>554</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p.12.

<sup>555</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, ‘The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millennium’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 90, no. 1, 2000, p. 167.

<sup>556</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 20.

that social bonds are instead far more casual in the risk society. Precision and ‘bulk’ have been replaced by the ‘lightness’ of a fluid, flexible and global ‘software capitalism’.<sup>557</sup> Adapting Bauman’s concept of the ‘liquid society’, Coker argues that the risk society prioritises ‘liquid alliances’.<sup>558</sup> Its strategic bonds either ‘do not hold their shape for long’ or these quickly become ‘fractured and brittle’.<sup>559</sup> In individualised societies, ‘fleeting forms of association’ are perceived as being more advantageous than traditional longer-term social bonds.<sup>560</sup> Coker perceived this in the 2006 US QDR urging policymakers to think beyond ‘static alliances’ and embrace ‘strategic partnerships’.<sup>561</sup> NATO remains permanent, but for the GWOT, the US and other leading allies did perceive it as flexible: an additional ‘pool of military power that can operate with [their] own in coalition’.<sup>562</sup> Washington sometimes saw its interests better served by ‘discretionary alignments’ outside NATO institutions such as short-term *ad hoc* ‘coalitions of the willing’ or ‘strategic partnerships’.<sup>563</sup> This held some advantages during early ‘shock and awe’ phases of intervention, but less so when coherently resourced long-term stabilisation policies were later required.<sup>564</sup>

Henry Kissinger expressed scepticism towards ‘postmodern’ transnational institutions with some remarks on the EU. He specified that while transnational Europeanisation erased boundaries between nation-states to benefit peace and stability, this also inhibits coherent policy formation because ‘the loyalties of the population are not geared toward the new political structures’.<sup>565</sup> ‘Multi-level’ or transnational governance is a horizontal process. Similar breakdowns in loyalty bonds between governments and citizens also result from domestic social change. According to Giddens, later modernity marks ‘the end of tradition’ and risk theorists claim that individualisation erodes the ‘traditional’ institutions that once constituted earlier modernity.<sup>566</sup> Contrary to safety perceived in social institutions ‘ordained by religion, tradition or the state’, individualised societies encourage ‘precarious freedoms’.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>558</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 20.

<sup>559</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 20.

<sup>560</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 23.

<sup>561</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>562</sup> Thomas S. Mowle and David H. Sacko, ‘Global NATO: Bandwagoning in a Unipolar World’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 28, no.3, 2007, pp. 597–598. And Bastien Iron-delle and Frédéric Mérand, ‘France’s Return to NATO: the Death Knell for ESDP?’, *European Security*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2010, p. 40.

<sup>563</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>564</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>565</sup> Henry Kissinger, ‘Does the West Still Exist? America and Europe Moving Towards 2020’, Speech, Washington DC, 23 February 2007, available at: <https://www.henryakissinger.com/speeches/does-the-west-still-exist-america-and-europe-moving-towards-2020/> (accessed 30 October 2020).

<sup>566</sup> Giddens, ‘Risk and Responsibility’, p. 3.

<sup>567</sup> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p. 2.

Collective social institutions were once a foundation for a cohesive nation-state that supported a more stable policymaking environment. Governments oversaw more social consensus, reducing pressure in contentious policy areas. 'Precarious freedom' and individualisation make the risk society far more anxious and fragmented. Beck argues that the end of the Cold War 'defence emergency' removed the 'shared, integrating enemy' that supported Western cohesion.<sup>568</sup> He doubts that expeditionary 'peace missions' or 'mobile' or 'abstract' enemies can recreate the same social cohesion for the post-Cold War era.<sup>569</sup> He argues that risk society governments must instead make decisions amid a louder 'cross-fire of criticism'.<sup>570</sup> Mark Deuze argues that individualised societies create increased choice for citizens, but citizens are no longer motivated to seek 'membership in a certain collective'.<sup>571</sup> Societies are instead determined by how an individual deems an activity of valuable for personal identity.<sup>572</sup> This does not necessarily lead to a 'meaningless, purposeless, or disengaged' societies, but it does magnify trends where public behaviour towards governing institutions is increasingly 'irregular, sporadic, [and] unpredictable'.<sup>573</sup> On temporary or intermittent loyalties, Keith Spence argues:

The globalising state is instead host to an overlapping diversity of multiply-sourced identities forging local, hybrid and hyphenated self-understandings, forms of association and ways of belonging, for which identification with the nation is partial or contingent rather than essential and defining.<sup>574</sup>

It has become far more difficult for governments to mobilise resources to constantly support longer-term policy aims. Literature in security governance explains that decisions are influenced by an unprecedented multitude of social actors including 'charities, environmental organisations, human rights watchdogs, medical organisations and think-tanks'.<sup>575</sup>

For many, more individualisation, choice and opportunity to exert influence on policy is a desired democratic transformation. It is emancipation from social norms that once imposed 'clanship, tribalism, or religious' collectives.<sup>576</sup> Nevertheless, it is a social trend that exposes many to what Beck terms 'the turbulence of the risk society'.<sup>577</sup> This is a disintegration of social cohesion instilled by the

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<sup>568</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 147–148.

<sup>569</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 148–151.

<sup>570</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 148–151.

<sup>571</sup> Mark Deuze, 'The Changing Context of News Work: Liquid Journalism for a Monitorial Citizenry', *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 2, 2008, p. 853

<sup>572</sup> Deuze, 'The Changing Context of News Work', p. 853.

<sup>573</sup> Deuze, 'The Changing Context of News Work', p. 853.

<sup>574</sup> Keith Spence, 'World Risk Society and War Against Terror', *Political Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2005, p. 287.

<sup>575</sup> Mark Webber, Stuart Croft, Jolyon Howorth, Terry Terriff and Elke Krahmman, 'The Governance of European Security', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>576</sup> Jarvis, 'Risk, Globalisation and the State', p. 27.

<sup>577</sup> Beck et al., *Reflexive Modernization*, p. 7.

post-WWII welfare state, replaced by what Darryl Jarvis calls the risk society's 'processes of individualisation [that] generate winners and losers'.<sup>578</sup> Some successfully adapt to social independence and are 'able to provide for themselves, form social networks, achieve educational attainments, procure wealth and ensure their personal security' but many less fortunate are 'exposed to increased risk, diminished long-term economic security, restricted access to educational opportunities'.<sup>579</sup> Factionalism in society increases, making it harder to achieve social cohesion to benefit policy. Effects from 'the turbulence of the risk society' even filter down into newer types of soldiering in both all-volunteer national militaries and PMSCs where responsibility for personal safety is increasingly shifted from collective command to individual personnel.

### 3.4.2. The end of praetorianism

According to Coker, wars of earlier modernity were led by states that firmly controlled social and economic systems providing 'conscription, training depots, and formations and reserves in the case of soldiers, and industrial assembly lines in case of the weapons which they used'.<sup>580</sup> Changed social priorities and economic restructuring have since taken traditional 'production lines' supplying war to the brink of 'shut down'.<sup>581</sup> When operating without direct US military assistance, NATO's European members are often restricted by a 'capabilities-expectations gap'.<sup>582</sup> While expecting governments to be suitably supplied to protect, societies within NATO probably still prefer the social and economic transformation that can sometimes weaken this objective. Autarkic production is often replaced with dependence on global 'just in time' supply-chains. Caught off-guard by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, Western states were left dependent on China for vital medical components. Shortages of important military equipment were regularly reported by leading NATO members during the ISAF mission.<sup>583</sup> Dwindling supplies in ammunition and an absence of production lines for this were reported soon after NATO governments started to support Ukraine after Russia's escalated aggression there in 2022. Weakening in Western military capacity is partially blamed on social preferences to switch from a national

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<sup>578</sup> Jarvis, 'Risk, Globalisation and the State', p. 27.

<sup>579</sup> Jarvis, 'Risk, Globalisation and the State', p. 27.

<sup>580</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 23.

<sup>581</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 23.

<sup>582</sup> Robert Dover, 'The EU and the Bosnian Civil War 1992–95: The Capabilities–Expectations Gap at the Heart of EU Foreign Policy', *European Security*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2005, pp. 297–318.

<sup>583</sup> See Luke Baker, 'British Government Criticized over Afghanistan Equipment', *Reuters*, 13 July 2009, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-afghanistan-idUSLD3134320090713> (accessed 26 May 2023). And Nick Hopkins, 'British Ex-Commander Hits Out Over "Inadequate Kit" in Afghanistan', *The Guardian*, 14 March 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/mar/14/british-ex-commander-hits-out-inadequate-kit-afghanistan> (accessed 26 May 2023).

defence outlook to ‘postmodern’ concepts focused on the security of the individual.<sup>584</sup>

Accounts of Western transformation towards de-militarised pacifism are not new. This was prominently captured by Joseph Schumpeter’s early twentieth century economic theories. Wars launched by ‘modern’ industrialised European empires dominated the nineteenth century. Without universal suffrage, niche but powerful vested interests interlinking economic and political elites directed ‘war machines’ serving imperial expansion.<sup>585</sup> Expansion of democratic franchises over the next century transformed capitalism. Schumpeter argues that a new capitalist ‘individualism’ spurred ‘subjective opportunities’ that gradually dismantled traditional social hierarchies that previously enabled privileged minority interests to materially profit from imperial campaigns.<sup>586</sup> From Schumpeter’s theory, Michael Doyle argues that advanced capitalism drives rationality to broaden market engagement, transforming society where ‘rational individuals demand democratic governance’ that ‘leads to peace’.<sup>587</sup>

Mature liberal democracy dilutes the power of privileged interests with far more ‘checks and balances’.<sup>588</sup> Jack Snyder concurs that broad-based liberal democratisation eliminates ‘praetorian’ regimes.<sup>589</sup> Even when imperial campaigns saw popular support rise behind political leaders, narrow ‘domestic political coalitions’ struck between political elites and the industrial class still guided policy. Conscription and the access that a narrow elite had to wholesale tax revenues supplied the manpower and financial resources to wage war.<sup>590</sup> Schumpeter argued that public support for war would continually weaken as neoliberal markets expand. Overseas military campaigns in search of wealth would become irrational once sophisticated global supply-chains ensured that ‘foreign raw materials and food stuffs are as accessible to each nation as though they were in its own territory’.<sup>591</sup> Schumpeter’s theory has some flaws. For example, the recent boom in global PMSCs as ‘enablers’ in many wars is a result of expanded neoliberal marketisation.

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<sup>584</sup> Arita Holmberg, ‘A Demilitarization Process Under Challenge? The Example of Sweden’, *Defence Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2015, pp. 235–253.

<sup>585</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1955, p. 25.

<sup>586</sup> Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>587</sup> Michael W. Doyle, ‘Liberalism and World Politics’, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 4, 1986, p. 1153.

<sup>588</sup> Doyle, ‘Liberalism and World Politics’, p. 1153.

<sup>589</sup> Jack Snyder, ‘Averting Anarchy in the New Europe’, *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1990, pp. 6–7.

<sup>590</sup> Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 14–15.

<sup>591</sup> Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, pp. 75–76.

### 3.4.3. 'Lite' military systems

As 'praetorian' social systems have been replaced, van Evera argues that the 'long peace' in Western Europe since 1945 is explained by a radical 'social stratification' erasing the 'social imperial' that once fed 'hyper-nationalism and militarism'.<sup>592</sup> Buzan and Gerald Segal argue that changed socio-economic developments have created a 'postmodern state' transforming Western military powers into 'lite' versions of such. The 'hardware economy' of earlier modernity better facilitated supply systems for military power but continued economic liberalisation has shifted industrial production into private ownership, beyond the direct control of many Western governments.<sup>593</sup> Privatisation reduces the Western state's ability to directly provide employment, diminishing its importance for many citizens.<sup>594</sup> Government control across many industrial sectors once supported military power, but dispersed global production now means that: 'States are no longer the independent brewers of power that they used to be'.<sup>595</sup>

Western states continue to host 'the technology, the weapons, and the money', but no longer control the levers of production to craft military strength, and arduous negotiations with the private sector are now required when this strength needs to be generated.<sup>596</sup> The demise of imperialist and militarist dominance in Western societies is normatively desirable, but this still leaves complications for security policy. When risks are 'aggravated' by globalisation, lengthy stabilisation campaigns in fragile states drawing in civilian and military assets are often unavoidable. However, social fragmentation and impatience matched with disappearing supply systems puts stabilisation in jeopardy. GWOT interventions favoured by neoconservative policy staff highlighted that a narrow coterie of government elites could still evoke nationalism to expand public support for military operations. Memorialising of 9/11 victims commenced immediately after the attacks, galvanising a 'rally around the flag' effect.<sup>597</sup> This burst of nationalist cohesion only proved temporary.<sup>598</sup> Support for the GWOT buckled as controversy engulfed the US campaign in Iraq after 2003. Nevertheless, the US and its allies struggled on with parallel campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Sarah Kreps argues that influences from public opinion are sometimes cancelled out when 'elite consensus' is achieved between competing parties in a

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<sup>592</sup> Stephen Van Evera, 'Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War', *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1990, pp. 9–10.

<sup>593</sup> Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, 'The Rise of "Lite" Powers: A Strategy for the Postmodern State', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1996, p. 2.

<sup>594</sup> Buzan and Segal, 'The Rise of "Lite" Powers', p. 2.

<sup>595</sup> Buzan and Segal, 'The Rise of "Lite" Powers', p. 2.

<sup>596</sup> Buzan and Segal, 'The Rise of "Lite" Powers', p. 2.

<sup>597</sup> Jenny Edkins, 'The Rush to Memory and the Rhetoric of War', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2003, pp. 231–251.

<sup>598</sup> Edkins, 'The Rush to Memory', pp. 231–251.

political system.<sup>599</sup> However, consensus across party lines is still often fragile and susceptible to collapse when public dissatisfaction is sparked by rising soldier fatality counts or other battlefield controversies. Stephen Saideman and David Auerswald argue that government-type has a significant influence on the caveats imposed for soldier safety. Coalition governments in parliamentary systems usually apply more caveats compared to presidential or majoritarian parliamentary governments.<sup>600</sup> According to Tim Haesebrouck, when centre-left parties hold power, governments will more likely impose more caveats restricting military activity than centre-right governments.<sup>601</sup> Extending beyond this nuanced variance, Coker notches a further connection between postmodern outlooks and risk theory, indicating that evolving globalisation and individualisation have collapsed the ‘structural fitness’ of Western states to sustain effective military campaigns.<sup>602</sup> Both processes weaken the social cohesion that once reinforced military mobilisation. The nation-state of earlier modernity was:

Once the most formidable political unit ever designed to send them [citizens] into [military] battle, it [the Western state] now can no longer secure them [citizens] against other non-state actors, whether they take the form of other citizens at home intent on blowing them up, or foreigners based thousands of miles away but who have global reach.<sup>603</sup>

#### 3.4.4. Blowback anxiety

The ‘boomerang effect’ that emerges in social consciousness in later modernity is not mentioned that much in previous literature linking risk theory and military security. According to Atkinson, this is ‘the reacting back of risks on those who produced them’.<sup>604</sup> For Rasmussen, the “‘boomerang effect” describes the breakdown of the distinction between “self” and “other”. In risk society, threats are often the consequences of one’s own actions’.<sup>605</sup> Beck’s ‘boomerang effect’ discussions focus mostly on dangerous side-effects from technological modernisation, notably with civilian nuclear energy. Once perceived as a solution to reduce carbon emissions and climate degradation from further industrialisation, the Chernobyl disaster fostered profound anxiety that negligence or sabotage involving technologies for nuclear energy could gravely endanger human

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<sup>599</sup> Sarah Kreps, ‘Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for NATO-led Operations in Afghanistan’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2010, pp. 191–215.

<sup>600</sup> Stephen M. Saideman and David P. Auerswald, ‘Comparing Caveats: Understanding the Sources of National Restrictions Upon NATO’s Mission in Afghanistan’, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2012, pp. 67–84.

<sup>601</sup> Tim Haesebrouck, ‘National Behaviour in Multilateral Military Operations’, *Political Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2018, p. 108.

<sup>602</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 76.

<sup>603</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 77.

<sup>604</sup> Atkinson, ‘Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class’, p. 352.

<sup>605</sup> Rasmussen, ‘Reflexive Security’, p. 286.

habitation.<sup>606</sup> Taking a narrower geopolitical focus, Mathias Albert outlines that many ‘social-systems...produce and consume’ risks.<sup>607</sup> Intervention might limit future harm but can rarely fully eliminate all risk. When complete security is perceived as ‘untenable’, the risk society must ‘process risk’ as best it can, as thoughts of ‘boomerang effects’ induce further anxiety on possible interventions.<sup>608</sup> For Albert, governments must ‘hedge risks while anticipating the necessary failure of that processing as a regular feature of the [management] system’s function’.<sup>609</sup>

Seeing ‘boomerang effects’ through historical reference, Ó Tuathail argues that CIA interventions supporting US strategy in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq during the Cold War all led to international destabilisation that later damaged US security. While an institution founded to keep Americans safe, CIA actions inadvertently ‘produced [further] risks’.<sup>610</sup> Warning of ‘boomerang effects’ on a grand scale before the US invaded Iraq in 2003, then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said that ‘instead of having one bin Laden, we will have 100’ from likely destabilisation.<sup>611</sup> ‘Boomerang effects’ as explained in risk theory are similar to what US security planners call ‘blowback’. This term entered CIA discourse in 1954 as anxiety grew about the future consequences of the covert overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh orchestrated in Iran in 1953. According to Chalmers Johnson, ‘blowback’ has since become ‘a metaphor for the unintended consequences of the US government’s international activities’.<sup>612</sup>

Rasmussen argues that traditional military-strategic thinking emphasises binary ‘means-end rationality’.<sup>613</sup> This logic is largely incompatible with continuous risk management that demands infinite adaptation. Policymakers face a ‘reflexive security dilemma’ tossing up many ‘changing targets’ rather than fixed objectives. Anxiety over ‘boomerang effects’ amplifies caution and discomfort. Williams theorises that ‘In making a decision to manage risk, there is an attempt to maintain control, an attempt that inevitably leads to a loss of control’.<sup>614</sup> Policymakers are deeply ‘self-conscious’ about the consequences that action might create. For Rasmussen, ‘Ends are no longer believed to be controlled by the means allocated to achieve them’ and any follow-up decision ‘becomes a risk in

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<sup>606</sup> Beck, *Risk Society*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>607</sup> Mathias Albert, ‘From Defending Borders Towards Managing Geographical Risks? Security in a Globalised World’, *Geopolitics*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2000, p. 76.

<sup>608</sup> Albert, ‘From Defending Borders’, pp. 76–77.

<sup>609</sup> Albert, ‘From Defending Borders’, p. 77.

<sup>610</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, ‘Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 22, no.2–3, 1999, pp. 120–121.

<sup>611</sup> Spence, ‘World Risk Society and War Against Terror’, p. 290.

<sup>612</sup> Chalmers Johnson, ‘Blowback: US Actions Abroad Have Repeatedly Led to Unintended, Indefensible Consequences’, *The Nation*, 27 September 2001, available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/blowback/> (accessed 30 June 2018).

<sup>613</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p. 13.

<sup>614</sup> Michael J. Williams, ‘(In) Security Studies, Reflexive Modernization and the Risk Society’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, no. 43, no. 1, 2008, p. 63.

itself'.<sup>615</sup> As there is no 'end', just evolving continuation, decisions become 'a choice between risks rather than a choice between a [zero-sum] safe and unsafe policy'.<sup>616</sup>

These ideas remain uncannily similar to some long-familiar maxims in foreign policy outside the risk theory literature. Connecting with Rasmussen's 'choice between risks', Kissinger once described security policymaking as 'a choice between the lesser and greater evils'.<sup>617</sup> This creates an impression that policymakers understand the full moral gravity of this choice beforehand, but says little about damaging consequences when mistakes are made. Heng defines a 'boomerang effect' as an 'action to manage risks [that] can create new unintended ones', utilitarian actions leading to modest 'non-events' are thus pragmatic 'indicators of success'.<sup>618</sup> Aradau and Rens Van Munster interpret the 'boomerang effect' extending from the risk society's sense for 'conditions of extreme uncertainty, [as] decision-makers are no longer able to guarantee predictability, security and control'.<sup>619</sup> Beck's theorising in this area takes some dubious leaps such as his outlook on a 'hidden central issue' where social institutions 'feign control over the uncontrollable – in politics, law, science, technology, economy and everyday life'.<sup>620</sup> This is an over-exaggeration. 'Feigning' is commonplace in politics and complete control over complexity is probably impossible, but, contrary to 'feigning' it remains possible to have confidence in governments to manage most risks and limit dangers with effective policies.

Aradau and Van Munster argue that Beck's distinction between "manufactured" risks such as pollution to "intentional" risks including terrorism and the financial shocks from economic crises' is 'vague'.<sup>621</sup> 'Manufactured risk' gains some theoretical relevance when tied to military- technological innovation. Advocates of advanced military technologies such as combat and surveillance drones; robotics; and fourth- and fifth-generation air power emphasise operational and strategic advantages that these weapons create, but the military postures they influence are still fallible for stabilisation. Astri Suhrke argues that ISAF's military operations in southern Afghanistan encountered 'technological and cultural' difficulties that damaged local support needed for COIN.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Rasmussen, 'Reflexive Security', p. 294.

<sup>616</sup> Rasmussen, 'Reflexive Security', p. 294.

<sup>617</sup> Thomas A. Schwartz, 'Henry Kissinger: Realism, Domestic Politics, and the Struggle Against Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2011, p. 124.

<sup>618</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 14.

<sup>619</sup> Claudia Aradau and Rens Van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (Un) Knowing the Future', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 13, no.1, 2007, p. 93.

<sup>620</sup> Ulrich Beck, 'The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2002, p. 41.

<sup>621</sup> Aradau and Van Munster, 'Governing Terrorism Through Risk', p. 93.

<sup>622</sup> Astri Suhrke, 'A Contradictory Mission? NATO from Stabilization to Combat in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2008, p. 221.

ISAF viewed advanced air-support as a crucial advantage over Taliban insurgents. It lent ground units with foresight intelligence to avoid ambushes and increased precision for strikes on Taliban networks. This reduced exposure of ground forces to fatality risk, satisfying the risk society's 'safety first' preference, but the same operations also upset and disturbed Afghan society. Suhkre explains that 'fear and antagonism [that] resonated beyond the inner circle of militants and fuelled recruitment to their cause'.<sup>623</sup> Technological advantages did not ease some acute 'choices between risks'. Despite creating a counterproductive 'accidental guerrilla' tendency, force protection advantages saw ISAF persist with heavy air power to reinforce COIN.<sup>624</sup>

### 3.4.5. War without passion

Nationalist 'heroism' resonant in imperial 'jingoism' or in the subsequent quests for national self-determination that collapsed Europe's empires after 1914 was a powerful force to mobilise populations towards war in earlier modernity. Luttwak explains that imperial or national independence campaigns are 'fought for great national purposes that can evoke public fervour, by armed forces that represent the aroused nation'.<sup>625</sup> However, military modernisation undertaken by Western states from 1945 onwards has arguably reduced the need for nationalist mobilisation to sustain military campaigns. The US transition to an all-volunteer military after the Vietnam War in the 1970s and the emergence of the RMA in the late 1980s were transformative milestones. All-volunteer professionalisation widened the civil-military 'gap' in many Western societies, dampening 'public fervour' for expeditionary military operations. When nationalist 'passion' is weak, the military is likely to be perceived 'merely [as] a body of professionals going about their business'.<sup>626</sup> Such perceptions are further magnified when security is outsourced to global PMSCs whose personnel work out of professional choice minus the 'sacrifice' and 'honour' sentiments of national service.

For Clausewitz, war is waged through a 'trinity' confluence: first, 'primordial violence, hatred, and enmity'; second, 'the play of chance and probability'; and third, 'war's element of subordination to rational policy'.<sup>627</sup> Governments must channel nationalist 'passions' for 'primordial violence' into 'rational policy'. A balanced trade-off between these two opposites is essential because 'war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in *magnitude* and also in *duration*'.<sup>628</sup> However, this Clausewitzian dynamic might now have been

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<sup>623</sup> Suhkre, 'A Contradictory Mission?', p. 221.

<sup>624</sup> David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>625</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', p. 110.

<sup>626</sup> Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', p. 110.

<sup>627</sup> Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, 'Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity', *Parameters*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1995, p. 9.

<sup>628</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Howard and Paret, p. 34.

slightly altered by professionalisation and advanced technological modernisation in Western militaries. Both detach wider society from military transformation, possibly leaving governments with more freedom from nationalist fervour to decide the ‘magnitude’ and ‘duration’ that military operations involve. In addition, ‘mobile’ de-territorialised enemies referenced by Beck might not recreate the unifying national cohesion of the Cold War ‘defence emergency’.<sup>629</sup>

Münkler claims that de-nationalised military ‘post-heroism’ in later modernity follows the logic of ‘interchange’ not ‘sacrifice’.<sup>630</sup> ‘Interchange’ is best highlighted by the short-term rotations that Western militaries now utilise for stabilisation. This dilutes risk among larger numbers of military personnel at a possible expense for situational awareness.<sup>631</sup> From Ancient Greece onwards, the logic ‘sacrifice’ intricately connected citizenship and military service. ‘Citizen-politician’ and ‘citizen-soldier’ ideas – both epitomising national service for the common social good – remained largely intact until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>632</sup> Later modernisation, professionalisation and specialisation in government institutions now transforms the ‘citizen-politician’ and the ‘citizen-soldier’ into the ‘career-politician’ and the ‘career-soldier’.<sup>633</sup>

These institutions perceive themselves as professional service providers, a focus that creates more distance with broader society. Contrary to earlier ‘draft-fed’ mass-militaries, the risk society’s priority to stabilise risks ‘aggravated’ by globalisation has caused recent military transformation to emphasise ‘highly trained specialists’ to cope in complex expeditionary scenarios or to operate sophisticated technologies.<sup>634</sup> Edmunds explains that this ‘model of military professionalisation’ emphasises ‘smaller, highly skilled, flexible force structures able to project power abroad’.<sup>635</sup> This change comes with the price of a wider civil-military ‘gap’. However, the risk society has still not completely lost awareness of military affairs. Its appetite for nationalist ‘sacrifice’ has diminished, but it still anxiously seeks to accomplish security aims while nervously worrying about soldier fatalities. Safety has this overtaken nationalism as a driver determining expeditionary intervention.

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<sup>629</sup> Beck, *Democracy Without Enemies*, pp. 148–151.

<sup>630</sup> Herfried Münkler, ‘The Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 85, no. 849, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>631</sup> John Ford, ‘My Time in the Rotation Helps Show Why Our Approach in Afghanistan is Doomed’, *Foreign Policy*, 20 October 2017, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/20/my-time-in-the-rotation-helps-show-why-our-approach-in-afghanistan-is-doomed/> (accessed 9 November 2020).

<sup>632</sup> Gary Hart, *The Shield and the Cloak: The Security of the Commons*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 89–91.

<sup>633</sup> Hart, *The Shield and the Cloak*, pp. 89–91.

<sup>634</sup> Hart, *The Shield and the Cloak*, pp. 89–91.

<sup>635</sup> Timothy Edmunds, ‘What Are Armed Forces For?’, *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 6, 2006, p. 1059.

### 3.4.6. 'Ready to kill but not to die'

Luttwak argues that Western under-commitment during military interventions might prove counterproductive because 'half-hearted, risk-avoiding methods [are] likely in the long run to be more costly'.<sup>636</sup> National caveats restricting combat exposure; outsourcing military risks to PMSCs; and over-reliance on risk-efficient military technologies all align with claims of 'half-hearted' commitments. The risk society wants to achieve security aims but is reluctant to suffer many punishing sacrifices that this might involve. NATO's OAF air campaign in Kosovo in 1999 highlighted some repercussions from 'half-hearted' military action. Humanitarian protection was emphasised, but as Paul Robinson explains, NATO was only willing to enforce this without exerting much sacrifice: 'ready to kill but not to die'.<sup>637</sup>

Ruling out a ground force intervention, NATO insisted on a contactless military posture, safely executing high altitude air raids. Kay argues that 'NATO members signalled that the lives of hundreds of thousands of ethnic-Albanians were not worth risking the lives of Western pilots or airplanes'.<sup>638</sup> Ralph Peters claims that OAF highlighted that 'Western leaders have become entranced by the idea of a bloodless techno-war'.<sup>639</sup> Damningly, 'NATO chose not the instruments that might do the job, but the instrument of least risk'.<sup>640</sup> Operations reliant on long-range fighter aircraft and air-to-air refuelling were prioritised over more 'versatile' but more risky ground force contact with the conflict. Pilots could travel from US or European bases, execute bombing raids in the Balkans, and then return to Western states on the same day.<sup>641</sup> Sergey Medvedev summarised these 'safety first' preferences as fighting war with the 'guard on'.<sup>642</sup> Costs were still incurred because 'high-tech weaponry provide no substitute for political solutions; on the contrary they tend to increase and reduce the likelihood of lasting settlement'.<sup>643</sup> However, when a settlement was reached with Serbia, NATO was pivotal for post-war stabilisation through its leadership of KFOR.

Luttwak argues that over-emphasising military technology can problematically straightjacket military strategies when 'Ground forces are undoubtedly more versatile than bombers or cruise missiles'.<sup>644</sup> Observing US-led warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq along with Israel's war against Hezbollah in south Lebanon

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<sup>636</sup> Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', p. 113.

<sup>637</sup> Paul Robinson, "'Ready to Kill But Not to Die". NATO Strategy in Kosovo', *International Journal*, vol. 54, no. 4, 1999, pp. 671–673.

<sup>638</sup> Sean Kay, 'NATO, the Kosovo War and Neoliberal Theory', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2004, p. 264.

<sup>639</sup> Ralph Peters paraphrased in Robinson, "'Ready to Kill But Not to Die'", p. 673.

<sup>640</sup> Ralph Peters, 'The Future of War', *Maclean's*, 26 April 1999, p. 43.

<sup>641</sup> Sergey Medvedev, 'Kosovo: A European *Fin de Siecle*', in Paul Van Ham and Sergey Medvedev, eds., *Mapping European Security after Kosovo*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, pp. 16–17.

<sup>642</sup> Medvedev, 'Kosovo: A European *Fin de Siecle*', pp. 16–17.

<sup>643</sup> Medvedev, 'Kosovo: A European *Fin de Siecle*', p. 28.

<sup>644</sup> Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', p. 38.

in 2006, Herbert R. McMaster argues that inflating the advantages of military technology can badly misguide security planning. McMaster infers that technological superiority did not significantly reduce the most critical uncertainties, or the ‘fog of war’, typically encountered by militaries fighting irregular adversaries.<sup>645</sup> Conveniences of superior technology might cause war planners to put ‘theory before practice’.<sup>646</sup> Obsessing over technological advantage distracts from military preparations geared towards the ‘human, psychological, political and cultural dimensions of conflict’.<sup>647</sup> This remains crucial for stabilisation in response to adversaries that ‘use terrain, intermingle with the population, and adopt countermeasures to technological capabilities’.<sup>648</sup>

### 3.4.7. Underprepared for low-intensity warfare

Risk theory posits that when risks evolve, risk management becomes a continuous task.<sup>649</sup> This logic sometimes interestingly contrasts with outlooks on military operations from some NATO leaders. By over-emphasising technological modernisation, Andrew Erdmann argues that US leaders tend to support military interventions with naïve ‘presumptions of quick, costless wars’, this despite Washington’s agonising experience in Vietnam and other examples.<sup>650</sup> Nevertheless, General Wesley Clark, NATO SACEUR for OAF in 1999, insists that military interventions be ‘short and sharp’.<sup>651</sup> Distilled by Adrian Hyde-Price, Clark’s recommendation is derived from a ‘safety first’ preference. Clark recommends military modernisation designed for coercive weapons that minimise contact instead of direct engagement with ‘brute force’.<sup>652</sup> He acknowledges that safety for military personnel has become an ‘imperative’ and argues that limiting collateral damage harming civilians will have a crucial influence on the success of an intervention.<sup>653</sup>

Clark’s proposals respond to the risk society’s ‘safety first’ instincts, but some suggestions remain unrealistic for successful stabilisation. Entering an asymmetric war with a ‘short and sharp’ campaign as the main expectation is likely to play into the hands of many insurgents. Communist leader Mao Zedong is also understood as a ‘theorist of guerrilla warfare’ with experience from the China’s

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<sup>645</sup> Herbert R. McMaster, ‘On War: Lessons to be Learned’, *Survival*, vol. 50, no.1, 2008, pp. 26–27.

<sup>646</sup> McMaster, ‘On War: Lessons to be Learned’, p. 25.

<sup>647</sup> McMaster, ‘On War: Lessons to be Learned’, p. 27.

<sup>648</sup> McMaster, ‘On War: Lessons to be Learned’, p. 27.

<sup>649</sup> Karsten Friis and Erik Reichborn – Kjennerrud, ‘From Cyber Threats to Cyber Risks’, in Karsten Friis and Jens Ringsmose, eds., *Conflict in Cyber Space: Theoretical, Strategic and Legal Perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, pp. 27–44.

<sup>650</sup> Andrew P.N. Erdmann, ‘The US Presumption of Quick, Costless Wars’, *Orbis*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1999, pp. 363–364.

<sup>651</sup> Wesley Clark, *Waging Modern War*, Oxford: Public Affairs, 2001.

<sup>652</sup> Adrian Hyde-Price, ‘European Security, Strategic Culture, and the Use of Force’, *European Security*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2004, pp. 340–341.

<sup>653</sup> Hyde-Price, ‘European Security, Strategic Culture’, pp. 340–341.

Civil War in the 1930s and the 1950s.<sup>654</sup> Mao argues that for guerrillas to frustrate a military force superior in ‘technology and organisation’ it must slow the conflict to a low-intensity struggle that ‘decelerate[s] the course of events’.<sup>655</sup> The materially weaker adversary then controls the pace of conflict, creating conditions for ‘successful armed resistance’.<sup>656</sup> Slow-paced guerrilla resistance gradually ‘bleeds’ the political, economic and military resolve of a stronger adversary. Impatient and anxious in character, the risk society can be suspected as being particularly vulnerable to such tactics.

‘Short and sharp’ expectations propel military intervention by ‘shock and awe’ that was favoured by the Bush administration in the early 2000s. Regimes that it sought to remove were quickly overwhelmed by US military power. However, Frederick Kagan argues that planning for stabilisation to follow ‘shock and awe’ was superficial in Afghanistan and in Iraq.<sup>657</sup> He explains that ‘shock and awe’ might have even ‘multiplied’ obstacles for later stabilisation.<sup>658</sup> By narrowly combining precision-strike with network-centric outlooks, these operations ‘attempted to simplify war into a targeting drill’ where ‘the enemy [w]as a target set’.<sup>659</sup> It was naïvely espoused ‘that when all or most of the targets have been hit, he [the enemy] will inevitably surrender and American goals will be achieved’.<sup>660</sup>

This flawed outlook was likely encouraged by the risk society preference for quick interventions that limit ground contact. Kagan insists that ‘War plans must also consider how to make the transition from that defeated government [Saddam, Taliban] to a new one’.<sup>661</sup> While largely accurate, Kagan’s term ‘transition’ is misleading because it creates an impression that stabilisation might be a linear process. On the contrary, stabilisation can usually be understood as convoluted and sharply contradictory where ‘outside intervention is used to foster self government’; when ‘foreigners are involved in defining “legitimate” local leaders’; and when “universal” values are promoted as a remedy for local problems’.<sup>662</sup> Necessary to limit risk from fragile states, this situation is still uncomfortable for the risk society.

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<sup>654</sup> Münkler, ‘The Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, pp. 7–8.

<sup>655</sup> Münkler, ‘The Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, pp. 7–8.

<sup>656</sup> Münkler, ‘The Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, pp. 7–8.

<sup>657</sup> Frederick W. Kagan, ‘War and Aftermath’, *Policy Review*, vol. 120, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>658</sup> Kagan, ‘War and Aftermath’, p. 4.

<sup>659</sup> Kagan, ‘War and Aftermath’, p. 4.

<sup>660</sup> Kagan, ‘War and Aftermath’, p. 4.

<sup>661</sup> Kagan, ‘War and Aftermath’, p. 27.

<sup>662</sup> Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, ‘Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding’, *International Peace Academy Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding*, November 2007, p. 4, available at: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/iparpps.pdf> (accessed 1 December 2020).

### 3.5. Conclusion

Expanded globalisation increases complexity for NATO policymakers aiming to react to ‘reflexive security dilemmas’. ‘Globality’ has emerged as a central calculation in the risk society’s strategic outlook. Contemplating events ‘along a “local-global” axis’, assessment of global risks will often determine engagement or disengagement from a particular action. A global emphasis is not exclusive to governments, a host of non-state actors from NGOs to private companies operating in conflict areas structure their affairs along similar lines. Contrary to risk theory expectations, some traces of liberal ideology remain at stake. ‘Transnational surveillance’ from human rights NGOs and international media brings Western military operations under close global scrutiny. Liberal public opinion is a tough taskmaster, it insists that security is upheld while military and wider civilian society casualty counts are kept low. While liberal arguments display greater compassion for human rights of local civilians, this outlook still has much in common with the risk society’s ‘safety first’ preference. Satisfying ‘transnational surveillance’ adds further complexity for policymakers already under pressure from the risk society to first quickly subdue hostile forces and then achieve stabilisation.

Dependence on a globalised PMSC market indicates NATO governments seeking additional options to overcome some risk society frailties. It remains questionable whether an expanded role for PMSCs held more advantage than harm for ISAF. Arguments that NATO needed to embrace a global strategic outlook to remain a relevant security provider dominated its transformation debates for twenty years before the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The complexities and uncertainties of the ‘reflexive security dilemma’ compelled NATO to react to ‘new realities’, but the way it uncomfortably accepted continuous global risk management led to some severe contradictions likely to undermine ISAF. The risk society pressures governments to uphold security through continuous risk management, but it is also impatient, utilitarian and cautious and will soon express frustration if security aims are not quickly achieved. A tentative compromise caused ISAF to be ‘tactically-driven’ and ineffective, supported only by ‘half-hearted’ contributions.

As another ideology that has traditionally supported war aims, nationalism has become very dilute in the individualised risk society. Nationalist fervour once ensconced social honour and sacrifice in war, but when this fades, the risk society’s ‘safety first’ and ‘post-heroic’ conditions override for warfare shorn of nationalist passion. Prioritising military technology and limiting ground contact, the risk society is ‘ready to kill but not to die’ and interventions must be ‘short and sharp’. While undoubtedly attractive for NATO governments, these ideas often prove too good to be true, sometimes naïvely playing into the hands of guerrilla adversaries seeking to deliberately slow the pace of conflict to their advantage. Moreover, they do not leave enough scope for the patience or versatility that effective stabilisation policies might require.

## 4. DILEMMAS OF A 'LIGHT FOOTPRINT' INTERVENTION

### 4.1. Introduction

Governing from 2000 until 2008, the Bush administration's discourses for the GWOT were dominated by neoconservative ideology. The neoconservative movement understood that the US could enhance its national security by using military force, if necessary, to expand liberal international order. Bush's discourses advanced the liberal 'maximalist' aspiration that Washington would assist Afghan state-building along a democratic trajectory. With a focus on the early US-led intervention in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2006, this chapter argues that Washington and its NATO allies deviated from 'maximalism' at many important stages. Afghanistan was the first front in the GWOT. The US military heavily emphasised airpower and the SOF guidance to overthrow Taliban rule. Washington used minimally utilitarian and low-risk warfare. Most of the risk-intense fighting on the ground was delegated to Afghan fighters from the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

Avoiding the risks of fighting 'toe to toe' with the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda supporters, coalition commanders employed an evasive 'light footprint' approach to minimised contact with the enemy. This was initially heralded as a success in 2002, but it would later be blamed for allowing bin Laden among other Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders to escape to Pakistan, an error with long and serious consequences. This chapter argues that the open-ended predicaments of the 'reflexive security dilemma' complicated Western policymakers' ability to coherently agree on the actual purpose of the Afghan mission. Examination of primary sources indicates uncomfortable and self-conscious reflection, with some policymakers using historical reference points as a problematic guide when responding to complex events. The GWOT focused on terrorism as a transnational risk, this involved a variety of military approaches against terrorists often operating across borders, but stabilisation in Afghanistan was primarily a state-centric task focused on improving governance capacity.

This brought a contradiction in priorities between counterterrorism and state-building. Washington sometimes prioritised the hunt for terrorists feared to be capable of operating transnationally from Afghan territory over the need to gain support from the local population for state-building aims. Being militarily ruthless for counterterrorism ultimately undercut the benevolence often required to deliver 'softer' social stabilisation aspects. Many utilitarian stabilisation shortcuts were taken between 2001 and 2006. The most damaging of these was the early decision to outsource governance and responsibility for public order in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen' militia leaders. These elements soon exploited the local population and turned many Afghans against ISAF.

Presented with early political dilemmas, the main international brokers for state-building in Afghanistan – the US and the UN – favoured pragmatic compromises that led to some notorious warlords and 'strongman' militia leaders

finding political power. This undercut Western democratic promotion. The risk society emphasises prevention, but preventative strategies are mostly effective when intelligence information is accurate. The US and NATO struggled with a serious intelligence deficit in Afghanistan. Both were surprised when Taliban sympathisers started to re-enter Afghanistan's recalibrated political institutions as early as 2003 and when the Taliban's insurgency began to build. This chapter is divided into six sections. Section two discusses the utilitarian warfare implemented by the US-led coalition to overthrow Taliban rule in the early 2000s. Section three examines the importance of historical reference points in guiding Western security planners for Afghanistan's 'reflexive security dilemmas'. Section four assesses early US and NATO responses to Afghanistan's complicated post-Taliban politics and security. Section five evaluates pragmatism from the US, NATO and the UN when negotiating state-building. Section six discusses this chapter's main conclusions.

## 4.2. Utilitarian beginnings

Heng's risk theory outlines that as an instrument of risk management, war is no longer meaningfully directed by any 'grand narrative'.<sup>663</sup> The 'moral calculus' for war is instead 'utilitarian: simply avoiding further human harm, not bringing about desirable historical change or processes, or including other moral considerations of guilt or fairness'.<sup>664</sup> This is a daring claim when early GWOT discourses and the neoconservative ideology influencing Bush's response to 9/11 are recalled. Heng claims that 'Although President Bush has couched the struggle [GWOT] in grandiose terms of "good" against "evil", the Afghan campaign has in fact been more utilitarian than one of retribution against evil'.<sup>665</sup> This claim might be correct, but Heng's observation is still limited to the early US response. To further examine this important theoretical claim, some of Heng's terminology needs to be further unpacked. While *war* is an act of organised violence occurring between multiple belligerents, *warfare* is the precise way that war is pursued. When these two concepts are separated, it is possible to understand that a belligerent can justify *war* with one particular narrative but this can still transpire to contradict the type of *warfare* utilised. Risk theory expects a utilitarian 'papering over' tendency. For Bush's stabilisation preferences, it is important to not only examine his discourses narrating the GWOT, but also to analyse the warfare that the risk society might be directing.

### 4.2.1. Overthrowing Taliban rule

After 9/11, it is possible to find many US officials expressing ideological rhetoric dividing the international system into 'good' and 'evil' actors. Jonathan Monten

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<sup>663</sup> Heng, 'Unraveling the "War" on Terrorism', p. 232.

<sup>664</sup> Heng, 'Unraveling the "War" on Terrorism', p. 232.

<sup>665</sup> Heng, 'Unraveling the "War" on Terrorism', p. 232.

argues that a confluence of Bush's own personal religious convictions; domestic support and influence from evangelical political movements; and strong neo-conservative policy guidance created consensus within his administration that 'good', personified as liberal ideological ends, could be fervently promoted to advance the US national interest.<sup>666</sup> Where 'evil' was perceived as endangering liberal democratic ends, it was perceived that military force could be utilised to support ideological aims. This 'Bush Doctrine' was externally informed by neo-conservative think-tanks. By advocating the use of military force as an option to expand liberal international order, the neoconservative movement was accused of dangerously widening the US national security interest. Realist commentators contributing to public discourse were among the staunchest critics for the US government. Emphasising that neoconservative policies were likely to backfire, realists insisted that a much more selective number of military engagements would instead suffice to uphold America's leadership of international order.<sup>667</sup>

With specific reference to Afghanistan, Bush frequently emphasised that military actions taken by his administration were moral, just and in line with liberal principles. Even as Washington's efforts suffered some severe setbacks, Bush stressed a continuing need to remain committed to Afghanistan's stabilisation. Even when his final term in office was ending, Bush showed little regret about his liberal values-based vision, remarking in 2008: 'I believe a moral interest in a prosperous and peaceful democratic Afghanistan. And no matter how long it takes, we will help the people of Afghanistan succeed'.<sup>668</sup> Grand liberal ideological outlooks like this received regular reference in Bush's foreign policy discourse, but when focus is shifted away from Bush's just war or *jus ad bellum* statements to instead observe his administration's approach to *jus in bello* or its conduct in warfare, a more realist picture emerges.<sup>669</sup> Bush began his January 2002 State of the Union address by praising the return of 'freedom' to Afghanistan. The US had overthrown Taliban rule three months previously. He emphasised that 'America and Afghanistan are now allies against terror. We'll be partners in rebuilding that country'.<sup>670</sup> Soon after 9/11, on 20 September 2001, Bush declared that combating terrorism as a global risk would be a primary US

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<sup>666</sup> Jonathan Monten, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in US Strategy', *International Security*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2005, pp.112–156.

<sup>667</sup> Brian C. Schmidt and Michael C. Williams, 'The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neo-conservatives versus Realists', *Security Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2008, pp. 191–220.

<sup>668</sup> George W. Bush, 'President Bush Visits with Troops in Afghanistan', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 15 December 2008, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/12/20081215-1.html> (accessed 18 February 2021).

<sup>669</sup> ICRC, 'What Are Jus Ad Bellum and Jus in Bello?', *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 22 January 2015, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-are-jus-ad-bellum-and-jus-bello-0> (accessed 5 May 2021).

<sup>670</sup> George W. Bush, 'President Delivers State of the Union Address', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 29 January 2002, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> (accessed 19 February 2021).

security objective: 'It [the GWOT] will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated'.<sup>671</sup>

In his 2002 State of the Union, Bush emphasised that continued military-technological modernisation would be vital for the warfare that Washington needed for the GWOT: 'Afghanistan proved that expensive precision weapons defeat the enemy and spare innocent lives, and we need more of them'.<sup>672</sup> However, Bush's narrative unsurprisingly did not take the more nuanced view that his immediate response to 9/11 with military operations in Afghanistan was largely 'safety first' and thus not as 'maximally' committed as his ideological discourse might have indicated. The opening phases of OEF aimed to limit the US military sacrifices when achieving strategic objectives. Washington shifted many military risks onto anti-Taliban factions serving as local clients. When US-led military engagement dissipated in Iraq in 2008 and when ISAF concluded in Afghanistan in 2014, both operations were then succeeded by much narrower and utilitarian military counterterrorism strategies. According to Karlsrud, later operations comprised of: 'targeted killings' with drone strikes; Western training for local military clients; and coordination from skeletal deployments of SOFs.<sup>673</sup> It thus becomes striking to observe that US-led warfare to begin the GWOT in Afghanistan in late 2001 and early 2002 was actually a very similar utilitarian type. As emphasised in the 2001 US QDR, released by the Pentagon just weeks after 9/11, the early GWOT saw US military planners put their trust in 'network-centric' and 'effects based' operations.<sup>674</sup>

Under these planning models, militaries will conceptualise enemies through the mechanics of a 'complex adaptive system' seeking to target hostile organisational nodes, thus paralysing enemies from progressing.<sup>675</sup> In 1995, when the IT- and precision-strike-centred RMA started to dominate US military strategy, US Air Force Major General David Deptula argued that the most technologically advanced militaries had transformed from an emphasis on 'sequential attack' to a focus on 'parallel warfare' where all necessary capabilities are simultaneously brought to bear to attack an 'enemy's vital systems'.<sup>676</sup> Deptula perceived airpower, precision weapons, and the ability to break the enemy's air defences as

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<sup>671</sup> George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 20 September 2001, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> (accessed 16 October 2022).

<sup>672</sup> Bush, 'President Delivers State of the Union Address (2002)'.

<sup>673</sup> Karlsrud, 'From Liberal Peacebuilding to Stabilization', p. 5.

<sup>674</sup> US Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defence Review Report*, Washington DC, 2001, available at: <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2001.pdf> (accessed 18 February 2021).

<sup>675</sup> Allen Batschelet, *Effects-Based Operations: A New Operational Model?*, Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2002, pp. 2–3, available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA404406.pdf> (accessed 18 February 2021).

<sup>676</sup> David A. Deptula, *Firing for Effect: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, Arlington, VA: Aerospace Education Foundation, 1995, p. 4. And Batschelet, *Effects-Based Operations*, pp. 2–3.

crucial capabilities to allow warfare focused on ‘effects rather than only on aggregate destruction’.<sup>677</sup> Security planners continue to perceive advanced military technology as a key enabler for precise-led ‘effects based’ warfare. Political aspirations to achieve ‘effects based’ outcomes can be perceived from several theoretical viewpoints. From a liberal perspective, coercing an enemy with precise targeting that minimises civilian suffering for civilians can be argued as a moral, ethical and an advisable approach. For the risk society, warfare like this can be interpreted as fulfilling ‘safety first’ objectives because precision air strikes to coerce or nullify the enemy can reduce the need for higher-risk ground force deployments.

‘Precision warfare’ is elaborated further in Shaw’s explanation of ‘risk-transfer militarism’ was argued as an important focus for Western leaders during military interventions in the post-Cold War era.<sup>678</sup> For OAF in Kosovo in 1999, OUP in Libya in 2011, and to a large extent initially with OEF in Afghanistan in 2001, the US- or NATO-led effort to coerce or oust a regime was spearheaded by a ‘safety first’ air campaign that ‘transferred’ most risks for ground operations to local military clients.<sup>679</sup> Shaw argues that warfare like this was focused on shifting serious fatality counts from civilians to a more precise targeting of enemy forces and infrastructure. It was accepted that some civilian casualties remained likely from accidents and errors, but that civilian deaths must still be limited to low number ‘small massacres’.<sup>680</sup> The negative consequences of air strikes must not be over-exposed to public scrutiny. When tragic incidents occur; these should be mitigated by ‘media management’ to avoid damaging the legitimacy for the military campaign.<sup>681</sup> ‘Media management’ becomes especially interesting when considered alongside the risk society’s non-committal tendencies.

‘Media embedding’ was a controversial form of war reporting during the early phases of the 2003 Iraq war. Kenneth Payne argues that there is no guarantee that allowing correspondents to have ‘embedded’ access to military units ensures favourable coverage likely to strengthen public support.<sup>682</sup> Nevertheless, the facilitating military organisation is allowed a ‘high degree of control over which part of the battlefield will receive media coverage’.<sup>683</sup> Governments at war can therefore be tempted to view the media as an instrument to shore up public support for military action and thus mitigate risk society reluctance. Even democratic governments find this difficult to resist. For example, in one declassified memo

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<sup>677</sup> Deptula, *Firing for Effect*, p.4. And Batschelet, *Effects-Based Operations*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>678</sup> Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

<sup>679</sup> Martin Shaw, ‘Risk-Transfer Militarism: The New Western Way of War’, *Theglobalsite.ac.uk*, 13 November 2001, available at: <https://martinshaw.org/2009/12/13/risk-transfer-militarism-the-new-western-way-of-war-13-nov-2001/> (accessed 15 February 2021).

<sup>680</sup> Martin Shaw, ‘Risk-Transfer Militarism, Small Massacres and the Historic Legitimacy of War’, *International Relations*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2002, pp. 344–348.

<sup>681</sup> Shaw, ‘Risk-Transfer Militarism, Small Massacres’, pp. 344–348.

<sup>682</sup> Kenneth Payne, ‘The Media as an Instrument of War’, *Parameters*, vol. 35, no.1, 2005, p. 81.

<sup>683</sup> Payne, ‘The Media as an Instrument of War’, p. 86.

where the US Secretary of Defence discusses policy in Afghanistan in 2002, the option of ‘controlling the media’ is openly raised.<sup>684</sup>

While ‘risk-transfer militarism’ to reduce civilian fatalities to as few as possible has liberal connotations, Shaw’s outlook still has more in common with the risk society’s utilitarian preferences. After the Cold War, Western states have habitually declared unrealistic time limits for accomplishing objectives with interventions. The need for civilian protection that Shaw highlights is thus required to prevent operations from encountering political disarray. This allows military engagement to be kept ‘short and sharp’ and in line with ‘safety first’ preferences. ‘Media management’ is a further attempt to counteract the risk society’s impatience for prolonged military campaigns. When the US militarily responded to 9/11 with OEF, risk transfer to local military clients defined the opening salvos. ‘Effects based operations’ guided air strikes against Taliban and Al-Qaeda targets, while US SOFs and CIA operatives provided coordination on the ground in relatively small deployments numbering approximately 1,000 personnel.<sup>685</sup> Cooperation took place between US air-support, its light ground presence, and local factions including the Northern Alliance and anti-Taliban Pashtun forces. With local knowledge, these factions crucially supported US intelligence for air strikes on enemy targets.<sup>686</sup>

Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance on 12 November 2001 and US-backed factions in Pashtun areas defeated Taliban loyalists in Afghanistan’s southern and eastern provinces soon after.<sup>687</sup> Early US war narratives quickly stressed that a ‘light footprint’ approach was morally justified. Washington was undertaking an important supporting role to allow local Afghan movements to liberate their own country from oppression. Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld explained in October 2001: ‘We [the US] want to help those forces in the country [Afghanistan] that are anxious to get the Taliban and al-Qaeda out of there’.<sup>688</sup> At a distance of six months, in mid-2002, Michael O’Hanlon appraised OEF as a ‘flawed masterpiece’. He saw the campaign as a success because the US ‘light footprint’ policy found the correct measure of military force. Too much force would have ‘risked uniting Afghan tribes and militias to fight the outside power, angering the Arab world, destabilising Pakistan, and spawning more terrorists’ while the opposite,

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<sup>684</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Doug Feith: “We Ought to Get Our Act Together”’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 5 April 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_strategy\\_feith\\_nsarchive\\_04052002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_strategy_feith_nsarchive_04052002) (accessed 19 April 2021).

<sup>685</sup> Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and US Policy*, Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017, p. 7, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> (accessed 2 March 2021).

<sup>686</sup> Katzman and Thomas, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, p. 7.

<sup>687</sup> Katzman and Thomas, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, p. 7.

<sup>688</sup> Donald Rumsfeld cited in Human Rights Watch Report, ‘Dangerous Dealings: Changes to US Military Assistance After September’, vol. 14, no. 1, 2002, pp. 6–8, available at: [https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/usmil/USass0202-02.htm#P156\\_18414](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/usmil/USass0202-02.htm#P156_18414) (accessed 21 February 2021).

‘Too little force, or the wrong kind of force, risked outright military failure and a worsening of Afghanistan’s humanitarian crisis’.<sup>689</sup> OEF’s success was nevertheless tainted by the failure to capture bin Laden and some other leading Al-Qaeda members.<sup>690</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Battle of Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda

Despite Bush’s liberal strategic narrative, closer examination of US military priorities during the early phases of OEF can reveal contrasting realist ‘safety first’ warfare taking place. Taliban rule was quickly overthrown with minimal military costs for Washington. Some strategists suggested that the approach by ‘which indigenous allies replace American conventional ground troops by exploiting US airpower and small numbers of American special operations forces (SOF)’ created a new and successful ‘Afghan model’ to guide future campaigns.<sup>691</sup> As the GWOT began, Western actors anticipated that missions similar to OEF focused on asymmetric warfare in the global periphery would soon dominate security planning. Fervent advocates for the ‘Afghan model’ argued that military transformation needed to be guided by its example because most adversaries barring truly first-world militaries would quickly and with minimal cost succumb to its overwhelming power.

Stephen Biddle outlines that these advocates over-exaggerated the prowess of the low-risk US airpower-SOF combination to devastate an adversary, arguing that success with ‘shock and awe’ missions still depended on the skill and motivation of local military clients chosen by the US military.<sup>692</sup> ‘Afghan model’ advocates argue that a ‘fraction of today’s [total military] forces will suffice for such [OEF-like] operations; hence most of the military should be reconfigured to deal with other contingencies, especially counterinsurgency and nation building’.<sup>693</sup> Military transformation directed by the ‘Afghan model’ will in theory support warfare that is low-cost with smaller fatality risks. Governments in the risk society perceive exposure to fatalities and subsequent political backlashes from this as highest with large conventional force deployments. Responding to the risk society’s ‘safety first’ preferences, the ‘Afghan model’ appeals with opportunities to substitute conventional combat functions with options from SOFs and/or advanced military technology.

This thinking in security planning brings the utility of SOF deployments into further focus. SOF operations arguably occupy a unique position between two extremes in the risk calculus for Western security planners. First, on a deployment’s ‘output’ side, SOFs are a preferred capability for deploying behind enemy lines because these forces are ‘specially selected personnel that are organised,

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<sup>689</sup> Michael O’Hanlon, ‘A Flawed Masterpiece’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2002, p. 49.

<sup>690</sup> O’Hanlon, ‘A Flawed Masterpiece’, p. 56.

<sup>691</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, ‘Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq’, *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2005/2006, p. 161.

<sup>692</sup> Biddle, ‘Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare’, p. 161.

<sup>693</sup> Biddle, ‘Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare’, p. 163.

equipped and trained to conduct high-risk, high value special operations to achieve military, political, economic or informational objectives'.<sup>694</sup> SOF capabilities developed in earnest within the world's most advanced militaries in the 1950s. SOFs were first narrowly introduced for hostage rescue or 'kill and capture' operations. However, pressed by new GWOT demands, SOF utility was broadened to include the spearheading of 'light footprint' ground operations that might otherwise require more cumbersome larger conventional forces. This was illuminated in the options for OEF selected by US security planners.<sup>695</sup> SOF deployments are appealing when security planners seek to respond to politically delicate high-risk situations. Should such operations fail, fatality exposure and political humiliation will be two severe risks for the deploying government. SOF operations are defined as 'unconventional', meaning: 'operations [that] are unique in that relatively small operational elements work in a combined environment with and through indigenous counterparts'.<sup>696</sup> For the US, SOF missions are 'frequently requiring close cooperation with Department of State and other non-DoD agencies' mostly because of the highly pressured political priorities at stake.<sup>697</sup>

Second, despite undertaking high-risk operational tasks, at the 'input side' of the spectrum, in the 'choice between risks', SOF missions can often seem lower-risk than conventional force deployments. As elite units, SOFs are primarily conditioned for high-pressure and high-stakes operations behind enemy lines; they have the flexibility to respond to tasks beyond the competences of conventional units because of specialised training, skill and superior psychological resilience. Under legislation in most Western states, SOFs tend to be governed by stricter secrecy restrictions compared to conventional forces. Therefore, when security planners form a risk calculus, SOF utilisation is likely to appeal as a 'safety first' option if the mission under consideration has an 'elevated political or military risk'.<sup>698</sup> SOF-centric warfare is a desirable response to the risk society's contradictory insistence that governments continue to provide security but with less means and reduced strategic ambition. James Kiras argues that SOF-centred warfare is the 'ultimate realization of the military principle of "economy of force," in that small numbers of special operators often can achieve far greater

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<sup>694</sup> Definition elaborated by Canadian Special Operations Forces Command and cited in Bernd Horn, 'The Strategic Utility of Special Operations Forces', *Canadian Military Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2014, p. 70.

<sup>695</sup> Linda Robinson 'The Future of Special Operations: Beyond Kill and Capture', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 6, 2012, pp. 110–122.

<sup>696</sup> Mark D. Boyatt, *Unconventional Operations Forces of Special Operations*, Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 1993, pp. 5–6, available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA264031.pdf> (accessed 21 February 2021).

<sup>697</sup> Boyatt, *Unconventional Operations Forces*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>698</sup> James D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy from World War II to the War on Terrorism*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 5.

results than conventional military operations'.<sup>699</sup> Kiras emphasises that SOF missions can offer a 'disproportionately high return on investment' because these operations 'have value to political and military decision makers, at both the strategic and the operational level, as a low-cost method of addressing vexing problems with a high probability of success'.<sup>700</sup> Low-cost, but high payoff scenarios seem ideal for the risk society, as these did for US policymakers during the early GWOT.

However, operations in Afghanistan switched from the Taliban's overthrow to the hunt for bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda leaders, some significant shortcomings began to emerge in Washington's low-cost, SOF-reliant approach. After it pursued air strikes against Al-Qaeda hideouts in the Battle of Tora Bora in December 2001, the US led a coalition with France, the UK and Australia in March 2002 to clear Taliban and Al-Qaeda affiliates from the Shahi-Kot Valley at Afghanistan's south-east frontier with Pakistan. Coordination from SOFs for air strikes and with anti-Taliban militias as local Afghan clients remained significant features. Nevertheless, Operation Anaconda diverged from Washington's conduct of OEF until that point as it sought to directly engage on the ground with both SOFs and conventional infantry with airborne and mountain-warfare specialities. Coalition forces provided air-support and approximately 1,700 US military personnel fought alongside local Afghan militias.

Combat in the Shahi-Kot Valley during Operation Anaconda in March 2002 both from the US-led coalition and from combined Taliban insurgents and Al-Qaeda fighters is notable for risk theory. The Valley was held by *Mujahedeen* against Soviet military advances during the 1980s. Bin Laden and his supporters believed that the US-led coalition would suffer similar battlefield devastation if drawn towards military engagement in the area. Bin Laden allegedly reached this conviction based on panicked US military withdrawals or 'half-hearted' responses to numerous terrorist attacks in the MENA region during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>701</sup> These events included Washington's military withdrawal from Lebanon soon after a Hezbollah bombing on a barracks hosting US Marines in 1983; the hasty US military withdrawal from Somalia in 1993, when two of US helicopters were shot down and it suffered eighteen soldier fatalities; and Washington's ineffective show of force with cruise missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan after Al-Qaeda attacks on two US Embassies in East Africa in 1998.<sup>702</sup> Bin Laden and his Taliban supporters believed that the US-led coalition would display similar 'cowardice' once pressurised by a formidable insurgency and that the 'US military was a high tech paper tiger, unwilling to stand and fight'.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>699</sup> James D. Kiras, 'Special Operations Warfare', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 16 November 2012, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/special-operations-warfare> (accessed 21 February 2021).

<sup>700</sup> Kiras, 'Special Operations Warfare'.

<sup>701</sup> Paul L. Hastert, 'Operation Anaconda: Perception Meets Reality in the Hills of Afghanistan', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2005, pp. 11–12.

<sup>702</sup> Hastert, 'Operation Anaconda', p. 12.

<sup>703</sup> Hastert, 'Operation Anaconda', p. 12.

Conversely, US military leaders were accused of underestimating the improvised Al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgent force. Rather than an expected ‘rag-tag’, ill-disciplined and disparate band of ‘terrorists’, coalition forces encountered a ‘competent, disciplined, well-trained light infantry force’, comprised of local Afghans and ‘Arab, Chechen and Pakistani foot soldiers’ that previously operated under Al-Qaeda’s command to defend its Taliban supporters from the latter’s multiple domestic enemies, most notably the Northern Alliance.<sup>704</sup> Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents expected to inflict serious casualties on US-led forces with local knowledge of the mountainous terrain fighting ‘toe to toe’ with their adversary, but the Western coalition resisted temptation to fall into this ‘trap’ laid for them. US commanders did not fight this battle on the terms the insurgency preferred. They instead utilised an evasive, if not completely contactless, posture that relied on air strikes, helicopter raids and extractions, as well as proxy-warfare to inflict fatalities upwards of 500 on Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents that were forced to retreat from the Shahi-Kot Valley.<sup>705</sup>

As commander of US CENTCOM – the military command overseeing US security interests in the MENA region and Central Asia – General Tommy Franks praised Operation Anaconda as ‘an unqualified and complete success’.<sup>706</sup> In a June 2004 speech at the US Air Force Academy, Bush alluded to Operation Anaconda to insist that his administration would not shy from an uncompromising military posture contrary to US governments previously threatened by terrorist or insurgent violence. Bush argued that:

It [Al-Qaeda] claims to rise on the currents of history, using past American withdrawals from Somalia and Beirut to sustain this myth and to gain new followers. The success of free and stable governments in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere will shatter the myth and discredit the radicals.<sup>707</sup>

This statement from Bush was an attempt to destroy any anticipation from anti-US terrorist or insurgency organisations that they had opportunities to exploit ‘safety first’ or risk-averse weaknesses in the US national security posture.

Discourse to this effect presents an initial challenge to one of risk theory’s main expectations. However, if considered in the context of the long-term Western effort to stabilise Afghanistan, Operation Anaconda was not as successful as Franks first envisaged nor was the US as resistant to risk-aversion as claimed by Bush. The US had cleared the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda supporters from a ‘haven’ in south-east Afghanistan, but this initial gain was ultimately scuppered by complacent ‘safety first’, low-cost and low-risk stabilisation policies under-

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<sup>704</sup> Hastert, ‘Operation Anaconda’, p. 18.

<sup>705</sup> Hastert, ‘Operation Anaconda’, p. 18.

<sup>706</sup> Tommy R. Franks, *American Soldier*, New York: Regan Books, 2004, p. 379.

<sup>707</sup> George W. Bush, ‘President Bush Speaks at Air Force Academy Graduation. Remarks by the President at the United States Air Force Academy Graduation Ceremony’, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2 June 2004, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/06/20040602.html> (accessed 26 February 2021).

taken in Afghanistan soon after to be examined in this chapter as it progresses. Those later criticising US leaders that proclaimed Anaconda an initial success were angered that bin Laden was able to escape despite the availability of additional US military resources in the region to assist his capture. Outlining this argument, a 2009 report from the US Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations criticised early GWOT policies designed by Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld and General Franks as:

Reversing the recent American military orthodoxy known as the Powell doctrine, the Afghan model emphasised minimising the US presence by relying on small, highly mobile teams of special operations troops and CIA paramilitary operatives working with the Afghan opposition.<sup>708</sup>

### 4.3. Reference points from past experiences

It is important to reflect on this report’s references to the Powell Doctrine – or what has sometimes been formally referred to as the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine – from a risk theory perspective. The military thought of US General Colin Powell became a central focal point as he climbed the military ranks to eventually become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff between 1989 and 1993. The Powell Doctrine emerged as a set of core principles to ensure that US security planners would never again suffer the torrid mistakes of Vietnam. Assisted by the political input of Caspar Weinberger, US Secretary of Defence between 1981 and 1987, the Powell Doctrine stresses that the ‘military must no longer be placed in killing fields when there seemed to be no overriding national interest at stake and no intention of fighting to win a complete victory’.<sup>709</sup> The Powell Doctrine consists of at least four paramount principles: Washington ‘should go to war only if there were a clear and present threat to US national security’, this military action must be supported by the American people.<sup>710</sup> After this, the US military must then ‘destroy the threat with overwhelming force in order to defeat the enemy quickly and to rapidly secure and pacify the conquered country’; and as a contingency against any severe unexpected consequences resulting from military intervention, ‘there must be an agreed “exit” strategy that would give

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<sup>708</sup> John F. Kerry, ‘Tora Bora Revisited: How We Failed To Get Bin Laden and Why It Matters Today. A Report To Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate’, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, November 2009, pp. 2–3, available at: <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/S%20Prt%20111-35%20Tora%20Bora%20Revisited%20How%20We%20Failed%20to%20Get%20Bin%20Laden%20and%20Why%20it%20Matters%20Today.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2021).

<sup>709</sup> Walter LeFeber, ‘The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine’, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 124, no. 1, 2009, p. 73.

<sup>710</sup> Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important’, p. 12. And Stephen M. Walt, ‘Applying the 8 Questions of the Powell Doctrine to Syria’, *Foreign Policy*, 3 September 2013, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/03/applying-the-8-questions-of-the-powell-doctrine-to-syria/> (accessed 31 July 2023).

the United States military an honourable means of escape if the war went awry and eventual defeat should appear inevitable'.<sup>711</sup>

### 4.3.1. Quagmire anxiety

The Powell Doctrine can be interpreted as designed to ensure that policymakers did not return the US to the demoralising military 'quagmire' experienced in Vietnam during the 1960s. Consistent with the anxiety stemming from the risk society's 'safety first' condition, Ó Tuathail outlines that Washington's torrid experience in Vietnam has remained a central reference point for continuing 'quagmire anxiety' as the US has attempted to shape global order.<sup>712</sup> This resonates in the fear of getting 'sucked into a civil war in a marginal place where the strategic stakes are murky and ill defined'.<sup>713</sup> As Vietnam vividly demonstrated, this can leave thousands of soldier casualties and a long and divisive social legacy, but despite this psychological scarring, the risk society still senses that it still does not have the option to retreat into isolation. It becomes intermittently compelled to intervene to prevent future harm, thus rather than the 'never again' promised in the US after Vietnam, 'quagmire anxiety' continues to cyclically occur.<sup>714</sup>

While the Powell Doctrine is a formula designed to allow US security planners to effectively manage the dilemmas of 'quagmire anxiety', its policy guidance sometimes conflicts with the risk society's 'safety first' demands. With the perception that Afghanistan could remain a 'haven' for Al-Qaeda to launch devastating global terrorist attacks, proposals for military action were broadly accepted because US national security interests were perceived as being directly at stake. Nevertheless, contrary to the Powell Doctrine, a 'safety first' outlook ensured that the US military did not utilise 'overwhelming force' against Al-Qaeda or the Taliban. Rumsfeld was reluctant to do so; he feared that this would multiply US soldier fatalities and that a larger US military presence would risk irritating a broad swath of the Afghan population, this could 'create an anti-American backlash and fuel a widespread insurgency'.<sup>715</sup> As a further contrary tendency to the Powell Doctrine that later transferred from Bush to Obama, the US and NATO were hesitant to develop a clearly defined 'exit strategy' like to allow an 'honorable means of escape' from a painful military stalemate.

With the benefit of hindsight, the 2009 US Senate Report reflected that the Powell Doctrine's advocacy of initial engagement with 'overwhelming force' would have been beneficial to limit the risk of a later insurgency resurfacing. The report argues that the chance to quickly capture bin Laden and other influential Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders could have been increased had Washington called on America's additional conventional military units based 'in or near Afgha-

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<sup>711</sup> Gilpin, 'War is Too Important', p. 12.

<sup>712</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 152.

<sup>713</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 152.

<sup>714</sup> Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 152.

<sup>715</sup> Kerry, 'Tora Bora Revisited', p. 2.

nistan to execute the classic sweep-and-block manoeuvre required to attack bin Laden and try to prevent his escape'.<sup>716</sup> On the question of why the US did not select this option, the report blames the cautious 'safety first' outlook taken by US leaders, arguing that the Bush administration perceived that:

It would have been a dangerous fight across treacherous terrain, and the injection of more US troops and the resulting casualties would have contradicted the risk-averse, "light footprint" model formulated by Rumsfeld and Franks. But commanders on the scene and elsewhere in Afghanistan argued that the risks were worth the reward.<sup>717</sup>

The report specifically explains that:

The commander of the Marines outside Kandahar, Brig. Gen. James N. Mattis, told a journalist that his troops could seal off Tora Bora, but his superiors rejected the plan. Everyone knew that such an operation would have conflicted with the Afghan model laid down by Franks and Rumsfeld.<sup>718</sup>

Reflecting on this as a rueful oversight by US strategists, Mattis interpreted CENTCOM's decision as cautious not to repeat past Soviet mistakes in Afghanistan by sending a larger US military contingent with transport vehicles into the mountains because these could be dangerously exposed to attacks from insurgents with better knowledge of the harsh terrain.<sup>719</sup> Mattis reflected that 'If I had to do it again...I would have called both commander [Franks] and Admiral Moore [US Navy commander] and said, "Sir, I have a plan to accomplish the mission, kill Osama bin Laden, and hand you a victory. All I need is your permission"'.<sup>720</sup>

While the Senate report partly empathised with the Bush administration's emphasis on preventative warfare as necessary, it still lamented the cautious and overly 'safety first' approach to warfare in late 2001 and early 2002 as prolonging security problems for the US and its allies:

The failure to finish the job represents a lost opportunity that forever altered the course of the conflict in Afghanistan and the future of international terrorism, leaving the American people more vulnerable to terrorism, laying the foundation for today's protracted Afghan insurgency and inflaming the internal strife now endangering Pakistan...Al Qaeda shifted its locus across the border into Pakistan, where it has trained extremists linked to numerous plots, including the July 2005 transit bombings in London and two recent aborted attacks involving people living in the United States.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Kerry, 'Tora Bora Revisited', pp. 2–3.

<sup>717</sup> Kerry, 'Tora Bora Revisited', pp. 2–3.

<sup>718</sup> Kerry, 'Tora Bora Revisited', p. 17.

<sup>719</sup> Jim Mattis and Bing West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, New York: Random House, 2019, pp. 73–76.

<sup>720</sup> Mattis and West, *Call Sign Chaos*, pp. 73–76.

<sup>721</sup> Kerry, 'Tora Bora Revisited', p.1.

### 4.3.2. Debating the light footprint

To partially defend the Bush administration's decision-making; it did not have the benefit of this hindsight, and its security planners still faced what risk theory would expect as a delicate 'choice between risks'. The open-ended, 'reflexive security dilemma' stressed in risk theory meant that many important details had to be considered. First, while there was a tide of domestic and international support behind the US after 9/11, it remains doubtful whether US public opinion would have remained as strong had higher military fatality counts, likely with 'overwhelming force', occurred. Second, the Powell Doctrine stressed 'great caution in the use of military force'.<sup>722</sup> In the uncertain choice between risks, it can be inferred that the Powell Doctrine ultimately perceives less risk in 'overwhelming' military action and where a smaller number of casualties are concentrated at the beginning of a 'short and sharp' campaign. This is contrary to the alternative risk of higher military casualties over a lengthy period if a lighter military incursion allows enemy violence to recover. Emphasising 'overwhelming force', the Powell Doctrine perceives this as the 'least-worst' option to avert larger pitfalls in asymmetric warfare. However, illustrative of the apprehension that the open-ended 'reflexive security dilemma' causes for security planners, the reasons for cautioning against 'overwhelming force' that Franks and Rumsfeld displayed also have merits.

In theory, the Powell Doctrine appears to offer an effective option, but in the heat of real-time political pressure, there is little evidence that 'overwhelming force' could have better prevented the escape of leading Taliban and Al-Qaeda members into Pakistan. This claim is supported by the mixed record of Western military interventions over the post-Cold War period. As a US military leader during Operation Desert Storm, Powell received much praise for overseeing the 'overwhelming force' that allowed the US-led coalition to quickly meet its strategic objectives against Saddam's Revolutionary Guard in 1991. As the first significant US-led military campaign of the RMA era, Operation Desert Storm has since been claimed as a 'victory misunderstood' because of the narrative emerging in its early aftermath that America's unrivalled military technology would allow it to continually undertake similar successful 'short and sharp' military interventions with minimal soldier fatalities.<sup>723</sup> This was however a fight against a conventional enemy and coalition security planners did not have to manage any follow-on stabilisation campaign to expunge guerrilla warfare. Once Saddam's forces had been expelled from Kuwait, President George H. W. Bush pragmatically perceived the continuation of Saddam's rule in Iraq as solely a domestic matter for Iraqi citizens. Washington was not embroiled in a possibly far more tedious military campaign.

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<sup>722</sup> Kenneth J. Campbell, 'Once Burned, Twice Cautious: Explaining the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine', *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1998, p. 357.

<sup>723</sup> Stephen Biddle, 'Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us About the Future of Conflict', *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1996, pp. 139–140.

The 1990s saw the US struggle with either failed interventions or tragic non-interventions in the face of ‘ambiguous distant conflicts’ in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Rwanda.<sup>724</sup> Struggles for US leaders were rooted in the dilemma imposed on Washington by the Powell Doctrine’s insistence to militarily intervene only when the US national interest is directly at stake. Nevertheless, America also had a newfound role as the primary guardian of global order. The latter rather than the former created impetus for NATO’s military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 but following only the incomplete lessons of Desert Storm, much trust was placed in advanced military technology as the main means to respond to the ‘reflexive security dilemma’ that further crises in the Balkans presented. Having repercussions for the later US-led approach in Afghanistan, observations from Kosovo arguably reinforced flawed lessons over-exaggerating the stabilising utility of air strikes. Comparable with Desert Storm, but this time against the Serbian military, OAF was fought against a conventional adversary that did not seek to provoke destabilisation by waging a guerrilla campaign after initial NATO air strikes had concluded. With the NATO-led KFOR then established to ensure baseline security, UNMIK to coordinate state-building, and international NGOs contributing to the development of civil society, once OAF concluded in June 1999, Kosovo fell under a relatively stable international ‘neotrusteeship’ managed by Western donors that could afford this for the long-term.<sup>725</sup>

Neither Desert Storm nor OAF provided much planning insight for the post-intervention stabilisation phases to follow an initial military combat campaign in a more hostile environment. This likely influenced the surprising later complacency in Bush’s outlook on Afghanistan. Such distinctions were downplayed, senior administration officials instead focused their frustrations on NATO’s multilateral ‘war by committee’ structure, accusing the alliance of curtailing US freedom of action and perceiving this as the reason that the 78 day OAF campaign became more prolonged than originally planned.<sup>726</sup> This lesson later influenced Rumsfeld’s infamous deduction that ‘the mission [for the GWOT] needs to define the coalition and we ought not to think that a coalition should define the mission’.<sup>727</sup> For Rynning, statements expressed in this tone signalled that ‘US power was better served by bold initiatives carried out by US-led coalitions of the willing’.<sup>728</sup> With NATO’s Kosovo campaign as a recent reference point, the Bush administration began to form the impression that few of its

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<sup>724</sup> Campbell, ‘Once Burned, Twice Cautious’, p. 357.

<sup>725</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, ‘Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States’, *International Security*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2004, p. 41.

<sup>726</sup> Kay, ‘NATO, the Kosovo War and Neoliberal Theory’, p. 263.

<sup>727</sup> The Washington Post, ‘Rumsfeld Defence Department Briefing’, 26 September 2001, available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/rumsfeld\\_092601.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/rumsfeld_092601.html) (accessed 3 March 2021).

<sup>728</sup> Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: The Liberal Disconnect*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 79.

European allies could contribute the military power, speed and flexibility that these 'bold' US-centred coalitions required.<sup>729</sup>

Rumsfeld's internal communications seeking to influence the policy message that the US needed to strike for the early GWOT further indicate a desire for 'bold initiatives'. A paper on 'major directional decisions' that he distributed to President Bush in January 2002 seeks to encourage government messaging stressing that when confronting attacks from terrorists, 'the US will be "leaning forward, not back"' while asserting that Washington will be strong in managing this risk, 'it is not possible to defend against terrorism in every place, at every time, against every conceivable technique. Self-defence against terrorism requires pre-emption – taking the battle to the terrorists wherever they are and to those who harbour terrorists'.<sup>730</sup> Rumsfeld's paper insists that combating terrorism will be "long, hard and difficult" and that Washington 'will not rule out anything – including the use of ground forces', asserting that the GWOT would 'not be an antiseptic, "cruise missile war"', America was 'ready and willing to put boots on the ground when and where appropriate'.<sup>731</sup> While Rumsfeld's discourses on US foreign policy communication for the GWOT included these 'bold' statements, the 'light footprint' military action that he insisted for Afghanistan was not always as muscular as these broader strategic discourses.

#### 4.4. Post-conflict politics and security

While later chapters in this dissertation will examine the subsequent Obama administration's efforts to stabilise Afghanistan, there have been provocative claims that the situation in Afghanistan was already irretrievable before Obama came to the presidency. Robin Schroeder argues that the additional military resources pledged by Obama when recommitting the US to stabilisation in Afghanistan after 2009 was a case of 'not too little, but too late'.<sup>732</sup> This claim is much too lenient towards the Obama administration's own policy mistakes. Nevertheless, overseen under Bush, Afghanistan between 2002 and 2006 did leave a series of negative path-dependencies to influence conflict long into the future. Bush's inability to prevent these was driven by a combination of complacency and risk-aversion. When Iraq's deterioration into violence stretched US policy

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<sup>729</sup> Ian Forbes, 'Minding the Gap', *Foreign Policy*, no. 141, 2004, p. 77.

<sup>730</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2002 Memo to President Bush About "Major Directional Decisions"', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 19 January 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_potus\\_nsarchive\\_01192002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_potus_nsarchive_01192002) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>731</sup> Rumsfeld, '2002 Memo to President Bush About "Major Directional Decisions"'.  
<sup>732</sup> Robin Schroeder, 'Not Too Little, But Too Late: ISAF's Strategic Restart of 2010 in Light of the Coalition's Previous Mistakes', in Joachim Krause, Charles King Mallory, eds., *Afghanistan, Pakistan and Strategic Change: Adjusting Western Regional Policy*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, pp. 19–69.

attention, the situation in Afghanistan appeared settled in comparison, but this soon turned out to be a mirage.

#### 4.4.1. Misunderstanding Afghanistan

After accepting the ISAF command in 2003, NATO was criticised for its ‘lack of significant manpower on the ground’, its presence was ultimately not enough to deter the rebirth of the Taliban as a formidable insurgency.<sup>733</sup> Afghanistan’s relapse into violent insecurity rooted in the years between 2002 and 2006 hold further political and military complexity in addition to this shortcoming. Meeting in December 2001, at the International Conference on Afghanistan (Bonn Conference), Afghan Elders approved Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the country’s post-Taliban transitional administration limited to six months duration. This was followed by Karzai’s appointment as interim president to last a further two years at the instruction of an emergency *loya jirga* (grand assembly) in 2002. Signalling some incremental progress in the development of Afghanistan’s political structures, Karzai was later directly and democratically elected as Afghan president in 2004. NATO governments perceived Karzai as a suitable choice to lead the political reform to achieve post-conflict reconstruction. In addition to a diplomatic tone that satisfied Western officials, he possessed the broad intra-society connections to assist in unifying an otherwise sharply fragmented society.<sup>734</sup>

However, state-building developments were largely confined to Kabul and Afghanistan’s other urban areas during Karzai’s early years as president. Kabul and provincial capitals dominated Karzai’s focus; these were the primary pillars of his domestic power.<sup>735</sup> Due to mountainous terrain, poor infrastructural connectivity, and safety concerns, the delivery of international aid also focused on the same urban-centric grid map. Unsurprisingly, urban areas began to see some improvements from ISAF-sponsored state-building reforms, but rural locations – where 75 per cent of the Afghan population resided – were neglected. Many in rural areas quickly perceived themselves as unfairly falling on the wrong side of a widening rural-urban divide.<sup>736</sup> For its first couple of years, ISAF was narrowly focused on Kabul, its presence was either minimal or nonexistent elsewhere, this posture ensured that it was unable to serve the aspiration to support ‘basic services but also to expand political authority and security’ throughout Afghanistan.<sup>737</sup>

With neither the Karzai-led government nor the ISAF presence tangibly prepared to enforce public order across large swathes of Afghan territory, the areas in question were at risk of becoming uncertain security vacuums. Finding it difficult to generate the military manpower required and with the consent of the Karzai-led government, ISAF was forced to ‘prevent the worst’ and it

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<sup>733</sup> Schreer, ‘The Evolution of NATO’s Strategy in Afghanistan’, p. 144.

<sup>734</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 60.

<sup>735</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

<sup>736</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

<sup>737</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

outsourced governance functions in some areas to anti-Taliban ‘warlords and militia commanders’ in southern Afghanistan.<sup>738</sup> Becoming local governors, these ‘strongmen’ were ruling not through popular legitimacy, but because they could command armed militias. With ISAF turning a blind eye, these governors often brutally exploited local populations, regularly engaging in ‘the abuse of power, corruption and criminal activities’.<sup>739</sup> When ISAF’s actions are linked to risk theory, this can be argued as a utilitarian and ‘safety first’ response to a difficult problem, but while providing a flawed yet workable form of stability in the short-term, this would undermine NATO’s longer-term efforts.

Karzai held strong political connections within Afghan society, but his sway over militia commanders was limited. His administration had only minimal leverage to fully enforce a monopoly on coercion. While ISAF was not legally accountable to the government of Afghanistan, it was still *de facto* supporting that government. ISAF was therefore undermined by the profound contradiction that it was purporting to support democratic state-building but it could still not fully uphold public order and it was instead vesting some responsibility for this to ‘strongmen’ local elites blatantly uncommitted to democratic progress.<sup>740</sup> The decision to cede some control for public order to ‘strongmen’ governors seemed ‘good enough’ in a situation where stabilisation resources did not match the ambitious aims outlined, but this came at the price of undermining the popular legitimacy required for state-building reforms that ISAF was seeking to support. For Ahmed Rashid, ISAF’s decision was ‘a cheap and beneficial way to retain US [and NATO] allies in the field who might even provide information about al-Qaeda’, but despite this short-term advantage, this would increasingly undermine ISAF’s headline aim to win ‘hearts and minds’ in areas vital for its parallel stabilisation effort.<sup>741</sup>

Rynning argues that caution led by the US in supporting a ‘light footprint’ approach in this way was the ‘original sin’ that then persisted to undermine later stabilisation attempts.<sup>742</sup> The Bush administration had a self-styled reputation for taking ‘bold decisions’, but contrary to its discourses claiming this, US oversight of stabilisation policy in Afghanistan after 2001 was instead defined by indecision, hesitancy and disagreement. The ‘light footprint’ approach that Western actors followed had its own particularities, but much of the policy thinking at this time also fell under the influence of a major UN report on peace operations published in 2000, chaired by the Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi.<sup>743</sup> Brahimi later summarised that this document aimed to advise those embarking on state-building to ‘avoid the creation of parallel institutions and dual systems

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<sup>738</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

<sup>739</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

<sup>740</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>741</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 129.

<sup>742</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 80.

<sup>743</sup> Lakhdar Brahimi (Chairman), *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, New York: United Nations, 21 August 2000, available at: <http://undocs.org/A/55/305> (accessed 20 April 2021).

which undermine local authority, hinder coordination and precipitate competition'.<sup>744</sup> Despite the misgivings that developed between the US and the UN during the Bush years, this was the broader normative background that was establishing a tone for multinational interventions. Any international presence would have to thread a delicate balance, and in Afghanistan, it can be argued that Washington initially perceived the minimalist side of this balance as the most preferable.

The decision-making context that Washington faced between 2002 and 2006 was open-ended, and thus consistent with the 'reflexive security dilemma' outlined in risk theory. While a disastrous escalation, Taliban resurgence after 2006 did provide a focus to better guide policy options for NATO that was not there before. Discussing the campaign up until 2010, Anatol Lieven makes the dramatic claim that NATO's Afghanistan policy had become 'a landscape of the mind, onto which Westerners could project a variety of agendas and fantasies'.<sup>745</sup> ISAF's response to local Afghan concerns and sensitivities fluctuated over the course of its presence, but this 'landscape of the mind' tendency was at its most severe at the very outset. Farrell reports that US government officials were already displaying serious complacency by 2003. This was sometimes reinforced by convenient but also faulty historical analogies that misrepresented the situation. One US official recalled the mood in Washington as, 'The war in Afghanistan was over – we [the US] had won', while another argued that 'Afghanistan was seen as like Bosnia, mostly a governance issue'.<sup>746</sup>

Washington's risk calculus was overwhelmed by wishful thinking. Farrell presents further evidence of this by explaining that the Bush administration amazingly only sought \$1 million in US humanitarian aid for Afghanistan in 2002, even though the US Congress did finally allocate \$250 million that year.<sup>747</sup> At this point, there was a Western-backed government in Kabul and Al-Qaeda could no longer operate from Afghan territory. As Bush began to set his sights on Iraq, Afghanistan was no longer deemed worthy of much more strategic attention. European NATO members displayed similar complacency. NATO allies and partners were able to supply 60,000 troops for peacekeeping missions in Bosnia in the years after the Dayton Agreement in 1995 but could only make

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<sup>744</sup> Lakhdar Brahimi, 'State Building in Crisis and Post-Conflict Countries', 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, Building Trust in Government, 26–29 June 2007, Vienna, Austria, available at: <https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/Brahimi%20UNPAN026305.pdf> (accessed 21 April 2021).

<sup>745</sup> Anatol Lieven, 'Insights from the Afghan Field', *OpenDemocracy*, 25 October 2010, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/insights-from-afghan-field/> (accessed 17 October 2020).

<sup>746</sup> Theo Farrell, *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001–2014*, New York: Random House, 2017, p. 132.

<sup>747</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, p. 132.

7,000 available for ISAF's early stages after 2002, notwithstanding US and UK forces already deployed under OEF.<sup>748</sup>

Transatlantic complacency can be connected to a problem inherent with the 'active anticipation' of risk. To 'proactively' respond to a risk, security planners need a set of reference points or an imaginary that they themselves create and project onto a security concern. However, with leaders then tempted to see what they believe, the reference points involved are always susceptible to political manipulation. One could argue that the optimistic perceptions that US policy-makers constructed for Afghanistan did not include enough pessimistic scenarios that might need future attention. A reason for this might have been the poor intelligence detail for Afghanistan that primacy source documents indicate US military planners as receiving during the campaign's early years. Communicating with CENTCOM commander, General John Abizaid, in October 2003, Rumsfeld complains that Karl Eikenberry, who at this stage held two concurrent roles in Afghanistan, as US Security Coordinator and Chief of OMC-A, had reported to him that he had 'no visibility as to what the Agency [CIA] is doing in Afghanistan'.<sup>749</sup> Rumsfeld's concern at the apparently unreliable US intelligence information flow from Afghanistan is heightened further in November 2003 when the prominent US-aligned Uzbek-Afghan warlord, Abdul Rashid Dostum, seeks to warn him about an unexpected Taliban resurgence, stressing in a letter that 'The strength and momentum of the reorganisation of the Taliban-Al Qaeda and Hezb-I-Islami has increased significantly'.<sup>750</sup>

Dostum alleges that the Taliban had begun to reassert control in a growing number of areas and had begun to infiltrate, or in his words 'cooperate', with the Afghan government and the police to an alarming extent.<sup>751</sup> Finding Dostum's report 'worrisome', Rumsfeld writes to Abizaid that 'If he [Dostum] is correct that the Taliban are in control of that many areas within Afghanistan, it is news to me'.<sup>752</sup> Further indications of an intelligence deficit affecting the highest levels of the US government were revealed by Rumsfeld in reports from his meetings held with President Bush in October 2002. With US General Dan McNeill then

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<sup>748</sup> Sean Kay, 'No More Free-Riding: The Political Economy of Military Power and the Transatlantic Relationship', in Janne Haaland Matlary and Magnus Petersson, eds., *NATO's European Allies Military Capability and Political Will*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013, p. 107.

<sup>749</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo to Gen. John Abizaid: What is CIA up to?', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 14 October 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, The Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_cia\\_eikenberry\\_nsarchive\\_10142003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_cia_eikenberry_nsarchive_10142003) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>750</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo to Gen. John Abizaid about Reported Taliban Comeback', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 18 November 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post] available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_dostum\\_taliban\\_nsarchive\\_11182003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_dostum_taliban_nsarchive_11182003) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>751</sup> Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo to Gen. John Abizaid about Reported Taliban Comeback'.

<sup>752</sup> Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo to Gen. John Abizaid about Reported Taliban Comeback'.

commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2003, Rumsfeld says that he had heard that Bush wanted to meet with McNeill and CENTCOM's General Franks. Rumsfeld then reports a baffling exchange, where Bush asked, 'Who is General McNeill?', Rumsfeld replied: 'the general in charge of Afghanistan' with Bush concluding, 'Well, I don't need to meet with him'.<sup>753</sup>

#### 4.4.2. Seeking 'big change' with 'small means'

Complacency combined with a possible dearth in quality intelligence was guiding US policymakers to underestimate the severity of Afghanistan's security problems. Further empirical examination paints an ever more complex picture of the 'reflexive security dilemmas' that US security planners were contending with. During the 1999 US Presidential Campaign, Bush famously criticised the outgoing Clinton administration for what he described as the latter's unwise decisions to involve the US in 'nation-building' overseas.<sup>754</sup> While 9/11 ushered in an era of fundamental change, it can still be argued that Bush only tentatively changed his mind on this issue. This created an uncomfortable doubtfulness that then influenced many 'half-hearted' policy actions that were problematic. Reflecting in his memoir in 2010, Bush later admitted that an overly cautious approach created flaws in US stabilisation policy, recalling that the 'light footprint' strategy that his administration implemented: 'worked well at first. But in retrospect, our rapid success with low troop levels created false comfort and our desire to maintain a light footprint left us short of the resources we needed'.<sup>755</sup> This caution was heavily guided by some obvious historical warnings. Bush recounts that his administration 'were all wary of repeating the experience of the Soviets and the British'.<sup>756</sup> Britain encountered a fierce backlash when it waged three separate wars in Afghanistan between 1839 and 1919 and the Soviet military suffered a similarly torrid experience between 1979 and 1989.

While Bush's reflection is retrospective, these historical reference points also cast a major shadow over how US security planning was being conducted. In March 2002, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz received a memo drafted by US policy staff on the British experience in Afghanistan between 1839 and 1919. With the memo later reaching Rumsfeld's desk, the Secretary of Defence described it as an 'interesting piece' and forwarded it to key civilian security advisors and members of the US General Staff responsible for policy on

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<sup>753</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2002 Memo About President Bush: "Who is General McNeill?"', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 21 October 2002, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_potus\\_mceill\\_nsarchive\\_10212002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_potus_mceill_nsarchive_10212002) (accessed 3 April 2021).

<sup>754</sup> The New York Times, 'The 2000 Campaign. 2nd Presidential Debate Between Gov. Bush and Vice President Gore', Transcript, 12 October 2000, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/12/us/2000-campaign-2nd-presidential-debate-between-gov-bush-vice-president-gore.html> (accessed 5 March 2021).

<sup>755</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2010, p. 207.

<sup>756</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, p. 207.

Afghanistan.<sup>757</sup> The memo outlines how Britain struggled to meet its military objectives due to infighting between its main policymakers, some serious ‘tactical missteps’, the absence of an ‘exit strategy’, and because London imposed a ruler on Afghanistan that ‘derived its authority from a foreign power’.<sup>758</sup> ISAF has often been accused of committing some uncannily similar errors in Afghanistan over the past twenty years, but it is interesting to note that this memo does not offer any policy recommendations for the US to avoid Britain’s past mistakes.

The painful Soviet experience in Afghanistan during the 1980s seems to have had an especially significant influence on US military plans for the Battle of Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda. An August 2002 memo sent by Rumsfeld to Bush’s national security advisor Condoleezza Rice attaches a series of ‘talking points’ gathered from CENTCOM on US force planning for Tora Bora. This document prominently highlights the Soviet military’s ten years in Afghanistan where it is claimed that Moscow deployed ‘more than 620,000 troops’ in total, while proceeding to suffer ‘More than 15,000’ soldier fatalities, a fate that Washington was desperate to avoid.<sup>759</sup> Forwarded from CENTCOM, this document continued to justify the ‘light footprint’ approach, explaining that ‘Mindful of the Soviet experience, planning was also shaped by the strategic setting that Afghanistan ultimately belonged to the Afghans’ and that Fahim Khan, the premier US-aligned Afghan leader in the area at the time, communicated a strong desire to have indigenous ‘Afghan forces attack in the Tora Bora area’.<sup>760</sup> US military planners were content to support Khan’s forces in taking the lead, as CENTCOM rationalised that the Afghans would be more appropriately suited than US forces to fighting at altitude in harsh weather.<sup>761</sup>

Despite the cautious outlook displayed politically by President Bush and militarily by CENTCOM, others within the Bush administration remained concerned that this ‘light footprint’ approach was overly minimal in its design and could expose Washington to future dangers. As Secretary of State, Colin Powell raised the possibility of a more elaborate military stabilisation presence to control against the risk of any further violence. Rumsfeld and Franks opposed this proposal, insisting that Afghanistan’s reconstruction must primarily rest with

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<sup>757</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo on British Problems in 19th-Century Afghanistan’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 29 March 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_britishfailures\\_nsarchive\\_03292002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_britishfailures_nsarchive_03292002) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>758</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo on British Problems in 19th-Century Afghanistan’.

<sup>759</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Condoleezza Rice on Tora Bora and Anaconda’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 6 August 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_torabora\\_condi\\_nsarchive\\_08062002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_torabora_condi_nsarchive_08062002) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>760</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Condoleezza Rice on Tora Bora and Anaconda’.

<sup>761</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Condoleezza Rice on Tora Bora and Anaconda’.

Afghan leaders themselves.<sup>762</sup> Despite insistence from these quarters, primary source documents also illustrate that Washington was indecisive on how to best assist an Afghan-led security capacity. In an April 2002 memo sent to Powell, Rumsfeld expresses concern at a State Department proposal to commit the US to paying 20 percent of the costs to train the refashioned Afghan army.<sup>763</sup> Rumsfeld shows explicit frustration: ‘The US spent billions of dollars freeing Afghanistan and providing security’ and he stresses to Powell: ‘I urge you to get DoS turned around on this – the US position should be zero. We are already doing more than anyone’.<sup>764</sup>

As well as demonstrating complacency on just how fragile the security situation was in Afghanistan, in proposing a burden-shift to US allies, Rumsfeld was also eager to minimise US ‘ownership’ of the stabilisation process. This rationale is confirmed in a November 2002 memo that Rumsfeld writes to one of his political advisors, asking him to formulate a ‘scorecard’ to better calculate and rank the contributions of other countries to stabilisation in Afghanistan.<sup>765</sup> This was a ploy to politically pressure US allies into doing more for Afghan stabilisation, thus relieving some of the burden shouldered by Washington.

With Rynning since collecting the opinions of a number of American diplomats with experience in US policy for Afghanistan, a retrospective consensus emerged among this group that Washington’s intention to introduce ‘big change’ – state reconstruction and even democratisation – with ‘small means’ was a highly naive expectation.<sup>766</sup> This hindsight might however be criticised as being too one-dimensional. To illustrate a delicate policy situation taking place in real-time, Marin Strmecki, one of Rumsfeld’s primary advisors on Afghanistan, took the view that ‘only when the Afghans are defending and policing Afghanistan will it not be at risk for being a safe haven’.<sup>767</sup> From this perspective, Afghan-led political and security solutions were seen by Washington as the most durable

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<sup>762</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 82.

<sup>763</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Colin Powell Arguing Against Spending on Afghan Army’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 8 April 2021, [Afghanistan Papers, The Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_afghanarmy\\_condi\\_nsarchive\\_04082002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_afghanarmy_condi_nsarchive_04082002) (accessed 24 March 2021).

<sup>764</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Colin Powell Arguing Against Spending on Afghan Army’.

<sup>765</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Staff Asking for Scorecard Listing Allied War Support’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 25 November 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_afghanarmy\\_coalition\\_nsarchive\\_11252002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_afghanarmy_coalition_nsarchive_11252002) (accessed 24 March 2021).

<sup>766</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 82.

<sup>767</sup> Marin Strmecki, ‘Lessons Learned Interview, To Ascertain the History of Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan Primarily During the First 5 Years of the War’, 19 October 2015, Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background\\_ll\\_01\\_xx\\_xx\\_10192015](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_ll_01_xx_xx_10192015) (accessed 5 March 2021).

forms of risk reduction, while proposing a more robust military stabilisation presence maintained by outside forces was perceived as riskier and unsustainable for the long-term.

Strmecki argues that a major mistake at this time came when US security planners ‘weren’t fully facing up to that need to create an Afghan capacity that is allied with us [the US], but that polices Afghan territory’.<sup>768</sup> He claims that Rumsfeld was a ‘misunderstood figure’ and that his policy approach was to refrain from the ‘cliché view of Afghanistan of [sic] ungovernable, horrific place, never been ruled [by] anyone, tribes, violence, all this kind of thing’.<sup>769</sup> This clichéd outlook is regularly repeated by Western commentators, but it is indeed a historically shallow interpretation failing to acknowledge a central puzzle in Afghanistan’s historic political development. Strmecki stresses that clichéd explanations have ‘no perception of the 1950s, 1960s or the pre-Soviet 1970s Afghanistan, which had a function [sic] government institutions and a national army’.<sup>770</sup>

#### **4.5. Cobbling together political compromises**

Legacies of a historically functioning Afghan state were another indicator convincing US policymakers that state-building could be successfully achieved with a ‘light footprint’ approach. It is also important to not exclude cooperation between US security planners and Afghan elites. As America’s primary local client in overthrowing Taliban rule, Washington’s cooperation with the Northern Alliance was perceived as crucial once state-building efforts commenced. Formed from factions uniting in 1996 to confront a common enemy, the Taliban, the Northern Alliance was still fragmented between disparate local interests of Elders and warlords filling its ranks. Internal battles between interests did not always comfortably align with US strategic objectives or the aims of President Karzai’s fledgling Afghan administrations. The Northern Alliance demonstrated its deviance at an early stage, occupying Kabul immediately after Taliban rule collapsed in November 2001, defying an agreement struck with the US beforehand to allow Washington retain the post-Taliban capital as a neutral zone without dominance from any one Afghan faction.<sup>771</sup>

##### **4.5.1. Realist coaxing at Grand Assemblies**

Long-time Northern Alliance leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, was assassinated by an Al-Qaeda suicide bomber on 9 September 2001, his death left the Northern Alliance’s leadership in the hands of three individuals, all competing to exert influence: Mohammad Qanooni, Abdullah Abdullah and Mohammed Fahim. All

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<sup>768</sup> Strmecki, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>769</sup> Strmecki, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>770</sup> Strmecki, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>771</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

three later held executive positions in Karzai's interim administrations as well as other governmental offices, but each was uncomfortable playing a mere supporting role and personal political aspirations often clashed with those of Karzai himself. For example, both Qanooni and Abdullah were unsuccessful challengers when Karzai emerged victorious in the 2004 Afghan Presidential Election.<sup>772</sup> Rynning argues that these three Northern Alliance leaders did not originally object to ISAF's formation as long as ISAF did not meddle in the regions of Afghanistan under their control.<sup>773</sup> Between 2001 and 2003 this necessary alignment between Karzai and leaders from the Northern Alliance was always fragile if not precarious. Karzai started to call for a stronger ISAF presence to extend from Kabul to Afghanistan's other major urban centres. This proposal was unacceptable to the Northern Alliance and its supporters, in their eyes, an expanded ISAF would become an instrument to simply reinforce Karzai's domestic power and thus marginalise its influence on Afghan politics.<sup>774</sup> This prospect caused especial anger by the Northern Alliance because it did the large share of the ground fighting to remove the Taliban.<sup>775</sup>

As Washington observed these local power struggles, Rynning argues that 'The complexity of Afghan politics and the power realities on the ground made it easier for an administration already biased against "nation-building" to argue in favour of a Afghan-led solution'.<sup>776</sup> Serving as the internationally-appointed chairman for the Bonn Conference, Brahimi then continued as the UN's Special Envoy for Afghanistan between 2001 and 2004, consistent with Washington's instincts, he also favoured a 'light footprint' ISAF. For Brahimi, helping Afghans to 'feel ownership' for state-building was essential. Starting from this principle, Brahimi first favoured an all-Afghan security force, but when he quickly realised that this was unworkable, and with no US or Afghan representative at the Bonn Conference proposing a traditional UN peacekeeping mission, a multinational force in some form stood as the only realistic option.<sup>777</sup>

Brahimi was cautious to avoid a situation where security in Afghanistan could deteriorate further. He and US diplomats were thus confronted with a delicate dilemma: on one hand, the belief that local 'ownership' needed to be supported but, on the other hand, the need to partially override this with a multinational military presence. Brahimi therefore proposed ISAF to be a presence that would 'enable the indigenous capacity, not overwhelm it', and he attempted to then gather broad support for this plan within Afghanistan.<sup>778</sup> Gaining the support of 'strongmen' and warlords that controlled the most influential political networks in Afghanistan was unavoidable.<sup>779</sup> As the main diplomatic brokers, the US and

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<sup>772</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>773</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>774</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>775</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>776</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 81.

<sup>777</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>778</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 83.

<sup>779</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 83.

the UN thought that including these actors would prevent them from otherwise destabilising Karzai's administration while gaining their approval for a 'light' multinational military footprint would ease local agitation once ISAF started to fully function.<sup>780</sup>

The US and the UN were initially undecided on the model of government to be promoted in Afghanistan. In a society so divisively factionalised, the suitability of a strongly decentralised state was momentarily and vaguely considered.<sup>781</sup> However, Washington's counterterrorism priorities saw the Bush administration ensuring that the opposite alternative of a 'strong presidential system' actually happened.<sup>782</sup> One account of Brahimi's diplomatic outlook closely corresponds with the risk society's stabilisation preferences: 'he is a tough-minded realist who respects and understands power; his approach in similarly vexed situations has been to figure out which players are in charge on the ground and how to meet their minimum requirements'.<sup>783</sup> Brahimi had the unenviable task of trying to unify Afghanistan's tribal leaders, warlords and regional strongmen behind a centralised governance model first at an emergency *loya jirga* in June 2002.

This 2002 assembly was convened to agree on a transitional authority, it was followed by a constitutional *loya jirga* held in December 2003 and January 2004 to formalise an Afghan constitution.<sup>784</sup> International efforts to coax a pragmatic consensus among a diverse multitude of Afghan factions were never too far away in the background. Richard Ponzio argues that an 'unofficial policy' led by the US and the UN at the 2002 *loya jirga* consisted in 'politically accommodating and sometimes recruiting Afghan militia groups [that] overshadowed concerns for institutionalising stable, democratic authority'.<sup>785</sup> Within the Bush administration, Washington's preference for this accommodative approach was highlighted in a memo sent by Rumsfeld to national security advisor Rice in April 2002, in which he emphasises that US negotiators must 'know what we want to do, who we want to be helpful to'.<sup>786</sup> At the December 2003–January 2004 constitutional *loya jirga*, Brahimi worked closely with US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, and was afterwards 'roundly criticised – fairly or unfairly – for appearing to participate in "back-room deals"' that would support US

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<sup>780</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 83.

<sup>781</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 78.

<sup>782</sup> Richard J. Ponzio, 'Transforming Political Authority: UN Democratic Peacebuilding in Afghanistan', *Global Governance*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, p. 261.

<sup>783</sup> Laura Secor, 'The Pragmatist', *The Atlantic*, July/August 2004, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/07/the-pragmatist/302992/> (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>784</sup> Ponzio, 'Transforming Political Authority', p. 261.

<sup>785</sup> Ponzio, 'Transforming Political Authority', p. 261.

<sup>786</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2002 Memo to Condoleezza Rice on Warlord Strategy', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 2 April 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_warlords\\_condi\\_nsarchive\\_04022002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_warlords_condi_nsarchive_04022002) (accessed 23 March 2021).

priorities for a centralised state and would marginalise the more conservative Islamic factions present.<sup>787</sup>

Corresponding with the risk society's stabilisation preferences, this can be argued as an effort to find a flawed but 'good enough' solution to 'prevent the worst', but this realist diplomacy also spawned a dangerous side-effect. As an attempt to foster Afghan 'ownership', these *loya jirga* meetings did facilitate some important bottom-up engagement. The UN reported some success at capturing a broad audience in Afghanistan as well as among diaspora groups.<sup>788</sup> However, international mediators exerted heavy influence to stop talks from collapsing on multiple occasions. By supporting the short-term prerogative to 'accommodate' factions with motives contrary to democratic state-building, anti-democratic elements were inadvertently strengthened in the process. Realist approaches from international negotiators that helped to decide Afghanistan's state-building path left them exposed to later accusations of double-standards, damaging the legitimacy and popular support necessary for healthy governance.

#### 4.5.2. Warlords and public order

Social repression under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001 was unpopular in many parts of Afghanistan and its overthrow by the US was initially welcomed by many Afghans. Hopes followed for a more just political order.<sup>789</sup> However, the US and its allies were perceived to have ultimately squandered this goodwill by their later actions, broadly positive local sentiments only lasted for a short while after 2001.<sup>790</sup> With the *loya jirga* meetings as the main vehicle, Washington was eager to signal that it supported bottom-up governance, but with its ardent support for Karzai, it could not hide that it was also spearheading an international effort to direct top-down state-building. With Karzai's fledgling administration unable to fully enforce public order, ISAF's empowerment of brutal and repressive anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen' militia leaders in southern Afghanistan pragmatically compensated for Kabul's shortcomings.<sup>791</sup>

Hypocritical from a 'liberal' state-building standpoint, this short-term gain for stability still led to a serious long-term loss. Many warlords and 'strongmen' became regional governors under ISAF patronage, according to Farrell, they then 'had free rein to prey on civilians, imposing arbitrary fines, stealing land, and kidnapping people for ransom and sexual abuse'.<sup>792</sup> This behaviour quickly

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<sup>787</sup> Ponzio, 'Transforming Political Authority', p. 261.

<sup>788</sup> Ponzio, 'Transforming Political Authority', p. 261.

<sup>789</sup> Felix Kuehn, 'Taliban History of War and Peace in Afghanistan', in Anna Larson and Alexander Ramsbotham, eds., *Incremental Peace in Afghanistan*, London: Accord Conciliation Resources, 2018, pp. 38–39, available at: [https://www.politicalsettlements.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Incremental\\_Peace\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_Accord\\_Issue\\_27\\_web.pdf](https://www.politicalsettlements.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Incremental_Peace_in_Afghanistan_Accord_Issue_27_web.pdf) (accessed 23 March 2021).

<sup>790</sup> Berdal, 'NATO's Landscape of the Mind', p. 535.

<sup>791</sup> Berdal, 'NATO's Landscape of the Mind', p. 535.

<sup>792</sup> Theo Farrell, 'Unbeatable: Social Resources, Military Adaptation, and the Afghan Taliban', *Texas National Security Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2018, p. 63.

undermined the democratic state-building message that ISAF and Karzai combined to promote.<sup>793</sup> Moreover, even when the dubious virtues of the US preference to promote a centralised Afghan state are momentarily discarded, Washington still undermined democratic aims by its support for anti-Taliban warlords and ‘strongmen’. The latter had no lasting allegiance to Kabul and were instead guided by localised tendencies at odds with the reestablishment of central government. Warlord and ‘strongmen’ governors instead sought to politically dominate and financially control their own ‘subnational’ patch.<sup>794</sup>

Between 2001 and 2006, Washington attempted to consolidate Afghan militias into the AMF which was formally subjected to the Afghan government, but in reality remained dominated by consenting warlords. This was succeeded by the ASF, ‘funded and run’ by the US military.<sup>795</sup> Militia-based security forces were often disparate, poorly disciplined and ‘unreliable in combat’, striking failures convincing ISAF that a far more thorough military-building project was necessary if public order was to be improved, spurring plans to finally develop the ANA.<sup>796</sup> Trial and error before this realisation caused a lot of damage, the political patronage and military assistance that ISAF endowed on exploitative warlords and their militias fuelled local anger and instilled mistrust towards the mission.

As local Afghan opposition was building, broader GWOT priorities were dislocating Washington’s attention from the serious longer-term risks that Afghan dissent would create. A narrow focus on counterterrorism left the US pursuing a locally divisive and confused approach: on one hand aiming to militarily root out suspected terrorists hiding among the Afghan population, but while also trying to encourage the improved social integration and cohesion necessary for state-building.<sup>797</sup> The Afghan government’s attempts to oversee the creation of a competent police force were not faring any better than parallel efforts at military reform. Recruitment for the police was drawn from the same pool of militia men that were troubling military development. Afghanistan’s newly formed interior ministry was ineffective in bringing the corruption and ill-discipline of militia men turned police officers into line.<sup>798</sup>

ISAF’s dependence on Afghan warlords proved very problematic in multiple ways, but writing on state-building efforts in 2004, Antonio Guistozi still warned against an over-simplified binary narrative distinguishing between Afghanistan’s ‘good state’ and its ‘bad warlords’.<sup>799</sup> This outlook was popular in

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<sup>793</sup> Berdal, ‘NATO’s Landscape of the Mind’, p. 535.

<sup>794</sup> Antonio Guistozi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

<sup>795</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 90.

<sup>796</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 90.

<sup>797</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 90.

<sup>798</sup> Schroeder, ‘Not Too Little, But Too Late’, pp. 19–69.

<sup>799</sup> Antonio Guistozi, ‘“Good” State vs. “Bad” Warlords? A Critique of State-Building Strategies in Afghanistan’, *LSE Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper*, No. 51, 2004, pp. 10–13, available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/13314/1/wp51.pdf> (accessed 01 April 2021).

some American commentary, but allowing it to guide policy was dangerous because many warlord networks had actually infiltrated the government. These entities were one in the same in some areas. Some warlords were pragmatically brought into the government system by the internationally brokered negotiations on Afghanistan's post-Taliban future; others gained access in more untoward ways, but their entry by either mode worsened many systemically corrupt practices.<sup>800</sup> State-building was inextricably linked to NATO and its global partners and this further eroded public trust in ISAF.

Corresponding with the risk society's stabilisation preference, ISAF's liberal state-building narratives can be argued as merely 'papering over' the more important underlying priority to 'prevent the worst'. Guistozi observed a worrying acceptance of 'failed reform' from Western actors when supporting Afghanistan's government ministries that continued to fill their ranks with politically connected but 'illiterate, incompetent, unreliable and/or corrupt' personnel.<sup>801</sup> Many from warlord networks with dubious allegiances would be recruited into Afghanistan's government institutions. While he was probably personally self-interested in seeking Washington's attention, Dostum's message as a US-aligned warlord to Rumsfeld in 2003 must be remembered as strikingly and urgently highlighting that Taliban loyalists were quickly re-occupying various levels in Afghanistan's new administration, a trend that ineffective US intelligence was not detecting.<sup>802</sup>

## 4.6. Conclusion

Neoconservative ideology was synonymous with Bush's foreign policy discourses. As its ideology was articulated between 2000 and 2008, the neoconservative movement specified that the US could support security through a liberal global order with military force, if necessary. Bush's discourses regularly stressed that Washington wished to support a stable and democratic Afghanistan. This may have led some to believe that it would pursue a liberal 'maximalist' approach to intervention and state-building. However, evidence presented in this chapter highlights that this did not really happen in practice. US-led war planning and the stabilisation policy that followed were instead shaped around a utilitarian blueprint.

Despite Bush communicating the GWOT as a mission to secure global order through liberal principles, Washington's mode of warfare to overthrow the Taliban was actually minimally utilitarian and low-risk. The US emphasised its airpower and relied on guidance coordinated by a skeletal SOF presence, much of the risky ground fighting was done by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. This 'safety first' and 'light footprint' approach proved effective very early in OEF. When coalition commanders engaged in the Battle of Tora Bora and launched

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<sup>800</sup> Guistozi, "'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords?", pp. 10–13.

<sup>801</sup> Guistozi, "'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords?", p. 12.

<sup>802</sup> Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo to Gen. John Abizaid About Reported Taliban Comeback'.

Operation Anaconda in late 2001 and early 2002 respectively, evasive warfare took bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgents by surprise. These elements appeared to believe that the risk society's 'safety first' tendency would provoke a US military retreat were Washington to suffer from fighting 'toe to toe'. While the evasive 'light footprint' approach avoided this setback, the same posture was later blamed for allowing bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders to escape to Pakistan, an error with enduring consequences.

Corresponding with the risk society's stabilisation policy preferences, in seeking to manage an asymmetric security concern, the open-ended predicaments of the 'reflexive security dilemma' challenged Western policymakers to find agreement on the exact purpose of their mission in Afghanistan. Primary source documents reveal much uncomfortable and self-conscious reflection among the main policymakers; many sought the problematic guide of historical reference points to better structure their response to events. The first of these was the Powell Doctrine that outlined a set of military principles to ensure that the US would 'never again' be humbled by an asymmetric imbroglio like Vietnam. However, the recommendation to utilise 'overwhelming force' to extinguish any possibility of an insurgency recovering to wage a lengthy guerrilla campaign was then discarded by Rumsfeld and Franks. The advantages of the 'light footprint' option were supported by historical reference points from Operation Desert Storm in Iraq and OAF in Kosovo. Both examples indicated that advanced airpower developed from the RMA would be decisive. Going deeper into history, Bush was readily aware of the suffering that Britain and the Soviet Union respectively encountered when militarily intervening in Afghanistan. The lessons of history highlighted a delicate dilemma, but many historical reference points were also interpreted in a selective way that proved dangerous. For example, both Desert Storm and OAF were campaigns against a conventional adversary that did not attempt to recover with a guerrilla phase after initial defeat. Afghanistan and the Taliban were a contrasting proposition.

The GWOT prioritised a transnational risk, but stabilisation in Afghanistan was primarily a state-centric task. Upon intervention in 2001, the US and NATO were exposed to this serious contradiction. This chapter argued that its choice between risks meant that the US often prioritised the hunt for the terrorists that remained on Afghan soil often over elements that could assist with the country's stabilisation. Being militarily ruthless for counterterrorism ultimately undercut the benevolence required to deliver 'softer' social stabilisation aspects. State-building is often portrayed as a 'maximalist' undertaking, but the US and NATO rarely took this approach between 2001 and 2006, they instead embarked on many utilitarian shortcuts. The most damaging among these was outsourcing governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongman' militia leaders. This turned many Afghans against ISAF, making it difficult to later win back 'hearts and minds'.

Afghanistan's previous history of functioning state capacity between the 1950s and the late 1970s allowed some optimism among international mediators that successful state-building was possible. However, when confronted by the

delicate political dilemmas of trying to support the local compromises necessary to begin the state-building process, US and UN negotiators saw it as important to include Afghanistan's many intricate power hierarchies, thus paving the path to political power for some notorious warlords and 'strongmen' militia leaders. This was perhaps unavoidable in the effort to jumpstart state-building, but it also undercut the democratic message that ISAF promoted. As a preference corresponding with the risk society outlook, Jervis argues the Bush Doctrine's emphasis on preventative warfare was unsustainable because this was dangerously reliant on inevitably flawed intelligence information. The situation in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2006 grants further insight for this argument, as those harbouring Taliban sympathies steadily regained a foothold in recalibrated governance structures. Evidence indicates that the US and NATO did not possess the intelligence capacity to credibly understand and respond to this risk. This weakness ultimately helped the Taliban to unexpectedly recover.

## 5. TALIBAN RECOVERY AND ENTANGLED ALLIANCE POLITICS

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines early ISAF expansion as well as the Taliban's resurgence as a formidable insurgency. Both developments happened between 2003 and 2008, starting with ISAF's command being transferred to NATO and ending with the final year of the Bush presidency. These five years were formative for NATO's post-intervention stabilisation policy. This chapter highlights early problems in NATO's 'structural fitness' to implement stabilisation to allow state-building. The US was at first organisationally underprepared for preventative stabilisation sought by the risk society for the GWOT. Its national security apparatus was still largely configured for an earlier modernity. Early disconnects appeared in inter-agency cooperation required to synchronise civilian and military aspects. NATO's other major powers did not fare any better. Converting credible intelligence into prudent policies is vital for preventative security strategies. NATO's intelligence failings ensured an ineffective response to a resurgent Taliban insurgency operating between Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan.

Geography made Pakistan a crucial ISAF partner. Contrary to neoconservative narratives of a safer liberal international order being a primary US priority for GWOT, this chapter draws on primary sources to argue that Washington instead took a far more realist outlook on its partnership with Pakistan. US officials expressed an explicit interest to financially support Pakistan's military rulers to ensure that Islamabad could better suppress Taliban militancy in the country's western borderlands. The risk society's preference for short-term, flexible and *ad hoc* security cooperation resonates strongly in the US-Pakistan counterterrorism partnership. This chapter argues that while this cooperation had some obvious benefits, this arrangement did not provide NATO with enough leverage to coerce Pakistan more into line with its stabilisation aims in Afghanistan. Islamabad's own strategic priorities instead led it to undertake a duplicitous policy towards NATO that often played into the Taliban's hands.

Under NATO command, ISAF was a major policy initiative for European allies seeking to repair transatlantic ruptures caused by the Iraq war in 2003. Germany was a prominent supporter of ISAF expansion, but Berlin primarily perceived it as a civilian mission where major military combat risks could be shifted onto the US-led OEF. This outlook fed a flawed understanding that the security situation in Afghanistan was more benign than it was, leaving some of ISAF's PRTs vulnerable without stronger military protection. Moving to southern Afghanistan in 2006, ISAF expansion suffered further difficulties when facing down an unexpected Taliban offensive during Operation Medusa. NATO's effort was weakened by a tentative 'safety first' outlook from some allies imposing strict national caveats to limit combat exposure. As ISAF expanded, the leading allies involved expressed ambitious stabilisation aims, but these discourses were only

matched with utilitarian resources. This obstructed some PRTs from gaining more uptake from local populations in southern Afghanistan. The PRT structure was often powerless to prevent the Taliban's early resurgence for what would become its southern heartlands after 2006. This chapter is divided into six sections. Section two discusses the switching of US strategic attention to Iraq and its implications for ISAF after 2003. Section three examines the sources of Taliban recovery. Section four analyses the difficulties that emerged in the US-Pakistan security partnership formed for the GWOT. Section five evaluates the difficulties in ISAF expansion created by NATO's entangled alliance politics and the imposition of strict national caveats restricting combat exposure by some allies. Section six presents the chapter's main conclusions.

## 5.2. Early problems for ISAF

Clausewitz has remarked that 'War is no pastime; it is no mere joy in daring and winning, no place for irresponsible enthusiasts. It is a serious means to a serious end'.<sup>803</sup> Coker infers that Clausewitz believed it unwise for governments to get involved wars without knowing a war's broad nature.<sup>804</sup> When this belief is extended to stabilisation policy, NATO's leading powers might likewise be accused of getting involved in a steep challenge without fully comprehending its nature. This caused some severe miscalculations that ultimately left the door ajar for a recovering Taliban insurgency. US leaders became unreasonably impatient to move on from military operations in Afghanistan. They rushed forward to dislodging Saddam in Iraq. As Farrell discusses, only over a month after intervention in Afghanistan, on 21 November 2001, Rumsfeld signalled to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to instruct General Franks as CENTCOM commander to begin revising the US plan for war with Iraq.<sup>805</sup>

### 5.2.1. Switching attention to Iraq

CENTCOM was already overburdened as operations progressing in Afghanistan. Franks was surprised and frustrated. He had been tasked with doing what was almost impossible. It is reported that his response to Rumsfeld's instructions included the line: 'Goddam, what the fuck are they talking about?'.<sup>806</sup> When a formal order soon arrived to Franks from Rumsfeld on 1 December 2001, another US war of choice was on the horizon. Pressure from the Bush administration created an unusually urgent military planning scenario. CENTCOM was normally allowed one full month to formulate a base plan, but the Pentagon had

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<sup>803</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, abridged with an introduction and notes by Beatrice Heuser, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1832], p. 27.

<sup>804</sup> Coker, *War in an Age of Risk*, p. 22.

<sup>805</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 3.

<sup>806</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 3.

tasked Franks to have this ready in only three days.<sup>807</sup> With a link to risk theory, this indicates that the Bush administration was behaving as an impatient and overly-proactive ‘hyperpower’ intent on military action against Saddam without exhausting diplomatic options. Rumsfeld was personally infamous for his impatience; he even acknowledges this himself in some memos sent to colleagues.<sup>808</sup>

Contrary to risk theory’s utilitarian expectations, there is also the parallel explanation that Washington’s lapse into ‘hyperpower’ behaviour was not necessarily borne from a preventative impulse, but from the ideological influences of senior officials previously serving in the administrations of President Ronald Reagan and/or the elder President Bush. These officials remained dissatisfied that the elder Bush refused to command the US military to depose Saddam’s rule in Iraq in 1991. Seeking to address some unfinished business, these viewpoints were strongly influenced by neoconservative ‘idealpolitik’ portraying Iraq’s Ba’ath Party as a dangerous source of authoritarian inflammation in the Middle East. This group included Rumsfeld, they and their think-tank supporters had waited for more than ten years for another opportunity under a Republican president to remove Saddam by military force, if necessary.<sup>809</sup>

An acrimonious diplomatic prelude to war took place throughout 2002 and the US invaded Iraq in March 2003. Washington aimed to leave Afghanistan firmly on the backburner. It was seriously underestimating the obstacles to stabilisation that remained in Afghanistan. The political pressure that the Bush administration exerted on CENTCOM further illustrates Gilpin’s criticism of this government’s ‘ideological amateurism’ towards war planning.<sup>810</sup> Rather than listening to circumspect military advice, the decision to quickly start preparing for action against Iraq was guided by the political priorities of the neoconservative movement. It is possible to accept the ‘amateurism’ side of this charge without too much question. Despite the vast military power at Washington’s disposal, this power was still not without limits. America’s political leaders were unknowingly creating unrealistic expectations for what their armed forces could achieve.

The Bush administration did display some severe ‘amateurism’ in its security planning, but the ‘ideological’ dimension of Gilpin’s critique can still be disputed. Bush and his advisors may have discussed preventative wars through superficial ideological concepts like the ‘axis of evil’. US power was perceived as an instrument to support a ‘good’ global order by disrupting Iraq, Iran and

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<sup>807</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 3.

<sup>808</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo: “I May Be Impatient. In Fact I know I’m a Bit Impatient”’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 17 April 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=rumsfeld\\_nsarchive\\_2002\\_04\\_17\\_to\\_doug\\_feith\\_re\\_afghanistan](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=rumsfeld_nsarchive_2002_04_17_to_doug_feith_re_afghanistan) (accessed 3 April 2021).

<sup>809</sup> Russell A. Burgos, ‘Origins of Regime Change: “Ideapolitik” on the Long Road to Baghdad, 1993–2000’, *Security Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2008, pp. 221–256.

<sup>810</sup> Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important’, pp. 5–18.

Syria as ‘evil’ influences. However, despite Bush’s support for the liberal ‘good’ as a prominent US narrative, the actual approach of his administration to warfare in Afghanistan (and probably Iraq) instead followed a utilitarian approach. Under Bush, Washington sought to avoid ‘maximalist’ investments, an otherwise reasonable indicator of genuine liberal intent. With Afghanistan demoted as a lower priority, the Bush administration began to perceive its stabilisation needs as low-intensity and thus more suitable for NATO’s European allies. This outlook connects with neoconservative commentator Robert Kagan’s outlook on transatlantic military power disparities.<sup>811</sup> For Kagan, this disparity created an unbalanced division of labour in the tasks required to enforce global order. The US had military capacity to devastate any adversary that would put order at risk (‘making dinner’), but with strategic decline, the Europeans could no longer keep pace, their military capabilities were now only suited to low-intensity tasks (‘doing the dishes’).<sup>812</sup>

### 5.2.2. Weaknesses in civil-military coordination

There are strong indications that US security planning was guided by a complacent understanding that ‘doing the dishes’ was all that remained in Afghanistan after 2002. A fledgling ISAF coexisted with the US-led OEF, the latter primarily focused on counterterrorism. ISAF command did not formally transfer to NATO until August 2003. As a multinational force originally agreed at the Bonn Conference in late 2001, the UK under Major General John McColl first undertook ISAF command in December 2001. This responsibility passed to Turkey under Major General Hilmi Akin Zorlu in June 2002, before a period when Germany and the Netherlands jointly held command under Lieutenant General Norbert van Heyst between February and August 2003. All these arrangements struggled. All found it difficult to generate the resources needed to match the responsibilities involved.

Unlike OEF consisting of 8,000 US troops tasked with ‘tracking and tackling’ Taliban insurgents or Al-Qaeda members active in south-eastern Afghanistan, ISAF was UN-mandated with a 5,000-strong multinational presence and located only in Kabul. Its contingent was threadbare at this time, with claims that ‘anything beyond the [Kabul] suburbs stretched it [the early ISAF] far too thin’.<sup>813</sup> Hassan Abbas argues that the US decision to refocus its military attention on Iraq was a ‘fatal distraction’. Renewed instability that brewed in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2008 became so serious that America’s ‘undivided’ attention was needed.<sup>814</sup> The imbroglios transpiring after Saddam’s overthrow in Iraq put severe strain on US military resources, but Bush’s unilateral invasion also

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<sup>811</sup> David Rieff, George Packer, Ronald Steel and Robert Kagan, ‘An Exchange: Neocon Nation?’, *World Affairs*, vol. 171, no. 1, 2008, pp. 12–25.

<sup>812</sup> Robert Kagan, ‘Power and Weakness’, *Policy Review*, no. 113, 2002, pp. 7–8.

<sup>813</sup> Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 88.

<sup>814</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

reduced America's popularity around the world precisely when Washington needed to harness more assets from the international community to stabilise Afghanistan.<sup>815</sup> Events in Iraq were a severe and unexpected setback. This lifted morale for a previously 'demoralised' Taliban, giving its ranks renewed belief that it could be a formidable insurgency to unsettle ISAF's aims.<sup>816</sup>

Abbas argues that 'Critical time was lost' in preventing Afghanistan from relapsing into violence because Western actors were only slowly grasping the stabilisation policy that Afghan society required.<sup>817</sup> US intelligence resources were spread too thinly and were overloaded. In addition to primarily targeting terrorist suspects, an inadequate CIA presence was also burdened with the assignment of coordinating political integration between remote parts of Afghanistan and Kabul.<sup>818</sup> As more NATO allies gradually got involved with ISAF, there were some early attempts to manage a less militarised approach to state-building. This involved a division of labour between four NATO powers: with the US taking responsibility for Afghanistan's military reform; Italy judicial reform; Germany police reform; while the UK coordinated counter-narcotics. These functions were supposed to be closely interconnected, but was far more difficult in practice and any tangible progress that this process might have generated quickly stagnated.<sup>819</sup> As a particularly rueful mistake, this process failed to address reforms that Afghanistan's dysfunctional interior ministry required; squandering its potential to be a critical influence on positive police reform to better support public order.<sup>820</sup>

There were worrying disconnects in cooperation between NATO governments, but Abbas argues that the US was also unable to reinvent its own domestic inter-agency structures to respond to broader civilian and military demands. He insists that better cooperation between US agencies could only prosper embracing expertise beyond defence officials.<sup>821</sup> Signalled by NATO's Comprehensive Approach, state-building was later broadened to include aspects as diverse as homeland security, educational policy and agricultural reform. America's own bureaucratic politics sometimes obstructed these important early efforts. Primary sources indicate that the Pentagon was aware of problems that it wanted to solve by undertaking a coordinating role to delegate civilian and homeland security tasks for Afghanistan to other government departments. In a memo to Undersecretary of Defence for Intelligence, Steve Cambone, Rumsfeld stresses in May 2002 that finding individual terrorists 'never used to be a DoD job' and he

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<sup>815</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>816</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>817</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>818</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>819</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>820</sup> Robert Perito, 'Afghanistan's Police: The Weak Link in the Security Sector Reform', United States Institute of Peace, August 2009, available at: [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_police.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_police.pdf) (accessed 02 April 2021).

<sup>821</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 88–90.

complained that ‘We [DoD] are not organized, trained or equipped to do the job. It is basically an intelligence and law enforcement assignment’.<sup>822</sup>

Further memos by Rumsfeld to DoD staff repeatedly indicate his interest in having a strong influence on who the Department of State selected as Afghanistan’s US ambassador.<sup>823</sup> In a memo to President Bush in May 2003, Rumsfeld shows strong concern for who the next US Ambassador to Afghanistan will be, he warns that ‘My concern is I don’t think we have a lot of time for further delay. I am convinced we need to get some energy into our leadership in Afghanistan’.<sup>824</sup> In a November 2004 memo, Rumsfeld criticises State Department laxity on Afghanistan’s growing narcotics problem, writing that ‘with respect to the drug strategy for Afghanistan, it appears not to be synchronised – no one’s in charge. Department of State has to develop a strategy’.<sup>825</sup> While the need for better coordination between civilian agencies preferred by the Pentagon, allowing it to dominate US civilian assistance and diplomacy for Afghanistan had critics stressing that ‘militarising foreign policy’ was dangerous.<sup>826</sup> Primary sources demonstrate that Rumsfeld had fractious relations with important civilian agencies such as USAID and other non-DoD agencies were tentative about pursuing stronger cooperation under the Pentagon’s lead.<sup>827</sup> These bureaucratic

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<sup>822</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo: The Defense Department is Not Set Up to Find Terrorists’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 31 May 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, The Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_findingterrorists\\_nsarchive\\_05312002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_findingterrorists_nsarchive_05312002) (accessed 3 April 2021).

<sup>823</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo on Suggested Criteria for New US Ambassador’, Washington DC: US Department of State, 12 August 2002, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_ambo\\_feith\\_nsarchive\\_08122002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_ambo_feith_nsarchive_08122002) (accessed 3 April 2021) And Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo to Andrew Card: I Want to Help Pick the US Ambassador’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 19 August 2002, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_ambo\\_card\\_08192002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_ambo_card_08192002) (accessed 3 April 2021).

<sup>824</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2003 Memo to President Bush Suggesting New Ambassador’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 9 May 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, The Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_potus\\_amb\\_nsarchive\\_05092003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_potus_amb_nsarchive_05092003) (accessed 3 April 2021).

<sup>825</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2004 Memo to Doug Feith on Developing a Drug Strategy’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 29 November 2004, [Afghanistan Papers, Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_feith\\_narcotics\\_nsarchive\\_11292004](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_feith_narcotics_nsarchive_11292004) (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>826</sup> Chalmers Johnson, ‘American Militarism and Blowback: The Costs of Letting the Pentagon Dominate Foreign Policy’, *New Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2002, pp. 21–38.

<sup>827</sup> Colin Powell, ‘2004 Memo from Colin Powell on USAID’, Washington DC: US Department of State, 8 March 2004, [Afghanistan Papers, Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_powell\\_usaid\\_nsarchive\\_03082004](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_powell_usaid_nsarchive_03082004) (accessed 3 April 2021).

political obstacles prevented a better connected civilian and military approach to stabilisation.

### 5.3. Taliban recovery and evolution

Limited governmental control in Pakistan's western borderlands, most prominently the FATA and the NWFP, enabled the Taliban's military revival. As a political movement, the Taliban traditionally sourced its largest support from the cross-border Pashtun population residing in both Afghanistan and western Pakistan. However, it should not be mistaken for an exclusively Pashtun movement, segments within the Pashtun population also defied Taliban objectives and supported its enemies.<sup>828</sup> Conversely, as the Taliban insurgency against NATO gained momentum, it was able to attract 'small groups of ideologically committed' recruits from Afghanistan's Islamic Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik communities.<sup>829</sup> Nevertheless, despite some Pashtun opposition, the Taliban had strong roots within this specific ethnic group's nationalist and religious portions.<sup>830</sup> While not politically uniform, Pashtuns comprise forty percent of Afghanistan's population, many Pashtun nationalists frequently express a desire for their ethnic group to dominate in ruling Afghanistan.<sup>831</sup> Pashtun political movements have historically competed for influence with Afghanistan's other tribal ethnic groups. After the Soviet military withdrew in 1989, Afghanistan suffered a tumultuous civil war that eventually concluded with the Taliban seizing power in Kabul in 1996. Its leaders established a draconian regime derived from an extreme and distorted interpretation of Sunni Islam. However, Taliban supporters within the Pashtun population were satisfied that a more stable political arrangement was again in place, reliving Afghanistan from almost two decades of violent turmoil.<sup>832</sup>

#### 5.3.1. Returning to militancy

British imperialism in South Asia during the nineteenth century devastated Pashtun unity. London's colonial interests demarcated the Durand Line, a border that partitioned the ethnic Pashtun population between separate territories in Afghanistan and what would later become Pakistan in 1947. Cross-border

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<sup>828</sup> Shamil Shams, 'Pashtuns Rise Up Against War, Taliban and Pakistani Military', *Deutsche Welle*, 9 April 2018, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pashtuns-rise-up-against-war-taliban-and-pakistani-military/a-43309299> (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>829</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Taliban Beyond the Pashtuns', *The Afghanistan Papers*, No. 5, The Centre for International Governance Innovation, July 2010, p. 2, available at: [https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_paper\\_5.pdf](https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_paper_5.pdf) (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>830</sup> Mohammed Ayooob, 'The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism', *The National Interest*, 10 January 2019, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/taliban-and-changing-nature-pashtun-nationalism-41182> (accessed 5 April 2021).

<sup>831</sup> Ayooob, 'The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism'.

<sup>832</sup> Ayooob, 'The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism'.

linkage has long facilitated militant tendencies, after the US military banished Taliban leaders from Afghanistan in 2001; it did not take long for its movement to revert to these tendencies to inflict prolonged difficulties for the ISAF presence. The Taliban movement was founded under the direction of Mullah Omar in southern Afghanistan's Kandahar province in 1994, Pakistan has long been its most ardent foreign supporter. This support has historically been rooted in Islamabad's fear that domestic destabilisation could swell from Pashtun nationalism. When Pashtun nationalists in Pakistan expressed separatist threats during the 1970s, Islamabad responded by supporting Islamic militant groups in Afghanistan, most of which comprised many ethnic Pashtuns.<sup>833</sup> Opposition to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the 1980s offered Islamabad a further 'golden opportunity' to override Pashtun nationalism. Pakistan promoted militant political Islam among Afghan refugees and it 'bankrolled' Islamist parties active in Pashtun-populated border regions.<sup>834</sup> Similar relations between Pakistan and pro-Taliban Pashtun factions were again revived to aggravate the ISAF presence.

Islamic militancy cultivated in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands has long been a background consideration when Islamabad calculates its bitter military rivalry with India. Primarily maintained through political and religious militancy, Pakistan emphasises strong pan-Islamic connections to balance against Indian influences.<sup>835</sup> A cross-border Pashtun population shared with Afghanistan laced with militant elements has suited Pakistan's strategic interests. The Taliban insurgency built its momentum from the support provided by the Pashtun population across the Durand Line. Formidable cross-border networks maintained by pro-Taliban warlords Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani respectively were vital in its militant recovery.<sup>836</sup> Hekmatyar and Haqqani networks pre-date the GWOT. Their warlordism was previously energised through clandestine US support when Washington utilised these networks against the Soviet military in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Convenient alignments with the West did not last and Hekmatyar and Haqqani both became important Taliban facilitators later on.<sup>837</sup> Responding to these hierarchies, the cross-border Pashtun population became steadily interwoven with the Taliban insurgency after 2001. For what was sometimes an amalgamation, this redefined social order in southern Afghanistan. ISAF failed to comprehend the power of this transformation in boosting its insurgent adversary. This was later admitted by Douglas Lute, nicknamed the 'war tsar' in the Western media because he served as a senior US advisor for Afghani-

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<sup>833</sup> Abubakar Siddique, *Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides*, Barcelona: Centre for International Affairs, 2012, pp. 6–7, available at: [https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/35203/567954/file/OK\\_ABUBAKAR+SIDDIQUE.pdf](https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/35203/567954/file/OK_ABUBAKAR+SIDDIQUE.pdf) (accessed 5 April 2021).

<sup>834</sup> Siddique, *Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides*, p.7.

<sup>835</sup> Olivier Roy, 'The Taliban: A Strategic Tool for Pakistan', in Christophe Jaffrelot, ed., *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation*, London: Zed Books, 2002, p. 149.

<sup>836</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 111.

<sup>837</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 111.

stan and Pakistan to both Bush and Obama between 2007 and 2010, he reflected that:

The military seemed never to appreciate that the Taliban were embedded in the social fabric of rural Afghanistan. They were inherently not a force which was external to the areas where it fought and indeed, in some places in the south and east, they barely even had a defined force structure distinct from the civilian population. In such parts of the country, by taking on a commitment to fight the Taliban, you were essentially lumbered with fighting against the Pashtun population.<sup>838</sup>

This inability to understand the Pashtun social fabric confused NATO approaches to COIN, a failure that can be traced precisely to the beginning of the intervention.

The Taliban insurgency sometimes had non-binary relations with patches of the Pashtun population within which it operated. NATO compounded its inability to understand this by framing a diametric binary ‘insurgency narrative’ as a central reference point for its COIN.<sup>839</sup> This ‘insurgency narrative’ expressed the conflict in southern Afghanistan as a clash between ‘good and evil’; between the internationally legitimate and recognised Afghan government supported by NATO, and the religious militancy of the Taliban seeking to violently disrupt modernising reforms from sanctuaries in Pakistan.<sup>840</sup> This narrative had some basic accuracy, but it was still dangerously ‘over-simplifying’ the conflict and thus reproducing a flawed COIN strategy. While ISAF’s planners found it difficult to comprehend southern Afghanistan’s complex social fabric, locals in Helmand conversely responded to ISAF’s misguided binary lens by saying one thing and doing another, many were able to manipulate NATO policy for their own duplicitous aims at the expense of stabilisation.<sup>841</sup>

Insufficient intelligence detail was long at the base of this confusion. In a memo to one Pentagon staff member in 2003, Rumsfeld complains that his understanding of US operations was obscured due to him having ‘no visibility into who the bad guys are in Afghanistan or Iraq’.<sup>842</sup> Confirming that he was reading intelligence sourced from America’s various agencies, he still insisted that ‘we [US policymakers] haven’t got anything that is actionable’ as he reached the damning conclusion that ‘we [the US] are woefully deficient in human intel-

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<sup>838</sup> Interview with Douglas Lute in Larson and Ramsbotham, eds., *Incremental Peace in Afghanistan*, p. 69.

<sup>839</sup> Mike Martin, *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict 1978–2012*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 195–196.

<sup>840</sup> Martin, *An Intimate War*, pp. 195–196.

<sup>841</sup> Martin, *An Intimate War*, pp. 195–196.

<sup>842</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2003 Memo: “I Have No Visibility into Who the Bad Guys Are”’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 8 September 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_badguys\\_cambone\\_nsarchive\\_09082003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_badguys_cambone_nsarchive_09082003) (accessed 6 April 2021).

ligence'.<sup>843</sup> In a further memo from the same time, Rumsfeld outlines that this weakness was inhibiting US security planners from developing more effective policies, although his focus seems to be on the broader GWOT and not just Afghanistan alone, he writes to a senior DoD staff member: 'I wish we had better information about the enemies so we could design a better approach. I don't feel I have good data on the people we have been capturing and interrogating'.<sup>844</sup>

Having intervened in Afghanistan, the US and NATO quickly underestimated the ominous task of needing to identify the 'bad guys' from the 'good guys' along a convoluted cross-border landscape. Mike Martin explains the basic rationale for COIN as 'meant to provide security to the population while providing them with improved governance and development, thus drawing them away from the insurgent'.<sup>845</sup> It is only possible for COIN to be effective when those that can be co-opted are distinguished from those the military is attempting to oppose. Failure to subdue insurgent violence in Afghanistan's southern provinces bordering Pakistan, chiefly Kandahar, Helmand and Zabul, was the crux of ISAF's predicament. People in Helmand province have fought to expel intruders for centuries. The self-imposed binaries of NATO's COIN posture was incompatible with Helmand's intricate local politics where manipulating under-informed and complacent outsiders is a well-instilled norm.<sup>846</sup>

### 5.3.2. Local sentiments and foreign influences

Social structures in southern Afghanistan threw up many changing, complex and contradictory preferences. Where interests and incentives suited, portions of the local population sometimes cooperated with ISAF only to then turn and support the Taliban on another matter. Hostility towards NATO can be easily understood, but while often tapping in to some local assistance, support for the Taliban was not always a fixed proposition in Helmand either. Local perspectives sometimes even subscribed to the narrative that NATO and the Taliban were both unwelcome outsiders, destructive sparring partners working together to destroy the province.<sup>847</sup> ISAF leaders expressed winning 'hearts and minds' within the local Afghan population as the key to campaign success, but as Freedman argues, this too is a problematic externally-imposed perspective with logical flaws. Conflict between the 'heart' and the 'mind' is a regular human occurrence that can pull a person's behaviour in contradictory directions.<sup>848</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> Rumsfeld, '2003 memo: "I Have No Visibility into Who the Bad Guys Are"'.  
<sup>844</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2003 Memo on The "Lack of Clarity As to Who the Enemies Are"', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 8 September 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Papers], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_enemies\\_cambone\\_nsarchive\\_09122003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_enemies_cambone_nsarchive_09122003) (accessed 9 April 2021).

<sup>845</sup> Martin, *An Intimate War*, pp. 195–197.  
<sup>846</sup> Martin, *An Intimate War*, pp. 195–197.  
<sup>847</sup> Martin, *An Intimate War*, pp. 195–197.  
<sup>848</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, London: Routledge 2006, p. 84.

The violent turbulence of political change in Afghanistan since Soviet military departure in 1989 spurred the Taliban to reinvent itself multiple times since creation in 1994. With its support base first centred on Kandahar, the Taliban was among multiple militias competing for dominance in Afghanistan before it eventually seized power in Kabul in 1996. It then sought to consolidate its rule between 1996 and 2001. When this rule was overthrown by the US in 2001, Taliban leaders and supporters made use of Pakistan's tribal regions to regroup as an insurgency. Many Western media outlets and policymakers have presented the Taliban as a uniform actor when it has instead evolved as a fractious political and military movement. It is possible to divide the Taliban movement that gradually re-emerged after its rule was overthrown in 2001 into at least three interrelated but different factions: the Afghan Taliban; the Pakistani Taliban; and the foreign militants that supported both.

US security planners made the profound mistake of equating Al-Qaeda and the Taliban as almost one in the same during the early post-intervention after 2001. This flawed outlook partly inhibited Washington and its NATO allies from better responding to the Taliban insurgency's early resurgence.<sup>849</sup> While not the same branch of Al-Qaeda that attacked the US on 9/11, non-Afghan Al-Qaeda members fought alongside the Taliban against US military advances during the Battle of Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda in late 2001 and early 2002. Foreign Al-Qaeda militants were drawn to support the Taliban because it was a regime offering sanctuary. However, both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda evolved along different paths in the decade that followed. Culminating in the raid by US Navy Seals that killed bin Laden in Abbottabad in Pakistan in 2011, Al-Qaeda gradually fell into decline as radical Islamic terrorism regenerated and other movements sprung up.<sup>850</sup>

To avoid being captured by the US, many in the Afghan Taliban's leadership sought sanctuary in Pakistan and became an important bridgehead for Pakistani militants sympathetic to their cause. As Ashok Behuria explains, the Pakistani Taliban was formed by supporters from across Pakistan to 'experiment with the Taliban precepts in the tribal hinterland' that included 'local pockets in Waziristan, Bajaur, Malakand, Swat and even in Khyber'.<sup>851</sup> Involvement from Pakistani militants transformed the Taliban organisation. Giustozzi even proposes that it is better to understand the post-2001 insurgency as the 'neo-Taliban'.<sup>852</sup> This proposition emphasises organisational renewal because of an influx of 'foot soldiers' from Pakistan as well as influences from foreign *jihadists* that gathered

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<sup>849</sup> Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>850</sup> Daniel Byman, 'Explaining Al Qaeda's Decline', *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 79, no. 3, 2017, pp. 1110–1112.

<sup>851</sup> Ashok K. Behuria, 'The Rise of Pakistani Taliban and the Response of the State', *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 31, no.5, 2007, p. 701.

<sup>852</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

in Pakistan's western borderlands as the post-2001 Taliban insurgency connected with global jihadist networks.<sup>853</sup>

However, Thomas Ruttig has cautioned that Taliban internationalisation should not be overstated, the organisation has never sought to engage in violence outside its 'area of operations' in Afghanistan and the tribal borderlands of Pakistan.<sup>854</sup> By 2010, changes in the Taliban's leadership council had not been from political or ideological shifts, but were instead only necessary to replace members killed in the insurgency campaign.<sup>855</sup> The Afghan Taliban remained the dominant faction with objectives retaining a localised focus centred on Afghanistan's political situation.<sup>856</sup> Before dying from tuberculosis in 2018, Taliban leader Mullah Omar stated that the movement had no wish to inflict further violence on Western states as long as these states withdrew from Afghanistan.<sup>857</sup> Taliban appeals to global *jihadist* audiences were only one-track; its leaders were attempting to receive a broader pool of Muslim benefactors to support its insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>858</sup> This combination of local and international support structures was crucial for the Taliban to re-emerge as a formidable insurgency, a force that Rynning described as 'an agile adversary' effective at exploiting ISAF weaknesses.<sup>859</sup>

A recovering Taliban eventually cultivated 'horizontal' consent among the cross-border Pashtun population partitioned between Afghanistan and Pakistan, this was assisted by 'common religious schooling and shared military experience, that endows the group with a powerful, unifying ideology and worldview'.<sup>860</sup> Many Pashtuns supported the Taliban, but its insurgency still benefited from looser alignments with a local population apprehensive about outsider interference in Afghanistan. By irritating local sensitivities, some of ISAF's military actions incited local rebellion. Najibullah Lafraie argues that because of strong 'collective memory' of invasions from outsiders, 'it is easy for the [Afghan] people to see even a benign intervention as gross aggression; and the US [and NATO] intervention has been far from benign'.<sup>861</sup> Berdal argues that local anger towards ISAF was 'difficult to pin down and measure', but it still had a significant role 'in stimulating Afghan nationalism and anti-foreign sentiment, especially in the Pashtun belt in the south'.<sup>862</sup> Many Afghans may not have shared

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<sup>853</sup> Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*.

<sup>854</sup> Thomas Ruttig, 'How "Neo" Were the "Neo-Taleban"?'', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 5 March 2010, pp. 1–5, available at: <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/wp-post-to-pdf-cache/1/how-neo-were-the-neo-taleban.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2021).

<sup>855</sup> Ruttig, 'How "Neo" Were the "Neo-Taleban"?'', pp. 1–5.

<sup>856</sup> Ruttig, 'How "Neo" Were the "Neo-Taleban"?'', pp. 1–5.

<sup>857</sup> Ruttig, 'How "Neo" Were the "Neo-Taleban"?'', pp. 1–5.

<sup>858</sup> Ruttig, 'How "Neo" Were the "Neo-Taleban"?'', pp. 1–5.

<sup>859</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 114.

<sup>860</sup> Farrell, 'Unbeatable', pp. 61–63.

<sup>861</sup> Najibullah Lafraie, 'Resurgence of the Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan: How and Why?', *International Politics*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2009, p. 111.

<sup>862</sup> Berdal, 'NATO's Landscape of the Mind', p. 535.

the Taliban's ideological worldview, but many were still drawn to support its military objectives.

## 5.4. Pakistan and the GWOT

Pakistan has not historically been as violently fragmented as neighbouring Afghanistan. It has still been a fragile state where government authority to fully enforce public order is often dubious. Pakistan's military and its intelligence service, the ISI, have routinely intruded into political affairs. Coming to power through a military-led coup d'état that overthrew the elected civilian government in 1999, and eventually assuming the title 'president' through what Abbas calls a 'flawed' referendum in 2002, Pakistan was led by General Pervez Musharraf at the faithful juncture when 9/11 occurred.<sup>863</sup> In planning for Afghanistan to be the first front in the newly ordained GWOT, securing Pakistan's cooperation was crucial for Washington. Musharraf was suddenly in the eye of the global media, under pressure to agree to US requests.

### 5.4.1. A duplicitous partnership

The partnership struck with Pakistan allowed the US access to the country's naval, air and army bases, Pakistan's territory became a crucial logistical link supplying US-led military operations in neighbouring Afghanistan.<sup>864</sup> This agreement quickly influenced events to destabilise Pakistan. Military cooperation with the US energised a backlash from Pakistan's radical Islamic factions. The first was the 'meteoric' rise of the Muttihada Majlis- e- Amal organisation after 2002, an otherwise unlikely alliance of religiously directed political parties that managed to gain enough support to lead in Pakistan's federal legislature between 2002 and 2007.<sup>865</sup> Muttihada Majlis- e- Amal's distorted political message was that Pakistan's Muslims had a choice: they could either support its political movement comprising parties of the Koran or they could betray their faith by supporting the country's traditionally secular parties – the Pakistan People's Party and the Awami National Party – that Muttihada Majlis- e- Amal claimed were aligned with the foreign military presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>866</sup> Leading a state dangerously teetering between the extremes of military authoritarianism and electoral unpredictability, Musharraf had his own domestic power consolidation reasons to silently cooperate with Muttihada Majlis- e- Amal. He needed their support for a 'major constitutional amendment' to allow him to formally attain the roles of military chief and president con-

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<sup>863</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 99.

<sup>864</sup> C. Christine Fair, 'The US–Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2012, p. 243.

<sup>865</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>866</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp.99–100.

currently.<sup>867</sup> Putting Pakistan on the precipice of further destabilisation, these political developments, helped along by Pakistan's GWOT backlashes, were a further boost for recovering Taliban militancy.

The GWOT's early phases coincided with an especially volatile time in Pakistan's relations with India. Pakistan conducted its first major nuclear weapons test in 1998; this was quickly followed in 1999 by direct military exchanges between India and Pakistan in the disputed Kashmir region, remembered as the Kargil War. Tensions continued with a further standoff between Islamabad and New Delhi with a military build-up from 2001 until 2002 at Kashmir's Line of Control separating the military activity of both states. Pakistan's violations of nuclear non-proliferation regulations combined with the authoritarian manner through which Musharraf and Pakistan's military seized power made his administration an international 'pariah'. Military rule in Islamabad was subject to international sanctions just when 9/11 occurred, but a sudden opportunity to become a frontline partner for the US in the GWOT offered Musharraf a dramatic reversal in fortunes.<sup>868</sup> The conventional military balance in Pakistan's long-running conflict with India has traditionally favoured New Delhi, and this provides further explanation on why Islamabad tolerates Islamic militant networks operating on its territory. With Kashmir as the principal example, the main flash-points framing tensions between Pakistan and India have a decidedly ethno-political character. Islamabad has seen potential in shaping some of these militants into an additional unconventional weapon to allow Pakistan to strike at some of India's own domestic ethno-political weaknesses.<sup>869</sup>

Against these broader geopolitical pressures, Christine Fair argues that Pakistan's tolerance of Islamic militancy regularly created a perilous domestic balance for the country's leaders. Writing in 2012, she highlights that Pakistan has lost 35,000 of its own citizens to Islamic militant violence, but that the government's efforts to curb its terrorism and insurgency problems have only been 'selective'; sometimes targeting Pakistani Taliban commanders that support violence in Pakistan, but while turning a blind eye to other Taliban leaders seeking to use Pakistan as a platform to launch attacks against ISAF in Afghanistan.<sup>870</sup> Pakistan's ambivalence to Western partners was not limited to affairs in Afghanistan. In 2004, the revelation broke that AQ Khan, a senior scientist employed on Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme had been selling 'nuclear technology secrets' to North Korea on the black market.<sup>871</sup> Proclaimed part of the 'axis of evil' by Bush, North Korea made its first successful nuclear test in 2006. With suspicions rife that senior officials from Pakistan were involved, a previous Pakistani prime minister, the internationally prominent Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto castigated the AQ Khan debacle as 'a

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<sup>867</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 101.

<sup>868</sup> Fair, 'The US–Pakistan Relations', p. 243.

<sup>869</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 96.

<sup>870</sup> Fair, 'The US–Pakistan Relations', p. 248.

<sup>871</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 104–105.

cover-up for Musharraf'.<sup>872</sup> This was highly delicate controversy for Washington, any diplomacy to be perceived as cavalier in Pakistan could further inflame an already tense domestic situation and jeopardise a vital frontline GWOT partner.

The US partnership with Pakistan forged for the GWOT accurately reflects Coker's risk theory proposition that today's cooperative security arrangements will better resemble short-term alliances and will thus be far more flexible compared to the military alliances agreed during earlier modernity. Permanent and treaty-based mutual defence alliances founded under US leadership for the Cold War – NATO in Europe and the US-led 'hub and spoke' system in East Asia – retain some relevance in global security system of 2023, but Washington has also shied away from initiating similar agreements after the Cold War. The US instead favoured more flexible and *ad hoc* arrangements to confront new and global security problems through GWOT and the War on Drugs. Bruno Tertrais argues that older form alliances with strict treaty-based security guarantees, like NATO, are not always suitable for post-Cold War complexity. Undertaking security management within such frameworks comes with a 'heavy political cost' because eventual action will depend 'on procedures that require constant negotiation to reach consensus'.<sup>873</sup>

Instead, coalitions that are more flexible and *ad hoc* often reduce these political difficulties, especially when unrivalled military power tempts American leaders into operations with only minimal assistance from other states.<sup>874</sup> Rajan Menon argues that some of the internal 'friction, not fellowship' of NATO's post-Cold War transformation accelerated US prioritisation of less institutionalised and more flexible security cooperation.<sup>875</sup> Washington increasingly sees itself as 'operating in the world without fixed, long-term alliances and pursuing its interests and safeguarding its security in cooperation with a range of partners'.<sup>876</sup> As the US embarked on the GWOT, Rumsfeld explained in October 2001 that 'there is no single coalition in this effort', foreseeing that the campaign would be undertaken by 'a number of flexible coalitions that will change and evolve'.<sup>877</sup>

To support stabilisation aims in Afghanistan as well as agreements with Pakistan, the US sought military basing facilities in Kyrgyzstan; and a second logistical supply route, the NDN, where Russia was a major facilitator, among other

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<sup>872</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 105.

<sup>873</sup> Bruno Tertrais, 'The Changing Nature of Military Alliances', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, p.141.

<sup>874</sup> Tertrais, 'The Changing Nature of Military Alliances', p.142.

<sup>875</sup> Rajan Menon, 'The End of Alliances', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2003, pp. 5–16.

<sup>876</sup> Menon, 'The End of Alliances', pp. 5–16.

<sup>877</sup> Donald Rumsfeld quoted in *The Washington Post*, 'The Coalition and the Mission', 21 October 2001, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2001/10/21/the-coalition-and-the-mission/e7de7bdf-c826-4c80-a578-283750026c72/?utm\\_term=.cca0f394c023](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2001/10/21/the-coalition-and-the-mission/e7de7bdf-c826-4c80-a578-283750026c72/?utm_term=.cca0f394c023) (accessed 14 April 2021).

states.<sup>878</sup> This ‘Central Asia footprint’, as Rumsfeld refers to this in one memo, was perceived as advantageous as it would allow NATO to service objectives in Afghanistan with less military contact in the primary conflict area, thus reducing risks from militant backlashes.<sup>879</sup> This thinking reflects broader global patterns in US security policy, Washington has utilised similar flexible security arrangements to support capacity-building for military and law-enforcement authorities in Colombia as part of the Latin America-centred War on Drugs, while it deployed SOFs to the Philippines to support Manilla’s efforts to curb the rise of Islamic militants as part of the broader GWOT.<sup>880</sup>

Flexible and *ad hoc* security cooperation has many ‘light footprint’ benefits. However, over-reliance on such arrangements can also create some serious drawbacks. When asymmetric, these arrangements do not structure longer-term positive or negative incentives to reinforce consistent cooperation. Arguing that Western alliances would need to be ‘remade’ for the GWOT, Byman argues that these needed to be flexible and multifaceted to guarantee assistance as diverse as intelligence-sharing to over-flight rights.<sup>881</sup> However, he concedes that US attempts to strengthen counterterrorism capacity in local regimes may also inhibit democratic reforms and inflame domestic militant elements that thrive on anti-American sentiments.<sup>882</sup> Early stages in the US-Pakistan counterterrorism partnership, Musharraf responded to US requests to Islamabad to better militarily enforce control over Pakistan’s western borderlands.

As well as being a sanctuary for Afghan and Pakistani Taliban militants, Pakistan’s western border areas were becoming a worrying gathering place for foreign militants from Arab states, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Turkey and elsewhere in support of Taliban violence in Afghanistan.<sup>883</sup> Initiating military operations in these locations was not an insignificant commitment from Musharraf’s government. Due to long-running domestic tensions, this was the first time that Pakistan’s military had entered the FATA since the country’s independence in 1947.<sup>884</sup> Between 2004 and 2007, Islamabad launched a serious military cam-

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<sup>878</sup> See Svante E. Cornell, ‘The United States and Central Asia: in the Steppes to Stay?’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2004, pp. 239–254.

<sup>879</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2002 Memo on Plan for Central Asia Military Bases’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 9 January 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_centralasiafootprint\\_nsarchive\\_01092002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_centralasiafootprint_nsarchive_01092002)

<sup>880</sup> For War on Drugs in Colombia, see Alexandra Guáqueta, ‘Change and Continuity in US-Colombian Relations and the War against Drugs’, *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2005, pp. 27–56. For GWOT in the Philippines, see Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston and Gillian S. Oak, *US Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016.

<sup>881</sup> Daniel Byman, ‘Remaking Alliances for the War on Terrorism’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2006, pp. 770–771.

<sup>882</sup> Byman, ‘Remaking Alliances’, pp. 770–771.

<sup>883</sup> Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, ‘No Sign Until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier’, *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2008, p. 66.

<sup>884</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 103.

paign to bring the FATA to order. Supporting ISAF's interests in neighbouring Afghanistan, this campaign from Pakistan was ultimately unsuccessful. It was 'politically costly' for Musharraf and 'several hundred' Pakistani soldiers perished.<sup>885</sup> After 2007, Islamabad reverted to a plan attempting to maintain a pragmatic stability by supporting local warlords in the FATA, but this did little to limit the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan from strongholds in Pakistan.<sup>886</sup>

#### 5.4.2. Utilitarian drawbacks

Heng theorises that a 'telltale' sign of utilitarian risk management manifests in attempts to 'reshape' an environment by 'reducing opportunities for harm over addressing causes' and without ideological considerations.<sup>887</sup> Representing military authoritarianism in Pakistan, Musharraf remained as president until 2008; the Western support that his government received was motivated by the risk society's utilitarian preference to 'prevent the worst' over liberal democratic or human rights concerns. The GWOT's strategic necessities led Washington to support Musharraf's authoritarianism along with other such regimes in Central Asia. This preference is vividly portrayed in one memo sent by Rumsfeld to a senior defence official at the Pentagon in September 2002 when he proposes 'If we are going to get the Paks [Pakistan] to really fight the war on terror where it is, which is in their country, don't you think we ought to get a chunk of money, so that we can ease Musharraf's transition from where he is to where we need him'.<sup>888</sup> US leaders would probably defend such actions by insisting that supporting Musharraf's administration was the 'least worst' option available in reinforcing the broader effort to confront a global terrorist risk in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nevertheless, while US military 'shock and awe' in the early months of OEF did demoralise and weaken the Al-Qaeda presence, after this, US security planners were too slow to recognise the 'changing targets' thrown up by political volatility. What originally started as a counterterrorism mission instead morphed into an underprepared COIN effort. ISAF was left to confront growing Taliban militancy thriving from an unstable Pakistan.

Pakistan's early GWOT partnership with the US provided Islamabad with a route away from international 'pariah' status. The benefits of this partnership for Pakistan included procurement of US-manufactured weapons systems that even facilitated transferable capabilities for military operations postured towards India, as well as improved diplomatic access in Washington.<sup>889</sup> However, the drawbacks

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<sup>885</sup> Johnson and Mason, 'No Sign until the Burst of Fire', p. 55.

<sup>886</sup> Johnson and Mason, 'No Sign until the Burst of Fire', p. 55.

<sup>887</sup> Heng, *War as Risk Management*, p. 14.

<sup>888</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, '2002 Memo to Doug Feith: About Pakistan and "The War on Terror"', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 25 June 2002, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_pakistan\\_feith\\_nsarchive\\_06252002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_pakistan_feith_nsarchive_06252002) (accessed 11 April 2021).

<sup>889</sup> Fair, 'The US-Pakistan relations', p. 243.

were also significant; Islamabad faced growing domestic militancy that opposed stronger links to the US military, as well as unwanted pressure from Washington to engage in costly military actions in the FATA. In the years after Musharraf stepped down, governments in Pakistan calculated that flexible benefits from military cooperation with the US needed to be balanced against more stagnant national security predicaments.

Unsurprisingly, Pakistan's relations with Western actors have deteriorated badly, Mohammed Ayooob explains that Islamabad:

clandestinely kept supporting Taliban factions within Afghanistan that were combating American and allied forces thus keeping some of its credibility among the Pashtuns intact. It [Pakistan] also gave refuge to the Taliban leadership who made Quetta in Baluchistan its new headquarters.<sup>890</sup>

Pakistan's duplicity persistently angered Washington, but this has largely been shrugged off in Islamabad knowing that the US has minimal leverage to inflict serious punishment. Ayooob argues that this hedging strategy has paid:

good dividends [for Pakistan] that are likely to increase with the anticipated American withdrawal [from Afghanistan]. Pakistan is likely to end up as the primary power broker in Afghanistan in the wake of the American departure.<sup>891</sup>

## **5.5. Alliance politics and ISAF leadership**

With instability in Pakistan offering the Taliban a platform to support its insurgency, 2006 proved a watershed when its insurgency launched a major offensive in southern Afghanistan. ISAF commander, the UK's General Richards has reflected that the British army had not encountered fighting as intense since the Korean War in the 1950s.<sup>892</sup> This unexpected offensive was a nightmare for ISAF. NATO was only gradually coming to terms with the burden-sharing arrangements for leading ISAF effectively, but ISAF quickly became intricately linked with NATO's often tense and complicated alliance politics. ISAF coexistence with OEF caused additional confusion for the overall stabilisation mission. Internal alliance politics had a major influence on NATO's outward ISAF policies, but this was not always effective when successful stabilisation policies needed to be developed.

### **5.5.1. European perspectives on ISAF expansion**

Discord caused by the US invasion of Iraq created unease for many European leaders that the transatlantic security link with Washington was deteriorating.

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<sup>890</sup> Ayooob, 'The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism'.

<sup>891</sup> Ayooob, 'The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism'.

<sup>892</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

Some initiatives to repair transatlantic ruptures stemmed from German leadership. Influenced by Peter Struck, Germany's Minister of Defence under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder between 2002 and 2005, Berlin saw ISAF as a responsibility that NATO could undertake to relieve the US when it was shouldered with a stabilisation burden on two separate fronts.<sup>893</sup> Leading ISAF might gave a new and relevant purpose to a previously uncertain NATO, but this was a solely internal rationale for NATO renewal that risked some distraction. Inward logic diverted attention away from the hefty outward problems that ISAF had to confront. This did not help NATO when its members found out that stabilisation in Afghanistan was tougher than originally expected.

Berlin expanded its ISAF presence from Kabul to Kunduz province in northern Afghanistan in December 2003.<sup>894</sup> Germany's diplomatic persuasion was influential when the plan to expand ISAF from Kabul first to northern provinces and then to the south through a network of PRTs was developed. Leadership for PRTs would be transferred to ISAF from the US-led OEF. Germany's NATO diplomacy presented the coexistence of OEF and ISAF as a worthwhile division of labour. For Berlin, OEF was already pursuing 'harder' military objectives and there was an opportunity to further support this work with a 'civilian power' ISAF.<sup>895</sup> This outlook understood that ISAF would be responsible for civilian security along with other lighter military tasks in support of this. Washington would then be free to conduct 'counterterrorist operations [through OEF] in parallel if they wanted to'.<sup>896</sup>

The US was a proponent of merging OEF with ISAF, but found little support for this within NATO. The most politically sensitive areas of military risk-sharing supporting stabilisation continued to be undertaken through a separate US command structure. ISAF integrated some channels for cooperation and communication with OEF, but it did not have its own prisoner and interrogation system; and it was not to be involved in counternarcotics operations, although it did pledge to support Afghan efforts on this.<sup>897</sup> Rynning argues that weaknesses in ISAF-OEF cooperation were quickly revealed. In February 2006, protestors temporarily overran a Norwegian-led PRT compound in Maymana in northwest Afghanistan. Vehicles were set alight, and grenades were thrown at civilian staff and military personnel. Rubber bullets were discharged in response and some protestors died. PRT military personnel eventually dispelled the intruders, but support from NATO military units stationed nearby proved slow and ineffective.<sup>898</sup> This was a warning that ISAF did not have adequate military infrastructure to properly secure its growing network of PRTs.<sup>899</sup>

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<sup>893</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>894</sup> Wilfried von Bredow, 'Germany in Afghanistan: The Pitfalls of Peace-Building in National and International Perspective', *Res Militaris*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>895</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 98.

<sup>896</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 97.

<sup>897</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 106.

<sup>898</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p.107.

<sup>899</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p.107.

Counter-narcotics became a high-risk stabilisation task. Income from opium flows was providing lucrative revenue streams for a revitalised Taliban. This caused wider global ripple-effects. Heroin exported from Afghanistan – that had again emerged as one of the world’s largest producers – was finding the streets of Western and Middle Eastern cities. Rooting out this problem rested in southern Afghanistan’s Pashtun belt where any force perceived as heavy would inflame more local anger. Unlike ISAF, the Taliban had deeper local knowledge; opium cultivation was a problem that it was acutely mindful of when previously ruling Afghanistan between 1997 and 2001. The Soviet invasion devastated Afghan agriculture during the 1980s, forcing farmers to become increasingly reliant on poppy cultivation, an easy crop to sow, store and trade.<sup>900</sup> In the 1990s, Taliban rulers were initially hesitant to ban this subsistence. It did so only in 2000, declaring drugs contrary to Islam. This was ‘because they [the Taliban] knew it [banning poppy cultivation] would be unpopular with farmers’, and while the Taliban outlawed cultivation, it did not outlaw opium trade because it was a source of tax income.<sup>901</sup> ISAF and OEF continually faced the same dilemma. They needed to intervene to halt opium production as a source for many violent dangers, but they also knew that doing so might further ignite local hostilities.

Germany wanted NATO to lead ISAF as ‘a platform for Alliance renewal’ but the same ambition was not shared by France.<sup>902</sup> Jacques Chirac’s government was sceptical of a NATO-led ISAF based on civilian PRTs. However, growing political momentum within NATO for the German outlook caused Paris to pragmatically consent. The early 2000s coincided with the formation of the EU’s CSDP, where France sought to lead. The first EU-led military mission, Operation Artemis, was undertaken in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003. Contrary to Germany’s ISAF vision orientated towards civilian reconstruction, France instead perceived a military-led and European-dominated ISAF, a force that would aspire to eventually overshadow the US-led OEF and project a stronger image of European defence.<sup>903</sup> This vision was over-ambitious that was probably difficult to realise in practice. When it failed to gain traction within NATO, France still supported ISAF as it proceeded, but it crucially refused to lead its own PRT, the burden for this shifted to other NATO members.<sup>904</sup> Paris was uncomfortable with the EU acting as a major civilian donor for PRTs. Between 2003 and 2005, France stifled the EU’s PRT involvement.<sup>905</sup> With a clash of visions and varying motives for participation, and with OEF continuing to coexist alongside ISAF, Rynning argues that the stabilisation for Afghanistan was ‘balkanised’. ISAF was a scene of ‘civil–military tensions, and political divisions’, its fragmentation left con-

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<sup>900</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 4.

<sup>901</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 4.

<sup>902</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 98.

<sup>903</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 100.

<sup>904</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 100.

<sup>905</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 100.

fronting rising Taliban violence to ‘a sort of in-house coalition of the willing’ rather than a genuinely united mission.<sup>906</sup>

### 5.5.2. French and German precautions

French and German outlooks on ISAF and OEF can be observed from a risk theory perspective. Whether achievable in practice or not, the French preference for a military-led ISAF does not at first correspond with the risk society’s ‘safety first’ preference. Nevertheless, in an October 2004 memo sent by Rumsfeld to senior staff at the Pentagon and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he includes a report outlining suggestions for counter-narcotics policies in Afghanistan received from the French Minister of the Armed Forces, Michèle Alliot-Marie. The report highlights French reluctance to military action that could provoke Afghan tensions over poppy cultivation. Rumsfeld claims that Alliot-Marie ‘thought that ISAF should not do the counter-narcotics tasks; they are not suited to it. Nor should OEF. OEF has other work to do’.<sup>907</sup>

The report explains how Alliot-Marie thought that a ‘special team’ should be established: ‘possibly the US, France and the UK with the Afghans. Some Special Forces might need to be involved’.<sup>908</sup> Offering only vague ideas to better implement counter-narcotics policy, Alliot-Marie insisted that it was still important to ‘act soon’ before drug money interferes to elect the Afghan parliament and undermine state-building.<sup>909</sup> Managing prisoners and interrogation, undertaking SOF missions, and preventing narcotics flows are all intrinsic to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. However, ‘safety first’ preferences ensured the European NATO members were reluctant to have ISAF conduct more dangerous or politically controversial military operations. Responsibility for these tasks was largely shifted to OEF under US command.

Counter-narcotics presented NATO members with a difficult choice between risks. Hesitancy towards stronger involvement was often veiled with the argument that counter-narcotics should be led by Afghan authorities even if they were without adequate resources or competences. Even German proposals for a mainly civilian ISAF imposed dilemmas around military risks. A light military ‘footprint’ would leave the civilian work of PRTs exposed, but heavier protection might also provoke tensions and alienate Afghans. As PRT security came more into question, NATO realised that ISAF’s civilian presence operated in an environment much less benign than first estimated. This oversight was encouraged by ‘safety first’ concerns.

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<sup>906</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 113.

<sup>907</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2004 Memo on The French and Counternarcotics’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 18 October 2004, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Papers], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_french\\_narcotics\\_nsarchive\\_10182004](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_french_narcotics_nsarchive_10182004) (accessed 12 April 2021).

<sup>908</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2004 Memo on The French and Counternarcotics’.

<sup>909</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘2004 Memo on The French and Counternarcotics’.

Some might argue that German priorities were driven by more than ‘safety first’ calculations. Germany’s strategic culture shaped from 1945 onwards is argued to have embraced an ‘unmilitary, and in some circles even antimilitary, flavour’.<sup>910</sup> Domestic approval in public opinion was required for Berlin to have a leading role in ISAF. The mission was presented as the ‘soft’ part of wider stabilisation. For Germany’s political left in particular, this explanation was reinforced with the narrative that a civilian and humanitarian-centred ISAF was a force for ‘good’, while the US-led, military-focused OEF was sometimes even portrayed as ‘nasty’.<sup>911</sup> Germany’s preference for a civilian-led ISAF after 2003 was clear in the national caveats that its government imposed to limit its military operations. Wilfried von Bredow outlines that ISAF was stringently perceived from Berlin as a peace-support mission with military deployments therefore forbidden to engage in combat.<sup>912</sup> Within a multinational mission, these caveats proved ‘rather embarrassing’ for *Bundeswehr* units ‘because their comrades in other [non-German] contingents could not understand that enforced restraint’.<sup>913</sup> After suffering soldier fatalities, the German government and society struggled to openly recognise its ‘fallen soldiers’, those wounded, and those suffering from PTSD.<sup>914</sup>

Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer argue that COIN doctrine has been largely developed in the Anglo-Saxon military tradition.<sup>915</sup> This observation curiously excludes considerable French experience with COIN since 1945, but it is accurate for German military development. Despite Berlin’s politically derived ISAF ambitions, its *Bundeswehr* was unprepared for the actual military situation in Afghanistan. A refusal to undertake a combat role in southern Afghanistan allowed military risk-sharing concerns to repeatedly strain Germany’s relations with ISAF’s other ‘framework’ nations.<sup>916</sup> However, as conflict developed between 2003 and 2008, northern Afghanistan was still not as safe as Berlin might have expected, ‘insurgent attacks with ambushes, suicide bombers and mortar rounds’ escalated.<sup>917</sup> Deployment dilemmas between lighter and stronger military stationing is always delicate, but it can be argued that Germany’s decision to utilise its military only in a supporting role to civilian PRT activities created security vulnerabilities that encouraged ISAF’s enemies. Despite historical path-dependencies contributing to Germany’s strategic culture, the especially cautious emphasis that Berlin placed on avoiding soldier fatalities and other military risks still strongly indicates that the risk society’s ‘safety first’ concerns shaped its ISAF outlook.

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<sup>910</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, p. 6.

<sup>911</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, pp. 4–7.

<sup>912</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, p. 7.

<sup>913</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, p. 8.

<sup>914</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, p. 8.

<sup>915</sup> Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, ‘Counter–What? Germany and Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan’, *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 153, no. 1, 2008, p. 42.

<sup>916</sup> Noetzel and Schreer, ‘Counter–What?’, pp. 43–44.

<sup>917</sup> Noetzel and Schreer, ‘Counter–What?’, pp. 43–44.

### 5.5.3. Tall ambitions but insufficient resources

Germany perceived its ‘mandate and the mission’ for ISAF as being ‘designed to avoid any resemblance with a “real” war situation’, but this very situation perhaps unexpectedly happened for those taking the ISAF lead in southern Afghanistan.<sup>918</sup> The official handover of Afghanistan’s southern provinces from OEF to ISAF was scheduled for July 2006. This transfer was accelerated throughout that spring as the security situation profoundly deteriorated. Ambitious discourses were expressed by NATO governments taking responsibility in southern provinces, but these narratives sometimes failed to match the military resources allocated to stabilisation on the ground. Helmand soon became a ‘centre of gravity’ against the Taliban insurgency after 2006, although violence in the province was not as intense in the years preceding this.<sup>919</sup> When ISAF’s southern expansion began, it was instead neighbouring Kandahar that NATO expected to be the most strategically significant location for stabilisation. Declaring a lofty ambition, Canada sought to lead the PRT in Kandahar, leaving the UK in charge for Helmand.

As ISAF expanded, leading a PRT became attractive for many NATO governments as a ‘flag-showing’ opportunity to enhance international status, even if some were underprepared to contribute the resources that PRT leadership really involved.<sup>920</sup> Farrell explains that the Canadians ‘wanted a big role in Afghanistan’, as a senior ISAF planner, UK Deputy Chief of Staff General Sir Robert Fry later revealed that Canada wanted to lead in Kandahar as ‘their price’ for deploying to southern Afghanistan.<sup>921</sup> In Fry’s recollection, Ottawa’s aim was ‘in search of redemption, having had a long period of undistinguished activity’.<sup>922</sup> Saideman similarly argues that Canada was keen to highlight its warrior credentials, ‘taking on a serious combat role would do much to demythologise the Canadian forces as being just good for peacekeeping’.<sup>923</sup> Despite bold ambitions, it appears that the Canadian government did not really expect to be involved in intense military combat. Canadian General Rick Hiller later reflected that ‘Nobody predicted the resurgence of the Taliban. It came as a surprise’.<sup>924</sup> Intelligence shortcomings certainly blindsided Washington to the Taliban’s recovery and judging from statements like Hiller’s, other NATO allies were unsurprisingly no better informed.

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<sup>918</sup> Von Bredow, ‘Germany in Afghanistan’, p. 8.

<sup>919</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 4.

<sup>920</sup> Rasmus Brun Pedersen and Yf Reykers, ‘Show Them the Flag: Status Ambitions and Recognition in Small State Coalition Warfare’, *European Security*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2020, pp. 16–32.

<sup>921</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 4.

<sup>922</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 4.

<sup>923</sup> Stephen M. Saideman, ‘Canadian Forces in Afghanistan: Minority Government and Generational Change While Under Fire’, in Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga and James A. Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 221.

<sup>924</sup> General Rick Hiller cited in Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War. Canada in Kandahar*, Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007, p. 289.

Incompatibilities in military interoperability has troubled transatlantic military cooperation throughout the post-Cold War period. OAF in Kosovo in 1999 first brought this problem into focus. Through a lens of transatlantic asymmetry; the uneven pace of technological modernisation heightened concerns of a ‘capabilities gap’ to functionally obstruct military cooperation between the US and its European allies. US investment in military modernisation has outstripped combined European and Canadian spending.<sup>925</sup> Renée De Nevers argues that this disparity made it increasingly difficult for most NATO militaries to reach interoperability levels enabling joint operations with US forces.<sup>926</sup> Less attention was granted to equally troubling interoperability and national caveat incompatibilities obstructing military cooperation within NATO when the US is not directly involved. As Washington rebalanced towards Iraq, non-US NATO members quickly discovered cooperative shortcomings once ISAF expanded in southern Afghanistan. Neighbours for Canada’s deployment in Kandahar, the Netherlands lead the PRT in Uruzgan province. As Taliban insurgents seriously reasserted force in Kandahar and Helmand during summer 2006; Dutch forces supported Canadian counterparts for Operation Medusa.

Canada previously supported the US in Kandahar during OEF, and once the transfer to ISAF took place, Canadian forces were soon disadvantaged by the change. Responding to requests from Canadian ground forces, the US Air Force had consistently and quickly provided air support; this ‘died the moment NATO took over’.<sup>927</sup> With more European involvement came more national caveats and alterations in the rules of engagement. Under OEF, the Canadian military was supported by low-flying US Apache helicopters; these were replaced by Dutch Apaches after the ISAF transfer, but the latter were unable to provide the same protection for Canadian forces because of a national caveat restricting movement below a certain altitude.<sup>928</sup> In one battle with the Taliban soon after the ISAF transfer, Canadian forces frustratingly learned that supporting Dutch Apaches had refused orders to engage Taliban fighters because of new and more restrictive rules of engagement.<sup>929</sup>

Under the banner of ‘smart defence’, NATO leaders emphasised clichéd phrases such as ‘pooling and sharing’ and ‘doing more with less’ as its members coped with austerity, but a reluctance to do just this was creating additional problems for ISAF against a rising Taliban.<sup>930</sup> National caveats prevented Dutch

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<sup>925</sup> Renée de Nevers, ‘NATO’s International Security Role in the Terrorist Era’, *International Security*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2007, p. 43.

<sup>926</sup> De Nevers, ‘NATO’s International Security Role’, p. 43.

<sup>927</sup> Canada’s Lieutenant Colonel Ian Hope cited in Elinor Sloan, ‘NATO and Crisis Management Operations’, in Lisa Aronsson and Molly O’Donnell, eds., *Smart Defense and the Future of NATO: Can the Alliance Meet the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century?*, Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2012, p. 39.

<sup>928</sup> Sloan, ‘NATO and Crisis Management Operations’, p.39.

<sup>929</sup> Sloan, ‘NATO and Crisis Management Operations’, p. 39.

<sup>930</sup> Bastian Giegerich, ‘NATO’s Smart Defence: Who’s Buying?’, *Survival*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2012, pp. 69–77.

forces from supporting the Canadian counterparts for combat operations. With Canada's combat manpower stretched thin, the Dutch military was able to take over a forward operating base, thus freeing-up more of Canada's deployment for battle.<sup>931</sup> With these cooperation obstacles, ISAF was fortuitously given some relief by the Taliban's error to fight a conventional land battle that attempted to hold territory over a protracted guerrilla campaign.<sup>932</sup> Some surprisingly poor manoeuvres eventually allowed NATO to force the Taliban into temporary retreat, but even with this marginal victory achieved, the 'safety first' national caveats being imposed by some NATO governments were leaving the door ajar for further Taliban onslaughts.

An early follower of intra-alliance 'pooling and sharing', Canada's post-Cold War military reforms abandoned procurements of ground lift helicopters. The US and the UK retained this capability, it was a crucial advantage for both to re-supply frontline troops through a secure air corridor.<sup>933</sup> With the US and UK under severe pressure with their own operations, Canada appealed to other NATO allies to extend an air corridor south to supply Canada's frontline combat forces, only to be met with refusals because of national caveats.<sup>934</sup> Canada was ultimately forced to re-supply its bases in southern Afghanistan with convoys over land that exposed its military units to dangerous IEDs and Taliban ambushes.<sup>935</sup> 159 Canadian soldiers died during Medusa, but the operation still eventually forced a temporary retreat from Taliban forces.<sup>936</sup> Between 2007 and 2008, ISAF attempted to consolidate this in southern Afghanistan with an 'inkblot' strategy to reinforce a 'secure zone' extending from ISAF's Regional Command (south) with lighter peace support and reconstruction tasks. Stabilisation in this mode was never fully realised. It was undermined by ISAF's inability to generate military resources to fully 'root out' insurgent elements within this area of operations.<sup>937</sup>

The UK deployment in Helmand that contributed to ISAF's southern expansion after 2006 began with the same naiveté as Canadian ambitions in Kandahar. Under Blair's Labour government, Westminster controversially supported the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003. The UK military became responsible for security in southern Iraq, based in Basra. Britain had a particularly torrid experience as Iraq cascaded into violence between 2003 and 2006. Its military presence was creating an unwelcome 'boomerang effect'. UK forces could not shake off local perceptions of an unwanted occupier, this stirred insurgent violence as a 'public bad'.<sup>938</sup> Under severe stress in Iraq, the US was still anxious to delegate more stabilisation tasks in Afghanistan to other NATO members. Britain was seen as

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<sup>931</sup> Sloan, 'NATO and Crisis Management Operations', p. 39.

<sup>932</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, pp. 113.

<sup>933</sup> Sloan, 'NATO and Crisis Management Operations', p.40.

<sup>934</sup> Sloan, 'NATO and Crisis Management Operations', p.40.

<sup>935</sup> Sloan, 'NATO and Crisis Management Operations', p. 40.

<sup>936</sup> David Fraser and Brian Hannigan, *Operation Medusa: The Furious Battle That Saved Afghanistan from the Taliban*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2018.

<sup>937</sup> Sloan, 'NATO and Crisis Management Operations', p.40.

<sup>938</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

the only other ally suitable to lead ISAF, especially as the US continued to contribute militarily, but with a scaled-down deployment. Perceiving ISAF command as more attractive than the toil in Iraq, Blair decided to draw down from Basra and deploy more UK personnel to Afghanistan's Helmand province.<sup>939</sup> From a confidential interview with a UK defence official, Farrell reports that Britain's MoD was 'euphoric' when Secretary of Defence John Reid announced this plan, reflecting that 'Everybody underestimated just how tough would be the fight ahead [in Afghanistan]'.<sup>940</sup>

Political commentary debating ideology was ever present during Blair's time as UK prime minister between 1997 and 2007. Ferguson once quipped that Blair's idea of 'New Labour' might as well have been 'New Liberal'.<sup>941</sup> Blair's foreign policy is synonymous with liberal interventionism; his tenure oversaw strong UK involvement in Western military campaigns in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>942</sup> Even though post-interventions turmoil turned out to be severe in Afghanistan and Iraq, reflecting on his leadership in 2009, Blair reaffirmed: 'I still believe that those who oppress and brutalise their citizens are better put out of power than kept in it'.<sup>943</sup> Such normative beliefs embolden claims that Blair perceived Western military force as an important instrument that could support an expanded liberal global order. Grandiose and ambitious political narratives dominated Blair's foreign policy discourses, but the civilian and military resources that Westminster in fact allocated for stabilisation in Helmand were far more modest.

The Joint Plan that Blair's government commissioned for Helmand stressed some highly ambitious UK aims to support a 'triple transition'.<sup>944</sup> Britain aimed to be the principal facilitator for an immense shift in Helmand's security, governance and socio-economic fortunes. Helmand was a place defined by an antiquated social hierarchy centred on tribal elders; it had only rudimentary, if not non-existent, physical infrastructure. Over-exaggerated ambition in British stabilisation aims has been derided as an unrealistic attempt to somehow quickly replicate Europe's Enlightenment and the Marshall Plan all in one go.<sup>945</sup> Lofty ambitions were never supported by enough resources. Helmand in early 2006 should not be confused with the province in the years after when its security situation seriously deteriorated and the Taliban advanced.

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<sup>939</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>940</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>941</sup> Niall Ferguson cited in Ravi Somaiya and Alexandra Topping, 'How Blair Will Be Remembered', *The Guardian*, 10 May 2007, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/may/10/tonyblair.labour3> (accessed 15 April 2021).

<sup>942</sup> Raymond Plant, 'Blair's Liberal Interventionism', in Martin Beech and Simon Lee, eds., *Ten Years of New Labour*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 151–169.

<sup>943</sup> Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community: Ten Years Later', *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>944</sup> Theo Farrell and Stuart Gordon, 'COIN Machine: The British Military in Afghanistan', *Orbis*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2009, p. 667.

<sup>945</sup> Farrell and Gordon, 'COIN Machine', p. 667.

The UK government initially pledged a task force of 3,300 troops to be deployed for three years with a budget of \$1 billion, an underwhelming vision considering the Blair government's liberal discourses. The three year timeline was perceived as wholly unrealistic to achieve the broad objectives stressed, one senior official from the UK's Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (now Stabilisation Unit) warned that 3,300 troops was inadequate to secure Helmand, but still enough to cause tensions with locals as an 'occupying force'.<sup>946</sup> UK policymakers were also advised to avoid stoking local sensitivities with counter-narcotics.<sup>947</sup>

It is difficult to fully decipher whether this 'half-hearted' UK approach came from a risk society's 'safety first' outlook, some evidence points to circumstantial factors. Some claim that the British army was under-equipped and under-resourced for what awaited in Helmand, but UK military leaders were still curiously optimistic of accomplishing agreed aims. Britain's drawdown from Iraq was gradual. As it planned its pivot to Helmand, it still had a brigade in Iraq, and this further stretched UK military resources.<sup>948</sup> Moving to Helmand coincided with widening political divides in Blair's cabinet; public opinion was turning against Blair after his ill-fated endorsement of military intervention in Iraq. Support for Gordon Brown to succeed Blair as prime minister had momentum and was causing tension. If Blair and his ministerial supporters were to propose a larger troop deployment and/or financial allocation for Helmand, this was risking a further rift.<sup>949</sup>

As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Brown was an important broker; he had denied additional funds for the military before the Iraq invasion despite promises from Blair to military leaders of extra funds.<sup>950</sup> Sparing soldier fatalities was one of multiple serious considerations, but UK difficulties in this instance can be linked to the risk society's 'increasingly anxious, but less strategically ambitious' dilemma. Declining UK strategic ambition intersects with reduced military investment. London was militarily overstretched between two demanding conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and even later on with one during its campaign in Helmand. Brigadier Ed Butler, ISAF's first British commander in southern Afghanistan in 2006, reflects that the UK had 'set itself up for a fall'; its civilian and military aims in Helmand were being weakened by insufficient intelligence absorption by UK policymakers.

As ISAF expanded south, Butler claims that 'detailed intelligence reports, produced by in-country special-forces operators, made it very clear that the Taliban were in a far stronger position than most of the government departments in London were basing their planning assumptions on'.<sup>951</sup> Butler highlights that the UK-led PRT in Helmand undertook many tasks in haste, circumstances that

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<sup>946</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>947</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>948</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>949</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>950</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

<sup>951</sup> Ed Butler, 'Setting Ourselves Up for a Fall in Afghanistan', *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 160, no. 1, 2015, p. 47.

did not help its humanitarian and development work to devote much attention to ‘grassroots’ peacebuilding: ‘the ordinary Afghan, certainly the Helmandi, was never asked what he wanted and what his priorities were [by the PRT]’.<sup>952</sup> Such mistakes dislocated ISAF from the local population while the Taliban targeted support in Helmand’s villages to gradually rebuild its local influence to later support a lengthy guerrilla campaign.<sup>953</sup>

## 5.6. Conclusion

This chapter addressed ISAF expansion and the Taliban’s resurgence as an insurgency as concurrent developments between 2003 and 2008. This was a formative five years for NATO-led post-intervention stabilisation in Afghanistan. Difficulties arising from the uncertain ‘structural fitness’ of NATO and its leading members to implement stabilisation policy began to show at an early stage. ISAF required both civilian and military ‘public goods’. NATO exists for collective action to achieve common security objectives, but an alliance is often only as strong as the leadership that its leading powers provide. Risk theory would have expected a preventative response to 9/11: Taliban rule was overthrown, and NATO members pledged that Afghanistan would be rebuilt as a democratic state. Its territory would no longer be a global security concern. However, displaying some remnants of Beck’s ‘zombie categories’, the US strategic posture was still configured for an outdated earlier modernity, and early disconnects with inter-agency cooperation obstructed stabilisation policy that closely synchronised civilian and military aspects.

NATO’s other powers did not fare any better. ISAF’s early division of stabilisation tasks where the US took responsibility for Afghanistan’s military reform, Italy judicial reform, Germany police reform, and the UK coordinated counter-narcotics was dysfunctional in necessary coordination. Converting credible intelligence into prudent policies is vital for preventative security strategies, but Washington and other NATO allies continued to experience difficulties. This problem was summarised in Rumsfeld’s complaint that the US did not have strong ‘actionable intelligence’ to better understand events in Afghanistan. In addition to some primary sources, numerous authors report that intelligence failings meant that NATO never fully comprehended the extent to which the Taliban insurgency was being rebuilt in Afghanistan or Pakistan. For example, while it wanted to be a leading state for ISAF’s expansion in southern Afghanistan, Canada’s military planners did not anticipate Taliban violence to return with such intensity after 2006. Highlighted during the UK’s early deployment in Helmand, even when credible intelligence on the Taliban recovery was gathered, this was not taken seriously enough by NATO governments; its importance was then lost for stabilisation policies.

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<sup>952</sup> Butler, ‘Setting Ourselves Up for a Fall in Afghanistan’, p. 47.

<sup>953</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 5.

Geostrategic proximity rendered Pakistan a crucial partner for ISAF. Contrasting with stringent treaty-based alliances of earlier modernity, security cooperation in later-phase modernity has been theorised as being more flexible and *ad hoc*. Neoconservative narratives stressed a safer liberal global order as a primary GWOT aim. However, primary sources indicate that the US instead took a far more realist outlook on partnership with Pakistan, with Rumsfeld expressing explicit interest in financially supporting Musharraf's rule to ensure that his military regime would better suppress Taliban militancy in Pakistan's western borderlands. The US-Pakistan partnership strongly illustrates the risk society's expected preference for short-term, flexible and *ad hoc* security cooperation. While this cooperation had some obvious benefits, the arrangement did not ultimately provide NATO with much leverage to coerce Pakistan better into line with ISAF's aims. Islamabad's persisting strategic priorities to retain pan-Islamic connections; to maintain a delicate domestic political balance; and bitter rivalry with India led Pakistan's governments to prefer a duplicitous policy towards NATO that often helped Taliban aims.

The US became seriously embroiled in Iraq after 2003 and initiatives to repair transatlantic ruptures saw NATO take ISAF's command. This decision was guided more by political preferences rather than by military logic. The 'safety first' preferences of NATO members signified influencing ISAF's expansion trajectory. Germany supported ISAF expansion, but Berlin perceived it as a primarily civilian mission where many military risks could be shifted onto the US-led OEF. Germany overestimating Afghanistan's benevolence and some PRTs were exposed to violence without the military protection necessary. The UK and Canada outlined ambitious stabilisation priorities for Helmand and Kandahar respectively when ISAF was expanded to southern Afghanistan in 2006. Canada did not quite have the military capabilities to match its lofty ambitions, but Ottawa's stabilisation efforts were also weakened by the 'safety first' cooperation preferences of other NATO allies. National caveats obstructed military support from Dutch forces and NATO's multinational composition did not provide the same effective military assistance that Canada had previously received from US forces during OEF. Similar caveats imposed by NATO allies stationed in northern Afghanistan, notably Germany, denied Canada valuable access to ground lift capabilities, its military was instead forced to resupply frontline troops in Kandahar with more dangerous ground conveyances. The UK opened its PRT in Helmand with an ambitious liberal narrative, but this was really only disappointingly supported with only utilitarian means. The PRT gained little early uptake with Helmand's local population; and it thus proved powerless to obstruct the Taliban's early resurgence in the province after 2006.

## 6. REALIST RECOMMITMENT

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the links between Barack Obama's foreign policy preferences and his administration's early war planning for Afghanistan. The chapter focuses on Obama's strategic outlook during his rise to the US presidency and the turbulent security planning debate on Afghanistan within the US government during his first year as president in 2009. Unusual for recent US presidents, Obama's tenure was prominently discussed by many commentators through a myriad of outlooks debating what his foreign policy ideology or 'doctrine' was. In theory-testing, this chapter considers multiple theoretical angles, but ultimately reaches the argument that Obama's outlook on Afghanistan was largely guided by conditions expected in risk theory. Obama won the 2008 US Presidential Election with promises of 'hope' and 'change'. Nationalist anger after 9/11 that galvanised the early GWOT under Bush, had, by 2008, given way to disillusion and war-weariness more telling of risk society impatience. Obama's presidency inherited a delicate balance of needing to reduce Washington's military footprint overseas while still ensuring national security from transnational terrorism. This led his Democrat administration to uncomfortably renew stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan. Facing a 'reflexive security dilemma' in Afghanistan, Obama and his wider administration displayed most of the traits that risk theory would expect. They were uncomfortably self-conscious, perceiving only stark choices.

Their approach was notably methodical, cautious and hesitant. It is argued that this created increased tensions between civilian and military policymakers. Conflicting perspectives emerged on the 'safety first' preferences that ISAF needed to implement. Senior military commanders favoured stronger COIN, reinforced by a 'surged' US military deployment. Obama and others were less sure about this. Sensitive to concerns that if sanctioning this plan, political leaders could be paving the way for a long-term quagmire with a large ISAF fatality count. This chapter has six sections. Section two discusses ideology and change in US strategic debates as presidential office transferred from Bush to Obama. Section three examines renewed realism and caution in Obama's approach to Afghan stabilisation. Section four argues that Bush's 'bold' US security planning narrative for the early GWOT was replaced by Obama's more cautious emphasis equating to 'reflexive security'. Section five discusses the Obama administration's uncomfortable, hesitant and cautious decision-making around state fragility in Afghanistan. This inflamed a clash on the limits for 'safety' first policies, triggering serious and problematic tensions between civilian and military policymakers over stabilisation strategies. Section six discusses the chapter's main conclusions.

## 6.2. Ideology and change

The US president replacing Bush in early 2009 was certain to inherit a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. After the US quickly overthrew Saddam in 2003, Iraq soon exploded into a catastrophic three-way civil war between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish factions. However, as violence dissipated in Iraq after 2007, a perspective prevailed in Washington was that its security situation was under control. These hopeful expectations were eventually shattered by the rise of ISIS in the early 2010s. The US Presidential Election Campaign cranked up throughout 2008. Obama of the Democratic Party competed with John McCain from the GOP. The campaign's main foreign policy questions focused on how the next administration would improve stabilisation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq was then experiencing a promising uptick in fortunes. In Bush's later years as president, his administration took a serious military gamble to 'surge' US troop numbers in Iraq. Due in part to this, Washington quelled insurgent violence after 2007.<sup>954</sup> By contrast, in Afghanistan, the Taliban had recovered, launching some devastating attacks on ISAF and many civilians. Both ISAF and the ANSF were struggling.

### 6.2.1. Campaign outlooks

Between 2006 and 2008, ISAF was slow in becoming effective to reinforce the fledgling ANSF. American war-weariness was building. The GWOT had brought two less than successful wars. It was unpopular in US domestic politics. Upon gaining the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, Obama proved politically astute in using foreign policy issues to gain popularity. McCain, as the Republican candidate, was automatically saddled with the problem of needing to separate his national security proposals from the Bush's tarnished record. Promising to break the neoconservative stranglehold on US foreign policy, Obama emphasised the importance of liberal ideology for reordering of US priorities to better uphold its security interests. Under neoconservative influence, Bush era discourses were dominated by too many binary 'good' and 'bad' ideological outlooks on global order. Obama did not immediately signal a radical departure from such reasoning. Democratic campaign messaging instead signalled a rebalancing of US foreign policy to maintain liberal preferences. Commentators soon famously labelled Obama's outlook on the ISAF campaign in Afghanistan as 'the good war'.<sup>955</sup> It was continually emphasised that Afghanistan's tolerance of Al-Qaeda militants while under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001 was the strongest enabling link in the global chain facilitating the 9/11 attacks.

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<sup>954</sup> Timothy Andrews Sayle, Jeffrey A. Engel, Hal Brands and William Inboden, *The Last Card: Inside George W. Bush's Decision to Surge in Iraq*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019.

<sup>955</sup> Mark Landler, 'The Afghan War and the Evolution of Obama', *The New York Times*, 1 January 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/world/asia/obama-afghanistan-war.html> (accessed 04 May 2021).

Some international lawyers are uncertain about whether OEF received either explicit, implicit or no mandate at all from the UNSC, but NATO still undertook the ISAF command with a UNSC mandate in 2003. Contrary to Bush's now unpopular unilateralism, Obama perceived military reengagement in Afghanistan as having broad international legitimacy from strong multilateralism.<sup>956</sup> Contrary to the ambivalent international support that plagued the US-led coalition in Iraq under Bush, Obama's campaign stressed US military recommitment to Afghanistan as 'justified'; 'necessary'; and 'right'.<sup>957</sup> This ideological discourse on Afghanistan created some virtuous impressions. Democrats emphasised liberal morals as the compass guiding renewed US military engagement in Afghanistan, but, in the background, Washington was also being pragmatically led in this direction by strategic change elsewhere. Iraq appeared to be stabilising.

Democratic Party discourses reinforced Iraq as a dubiously undertaken 'bad war'. A 9/11 response targeting Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan could be justified, but Bush's preventative war to disarm Saddam was defined as 'elective'; 'illegitimate'; and 'wrong'.<sup>958</sup> Elected to the US Senate as recently as 2005, Obama was still a long-term critic of Bush's invasion in Iraq. This gained him considerable political capital. He unexpectedly overcame Hillary Clinton to win the Democratic primary. As Senator from New York, Clinton supported US military action against Iraq. An earlier speech delivered in Chicago in October 2002 when Obama was still an Illinois State Senator was highlighted as demonstrating his sound foreign policy judgment. He denounced Bush's intention to invade Iraq as a 'dumb war'.<sup>959</sup> Richard Pearle, a leading ideologist in the neoconservative movement, and Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, were singled out for stinging criticism as 'armchair, weekend warriors' seeking to 'shove their own ideological agendas down our [US] throats, irrespective of the costs in lives lost and in hardships borne'.<sup>960</sup>

Further insights into the future president's strategic thinking were revealed when he stressed that 'I don't oppose all wars', and, with reference to Afghanistan, 'I supported this [Bush] administration's pledge to hunt down and root out those who would slaughter innocents in the name of intolerance'.<sup>961</sup> Even as his political career began, Obama was attentive to the serious 'boomerang effects' likely after 'hyper' military interventions. He argued that Saddam's overthrow would 'encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and

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<sup>956</sup> Patrick C. R. Terry, 'The War in Afghanistan – Was the Use of Force Legal and/or Wise?', *The New Zealand Yearbook of International Law*, vol. 9, 2011, pp. 69–72.

<sup>957</sup> Michael J. Williams, *The Good War: NATO and the Liberal Conscience in Afghanistan*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 1–2.

<sup>958</sup> Williams, *The Good War*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>959</sup> Barack Obama, 'Transcript: Obama's Speech Against the Iraq War', *National Public Radio*, 2 October 2002 [20 January 2009], available at: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469> (accessed 17 February 2021).

<sup>960</sup> Obama, 'Transcript: Obama's Speech Against the Iraq War'.

<sup>961</sup> Obama, 'Transcript: Obama's Speech Against the Iraq War'.

strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda'.<sup>962</sup> Bush understood 'safety first' with the rationale that, if Saddam was not disarmed, his regime would eventually risk endangering security in the Middle East. Obama's idea of 'safety first' was far more defensive, he advocated 'containing' Saddam 'until, in the way of all petty dictators, he falls away into the dustbin of history'.<sup>963</sup>

### 6.2.2. Just war rhetoric

Obama won the 2008 US Presidential Election. Serving two terms, he left office in January 2017. There has been considerable debate over multiple influences that might have defined his foreign policy. This has largely centred on whether his strategic reflexes were more significantly influenced by 'safety first' precautions or instead by preferences derived from liberal just war thinking. Few doubt that neoconservatism was an important influence for Bush. Obama's foreign policy record has more intrigue. His reprioritising of Afghanistan as 'the good war' has close connotations with a liberal just war outlook. As a further variant on the same liberal normative theme, other commentators have stressed Obama's priority to militarily respond to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan as 'the right war'.<sup>964</sup> Reinforced by the controversial decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Obama in 2009, the just war interpretation attracted considerable attention at the outset of his presidency.

Obama framed Afghanistan as 'the right war' for further resources, emphasising that: 'The core goal of the US must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Afghanistan and Pakistan'.<sup>965</sup> It remains unclear whether 'right' in this context was meant as a correct action by liberal morals or if this was instead defined by narrower 'safety first' concerns on what was 'right' for US or NATO security. By recommitting to Afghanistan, Washington signalled that it was continuing to lead the broader response to combating global terrorism. Obama is remembered by some commentators as an especially reflective president. Often divided on important issues, his administration was collectively self-conscious about possible 'boomerang effects' from US military action. Washington was a superpower in a unipolar international system, but compared to Bush, Obama was visibly more tentative and hesitant when responding to the open-ended 'reflexive security dilemmas'. He steered clear of some strongly 'proactive', verging on 'hyperpower', policy actions of his predecessor. Nevertheless, Obama's early presidency continued to prioritise the hunt for Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He perceived the need to halt the Taliban's resurgence as an important objective intertwined with this. Dismantling Taliban insurgency was perceived as key to Afghanistan's eventual stabilisation. However, a broader global perspective sometimes over-

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<sup>962</sup> Obama, 'Transcript: Obama's Speech Against the Iraq War'.

<sup>963</sup> Obama, 'Transcript: Obama's Speech Against the Iraq War'.

<sup>964</sup> Steven Simon, 'Can the Right War Be Won? Defining American Interests in Afghanistan', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 4, 2009, p. 130.

<sup>965</sup> Simon, 'Can the Right War Be Won?', p.130.

rode. Some in the Obama administration still naively saw the Taliban merely as a localised insurgency temporarily impeding the primary US aim to combat global terrorism from evolving *jihadist* networks.

Despite Obama's caution, there were indications that US recommitment to Afghanistan remained guided by a preventative focus. Steven Simon has stressed that his administration held the 'notion that Afghanistan was the epicentre of global terrorism and would prove to be an enduring source of danger to the United States unless the Taliban were subdued'.<sup>966</sup> The continuing need for military action to respond to global terrorism 'became a recurring theme'.<sup>967</sup> While having some risk theory connotations, this can be interpreted as possibly also indicating some liberal just war propositions. Obama's outlook on Afghanistan as 'the good war' or 'the right war' was generated by discourses that dovetailed with broader liberal international hopes. Obama's election hinted at an era where just war principles might increasingly redirect US security strategy. There were some grounds for this in Obama's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 2009. With the situation in Afghanistan providing considerable context, Obama explained that:

The concept of a "just war" emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defence; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence.<sup>968</sup>

Just war ideas received prominence in Obama's foreign policy outlook.<sup>969</sup> However, Cian O'Driscoll argues that this 'just war turn' away from Bush's unilateral 'wars of choice' was still not as 'radical' as some commentators suggested. O'Driscoll argues that Bush understood war as an instrument to achieve justice, but, in contrast, Obama saw military action merely as 'a remedial measure that stints injustice'.<sup>970</sup>

It is here that more circumspect realism can also be identified as another background influence guiding Obama. Michael Walzer advocates that just war principles should remain an important in US security strategy. This is framed in his theorising that war is sometimes necessary to fulfil morally desirable ends, not only for a state or coalition selecting this action, but also universally for those

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<sup>966</sup> Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan', The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 27 March 2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan> (accessed 17 February 2021).

<sup>967</sup> Simon, 'Can the Right War Be Won?', p.131.

<sup>968</sup> Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 10 December 2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize> (accessed 18 February 2020).

<sup>969</sup> Cian O'Driscoll, 'Talking About Just War: Obama in Oslo, Bush at War', *Politics*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2011, p. 88.

<sup>970</sup> O'Driscoll, 'Talking About Just War', p. 88.

seeking a global order functioning in accordance with liberal justice. Utopian or pacifist viewpoints often express normative alternatives to just war outlooks. These seek a ‘universal order in which the existence of nations and peoples could never be threatened’, but Walzer argues that achieving this still faces the practical problem that without justifiably resorting to force any such universal order is inhibited by the recurring ‘difficulty’ that ‘we [humanity] sometimes have no choice but to fight for’ an order that is liberal and just.<sup>971</sup> Obama seemed to share a similar perspective in his 2009 Oslo speech: ‘The belief that peace is desirable is rarely enough to achieve it. Peace requires responsibility. Peace entails sacrifice. That’s why NATO continues to be indispensable’.<sup>972</sup>

There is a normative contradiction between political orders that promote justice and peace, on one side, and the use of military force that is often required to maintain and uphold them, on the other. Walzer’s just war outlook is not purely idealist. It has some fragments of pragmatism, but he does insist his theory is mainly ‘against “realism”’.<sup>973</sup> According to Walzer, realism that reifies the ‘inhumanity’ of war as ‘simply humanity under pressure’ is unacceptable.<sup>974</sup> It is here that clashes between just war outlooks and risk theory’s ‘new realism’ can be identified. Unsatisfactory for Walzer, his ‘humanity under pressure’ explanation is another appropriate phrase to understand utilitarian stabilisation to ‘prevent the worst’ expected in risk theory. Coinciding with humanitarian or R2P discourses dominant during recent Western military interventions, just war theory receives plentiful attention. Rejoining with this, it is important to recall McGinty’s observation that, while no truly ‘golden era’ for complete liberal ideological influence over Western intervention fully materialised, the momentum for humanitarian intervention based on liberal just war principles was fading by the early 2000s.<sup>975</sup> Obama’s presidency between 2009 and 2016 therefore came at a global crossroads where the norms and practices framing military interventions were possibly undergoing a utilitarian transformation.

### 6.3. Realism and caution

Discussions of just war theory were prominent at the beginning of Obama’s presidency, but as this progressed many claims to the contrary emerged: realist principles dominated US foreign policy formation. Bush was only able to match ambitious discourses on liberal transformation with the implementation of modest and utilitarian stabilisation in Afghanistan. Obama arguably marked a further utilitarian evolution, combining a more cautious foreign policy discourse with a preference for more military restraint. The Bush Doctrine was criticised domes-

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<sup>971</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Fourth Edition, New York: Basic Books, 2006, p. 327.

<sup>972</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize’.

<sup>973</sup> Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p. 4.

<sup>974</sup> Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p. 4.

<sup>975</sup> McGinty, ‘Against Stabilization’, p. 22.

tically and internationally as unilateral and overly militarised. Seeking to renew US foreign policy, Obama emphasised his cautious approach led more by multi-lateral diplomacy than by military force. This was illuminated in his 2015 State of the Union address when he reminded Congress of the folly for US national security then recently created by military miscalculations:

the question is not whether America leads in the world, but how. When we make rash decisions, reacting to the headlines instead of using our heads; when the first response to a challenge is to send in our military – then we risk getting drawn into unnecessary conflicts, and neglect the broader strategy we need for a safer, more prosperous world. That’s what our enemies want us to do.<sup>976</sup>

Deputy national security advisor to Vice-President Joe Biden, Julianne Smith gained an insider’s view on Obama’s cautious strategic outlook. She remarks that: ‘He [Obama] genuinely believes that he was elected to get America off its war footing, that his legacy is to get the US away from its over-reliance on the military instrument’.<sup>977</sup>

### 6.3.1. Debating realist change

A cautious outlook is certainly not incompatible with just war preferences. However, one preference can still override to dominate another despite discourses to the contrary. Obama’s outlook on military action was ever more utilitarian as his presidency progressed. Risk theory expects preferences to ‘prevent the worst’. It therefore embraces a strong realist dimension rooted in priorities to prevent risks from spreading over other more costly responses that might still better deal with deeper conflict causes. This proposition connects risk theory with some realist IR theorists and historians of Obama’s diplomacy. Risk theory therefore still encounters the same problem highlighted by some realist IR theorists on whether primarily systems-level realist theories are suitable for theorising in foreign policy. With a theory aiming to explain how a minimised but important number of variables shape the international system, some structural realists argue against their theory’s ability to generally explain precise foreign policy behaviour of individual states.<sup>978</sup> Neoclassical or postclassical realists often disagree. Both seek to theorise through a combination of ‘second image’ (domestic-level) and ‘third-image’ (international system) variables for a specific realist theory of

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<sup>976</sup> Barack Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address’, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 20 January 2015, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015> (accessed 7 May 2021).

<sup>977</sup> Julianne Smith cited in Kathleen Hennessey and Christi Parsons, ‘Obama’s Mideast Airstrike Refrain: “And Then What?”’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-obama-iraq-20140619-story.html> (accessed 17 February 2021).

<sup>978</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘International Politics is Not Foreign Policy’, *Security Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1996, pp. 54–57.

government foreign policy.<sup>979</sup> This theoretical debate resonated prominently during the Obama presidency. Many commentators claimed for or against on whether Obama was guided by realist principles.<sup>980</sup>

Realist foreign policy theorising promotes a monochrome outlook. Even its proponents have conceded that ‘real world’ policymaking is sometimes unlikely to follow the precise track expected. Walt argues that Obama’s foreign policy was not complete in its realism, although it did embrace some realist aspects.<sup>981</sup> First, Walt argues that Obama understood a redistribution of global military and economic power favouring East Asia. This made it a priority for Washington to ‘pivot’ its strategic focus there and away from the Middle East.<sup>982</sup> Second, Obama attempted to redirect US focus back towards ‘nation-building at home’, perceiving this as the main foundation for US power, and, according to Walt, Obama dismissed claims that Washington needed to keep fighting ‘foolish wars’ to uphold its ‘credibility’ as ‘foolish nonsense’.<sup>983</sup> Despite some prudent realism, Walt argues that Obama did not strictly adhere to other realist principles, but if he had he done so, he would ‘have avoided some of his biggest foreign policy mistakes’.<sup>984</sup>

Walt puts the decision to commit additional US troops to Afghanistan for the ‘surge’ between 2009 and 2011 at the top of his list of Obama’s mistakes. This is followed by ineffective US diplomacy during OUP that failed to end turmoil in Libya and Obama’s indecision and inaction in Syria when Assad launched a chemical attack in 2013.<sup>985</sup> For Walt, US military recommitment to Afghanistan after 2009 was unwise because it prolonged an already failed intervention in a location of declining US strategic importance. Contrary to a complete adherence to realist principles, Walt concluded that Obama thinks:

there are four main strategic alternatives for the United States: realism, liberal interventionism, internationalism, and isolationism. He rejects the latter completely and believes foreign-policy making involves picking and choosing from among the first three.<sup>986</sup>

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<sup>979</sup> Anders Wivel, ‘Explaining Why State X Made a Certain Move Last Tuesday: The Promise and Limitations of Realist Foreign Policy Analysis’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2005, p. 363.

<sup>980</sup> Roger Cohen, ‘Obama’s Flawed Realism’, *The New York Times*, 18 March 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/opinion/obamas-flawed-realism.html> (accessed 13 May 2021).

<sup>981</sup> Stephen M. Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’, *Foreign Policy*, 7 April 2016, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/07/obama-was-not-a-realist-president-jeffrey-goldberg-atlantic-obama-doctrine/> (accessed 13 May 2021).

<sup>982</sup> Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’.

<sup>983</sup> Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’.

<sup>984</sup> Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’.

<sup>985</sup> Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’.

<sup>986</sup> Walt, ‘Obama Was Not a Realist President’.

Obama received further criticism from other commentators, but most still disagreed on the ideology defining his foreign policy. Commentary has accused Obama of a curiously diverse number of worldviews: liberal internationalism, realism, imperialism and even neoconservatism have been proposed, among others.<sup>987</sup> One evaluation published midway into his second presidential term claims that a clear and defining ideology for foreign policy was actually absent for Obama. US strategy was instead being undermined by Obama's inconsistent and hesitant approach.<sup>988</sup>

Disagreement between commentators can perhaps be found in Obama not completely subscribing to a realist outlook, but where his administration remained satisfied to imply that realism was still a guiding influence.<sup>989</sup> It was claimed that by doing this, the administration gained some 'superficial intellectual and political legitimacy to Obama's frequently expressed desire to concentrate on "nation building at home"'.<sup>990</sup> Peter Saunders argues that a false reputation for realism helped the Obama 'administration to justify avoiding undue involvement in complex and time-consuming international problems, especially those inherited from former president George W. Bush'.<sup>991</sup> Realism perceived in Obama's foreign policy was a 'tempting' alternative for 'Americans frustrated with Bush's expensive choices'.<sup>992</sup> Obama initiatives that likely satisfied this worldview included: the US withdrawal from Iraq in favour of a 'pivot' to emerging powers in East Asia; ending the 'surge' and reducing the US military presence in Afghanistan; and rapprochement with Iran through a nuclear agreement to reduce conflict intensity in the Middle East, thus limiting impulses for further US military interventions.<sup>993</sup> Nevertheless, for Saunders, Obama's realism was inconsistent and this undermined US foreign policy as new security problems emerged.

A prudent principle emphasised in realist theories, a leader's ability to know when and where it is wise to 'selectively engage' distinguishes realism from isolationism.<sup>994</sup> This reaffirms a 'choice between risks' routinely encountered by security planners. Saunders argues that the Obama administration made mistaken risk assessments on multiple important occasions. Having militarily intervened in Libya in 2011, it was then unable to credibly justify its reluctance to intervene

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<sup>987</sup> Adam Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power', *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 4, 2011, p.813.

<sup>988</sup> John Amble, 'I Still Have No Idea What the Obama Doctrine Is', *War on the Rocks*, 2 June 2014, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2014/06/i-still-have-no-idea-what-the-obama-doctrine-is/> (accessed 29 May 2021).

<sup>989</sup> Peter J. Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist', *The National Interest*, 26 August 2014, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/barack-obama-not-realist-11124> (accessed 30 May 2021).

<sup>990</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>991</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>992</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>993</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>994</sup> Robert J. Art, 'Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement', *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1999, pp. 79–113.

in Syria after 2011, even when international pressure mounted when Assad overstepped Obama's 'red-line' to not use chemical weapons.<sup>995</sup> Obama later remarked in 2016 that intervening in Libya was the 'worst mistake' of his presidency.<sup>996</sup> Saunders also criticised Obama's response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 as ineffective, while arguing that US withdrawal from Iraq left the country vulnerable to the rise of ISIS.<sup>997</sup> Bush had an underwhelming tendency to match overblown promises of US-led liberal post-war transformation only with comparatively modest utilitarian means. Saunders argues that a similar pattern can be observed for Obama, but in scaled-down form, claiming that his leadership was 'oratorically strong but factually weak'.<sup>998</sup>

### 6.3.2. Obama and 'cosmopolitical realism'

Responding to setbacks for US-led collective action that Bush's unilateralism created, Obama's foreign policy was also perceived through a liberal internationalist lens. He prominently emphasised Washington's recommitment to 'multilateral' and 'cosmopolitan' partnerships as an effective approach to 'common' global security problems.<sup>999</sup> Seeking to heal damage between the US and Islamic societies, Obama attempted to herald a 'new beginning' in a landmark speech delivered in Cairo in June 2009.<sup>1000</sup> This speech also embraced Washington's recommitment to multilateral security cooperation. US aims to lead a revitalised global coalition to eventually leave Afghanistan in a stable condition were highlighted in Obama's broader message. He explained:

The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America's goals, and our need to work together [with MENA states and the broader international community]. Over seven years ago [from 2009], the United States pursued al Qaeda and the Taliban with broad international support. We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity.<sup>1001</sup>

Obama provided a vivid indication of a pragmatic but still preventative focus when he described what continuing instability in Afghanistan could create for the US and broader global security, explaining that:

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<sup>995</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>996</sup> Maya Rhodan, 'President Obama Admits the "Worst Mistake" of His Presidency', *Time*, 11 April 2016, available at: <https://time.com/4288634/president-obama-worst-mistake/> (accessed 30 May 2021).

<sup>997</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>998</sup> Saunders, 'Barack Obama is Not A Realist'.

<sup>999</sup> Gustavo de las Casas, 'Barack von Metternich', *Foreign Policy*, 21 June 2009, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/06/21/barack-von-metternich/> (accessed 14 June 2021).

<sup>1000</sup> Barack Obama, 'The President's Speech in Cairo: A New Beginning', The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 4 June 2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/presidents-speech-cairo-a-new-beginning> (accessed 19 June 2021).

<sup>1001</sup> Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President at Cairo University', The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 04 June 2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09> (accessed 14 June 2021).

We [the US] do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan. We see no military – we seek no military bases there. It is agonising for America to lose our young men and women. It is costly and politically difficult to continue this conflict. We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and now Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case.<sup>1002</sup>

Obama communicated a contrasting message from the unilateralism Bush once signalled. Cosmopolitan partnerships in the US recommitment to Afghanistan were emphasised. Washington was ‘partnering with a coalition of 46 countries’, and Obama encouraged more contribution towards this collective action from MENA societies:

And despite the costs involved, America’s commitment will not weaken. Indeed, none of us should tolerate these extremists. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths – but more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam.<sup>1003</sup>

From this angle, Obama can be interpreted as expressing some ‘cosmopolitical realism’ that Beck theorises as an important condition as the risk society expands across borders.<sup>1004</sup>

The ‘cosmopolitical’ side of this proposition understands that as globalisation accelerates, the most serious security problems will be strongly transnational, while not a fully universal phenomenon, Beck expects this to override divides once separating different societies.<sup>1005</sup> The ‘realist’ side of this proposition understands transnational cooperation as a necessity to manage the increase in security risks transcending national borders. For Beck, this cooperation is propelled by a common global pragmatism to reduce risk rather than ‘normative cosmopolitanism’ which could alternatively be described as cosmopolitan idealism.<sup>1006</sup> Obama’s 2009 Cairo speech understood the situation in Afghanistan in these terms. The speech emphasised that instability in Afghanistan was not just a risk for the US, but if ‘extremism’ was allowed to fester there, Afghanistan would continue to support transnational terrorism to endanger the broader global community. Contrary to the mistaken US unilateralism under Bush, Obama’s understanding can be interpreted as attempting to facilitate a truly global effort to solve Afghanistan’s predicaments. This link with Beck’s idea of ‘cosmopolitical realism’ is one of multiple dimensions where risk theory is able to better explain the otherwise curiously diverging descriptions offered for Obama’s foreign policy ideology or ‘doctrine’.

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<sup>1002</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University’.

<sup>1003</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University’.

<sup>1004</sup> Ulrich Beck, ‘Cosmopolitical Realism: On the Distinction Between Cosmopolitanism in Philosophy and the Social Sciences’, *Global Networks*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2004, pp. 131–156.

<sup>1005</sup> Beck, ‘Cosmopolitical Realism’, pp. 131–156.

<sup>1006</sup> Beck, ‘Cosmopolitical Realism’, p. 132.

## 6.4. From GWOT to reflexive security

For the 2008 US Presidential Election, the Obama campaign had learned lessons from Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry's defeat in 2004. It is claimed that the US electorate eventually placed more trust in the Republican Party to deliver on America's national security priorities in 2004 and that this made the crucial difference between Kerry and Bush.<sup>1007</sup> Prominent foreign policy expert working for the Democratic Party, Samantha Power, argues that despite Democratic electoral upticks in other domestic policy areas, up until Obama's victory in 2008, the Republicans retained greater electoral 'issue ownership' on national security questions, be this fair or unfair.<sup>1008</sup> Ronald Reagan's Republican promise to take a tough and uncompromising posture towards the Soviet Union during the 1980s was later perceived as a resounding success in American society. It was a revered and rewarded episode in Republican Party foreign policy folklore, in the words of Colin Dueck, the party held a strong and enduring image for taking a 'hard line' against America's enemies.<sup>1009</sup>

### 6.4.1. Struggling with contradictions

Awarded three Purple Heart medals for battlefield bravery in Vietnam, Kerry was a decorated war veteran, but, while his counterterrorism policy proposals might have had better balance compared to the floundering GWOT guided by Bush, his proposals were crucially not perceived as being as 'tough' or as 'resolute' as the Republican incumbent by many American voters.<sup>1010</sup> Referring to the decisive difference that this electoral 'issue ownership' held by the Republicans on national security issues made in 2004, Power remarks that:

John Kerry, a decorated Vietnam veteran, had an uphill climb convincing voters that Democrats made reliable commanders in chief during wartime – even though a majority of Americans had already come to regret that the sitting commander in chief had chosen to wage war in the first place.<sup>1011</sup>

The 2004 Presidential Election occurred at only three years' distance from 9/11, a time when public emotions were still raw and when an acceptance of the need for continuity in 'wartime' persisted. However, corresponding with necessity derived from the risk society's need to continually manage, the GWOT had the recurring problem of being unlike any other war that the US had led. It had

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<sup>1007</sup> Gerard Toal, "'In No Other Country on Earth": The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama', *Geopolitics*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2009, p. 384.

<sup>1008</sup> Samantha Power, 'The Democrats and National Security', *New York Review of Books*, 14 August 2008, available at: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2008/08/14/the-democrats-national-security/> (accessed 19 June 2021).

<sup>1009</sup> Colin Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and US Foreign Policy Since World War II*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

<sup>1010</sup> Toal, "'In No Other Country on Earth", p. 384.

<sup>1011</sup> Power, 'The Democrats and National Security'.

transnational objectives and no clearly defined endpoint for when ‘victory’ could be realistically understood.

Those originally framing the GWOT’s main objectives had contradictory expectations on the outcomes to be achieved. This set policy on a problematic course. In an October 2003 memo where Rumsfeld seeks to clarify the ongoing aims of the GWOT with senior Pentagon officials, he insists that: ‘It is pretty clear that the coalition can win in Afghanistan and Iraq in one way or another, but it will be a long, hard slog’.<sup>1012</sup> Less than a year later, in July 2004, Rumsfeld impatiently communicates in the Pentagon that the US will not have its military in Afghanistan ‘forever’.<sup>1013</sup> This contradiction indicates that the US and NATO had unexpectedly walked into a severe predicament inherent to war as risk management.

When fighting wars to manage risk, it is profoundly difficult for security planners to adhere to the Powell Doctrine’s four most important principles to stop the US failing when intervening in smaller wars. First, the Powell Doctrine emphasises that the ‘[US] military must no longer be placed in killing fields when there seemed to be no overriding national interest at stake and no intention of fighting to win a complete victory’.<sup>1014</sup> Second, that Washington ‘should go to war only if there were a clear and present threat to US national security’; third, that intervention has the full support of the American people; and fourth that ‘there must be an agreed “exit” strategy that would give the United States military an honourable means of escape if the war went awry and eventual defeat should appear inevitable’.<sup>1015</sup> Risk management is a continuous endeavour required to respond to evolving circumstances. Over twenty years in Afghanistan, there were many changing strategic discourses outlined to justify continuing the US-led military presence. Many commentators insisted that NATO needed to respond to many ‘changing targets’ in Afghanistan’s security situation. However, contrary to the Powell Doctrine’s principles prescribed to prevent military imbroglios, as well as being a continuous pursuit, war as risk management created circumstances where national interests were fluidly interpreted and justified. It was difficult to clearly pin down a clear ‘exit strategy’ to allow ‘an honourable means of escape’.

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<sup>1012</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2003 Memo: The Coalition Can Win, “But It Will be a Long, Hard Slog”’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 16 October 2003, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_slog\\_myers\\_nsarchive\\_10162003](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_slog_myers_nsarchive_10162003) (accessed 20 June 2021).

<sup>1013</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘2004 Memo: “Our Goal Is To Not Have Our Military in Afghanistan Forever”’, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 2 July 2004, [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake\\_myers\\_afghansecurityforces\\_nsarchive\\_07022004](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=snowflake_myers_afghansecurityforces_nsarchive_07022004) (accessed 20 June 2021).

<sup>1014</sup> LeFeber, ‘The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine’, p. 73.

<sup>1015</sup> Gilpin, ‘War is Too Important’, p. 12.

9/11 was a painfully close memory for the US public in 2004. Many perceived Bush as taking a strong if imperfect response, helping him win a second presidential term. Bush still made some grave GWOT mistakes, most obviously his 2003 decision to divert attention away from Afghanistan and embroil the US in Iraq, which soon became a fiasco. Emotion and perception overrode rationality in US politics at this time, summarised in Bill Clinton's remark: 'When people are insecure, they'd rather have somebody who is strong and wrong than someone who's weak and right'.<sup>1016</sup> Bush implemented an aggressive military posture during the early GWOT because he had considerable public support due to reactionary US domestic nationalism immediately after 9/11.<sup>1017</sup>

However, the risk society still remained impatient, public approval for US military action derived from broad and emotive nationalist support was short lived, highlighting a further clash between the risk society and the Powell Doctrine. Large swells of nationalist emotion will likely boost public support for military campaigns narrated as undertaken to prevent further risks, but normalised risk society 'post-heroism' and impatience will be restored soon after. Publics expect governments to keep them safe by continuously preventing risks but remain unwilling to sanction long-term sacrifices necessary for this. Governments are then saddled with military campaigns that are domestically unpopular, but with risk society anxiety about future risks omnipresent, they uncomfortably feel these must somehow continue. Such contradictions frame the background to continuous but 'half-hearted' military campaigns.

Change in US social perceptions came fully into the reckoning with the Republican Party's downfall in the 2008 Presidential Election. McCain and his controversial candidate for Vice-President, Sarah Palin, attempted to 'double down' on nationalist sentiments with the 'conventional Republican campaign tactics of culture war and narrow – white/Christian/heterosexual/patriot/heartland – nationalism'.<sup>1018</sup> McCain intended to refine but largely continue Bush's 'resolute' GWOT posture. The Republicans soon found this strategy was not as effective in 2008 as it was in 2004. Moreover, even when Donald Trump – the next Republican to become president in 2017 – was successful, he campaigned on a hard nationalist and populist platform, and it was only domestic 'heartland' nationalism that remained appealing to Republican voters. Trump's populism criticised Bush's foreign policy mistakes and promised to end US involvement in 'endless' or 'forever' wars.<sup>1019</sup>

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<sup>1016</sup> Bill Clinton cited in Peter Brown, 'Strong and Wrong vs. Weak and Right', *RealClearPolitics.com*, 15 January 2007, available at: [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/01/strong\\_and\\_wrong\\_vs\\_weak\\_and\\_r.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2007/01/strong_and_wrong_vs_weak_and_r.html) (accessed 20 June 2021).

<sup>1017</sup> See Montan, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine', pp.112–156. And Viet D. Dinh, 'Nationalism in the Age of Terror', *Florida Law Review*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2004, pp. 875–879.

<sup>1018</sup> Toal, "'In No Other Country on Earth'", p. 377.

<sup>1019</sup> Amanda Macias, "'It's Time to Come Home" – Acting Pentagon Chief Wants to End America's Wars in the Middle East', *CNBC*, 14 November 2020, available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/14/acting-pentagon-chief-says-wars-must-end-in-first-address.html> (accessed 20 June 2021).

Public urgency to conclude ‘endless’ or ‘forever’ wars not as intense during Obama’s early presidency, but moods in US society were still becoming war-weary. Obama tapped into this sentiment. He successfully changed political discourse on what ‘pro-[US]military’ meant. Republicans previously gained electoral advantage from being perceived as the most trustworthy party for national security. However, as failing ‘wars of choice’ in Afghanistan and Iraq dragged on, many had lost this belief by 2008. Obama was able to highlight weaknesses in the Republican narrative, criticising Bush’s sometimes inadequate leadership of a wartime US military and highlighting problems that included: ‘not enough armour, overstretched resources, multiple deployments and not enough troops’, as well as scandals over the treatment of veterans.<sup>1020</sup> Bush’s visible failings amplified credibility in Obama’s claims that military force was being ‘overused’ in US foreign policy.<sup>1021</sup>

#### 6.4.2. Reference points for new approaches

Bush’s failings helped Obama to further justify Afghanistan as the ‘good’ or ‘right’ war to prioritise. However, as he entered office, it still appeared that the US had fashioned a successful COIN campaign in Iraq. After five years of turmoil, some semblance of stability was returning. A military leader for the MNF in Iraq, General David Petraeus was prominently praised for a positive transformation.<sup>1022</sup> Petraeus later served as CENTCOM commander between 2008 and 2010 and then ISAF commander between 2010 and 2011. Corresponding with the ‘reflexive security dilemma’, the stabilisation predicament that Obama oversaw in early 2009 was an uncomfortably problematic but open-ended proposition. Afghanistan’s state fragility was unlikely to bring another imminent ‘historical disaster’, but it was still creating considerable anxiety for Western governments. Afghanistan was still a place of ‘strategic uncertainty’ for ISAF members, for which they needed to redraw reference points to guide renewed policy action.

The apparent success of earlier COIN in Iraq under Petraeus’ command offered some important reference points for renewing strategy in Afghanistan.<sup>1023</sup> The term ‘surge’ entered recent Western strategic discourse in January 2007 when Bush announced that the US was sending an additional 20,000 troops to Iraq.<sup>1024</sup> This was not just a blunt increase in military power to forcefully subdue insurgent violence. Additional US contingents were also tasked with ‘population

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<sup>1020</sup> Toal, “‘In No Other Country on Earth”, p. 384.

<sup>1021</sup> Toal, “‘In No Other Country on Earth”, p. 384.

<sup>1022</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, ‘The Petraeus Doctrine’, *The Atlantic*, October 2008, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/10/the-petraeus-doctrine/306964/> (accessed 22 June 2021).

<sup>1023</sup> Farrell and Gordon, ‘COIN Machine’, p. 666.

<sup>1024</sup> Kelly McHugh, ‘A Tale of Two Surges: Comparing the Politics of the 2007 Iraq Surge and the 2009 Afghanistan Surge’, *SAGE Open*, October-December, 2015, pp. 1.

security’ to free citizens from violence.<sup>1025</sup> When a US Senator, Obama led opposition to Bush’s Iraq ‘surge’. He introduced the Iraq War De-Escalation Act ‘designed to force the president [Bush] to abandon the surge’.<sup>1026</sup> It is not without irony that Obama’s promise to reduce the US military footprint by prioritising Afghanistan led him squarely into planning his own risky ‘surge’ when president after 2009.

According to Toal, promoting ‘new’ approaches to security linked Obama’s tenure in the Senate with his presidency.<sup>1027</sup> Democratic Party criticism of Bush often focused on mere repackaging of outmoded Republican ‘doctrines’. This criticism perceived Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ as a guiding concept only as a conversion of Reagan’s famous characterisation of the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire’ in the 1980s. Republican neoconservative preferences to pre-emptively remove governments not to US liking was seen as a problematic globalised oversimplification of the Monroe Doctrine from 1823.<sup>1028</sup> Many Democrats believed that these tired and unsuccessful foreign policy reference points needed replacement. Obama never used the term ‘reflexive security’, but Toal argues that his foreign policy thinking reflected much of what the risk society embodies. Obama believed in a cautious ‘safety first’ approach to the use of military force. He was palpably concerned that serious side-consequences were ‘far from marginal’ when undertaking military operations.<sup>1029</sup>

Political campaign promises committed Obama to a renewed effort in Afghanistan. This issue dominated debate in his first year as president in 2009. Obama’s leadership was highly sensitive to possible side-effects of the US actions that he had the power to sanction. Realist IR theorists emphasise ‘selective engagement’ to ensure that a government’s most important security priorities are addressed but while avoiding unnecessary imbroglios. This is attractive in theory, but when making attempts to convert this into actionable policy advice, ‘selective engagement’ runs into problems. Disputes are common among key security planners on what to prioritise or discard. Realist IR does not provide too many answers for this difficulty, but it can be enlightened by risk theory’s outlook that hesitant, cautious and precautionary reflexes ultimately guide construction of reference points to be followed and what is discarded.

As his presidency got underway, Obama commissioned a Strategic Review process to better define parameters for US policy in Afghanistan. Results were formally presented to Congress in December 2009.<sup>1030</sup> While an opportunity for

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<sup>1025</sup> McHugh, ‘A Tale of Two Surges’, p. 1.

<sup>1026</sup> McHugh, ‘A Tale of Two Surges’, p. 1.

<sup>1027</sup> Toal, “‘In No Other Country on Earth’”, p. 385.

<sup>1028</sup> Toal, “‘In No Other Country on Earth’”, p. 385.

<sup>1029</sup> Toal, “‘In No Other Country on Earth’”, p. 385.

<sup>1030</sup> House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, ‘Afghanistan: The Results of The Strategic Review, Part I, Hearing Held December 3, 2009’, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2010, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhr56006/html/CHRG-111hhr56006.htm> (accessed 02 August 2021). And House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, ‘Afghanistan: The Results of The Strategic

the new administration to consider precise civilian and military measures to better achieve stabilisation, conversive to the ‘bold’ policy messages expressed under Bush, a hesitant, cautious and precautionary atmosphere descended on Obama-era officials.<sup>1031</sup> There was much chopping and changing. A review of available policy options from long-time CIA analyst Bruce Riedel was announced in late March 2009. US military reports from the ground in Afghanistan continued to indicate a situation both badly and quickly deteriorating. Riedel’s review was quickly perceived as outdated and insufficient.<sup>1032</sup> Obama’s uncomfortable policy contemplation continued. As one of the main military planners, Petraeus has remarked that ‘The Riedel review was very rapid and the idea at the time was to get some fingers in the dyke and then do an assessment later’.<sup>1033</sup> The risk society lives with its mind fixated on the future. When policymakers rationalise future scenarios they are struck with an uncomfortable awareness of intricate complexity. The open-ended complexity of the ‘reflexive security dilemma’ imposes a perplexing, perhaps overwhelming ‘choice between risks’. Risk theorists understand this as inducing strong anxiety and self-conscious hesitancy in policymakers. Complexity means that security planners are readily concerned about the emergence of ‘invisible and imperceptible’ – but nevertheless ‘actual’ – risks coming at a significant political or military cost.<sup>1034</sup>

Dismissed as Secretary of Defence in 2006, Rumsfeld is accused of many serious errors. He was a powerful influence behind costly military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. He has sometimes even been described as the worst US Secretary of Defence in history.<sup>1035</sup> Despite his political legacy, Rumsfeld’s prediction capturing the complexity of later modernity, that ‘the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen, and the unexpected’ will continually trouble US security planners remains accurate.<sup>1036</sup> When deciding on ‘surge’ for Afghanistan, Rumsfeld’s uncomfortable ‘unknown, uncertain, unseen, and unexpected’ context foreshadowed many struggles for the Obama administration. Different complexities concerning Afghanistan’s place in the future global security order and

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Review, Part II, Hearing Held December 8, 2009’, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2010, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hrg57832/html/CHRG-111hrg57832.htm> (accessed 02 August 2021).

<sup>1031</sup> Kevin Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge: A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis of the Decision to Order a Troop Surge in the Afghanistan War’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2014, pp. 272–280.

<sup>1032</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’.

<sup>1033</sup> David Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’, 16 August 2017, Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/documents/petraeus\\_david\\_ll\\_07\\_64\\_08162017.pdf?v=26](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/documents/petraeus_david_ll_07_64_08162017.pdf?v=26) (accessed 28 August 2021).

<sup>1034</sup> Cottle, ‘Ulrich Beck, “Risk Society” and the Media’, p. 10.

<sup>1035</sup> George Packer, ‘How Rumsfeld Deserves to Be Remembered’, *Defense One*, 1 July 2021, available at: <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/07/how-rumsfeld-deserves-be-remembered/182704/> (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>1036</sup> Rumsfeld, ‘Transforming the Military’, p. 23.

its continuing dependence on ISAF for domestic security caused divisive internal US government compounded by further division between Washington and its NATO allies.

## 6.5. Tensions between civilian and military leaders

Appointed ISAF commander in 2009, General Stanley McChrystal was directed by Secretary of Defence Gates to comprise a ‘multidimensional assessment’ of Afghanistan’s security situation.<sup>1037</sup> According to Kevin Marsh, McChrystal finalised this assessment as ‘dismay that the war effort had been chronically under-resourced, the Afghan security forces were unreliable, the Karzai government was patently corrupt, and the Taliban had seized control of much of the country outside of Kabul’ was building.<sup>1038</sup> McChrystal’s ‘multidimensional assessment’ confidentially served to Gates was later leaked to the media in 2009. These were the politically delicate months when Obama’s overall Strategic Review process was to conclude. The alleged intent behind this leak was thereafter infamously generalised as ‘McChrystal risk’: an action aiming to confine a leader to a particular choice, to ‘box Obama into a corner...about boosting troop levels in Afghanistan’.<sup>1039</sup> Many have focused on the political controversy that the leak of the McChrystal report caused, but in his SIGAR interview, Petraeus had a more nuanced recollection shedding light on confusion over intelligence information that possibly undermined the Obama administration at the time: ‘The president got the sense that what McChrystal was seeing was worse than what was expected or understood’.<sup>1040</sup> Petraeus argued that ‘it wasn’t the leaking of the [McChrystal] assessment, but rather the contents of the assessment’ that prompted Obama to elaborate his scrutiny of the Afghan situation.<sup>1041</sup>

### 6.5.1. McChrystal and military recommitment

Once McChrystal’s report found the public domain, media coverage became distracted by some optimism he briefly expressed on Afghanistan’s stabilisation prospects. McChrystal wrote that ‘While the situation is serious, success is still achievable’.<sup>1042</sup> This gained headlines, but a deeper reading of McChrystal’s assessment will find explanation of the many faults that had seriously inhibited ISAF until 2009. Future-focused consciousness in his identification of risk, McChrystal explained dangers at stake by insisting that ‘Stability in Afghanistan

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<sup>1037</sup> Stanley McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, Kabul: International Security Assistance Force, 26 June 2009, available at: [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB292/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB292/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf) (accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>1038</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 272.

<sup>1039</sup> Gabriel Sherman, ‘Revolver’, *New York Magazine*, 8 April 2011, available at: <https://nymag.com/news/business/wallstreet/peter-orszag-2011-4/> (accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>1040</sup> Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1041</sup> Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1042</sup> McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, p. 4.

is an imperative; if the Afghan government falls to the Taliban – or has insufficient capability to counter transnational terrorists – Afghanistan could again become a base for terrorism, with obvious implications for regional stability’.<sup>1043</sup> McChrystal places a heavy emphasis on renewing ISAF to primarily focus on winning the local civilian population over to its aims. He argues that stabilisation would still be undermined if a ‘tactically-driven’ approach continued to dominate military operations. According to McChrystal, Taliban insurgents could not inflict a convention defeat on ISAF, but ISAF was still at ‘risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage’.<sup>1044</sup>

Efforts to win support from local populations; providing protection, humanitarian relief and economic development possibilities were ever more emboldened for ISAF under Obama. A focus on protection for local populations brought the US some temporary stabilisation success in Iraq. Some replication of this was championed for Afghanistan by military leaders including McChrystal as ISAF commander; Petraeus, as CENTCOM commander; and Admiral Michael Mullen as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff between 2007 and 2011. Despite this heavy emphasis on civilian protection, US-led expeditionary military operations still had a chequered history with civilian cooperation. NATO was sometimes divided by disputes over this. When the ISAF command was passed from UK General David Richards to US General Dan McNeill in 2007, US approaches to COIN under McNeill received criticism from some commentators. Rashid outlines that ‘Officials in several European countries have quietly expressed concern’.<sup>1045</sup> Contrary to Richards who ‘tried to create a less harsh, more economic-development-oriented identity for NATO in Afghanistan’, McNeill was expected to continue the “kicking-down-doors” reputation US forces had [in Afghanistan]’.<sup>1046</sup> For Rashid, an ‘overly aggressive NATO force’ under McNeill ‘could alienate Afghans, and thus cause the Taliban’s support base to grow’.<sup>1047</sup>

When security in Afghanistan and Iraq deteriorated rapidly after 2003, tensions surfaced in the ‘special relationship’ between the US and the UK. Resulting from Bush’s unilateralism, the US military dominated both coalitions early on. London was Washington’s primary partner, but still only a junior partner. As both campaigns began to struggle, the US military perceived the UK’s ‘soft’ approach to COIN as contributing to military ‘losses’ in both Basra in southern

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<sup>1043</sup> McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, p. 1.

<sup>1044</sup> McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, p. 2.

<sup>1045</sup> Ahmed Rashid, ‘Taliban Takeover of Town Could Mark Start of Military Offensive’, *Eurasia Insight*, 2 February 2007, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070610221159/http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020507.shtml> (accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>1046</sup> Rashid, ‘Taliban Takeover of Town’.

<sup>1047</sup> Rashid, ‘Taliban Takeover of Town’.

Iraq and Musa Qaleh in southern Afghanistan.<sup>1048</sup> British security planners took an opposing perspective. UK diplomats often discussed behind the scenes that the US military were problematically approaching COIN in a dangerously robust manner likely to alienate local civilians.<sup>1049</sup> Washington perceived this as unhelpful interference. London justified these efforts to influence coalition policy based on its knowledge gained from previous imperial experience with military operations ‘other than war’ aiming to stabilise and police overseas territories.<sup>1050</sup>

Despite these disputes, McChrystal favoured a changed US approach towards ‘softer’ and more civilian-focused COIN for ISAF. McChrystal perceived some previously aggressive COIN tactics as counterproductive. These were ‘characterised by the destruction of property, a heavy reliance on air power and high numbers of civilian casualties’, he concurred that these were at ‘odds with the cultivation of local support’.<sup>1051</sup> It seems that McChrystal was the military commander emboldening this emphasis the most. His successors post-2010, Generals Petraeus and John Allen respectively restored a contradictory balance between civilian protection and the forceful conduct of ‘air strikes and night raids’ in southern Afghanistan where collateral damage did little to ease Afghan dissent.<sup>1052</sup>

McChrystal’s 2009 assessment presents a further contradictory outlook between what he thinks is achievable between the short- and long-term. Alongside strong civilian political and economic development, he argues that ‘The long-term fight will require patience and commitment’.<sup>1053</sup> Critics accused McChrystal of trying to refocus the US on a problematic ‘nation-building’ approach with a large increase in NATO troops, leading Washington into a deeper quagmire.<sup>1054</sup> McChrystal aimed to avoid quagmires by offering some ‘short-term’ options to turn the Afghan situation in ISAF’s favour.<sup>1055</sup> It was incorrect to perceive conflict in Afghanistan as ‘cyclical’ where a violent insurgent ‘fighting season’ breaks out temporarily (mostly spring and summer) and then violence dissipates considerably at other times. For McChrystal, this interpretation distorted the ISAF mission, it focused too much on periods of violence and neglected opportunities to gain the support from local Afghans when violence eased. Such binary thinking was problematic because ‘Protecting the

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<sup>1048</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, ‘Size and Reputation – Why the USA has Valued Its “Special Relationships” with Denmark and the UK Differently Since 9/11’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2005, p. 141.

<sup>1049</sup> Egnell, ‘Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan’, pp. 298–299.

<sup>1050</sup> Egnell, ‘Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan’, pp. 298–299.

<sup>1051</sup> James Sperling and Mark Webber, ‘NATO’s Intervention in the Afghan Civil War’, *Civil Wars*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2012, p. 359.

<sup>1052</sup> Sperling and Webber, ‘NATO’s Intervention’, p. 359.

<sup>1053</sup> McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, p. 2.

<sup>1054</sup> Eric Bates, ‘Behind the Story: The Runaway General’, *Rolling Stone* (Youtube video), 28 June 2010, available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ\\_j5\\_3VmKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ_j5_3VmKE) (accessed 7 August 2021).

<sup>1055</sup> McChrystal, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment’, p. 2.

population from insurgent coercion and intimidation demands a persistent presence and focus that cannot be interrupted without risking serious setback'.<sup>1056</sup> A substantial increase in troop numbers was inherent to this 'protecting the population' suggestion when many NATO leaders remained apprehensive towards.

Arguing that 'long-term' efforts would be crucial, a contradiction in McChrystal's assessment continues when he insists that 'the short-term fight will be decisive'.<sup>1057</sup> He warned that if ISAF did not effectively respond to Afghanistan's security problems, then 'Failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum in the near-term (next 12 months) – while Afghan security capacity matures – risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible'.<sup>1058</sup> Expressed in 2009, it can be argued in retrospect that this part of McChrystal's assessment was dramatically optimistic. Even at a decade after, the ANSF had not reached 'maturity' to enforce a non-violent public order. McChrystal casts doubt towards arguments that the best opportunities to stabilise Afghanistan had already passed before Obama's presidency. It is clear from his evaluation that Obama still had the opportunity to achieve lasting stabilisation if policy change happened.

Some commentators were intrigued that McChrystal called for stronger civilian stabilisation in Afghanistan. Civil-military tensions were increasing in US politics. McChrystal had an uneasy relationship with the US Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry. Before his diplomatic tenure, Eikenberry reached the military rank of Lieutenant General and had undertaken two military tours in Afghanistan. The second was as commander of the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan between 2005 and 2007, the operational arm of the US military that assisted ISAF expansion to southern and eastern Afghanistan.<sup>1059</sup> Leaked diplomatic cables revealed that Eikenberry was advocating against McChrystal's proposing. He warned Washington's civilian policymakers that McChrystal's 'request for new troops might be counterproductive as Karzai was "not an adequate strategic partner"'.<sup>1060</sup> McChrystal fully understood the high corruption levels rife in the Karzai-led administration. He made manifold references to this in his memoir as a severe problem obstructing ISAF. McChrystal explained that 'the weakness of the Afghan government and nationwide corruption had given people what we described as a crisis of confidence'.<sup>1061</sup> When this is considered alongside Eikenberry scepticism, McChrystal probably still downplayed the problem of Afghan government corruption as gravely likely to undermine scaled-up civilian and military strength for ISAF.

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<sup>1056</sup> McChrystal, 'Commander's Initial Assessment', p. 2.

<sup>1057</sup> McChrystal, 'Commander's Initial Assessment', p. 2.

<sup>1058</sup> McChrystal, 'Commander's Initial Assessment', p. 2.

<sup>1059</sup> Joshua Partlow, 'Tensions Between Eikenberry, McChrystal Will Be Focus of Their Washington Visit', *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2010, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/08/AR2010050803391.html> (accessed 7 August 2021).

<sup>1060</sup> Partlow, 'Tensions between Eikenberry, McChrystal Will Be Focus'.

<sup>1061</sup> Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir*, New York: Penguin, 2013, Chapter 18.

### 6.5.2. Civil-military relations and war planning

As MNF commander under Bush, Petraeus was praised for spearheading the military ‘surge’ that successfully, albeit temporarily, stabilised in Iraq by 2007.<sup>1062</sup> A reshuffling of US military leadership was understandable when Obama entered office. General David McKiernan’s tenure as ISAF commander was cut short. He was replaced by McChrystal in mid-2009. Petraeus returned from Iraq and became CENTCOM commander. Being named ISAF commander, McChrystal received Obama’s endorsement to be one of a select few civilian and military leaders entrusted with shaping the highest foreign policy priority of his early tenure. Despite early approval, Obama and McChrystal never had the same trusting professional relationship on Afghanistan to that between Bush and Petraeus on Iraq. When leading the MNF, Petraeus was constantly beamed into the White House from coalition headquarters in Baghdad, giving extensive briefings on campaign progress for the NSC. Bush’s approval helped Petraeus to gain the trust from other civilian policymakers. Many of his proposals for Iraq were made policy.<sup>1063</sup> Under Obama, opportunities for McChrystal and other military leaders to exert a stronger influence on security planning were frequently curtailed. Petraeus acknowledged this in a later SIGAR interview: ‘We [US military commanders] did a monthly teleconference with Obama on Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was weekly with Bush during the Surge in Iraq’.<sup>1064</sup> Increased division between some military and civilian leaders emerged.<sup>1065</sup>

During Bush’s first presidential campaign in 1999, Republicans communicated to voters holding US military concerns that ‘help is on the way’. Bush specifically sought to attract military votes by politicising civil-military setbacks experienced under Clinton.<sup>1066</sup> Despite campaign promises, civil-military relations remained turbulent under Bush. The military were dissatisfied at Rumsfeld’s ‘meddling’ in the military’s operational and tactical planning as well as his impatient efforts to deliver disruptive transformation in the force structure.<sup>1067</sup> Often to the detriment of war planning for Afghanistan and Iraq, professional military advice was sometimes overruled by civilian security officials. Illuminating this just before the outbreak of war in Iraq, testifying before Congress in February 2003, Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, argued that ‘several hundred thousand’ coalition troops would be necessary to enforce stability in Iraq post-Saddam. According to Michael Desch, this was dismissed in a

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<sup>1062</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, ‘Voice of Bush’s Favored General Is Now Harder to Hear’, *The New York Times*, 4 October 2009, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/05/world/05military.html> (accessed 7 August 2021).

<sup>1063</sup> Bumiller, ‘Voice of Bush’s Favored General’.

<sup>1064</sup> Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1065</sup> Bumiller, ‘Voice of Bush’s Favored General’.

<sup>1066</sup> Michael C. Desch, ‘Bush and the Generals’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no.3, 2007, p. 102.

<sup>1067</sup> Desch, ‘Bush and the Generals’, p. 98.

‘cavalier’ manner by Deputy Secretary of Defence Wolfowitz who denounced the idea as ‘wildly off the mark’.<sup>1068</sup>

There were serious civil-military tensions under Bush, but some were rectified during his second term. After replacing Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defence in 2006, Gates saw rebuilding trust and confidence between civilian policy-makers and military leaders as vital:

A major task of the secretary of defence is to help manage that [civil-military] relationship and to ensure that the president listens to professional military advice that he may not want to hear, and that the senior officers offer their best and most candid advice and obey loyally, especially when they are overruled.<sup>1069</sup>

Gates was also influential in healing bipartisan divisions with Congress, previously inflamed by Bush and Rumsfeld’s controversial policies. Brzezinski remarked that Gates ‘acknowledged the important role of Congress in any decision to initiate a new war. That earned him widespread bipartisan respect – and a wartime Secretary of Defence needs such support, particularly when the war is so unpopular’.<sup>1070</sup> The return of some mutual trust in civil-military relations enabled Bush’s Iraq ‘surge’ in 2007. Bush agreed with military advice to increase US troop numbers by approximately 20,000 despite considerable domestic opposition. Washington deployed a total of 141,100 to Iraq in 2006, this climbed to 157, 800 by 2008.<sup>1071</sup> Explaining this ‘surge’ in January 2007, Bush argued that ‘Failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the United States’ because ‘Radical Islamic extremists would grow in strength and gain new recruits. They would be in a better position to topple moderate governments, create chaos in the region [MENA], and use oil revenues to fund their ambitions’.<sup>1072</sup> He mentioned progress made in rebuilding Iraq’s military and police, but despite improvements, ‘our [US] commanders say the Iraqis will [still] need our help’.<sup>1073</sup>

Debate on Bush’s Iraq ‘surge’ the later Obama ‘surge’ in Afghanistan centred on stabilising function of additional troops. Those unsure about ‘surging’ argued that additional deployments would be counterproductive because a larger military presence would anger local populations. creating the impression of a hostile

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<sup>1068</sup> Desch, ‘Bush and the Generals’, p. 103.

<sup>1069</sup> Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, Chapter 15.

<sup>1070</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Robert Gates’, *Time*, 12 May 2008, available at: [http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1733748\\_1733757\\_1735600,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1733748_1733757_1735600,00.html) (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1071</sup> Amy Belasco, ‘Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues’, *Congressional Research Service*, 2 July 2009, p. 9, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1072</sup> George W. Bush, ‘President’s Address to the Nation’, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 10 January 2007, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1073</sup> Bush, ‘President’s Address to the Nation’ (10 January 2007).

occupying force. A larger target for US enemies would exist within the conflict area. Speaking on Iraq, Bush took a different view:

Our [US] troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighbourhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs.<sup>1074</sup>

Iraq saw a significant reduction in violence for a period after 2007. Washington then made a significant military drawdown. Some of this success was facilitated by the trust that Bush vested in Petraeus as a military commander.

Bush once remarked on his own decision-making style that, 'I'm not a textbook player, I'm a gut player'.<sup>1075</sup> Observing these traits at close hand, Gates reflects that 'The war in Iraq was going badly, and he [Bush] acted courageously and boldly to change course'.<sup>1076</sup> Once military advice matched his 'gut feeling', Bush could unify his administration for the decision. It seems that this simplified approach was effective in some important scenarios.<sup>1077</sup> References to 'bold' decision-making involving sizable military deployments in hostile combat locations do not, at first glance, correspond with risk theory's expectation that leaders will be hesitant, tentative or cautious to prefer 'safety first' options. Risk theory might be further confounded by Bush's 'surge' plan going ahead despite stern domestic opposition and by his Republican Party losing mid-term Congressional elections to the Democrats in 2006. Both could have been expected to have made the president more risk-averse, not less. Conversely, Bush was deep into his second term, he did not have to worry about re-election. Removing this concern may have facilitated 'bolder' risk-taking. Nevertheless, as explained in previous chapters, Bush had a tendency to 'boldly' announce security initiatives, but his administration's conviction usually faded soon afterwards leaving only limited and utilitarian 'safety first' approaches to stabilisation. Contrary to many of Bush's other GWOT actions that soon after embroiled the US in a series of quagmires, the Iraq 'surge' was a rare GWOT initiative that delivered as planned on short-term goals. It was a gamble, but because the Iraq 'surge' achieved its aims in two years, military risks were minimised and so too were additional political risks affecting the Republican Party.

Success allowed Petraeus to gain mainstream popularity and even celebrity. His apparent skill in devising operational plans to quickly deliver battlefield success meant that he was, for a while, viewed as the ideal military leader for the risk society age. His star later fell infamously due to controversies when he

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<sup>1074</sup> Bush, 'President's Address to the Nation' (10 January 2007).

<sup>1075</sup> Joel Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly, and With Head, Not Gut', *The Washington Post*, 25 November 2009, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/24/AR2009112404225.html> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1076</sup> Gates, *Duty*, Chapter 15.

<sup>1077</sup> Gates, *Duty*, Chapter 15.

directed the CIA.<sup>1078</sup> Symptomatic of the risk society's military transformation towards expeditionary operations for stopping security risks 'aggravated by globalisation' at distance, Magnus Nordenmann argues that 'several high-profile careers within the US military...were built on the back of mastering counter-insurgency [COIN]'.<sup>1079</sup> Petraeus' rise up the military was a prominent example of this.<sup>1080</sup> While not always communicated as a complement, Petraeus was described as a 'COIN guru' immersed in the advice of officers specialising in this area, most notably: HR McMaster, John Nagl and David Kilcullen, unusually Kilcullen was a non-American who reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the ADF.<sup>1081</sup> Many viewed COIN development as beneficial for the US security posture. Nevertheless, critics like Robert Dreyfuss argued that 'If the COIN cult has a guru (whom all obey unquestioningly), it's Petraeus', seeing his style as cultivating an arrogant stubbornness and even military insincerity in consultations between Obama and US generals when preparing the Afghan 'surge'.<sup>1082</sup>

### 6.5.3. Reflexive security and civil-military tensions

Once Obama took office, Petraeus remained prominent as CENTCOM commander, but McChrystal was appointed ISAF commander. McChrystal faced obvious pressure to achieve a successful 'surge' outcome in Afghanistan, like what Petraeus had delivered in Iraq. McChrystal never established the same trusting relationship with Obama as Petraeus had done with Bush. Obama wanted to usher in change, but he retained Gates as Secretary of Defence until June 2011 for some coherent continuity. Serving two administrations across bipartisan lines, Gates was instrumental in ISAF's later development. He provides some insights on approaches to civil-military relations differentiating Obama from Bush. This helps to trace some reasons for why some civil-military tensions that dissipated in Bush's presidency again escalated under Obama. According to Gates, 'Bush was willing to disagree with his senior military advisers on the wars [in Afghanistan and Iraq]', but when consulting US military chiefs, he 'never (at

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<sup>1078</sup> The Takeaway, 'David Petraeus and the Military's Culture of Celebrity', *The World*, 14 November 2012, available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-11-14/david-petraeus-and-militarys-culture-celebrity> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1079</sup> Magnus Nordenmann, 'NATO Beyond Afghanistan: A US View on the ISAF Mission and the Future of the Alliance', *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 2, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>1080</sup> Nordenmann, 'NATO Beyond Afghanistan', p. 15. And Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq 2006–2008*, New York: Penguin 2009.

<sup>1081</sup> Bacevich, 'The Petraeus Doctrine'. And Michael Crowley, 'COIN Toss: The Cult of Counterinsurgency', *The New Republic*, 4 January 2010, available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/72207/coin-toss> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1082</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, 'The Land Where Theories of Warfare Go to Die: Obama, Petraeus, and the Cult of COIN in Afghanistan', *Guernica*, 27 June 2010, available at: [https://www.guernicamag.com/robert\\_dreyfuss\\_the\\_land\\_where/](https://www.guernicamag.com/robert_dreyfuss_the_land_where/) (accessed 12 August 2021).

least to my [Gates'] knowledge) questioned their motives or mistrusted them personally'.<sup>1083</sup> Obama's approach contrasted, with Gates observing:

Obama was respectful of senior officers and always heard them out, but he often disagreed with them [military chiefs] and was deeply suspicious of their actions and recommendations. Bush seemed to enjoy the company of the senior military; I [Gates] think Obama considered time spent with generals and admirals an obligation.<sup>1084</sup>

Unlike Clinton and even Bush the younger, presidents that might 'feel your pain', Obama did not exude the same empathy. He instead kept an 'emotional distance from all but a handful of longtime friends and advisers', thus further limiting connections with civilian and military officials on security policy.<sup>1085</sup>

According to one 2009 media profile examining Obama's leadership traits, his 'handling of the Afghanistan conundrum' was 'a spectacle of deliberation unlike anything seen in the White House in recent memory'.<sup>1086</sup> Mulling over 'an array of unappealing options', Obama was hesitant and unsure, reflecting a risk society decision-making style, described as 'diametrically the opposite' to Bush's 'from the gut' approach.<sup>1087</sup> Obama was anxiously self-conscious about 'the grave responsibility of sending young men and women into harm's way'.<sup>1088</sup> Taking almost one year as president before finalising strategic renewal for Afghanistan, Obama was acutely focused on the complexities of NATO's Afghan predicament, insisting, 'you've got to make decisions based on information and not emotions'.<sup>1089</sup> White House Press Secretary, Robert Gibbs, explained that Obama's focus on Afghanistan included 'a lot of different layers' when it was essential to renew cooperation with domestic political institutions; with NATO allies and other international partners; with Pakistan; and with stakeholders in Afghanistan, among many other actors and agencies.<sup>1090</sup>

To be expected in risk society, Obama has candidly discussed difficulties of decision-making determined by 'probabilistic' future-focused scenarios:

Because these are tough questions, you are always dealing to some degree with probabilities. You're never 100 percent certain that the course of action you're choosing is going to work. What you can have confidence in is that the probability of it working is higher than the other options available to you. But that still leaves some uncertainty, which I think can be stressful, and that's part of the reason why

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<sup>1083</sup> Gates, *Duty*, Chapter 15.

<sup>1084</sup> Gates, *Duty*, Chapter 15.

<sup>1085</sup> James Fallows, 'Obama, Explained', *The Atlantic*, March 2012, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/03/obama-explained/308874/> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1086</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1087</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1088</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1089</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1090</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

it's so important to be willing to constantly reevaluate decisions based on new information.<sup>1091</sup>

Obama's methodical and hesitant decision-making was perceived as unsatisfactory by many critics. Fred Thompson, Republican Senator for Tennessee from 1994 until 2003, later a political commentator, argued that Obama's hesitancy had jeopardised progress in Afghanistan. He remarked that 'The president [Obama] does not have the will and determination to do what's necessary to win it [the war in Afghanistan]. His heart's not in it, and never has been'.<sup>1092</sup> While aligned with the Democratic Party, Allan Lichtman argued that Obama's hesitancy was disappointing. He saw this slow caution as contrary to Obama's 2008 election victory where his campaign 'connected' with the public through the passionate communication of a 'grand and inspiring vision' offering 'hope' and 'change'.<sup>1093</sup> Lichtman remarked that 'If you want to be a transformational president, you've got to take the risks', but when president, Obama settled for being less than 'transformational' on Afghanistan. This supports theorising on the risk society's stabilisation preferences where 'transformational' liberal ideological discourses might be expressed by NATO governments, but when action is undertaken, 'preventing the worst' and doing what is 'good enough' for 'safety first' non-violent stabilisation override as policy priorities.

Reports of controversial actions by some US military leaders – McChrystal in particular – only increased Obama's doubtfulness. McChrystal was probably fortunate to avoid dismissal as ISAF commander following the 'McChrystal risk' controversy in September 2009.<sup>1094</sup> McChrystal subsequently made a public speech on a visit to the UK in October 2009. Reports framed some of his comments as implying that 'rejecting his request for more troops and adopting a narrower strategy than the one he recommends would be "shortsighted"'.<sup>1095</sup> It is claimed that Obama was 'furious' once word reached him.<sup>1096</sup> Attending a separate event in Denmark, he quickly summoned McChrystal for an explanation at an impromptu private meeting on Air Force One on the airport tarmac in

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<sup>1091</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1092</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1093</sup> Achenbach, 'Analysis: Obama Makes Decisions Slowly'.

<sup>1094</sup> Rosa Brooks, 'Obama vs. The Generals', *Politico*, November 2013, available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2013/11/obama-vs-the-generals-099379/> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1095</sup> The Week Staff, 'Is Gen. McChrystal Out of Line?', *The Week*, 9 January 2015, available at: <https://theweek.com/articles/501197/gen-mcchrystal-line> (accessed 12 August 2021).

<sup>1096</sup> Chris Good, 'Barack Obama, Furious at General Stanley McChrystal Speech on Afghanistan', *The Atlantic*, 5 October 2009, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2009/10/barack-obama-furious-at-general-stanley-mcchrystal-speech-on-afghanistan/27786/> (accessed 12 August 2021). And Jeff Mason, 'Obama, US Afghan Commander Meet in Copenhagen', *Reuters*, 3 October 2009, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-obama-mcchrystal-idUKN0231825720091003> (accessed 12 August 2021).

Copenhagen.<sup>1097</sup> The final straw between Obama and McChrystal came infamously less than a year later in June 2010. US civil-military tensions over Afghanistan boiled over into global headlines when a lengthy profile on McChrystal in *Rolling Stone* magazine carried comments from McChrystal's command staff disparaging members of the Obama administration, most notably Biden and national security advisor, James Jones.<sup>1098</sup> Coming from within McChrystal's direct sphere of responsibility, these comments were roundly condemned as disrespecting civilian authority. In June 2010, Obama accepted McChrystal's resignation from the US military.<sup>1099</sup>

Differing perceptions of risk inflamed these civil-military tensions. Obama's political risk calculus conflicted with McChrystal's idea of the military risks at stake in Afghanistan. Assumptions that military organisations will always lean towards deploying more military force need to be avoided. After all, many US military leaders opposed Bush's invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, McChrystal's particular framing of risk guided him to favour a large US military ground 'surge' in Afghanistan for ISAF to take the situation back under its control so that a crucial window of opportunity to finally stabilise Afghanistan was not missed. This 'surge' was deeply unpopular within the Democratic Party. Obama hesitated to endorse McChrystal's recommendations, remaining fearful that large troop increases would have a high military fatality risk still with no sure guarantee of stabilisation.<sup>1100</sup> Even with a larger military deployment, Obama was suspicious that military leaders were underestimating the length of time needed to achieve what they were telling him was possible.

In his *Rolling Stone* story on McChrystal, Michael Hastings gained an impression from McChrystal's command team that, under Obama's leadership, 'it's [the outcome in Afghanistan] going to look more like Vietnam than Desert Storm', and he quoted ISAF Chief of Operations, Major General Bill Mayville, as saying: 'It's [the outcome in Afghanistan] not going to look like a win, smell like a win or taste like a win' and that 'This is going to end in an argument'.<sup>1101</sup> Reflecting on tensions between Obama, McChrystal and other military commanders, Hastings argued that 'Obama is not comfortable with the military. He does not use

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<sup>1097</sup> Good, 'Barack Obama, Furious at General Stanley McChrystal'. And Mason, 'Obama, US Afghan Commander Meet in Copenhagen'.

<sup>1098</sup> Michael Hastings, 'The Runaway General: The Profile That Brought Down McChrystal', *Rolling Stone*, 22 June 2010, available at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/the-runaway-general-the-profile-that-brought-down-mcchrystal-192609/> (accessed 15 August 2021).

<sup>1099</sup> US Department of Defence, 'McChrystal Resignation', Washington DC, 23 June 2010, available at: <https://www.defense.gov/observe/photo-gallery/igphoto/2002003997/> (accessed 15 August 2021).

<sup>1100</sup> Mark Tran, 'US "To Send 34,000 More Troops to Afghanistan"', *The Guardian*, 24 November 2009, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/24/barack-obama-us-troops-afghanistan> (accessed 17 August 2021).

<sup>1101</sup> Hastings, 'The Runaway General'.

words like “victory” or “win” when the military loves those kinds of words’.<sup>1102</sup> For Obama, no matter the deployment option eventually selected, operations were unlikely to conclude in a glorious US military triumph. ‘Preventing the worst’ for modest political reward was all that seemed available. Keeping military fatalities to a minimum, he aimed to leave Afghanistan less like a beacon of liberal democracy and more as a utilitarian ‘non-event’ unlikely to cause any further global security risks.

## 6.6. Conclusion

This chapter examined links between Obama’s foreign policy outlook and his administration’s early war planning for Afghanistan. It analysed whether Obama’s policy logic corresponded with risk theory expectations. Unusual among recent US presidents, Obama’s tenure was discussed through a diverse debate aiming to define what his foreign policy ideology or ‘doctrine’ was. This was an interesting empirical occurrence also holding some methodological relevance on the functions of a ‘risky’ case study. This chapter contemplated the cacophony of disagreeing outlooks proposed for Obama’s outlook on Afghanistan. It is therefore hard to argue that this part of the case study was anything other than ‘risky’ for theory-testing or revision. Nevertheless, while considering other theoretical angles, this chapter uncovered a strong argument for Obama’s recommitment to stabilisation in Afghanistan as being guided by risk society conditions at many important junctures. Obama promised ‘hope’ and ‘change’ over the 2008 Presidential Election campaign. By 2008, US nationalist anger stoked in 9/11’s immediate aftermath that drove the early GWOT under Bush was no longer there to support McCain’s presidential hopes. Telling of the risk society’s impatience, nationalist reflexes that once backed extensive military action soon dissipated for large disillusion and war-weariness in US public opinion.

Nationalism, durable with guidance from the political elite often allowed ‘garrison states’ of earlier modernity to sustain imperial campaigns at high military intensity. Such nationalism is no longer sustainable in the risk society. A short nationalist jolt propelled the early GWOT, but this soon tapered out. Obama then inherited the delicate task of needing to reduce the US military footprint overseas while still having to ensure US security from global terrorism. Obama uncomfortably prioritised a renewal of ISAF’s stabilisation efforts. This chapter discussed Obama’s outlook on military intervention through multiple ideological lenses. Each theoretical paradigm will unlikely fully fit with historical explanation, but claims that Obama was an inconsistent realist are stronger than some others. Risk theory incorporates its own realist dimensions, and it can more accurately explain Obama’s foreign policy inconsistencies, that some conventional

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<sup>1102</sup> Michael Hastings, ‘Rolling Stone Magazine Writer Explains McChrystal Article’, *Al-Jazeera* (Youtube video), 23 June 2010, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMpJ83Q3wIs> (accessed 17 August 2021).

realist IR theorists were disappointed about. For example, Obama's participation in OUP in 2011 and his tentative decision to 'surge' with ISAF after 2009 were both criticised by some realists in IR, but the exact shape of policy action taken can be attributed to the risk society's pre-intervention anxieties rationalising that, if these operations were not undertaken, the security situation for the US and NATO would deteriorate into further dangers.

Facing 'reflexive security dilemmas' in Afghanistan, the Obama administration displayed most decision-making traits that risk theory would expect. They were uncomfortably self-conscious, perceiving stark options as the only choice. Approaches were particularly methodical, cautious and hesitant. When tensions escalated between civilian and military policymakers, perspectives conflicted on the future-focused 'safety first' strategy that Washington needed to depart from state fragility in Afghanistan. Senior military commanders believed that stronger COIN reinforced by a 'surged' military deployment would bring a dangerous situation in Afghanistan under control. This would then underwrite stabilisation and reduce risks otherwise likely to flow from Afghanistan as a fragile state. Obama and some other administration leaders were much less sure about this plan. They were acutely concerned that if stronger COIN was sanctioned with a large military 'surge' they risked another agonising quagmire with high military fatalities. This clash in 'safety first' preferences was a source of serious civil-military tensions, eventually ending in McChrystal's resignation, plunging Obama's policy for Afghanistan into some disarray.

## 7. CONFIRMING 'THE SURGE'

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the later planning phases of the Obama administration's 'surge' for Afghanistan. Sworn in as president in January 2009, Obama's Democratic Party was divided on the kind of 'surge' needed for stabilisation. Led by Vice-President Biden, some policymakers wanted Washington to narrow its focus to combatting Al-Qaeda, discouraging a larger and riskier ground force deployment against Taliban insurgency. Most US military leaders disagreed, seeing stronger COIN and a sizable troop contingent as making Taliban defeat and stabilisation possible. State-building could then thrive so that Afghanistan would not return to being a global terrorist 'haven'. After some fierce internal discussions, Obama agreed to increase the US military presence in ISAF by 30,000 troops, but he also imposed an 18-month deadline on this deployment to achieve stabilisation before a drawdown.

This chapter argues that NATO was continually and sometimes correctly concerned about more global risks emerging from Afghanistan's fragile security situation. While primarily a local Afghan movement, the Taliban still leveraged multiple global flows to support its insurgency. This contributed to further frustration in NATO's risk societies that desired a 'short and sharp' military campaign. The Taliban sourced some foreign financing, 'foreign fighters' and battlefield tactics from abroad. Western ideological objections to illicit narcotics-trading led to ISAF eradication policies on opiate production, when some utilitarian alternatives pragmatically tolerating 'joint extraction' between government authorities and legal enterprises might have been 'good enough' to stop the Taliban's opium dominance. This chapter is divided into five sections. Section two discusses the final policy debates within the Obama administration before 'surging' military resources in Afghanistan. Section three examines differing preferences on war duration that frustrated the impatient risk society against the 'pre-modern' Taliban, undeterred by a longer, drawn out campaign. Focused on the funding the Taliban received from the global opium trade, section four analyses the 'local-global' calculus in ISAF's counter-narcotics policies. Section five discusses the chapter's main conclusions.

### 7.2. A finalised plan

68,000 US troops were already deployed to Afghanistan by autumn 2009. McChrystal originally proposed three 'surge' options: a 'low-risk option' with 80,000 additional troops; a 'medium-risk option' with 45,000-40,000 troops; and a 'high-risk option' requiring only 20,000 troops.<sup>1103</sup> Accessing an important classified US policy document for Afghanistan dated September 2009,

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<sup>1103</sup> Tran, 'US "To Send 34,000 More Troops to Afghanistan"'.

investigative journalist Bob Woodward records a US ‘surge’ plan with three slightly different options including: ‘10-11,000 [troops] to mostly train the Afghan forces’; or ‘40,000 for a counterinsurgency’; or ‘85,000 for a robust counterinsurgency’.<sup>1104</sup> Sceptical public opinion continued to put decision-makers under intense pressure. Further reports claim that military leaders wished to recommend that Obama agree to an additional deployment of 50,000 troops, but McChrystal was ultimately ‘convinced to lower the request to 40,000’.<sup>1105</sup>

### 7.2.1. COIN and ‘counterterrorism-plus’

Numerous ‘surge’ options were in circulation. Most divided senior officials in the US government. Plans for a larger deployment for robust COIN had wider support among military leaders. Mindful of steep political sensitivities, Petraeus as CENTCOM commander and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, eventually supported an extra 40,000 US troops as an option balancing what might be politically acceptable with military workability.<sup>1106</sup> At his reappointment hearing as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs before the US Senate in September 2009, Mullen argued that ‘a properly resourced counterinsurgency probably means more forces and without question, more time and more commitment to the protection of the Afghan people and to the development of good governance’.<sup>1107</sup> At a lengthy and intense meeting with senior US security planners to discuss ‘surge options’, Obama was reported as remarking ‘we won’t get any more bites at this apple [stabilising Afghanistan]’, to which Petraeus replied: ‘You do have one bite at the apple...make it one that can make a difference. Try to avoid leaving a position that requires us [US military leaders] to come back [to discuss another policy reformulation for Afghanistan]’.<sup>1108</sup>

Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General James Cartwright, was one of few senior military leaders favouring a reduced ‘surge’ limited to 20,000 additional troops, but he was later overruled by Mullen.<sup>1109</sup> US agony suffered in Vietnam remained an important historical reference point guiding some forthright perspectives from military commanders to civilian leaders.<sup>1110</sup> Published in 1997, McMaster’s book *Dereliction of Duty* quickly became a seminal text in US PME. It argues that Washington pursued poor strategies in Vietnam because military leaders were unwisely subservient to civilian policymakers. For McMaster,

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<sup>1104</sup> Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010, p. 192.

<sup>1105</sup> CBS News, ‘McChrystal Wanted 50,000 Troops’, 7 October 2009, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mcchrystal-wanted-50000-troops/> (accessed 18 August 2021).

<sup>1106</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, pp. 271–273.

<sup>1107</sup> US Senate Committee on Armed Service, *Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN, For Reappointment to the Grade of Admiral and Reappointment as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 111th Congress, 1st Session. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 15 September 2009, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg55953/html/CHRG-111shrg55953.htm> (accessed 22 August 2021).

<sup>1108</sup> Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, p. 231.

<sup>1109</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 272.

<sup>1110</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 272.

military leaders often allowed political preferences to problematically distort military advice.<sup>1111</sup> Circumspect military advice more likely to influence effective policies on Vietnam did not come fully to the fore.<sup>1112</sup> Perceiving similar issues at stake over Afghanistan, military commanders did not want to make the same mistakes twice, but their forthright approach this time around caused tense friction with political leaders, with Gates observing: ‘more and more senior officers seem compelled to seek a high public profile and to speak out, often on politically sensitive issues’.<sup>1113</sup>

The proposal for a COIN-focused ‘surge’ backed by an additional 40,000 troops had political support from Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.<sup>1114</sup> This proposal had some fierce detractors led by Vice-President Biden, as well as Jones as national security advisor, Eikenberry as US Ambassador to Afghanistan and Rahm Emmanuel, the president’s Chief of Staff.<sup>1115</sup> Biden disagreed on the Taliban being a direct threat to US national security. He favoured a strategy later labelled as ‘counterterrorism-plus’.<sup>1116</sup> This was a significantly more limited and utilitarian approach compared with to COIN alternatives. It would switch US attention away from Taliban insurgency to more precisely target Al-Qaeda activity in Afghanistan with drone strikes and SOF raids.<sup>1117</sup> ‘Counterterrorism-plus’ would not significantly increase the US conventional ground force deployment.<sup>1118</sup> Biden proposed strikes against Al-Qaeda leaders to deter them from reutilising Afghanistan as a base to launch terrorist attacks as Washington’s primary priority. He believed that the US could be safely protected ‘without the expense of COIN operations against the Taliban’.<sup>1119</sup>

This debate between ‘counterterrorism-plus’ and stronger COIN has an important connection with risk theory. It illustrates divergent ‘globalities’ in US perspectives rationalising risk from Afghanistan. Biden reasoned that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban were separate. The former was a global terrorist network that, if not disrupted and destroyed at distance, would continue to endanger US security interests. The Taliban’s ambitions were far more limited. In Biden’s evaluation, its insurgency could only affect regional insecurity and should thus be a lesser security concern for Washington. Those disagreeing with Biden perceived perpetual fragility in Afghanistan as allowing global risks to persist. If the Taliban

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<sup>1111</sup> HR McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1997. And Kori Schake, ‘Dereliction of Duty Reconsidered: The Book That Made the National Security Advisor’, *War on the Rocks*, 28 March 2017, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2017/03/dereliction-of-duty-reconsidered-the-book-the-made-the-national-security-advisor/> (accessed 22 August 2021).

<sup>1112</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*. And Schake, ‘Dereliction of Duty Reconsidered’.

<sup>1113</sup> Gates, *Duty*, Chapter 15.

<sup>1114</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 272.

<sup>1115</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 274.

<sup>1116</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 274.

<sup>1117</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 274.

<sup>1118</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 274.

<sup>1119</sup> Marsh, ‘Obama’s Surge’, p. 274.

insurgency continued to cause violent insecurity, global terrorist networks could thrive between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These polarised reference points summarise divided opinion within the Obama administration.

### 7.2.2. Reference points from Iraq

Obama and Biden were both senators when Bush decided his ‘surge’ for Iraq in 2007. Concerns from both then foreshadow later anxieties over the ‘surge’ in Afghanistan. For Iraq, Obama and Biden perceived many political and military risks with few strategic benefits. This scepticism was revealed with remarks made on a 2007 report endorsing the Iraq ‘surge’ from Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, then the US Ambassador to Iraq. Commenting at Petraeus’ and Crocker’s testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Biden argued that, to be effective, a stronger US military presence for COIN would need to be inextricably connected to a more elaborate and problematic US-led state-building approach:

The surge, whatever tactical or temporary security gains it might achieve, is at the service of a fundamentally flawed strategy, and that strategy is, the [Bush] administration continues to believe that we can achieve political progress in Iraq by building a strong national unity government in Baghdad that secures the trust of the Iraqi people.<sup>1120</sup>

He predicted that durable US-guided state-building in Iraq was not ‘going to happen in the lifetime of any of us [Biden, Crocker or Petraeus]’.<sup>1121</sup> Iraq was severely and violently ruptured between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish militants that ‘absent an occupation we [the US] cannot sustain, or return of a dictator we cannot want, Iraq, in my view, cannot be governed from the centre, at this point in history’.<sup>1122</sup> He warned that:

the [Iraq] surge is, at best, a stopgap that delays, but will not prevent, chaos. It’s net effect will be to put more American lives at risk – in my view, with very little prospect of success. And I don’t think that is conscionable.<sup>1123</sup>

The latter perspective highlights at least two risk theory expectations. The first and most obvious is the ‘safety first’ concern centred on large US military fatalities. The second is Biden’s reference to the ‘surge’ as a temporary ‘stopgap’ measure. This has close similarities with the long series of ‘tactically-driven’

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<sup>1120</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report. Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, One Hundred Tenth Congress, First Session*, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 11 September 2007, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg44322/html/CHRG-110shrg44322.htm> (28 October 2021).

<sup>1121</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

<sup>1122</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

<sup>1123</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

solutions propping up ISAF in Afghanistan; a result of the risk society's contradictory insistence that security still be achieved with reduced strategic ambition. ISAF became a long-term mission, but most initiatives supporting it were a regeneration of short-term 'stopgaps'. This produced an incoherent stabilisation presence unable to coherently address state-building aims or militarily defeat the insurgency.

At the same hearing, then Senator Obama prominently highlighted fatality and financial costs already suffered by the US in Iraq, while discouraging any further military 'surge':

Rather than identify the very limited tactical gains that have been made at great cost and using them to justify the maintenance of a failing strategy, I believe it is time to change course. Over 3,700 American service men and women have died in this war and over 27,000 have been seriously wounded. Each month, this misguided war costs us a staggering \$10 billion, and when all is said and done, this will have cost us \$1 trillion.<sup>1124</sup>

Petraeus, Crocker and others supporting Bush's Iraq 'surge' perceived the reduction in violence happening in Iraq's largest province, Al-Anbar, between 2005 and 2007 as confirming that a larger US military presence could successfully stabilise all of Iraq, but Obama saw too many flaws in this logic:

it is not clear to me that the primary success that you've [Petraeus and Crocker] shown in Anbar has anything to do with the surge. You said, in this testimony, that it's political, the reason for the success in Anbar, not because of an increase in troop strength. We have, maybe, seen some modest decline in sectarian violence inside Baghdad, as a consequence of our troop patrols. That's been purchased at the cost of increased US casualties, and is unsustainable.<sup>1125</sup>

Instead of stronger military options, Obama called for the Iraq 'surge' to conclude and stressed an alternative US approach to remedy Iraq's state fragility led by diplomacy:

Our [US] military cannot sustain its current deployments without crippling our ability to respond to contingencies around the world. It's time for a change of direction that brings our troops home, applies real pressure on the Iraqis to act, surges our diplomacy, and addresses Iraq's urgent humanitarian crisis.<sup>1126</sup>

From a US perspective, this suggestion is at least partially 'safety first' because it would shift more military risks to Iraqis. Despite objections from Obama, Biden and other Democrats, the US 'surge' in Iraq continued into 2008.

These debates on Iraq influenced Obama's later policy thinking for Afghanistan. His administration remained concerned that if Afghanistan stayed fragile,

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<sup>1124</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

<sup>1125</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

<sup>1126</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

Al-Qaeda might again use it as a base. Biden's 'counterterrorism-plus' rationalised that US protection from global terrorism would be improved by specifically targeting Al-Qaeda networks with a combination of US air surveillance; drone strikes; and SOF coordination with Afghan and other partners. Preventing global terrorism like this, this would leave Afghan factions with sole responsibility to decide the country's political future. The majority of US military leaders did not share Biden's outlook. This was explicitly indicated by Mullen:

The President has given us [US military command] a clear mission: disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven again. You can't do that from offshore and you can't do that by just killing the bad guys. You have to be there, where the people are, when they need you there, and until they can provide for their own security.<sup>1127</sup>

Insisting on military consensus for stronger COIN, Mullen highlighted: 'This is General McChrystal's view and it is my view and that of General Petraeus in the Joint Chiefs'.<sup>1128</sup>

Briefly acknowledging that US problems in Iraq and Afghanistan were different, Mullen still urged US policymakers to learn from what was then an improvement in Iraq following Bush's 2007–2008 'surge':

Now, not every lesson from Iraq will apply, but the big ones will: protect the people, connect them to the political process, enable them to provide for their own security. The enemy in Afghanistan is not the insurgent. The enemy is fear. If you can remove the fear under which so many Afghans live, if you can supplant it with security and good governance, then you can offer them an alternative to Taliban rule. If they have an alternative to Taliban rule, they will choose it.<sup>1129</sup>

Irony should not be lost that it was civilian policymakers led by Biden proposing a narrower military-focused counterterrorism posture when military leaders were advocated much broader civilian reconstruction reinforced by a larger military presence. Obama ultimately sanctioned a 'surge' with an additional 30,000 US troops for Afghanistan. This seemed closer the more ambitious US military-favoured posture. However, bringing Iraq back into focus, some very utilitarian expectations from what initially appear as ambitious actions can be revealed.

Before the US Senate in 2007, Petraeus argued that 'The fundamental source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition will take place. The question is whether it is resolved more or less violently'.<sup>1130</sup> This acknowledged that the US-led coalition could not fully address deeper conflict causes, but it could 'prevent the worst' by reducing some possibilities for violence. With Afghanistan, Obama's

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<sup>1127</sup> US Senate Committee on Armed Service, *Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN*.

<sup>1128</sup> US Senate Committee on Armed Service, *Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN*.

<sup>1129</sup> US Senate Committee on Armed Service, *Nomination of Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN*.

<sup>1130</sup> US Senate, *Iraq: The Crocker-Petraeus Report*.

choice edging closer to stronger COIN over ‘counterterrorism-plus’ also holds some questions for risk theory expectations on utilitarian priorities. What appeared to be a more ‘maximalist’ ‘surge’ from Obama was undermined by problematic contradictions generated by urgency to switch to utilitarian measures if success was not achieved in the short-term. The success of Bush’s Iraq ‘surge’ seemed evident when Obama’s presidency started in 2009, changing some sceptical minds in the Democratic Party.

During the presidential campaign, in September 2008, Obama even acknowledged that the Iraq ‘surge’ had ‘exceeded expectations’ because it had reduced violence ‘beyond our [US] wildest dreams’.<sup>1131</sup> Gates continued as Secretary of Defence. This created an important link between an otherwise divergent outgoing Republican administration and Obama’s fledgling Democratic administration. Recent experience in Iraq had also persuaded Clinton, Obama’s incoming Secretary of State, that a similar ‘surge’ might work in Afghanistan.<sup>1132</sup> Unknown at this time, reduced violence in Iraq was merely temporary. Its capacity to defend against external aggressors remained weak. Clinton was later criticised for neglecting further post-‘surge’ state-building in Iraq that might have obstructed the rise of ISIS.<sup>1133</sup>

### 7.2.3. Timetables and deadlines

Obama announced his finalised ‘surge’ plan in December 2009 with an address at the US Military Academy at West Point.<sup>1134</sup> Eventually settling on a further 30,000 US troops in addition to the extra 17,000 he had sanctioned earlier in 2009, Obama’s announcement had some points closely corresponding with risk theory expectations. Historical reference points remained central. Wary of ‘quagmire anxiety’, Obama assured the US public that he would not make akin to another Vietnam:

Unlike Vietnam, we are not facing a broad-based popular insurgency. And most importantly, unlike Vietnam, the American people were viciously attacked from Afghanistan, and remain a target for those same extremists who are plotting along its border.<sup>1135</sup>

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<sup>1131</sup> Associated Press, ‘Iraqi Surge Exceeded Expectations, Obama Says’, *NBC News*, 5 September 2008, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna26550764> (accessed 7 January 2022).

<sup>1132</sup> Peter Feaver, ‘Hillary Clinton and the Inconvenient Facts about the Rise of the Islamic State’, *Foreign Policy*, 13 August 2015, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/13/clinton-surge-iraq-maliki-obama/> (accessed 7 January 2022).

<sup>1133</sup> Feaver, ‘Hillary Clinton and the Inconvenient Facts’.

<sup>1134</sup> Jesse Lee, ‘The New Way Forward – the President’s Address’, Washington DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 1 December 2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/12/01/new-way-forward-presidents-address> (accessed 10 February 2022).

<sup>1135</sup> Barack Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan’, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 1 December

Emphasising extra military resources as necessary for stabilisation to prevent further terrorist attacks striking the US or the wider West, this statement indicates some complacency from Obama. Strong pockets of Afghan support reinforced Taliban insurgents. He argued that ‘Afghanistan is not lost, but for several years it has moved backwards...The status quo is not sustainable’.<sup>1136</sup> His ‘safety first’ anxiety rationalised that Afghanistan could still be stabilised, but if action was not taken to curb its deterioration, this might later cost Washington. Obama explained that the delay in deciding to ‘surge’ nearly one year into his presidency was needed because of Afghanistan’s August 2009 Presidential Election. Karzai won, allowing ISAF a clearer outlook on the political situation.

Defending slow and careful policy consultations, Obama insisted he could not rush a decision with so much at stake:

after the Afghan voting was completed [in August 2009], I insisted on a thorough review of our strategy... the review has allowed me to ask the hard questions, and to explore all the different options, along with my national security team, our military and civilian leadership in Afghanistan, and our key partners.<sup>1137</sup>

Obama assured his audience that improved state-building outcomes were possible from a renewed commitment to ISAF, explaining that: ‘we [the US] and our allies prevented the Taliban from stopping a presidential election, and – although it was marred by fraud – that election produced a government that is consistent with Afghanistan’s laws and constitution’.<sup>1138</sup> He balanced this with the view that Afghanistan’s future might lead in two diametrically different directions, warning that: ‘There’s no imminent threat of the government being overthrown, but the Taliban has gained momentum’.<sup>1139</sup>

If Taliban momentum was not halted, the risk of an Al-Qaeda comeback was implied as likely. Obama explicitly perceived a link between the two entities: ‘Over the last several years, the Taliban has maintained common cause with al Qaeda, as they both seek an overthrow of the Afghan government’.<sup>1140</sup> Obama assessed previous assistance from the US to ANSF as disappointing: ‘our [US] forces lack the full support they need to effectively train and partner with Afghan security forces and better secure the population’.<sup>1141</sup> Obama saw his ‘surge’ for Afghanistan as a response to global risks: ‘For what’s at stake [in Afghanistan] is not simply a test of NATO’s credibility – what’s at stake is the security of our allies, and the common security of the world’.<sup>1142</sup>

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2009, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan> (accessed 10 October 2022).

<sup>1136</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1137</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1138</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1139</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1140</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1141</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1142</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

Largely bipartisan support existed for Obama's 'surge' plan in Congress.<sup>1143</sup> Nevertheless, when the wider Democratic Party and its supporters were considered, it was claimed that 'Fewer than 20 percent of Democrats support increasing troop levels, and seven in 10 say the war hasn't been worth the cost'.<sup>1144</sup> The party's 'anti-war' elements insisted that Obama impose a 'flexible timetable' to limit soldier fatality and 'mission creep' risks.<sup>1145</sup> With these opinions in the background, Obama did impose both a 'surge' timetable and a deadline. The US was 'going in to get out'.<sup>1146</sup> Extra troops to strengthen ISAF was balanced with satisfying domestic 'safety first' concerns. The 'surge' was rationalised as a last window of opportunity with a signalled end date:

After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.

This deadline can be seen as a political safety measure to avert sliding towards an even longer fatality-strewn campaign. Washington attached similar deadlines to its 'surged' civilian reconstruction assistance in support of its larger military presence. Originating from the expected risk society contradiction where a proactive security posture is demanded but with restrained 'safety first' policies, the logic of these 'surge' deadlines later undermined ISAF's most important aims.

### 7.3. Misreading societies in conflict

US military experience in Iraq in 2007 and 2008 was an important reference point for the Obama administration in responding to what risk theory would perceive as 'reflexive security dilemmas' in Afghanistan. This experience encouraged belief that stabilisation could be achieved in Afghanistan with improved policies, but it might have also created some false perceptions that an Afghan 'surge' – 'short and sharp' like in Iraq in 2007 – might work in an entirely different political and military context. Discussing state-society relations, Robert Cooper differentiates between the 'postmodern'; 'modern'; and 'premodern'

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<sup>1143</sup> The Washington Post, 'Lawmakers React to Afghan Strategy', 2009, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/obama-afghanistan/index.html?hpid=topnews> (accessed 11 February 2022).

<sup>1144</sup> Gene Healy, 'Afghanistan May Be Obama's Vietnam', *CATO Institute Commentary*, 1 September 2009, available at: <https://www.cato.org/commentary/afghanistan-may-be-obamas-vietnam> (accessed 11 February 2022).

<sup>1145</sup> Healy, 'Afghanistan May Be Obama's Vietnam'.

<sup>1146</sup> Sten Rynning, 'Losing? The West and Modern War', Lecture at the Danish Institute for Advanced Studies (D-IAS), University of Southern Denmark, Odense, 16 September 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCGPecokzTM> (accessed 11 February 2022).

states that comprise global order.<sup>1147</sup> Cooper defines ‘premodern’ states as internally suffering from being ‘broken up if those concerned want to fight’.<sup>1148</sup> Afghanistan has experienced civil war in cycles since the 1970s, but statehood in Iraq was crafted by a different path.<sup>1149</sup> Iraq’s territorial composition including Shia, Sunni and Kurdish populations has roots in Britain’s imperial policies from the early twentieth century. Saddam was authoritarian, corrupt and oppressive, but some sections of Iraqi society (not all) developed under a non-violent order during his rule from 1979 until 2003. Iraq had some ‘modern’ credentials. When AQI and other factions wreaked violent havoc in Iraq after Saddam’s overthrow, many in Iraq’s civilian population desired a return to familiar non-violence. By 2006, Iraq’s largest governorate, Al-Anbar province, became a focal-point for change. Many Sunni communities had rejected AQI, and some Sunni organisations formed to obstruct AQI violence.<sup>1150</sup>

### 7.3.1. Recurring violence

Credit for temporary stabilisation in Iraq was given to a ‘Sunni awakening’ led by movements in Al-Anbar.<sup>1151</sup> Formed from this ‘awakening’, the Sons of Iraq movement organised civil society volunteers that cooperated with the MNF to work against AQI and other militants.<sup>1152</sup> Urgently needing to end distress from violent turmoil was enough for some Sunni communities to support this cooperation. In addition to MNF’s military and political influences, Iraq’s changing ethno-political balance post-Saddam was a further stabilising factor. Shia Muslims comprise 60 percent of Iraq’s population, but Saddam’s Ba’ath Party had maintained Sunni dominance for over thirty years. This dominance was reversed by Saddam’s overthrow followed by violent factionalism between Sunni groups. Shia elites started to dominate state-building.<sup>1153</sup> US military leaders might have displayed an unsurprising tendency to elevate US actions above local conditions in their analysis of the factors pivotal for stabilisation.

Petraeus has argued US COIN to ‘safeguard the Iraqi people’ was strengthened by local support, making it more effective ‘to pursue AQI, to combat criminal elements and militia extremists, to foster local reconciliation, and to enable political and economic progress’.<sup>1154</sup> However, with a focus on violent

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<sup>1147</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the 21st Century*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.

<sup>1148</sup> Cooper, *The Post-Modern State*, 1996, p. 24.

<sup>1149</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, ‘The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan’, *World Development*, vol. 28, no. 10, 2000, pp. 1789–1803.

<sup>1150</sup> Mark Wilbanks and Efraim Karsh, ‘How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq’, *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2010, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1151</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh, ‘How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1152</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh, ‘How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1153</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh, ‘How the “Sons of Iraq” Stabilized Iraq’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1154</sup> Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, One Hundred Tenth Congress, Second Session, ‘The Situation in Iraq and Progress Made by the Government in Meeting Benchmarks and Achieving Reconciliation’, Washington DC: US Government

cycles and social preferences, a similar COIN strategy might have been unlikely to work successfully in southern Afghanistan. Contrary to some legacies of ‘modern’ statehood supporting US COIN in Iraq, war-torn ‘pre-modern’ southern Afghanistan was instead shaped by cyclical or recurring violence that is discussed in the ‘new wars’ literature. Michael Brzoska argues ‘new wars’ as distinct from wars that support state-building. ‘New wars’ typically arise when state-building stagnates or fails.<sup>1155</sup> Constantly recurring war creates constant wealth for one belligerent or another. Violence is thus incentivised with no momentum for a ‘hurting stalemate’ to end the conflict.<sup>1156</sup> Cycles of violence are woven into the social fabric. Mary Kaldor argues that ‘old wars’ of earlier modernity were waged for state-building, but today’s ‘new wars’ conversely ‘contribute to the dismantling of the state’.<sup>1157</sup> These ‘new wars’ ideas have some important insights for ISAF’s problems in Afghanistan, but the term ‘new wars’ is sometimes misleading. These wars are still maintained by older-style warriors reviving long-established trends in warfare.<sup>1158</sup> Kaldor explains that ‘new wars’ typically involve a composite of ‘regular armed forces, private security contractors, mercenaries, *jihadists*, warlords and paramilitaries’, broader opportunities from expanded global networks support these actors.<sup>1159</sup>

Taliban networks and funding sources connect with Beck’s theorising that transnational processes ‘criss-cross’ Westphalian order.<sup>1160</sup> Like NATO, Taliban outlooks also sometimes followed ‘along a “local-global” axis’.<sup>1161</sup> As the front-line faction within the broader network, the Afghan Taliban was a local and specifically Afghan-centred political programme.<sup>1162</sup> Distinct from globally-focused *jihadist* organisations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, the Taliban claimed no intent to perpetuate violence outside an ‘area of operations’ in Afghanistan and western Pakistan.<sup>1163</sup> Few non-Afghans were elevated to its leadership council where most replacements were forced by leaders dying or being killed in conflict.<sup>1164</sup> However, the broader Taliban network still maintained an important global dimension. Supporting the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban permitted ‘foreign fighters’ gathering in Pakistan’s western borderlands. Highlighting Pakistan’s duplicity as a NATO partner, Islamabad sometimes allowed Taliban members ‘to use Pakistani *madrassa* (places of education) and mosque networks to raise funds and

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Printing Office, 8, 9 and 10 April 2008, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg45666/html/CHRG-110shrg45666.htm> (accessed 04 May 2021).

<sup>1155</sup> Michael Brzoska, ‘“New Wars” in German Discourse’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2004, pp. 113–114.

<sup>1156</sup> Brzoska, ‘“New Wars” in German Discourse’, pp. 113–114.

<sup>1157</sup> Mary Kaldor, ‘In Defence of New Wars’, *Stability*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2013, pp. 2–3.

<sup>1158</sup> Dietrich Jung, ‘New Wars, Old Warriors and Transnational Crime: Reflections on the Transformation of War’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2005, p. 426.

<sup>1159</sup> Kaldor, ‘In Defence of New Wars’, p. 2.

<sup>1160</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>1161</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, p. 11.

<sup>1162</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taliban”?’ pp. 1–5.

<sup>1163</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taliban”?’ pp. 1–5.

<sup>1164</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taliban”?’ pp. 1–5.

recruit fighters' from within Pakistan and further afield.<sup>1165</sup> For example, militant elements in the Punjabi population from border regions between India and Pakistan regularly travelled as 'foreign fighters' supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>1166</sup>

A senior counterterrorism official from Pakistan highlights transnational chains energising Taliban insurgency: 'ideas, logistics, cash (comes) from the Gulf. Arab guys, mainly Egyptians and Saudis, are on hand to provide the chemistry. Veteran Punjabi extremists plot the attacks, while the Pakistan Taliban provides the martyrs'.<sup>1167</sup> Connections were maintained through looser networks rather than strict command structures. As well as the ideologically motivated, these networks provided opportunities for mercenary insurgents involved for financial reward.<sup>1168</sup> Beyond Punjabi militants, 'foreign fighters' from Central Asian societies were recruited. For example, the IJU, based in Uzbekistan, claims to have sent fighters to Afghanistan for suicide bombings killing US soldiers.<sup>1169</sup> Highlighting links between Arab 'foreign fighters', Taliban insurgency and Al-Qaeda, a 2021 European Parliament report explained Al-Qaeda's presence on the 'Indian Subcontinent' as a loose network operating as 'a formal, separate al-Qaeda affiliate in south Asia set up in 2014 to appeal to regional actors'.<sup>1170</sup>

When Al-Qaeda's global network is considered, its leadership is 'predominantly Arab', by contrast, Al-Qaeda affiliates in Afghanistan or its neighbouring states 'consists primarily of Afghan and Pakistani nationals, and individuals from Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, all operating under the Taliban "umbrella"'.<sup>1171</sup> Ideologies transmitted by Al-Qaeda direct those from non-Arab societies to volunteer as fighters for the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This recruiting message from Al-Qaeda's global leadership perceived conflict between the Taliban and ISAF as leverage to influence wider rebellion in the Muslim

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<sup>1165</sup> Nasreen Akhtar, 'Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban', *International Journal on World Peace*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2008, p. 57.

<sup>1166</sup> Hassan Abbas, 'Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network', *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2009, p. 1, available at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol2Iss4-Art1.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1167</sup> Tariq Pervez, former Director General of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency cited in Kaustav Dhar Chakrabarti, 'Taliban Spreads into Pakistan's Heart', *Rediff.com*, 13 February 2009, available at: <https://www.rediff.com/news/2009/feb/13guest-taliban-spreads-into-pakistans-heart.htm> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1168</sup> Abbas, 'Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network', pp. 1–2.

<sup>1169</sup> Jeremy Binnie and Joanna Wright, 'The Evolving Role of Uzbek-Led Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan', *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 2, no. 8, 2009, p. 1, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2010/06/Vol2Iss8-Art2.pdf> (accessed 20 January 2019).

<sup>1170</sup> European Parliament, 'Security Situation in Afghanistan: Implications for Europe', *Research Service Briefing*, October 2021, p.3 available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698771/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)698771\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698771/EPRS_BRI(2021)698771_EN.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1171</sup> European Parliament, 'Security Situation in Afghanistan', p. 3.

world.<sup>1172</sup> Al-Qaeda perceived more secular and moderate Muslim states supporting the GWOT as the ‘near enemy’ in collusion with the wider West as the ‘far enemy’.<sup>1173</sup> It encouraged *jihadi* violence against all soldiers and civilians supporting ISAF.<sup>1174</sup>

### 7.3.2. Transferring battle tactics

Suicide attacks were controversial within the Taliban’s wider movement. When ISAF expanded after spring 2006, Canadian forces moved to Kandahar as fourteen suicide bomb attacks ripped through that province the preceding winter.<sup>1175</sup> This was unusual because such attacks were believed to be against the culture in that part of Afghanistan.<sup>1176</sup> Controversy caused a ‘local-global’ power struggle within the wider Taliban movement. Some Afghans saw suicide attacks as violating cultural and religious norms. Learning from other MENA conflicts, the Taliban’s external *jihadi* supporters and some local advocates argued that suicide bombers were needed to inflict devastation on the enemy.

It was mostly Arab ‘foreign fighters’ that mentored Taliban-associated warlords including Mullah Dadullah and Jalaludin Haqqani in southern Afghanistan in tactics transferred from AQI after 2003.<sup>1177</sup> Considered ‘taboo’ by the Afghan Taliban, suicide bombing did not happen until after 2003 when ‘foreign fighters’, influenced by events in Iraq, travelled to Afghanistan and Pakistan in larger numbers.<sup>1178</sup> Suicide attacks were soon a ‘weapon of choice for Afghan insurgents’, but a spate of these bombings in the early 2000s only proved temporary.<sup>1179</sup> Dadullah – an Afghan proponent of suicide attacks – was killed in 2007. These attacks then dissipated after this death.<sup>1180</sup> While influential in some Taliban circles, the Haqqani network was not perceived as belonging to the mainstream Taliban in southern Afghanistan. Its support for suicide attacks was therefore not enough to sustain this tactic.<sup>1181</sup>

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<sup>1172</sup> Carsten Bockstette, ‘Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication Management Techniques’, *George C. Marshall Centre for Security Studies Occasional Paper Series*, no. 20, 2008, pp. 11–12, available at: <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/jihadist-terrorist-use-strategic-communication-management-techniques-0> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1173</sup> Bockstette, ‘Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication’, pp. 11–12.

<sup>1174</sup> Bockstette, ‘Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication’, pp. 11–12.

<sup>1175</sup> Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 114.

<sup>1176</sup> Scott Baldauf, ‘Taliban Turn to Suicide Attacks’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 February 2006, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0203/p01s04-wosc.html> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1177</sup> Brian Glyn Williams, ‘On the Trail of the “Lions of Islam”: Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980–2010’, *Orbis*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2011, pp. 232–233.

<sup>1178</sup> Glyn Williams, ‘On the Trail of the “Lions of Islam”’, pp. 232–233.

<sup>1179</sup> Glyn Williams, ‘On the Trail of the “Lions of Islam”’, pp. 232–233.

<sup>1180</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taleban”?’ pp. 1–5.

<sup>1181</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taleban”?’ pp. 1–5.

Suicide bombing can devastate an intended target, but detonating sudden explosive force in densely crowded areas also endangers civilian life. The Taliban needed to maintain as much Afghan support as possible. It feared that civilian casualties from suicide attacks could counterproductively alienate the local population. According to Ruttig, some supporters of the mainstream Afghan Taliban denounced suicide attacks as a platform for martyrdom and condemned its proponents as ‘terrorists’.<sup>1182</sup> However, other tactical influences brought to Afghanistan by ‘foreign fighters’ persisted. Knowledge gained from Iraq and other MENA conflicts was shared on how the Taliban could adapt IED targeting. Showing how quick and rudimentary some attempts to transfer knowledge from global *jihadi* movements to local Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan were, ‘inspirational DVDs’ for purchase at markets depicting ‘ambushes of US troops, suicide bombings, and sniper attacks’ were simply ‘dubbed into Pashtu’ from Arabic language.<sup>1183</sup>

Beyond military approaches, a strong global-local link also influenced the Taliban’s political activities. ISAF had the recurring agony that the Karzai government it supported was regularly accused of corruption. Neither ISAF nor the Karzai administration were accountable to each other, but both – in theory at least – were partners sharing the same objective to ‘out-govern’ the Taliban by winning the trust and allegiance of Afghan citizens. Corruption in the Kabul government was severe obstacle state-building. Expanding from the Taliban’s initial military resurgence in southern Afghanistan in 2006, it gradually assembled shadow state institutions that competed for citizen loyalty with the Afghan government. Many disillusioned with corruption under Karzai instead supported these institutions. By 2018, the BBC had estimated that the Taliban had an ‘active’ political or military presence across 70 percent of Afghanistan.<sup>1184</sup>

## 7.4. ‘Global’ and ‘local’ in conflict protraction

US government sources claimed in 2018 that 60 percent of the Taliban’s funding came from the global opium trade.<sup>1185</sup> With the movement’s wealth building throughout the ISAF years, this was valued at \$1.6 billion by 2021, with one commentator claiming that the Taliban were a ‘super rich’ organisation.<sup>1186</sup> Extracting

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<sup>1182</sup> Ruttig, ‘How “Neo” Were the “Neo-Taliban”?’ ,pp. 1–5.

<sup>1183</sup> Glyn Williams, ‘On the Trail of the “Lions of Islam”’, pp. 232–233.

<sup>1184</sup> Dawood Azami, ‘Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?’, *BBC News*, 22 December 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46554097> (accessed 18 January 2019).

<sup>1185</sup> Azami, ‘Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?’.

<sup>1186</sup> Hanif Sufizada, ‘Minerals, Drugs and China: How the Taliban Might Finance their New Afghan Government’, *The Conversation*, 9 September 2021, available at: <https://theconversation.com/minerals-drugs-and-china-how-the-taliban-might-finance-their-new-afghan-government-167169> (accessed 29 January 2022). And Gabrielle Debinski, ‘The Taliban Are Super Rich. Is it Enough to Run a Country?’, *GZero Media*, 18 August 2021, available

payments through extortion and intimidation of opium farmers, the Taliban also devised a sophisticated chain of ‘laboratories’ to commercialise its raw opium for illicit global markets. Mineral wealth in Afghan mining regions had long been underexplored. The Taliban’s dominant shadow presence in Afghan society from the late 2000s and 2010s gave it power to extort funding from the legal and illegal mining trades.<sup>1187</sup> The US has accused Iran, Russia and Pakistan of funding Taliban activities.<sup>1188</sup> Benefiting from often opaque global payment channels, the Taliban also benefited from hefty financial donations from wealthy ‘private citizens’ in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.<sup>1189</sup>

#### 7.4.1. Global fragmentation

The ‘global-local axis’ along which the Taliban’s development can be understood brings Beck’s over-optimistic theorising on the risk society’s universality into question. After 9/11, the global terrorism was an urgent security problem for Washington. US policymakers saw global risks connecting to state fragility in Afghanistan before and after 2001.<sup>1190</sup> However, contrary to Beck’s general risk theory, there was no universal global collective action on managing transnational terrorism as a common risk. The GWOT caused further global fragmentation. Washington’s interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq inadvertently created two additional fronts for the wider global *jihadist* movement to strike at Western targets. Iraq’s descent into turmoil facilitated the expansion of foreign *jihadist* networks and the wider dispersal of terrorist and insurgent tactics that later transferred to the conflict in Afghanistan and elsewhere.<sup>1191</sup> Cooper’s differentiation between ‘postmodern’; ‘modern’; and ‘premodern’ states gives a simple outlook indicating much more global diversity in social outlooks on organised violence than Beck’s universal theorising sometimes depicts. Southern Afghanistan is defined by a ‘pre-modern’ social structure where violence has recurred since the 1970s. In stark contrast to Western societies existing in later- or post-modernity, ‘pre-modern’ societies can acclimatise to continuing violence where most resources produced contribute to belligerence.

Indicating a profoundly different attitude to risk societies desiring ‘short and sharp’ military campaigns, when interviewed in 2021, one Taliban commander stressed ‘If we’re tired, that’s success. We succeed by just being at war’.<sup>1192</sup> This portrays the belief that simply sustaining a serious guerrilla campaign will auto-

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at: <https://www.gzeromedia.com/the-taliban-are-super-rich-is-it-enough-to-run-a-country> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>1187</sup> Azami, ‘Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?’.

<sup>1188</sup> Azami, ‘Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?’.

<sup>1189</sup> Azami, ‘Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?’.

<sup>1190</sup> Buzan, ‘Will the “Global War on Terrorism” Be the New Cold War?’, pp. 1101–1118.

<sup>1191</sup> Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds, ‘Blowback Revisited: Today’s Insurgents in Iraq are Tomorrow’s Terrorists’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6, 2005, pp. 2–6.

<sup>1192</sup> Vice on Showtime, ‘The Taliban’s Message to President Biden’, 5 March, 2021, available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lr8\\_OUa58c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lr8_OUa58c) (accessed 17 August 2022).

matically frustrate militarily stronger but impatient risk societies, thus forcing them onto the back foot. Moreover, as war raged, anarchy created illicit opportunities to continually exploit opium flows that funded the expansion of shadow Taliban institutions for education, healthcare and even an alternative legal system in areas it controlled.<sup>1193</sup> Funding established these institutions, but perceptions of endemic corruption within the Afghan government ultimately persuaded large sections of the population to devote allegiance to them. In 2021, a BBC report found that despite the Taliban's 'brutal' reputation, many Afghans still came to prefer its justice system because 'they [Taliban institutions] at least offer a swifter resolution than the notoriously corrupt government courts'.<sup>1194</sup>

The global response to US calls for stronger collective action to support ISAF was often lacklustre. State fragility in Afghanistan did not universally gain recognition as a truly global risk. It was difficult for NATO to mobilise wider commitments and resources for reconstruction. There was still little shelter from the 'dark sides' of globalisation which continued to aggravate security in Afghanistan. Taliban resurgence to dominate the opium trade stemmed from mistakes by ISAF and the Karzai government. After 2002, curtailing opium production was not a priority for Kabul or for ISAF, but, by 2007, 93 percent of opiates on illicit global markets were coming from Afghanistan.<sup>1195</sup> This was a global trend resulting from the local need to support 'pre-modern' violence in southern Afghanistan. Long traditions in warlord politics, guerrilla warfare and opiate cultivation were combined with some modern technologies, imported paramilitary tactics and the global narcotics trade to enable a formidable Taliban insurgency. Once the Taliban established control over Afghanistan's opium trade, this was near-impossible for ISAF to dismantle.

#### 7.4.2. Opium-eradication

Eradication was ISAF's primary counter-narcotics policy.<sup>1196</sup> Western governments viewed opium production as a corrupt and criminal practice obstructing 'good governance'. Albeit with half-hearted commitment, eradication ideologically synchronised with Western visions of liberal order. Opium-reduction was delicate for ISAF commanders. Among IOs contributing to stabilisation, NATO was not always the most hard-line on this issue. In 2006, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa stressed that ISAF needed to directly 'fight the double

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<sup>1193</sup> Ashley Jackson and Rahmatullah Amiri, 'Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy', *Peaceworks* (United States Institute of Peace), no 153, November 2019, available at: [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/pw\\_153-insurgent\\_bureaucracy\\_how\\_the\\_taliban\\_makes\\_policy.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/pw_153-insurgent_bureaucracy_how_the_taliban_makes_policy.pdf) (accessed 17 August 2022).

<sup>1194</sup> BBC News, 'Life Inside a Taliban Town as Insurgence in Afghanistan Continues', 12 August 2021, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTVfCpLrIrc> (accessed 17 August 2022).

<sup>1195</sup> Jonathan Goodhand 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2008, p. 405

<sup>1196</sup> Goodhand 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?', p. 414.

attacks – the attacks by the [drug] traffickers and, generally speaking, by the drug economy on the one hand and the [Taliban] insurgency on the other [hand]’ to improve security.<sup>1197</sup> More robust and direct intervention was seen as unwise by Afghan leaders. Farmers in southern Afghan provinces were already outraged at Karzai’s government after rumours that NATO aircraft would ‘spray poison chemicals on poppy fields’.<sup>1198</sup> ISAF interference against poppy eradication would be inflammatory. Afghan Minister for Counternarcotics Habibullah Qaderi insisted that ‘We [the Afghan government] would still prefer that [opium-crop eradication] is done by the Afghan forces supported by NATO’.<sup>1199</sup>

NATO concurred with most Afghan government advice, communicating in 2010 that ‘We [NATO] cannot be in a situation where we remove the only source of income of people who live in the second poorest country in the world without being able to provide them with an alternative’.<sup>1200</sup> ISAF was threading another dangerous tightrope. Not only were opium revenues funding the Taliban insurgency, but the massive rise in opium production had turned Afghanistan in an illicit narcotics superpower. Any robust response would very likely create irate backlashes from many local Afghans, making them support the insurgency. Leaving the ANSF to front a wider eradication campaign, ISAF narrowed its focus ‘to target drug lords and drug labs’.<sup>1201</sup> However, no matter which way this combination worked, the ‘aggressive pursuit of eradication’ had already ‘alienated many peasant farmers and resulted in some of them turning against US and NATO forces’.<sup>1202</sup>

For Goodhand, eradication was counterproductive for state-building.<sup>1203</sup> He argues that ISAF’s state-building was too ideologically-driven and that the opium trade could have been more limited if a more utilitarian strategy pragmatically tolerating some corruption was chosen instead.<sup>1204</sup> This might have strengthened basic governance and provided local economic benefits: ‘If rulers are able to build institutions of joint extraction [of opium resources], lootable resources can produce political order by providing the revenues to govern’.<sup>1205</sup> ‘Joint extraction’ between government and private actors is achieved either when rulers apply ‘coercion or legal instruments’ as a means ‘to deny private actors independent access to resources’ or when offering tax incentives or amnesties for these actors

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<sup>1197</sup> Ron Synovitz, ‘Afghanistan: UN Antidrug Chief Wants NATO to Destroy Opium’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 12 September 2006, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1071273.html> (accessed 19 August 2022).

<sup>1198</sup> Synovitz, ‘Afghanistan: UN Antidrug Chief Wants NATO To Destroy Opium’.

<sup>1199</sup> Synovitz, ‘Afghanistan: UN Antidrug Chief Wants NATO To Destroy Opium’.

<sup>1200</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘NATO Rejects Russian Call for Afghan Poppy Spraying’, 24 March 2010, available at: [https://www.rferl.org/a/NATO\\_Russia\\_Can\\_Contribute\\_More\\_To\\_Afghan\\_War\\_Effort/1992808.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/NATO_Russia_Can_Contribute_More_To_Afghan_War_Effort/1992808.html) (accessed 19 August 2022).

<sup>1201</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, ‘NATO Rejects Russian Call’.

<sup>1202</sup> John A. Glaze, *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing US Counternarcotics Strategy*, Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>1203</sup> Goodhand, ‘Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?’, p. 405.

<sup>1204</sup> Goodhand, ‘Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?’, p.407.

<sup>1205</sup> Goodhand, ‘Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?’, p.407.

to join 'joint' arrangements.<sup>1206</sup> Goodhand concedes that 'patronage and corruption' is probable in negotiations for 'joint extraction'.<sup>1207</sup> Corruption therefore becomes a 'necessary evil' to allow a political order where 'joint extraction' creates revenue for more coherent governance and when some economic benefits are then redistributed to the wider population.

Goodhand argues that political order based on this will likely reduce violence because conflict is 'bad for business', both private actors and rulers benefiting from opium trade will not want to see this trade destroyed.<sup>1208</sup> From this angle, opium production can interweave with political patterns in Afghan society to support peace. ISAF's heavy-handed opium-eradication approach thus unwisely violated this 'eco-system' for utilitarian stability and prolonged violent insecurity. Goodhand argues that ISAF's eradication policy forced the Karzai government into a 'dual legitimacy trap' where its support for opium eradication weakened domestic support, but it still retained this priority because it strengthened its 'external legitimacy' from West governments and IOs.<sup>1209</sup>

Taliban funding from global opium markets allowed its insurgency to increase volatility. In Western minds, the risk of Afghanistan reemerging as a base for global terrorism showed little sign of abating. When the UK passed the 200 soldier fatality mark in Afghanistan in 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown came under pressure from some families of the deceased. To global media attention, one family publicly denounced UK efforts in Afghanistan as 'effectively pointless'.<sup>1210</sup> Colonel Richard Kemp, commander of UK forces in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2004, described the UK's 200 soldier fatalities as 'a very significant milestone', elaborating that 'there will be questions asked about whether what we're achieving in Afghanistan, and what we're hoping to do in Afghanistan is worth this number of British soldiers' lives'.<sup>1211</sup> A public opinion poll in the UK in 2009 claimed that 'Fifty-seven percent said troops should not be fighting in Afghanistan, and only 13 percent said it was "very clear" why troops were there'.<sup>1212</sup> Brown insisted that continued British support remained vital, emphasising ISAF as a 'vital mission' and framing state fragility in Afghanistan as carrying serious global risks: 'Three-quarters of the terrorist plots that hit Britain derive from the mountain areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan and it is to make Britain safe and the rest of the world safe that we must make sure we honour our commitment [in Afghanistan]'.<sup>1213</sup>

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<sup>1206</sup> Goodhand, 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?', p.407.

<sup>1207</sup> Goodhand, 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?', p.407.

<sup>1208</sup> Goodhand, 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?', p. 415.

<sup>1209</sup> Goodhand, 'Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace?', p. 417.

<sup>1210</sup> AFP, 'Brown Defends Afghan Mission as UK Death Toll Creeps Higher', *France 24*, 17 August 2009, available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20090817-brown-defends-afghan-mission-uk-death-toll-creeps-higher-> (accessed 9 February 2022).

<sup>1211</sup> AFP, 'Brown Defends Afghan Mission'.

<sup>1212</sup> AFP, 'Brown Defends Afghan Mission'.

<sup>1213</sup> AFP, 'Brown Defends Afghan Mission'.

With a history of lengthy imperial military campaigns, this domestic pressure on Brown gives an indication into how UK public tolerance for expeditionary operations has recently dropped. The UK approached its eighth year at war in Afghanistan by 2009, 200 fatalities was relatively low compared to UK military campaigns of similar duration in earlier periods. Brown's insistence that a fragile Afghanistan remained a global risk did not renew public unity behind Britain's ISAF contribution, even though London had been attacked in a serious instance of terrorism in July 2005, motivated by 'opposition to [previous Prime Minister] Blair's wars [in Afghanistan and Iraq]'.<sup>1214</sup> Indicating how global risks evolve and manifest, the July 2005 attacks in London did not result from a physically traceable transnational chain like 9/11 did, but from 'blowback' caused by 'home-grown terrorists' radicalised by Muslim suffering blamed on the West's GWOT military campaigns.<sup>1215</sup>

## 7.5. Conclusion

Caution, scepticism and criticism on large US military deployments guided Obama's political instincts on the situation in Afghanistan. Some US policy-makers, most prominently Vice- President Biden, believed that links between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban were over-exaggerated and that destroying Al-Qaeda's global terrorism network needed to be the main priority for Washington. Biden's supporters understood that risks from Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan might be managed without a large ground force deployment. Al-Qaeda networks could be dealt with 'surgically' with targeted US drone strikes and/or SOF raids. Most US military leaders did not see this approach as effective to reduce future dangers. For them, stronger COIN reinforced by a larger troop deployment could defeat the Taliban. Stabilisation and stronger state-building for Afghanistan could then prevent the return of global risks. In his ultimate decision to sanction a 'surge' for Afghanistan, Obama agreed to increase the US military presence by 30,000 troops. At first glance, this does not seem like a 'safety first' action, but it was a move that came with many strings attached. Following the risk society's preference for 'short and sharp' military campaigns, this deployment had a deadline. Under the logic that some short-term sacrifice could bring longer-term risk reduction, Obama's caveats were as much about US domestic politics and 'safety first' concerns as they were about what stabilisation in Afghanistan required. Even in a best-case scenario, it was unrealistic to think that transformative stabilisation might be achieved over an 18-month timetable without significant military measures still being needed afterwards, even for peacekeeping, ANSF training, or lighter combat functions.

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<sup>1214</sup> Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Rhiannon Vickers, 'Blowback' for Britain?: Blair, Bush, and the War in Iraq', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2007, p. 205.

<sup>1215</sup> Kennedy-Pipe and Vickers, 'Blowback' for Britain?', p. 205.

ISAF's showdown with the Taliban might be viewed as casting doubt on Beck's claim that risk society tendencies are universally globalising. Different ideological, economic and political factors combined to ensure that a long-term war benefitted Taliban objectives. This is a profound contrast from the risk society's rationale for war that, if waged, must be 'short and sharp' with minimal risk. Creating an important advantage for asymmetric warfare, Taliban resilience frustrated NATO governments impatient for progress in stabilisation. NATO was continually and often correctly concerned by global risks reemerging from Afghanistan's security situation. Perceived as a 'centre of gravity' for stabilisation, volatile southern Afghanistan epitomised a global periphery. The Taliban drew its main strengths from its local Afghan commanders and supporters, but its campaign against ISAF still produced global inputs and outputs. Funding, 'foreign fighters' and battlefield tactics imported from abroad galvanised its insurgency. The continuing risk of global terrorism and an enormous rise in illicit opium exports from Afghanistan were global outputs causing difficulties closer to home for NATO governments. ISAF was accused of not being utilitarian enough when responding to opium production. This deviates from the theoretical expectation that the risk society will prefer steadfast utilitarian preferences. Ideological objections to the illicit narcotics trade led to eradication policies when 'joint extraction' might have been a better pragmatic alternative to produce opiates and then generate revenue for wider social development. As well as weakening a vital Taliban funding stream, this might also have reduced some violent local backlashes against ISAF. Proponents of 'joint extraction' are unclear on how this would have affected Afghanistan's position as a major opium exporter, but it might have been 'good enough' to stop the Taliban's close control over its trade, and thereafter to reduce the violent impact of its insurgency.

## 8. FRAGMENTED RESOLVE

### 8.1. Introduction

With the US calling for global collective action to underpin stabilisation, state fragility in Afghanistan was repeatedly emphasised as a global terrorism risk. This chapter examines the coherence and effectiveness of global collective action underpinning ISAF. The risk society prefers flexible, *ad hoc* partnerships to ‘static’ treaty-based alliances. The chapter argues that NATO experience in Afghanistan, particularly partnership with Pakistan, indicates many downsides in this cooperation. Pakistan perceived benefits received from a temporary NATO partnership as insufficient; it did not abandon clandestine support for the Taliban. US leverage to coax or coerce Pakistan to stop its Taliban support remained weak. While much less controversial, other global partners for NATO, notably Australia, Japan and South Korea still underwhelmed as ISAF contributors.

ISAF was a NATO-led mission; it was an obvious expectation for NATO allies to contribute strongly. However, analysing the contributions of the UK, Germany, France and some NATO newcomers in the CEE region, this chapter argues that NATO Europe’s cumulative contribution was mediocre. This chapter concludes that global collective action underpinning ISAF was problematically fragmented due to widespread ‘safety first’ concerns obstructing stronger military resolve. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section two examines the Obama administration’s attempts to renew regional and global efforts to address state fragility in Afghanistan once it entered office in 2009. Section three analyses the ISAF contributions of NATO’s European members and some global partners. Section four presents the chapter’s main arguments.

### 8.2. Regional and global considerations

During the early GWOT, Pakistan was a vital partner facilitating NATO stabilisation in neighbouring Afghanistan. Favoured by the risk society, Pakistan’s connection with NATO was a ‘flexible partnership’. ISAF gained important supply-routes through Pakistan; over-flight rights; and access to shared intelligence from Pakistan’s ISI. Pakistan conducted its first nuclear tests in defiance of the NPT framework in 1998. It was soon an international pariah and subject to UN sanctions.<sup>1216</sup> 9/11 followed soon after and GWOT cooperation with Washington stunningly reversed Pakistan’s fortunes. It became a crucial state for global counter-terrorism. Partnership with the US brought Pakistan many benefits including US-supplied weapons systems; joint-training exercises with Western militaries; access to Western professional military education; and financial development assistance. However, as ISAF progressed, Pakistan turned out to be far from reliable

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<sup>1216</sup> Daniel Morrow and Michael Carriere, ‘The Economic Impacts of the 1998 Sanctions on India and Pakistan’, *The Non-Proliferation Review*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1999, pp. 1–16.

in wider efforts against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Under the knowledge or even assistance from Pakistan's government or its ISI, the Pakistani Taliban established a strong operational presence in the FATA that straddles Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan.<sup>1217</sup> The Pakistani Taliban interlinked with the Afghan Taliban and some 'foreign fighters' to reinforce a formidable insurgency against ISAF in Afghanistan.

### 8.2.1. Plotting regional solutions

From Washington, the wider situation in South Asia that fed instability in Afghanistan was perceived as an open-ended 'reflexive security dilemma'. Early in his first presidential term, Obama attempted to redefine the reference points to better guide US engagement in this region. Experienced diplomat, Richard Holbrooke, served as US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan between 2009 and 2010. Perceiving many serious problems obstructing stability in Afghanistan as interlinked with the political situation in Pakistan, Holbrooke proposed a redefined 'AfPak' focus.<sup>1218</sup> Uncannily similar to risk theory vocabulary, Holbrooke described 'AfPak' as 'bureaucratic shorthand'.<sup>1219</sup> 'AfPak' has origins in the 2008 US Presidential Campaign when Holbrooke proposed that "There is a theatre of war, that I would call AfPak, with two fronts an eastern front and a western front".<sup>1220</sup> For Holbrooke, in the west, in Afghanistan, NATO's COIN against the Taliban must limit possibilities for Al-Qaeda's return. However, success was interdependent with Pakistan. ISAF needed to convince its leaders and public opinion to show less tolerance for militants.<sup>1221</sup> Soon entering mainstream US policy discussions, 'AfPak' banished delusions that stabilisation could be achieved with an isolated focus on Afghanistan. Despite this advantage, 'AfPak' was diplomatically controversial.

For Pakistan's government, 'AfPak' was a label portraying Pakistan as a major part of the problem in Afghanistan and was thus 'demeaning'.<sup>1222</sup> Having acquired nuclear weapons, Pakistan's self-identified as a regional power. Contrary

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<sup>1217</sup> US House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Pakistan: Friend or Foe in the Fight Against Terrorism? Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific*. 114th Congress, 2nd Session, 12 July 2016, p. 2, available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20160712/105188/HHRG-114-FA18-Transcript-20160712.pdf>(accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1218</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmad, 'The US Af-Pak Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2010, 191–209.

<sup>1219</sup> Nirupama Subramanian, 'India Has Role to Play in Afghanistan: Holbrooke', *The Hindu*, 6 June 2009, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20090608074555/http://www.hindu.com/2009/06/06/stories/2009060659771000.htm> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1220</sup> Richard Holbrooke cited in Helene Cooper, 'Choosing Which War to Fight', *The New York Times*, 24 February 2008, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/24/weekinreview/24cooper.html> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1221</sup> Nivi Manchanda, *Imaging Afghanistan: The History and Politics of Imperial Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 95.

<sup>1222</sup> Subramanian, 'India Has Role to Play in Afghanistan'.

demarcation from Washington as being strategically entangled with Afghanistan, a notoriously fragile state, was greatly deprecating. Diplomatic expectations aside, cross-border militancy originating from western Pakistan was central to ISAF's operational predicament. A complete regional analysis led to India's tentative inclusion as further problematic vector. Pakistan's protracted rivalry with New Delhi dominates its strategic centre of gravity. India has nuclear weapons and a larger conventional military. The conventional rivalry is asymmetric in India's favour but Islamabad aims to compensate by weaponising Islamic militants for an irregular response.<sup>1223</sup> A fragile Afghanistan is perceived as a 'security vacuum' that India and Pakistan see through a bitterly competitive zero-sum lens.<sup>1224</sup> ISAF's military drawdown after 2011 was claimed as particularly bad news for India. A smaller ISAF in Afghanistan could risk more Islamic militancy spreading in the wider region. Covert support for the Taliban might further galvanise Pakistan influence over this outcome.<sup>1225</sup>

Grasping the 'reflexive security dilemma' in South Asia, US policymakers attempted to frame problems of regional interconnection that overlapped with tense strategic rivalries within an 'AfPakIndia' framework. Finding reference points for policy guidance is rarely done without wider political pressures. Pakistan wanted to be recognised as an indispensable regional power. India had even higher aspirations, perceiving itself as a rising global power with ambitions for a permanent UNSC seat.<sup>1226</sup> Seemingly being coupled with its bitter rival Pakistan in US discourse as affecting insecurity in Afghanistan alarmed Indian leadership. They lobbied fervently to be omitted from Obama's redefined Afghanistan policy embracing wider region considerations.<sup>1227</sup> India and the Kashmir dispute were eventually left out from the Terms of Reference defining Holbrooke's role as Special Representative. This was a political decision that removed an otherwise important strategic emphasis with potential to better focus US diplomacy on mediating tensions between India and Pakistan, thus lowering Afghanistan as a staging post for proxy competition.<sup>1228</sup>

Commentators claimed that India's absence from 'AfPak' could still have led to increased bilateral diplomacy between Washington and New Delhi where the wider regional situation around Afghanistan could have been beneficially discussed. These arguments are far from convincing. If one or multiple bilateral tracks were the most optimal response; the value of quasi-regional policy visions like 'AfPak' is dubious in the first instance. Ultimately, while having some merit

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<sup>1223</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, p. 96.

<sup>1224</sup> Shashank Joshi, 'India's Role in a Changing Afghanistan', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2014, p.82.

<sup>1225</sup> Joshi, 'India's Role in a Changing Afghanistan', pp. 82–102.

<sup>1226</sup> Vinay Kaura and Chakravarti Singh, 'India and the Geopolitics of UNSC Permanent Membership', *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2021, pp. 271–285.

<sup>1227</sup> Laura Rozen, 'India's Stealth Lobbying Against Holbrooke's Brief', *Foreign Policy*, 24 January 2009, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/01/24/indias-stealth-lobbying-against-holbrookes-brief/> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1228</sup> Rozen, 'India's Stealth Lobbying Against Holbrooke's Brief'.

to organise important regional reference points, ‘AfPak’ survived for only a year before US policymakers saw it as causing more diplomatic trouble than it was worth. Holbrooke remarked in 2010 that ‘We [the US] can’t use it [AfPak] anymore because it does not please people in Pakistan, for understandable reasons’.<sup>1229</sup>

### 8.2.2. Global collective action

The Obama administration opened discussions on a new Afghanistan policy by trying to embrace wider regional dimensions contributing to state fragility. However, much broader global risks still surfaced in Obama’s insistence that Afghanistan could not be left unstable. His speeches either directly or indirectly allude to ‘common security’ needing to be upheld with global collective action.<sup>1230</sup> Attempting to repair relations between the US and the Muslim world, Obama’s spoke in Cairo in 2009 to emphasise the commonality of many global risks:

When a new flu infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean.<sup>1231</sup>

While stressing the Al-Qaeda threat to NATO, Obama argued that Islamic ‘extremists’ violently destabilise many Muslim societies.<sup>1232</sup> Insisting that ‘none of us should tolerate these extremists’, Obama attempted to compel wider MENA support to reinforce global action against militant  *jihadists*.<sup>1233</sup>

An emphasis on global risks was also evident in Obama remarks on US relations with Pakistan. In March 2009, Obama announced his ‘new strategy’ for Afghanistan and Pakistan. US society was reeling from the turmoil of the Global Financial Crisis. Obama justified a further \$1.5 billion in US development assistance for Pakistan for the following five years, claiming that the US public ‘must understand that this is a down payment on our own future – because the security of America and Pakistan is shared’.<sup>1234</sup> Calling for a ‘new sense of shared responsibility’, Obama emphasised that ‘we must isolate al Qaeda from the Pakistani people’, arguing that violent militancy thriving along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border had risks for the US, regional and global security combined.<sup>1235</sup>

Financial assistance, ‘resources that will build schools and roads and hospitals’ was an exercise in US liberal ‘soft power’, an attempt to win ‘hearts and

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<sup>1229</sup> Richard Holbrooke cited in Josh Rogin, ‘Team Obama Scuttles the Term “AfPak”’, *Foreign Policy*, 20 January 2010, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/20/team-obama-scuttles-the-term-afpak/> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1230</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1231</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University’.

<sup>1232</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University’.

<sup>1233</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University’.

<sup>1234</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’.

<sup>1235</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan’.

minds' in Pakistan.<sup>1236</sup> Even so, resonating in the phrase 'down payment on our future', this rationale still connected with the risk society's preventative focus. Obama reasoned that achieving stronger support from Pakistan for ISAF would help to limit the global projection of *jihadist* violence. His framing of Afghanistan-Pakistan border security as having broader global consequences displays a 'global-local' perception. Obama's outlook towards Afghanistan and Pakistan began with some small financial sacrifice in his presidency's early months as he continued to carefully consider the serious military sacrifices that deploying more US ground forces to Afghanistan would involve. Obama's 'safety first' and 'common security' inclinations for his eventual 'surge' decision were later revealed in his 2009 speech at West Point: 'If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow'.<sup>1237</sup>

Harnessing global collective action for stabilisation in Afghanistan came in Obama's proposal for a US-led international contact group. Obama promised to 'forge a new Contact Group for Afghanistan and Pakistan' to include 'all who should have a stake in the security of the region – our [US] NATO allies and other partners, but also the Central Asian states, the Gulf nations and Iran; Russia, India and China'.<sup>1238</sup> Diverse and divergent interests would usually divide this broad grouping, but Obama perceived a common interest to stop Afghanistan returning as source of global terrorism as likely to drive cooperation: 'None of these nations benefit from a base for al Qaeda terrorists, and a region that descends into chaos. All have a stake in the promise of lasting peace and security and development'.<sup>1239</sup> Refreshing US support for multilateral institutions Following Bush's divisive unilateralism, Obama welcomed expanded UN involvement in Afghanistan: 'we seek greater progress for its mandate to coordinate international action and assistance, and to strengthen Afghan institutions'.<sup>1240</sup>

Obama's ideas to invigorate global collective action to resolve state fragility in Afghanistan connect with Beck's theorising that pressure to manage transnational risks reshapes cooperation in global politics.<sup>1241</sup> However, in practice, thinking that a multitude of stakeholder governments, international institutions and NGOs might all perceive state fragility in Afghanistan as a common risk in a similar way to NATO was naive. Contrary to cooperating more closely with ISAF to minimise global terrorism and instability, most non-Western stakeholders continued to prioritise overriding geopolitical aims. Washington has multiple allies in the Persian Gulf, but these governments turned a 'blind eye' to

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<sup>1236</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan'.

<sup>1237</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward'.

<sup>1238</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan'.

<sup>1239</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan'.

<sup>1240</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan'.

<sup>1241</sup> Beck, *What is Globalization?*, pp. 10–11.

citizens funding the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.<sup>1242</sup> Afghanistan was location for proxies and strategic competition. Pakistan's clandestine political investment in the Taliban often gave it the upper hand, but India and Iran sometimes countered Islamabad by supporting different factions. Tehran was especially interested in Afghanistan's Shia minority.<sup>1243</sup> Russia assisted ISAF by facilitating the NDN, a more reliable alternative supply-route compared to ISAF's routes through Pakistan. There were later allegations that Moscow offered bounty payments to the Taliban in return for killing US soldiers, but US intelligence agencies claim that evidence for this is 'inconclusive'.<sup>1244</sup> Throughout the 2010s, China shifted most of the risks for state-building in Afghanistan onto NATO. Beijing was content to focus its diplomacy on trade in raw materials with Kabul.<sup>1245</sup>

### 8.2.3. Partnership failure with Pakistan

Obama tried to expand partnerships for stabilisation but he largely failed to lead in strengthening global collective action for state-building in Afghanistan. Risks 'aggravated' by globalisation create a security environment with a faster 'tempo'. Compared with longer-term, 'static', mutual guarantee-based alliances, shorter-term, *ad hoc* partnerships preferred by the risk society allow for security cooperation that can be quickly reformed and redistributed. 'Flexible partnerships' are advantageous when an urgent response is needed. However, NATO's partnership with Pakistan is a telling example that some partnerships were also costly for ISAF. A longer-term focus in 'static' guarantee-based alliances promises enduring benefits that, by contrast, are rare in *ad hoc* partnering.<sup>1246</sup> The US is usually the alliance leader and is thus normally the main producer of benefits. Power asymmetry enables Washington to marshal allies in line with its priorities.

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<sup>1242</sup> See Charlotta Gall, 'Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Supports Afghan Government', *The New York Times*, 6 December 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/saudi-arabia-afghanistan.html> (accessed 3 August 2021). And US House of Representatives, *Committee on Foreign Affairs, Assessing the US-Qatar Relationship. Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa*. 115th Congress, 1st Session, 26 July 2017, p. 3, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115hhrg26427/pdf/CHRG-115hhrg26427.pdf> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1243</sup> Mir H. Sadat and James P. Hughes, 'US-Iran Engagement Through Afghanistan', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2010, p. 32.

<sup>1244</sup> Ken Dilanian and Mike Memoli, 'Remember Those Russian Bounties for Dead US Troops? Biden Admin Says the CIA Intel is Not Conclusive', *NBC News*, 16 April 2021, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/remember-those-russian-bounties-dead-u-s-troops-biden-admin-n1264215> (accessed 3 August 2022).

<sup>1245</sup> BBC News, 'China and Afghanistan Sign Economic and Security Deals', 23 September 2012, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-19693005> (accessed 4 August 2022).

<sup>1246</sup> Some of the following paragraphs draw from a paper that the author has already published, see Eoin Micheál McNamara, 'US Global Security Partnerships in the Biden Era: Twilight or Regeneration?', *Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Briefing Paper 345*, July 2022, available at: [https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/bp345\\_eoin-mcnamara\\_us-global-security-partnerships-in-the-biden-era.pdf](https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/bp345_eoin-mcnamara_us-global-security-partnerships-in-the-biden-era.pdf) (accessed 7 August 2022).

*Ad hoc* partnerships promise fewer ‘static’ benefits and are more precarious. This reduces US leverage to influence deviant partners. Over the past decade, US-Pakistan relations illustrate this pattern.

ISAF depended on Pakistan to support stabilisation in Afghanistan. Pakistan facilitated vital supplies for ISAF and NATO also relied on Islamabad to disrupt Taliban militants on its own territory for which is proved frustratingly unreliable. When ISAF’s ‘surge’ peaked between 2009 and 2011, approximately 49 percent of its supplies were transported through Pakistan.<sup>1247</sup> Islamabad provided important local intelligence for ISAF during the early GWOT, thus helping to satisfy the risk society’s preference for preventative operations. NATO raids were undertaken against Al-Qaeda or Taliban commanders before they could consider attacks on ISAF or collaboration with global *jihadists*.

Once Pakistan’s covert support for the Taliban became fully apparent; Islamabad became an intelligence liability rather than an asset. Nevertheless, ISAF’s dependence on Pakistan was still pragmatically reinforced. This did not stop NATO supplies being jeopardised at critical times. In 2011, the US did not consult Pakistan before its Navy Seal raid that killed bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, revealing profound mistrust and animosity in US-Pakistan relations.<sup>1248</sup> Amid prevalent confusion at Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan, relations between Islamabad and Washington further worsened in 2011 when a US helicopter attack killed 28 soldiers from Pakistan at a border outpost.<sup>1249</sup> Pakistan halted its consent for NATO’s ground supply routes. Moves to restore these were not made until summer 2012.<sup>1250</sup> Returning other supply lines took even longer with Pakistan enforcing a ‘12 month blockade’ on oil supply transport for ISAF.<sup>1251</sup> ISAF maintained supplies through other routes, but Pakistan obstructed optimal supply levels.<sup>1252</sup> Benefits received from Western partnerships were insufficient to override domestic pressure on Islamabad to withdraw cooperation when controversies with ISAF arose or for Pakistan to stop covertly supporting the Taliban. The risk society favours *ad hoc* cooperation, but not unlike an intra-alliance security dilemma, Pakistan’s behaviour shows that this cooperation can allow the weaker

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<sup>1247</sup> Jasmine Coleman, ‘Pakistan Halts NATO Supplies after Attack Leaves Soldiers Dead’, *The Guardian*, 26 November 2011, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/26/pakistan-halts-nato-supplies-attack> (accessed 7 August 2022).

<sup>1248</sup> Chris Allbritton and Augustine Anthony, ‘Pakistan Says Had No Knowledge of US Bin Laden Raid’, *Reuters*, 3 May 2015, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-binladen-pakistan-statement-idUSTRE74242R20110503> (accessed 7 August 2022).

<sup>1249</sup> Coleman, ‘Pakistan Halts NATO Supplies’.

<sup>1250</sup> NATO, ‘NATO Secretary General Welcomes Pakistani Announcement on Supply Lines’, 3 July 2012, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_88895.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_88895.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed 7 August 2022).

<sup>1251</sup> Lisa Lundquist, ‘Pakistan to Restore NATO’s Afghan Oil Supply Line After 12-Month Hiatus’, *Long War Journal*, 15 November 2012, available at: [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/11/pakistan\\_restoring\\_natos\\_afgha.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/11/pakistan_restoring_natos_afgha.php) (accessed 7 August 2022).

<sup>1252</sup> Emma Graham-Harrison, ‘Factbox: NATO Supply Routes into Afghanistan’, *Reuters*, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-pakistan-isaf-idUSTRE7AP0GV20111126> (7 August 2022).

side to exploit a stronger power, if that power is ‘entrapped’ needing cooperation to continue.<sup>1253</sup>

### 8.3. Alliance expectations

Most theory on ‘entrapment’ focuses on larger powers leading expeditionary operations with smaller allies supporting the actions. Having less to gain from these operations, smaller allies still fear resource drainage.<sup>1254</sup> Risk-sharing between NATO allies in ISAF did not always follow this pattern. ‘Non-Article 5’ expeditionary missions were NATO’s main *modus operandi* in the 1990s and 2000s. Before collective defence under Article 5 returned as a priority with Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, NATO’s leading powers sometimes even perceived the organisation nearly as flexibly as with *ad hoc* partnering.<sup>1255</sup> NATO was an additional ‘pool of military power’ where coalition leaders could find ‘enablers’ to reinforce operations.<sup>1256</sup> This had some advantages, but too much ‘non-Article 5’ flexibility often backfired on the US and the UK – the main powers leading ISAF. A permissive atmosphere for risk-shifting prevailed among allies. This sometimes inhibited coherent stabilisation policies. NATO allies and partners contributing ISAF have been divided into three different categories: ‘owners’; ‘strivers’; and ‘onlookers’.<sup>1257</sup>

#### 8.3.1. Fragmented trust

The US was ISAF’s main ‘coalition owner’. Much discussion on NATO risk- and burden-sharing is focused on US disappointment at its allies, but Washington has also been criticised for not being wholly inclusive. During the important ‘surge’ years, Obama’s promise to re-establish a multilateral approach did not always apply for some ISAF operations.<sup>1258</sup> Once it took command for ISAF in 2006, the US military dominated the mission. Washington was the recognised ‘coalition owner’; of this was accepted by other NATO members. However, especially stringent dominance when McChrystal was ISAF commander caused some tense internal ‘resentment’.<sup>1259</sup> McChrystal was reportedly ‘very reluctant’

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<sup>1253</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, ‘The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics’, *World Politics*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1984, p. 473.

<sup>1254</sup> Snyder, ‘The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics’, pp. 461–495. And Erik Männik, ‘Small States: Invited to NATO – Able to Contribute?’, *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 22.

<sup>1255</sup> David Yost, ‘The New NATO and Collective Security’, *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1998, p. 142.

<sup>1256</sup> Mowle and Sacko, ‘Global NATO: Bandwagoning in a Unipolar World’, pp. 597–598.

<sup>1257</sup> Péter Marton and Nik Hynek, ‘What Makes ISAF S/tick: An Investigation of the Politics of Coalition Burden-Sharing’, *Defence Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2012, p. 541.

<sup>1258</sup> Olivier Schmitt, ‘International Organization at War: NATO Practices in the Afghan Campaign’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2017, pp. 507–508.

<sup>1259</sup> Schmitt, ‘International Organization at War’, pp. 507–508.

to even allow non-US or UK officers in his office.<sup>1260</sup> Arrangements marginally improved when Petraeus succeeded McChrystal, but US commanders still exerted close control over ISAF's OPLAN.<sup>1261</sup>

Within NATO, operational planning by field commanders is officially subject to scrutiny from SHAPE and SACEUR. Both can make revisions before an OPLAN goes to the Military Committee for approval by all NATO members.<sup>1262</sup> When McChrystal or Petraeus were at ISAF's command, US pressure ensured collective NATO procedures were frequently bypassed or they simply rubber-stamped the original US plan.<sup>1263</sup> Tensions with Washington escalated on some occasions when some dissatisfied allies pressed for OPLAN revisions. Some European allies objected to McChrystal's use of SOFs and night raids.<sup>1264</sup> Such disputes show a vicious circle in NATO's risk-sharing politics. NATO has historically been praised for internally institutionalising de-nationalised and multi-lateral security solutions.<sup>1265</sup> Despite asymmetries in military power, institutionalised consultation gives European members a disproportionately large influence on US strategies.<sup>1266</sup> Consultation was often denied by the US throughout the 2000s. Bush switched Washington's focus away from NATO to favour of US-led 'coalitions of the willing'. Under Obama, US ISAF commanders dominated military planning for Afghanistan. Washington did not want to relax its dominance because it did not wholly trust its European allies with a larger leadership role in ISAF after 2009. This fragmented ISAF. US leaders feared that more European influence on the mission would weaken COIN. With less influence to shape the mission, Europeans were dis-incentivised from taking greater military risks to support stabilisation.

### 8.3.2. US-UK disputes

The UK perceived similar global risks emanating from Afghanistan as the US. London held the most 'coalition ownership' after Washington, but some troubling US-UK divides ultimately emerged. Defeating the insurgency in Helmand was the crucial 'centre of gravity' that Obama's troop 'surge' was dedicated to. The UK had established Task Force Helmand with support from Denmark and Estonia in April 2006. Helmand was then 'a remote backwater' – a security vacuum that needed ISAF to stop falling under Taliban or Al-Qaeda control.<sup>1267</sup> Unfortunately, the arrival of the UK-led presence hastened the

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<sup>1260</sup> Schmitt, 'International Organization at War', pp. 507–508.

<sup>1261</sup> Schmitt, 'International Organization at War', pp. 507–508.

<sup>1262</sup> Schmitt, 'International Organization at War', pp. 507–508.

<sup>1263</sup> Schmitt, 'International Organization at War', pp. 507–508.

<sup>1264</sup> Schmitt, 'International Organization at War', pp. 507–508.

<sup>1265</sup> Morgan, 'NATO and European Security', p. 62.

<sup>1266</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies: The European Influence on US Foreign Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

<sup>1267</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Introduction.

‘accidental guerrilla’ effect; it was soon a target for insurgent violence.<sup>1268</sup> Violence escalated quickly. By early autumn 2006, British forces were besieged in Helmand’s administrative capital, Musa Qala. After intense negotiations brokered by local elders concerned at the destruction constant fire fights between ISAF and the Taliban was wreaking, Britain withdrew its forces, leaving Musa Qala under long-standing elders.

Withdrawal from Musa Qala was driven by strong ‘safety first’ concerns. Supplies and ammunition were running low. Major Adam Jowett was a British officer centrally involved in negotiations confirming the UK’s decision. He discussed the consequences for UK public opinion. Continuing to fight for Musa Qala was likely to hurt the wider campaign: ‘Downed helicopters and rescue efforts live long in the public consciousness, and Task Force Helmand’s commanders had no desire to star in the British *Black Hawk Down*’.<sup>1269</sup> Jowett’s commanding officer, Brigadier Butler, insisted that withdrawal from Musa Qaleh ‘was not an admission of defeat’ but that ‘professionally, personally and morally I [Butler] could not keep my troops in such constant danger without a viable casevac system in place.’<sup>1270</sup> ‘Casevac’ is military shorthand for casualty evacuation. Butler highlighted the treacherous risks that continuing to fight for Musa Qaleh could have posed: ‘Do you send in another helicopter into a high-threat area to try and rescue the helicopter that was down, and the casualties?’<sup>1271</sup>

Britain’s solution for this predicament did not please US commanders. UK withdrawal from Musa Qaleh happened under the ISAF command of UK General Richards, but he was soon succeeded by the US General McNeill in February 2007. McNeill was ‘far from a fan’ of Britain’s approach, perceiving its COIN posture as weak and likely to concede more ground to the Taliban.<sup>1272</sup> He stressed a more robust military approach.<sup>1273</sup> The Taliban expanded control over Musa Qaleh, but ISAF took the city back for a spell after late 2007.<sup>1274</sup> This US-UK controversy occurred during Bush’s presidential tenure, but its optics lingered into the Obama era. Reflecting on the battles for Musa Qaleh, one of the elders left to govern the city, Wakil Haji Mohammed Naim declared that ‘Most of the fighters weren’t real Taleban’, before explaining that ‘There were some outsiders, but most were local men who were angry with the [Afghan] Government, its robbery and corruption, who were persuaded to fight against the

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<sup>1268</sup> Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*.

<sup>1269</sup> Major Adam Jowett With Geraint Jones, *No Way Out: The Searing True Story of Men Under Siege*, London: Pan Books, 2018, Chapter 17.

<sup>1270</sup> Brigadier Ed Butler cited in Patrick Bishop, *3 Para. Real Combat. Real Heroes. True Story*, London: William Collins, 2007, p. 254.

<sup>1271</sup> Brigadier Butler cited in Bishop, *3 Para.*, p. 254.

<sup>1272</sup> Jason Burke, ‘Taliban Town Seizure Throws Afghan Policy into Disarray’, *The Guardian*, 4 February 2007, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/feb/04/afghanistan.jasonburke> (accessed 8 August 2022).

<sup>1273</sup> Burke, ‘Taliban Town Seizure Throws Afghan Policy into Disarray’.

<sup>1274</sup> David Loyn, ‘Why the Battle for Musa Qala Matters’, *BBC News*, 10 December 2007, available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7137041.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7137041.stm) (accessed 9 August 2022).

foreigners by our preachers in the mosques'.<sup>1275</sup> Local anger and violent animosity towards Afghan governors and ISAF associates has roots in utilitarian 'safety first' policies pursued in the early 9/11 intervention. Contrary to committing better resources to better governance, the US-led coalition outsourced administration for southern Afghanistan to many brutal and corrupt anti-Taliban warlords and tribal 'strongmen'.

The global controversy with WikiLeaks' release of classified US diplomatic cables in 2010 sparked further trouble for relations between Washington and London. One cable sent from the US Embassy in Kabul in 2008 surveyed political sentiments in Helmand and concluded that 'We [US Embassy] and Karzai agree the British are not up to the task of securing Helmand'.<sup>1276</sup> Included comments from McNeill criticised the UK's withdrawal from Musa Qaleh and the UK military's tactics.<sup>1277</sup> With McNeill's hard-line outlook, this was unsurprising. However, further criticism from the Governor of Helmand, Gulab Mangal, to a US delegation led by Vice President Joe Biden in 2009 is even more interesting. Mangal insisted that the main problem with the UK-led Task Force was that it was estranged from local Afghans. He emphasised that 'they [UK military] must leave their bases and engage with the people'.<sup>1278</sup>

Referring to Sangin, a town in Helmand where ISAF under UK lead maintained a presence, Mangal remarked: 'Stop calling it the Sangin district and start calling it the Sangin base – all you [ISAF] have done here is built a military camp next to the city'.<sup>1279</sup> Karzai also damningly criticised the UK-led presence in Helmand, arguing that before UK deployment in 2006, the province was largely peaceful, but serious violence then emerged and 'the people are not safe'.<sup>1280</sup> Washington was struggling to maintain coalition cohesion as 'the surge' reached its midpoint in 2010. Stressing London's ISAF contribution as vital, US political and military leaders publicly refuted criticism of the UK revealed by WikiLeaks.<sup>1281</sup> Nevertheless, if claims by Afghan leaders are credible, their outlook identifies a sharp contradiction in the risk society's approach to stabilisation. The US and the UK disputed the amount of force needed for COIN. UK policy is long influenced by the 'constabulary ethic' extrapolated from its 'colonial era' to emphasise 'policing' to protect the local population and thus wins compel

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<sup>1275</sup> Wakil Haji Mohammed Naim cited in Anthony Loyd and Tahir Luddin, 'After the Fighting and Dying, The Taleban Return as British Depart', *The Times*, 30 October 2006, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/after-the-fighting-and-dying-the-taleban-return-as-british-depart-2r9xl877xsr> (accessed 9 August 2022).

<sup>1276</sup> Michel Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized in Wiki Cables', *Reuters*, 3 December 2010, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-wikileaks-afghanistan-britain-idUKTRE6B24N920101203> (accessed 10 August 2022).

<sup>1277</sup> Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized'.

<sup>1278</sup> Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized'.

<sup>1279</sup> Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized'.

<sup>1280</sup> Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized'.

<sup>1281</sup> Rose, 'British Afghan Effort Criticized'.

Afghan consent and support.<sup>1282</sup> This sometimes differed from US military outlooks when stronger force and intrusive raids against insurgent commanders were prioritised.

Observations from Afghan leaders claim that the UK was not converting its ‘constabulary ethic’ into practice very well. Karzai’s remarks indicate that the UK-led Task Force struggled to gain consent from Hemandis. In theory, the ‘constabulary ethic’ often relies on the ‘strategic corporal’. It is possible to build consent from personalised military interactions assuring the local population. This is an important for the ‘postmodern military’ during stabilisation missions, but claims that the UK military ‘bunkerised’ itself indicates that ‘safety first’ concerns were prioritised before the ‘constabulary ethic’. There is no guarantee that more peacekeeper interaction with Afghans would deliver stronger local consent or trust. Less protection and more exposure to violent attacks is a fatality risk. However, views from leaders in Sangin indicate that less ‘bunkerisation’ might have been better appreciated by local Afghans.

Further tacit US disapproval of UK performance was to come. Helmand was eventually perceived as too important to be left under UK lead. Under Brigadier General Lawrence Nicholson, the US undertook a major offensive in Helmand, Operation Khanjar, in July and August 2009. Britain’s leadership in Helmand was transferred to US command as the ‘surge’ began in earnest in 2010 when 20,000 US Marines were deployed across southern Afghanistan to reinforce stabilisation.<sup>1283</sup> Mirroring Obama’s political sentiments, Nicholson promised that US military force would be ‘big, strong and fast’ to stabilise Helmand.<sup>1284</sup> Forced into the background, the UK’s great power image was bruised.

Both ISAF and stuttering European performance for OUP in Libya in 2011 caused Obama to reflect in a 2016 interview that the US-UK ‘special relationship’ in security affairs will face jeopardy should London continue to reduce defence spending. Expressing frustration, ‘Free riders aggravate me’, Obama questioned NATO Europe’s political commitment to transatlantic risk- and burden-sharing.<sup>1285</sup> His hopes that Britain could re-establish stronger leadership in global security were dashed when Prime Minister David Cameron got ‘distracted by a range of other things’.<sup>1286</sup> This was a reference to UK domestic politics on Scottish independence and Brexit referenda between 2014 and 2016.

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<sup>1282</sup> Egnell, ‘Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan’, p. 297.

<sup>1283</sup> *The Times*, ‘American General to Take Command of British troops in Helmand Province’, 1 June 2010, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/american-general-to-take-command-of-british-troops-in-helmand-province-ld6clb6mcsw> (accessed 10 August 2022).

<sup>1284</sup> Declan Walsh, ‘Allied Forces in Helmand Begin Biggest Push of Afghanistan War’, *The Guardian*, 12 February 2010, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/12/afghanistan-allies-attack-helmand> (accessed 10 August 2022).

<sup>1285</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, ‘The Obama Doctrine: The US President Talks Through his Hardest Decisions About America’s Role in the World’, *The Atlantic*, April 2016, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/> (accessed 10 August 2022).

<sup>1286</sup> Goldberg, ‘The Obama Doctrine’.

Unbalanced risk-sharing within NATO had frustrated Obama for a while. His 2008 Presidential Campaign manifesto stressed that ‘contributing forces [to ISAF] are imposing restrictions on where their troops can operate, tying the hands of commanders on the ground’ and went on to promise that Obama ‘will work with our European allies to end these burdensome restrictions and strengthen NATO as a fighting force’.<sup>1287</sup> Nevertheless, some harsher US criticism of UK efforts in Afghanistan is claimed as ‘blatantly unfair’.<sup>1288</sup> Unlike smaller ISAF contributors, London made a ‘real contribution’ to stabilisation and ‘held the fort’ in southern Afghanistan while the US was distracted in Iraq between 2003 and 2008.<sup>1289</sup>

### 8.3.3. German caveats

Some German struggles with expeditionary operations were discussed in chapter five. Political sensitivity and ‘safety first’ casualty avoidance concerns saw Berlin self-impose many caveats on its *Bundeswehr* in Afghanistan. This affected operations, German troops ‘could use force only in self-defence and after repeated warnings to the enemy; they were not allowed to pursue retreating adversaries’.<sup>1290</sup> Its military ‘could only patrol in armoured vehicles’ for large periods of ISAF’s duration.<sup>1291</sup> Designed to keep German military fatality counts as low as possible, ‘safety first’ caveats were sometimes inadvertently counter-productive for stabilisation. For example, when patrolling, German armoured vehicles had maximised force protection that also erected a barrier with Afghan civilians. ISAF was cast as faceless at best and intimidating at worst. Berlin favoured civilian reconstruction through the PRT it led in Kunduz. Its military implemented peacekeeping to support this.

Berlin’s preferences did not always synchronise with the operational environment. Germany’s PRT was in northern Afghanistan, a location that was often stable for long spells. Berlin refused to deploy soldiers in volatile southern Afghanistan. Its caveats even obstructed assistance for other NATO allies fighting to stabilise the volatile south Afghanistan. Germany refused to support an important north-south air corridor facilitating supplies. Insurgent violence was still unavoidable, the Taliban responded to ISAF’s ‘surged’ military presence in southern Afghanistan by sometimes switching attacks to NATO targets in the north.<sup>1292</sup> Germany’s field commanders advised that caveats on ‘some offensive operations’ and some limits on using ‘heavy weapons’ be removed.<sup>1293</sup>

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<sup>1287</sup> Barack Obama, *Change We Can Believe In: Barack Obama’s Plan To Renew America’s Promise*, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008, p. 110.

<sup>1288</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, ‘Size and Reputation’, p. 136.

<sup>1289</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, ‘Size and Reputation’, p. 136.

<sup>1290</sup> Olivier Schmitt, ‘French Military Adaptation in the Afghan War: Looking Inward or Outward?’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2017, p. 586.

<sup>1291</sup> Schmitt, ‘French Military Adaptation’, p. 586.

<sup>1292</sup> Saideman and Auerswald, ‘Comparing Caveats’, p. 77.

<sup>1293</sup> Saideman and Auerswald, ‘Comparing Caveats’, p. 77.

Minister of Defence Franz Josef Jung agreed to this in April 2009, seeing this as necessary to protect German personnel. Domestic sensitivities influenced controversy. Changes were concealed from Germany's parliamentary defence committee and the wider public until June 2009.<sup>1294</sup> Uneasy public opinion made many controversies over Germany's ISAF involvement even worse.

In 2008, three Afghan civilians including one woman and two children were shot dead in Kunduz province when German troops opened fire after a vehicle the civilians were travelling in did not heed warnings to stop at a checkpoint.<sup>1295</sup> In September 2009, a German commander requested a US airstrike on two tankers 'hijacked by the Taliban', but an estimated 91 civilians were killed.<sup>1296</sup> This disastrous incident eventually ended Jung's ministerial career with accusations that he had 'withheld information about civilian casualties'.<sup>1297</sup> This atrocity is remembered with deep unease in Germany. Human rights organisations continue to shed global scrutiny on the incident. Human rights violations by the German military continue to be examined when more 'accountability' is demanded from the German officers involved.<sup>1298</sup> Even before this Kunduz airstrike, over fifty percent of Germans did not support ISAF participation in opinion polls.<sup>1299</sup> Stronger German military support for NATO allies was politically infeasible.

Germany's post-WWII 'culture of restraint' created discomfort when contributing to the expeditionary operations needed to manage global risks.<sup>1300</sup> With combat caveats, Berlin refused to contribute to ISAF where it mattered most; the combat campaign against the Taliban. Acknowledging these problems and remembering the scandals, some reflective German commentary still implies satisfactory performance against these odds. Between 1994 and 2011, before 9/11, Kunduz was a rare northern stronghold for Taliban rule. This sometimes elevated

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<sup>1294</sup> Saideman and Auerswald, 'Comparing Caveats'. p. 77.

<sup>1295</sup> DPA News Agency, 'Three Civilians Shot Dead at German Checkpoint in Afghanistan', *Deutsche Welle*, 29 August 2008, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/three-civilians-shot-dead-at-german-checkpoint-in-afghanistan/a-3602953> (accessed 14 August 2022).

<sup>1296</sup> European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), 'The Kunduz Airstrike – German Armed Forces Go Unpunished', March 2021, available at: [https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Q\\_As/QA\\_Kunduz\\_February2021.pdf](https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Q_As/QA_Kunduz_February2021.pdf) (accessed 14 August 2022).

<sup>1297</sup> Peter Walker, 'German Minister Quits in Row over NATO Air Strike that Killed Civilians', *The Guardian*, 27 November 2009, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/27/franz-josef-jung-nato-afghanistan> (accessed 14 August 2022).

<sup>1298</sup> ECCHR, 'The Kunduz Airstrike'.

<sup>1299</sup> Neil King, 'Time to Deal With Afghanistan Escalation Says Top German General', *Deutsche Welle*, 23 July 2009, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/time-to-deal-with-afghanistan-escalation-says-top-german-general/a-4509046> (accessed 15 August 2022).

<sup>1300</sup> Thomas U. Berger, 'Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan', in Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 317–356.

stabilisation efforts in the province to a place of ‘symbolic’ importance in the German debate.<sup>1301</sup>

As Germany began its PRT withdrawal from Kunduz in 2013, Florian Wiegand reflected that ‘The indisputable successes of the last ten years [in Kunduz] have faded into the background’ due to scandals involving the German military; public scepticism over ISAF’s ‘legitimacy’; and worsening security in the province.<sup>1302</sup> However, despite many mistakes, Wiegand insisted that:

the German presence in and around Kunduz also led to new streets and schools being built, and to the establishment of health centres, teacher training posts with up to 1,600 students and a tomato-canning-factory. Police were trained and craftsmen were supported. Hundreds of projects, large and small, were organised, some by development aid workers independent of the *Bundeswehr*, but all of them around the military camp. The camp in itself became a significant factor in the town’s [Kunduz city] economy.

Emphasising positive developments, this account omits some detrimental aspects for stabilisation. It inadvertently highlights how German PRT ‘bunkerisation’ altered the local social structure. Civilian development providers were unsurprisingly keen to work proximate to the ISAF military base. Military bases and their wider environs are protected by different security cordons on approach. This satisfied the ‘safety first’ concerns of civilian PRT workers, but, blurring the divide between civilian assistance and military force, it also created physical and social barriers between civilian organisations and the Afghans they aimed to help.

### 8.3.4. French indifference

France’s risk-sharing performance in ISAF indicates some contradictory tendencies. When the ‘surge’ began in 2009, France had deployed 4,000 soldiers to Afghanistan, placing Paris well behind the US and the UK and narrowly behind Germany on numbers.<sup>1303</sup> Location and deployment role can sometimes have a military value greater than raw numbers. Responding to US calls for a stronger NATO posture against the Taliban in 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy sanctioned

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<sup>1301</sup> Florian Weigand, ‘Kunduz after the *Bundeswehr* Withdrawal’, available at: <https://learnrgerman.dw.com/en/kunduz-the-end-of-germanys-peaceful-army/a-17138615#> (accessed 26 August 2022).

<sup>1302</sup> Weigand, ‘Kunduz after the *Bundeswehr* Withdrawal’.

<sup>1303</sup> Tolo News, ‘Last French Combat Forces Leave Afghanistan’, 15 December 2012, available at: <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/last-french-combat-forces-leave-afghanistan> (accessed 16 August 2022). Numbers for the UK cited from National Army Museum, ‘War in Afghanistan’, available at: <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/war-afghanistan#:~:text=The%20war%20in%20Afghanistan%20sucked,troops%20in%20Helmand%20Province%20alone> (accessed 16 August 2022). Numbers for Germany cited from Matthias Gebauer, ‘US to Send 2,500 Soldiers to German-Controlled Area’, *Der Spiegel*, 4 January 2010, available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/afghanistan-surge-us-to-send-2-500-soldiers-to-german-controlled-area-a-670085.html> (accessed 16 August 2022).

a French ISAF deployment in Kapisa province and in the Surobi district near Kabul. Securing both was deemed 'strategic' to safely link with ISAF supply routes from Pakistan.<sup>1304</sup> This deployment still involved less military risk compared to UK contributions in southern Afghanistan, sometimes harshly criticised by Washington. The UK deployment peaked at 9,500 troops in the volatile but vital Helmand province during the 'surge'.<sup>1305</sup>

With security in Afghanistan deteriorating after 2005, French Minister of Defence Herve Morin expressed a 'Euro-centric' need for strengthening ISAF: 'Most of Europe has made NATO responsible for their security. Therefore, the weakness of Europe is typified by what you see in Afghanistan'.<sup>1306</sup> Morin criticised European allies for imposing 'national caveats' restricting combat. In 2007, Gates argued that national caveats from ISAF contributors had assisted the Taliban's recovery. He compared ISAF and the Taliban to players in a chess game where the Taliban 'enjoyed full freedom of movement', but, due to caveats, ISAF could 'only move a single space in a single direction'.<sup>1307</sup> Conscious of US concerns, discussing Afghanistan with his Australian counterpart, Morin emphasised, 'We [Australia and France] share the point of view that the effectiveness of the forces in place in Afghanistan depends very heavily on the conditions that are applied for their use. Caveats prevent the best possible application of the forces'.<sup>1308</sup>

Afghan geography was sometimes a rudimentary guide for risk-sharing performance within ISAF. Northern provinces were not completely insulated from attacks, but conflict was still most intense in southern Afghanistan. French contributions occasionally bucked this north-south trend. Paris' deployments in Kapisa and Surobi were located in relative stability north of Kabul. France provided some ANSF trainers in addition, but this was 'by no means the largest in number or the most well-known' for this task.<sup>1309</sup> Paris provided 'limited development assistance'.<sup>1310</sup> For Joshua Foust, these contributions were 'not particularly groundbreaking or even noteworthy', but when hostility did flare up in Kapisa and Surobi, France demonstrated its value to ISAF.<sup>1311</sup> Unlike some other northern provinces, the Taliban could attack or ambush in Kapisa and Surobi to undermine ISAF's supplies. In Kapisa, France unusually provided the military security for the US-led PRT supporting civilian reconstruction. Else-

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<sup>1304</sup> Tolo News, 'Last French Combat Forces'.

<sup>1305</sup> DW Staff, 'France Calls For More European Effort in Fight for Afghanistan', *Deutsche Welle*, 17 September 2008, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/france-calls-for-more-european-effort-in-fight-for-afghanistan/a-3650365> (accessed 16 August 2022).

<sup>1306</sup> DW Staff, 'France Calls for More European Effort'.

<sup>1307</sup> DW Staff, 'France Calls for More European Effort'.

<sup>1308</sup> DW Staff, 'France Calls for More European Effort'.

<sup>1309</sup> Joshua Foust, 'France in Kapisa: A Combined Approach to Statebuilding', in Nik Hynek and Péter Marton, eds., *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, p. 88.

<sup>1310</sup> Foust, 'France in Kapisa', p. 88.

<sup>1311</sup> Foust, 'France in Kapisa', p. 88.

where, the US mostly ensured military protection for European-led PRTs.<sup>1312</sup> Surobi was an important entry point into Afghanistan for Taliban members and the Hekmatyar network from western Pakistan. Mountainous terrain facilitated flows of insurgents, transnational smuggling and violent ambushes.

Before France led a larger deployment in 2008, Italy had managed the ISAF presence in Sarobi in 2006 and 2007. Seeing its role only to secure civilian reconstruction, the Italian military operated under the caveat not to venture into areas where ambushes were likely.<sup>1313</sup> Some stability was maintained, but not enough to stop insurgent activity. One report quoting anonymous NATO officials even claimed that the Italians partly maintained stability with financial bribes to discourage Taliban attacks.<sup>1314</sup> This was never officially confirmed. Taking over in Sarobi, the French military embarked on extensive patrols. In August 2008, a French patrol suffered a deadly ambush in the Uzbeen Valley with 10 French soldiers killed and 18 wounded. Speculation that Italian officials had not disclosed that they were paying the Taliban not to attack might have caused a serious scandal within NATO.<sup>1315</sup> Unknowing of Italy's alleged previous arrangement, French commanders might have been dangerously blindsided to a suddenly more hostile environment after Italy withdrew and payments stopped. A NATO report investigating this ambush leaked in the Canadian media found that the French patrol was underequipped and underprepared for ambushes where skilled Taliban snipers used sophisticated ammunition.<sup>1316</sup>

This ambush was a watershed for French military operations over the years that followed before Paris withdrew its troops in 2013. Foust argues that:

French soldiers became both more aggressive, in the sense of firing their weapons and intrusively searching local Afghans' homes more, but also more timid, in the sense that they spent a significantly smaller portion of their time off-base and interacting with the local population.<sup>1317</sup>

Some French analysts like to frame French military structure and COIN policies as homogenously shaped by specific French expertise and experiences. Olivier

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<sup>1312</sup> Foust, 'France in Kapisa', p. 88.

<sup>1313</sup> Romain Rosso, 'Comment l'Italie contrôlait la vallée d'Uzbin en Afghanistan [How Italy Controlled the Uzbin Valley in Afghanistan]', *L'Express*, 15 October 2009, available at: [https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/comment-l-italie-controlait-la-vallee-d-uzbin-en-afghanistan\\_794782.html](https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/comment-l-italie-controlait-la-vallee-d-uzbin-en-afghanistan_794782.html).

<sup>1314</sup> Tom Coghlan, 'French Troops Were Killed After Italy Hushed Up 'Bribes' to Taleban', *The Times*, 15 October 2009, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100106004351/http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6875376.ece> (accessed 22 August 2022).

<sup>1315</sup> Graeme Smith, 'French Soldiers Unprepared for Taliban Ambush: Report', *The Globe and Mail*, 20 September 2008, available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/french-soldiers-unprepared-for-taliban-ambush-report/article20387655/> (accessed 22 August 2022).

<sup>1316</sup> Smith, 'French Soldiers Unprepared'.

<sup>1317</sup> Foust, 'France in Kapisa', pp. 92–93.

Schmitt argues that this is incorrect. French military development has combined approaches particular to its national outlook with lessons learned from states operating elsewhere.<sup>1318</sup> France responded to the Uzbeen ambush by learning from similar incidents that affected US and UK militaries in Afghanistan and Iraq. French armoured vehicles for patrols were made more secure.<sup>1319</sup> Learning from Britain's evacuation from Musa Qala in 2006, France increased its use of new *Tigre* helicopters that offered stronger firepower and endurance; these were ready to transport troops by 2009.<sup>1320</sup>

Historically reluctant to procure from non-French suppliers, the French military purchased five *Buffalo* 'mine resistant ambush protected' vehicles from the US Marines in 2008 when the traditional French supplier *Renault Truck Défense* was unable to deliver stronger 'force protection' vehicles in time.<sup>1321</sup> These changes indicate a strong 'safety first' retrenchment. Force protection hardened as the mission progressed. As with the UK's experience, this represented military 'bunkerisation' in different forms, undermining operational opportunities for soldiers to mediate with Afghans to dismantle some social barriers and build local consent. At best, stronger force protection signalled to Afghans that ISAF was ensuring security for itself and not expanding this for local populations. At worst, intrusive French raids attempting to prevent further attacks angered locals. By 2012, 60 out of the 88 French fatalities had occurred in Kapisa province.<sup>1322</sup>

As the European 'big three' in NATO, alliance risk-sharing from France and Germany and, to a lesser extent, the UK, highlights how fragmented and compartmentalised ISAF was. Flexible 'non-Article 5' conditions made NATO allies appraise ISAF contributions rigidly within their own resources and strategic traditions. Post-WWII, France has a diametrically different military history to Germany where COIN is a familiar concept. Paris battled with insurgencies during decolonisation in Indochina in the 1940s and in Algeria during the 1950s.<sup>1323</sup> Neither campaign was successful. According to Mockaitis, before the GWOT, this had made COIN synonymous with 'disastrous colonial wars that had unceremoniously ushered the European powers out of Africa and Asia'.<sup>1324</sup> Despite its dubious record, the risk society revived COIN in seeking to stabilise risks from fragile states 'aggravated' by globalisation. France and Germany have profoundly different outlooks on expeditionary operations, but both came to adopt relatively similar ISAF postures. Paris did not impose the same military

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<sup>1318</sup> Schmitt, 'French Military Adaptation', pp. 593–594.

<sup>1319</sup> Schmitt, 'French Military Adaptation', pp. 593–594.

<sup>1320</sup> Schmitt, 'French Military Adaptation', pp. 593–594.

<sup>1321</sup> Schmitt, 'French Military Adaptation', pp. 593–594.

<sup>1322</sup> Radio France International, 'France Pulls Troops Out of Key Afghanistan Province', 20 November 2012, available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20121120-france-pulls-troops-key-afghanistan-province> (accessed 21 August 2022).

<sup>1323</sup> Thomas R. Mockaitis, 'The Phoenix of Counterinsurgency', *Journal of Conflict Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2007, p. 18.

<sup>1324</sup> Mockaitis, 'The Phoenix of Counterinsurgency', p. 9.

caveats as Berlin, but it still made the majority of its contributions in less volatile northern regions. German and French risk-sharing behaviour supports claims that US criticism of the UK in ISAF was sometimes unfair. Unlike Germany and France, the UK did not shy away from deploying large troop contingents in vital combat situations.<sup>1325</sup>

Fatality avoidance continued to concern NATO governments as ISAF approached ten years in existence in 2012. With a French Presidential Election looming, an attack by a man wearing an ANA uniform left 4 French soldiers and 16 wounded at an ISAF base in Afghanistan. Offering the nearest possible date for a French withdrawal from Afghanistan became a competition between the incumbent President Sarkozy and his Socialist rival François Hollande.<sup>1326</sup> If elected, Hollande promised to end the French deployment by late 2012, even if some commentators doubted whether this was realistic. Sarkozy proposed a withdrawal timeline from 2013.<sup>1327</sup> When Hollande was victorious, he faced domestic pressure to keep his promise. The ‘surge’ failed to deliver stabilisation over its 18-month timetable and the US began its military drawdown in 2011. Washington soon struggled to hold ISAF together for the next phase aiming to gradually transfer authority to the ANSF. Hollande also faced a diplomatic push-back from Obama who feared that a quick French withdrawal would ‘start a race for the [ISAF] exit’ even if Dutch and Canadian departures in 2010 and 2011 respectively had ‘passed practically unnoticed’.<sup>1328</sup>

France’s withdrawal was in full swing by November 2012, but its military leaders were blind to deep weaknesses in the ANSF. French General Eric Hauteclouque-Raysz optimistically predicted a more stable future for Afghanistan: ‘The insurgency is 10 times less numerous than the [Afghan] security forces. Therefore, they cannot be beaten’.<sup>1329</sup> US General John Allen, ISAF commander between 2011 and 2013, had similar confidence; he claimed that French withdrawal would lead to ‘no degradation in security’.<sup>1330</sup> These expectations were stunningly misguided. Wishful thinking downplaying continued state fragility in Afghanistan was likely fabricated from domestic impatience to withdraw.

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<sup>1325</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, ‘Size and Reputation’, p. 135.

<sup>1326</sup> Radio France International, ‘Four French Troops Shot Dead by Man Dressed as Afghan Soldier’, 20 January 2012, available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/asia-pacific/20120120-four-french-troops-shot-dead-man-dressed-afghan-soldier> (accessed 30 August 2022).

<sup>1327</sup> Radio France International, ‘Merkel Says Troops to Stay in Afghanistan as Hollande Moves to Pull French Out’, 10 May 2012, available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/asia-pacific/20120510-merkel-says-troops-stay-afghanistan-hollande-moves-pull-french-out> (accessed 30 August 2022).

<sup>1328</sup> Radio France International, ‘How Will Obama and Hollande Get Along at G8, NATO Summits?’, 18 May 2012, available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/asia-pacific/20120518-how-will-obama-and-hollande-get-along-g8nato-summits> (accessed 30 August 2022).

<sup>1329</sup> Radio France International, ‘France Pulls Troops Out of Key Afghanistan Province’, 20 November 2012, available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20121120-france-pulls-troops-key-afghanistan-province> (accessed 30 August 2022).

<sup>1330</sup> Radio France International, ‘France Pulls Troops Out of Key Afghanistan Province’.

When Taliban insurgents, foreign *jihadists* linked to ISIS, and other militant networks wreaked havoc in Kunduz after 2014, one Afghan commentator saw Germany's withdrawal as 'too hasty' and that 'The people [of Kunduz] are very disappointed [about this withdrawal]. They think the Afghan army is still not capable of defending them'.<sup>1331</sup> Obama was desperate to avoid a 'coalition of the leaving' effect that had previously undermined US efforts in Iraq.<sup>1332</sup> Nevertheless, ISAF's fragmentation was accelerated by the 'safety first' deadlines he had imposed. Knowing that ISAF was timetabled to end in 2014 exerted less diplomatic pressure on NATO members and partners to preserve with consistent contributions, some even stole a march and withdrew earlier than 2014. After 2014, ISAF was replaced by RSM, a narrower mission focused on ANSF training that comprised a multinational force peaking at 13,000 troops. RSM's end objective was the eventual transfer of security and public order responsibilities to the Afghan government.

### 8.3.5. Newcomer contributions

Further gloss was taken off French and German ISAF performance by some contributions made by smaller states. Canada, Denmark and Estonia deployed their militaries to southern Afghanistan without national caveats restricting combat. In per capita military fatality counts, the US and the UK were routinely in ISAF's top five, but Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands were also regulars in this category.<sup>1333</sup> With less combat sacrifice, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain had significantly lower military fatalities.<sup>1334</sup> As global terrorism was perceived as a continuing risk from a fragile Afghanistan, these comparisons indicate some politically problematic 'risk-shifting'. Attacking cities in North America or in larger European countries is more attractive for terrorist aims than locations in smaller states on NATO's periphery.<sup>1335</sup>

When asked if US unilateralism on Iraq had alienated European allies in 2003, Rumsfeld infamously replied that this question was too focused on 'old' Europe, primarily understood as France and Germany. He insisted that more attention be

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<sup>1331</sup> Reza Shirmohammadi interview with Mohammad Saber Yosofi, 'Battle for Kunduz: "German Forces Left Too Early"', *Deutsche Welle*, 29 April 2015, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/battle-for-kunduz-german-forces-left-too-early/a-18418399> (accessed 30 August 2022).

<sup>1332</sup> Andrew F. Cooper, 'Stretching the Model of "Coalitions of the Willing"', in Andrew F. Cooper, Brian Hocking and William Maley, eds., *Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart?*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, p. 267.

<sup>1333</sup> Steve Coll, 'Burden Sharing', *The New Yorker*, 11 March 2010, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/steve-coll/burden-sharing> (accessed 27 August 2022).

<sup>1334</sup> "iCasualties", available at: <http://icasualties.org/App/AfghanFatalities> (accessed 27 August 2022).

<sup>1335</sup> Mariya Y. Omelicheva, 'Reference Group Perspective on State Behaviour: A Case Study of Estonia's Counterterrorism Policies', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2009, pp. 483–504.

paid to the support that Washington was receiving from ‘new’ Europe.<sup>1336</sup> These were the CEE states freed from communist dictatorship a decade previously and by then on the verge of EU and NATO membership. Support for US aims on Iraq was affirmed in ‘the letter of eight’ signed by Czech, Hungarian and Polish leaders and those from Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK.<sup>1337</sup> A declaration supporting the US from a group of smaller CEE states dubbed the ‘Vilnius Ten’ was also published.<sup>1338</sup> Commentators portrayed CEE Atlanticism as defying some future EU counterparts as possible ‘Trojan horses’ for US interests in transatlantic relations.<sup>1339</sup> Various reasons are given for CEE alignment. Rick Fawn claims that these states perceived Washington as an ‘absentee liberator’ that pressured for Soviet communism’s collapse and were thus ideologically compelled to support US promotion of liberal values even when combined with military force.<sup>1340</sup>

Besides ideology, Hans Mouritzen identifies ‘fear’ and ‘profit’ as further reasons for smaller states ‘bandwagoning’ on great power coalitions.<sup>1341</sup> Many CEE states feared the return of Russian dominance and saw contributions to US-led military missions as an opportunity to strengthen links with Washington to reinforce superpower support to deter any future aggression from Moscow.<sup>1342</sup> Some CEE governments saw US support as having possible financial benefits when companies from their states might later gain some lucrative reconstruction contracts or at least financial debts owed to them by Saddam’s Iraqi government would be reimbursed.<sup>1343</sup> In the US, newfound CEE support was quickly hailed

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<sup>1336</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, ‘Secretary Rumsfeld Briefs at the Foreign Press Center’, 22 January 2003, Washington DC: US Department of Defence, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140228200949/http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330> (accessed 4 September 2022).

<sup>1337</sup> Barry James, ‘Action By 8 Countries Reveals Deep Breach: Iraq Letter Splits Europe’, *The New York Times*, 1 February 2003, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/01/news/action-by-8-countries-reveals-deep-breach-iraq-letter-splits-europe.html> (accessed 4 September 2022).

<sup>1338</sup> Mihaela Gherghisan, ‘Vilnius 10 Sign Letter on Iraq’, *EU Observer*, 6 February 2003, available at: <https://euobserver.com/eu-political/9269> (accessed 4 September 2022).

<sup>1339</sup> Matthew Rhodes, ‘Whose Trojan Horses?’, *International Journal*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2002, pp. 631–637.

<sup>1340</sup> Rick Fawn, ‘Alliance Behaviour, the Absentee Liberator and the Influence of Soft Power: Post-Communist State Positions over the Iraq War in 2003’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2006, p. 473.

<sup>1341</sup> Fawn, ‘Alliance Behaviour, the Absentee Liberator’, pp. 467–468. And Voice of America, ‘Bulgaria Hopes Iraq Will Repay \$1.7 Billion Debt’, 18 October 2003, available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2003-10-18-7-bulgaria/303650.html> (accessed 4 September 2022).

<sup>1342</sup> Hans Mouritzen, ‘Choosing Sides in the European Iraq Conflict: A Test of New Geopolitical Theory’, *European Security*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2006, p. 146.

<sup>1343</sup> Eoin Micheál McNamara, ‘When Contributions Abroad Mean Security at Home? The Baltic States and NATO Burden-Sharing in Afghanistan’ in Robert Czulda and Marek Madej, eds., *Newcomers No More? Contemporary NATO and the Future of the Enlargement from the*

as important, but it soon became forgettable. In a debate during the 2004 US Presidential Election campaign, John Kerry challenged Bush on his unilateral approach: ‘when we went in [to Iraq], there were three countries: Great Britain, Australia and the United States. That’s not a grand coalition. We can do better’.<sup>1344</sup> Bush replied: ‘Well, actually, he forgot Poland. And now there’s 30 nations involved, standing side by side with our American troops’.<sup>1345</sup>

Wider international interest in CEE involvement soon faded as campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq progressed. Aligning with US preferences, some CEE states initially made larger military contributions to Iraq than to ISAF in Afghanistan. This trend reversed when turmoil in Iraq was brought temporarily under control, but security in Afghanistan deteriorated.<sup>1346</sup> CEE governments remained concerned about security in Europe, but NATO’s Riga Summit in November 2006 brought it home that they were members of a globally-focused alliance. The Summit Declaration reaffirmed that:

we [NATO allies] confront complex, sometimes inter-related threats such as terrorism, increasingly global in scale and lethal in results, and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery, as well as challenges from instability due to failed or failing states.<sup>1347</sup>

The declaration emphasised that ‘Contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan is NATO’s key priority’ and included a ‘pledge to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources, and flexibility needed to ensure the mission’s continued success’.<sup>1348</sup>

Some claim that various regional EU and NATO groupings clustered around different ISAF stabilisation tasks, for example, Nordic states might have preferred civilian reconstruction in PRTs in stable northern Afghanistan.<sup>1349</sup> These claims were not always correct. Norway and Sweden led PRTs in northern Afghanistan, but Denmark’s main contribution was diametrically different, it

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*Perspective of ‘Post-Cold War’ Members*, Warsaw: Institute of International Relations, 2015, pp. 153–168.

<sup>1344</sup> Commission on Presidential Debates, ‘Debate Transcript: The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate’, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 30 September 2004, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20061013073503/http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a.html> (accessed 4 September 2022).

<sup>1345</sup> Commission on Presidential Debates, ‘Debate Transcript: The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate’.

<sup>1346</sup> David J. Galbreath, ‘Latvian Foreign Policy after Enlargement: Continuity and Change’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2006, p. 452.

<sup>1347</sup> NATO, ‘Riga Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006’, Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 29 November 2006, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_37920.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_37920.htm) (4 September 2022).

<sup>1348</sup> NATO, ‘Riga Summit Declaration’.

<sup>1349</sup> Scott N. Siegel, ‘Bearing Their Share of the Burden: Europe in Afghanistan’, *European Security*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2009, p. 467.

deployed troops without combat caveats in Helmand.<sup>1350</sup> Despite substantial soldier fatalities (approximately 40 by 2014) and with stabilisation still elusive, a series of Danish governments comprising multiple parties across the ideological spectrum still sustained a combat contribution for over a decade.<sup>1351</sup> Public consent in Denmark was maintained through an eclectic combination of strategic narratives from the need to militarily defeat Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, to supporting women's rights and the need to assist a stable US-led international order.<sup>1352</sup> Perhaps unusually, these governments communicated Denmark's role in ISAF with 'one voice' as Denmark's 'attainment of realistic short-term, tactical objectives such as police training and building of schools' were constantly singled out as achievements building towards stabilisation.<sup>1353</sup> This 'effectively reduced the Danish media to a conveyor belt passively transmitting the positive views'.<sup>1354</sup> Danish governments were trying to ease domestic risk society concerns.

Emphasising some tactical success automatically downplayed fewer strategic gains. This created an image that Danish sacrifices were helping to gradually lift Afghanistan out of state fragility. Whether these communications were beneficial for stabilisation is debatable. Denmark supported a combat deployment in southern Afghanistan when ISAF desperately required this. Other NATO members resorted to similar strategic narratives to reinforce public support for ISAF, highlighting scattered tactical progress in Afghan governance, with human rights or with ANSF capacity. Over-emphasising these fragments to boost domestic support or alliance cohesion reduced scrutiny on ISAF's many problems. This tactically-driven outlook became a poor substitute for overarching strategic focus.

Similar to Nordic experience, CEE contributions to ISAF varied. Nordic militaries had significant expeditionary experience from UN peacekeeping during the Cold War, but CEE states had limited experience here, they were fresh from Westernising military reforms needed to join NATO in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>1355</sup> Unlike some Western European NATO members, CEE states are less susceptible to borderless risks 'aggravated' by globalisation like terrorism. Some are classified as security 'modernists' primarily concerned with the need to defend borders

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<sup>1350</sup> Gary Schaub and André Ken Jakobsson, 'Denmark in NATO: Paying for Protection, Bleeding for Prestige', *War on the Rocks*, 17 July 2018, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/07/denmark-in-nato-paying-for-protection-bleeding-for-prestige/> (accessed 5 September 2022).

<sup>1351</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For: How Public Support for the War was Maintained in the Face of Mounting Casualties and Elusive Success', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2015, pp. 211–227.

<sup>1352</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For', p. 211.

<sup>1353</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For', p. 211.

<sup>1354</sup> Viggo Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For', p. 211.

<sup>1355</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 'The Nordic Peacekeeping Model: Rise, Fall, Resurgence?', *International Peacekeeping* vol. 13, no. 3, 2006, pp. 381–395.

from Russian aggression.<sup>1356</sup> CEE states were sometimes uncomfortable with the global focus that some Western members wanted for NATO. An open letter signed by prominent CEE politicians and intellectuals in 2009 stressed that CEE contributions to US and NATO-led expeditionary operations were ‘significant when measured as a percentage of our population and GDP’ even when ‘The region does not have the tradition of assuming a more global role’.<sup>1357</sup> This was published soon after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war as an attempt to persuade Washington to maintain a strong transatlantic link to defend Europe in parallel to US strategic priorities in Afghanistan, the Middle East and in Asia.<sup>1358</sup>

Some saw strong CEE support for US foreign policy as a passing trend. The Iraq crisis in 2003 coincided with a final opportunity for some CEE states to clarify allegiances to Washington before Congress ratified their NATO accession.<sup>1359</sup> Wade Jacoby saw Rumsfeld’s differentiation between ‘new’ and ‘old’ Europe and Bush’s coalition-building efforts bypassing French and German objections as ‘risking the long-term vitality of the Western Alliance in the pursuit of short-term objectives’.<sup>1360</sup> By expecting CEE states to take sides, Washington was asking ‘too much’ from them politically, but by prioritising only political support, the US was seeking ‘too little’ from these states militarily.<sup>1361</sup> Political support was sought by the US to disguise unilateral intent for intervention in Iraq, but it was dubious whether CEE states possessed the military capabilities or civilian reconstruction experience to meaningfully contribute to expeditionary stabilisation.

When ISAF became NATO-led through European initiative, CEE states gradually switched focus from Iraq to Afghanistan as the 2000s progressed. This reinforced transatlantic solidarity within NATO. Poland is the largest CEE state and was probably the best positioned to significantly contribute to stabilisation. Warsaw’s military contributions were first stretched between two separate theatres (Iraq and ISAF) and even within Afghanistan itself.<sup>1362</sup> This was solved after 2007 when Poland focused its forces on securing Ghanzi and Paktika provinces in southeast Afghanistan.<sup>1363</sup> Before GWOT participation, the Polish

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<sup>1356</sup> Maria Mälksoo, ‘Europe’s New Vanguard or the Old “Security Modernists” in a Fancy Dress? The Baltic States Against the Images of Eastern Europe in the EU’ in Andres Kasekamp (ed.), *The Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook 2008*, Tallinn: Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, 2008, pp. 31–60.

<sup>1357</sup> Valdas Adamkus et al., ‘An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 July 2009, available at: <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,6825987,an-open-letter-to-the-obama-administration-from-central-and.html> (accessed 7 September 2022).

<sup>1358</sup> Adamkus et al., ‘An Open Letter to the Obama’.

<sup>1359</sup> Kay, ‘No More Free-Riding’, p. 108.

<sup>1360</sup> Wade Jacoby, ‘Is the New Europe a Good Substitute for the Old One?’, *International Studies Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2006, pp. 178–179.

<sup>1361</sup> Jacoby, ‘Is the New Europe a Good Substitute?’, p. 178.

<sup>1362</sup> Michał Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change: Poland’s Armed Forces and the ISAF Operation in Afghanistan’, *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 87–89.

<sup>1363</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 90.

military was ‘a large, heavy, conscript-based force, doctrinally charged with the mission of protecting Poland’s territory’.<sup>1364</sup> This military structure was outdated and contrary to the light, mobile and specialised forces needed for the risk society to quickly prevent risks at distance.

Post-communist Poland’s expeditionary capabilities were ‘non-existent’.<sup>1365</sup> Warsaw contributed to UN peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, but these were ‘more political than military operations’ when ‘the likelihood of combat was low, and often involving non-combat tasks such as medical or logistical support’.<sup>1366</sup> Learning by doing, Poland made strides to develop expeditionary capabilities. In Afghanistan, SOFs were central for combat operations and for training the ANSF.<sup>1367</sup> This expeditionary learning curve was sometimes very steep, Polish soldiers had little experience with ‘extreme pressures’ from global media scrutiny typical during international missions.<sup>1368</sup> There was a thin line separating force against the Taliban from a civilian atrocity. In August 2007, Polish troops opened machine gun and mortar fire in a village in Paktika. Numerous civilians were killed and seven Polish soldiers were charged with deliberately targeting civilians.<sup>1369</sup> Each soldier claimed innocence, arguing sincere intent to target a possible Taliban observation post, but, due to mortar imprecision, civilians were killed accidentally.<sup>1370</sup> Evidence was judged as ‘incomplete’ and all seven soldiers were acquitted pending appeal in 2011.<sup>1371</sup> Poland sought political and military side-benefits from NATO linked to its territorial defence in return for its ISAF contributions. One US official frustratingly described how Warsaw was treating ISAF ‘as a bazaar’ to gain these benefits, evoking doubts about Poland’s focus on the mission.<sup>1372</sup> Securing Ghanzi and Paktika was important, but these provinces were still not as volatile as locations further south. Nevertheless, by late 2013; Poland had incurred 43 military fatalities, half from IED incidents, highlighting the dangers of non-combat patrols and transport tasks.<sup>1373</sup>

Poland’s expeditionary modernisation was not uniform for every CEE newcomer. In 2010, a US diplomatic cable from Eikenberry released by Wikileaks revealed how ineffective Hungarian troops in Baghlan province were bailed out by a military contingent from New Zealand otherwise responsible for a neigh-

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<sup>1364</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 86.

<sup>1365</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 86.

<sup>1366</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 86.

<sup>1367</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 96.

<sup>1368</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 91.

<sup>1369</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 91.

<sup>1370</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 91.

<sup>1371</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 91.

<sup>1372</sup> Anders Henriksen and Jens Ringsmose, ‘What Did Denmark Gain? Iraq, Afghanistan and the Relationship with Washington’, in Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen, eds., *The Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2012*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Studies, 2012, p. 161.

<sup>1373</sup> Piekarski, ‘A Story of Change’, p. 96.

bouring region.<sup>1374</sup> Eikenberry reported that Baghlan was stricken with ‘escalating violence, drug problems and power struggles’ which the Hungarian deployment ‘does little to address’.<sup>1375</sup> Hungary’s ineffective posture came from some acute ‘safety first’ concerns. According to Eikenberry: ‘They are not permitted to fire their weapons except in self-defence, do little more than patrol the main roads and undertake no counter-narcotics activities’.<sup>1376</sup> Fatality-avoidance was epitomised in his claim that ‘When two Hungarian de-miners were killed doing their work, Budapest stopped sending mine clearers’.<sup>1377</sup>

Hungarian performance was poor, but other smaller CEE states did better as ‘niche’ contributors. Estonia deployed without caveats to vital but hostile Helmand after 2006.<sup>1378</sup> For the next eight years, EDF units fought alongside Danish, UK and US troops. This seemed risky at the beginning. Deploying soldier rotations of approximately 165 into combat might have enhanced Estonia’s reputation within NATO, but its military inexperience was a concern. Where pressure was most intense, its troops could have been a weak-link in NATO’s interoperable chain.<sup>1379</sup> With the exception of an early controversy with military intelligence, these concerns faded as the EDF performed strongly in Helmand.<sup>1380</sup>

The importance of Estonia’s ISAF contribution was stressed by NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen in 2012: ‘I particularly welcome the fact that Estonian forces are operating in Afghanistan without restrictions. Because that means they can be deployed quickly whenever, and wherever, extra troops are needed to improve security’.<sup>1381</sup> With discussion of EDF performance overriding commentary on a lacklustre ISAF, before Estonian troops in Afghanistan in 2013, Minister of Defence Urmas Reinsalu declared that ‘You [Estonian troops] are

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<sup>1374</sup> New Zealand Herald, ‘NZ Troops Had to Help Ineffective Colleagues – WikiLeaks Cable’, *Herald Online*, December 2010, available at: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nz-troops-had-to-help-ineffective-colleagues-wikileaks-cable/Z6JQJLYFUBNFT3JDTO2HIJJGOU/> (accessed 9 September 2022).

<sup>1375</sup> New Zealand Herald, ‘NZ Troops Had to Help Ineffective Colleagues’.

<sup>1376</sup> New Zealand Herald, ‘NZ Troops Had to Help Ineffective Colleagues’.

<sup>1377</sup> New Zealand Herald, ‘NZ Troops Had to Help Ineffective Colleagues’.

<sup>1378</sup> Piret Paljak, ‘Participation in International Military Operations’, in Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius (eds.), *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States*, Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013, p. 219.

<sup>1379</sup> Holger Mölder, ‘Estonia and the ISAF: Lessons Learned and Future Prospects’, *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 61–78.

<sup>1380</sup> For some information on this controversy, see Priit Hõbemägi, ‘Luureohvitseri pihtimus: Afganistanis elupäästja, Eestis kohtualune (täispikk versioon) [A Confession of an Intelligence Officer: Life Saver in Afghanistan, Defendant in Estonia (Full Version)]’, *Eesti Ekspress*, 3 October 2009, available at: <https://ekspress.delfi.ee/artikkel/27691917/luureohvitseri-pihtimus-afganistanis-elupaastja-eestis-kohtualune-taispikk-versioon> (accessed 9 September 2022).

<sup>1381</sup> Anders Fogh Rasmussen, ‘NATO’s Baltic Allies: Punching Above Their Weight. Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in Tallinn, Estonia on 19 January 2012’, Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 19 January 2012, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions\\_83482.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_83482.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed 9 September 2022).

fighting for Estonia's foreign and security policy interests in Afghanistan, fulfilling our international obligations' and that 'Thanks to your contribution to our relations with allies, our international ties, credibility and visibility are greater than ever before. Everyone knows how good Estonian soldiers are in battle'.<sup>1382</sup> As NATO newcomers eager to boost reputations, 'show them the flag' sentiments defined many CEE contributions to ISAF.<sup>1383</sup>

Hungary's unprepared troops and its stringent national caveats hint that it merely contributed to ISAF to serve its political image within NATO. This backfired; Hungary was sometimes a liability rather than an asset. As shown with Poland's move to Ghanzi and Paktika and Estonia's deployment in Helmand, contributions with strong political undertones could still have some military utility.<sup>1384</sup> Estonia was a 'striver', but even with small rotations, scarcities in caveat-free combat troops led larger powers to appreciate them. This was unintentionally signified in controversy over Toby Harnden's *Dead Men Risen* in 2011.<sup>1385</sup> The UK MoD stopped initial copies of this book from going on sale with claims that it feared that graphic depictions of EDF sacrifices fighting alongside UK troops might lead to calls for Estonia's immediate withdrawal from ISAF as a national election also loomed.<sup>1386</sup>

Some CEE states attempted to lead in civilian reconstruction. The Czech Republic and Lithuania led PRTs in Logar and Ghor provinces respectively. In central Afghanistan, Ghor was remote but relatively stable. Lithuania's leaders initially perceived PRT leadership as likely to enhance the country's reputation. However, leading a PRT was an arduous and resource intensive task. By the mid-2000s, the US requested its allies to do more as it was stretched between two GWOT fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Lithuania responded by offering to lead a PRT, but it had little expertise in civilian reconstruction. Early ambition in 2005 was replaced with disillusion by 2009. Some Lithuanian officials criticised earlier decisions to lead reconstruction for Ghor as unrealistic and too focused on 'scoring points' in NATO alliance politics.<sup>1387</sup> Pressure on Vilnius increased between 2007 and 2009 when two separate Governors of Ghor expressed dissatis-

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<sup>1382</sup> Urmas Reinsalu, 'Reinsalu: Next 12 Months in Afghanistan are Critical', Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, Republic of Estonia, 28 June 2013, available at: <https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/en/news/reinsalu-next-12-months-afghanistan-are-critical> (accessed 9 September 2020).

<sup>1383</sup> Rasmus Brun Pedersen and Yf Reykers, 'Show Them the Flag: Status Ambitions and Recognition in Small State Coalition Warfare', *European Security*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2020, pp. 16–32.

<sup>1384</sup> Piekarski, 'A Story of Change', p. 88.

<sup>1385</sup> Toby Harnden, *Dead Men Risen: The Welsh Guards and the Defining Story of Britain's War in Afghanistan*, London: Quercus, 2011.

<sup>1386</sup> A Daily Telegraph Reporter, 'MoD Tried to Stop Dead Men Risen Book "To Prevent Ally Withdrawing From Afghanistan"', *The Telegraph*, 15 March 2011, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8383877/MoD-tried-to-stop-Dead-Men-Risen-book-to-prevent-ally-withdrawing-from-Afghanistan.html> (accessed 11 September 2022).

<sup>1387</sup> Egdūnas Račius, 'Trials and Tribulations of the Lithuanian Participation in the NATO ISAF Mission' in Nik Hynek and Péter Marton, eds., *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multi-national Contributions to Reconstruction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, p. 286.

faction with Lithuania's PRT leadership, preferring a transfer of reconstruction responsibilities to better resourced ISAF participants.<sup>1388</sup> This partially occurred when the US and Japan took on some extra civilian projects, but Lithuania persevered to lead the PRT to planned completion in 2013. This spared Vilnius some political embarrassment within NATO, but its dubious suitability for PRT leadership meant that ISAF missed some opportunities for a stronger civilian reconstruction.

On the whole, while most CEE states were able to contribute to ISAF, doubt remains over just how much impact these contributions made for the overall mission. Different logic guided CEE contributions compared to those of the US, UK and even France and Germany as ISAF's 'coalition owners'. For example, Albania, which joined NATO in 2009, is described as an 'inward-looking' contributor to expeditionary operations, a description that probably applies to most CEE states.<sup>1389</sup> Tirana prioritises NATO and EU missions over UN peacekeeping due to its wider diplomatic priorities to better integrate with the EU and NATO as both might provide major political, economic and strategic benefits for Albania.<sup>1390</sup> Such priorities mean that 'performance and impact' for generating effective stabilisation output is often 'secondary'.<sup>1391</sup>

Giving further perspective on 'inward' priorities for ISAF participants, Gunnar Havi argues that the EDF gained 'live' command and control experience for medical, logistical and combat units, while 'lessons learned' and the EDF's wider interoperability with other NATO allies were drawn to better inform Estonia's military planning for future challenges.<sup>1392</sup> Estonia's case demonstrates that some 'inward' focus can still produce effective stabilisation output, but this diverges from many other CEE allies that prioritised political representation over stabilisation progress. This sometimes propelled a 'doing the least one can do' logic that worsened effective collective action within ISAF; the NATO-led OUP in Libya in 2011; and the later US-led Western coalition against ISIS.<sup>1393</sup> This trend applies for a large swathe of NATO, but it was particularly fervent in CEE states.<sup>1394</sup> By 2011, enthusiastic support for US-led intervention experienced in

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<sup>1388</sup> Ringailė Kuokštytė, 'Lithuania's Participation in the Reconstruction Process of Afghanistan: A Case of a Small State's Engagement in the International Arena', *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics*, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 226.

<sup>1389</sup> Elvin Gjevori and Gëzim Visoka, 'Albanian Peacekeepers: Exploring the Inward-Looking Utility of International Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2016, pp. 522–525.

<sup>1390</sup> Gjevori and Visoka, 'Albanian Peacekeepers', pp. 522.

<sup>1391</sup> Gjevori and Visoka, 'Albanian Peacekeepers', p. 513.

<sup>1392</sup> Gunnar Havi, 'The Afghanistan Mission's Benefits for Estonia', *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2010, pp. 159–165.

<sup>1393</sup> Stephen M. Saideman, 'The Ambivalent Coalition: Doing the Least One Can Do Against the Islamic State', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2016, pp. 289–305.

<sup>1394</sup> Joseph P. Bell and Ryan C. Hendrickson, 'NATO's Visegrad Allies and the Bombing of Qaddafi: The Consequence of Alliance Free-Riders', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2012, p. 150.

2003 had evaporated in the Visegrád states; four of the larger and better equipped CEE militaries, all were unwilling to contribute to OUP in Libya.<sup>1395</sup>

### 8.3.6. Global partnerships

Despite some Western European NATO members falling below US expectations and the mixed record of Eastern NATO newcomers, NATO Europe remained ‘the one’ that supported Washington the most in Afghanistan.<sup>1396</sup> The two most prominent and militarily modernised US allies in East Asia – Japan and South – limited ISAF participation mostly to civilian reconstruction rather than military peacekeeping or combat.<sup>1397</sup> Outside the Euro-Atlantic area, Australia is perhaps the best resourced NATO partner. ADF units contributed to early US-led operations that overthrew the Taliban in 2001, but Australia then withdrew from Afghanistan in 2002. Australia and the UK provided over 1,000 troops for US-led operations in Iraq that toppled Saddam in 2003.

Global terrorism ranks quite high in Australia’s security priorities. Terrorist networks spreading from Afghanistan and the MENA region to South-East Asia proximate to Australia might create a possible GWOT ‘second front’.<sup>1398</sup> However, Canberra grew anxious about China’s rising power in the wider Asia-Pacific. Australia’s alliance dependence on the US for territorial defence and deterrence soon overrode counterterrorism priorities. Australia followed Washington’s lead without questioning whether US military actions were actually beneficial for global security.<sup>1399</sup> Following the shift in US priorities, Australia switched its emphasis from Afghanistan in 2001 to Iraq by 2003. It wrongly trusted US complacency that post-intervention instability in Afghanistan was ‘containable’ and that restructuring the Middle East in line with liberal peace should be its main priority.<sup>1400</sup> Australia switched its attention back to Afghanistan in 2006, it supported ISAF expansion, but its ambition was modest relative to its resources. Canberra was still providing more troops to UN peacekeeping missions in Bosnia, East Timor and Kosovo and to the MNF in Iraq.<sup>1401</sup> For ISAF,

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<sup>1395</sup> Bell and Hendrickson, ‘NATO’s Visegrad Allies’, pp. 150–151.

<sup>1396</sup> Deni, ‘Still the One?’, p. 36.

<sup>1397</sup> Stéfanie von Hlatky and Jessica Trisko Darden, ‘Cash or Combat? America’s Asian Alliances During the War in Afghanistan’, *Asian Security*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2015, p. 31.

<sup>1398</sup> Acharya and Acharya, ‘The Myth of the Second Front’, pp. 75–90.

<sup>1399</sup> William Maley, ‘The War in Afghanistan: Australia’s Strategic Narratives’, in Beatrice De Graaf, George Dimitriu and Jens Ringsmose, eds., *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War: Winning Domestic Support for the Afghan War*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, pp. 81–97.

<sup>1400</sup> Elsiná Wainwright, ‘Precarious State: Afghanistan and the International and Australian Response’, *ASPI Strategic Insights*, no. 23, March 2006, available at: <https://www.aspi.org.au/news/precariou-state-afghanistan-and-international-and-australian-response> (accessed 25 September 2022).

<sup>1401</sup> Graeme Dobell, ‘ASPI’s Decades: The War in Afghanistan’, *The Strategist (ASPI)*, 6 September 2021, available at: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/aspis-decades-the-war-in-afghanistan/> (accessed 25 September 2022).

Australia deployed to Uruzgan to support the Dutch-led PRT. Australian commitment remained inconsistent until eventual withdrawal in 2013. In 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd increased the ADF contingent from 1,090 to 1,500 to support ISAF's 'surge', Uruzgan was strategically important for the wider mission.<sup>1402</sup> Australia suffered 40 personnel fatalities by 2013, even without that much vulnerability to combat.

Australia's domestic debate provides some wider insights into the disputes between leaders on the priorities needed for stabilisation. Prime Minister from 1996 until 2007, John Howard, only wanted to 'commit sharp edged forces' upfront to rapidly overwhelm the Taliban and not get 'bogged down' thereafter.<sup>1403</sup> This had parallels with US 'shock and awe', but other Australian leaders and commentators saw this as unrealistic because it did not cater for managing global risks likely to emerge from a fragile state. A military intervention had 'morphed into a policy of "nation building"' and some 'mission creep' was even justified to ensure Taliban rule was replaced by an 'American style democracy'.<sup>1404</sup>

With a discomfiting observation for the risk society, Raspal Khosal, an Australian commentator on Afghanistan, remarked in 2008 that 'Afghanistan is not a country for quick victories and we must accept that this is a long-term intervention in a dangerous environment'.<sup>1405</sup> Further Australian commentary from Jacob Townsend argued that global risks from fragile Afghanistan would not stop until 'a functional government that can compete successfully for legitimacy and territory with its predecessor, the Taliban' was formed.<sup>1406</sup> Australia's main contribution to Afghan governance was ANSF training in Uruzgan, and when the Netherlands withdrew early from Uruzgan in 2010, Canberra refused command despite having the largest ISAF deployment in Uruzgan.<sup>1407</sup> Burdening Washington further, command was first taken by the US until Australia subsequently took over in 2012 with ISAF's handover to the ANSF in Uruzgan beginning in 2013.<sup>1408</sup>

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<sup>1402</sup> Dobell, 'ASPI's Decades: The War in Afghanistan'.

<sup>1403</sup> Hugh Poate, 'Australia's Engagement in the War in Afghanistan – Lessons to be Learned', *Australians for War Powers Reform*, 4 April 2022, available at: <https://warpowersreform.org.au/australias-engagement-in-the-war-in-afghanistan-lessons-to-be-learned/> (accessed 25 September 2022).

<sup>1404</sup> Poate, 'Australia's Engagement in the War in Afghanistan'.

<sup>1405</sup> Raspal Khosal, 'Making It Count: Australia's Involvement in Afghanistan', *ASPI Strategic Insights*, no. 40, May 2008, p.14, available at: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/strategic-insights-40-making-it-count-australias-involvement-afghanistan> (accessed 26 September 2022).

<sup>1406</sup> Jacob Townsend, 'Charting a Course for Afghanistan', *ASPI Strategic Insights*, no. 17, January 2008, available at: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/charting-course-afghanistan> (accessed 26 September 2022).

<sup>1407</sup> Dobell, 'ASPI's decades: The War in Afghanistan'.

<sup>1408</sup> Dobell, 'ASPI's decades: The War in Afghanistan'.

## 8.4. Conclusion

State fragility in Afghanistan was repeatedly claimed as a global terrorism risk. Washington called for global collective action to stabilise Afghanistan. This perspective was probably never convincingly shared by many US allies or partners. As a wider global community, this was probably a mistake; the US is far from the only state susceptible to transnational terrorism. The Taliban limited its insurgency to Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan, but other militants possibly harbouring a global focus including Al-Qaeda- and ISIS-affiliates intermingled and prospered from instability at this Central Asia-South Asia-Middle East crossroads. Even if the nature of the risk has changed since 9/11, NATO's European members remain vulnerable to Islamic extremism. This risk looms in various forms, but most ISAF contributors were content to shift combat sacrifices onto the US, the main 'coalition owner'.

For the risk society, flexible and *ad hoc* security partnerships are often preferred to 'static' treaty-based alliances. Partnerships facilitate cooperation that is quick to adjust or redistribute when responding to urgent and changeable risks 'aggravated' by globalisation, but NATO's experience in Afghanistan highlighted many downsides with this type of cooperation. Obama attempted to renew US focus for the 'reflexive security dilemma' posed by Afghanistan. Proposing concepts like 'AfPakIndia', his policymakers initially sought wider regional solutions that might limit proxy-support for the Taliban. Diplomatic sensitivities quickly cancelled an integrated regional approach. Pakistan did not perceive the benefits it received from its NATO partnership as sufficient enough to abandon the possibility of utilising Taliban militancy in conflict with India. Islamabad consumed some temporary benefits from its US partnership, but, because long-term benefits were unlikely, US capacity to coax or coerce Pakistan away from Taliban support remained weak. Pakistan retained leeway for a duplicitous posture; its assistance energised the Taliban while domestic dissatisfaction towards NATO magnified controversies disrupting ISAF supply lines.

While not as controversial or as divisive as NATO's relations with Pakistan, ISAF received underwhelming support from NATO's other global partners. South Korea and Japan mostly contributed to civilian reconstruction tasks. Australia contributed militarily, but its performance was inconsistent. Canberra supported the US with combat in Iraq in 2003, but combat was not a priority for Australia in Afghanistan. It also shied away from leading a PRT. New Zealand's military contribution was small, but, importantly, it provided some cover when under-prepared and ultra risk-averse Hungarian forces became a liability. ISAF was a NATO-led but 'non-Article 5' mission, it was an obvious expectation that NATO allies would contribute strongly. However, contribution patterns across NATO's European members were mixed. The US placed lofty military expectations on the UK as its closest ally to defeat the Taliban in its south Afghanistan stronghold. The UK did not always live up to Washington's expectations. Some US commentators suspected that the UK's COIN was ineffective because London was timidly 'safety first' and not applying enough military force. UK policy-

makers responded that greater force would not improve COIN and that the 'constabulary ethic' was preferable to win consent and cooperation from Afghans. However, the UK's 'safety first' inclinations were also highlighted in a different context by Afghan leaders in Sangin who argued that its 'bunkerised' stabilisation posture did little to ease alienation from the local population. UK performance had flaws, but London still contributed to the main combat campaign that Germany and France were reluctant to join.

Troops for combat against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan were at a premium. However, it should be clarified that were ISAF members not doing peace-keeping or leading PRTs in northern Afghanistan, the US 'coalition owner' would not have had the same freedom of action for combat operations in the south. Non-combat contributions were still valuable for ISAF, but lighter French and German efforts did not leave much of a legacy. After both withdrew, the Taliban soon expanded its influence in northern regions. Inexperienced for expeditionary stabilisation at the outset and with modest resources, some NATO newcomers, notably Estonia, Lithuania and Poland made some effective ISAF contributions. Some CEE states were more 'safety first' than others. Estonia was singled out for deploying its military in Helmand without national caveats. Poland deployed to a slightly less volatile province, but this was not without some military risks. PRT leadership was onerous for Lithuanian resources, but it relieved Vilnius from combat sacrifices. Overall, an image of fragmented resolve emerges for global collective action supporting ISAF. NATO allies and partners contributed, but many contributions were proven insufficient for what stabilisation demanded on the ground. ISAF was incoherent where 'safety first' concerns unfairly overloaded a small US-led group with combat sacrifices.

## 9. CLASHING MILITARY AND CIVILIAN APPROACHES

### 9. 1. Introduction

Stabilisation policy combines civilian and military instruments. Coordinating both is vital for effective state-building, a task that ISAF struggled with for its duration. Civilian and military stabilisation approaches frequently clashed and mutually obstructed. With ISAF's efforts peaking in the 2010s, this chapter examines how clashing civilian and military approaches undermined stabilisation aims. Beginning in late 2009, Obama limited the US troop 'surge' to 18 months with a drawdown pre-planned to start in mid-2011. This was a compromise from a risk society dilemma. 'Safety first' anxiety could not permit Afghanistan to re-emerge as a source for global security risks, but a longer 'surge' risked more US soldier fatalities and a profound political backlash. Short rotations of ISAF's military and civilian staff curtailed stronger cultural and situational awareness to mediate with Afghan society. Overflowing violence from 'surged' military manoeuvres including intrusive SOF raids against Taliban militants further alienated Afghans, but ISAF made serious mistakes with civilian reconstruction as well.

Obama's short 'safety first' timeline was accompanied by 'surged' civilian spending. Sudden floods of funding failed to persuade Afghans to lend more support to ISAF, but it further fuelled Afghan government corruption or was diverted to criminals and Taliban insurgents. 'Safety first' concerns forced NGOs and other civilian organisations to prioritise protection over reconstruction assistance. 'Bunkerisation' restricted contact between ISAF-aligned civilian personnel and Afghans. ISAF and ANSF failed to stem insecurity. Civilian organisations wanted further protection. This invited an overbearing PMSC presence. PMSC intrusion and abuse was detested by Afghans. Western governments increasingly saw SSR for the ANSF as an important stabilisation alternative to risky combat deployments, but ISAF's 'train-and-equip' SSR model was ineffective. It did not support a cohesive ANA and failed to politically and legally introduce Afghanistan's military organisation to wider liberal 'good governance' principles. Obama found 'safety first' drone warfare difficult to resist. Escalated drone warfare eliminated and deterred some dangerous militants possibly coordinating attacks against Western interests, but this came with serious human costs for innocent populations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. Section two examines how political impatience for stabilisation undermined ISAF's cultural and situational awareness and the compromise between finally stabilising Afghanistan and the need to limit US soldier fatalities that defined Obama's 'surge'. Section three discusses the flood of Western civilian assistance pumped into Afghanistan during the 'surge' and how this counterproductively fuelled more Afghan government corruption. Section four examines how civilian organisations prioritised safety at the expense of optimised reconstruction aims. Section five analyses the failings of ISAF's 'train-and-equip' SSR. Section six discusses how PMSC proliferation eroded Afghan support for ISAF. Section seven explains how

Western governments eventually discarded stabilisation aims for ‘targeted killing’ in the 2010s. Section eight presents the chapter’s main conclusions.

## 9.2. Political impatience

In 2017, political commentator Michael Petrou expressed disappointment that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was ruling out military re-deployment for RSM.<sup>1409</sup> Ottawa paid a large sacrifice in soldier fatalities during earlier deployments in Afghanistan before 2011. Afghanistan remained fragile but was becoming ‘yesterday’s news’. Other NATO governments saw renewed commitment as politically problematic. Keeping Canada’s bid for an elected UNSC seat in 2020 in mind; Trudeau started to prioritise Canadian resources for other peace-keeping missions. According to Petrou, departing to new tasks would weaken Canada’s foreign policy when renewed commitment in Afghanistan could better impact global security. He urged Ottawa to ‘engage Canada’s military in something we’ve demonstrated tremendous ability at in Afghanistan and elsewhere: training up local troops doing the fighting on the ground’.<sup>1410</sup>

### 9.2.1. Situational and cultural awareness

Petrou argued that ‘Progress in Afghanistan will be measured in generations’ and progress ‘requires long-term commitments’.<sup>1411</sup> Military rotation schedules, ‘generally six-month tours [for Canadian military], were too short. Understanding a mission and nurturing relationships with locals take time, and a constant rotation of troops undermines this process’.<sup>1412</sup> Most NATO governments contributed like this, creating problems where command; ground troops; and ISAF-aligned civilian organisations struggled to build tangible relationships between themselves and with local Afghans. According to John Spencer, ‘frequent rotation’ means that ‘trust, rapport and progress’ between a stabilisation presence and local society is often ‘short-lived’.<sup>1413</sup> These tendencies are difficult to counteract against risk society preferences. Security from risks is continually demanded, but only limited resources and sacrifices are tolerated.

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<sup>1409</sup> Michael Petrou, ‘Canada Should Join its Closest Allies and Return to Afghanistan’, *CBC News*, 1 June 2017, available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/canada-in-afghanistan-1.4140231> (accessed 1 September 2022).

<sup>1410</sup> John Paul Tasker, ‘Justin Trudeau: I’ll End ISIS Combat Mission, Restore Relations with Iran’, *CBC News*, 23 June 2015, available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/justin-trudeau-i-ll-end-isis-combat-mission-restore-relations-with-iran-1.3124949> (accessed 1 September 2022).

<sup>1411</sup> Petrou, ‘Canada Should Join its Closest Allies’.

<sup>1412</sup> Petrou, ‘Canada Should Join its Closest Allies’.

<sup>1413</sup> John Spencer, ‘How to Rethink the US Military’s Troop Deployment Policy’, *Politico*, 27 July 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2016/07/rethinking-us-military-troop-deployment-policy-000177/> (accessed 2 September 2022).

Rotations will not reduce total fatalities across a military organisation, but risks are shared between internal divisions. While having more stabilisation benefits in fragile states, longer expeditionary rotations carry more hardships for soldiers and their families.<sup>1414</sup> While detracting from situational awareness, shorter rotations can allow better readiness. Trying to find middle ground, Spencer proposes that a long-term ‘single command and unit’ is stationed for stabilisation with ‘soldiers rotating in and out of the base on an individual basis’.<sup>1415</sup> In theory, stronger local links are maintained through an established command structure and a specific division (e.g. a US Marine Corps Division, UK Royal Marines, etc.) accumulating familiarity to better preserve situational knowledge as personnel return for multiple shorter tours. This proposal still loads all fatality risk onto a single division. One report claims that ISAF ‘made little effort, at least initially, to understand the Afghan condition and what motivated [local] behaviour’.<sup>1416</sup> It blamed the ‘tremendous turn-over of NATO forces and leaders in theatre’ for ISAF’s disconnect with the Afghan population.<sup>1417</sup>

Many civilian organisations perceived long-term commitments as a sacrifice for tangible progress. ‘Situational awareness’ is regularly stressed in military discourse, but Egdūnas Račius discusses combined military and civilian ‘cultural awareness’ as crucial for stabilisation.<sup>1418</sup> ‘A minimal amount of knowledge’ to understand local society must be attained to support mediation that informs policy.<sup>1419</sup> This can ‘save human and material resources and facilitate smoother interaction [with the local population] producing more favourable [stabilisation] results’.<sup>1420</sup> More ‘cultural awareness’ might have reduced ISAF mistakes for less violent backlashes. From 2007, the HTS attempted to improve the US military’s ‘cultural awareness’ in Afghanistan and Iraq. The HTS comprised teams of ethnographers and anthropologists researching local populations; analysis helped to guide US commanders.<sup>1421</sup> HTS teams identified ‘the legitimate power holders in the [local] community, and through them addressing the interests and grievances of the population they represent’.<sup>1422</sup> In 2008, Gates emphasised HTS’ importance in generating ‘alternative thinking’ where local awareness supported reconstruction initiatives such as ‘job-training programs for widows, or inviting

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<sup>1414</sup> Spencer, ‘How to Rethink the US Military’s Troop Deployment Policy’.

<sup>1415</sup> Spencer, ‘How to Rethink the US Military’s Troop Deployment Policy’.

<sup>1416</sup> Brett Boudreau, “*We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us*”. *An Analysis of NATO Strategic Communications: The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, 2003–2014*, Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2016, p. 26, available at: [https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/download/isaf\\_full\\_report\\_06-04-2016.pdf](https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/download/isaf_full_report_06-04-2016.pdf) (accessed 9 October 2022).

<sup>1417</sup> Boudreau, “*We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us*”, p. 28.

<sup>1418</sup> Egdūnas Račius, ‘The “Cultural Awareness” Factor in the Activities of the Lithuanian PRT in Afghanistan’, *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, vol. 9, 2007, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1419</sup> Račius, ‘The “Cultural Awareness” Factor’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1420</sup> Račius, ‘The “Cultural Awareness” Factor’, pp. 57–58.

<sup>1421</sup> Montgomery McFate and Steve Fondacaro, ‘Reflections on the Human Terrain System During the First 4 Years’, *Prism*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2011, p. 63.

<sup>1422</sup> McFate and Fondacaro, ‘Reflections on the Human Terrain System’, p. 65.

local power-brokers to bless a mosque restored with coalition funds'.<sup>1423</sup> This signalled to Afghans that ISAF assistance was benefitting their daily lives. For Gates, initiatives like the HTS were 'key to long-term success, but they are not always intuitive in a military establishment that has long put a premium on fire-power and technology'.<sup>1424</sup>

The HTS was controversial in US academia. Some ethnographers and anthropologists expressed ethical concerns over 'militarisation' or because HTS teams studied Afghan populations without consent.<sup>1425</sup> These disputes indicate further tensions in military and civilian organisational understandings of 'humanitarian space'. Critics perceived the HTS as violating academic and humanitarian ethics, interpreted as prioritising NATO's combat and stabilisation aims over purely humanitarian needs.<sup>1426</sup> The HTS did not conclude because of protests. After four HTS staff deaths on the battlefield and a \$726 million investment from 2007, HTS ended with US combat operations in 2014.<sup>1427</sup> An impatient risk society saw little continuing value in programmes requiring longer-term commitments. Sustained commitment over many decades was probably needed for civilian and military organisations to acquire effective knowledge and trust within Afghan society. While clashing with risk society preferences, this was not an alien understanding; it was discussed openly by ISAF's proponents. For example, the US military's landmark June 2006 Field Manual for COIN stated: 'The conduct of counterinsurgency always demands considerable expenditures of time and resources'.<sup>1428</sup> This is entirely logical in theory, but in practice, the risk society's impatience will intervene to obstruct a long-term focus. 'Safety first' preferences will not tolerate high military or civilian fatalities from longer engagements. SIGAR reports and declassified interviews reveal these tendencies underlying ISAF.

### 9.2.2. A final chance for COIN

Military organisations, government development agencies and NGOs prefer to rotate personnel stationed abroad. Risks inherent to foreign assignments in

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<sup>1423</sup> Robert M. Gates, 'Speech to the Association of American Universities', Washington DC: US Department of Defence, 14 April 2008, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100301161542/www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1228> (accessed 30 September 2022).

<sup>1424</sup> Gates, 'Speech to the Association of American Universities'.

<sup>1425</sup> Scott Jaschik, 'Embedded Conflicts', 7 July 2015, *Inside Higher Ed*, available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/07/07/army-shuts-down-controversial-human-terrain-system-criticized-many-anthropologists> (accessed 1 October 2022).

<sup>1426</sup> Jaschik, 'Embedded Conflicts'.

<sup>1427</sup> Tom Vanden Brook, 'Army Kills Controversial Social Science Program', *USA Today*, 29 June 2015, available at: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/06/29/human-terrain-system-afghanistan/29476409/> (accessed 1 October 2022).

<sup>1428</sup> US Army and US Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM) 3-24*, Final Draft, Washington DC, June 2006, p. 1-20, available at: <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf> (accessed 1 October 2022).

hostile locations are spread broadly across organisations. Employee safety and welfare is understandably prioritised to attract and retain staff, even when short rotations limit opportunities to build stronger local knowledge and relationships benefiting stabilisation. In a declassified SIGAR interview from 2015, David Marsden, a former Deputy Director of Technical Services at the USAID Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, laments rotations, constant haste and over-emphasised security as undermining civilian reconstruction. For Marsden, ‘the one year rotation for USAID, DoS and DoD personnel is the biggest obstacle to success and the biggest single factor in our failure [to stabilise Afghanistan]’.<sup>1429</sup> Constant staff rotations ‘hamper effectiveness’ by unsettling priorities as ‘Everyone wants to do something new and conduct operations “their way”’.<sup>1430</sup>

In Marsden’s assessment, USAID’s ineffectiveness was compounded by an overemphasis on safety: ‘Security is also the overwhelming priority over development. Many [USAID] staff cannot go out of the compound’ and that ‘Security infringes our [USAID] ability to interact [with the local population]’.<sup>1431</sup> Highlighting the risk society’s focus on preventing risks extending beyond fragile states, Marsden argues that a ‘Political agenda overrides’ and that USAID was working in Afghanistan ‘to support counterterrorism. If we [USAID] were supporting a development agenda, then we would be spending less and taking more time... More money and doing things faster don’t mean progress and success’.<sup>1432</sup> ‘Bunkerisation’, short rotations and politically-driven haste were denying stronger Afghan networks needed for effective civilian reconstruction: ‘The institutional memory of people [USAID’s staff in Afghanistan] who leave after a year is gone with them. You can’t build networks in one year. We are social creatures so we know who to go to in order to get things done’.<sup>1433</sup>

In December 2009, Obama finalised his ‘way forward’ for stabilisation in Afghanistan, focusing on three dimensions: ‘a military effort to create the conditions for a transition; a civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan’.<sup>1434</sup> He imposed a rigid deadline for accomplishing these lofty objectives. For Obama, this ‘surge’ was temporary. Anything contrary ‘would deny us [the US] any sense of urgency in working with the Afghan government. It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security’.<sup>1435</sup> Gates’ opinion that enhanced resources for 12-18 months

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<sup>1429</sup> David Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview, To Ascertain the History of Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan Primarily During the First 5 Years of the War’, Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], 3 December 2015, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?tid=bottom\\_nav&document=marsden\\_david\\_ll\\_05\\_a2\\_12032015](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?tid=bottom_nav&document=marsden_david_ll_05_a2_12032015) (accessed 5 October 2022).

<sup>1430</sup> Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>1431</sup> Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>1432</sup> Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>1433</sup> Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>1434</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

<sup>1435</sup> Obama, ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward’.

could stabilise Afghanistan seemingly guided Obama to confirm this as his ‘surge’ timetable. July 2011 was pre-planned as month when the US military drawdown would begin.<sup>1436</sup> Petraeus claims that this plan ‘was just sprung on’ military commanders two days before it was publicly announced.<sup>1437</sup> Confronted with a ‘take it or leave it situation’, Petraeus hints that Obama’s timeline was unrealistic: ‘nobody ever thought this [‘surge’] was going to last forever, but nobody presumed we would begin drawing down in July 2011’.<sup>1438</sup>

Under US leadership, NATO had a narrow window with ‘surged’ resources to stabilise Afghanistan. This was the last chance for COIN. Obama wished to avoid an ‘open-ended surge’ that would ‘divert critical resources’ from the US response to the post-2008 financial crisis.<sup>1439</sup> ISAF commanders had no more scope to request ‘future extensions or escalations’ while it was signalled to Kabul that US aid inflows would eventually diminish; it needed to prepare to reduce its dependency to sustain its rule.<sup>1440</sup> Obama attempted to balance domestic pressure to end a faltering war with the need to address risks from continued instability in Afghanistan. The tight turnaround that Obama imposed caused many unintended consequences. It forced civilian assistance to peak sharply, eventually making the stabilisation situation worse.

### 9.3. A funding flood

It is wrong to suggest that US financial assistance and that from other donors for development did not assist Afghan society. Between 2001 and 2020, around \$150 billion in US funds flowed into Afghanistan for a vast number of civilian projects.<sup>1441</sup> When the Taliban seized control in August 2021, some claimed that it would still be unable to restore its previously draconian social order. From Western assistance, Afghan society was more educated and more liberal than before. Foreign assistance had built an education system for a new generation; the number of women accessing education at all levels had increased dramatically.<sup>1442</sup> Life expectancy was much higher. Investment in physical infrastructure had expanded road and street networks, while hydroelectric dams and solar

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<sup>1436</sup> John F. Sopko, *Stabilization: Lessons from US Experience in Afghanistan*, Arlington VA: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), May 2018, p. 34, available at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-18-48-LL.pdf> (accessed 6 October 2022).

<sup>1437</sup> Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1438</sup> Petraeus, ‘LL-07 – Stabilization in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1439</sup> Sopko, *Stabilization*, p. 34.

<sup>1440</sup> Sopko, *Stabilization*, p. 34.

<sup>1441</sup> Mohammad Qadam Shah, ‘What Did Billions in Aid to Afghanistan Accomplish? 5 Questions Answered’, *The Conversation*, 26 October 2021, available at: <https://theconversation.com/what-did-billions-in-aid-to-afghanistan-accomplish-5-questions-answered-166804> (accessed 6 October 2022).

<sup>1442</sup> Shah, ‘What Did Billions in Aid to Afghanistan Accomplish?’.

power plants were allowing Afghanistan to improve its economic potential.<sup>1443</sup> Some claim that Afghans preferring a more open society will not allow the Taliban to re-establish its draconian system. These claims are dubious, but, for twenty years, international development assistance had many positives for Afghanistan.

### 9.3.1. Rushing to spend

Despite this, the enormous spike in civilian funding arriving during the ‘surge’ turned out to have many harmful consequences. Along with defeating the Taliban insurgency and creating a strong ANSF to sustain stable statehood, supporting governance was an ISAF priority. The ANA’s collapse to the Taliban in 2021 had origins in Obama’s tight ‘surge’ timeline pressuring NATO trainers to hastily find solutions for Afghan military reform.<sup>1444</sup> The ANA was dependent on vital Western ‘enablers, such as close air support, medical evacuation, and leadership’.<sup>1445</sup> Any security that the ANA seemed to independently provide against Taliban violence was a mirage laid bare when Western ‘enablers’ were later withdrawn. NATO’s model for ANA development contradicted its own aim for the ANSF to be independently capable. The ANA’s rapid 2021 collapse dominated global headlines, but many similarly unsustainable practices also prevailed with civilian reconstruction.

The US struggled to administer its civilian funding for Afghanistan prior to 2009. A 2021 SIGAR report found that Washington’s civilian outlay ‘spiked’ by another 50 percent between 2009 and 2010.<sup>1446</sup> US field administrators were ‘scrambling’ to ‘make the most of the short surge’.<sup>1447</sup> Whitlock argues that ‘surge’ plans triggered a ‘mindless rush to spend’; Marsden viewed the sudden deluge as unwise: ‘We don’t need more troops or money, we need more time. People are just learning to read and write and we are expecting the [Afghan] government to operate like ours [Western governments].’<sup>1448</sup> By 2010, US development spending was ‘equivalent to more than 100 percent of Afghanistan’s GDP’. SIGAR assessed this as ‘more than double the country’s estimated maximum absorptive capacity’.<sup>1449</sup> Some USAID funds supported NGOs. Paul O’Brien, then vice-president for policy at Oxfam America, explained that USAID’s usual

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<sup>1443</sup> Shah, ‘What Did Billions in Aid to Afghanistan Accomplish?’.

<sup>1444</sup> John F. Sopko, *What We Need To Learn: Lessons From Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*, Arlington VA: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), August 2021, p. 33, available at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf> (accessed 7 October 2022).

<sup>1445</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, p. 33.

<sup>1446</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, p. 33.

<sup>1447</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1448</sup> Whitlock, ‘A War With the Truth’. And Marsden, ‘Lessons Learned Interview’.

<sup>1449</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

policy was for \$10 million in grants to be the recommended maximum for each manager, but during the ‘surge’ this exploded to \$100 million.<sup>1450</sup>

This enormous peak was gravely problematic for stabilisation. It ended up creating further distance and confusion between the Afghan government and local Afghan stakeholders. In the rush to use this funding, US agencies and the organisations they funded were often too busy to consult ‘Afghan government officials and project beneficiaries’, a process that might have slowed decisions down to allow more realistic ‘project design and implementation’.<sup>1451</sup> Under anonymity, one NATO official revealed to SIGAR that Karzai complained that PRTs were bypassing his administration and had become a ‘parallel government’.<sup>1452</sup> The Taliban was attracting more supporters for its own ‘shadow institutions’. ISAF priorities were split between PRTs with sprawling aims and support for Karzai’s government, beleaguered in most regions outside Kabul.<sup>1453</sup> This was chaotic governance patchwork and many Afghans correctly doubted who was actually in charge.

Much ‘surge’ funding had no long-term development impact. In 2021, a SIGAR audit focused on ‘a sample of 60 US infrastructure projects’ assessed that \$723.8 million, or funding for 91 percent of these projects, had been spent on ‘assets that were unused or abandoned, were not used as intended, had deteriorated, were destroyed, or some combination of the above’.<sup>1454</sup> It was similar with US funding for Afghan governance. According to SIGAR, Washington ‘spent \$4.7 billion trying to make district-level governments in contested areas seem responsive to their constituents’, but it had ‘failed to acknowledge that the districts had no budget to even maintain what had been built, much less continue the work’.<sup>1455</sup> USAID often prioritised NGOs as ‘implementing partners’ assisting governance and not the Afghan government.<sup>1456</sup> This helped the Afghan government to shirk responsibility, releasing it from ‘pressure to decentralize its budgetary process which, according to SIGAR, ‘remained dysfunctional’.<sup>1457</sup> When this funding ‘surge’ ended, little was achieved for enduring stable

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<sup>1450</sup> Paul O’Brien cited in Ben Arnoldy, ‘Afghanistan War: USAID Spends Too Much, Too Fast to Win Hearts and Minds’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 July 2010, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0728/Afghanistan-war-USAID-spends-too-much-too-fast-to-win-hearts-and-minds> (accessed 7 October 2022).

<sup>1451</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1452</sup> NATO official in Brussels, ‘Lessons Learned Interview, Re: NATO Coalition in Afghanistan, NATO Expansion and Transition from ISAF to RSM’, Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], 18 February 2015, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?tid=bottom\\_nav&document=background\\_11\\_01\\_xx\\_brussels\\_1800\\_02182015](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?tid=bottom_nav&document=background_11_01_xx_brussels_1800_02182015) (accessed 7 October 2022).

<sup>1453</sup> NATO official in Brussels, ‘Lessons Learned Interview, Re: NATO Coalition in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1454</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1455</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1456</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33

<sup>1457</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

governance in Afghanistan's rural peripheries, areas with the lowest development levels and the highest insurgency risk.

### 9.3.2. Worsening corruption

'Surged' development funding made severe corruption worse within the Afghan government. Karzai's networks were originally perceived by ISAF as an asset for state-building, but, by 2011, these were a serious problem. With massive US funding came 'Enormous pressure to demonstrate progress to the Congress and the American and Afghan people distorted accountability systems into spin machines'.<sup>1458</sup> Political need for a successful 'surge' narrative distorted honesty on whether funding was actually meeting genuine development aims.<sup>1459</sup> With Western accountability controls breaking down, Afghans with political connections sought to corruptly profit. Larger development funds created more incentive for this. According to one US official, those corruptly connected to the Afghan government realised this money would 'keep flowing no matter what they do'.<sup>1460</sup>

Marsden discussed the sudden funding flood as 'like pouring a lot [of] water into a funnel; if you pour it too fast, the water overflows the funnel onto the ground. We were flooding the ground'.<sup>1461</sup> This 'overflow' mostly served corrupt Afghan elite.<sup>1462</sup> Gert Berthold worked in forensic accounting for the US military. Interviewed by SIGAR, Berthold discussed one \$106 billion US political and military capacity-building budget eventually distributed to contractors.<sup>1463</sup> He claimed that 25 percent was diverted to 'transnational crime and insurgency' and a further 15 percent was siphoned by 'transnational crime and government corruption'.<sup>1464</sup> Funding to improve governance and security had instead fallen into the hands of criminals and insurgents.

Interviewed by SIGAR, Christopher Kolenda, a retired US Army colonel who advised three ISAF commanders, argued that 'By 2006, the Afghan government

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<sup>1458</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1459</sup> Sopko, *What We Need To Learn*, pp. 30–33.

<sup>1460</sup> Senior US official cited in John F. Sopko, *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan*, Arlington VA: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), September 2016, p. 9, available at: <https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/SIGAR-16-58-LL.pdf> (accessed 8 October 2022).

<sup>1461</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1462</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1463</sup> Gert Berthold, 'Lessons Learned Interview, To Learn About The Activities of Task Force 2010, and Reasons for its Creation and Significant Scaling Down in 2012', Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], 6 October 2015, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background\\_II\\_03\\_xx\\_dc\\_10062015](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_II_03_xx_dc_10062015) (accessed 8 October 2022).

<sup>1464</sup> Berthold, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

had self-organised into a kleptocracy'.<sup>1465</sup> This problem got even worse as ISAF progressed. Afghan government corruption did not always involve individuals paying politicians for privileges, rather political or military officials saw that they could 'recoup the costs' of government responsibilities 'through cuts from assistance programs, selling uniforms or ammunition on the black market, drug trafficking, or kidnapping'.<sup>1466</sup> Kolenda captures the grave repercussions for ISAF with this analogy:

Petty corruption is like skin cancer; there are ways to deal with it and you'll probably be just fine. Corruption within the ministries, higher level, is like colon cancer; it's worse, but if you catch it in time, you're probably ok. Kleptocracy, however, is like brain cancer; it's fatal.<sup>1467</sup>

Kolenda concedes that 'we [Western officials] didn't define the issue well enough or early enough to have a cohesive response'.<sup>1468</sup> Many US officials downplayed the problem, sometimes equating it as similar to corruption in the US or as a temporary developmental phase likely to recede rather than expand.<sup>1469</sup> However, this corruption was not just a feature of Afghanistan's government system, it was the system.

Associations between ISAF and a corrupt Afghan government were disastrous for state-building. Opportunities to convince more Afghans to support ISAF quickly evaporated. Not only was the Afghan government exorbitantly corrupt, but its system was violently abusive. HRW claimed in 2015 that Karzai's government 'installed many powerful warlords and failed to confront others, while many others have been funded by and worked alongside international forces, further entrenching them politically into the fabric of Afghan society'.<sup>1470</sup> According to HRW, it was common for 'persons in positions of [Afghan government] authority or persons who operate with their backing' to carry out 'mass killings, murder, rape, torture, beatings, enforced disappearances, theft, and arbitrary detention'.<sup>1471</sup>

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<sup>1465</sup> Christopher Kolenda, 'Lessons Learned Interview, To Learn About Interviewee's Experience in Afghanistan', Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], 5 April 2016, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background\\_11\\_03\\_xx\\_dc\\_04052016](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_11_03_xx_dc_04052016) (accessed 9 October 2022).

<sup>1466</sup> Kolenda, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1467</sup> Kolenda, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1468</sup> Kolenda, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1469</sup> Kolenda, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1470</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), "'Today We Shall All Die': Afghanistan's Strongmen and the Legacy of Impunity", New York, 3 March 2015, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/03/03/today-we-shall-all-die/afghanistans-strongmen-and-legacy-impunity> (accessed 9 October 2022).

<sup>1471</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), "'Today We Shall All Die':

Government connections allowed perpetrators to evade justice which ‘degrad[ed] commitments to human rights, justice, and the rule of law that Afghanistan has made in its constitution and international treaties’.<sup>1472</sup> When organisations supporting ISAF said they were promoting human rights, justice, the rule of law, anti-corruption and protection from insurgent violence, many Afghans doubted their sincerity. Some Afghans even perceived the Taliban’s ‘shadow institutions’ as preferable to what ISAF and the Afghan government were promoting.<sup>1473</sup> The Taliban leveraged Afghan grievances to strengthen support for its parallel court system, portraying ISAF and its Afghan government accomplices as corrupt ‘occupiers’.<sup>1474</sup> ‘Shadow institutions’ expanded from rural peripheries where ISAF had a limited presence; where the *madrastas* supported Taliban ideology to further inflame Afghan grievances against ISAF.<sup>1475</sup>

Leading human rights NGOs such as HRW and Amnesty International highlighted the Afghan government’s predatory tendencies to a global audience.<sup>1476</sup> A telling illustration of ISAF’s close entanglement with Afghan corruption occurred with its dependence on Ahmed Wali Karzai (AWK), Chief of the Kandahar Provincial Council, and also President Karzai’s half-brother after 2010.<sup>1477</sup> AWK was a ‘key power broker’ in southern Afghanistan, but ISAF suspected he was ‘heavily involved in the illicit drugs trade’.<sup>1478</sup> Family connections to the Western-backed Afghan president rendered him ‘untouchable’.<sup>1479</sup> Instead of clamping down on AWK, ISAF co-opted him with an ‘engagement strategy’ involving ‘millions of dollars’ in international contracts allocated ‘to various companies and agencies run by his network’.<sup>1480</sup> AWK’s networks temporarily cooperated and security improved, but this was short lived. ISAF was undermining its own anti-corruption and anti-narcotics messages.<sup>1481</sup> NATO had gradually developed strategic communications ‘to inform, persuade or influence

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<sup>1472</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), “‘Today We Shall All Die’”:

<sup>1473</sup> BBC News, ‘Life Inside a Taliban Town’.

<sup>1474</sup> Adam Baczko, ‘How the Taliban Justice System Contributed to their Victory in Afghanistan’, *Items: Insights from the Social Sciences*, 26 October 2021, available at: <https://items.ssrc.org/insights/how-the-taliban-justice-system-contributed-to-their-victory-in-afghanistan/> (accessed 11 October 2022).

<sup>1475</sup> Baczko, ‘How the Taliban Justice System Contributed to their Victory’.

<sup>1476</sup> For a sample, see Human Rights Watch (HRW), ‘Afghanistan: Abusive Strongmen Escape Justice’, New York: 3 March 2015, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/03/afghanistan-abusive-strongmen-escape-justice> (accessed 9 October 2022). And Amnesty International, ‘Afghanistan: 10-Point Agenda for President Karzai’, London, November 2009, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/asa110172009en.pdf> (accessed 9 October 2022).

<sup>1477</sup> Rudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell, ‘Campaign Disconnect: Operational Progress and Strategic Obstacles in Afghanistan, 2009–2011’, *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 2, 2011, p. 286.

<sup>1478</sup> Chaudhuri and Farrell, ‘Campaign Disconnect’, p. 286.

<sup>1479</sup> Chaudhuri and Farrell, ‘Campaign Disconnect’, p. 286.

<sup>1480</sup> Chaudhuri and Farrell, ‘Campaign Disconnect’, p. 286.

<sup>1481</sup> Chaudhuri and Farrell, ‘Campaign Disconnect’, p. 286.

audiences in support of specific objectives'.<sup>1482</sup> Compounding associations with Afghan government corruption, communication errors caused further setbacks. ISAF regularly reported that only insurgents were killed in its SOF raids. However, it appeared deceitful with local populations when news subsequently emerged that civilians also perished in the same operations.<sup>1483</sup>

## 9.4. Safety for civilian organisations

ISAF-led civilian reconstruction involved a diverse, decentred and complex system of government agencies, private contractors and NGOs. A multitude of NGOs aligned with ISAF aiming to improve Afghan state capacity. Michael Pugh describes the NGO community contributing to civilian reconstruction as 'a fractured, fractious zoo full of weird and wonderful animals'.<sup>1484</sup> Some NGOs have a humanitarian focus; others are more development driven, aiming to build capacity in areas as diverse as education; healthcare; poverty-reduction; anti-corruption; good governance; law enforcement; civil society engagement; and public safety (e.g. anti-landmines, small arms reduction). Some NGOs were contracted by governments and IOs; others were funded from independent sources.

### 9.4.1. NGOs and COIN

Many NGOs insist on impartiality within 'humanitarian space' so that those seeking humanitarian assistance are treated equally regardless of conflict alignment. This led some NGOs towards tension with ISAF. NGOs were suspicious that NATO's COIN focus would tempt it to coax them to explicitly align their work with military aims. Early 9/11 US intervention in Afghanistan had focused narrowly on SOF counterterrorism raids to the detriment of civilian obligations. This left a governance vacuum that the Taliban recovered to exploit. This mistake galvanised ISAF's belief that more civilian 'soft power' could be combined with military operations to make stabilisation more effective.<sup>1485</sup> NATO was guided by its CA, but many NGOs remained uncomfortable. ISAF's relations with NGOs were unbalanced, NATO benefited from better resourced and longer-term funding streams, assets beyond most NGOs.<sup>1486</sup> NGOs could rarely match

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<sup>1482</sup> Boudreau, "We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us", p. 25.

<sup>1483</sup> Boudreau, "We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us", p. 29.

<sup>1484</sup> Michael Pugh, 'Civil-Military Relations in International Peace Operations' in Kurt R. Spillmann, Thomas Bernauer, Jürg M. Gabriel, Andreas Wenger, eds., with the assistance of Yvonne Rosteck, *Peace Support Operations: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2001, p. 110, available at: [https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Studien\\_zu\\_ZS-9.pdf](https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Studien_zu_ZS-9.pdf) (accessed 12 October 2022).

<sup>1485</sup> Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace? Aid, Reconstruction, and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan', *Disasters*, 2010, vol. 34, no. 1, p. 93.

<sup>1486</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *NATO's Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Response Operations: A Work in Slow Progress*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS),

NATO-led initiatives for mutual dialogue, cooperation and training, leaving scope to misconstrue that a NATO-dominated or overly-militarised relationship was purposely engineered.<sup>1487</sup>

Despite these misgivings, NGOs still needed NATO's military protection to operate properly. A fragile understanding developed where NATO avoided direct meddling in 'humanitarian space' that often threaded the limits of 'international standards'.<sup>1488</sup> NGOs objected to their programmes being 'integrated and subordinated' into military planning, but NGO work often indirectly supported COIN.<sup>1489</sup> Humanitarian impartiality was sometimes subtly downplayed because of the risk society's 'safety first' emphasis on defeating the insurgency. Military operations would break the Taliban on the battlefield, but civilian funds would win 'hearts and minds', drawing locals away from the Taliban to support ISAF. However, even when civilian assistance supported this, impact to weaken the Taliban was underwhelming.

Afghanistan's central provinces were its most stable; these were also its poorest. Stable central Afghanistan received considerably less civilian assistance than Helmand and Kandahar; 'the primary recruiting grounds and battlefields for the Taliban'.<sup>1490</sup> Afghanistan is deeply divided along ethno-political lines. ISAF's uneven coordination of financial assistance benefitting Pashtun-dominated southern Afghanistan to correspond with military objectives provoked 'resentment' beyond.<sup>1491</sup> This reduced incentives for communities in northern and central Afghanistan to strive beyond a situation of less violence but limited governance. This weakness was later exploited by the Taliban when it retook areas of central and northern Afghanistan soon after ISAF concluded in 2014.<sup>1492</sup> ISAF did attempt to integrate some civilian coordination into its military command, but it struggled to convert this into an operational focus combining civilian and military security concerns in a balanced way. ISAF's strategic communications for PRT-led civilian reconstruction were criticised as 'seriously deficient'.<sup>1493</sup> Opportunities to better inform Afghans of wider civilian benefits were missed. Military operations dominated ISAF's optics. Contributors to civilian reconstruction feared that Afghans perceived PRTs as solely concerned with 'military problems'.<sup>1494</sup>

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Report 15, 2008, pp. 35–37, available at: [https://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import\\_efter1114/report\\_2008-15\\_nato\\_comprehensive\\_approach\\_crisis\\_response\\_operations.pdf](https://www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import_efter1114/report_2008-15_nato_comprehensive_approach_crisis_response_operations.pdf) (accessed 21 January 2023).

<sup>1487</sup> Viggo Jakobsen, *NATO's Comprehensive Approach*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>1488</sup> Viggo Jakobsen, *NATO's Comprehensive Approach*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>1489</sup> Viggo Jakobsen, *NATO's Comprehensive Approach*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>1490</sup> Goodhand and Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace?', p. 95.

<sup>1491</sup> Goodhand and Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace?', pp. 94–95.

<sup>1492</sup> Goodhand and Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace?', pp. 94–95.

<sup>1493</sup> Boudreau, 'We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us', p. 29.

<sup>1494</sup> Boudreau, 'We Have Met The Enemy and He is Us', p. 29.

### 9.4.2. Cooperation with militaries

ISAF military units were sometimes welcomed by local populations for providing security, but intrusive SOF raids often turned local goodwill into resentment and hostility. Farrell highlights discussions where US officials revealed that ‘kill and capture’ raids were ‘ramped up’ to an ‘industrial scale’ when McChrystal’s was ISAF commander during the ‘surge’.<sup>1495</sup> Most occurred in rural areas near Taliban strongholds. Seeking to reduce international controversy, McChrystal did not ‘make a big deal’ of this, but these raids wrought violent disruption that was impossible to hide from distressed Afghans.<sup>1496</sup> Karzai, out of the presidency since 2014, recalled these raids in a July 2021 interview: ‘the American forces and their militias sometimes with them come and barge into our [Afghan] homes and do things that are horrible, bomb our villages in the name of fighting the Taliban’.<sup>1497</sup>

Karzai’s reflections need to be balanced with knowledge that his relations with US leaders seriously deteriorated as his presidency progressed. Caustic relations between Karzai and Obama undercut ISAF’s political aims.<sup>1498</sup> Karzai was blamed as state-building regressed. Trying to ‘clean up’ the Afghan government, Washington launched a ‘confrontational’ anti-corruption approach targeting Karzai’s ‘inner circle’.<sup>1499</sup> It is no surprise that Karzai’s recollections are bitter. He perceived US governments in a risk society mould as ‘hopelessly fickle, represented by multiple military and civilian envoys who carry contradictory messages, work at cross-purposes’.<sup>1500</sup> Western officials were perceived as impatient and unrealistic, ‘operating on short fuses and even shorter timetables’.<sup>1501</sup> He recalled that supporting civilian reconstruction should have been ‘the main objective’ for ISAF ‘in which the Afghan people, our people also shared and joined hands; an end to extremism, stability in Afghanistan, peace in our country’.<sup>1502</sup> Karzai perceived it as ‘disastrous for us [Afghans]’ that ISAF had allowed military aims to overshadow civilian reconstruction.<sup>1503</sup> He conspiratorially questioned if other motives underpinning NATO’s intervention were being concealed: ‘is this for a global objective or regional rivalry of the United

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<sup>1495</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 10.

<sup>1496</sup> Farrell, *Unwinnable*, Chapter 10.

<sup>1497</sup> Hamid Karzai, ‘US Troops in Afghanistan Has Been “Disastrous”’, *Sky News*, 5 July 2021, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSPy2aJ2ixM> (accessed 22 October 2022).

<sup>1498</sup> Ahmed Rashid, ‘How Obama Lost Karzai’, *Foreign Policy*, 21 February 2011, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/02/21/how-obama-lost-karzai-2/> (accessed 22 October 2022).

<sup>1499</sup> Rashid, ‘How Obama Lost Karzai’.

<sup>1500</sup> Rashid, ‘How Obama Lost Karzai’.

<sup>1501</sup> Rashid, ‘How Obama Lost Karzai’.

<sup>1502</sup> Karzai, ‘US Troops in Afghanistan’.

<sup>1503</sup> Karzai, ‘US Troops in Afghanistan’.

States?'.<sup>1504</sup> Karzai was angrily convinced that Afghans were 'the victim of this ongoing sad saga'.<sup>1505</sup>

While concerned that ISAF was too military dominated; civilian development providers had another uncomfortable conflict of interest. Many could not have operated in Afghanistan without protection from NATO and/or PMSCs. PRTs 'blurred' boundaries between civilian assistance and military force, possibly putting aligned civilian organisations at more risk from violence.<sup>1506</sup> According to David Mitchell, NGOs were more likely to be violently targeted when PRT affiliated, but this risk was only significant when the PRT was not a US one.<sup>1507</sup> US-led PRTs sometimes had stronger security compared to other ISAF PRTs. Washington had the largest military footprint in Afghanistan; this possibly deterred perpetrators that perceived punishment likely for an attack. Mitchell's analysis indicates that more PRT military security measures, not less might have been best for civilian safety.

However, he does not address how different security measures assist or obstruct NGOs and other civilian organisations carrying out reconstruction tasks. In theory, limiting contact with local populations for security reasons might not necessarily affect effective reconstruction outcomes. Civilian organisations definitely needed some protection to stand a chance of operating effectively, but, in practice, many development personnel reported 'bunkerisation' as undermining reconstruction. With some scathing feedback from Afghan field operations, Marsden explains that security concerns regularly overrode USAID's development aims, reporting that: 'There are hundreds of regional security advisors. Security industry has taken over the government'.<sup>1508</sup> There is insatiable demand for security services in the risk society, even if, in Marsden's view, this can then smother civilian reconstruction necessary to stabilise a fragile state.

For Marsden, 'Some rationalisation of security' was necessary because 'Security infringes our [USAID's] ability to interact [with local population]'.<sup>1509</sup> While not explicitly mentioning 'safety first' security concerns as a barrier, Marsden discusses a dysfunctional disconnect between USAID's Afghan headquarters in Kabul and the organisations that USAID relied on to implement its projects 'in the field'.<sup>1510</sup> In Marsden's account; USAID was unable to undertake 'systematic and consistent' monitoring of how its funds were being spent in many Afghan regions.<sup>1511</sup> Security restrictions limiting contact with Afghan headquarters left civilian NGOs funded by Washington and many Afghan people – the supposed beneficiaries of this funding – in distant regions without a 'strong

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<sup>1504</sup> Karzai, 'US Troops in Afghanistan'.

<sup>1505</sup> Karzai, 'US Troops in Afghanistan'.

<sup>1506</sup> David F. Mitchell, 'Blurred Lines? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and NGO Insecurity in Afghanistan, 2010–2011', *Stability*, vol. 4 no. 1, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>1507</sup> Mitchell, 'Blurred Lines?', p. 1.

<sup>1508</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1509</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1510</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1511</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

connection with USAID'.<sup>1512</sup> Military forces largely represented ISAF in volatile peripheries. Military units were 'more mobile' when civilian representatives operated with greater safety restrictions.<sup>1513</sup> Strong country-wide networks were essential for ISAF to win Afghan 'hearts and minds'. When 'safety first' security restrictions inhibited civilian reconstruction, this limited networks as Taliban militants gained momentum.

### 9.4.3. Increased 'bunkerisation'

Humanitarian NGOs such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent insist on 'humanitarian neutrality' to help them safely operate in 'active conflict zones'.<sup>1514</sup> This alone did little to reduce Taliban violence against civilian organisations.<sup>1515</sup> Achieving neutrality was near untenable in Afghanistan. The Afghan government and NATO were concerned that equal access to NGO services would 'help the enemy'.<sup>1516</sup> Civilian organisations were 'at risk from both sides' forcing them to choose stronger security measures, even if some reconstruction tasks were disrupted.<sup>1517</sup> According to Abby Stoddard, stronger security created 'militarised optics' for civilian organisations. This caused 'mistrust' with Afghan populations and made some NGOs 'seem like a legitimate target' for insurgents.<sup>1518</sup> Even UN personnel, an unmistakably universal IO, were threatened.<sup>1519</sup>

Many, although not all, civilian organisations in Afghanistan favoured what Florian Weigand and Ruben Andersson call 'hard security risk management'.<sup>1520</sup> Workplaces and residences were located behind fortified walls and armed guards. Only armoured vehicles were permitted for transport.<sup>1521</sup> Safety practices involved routine security briefings, regular curfews and lockdowns, and the 'separation of foreigners and locals'.<sup>1522</sup> Civilian personnel described how security arrangements 'replicated how NATO soldiers lived'.<sup>1523</sup> Civilian organisations were often trapped in a 'vicious-circle' where security awareness counter-intuitively evoked insecurity. Security measures were an inward reminder of

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<sup>1512</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1513</sup> Marsden, 'Lessons Learned Interview'.

<sup>1514</sup> Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire'.

<sup>1515</sup> Stefan Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire', *Open Canada*, 2020, available at: <https://opencanada.org/humanitarians-under-fire/> (accessed 1 November 2022).

<sup>1516</sup> Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire'.

<sup>1517</sup> Abby Stoddard cited in Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire'.

<sup>1518</sup> Stoddard cited in Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire'.

<sup>1519</sup> Labbé, 'Humanitarians Under Fire'.

<sup>1520</sup> Florian Weigand and Ruben Andersson, 'Institutionalized Intervention: The "Bunker Politics" of International Aid in Afghanistan', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2019, p. 505.

<sup>1521</sup> Weigand and Andersson, 'Institutionalized Intervention', p. 505.

<sup>1522</sup> Weigand and Andersson, 'Institutionalized Intervention', p. 505.

<sup>1523</sup> Weigand and Andersson, 'Institutionalized Intervention', p. 518.

danger, but outwardly stoked local suspicions.<sup>1524</sup> ‘Bunkerisation’ ingrained psychological difficulties causing problems with morale, mental stress, and paranoia.<sup>1525</sup> Some civilian personnel reported that ‘bunkerisation’ served to ‘alienate’ them from Afghans they were assisting.<sup>1526</sup> A minority of civilian organisations permitted personnel to reside in regular Afghan neighbourhoods without conspicuous protections.<sup>1527</sup> Civilian organisations have a ‘duty of care’ to employees. They need to convince insurers that satisfactory security measures are in place and explain to donors ‘back home’ that expatriate citizens working for them are not in harm’s way.<sup>1528</sup> When security measures obstruct, coordination from headquarters gets ‘disconnected’ from frontline employees.<sup>1529</sup>

Civilian personnel guiding frontline operations from Kabul were frequently restricted from travelling beyond the capital to oversee projects elsewhere.<sup>1530</sup> When security advice deemed Afghanistan too dangerous, some civilian organisations even relocated their Afghan headquarters outside the country.<sup>1531</sup> This increased distance with local populations, reduced situational awareness and transferred more risk onto ‘often ill-prepared frontline staff’.<sup>1532</sup> ‘Remote’ coordination from Kabul or elsewhere led civilian programmes to be ‘outsourced’ to ‘local’ or ‘regional’ staff.<sup>1533</sup> Frontline risks were often ‘transferred’ from organisation management ‘down the social hierarchy’ to Afghan staff.<sup>1534</sup> Contrary to stabilisation derived from closer social cohesion, ‘bunkerisation’ created a ‘risk economy’ defined by widening inequality.<sup>1535</sup>

As the post-Cold War era defined by responses to risks ‘aggravated’ by globalisation evolved, Jan Egeland argues that civilian organisations moved from ‘recklessness’ where security was first under-prioritised in the 1990s to the opposite extreme of ‘bunkerisation’ in the 2000s.<sup>1536</sup> The bombing that devastated the UN’s headquarters in Iraq in 2003 was a watershed.<sup>1537</sup> Many development practitioners now conclude that ‘bunkerisation’ has gone too far because it regularly

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<sup>1524</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 509. And Ruben Andersson and Florian Weigand, ‘Intervention at Risk: The Vicious Cycle of Distance and Danger in Mali and Afghanistan’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2015, p. 519.

<sup>1525</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, pp. 514–515.

<sup>1526</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, pp. 510–511.

<sup>1527</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 509.

<sup>1528</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 506.

<sup>1529</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, pp. 510–511.

<sup>1530</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 514.

<sup>1531</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 514.

<sup>1532</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 506.

<sup>1533</sup> Andersson and Weigand, ‘Intervention at Risk’, p. 532.

<sup>1534</sup> Andersson and Weigand, ‘Intervention at Risk’, p. 532.

<sup>1535</sup> Andersson and Weigand, ‘Intervention at Risk’, p. 532.

<sup>1536</sup> Jan Egeland cited in AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’, *The New Humanitarian*, 3 November 2015, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/92459/aid-policy-staff-security-%E2%80%9Cbunkerization%E2%80%9D-versus-acceptance> (accessed 2 November 2022).

<sup>1537</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

disrupts local assistance. This was emphasised in a 2011 UN report recommending a switch from ‘bunkerisation’ to ‘smart protection’.<sup>1538</sup> ‘Cloistering offices in walled compounds, using armoured cars and armed guards’ were blamed for ‘promoting division and reinforcing the misperception of humanitarians as harbouring a Western agenda’.<sup>1539</sup>

Retaining a ‘safety first’ outlook, the report proposed more discreet security measures. Rather than prominent sites with imposing ‘blast barriers’, organisations might prefer locations away from main roads with less security infrastructure.<sup>1540</sup> Local taxis were preferable to conspicuous armoured SUVs.<sup>1541</sup> ‘Signing memos of understanding with local elites’ to develop co-investment policies with local governments and organisations were likely to ‘lower risks to staff’ while helping to resolve some local disconnects.<sup>1542</sup> These alternatives to ‘bunkerisation’ still centred on ‘mitigating risks’ but ‘so programmes can continue’ even if security circumstances deteriorate.<sup>1543</sup> Reforms to this effect had some small success in Afghanistan. For example, the British NGO Save the Children safely improved its access to those it assisted by engaging ‘traditional elders’ as community power brokers.<sup>1544</sup> Mutually agreed memorandums of understanding reduced misplaced suspicion.<sup>1545</sup> Cultivating closer local ‘acceptance’ like this had some promise, but it required a risky ‘leap of faith’ from civilian organisations to drop some well ingrained security habits.<sup>1546</sup>

## 9.5. SSR failings

Civilian organisations – mostly IOs, diplomatic missions, NGOs and private enterprises – perceived ANSF and ISAF combined as not creating enough safety.<sup>1547</sup> PMSCs were routinely contracted by international and local actors to boost security.<sup>1548</sup> This may not have been as widespread if ISAF’s SSR proved more effective. External SSR aims to help fragile states to build functioning military and police forces. For Rubin, this is ‘constructing sovereignty for security’

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<sup>1538</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1539</sup> Jan Egeland, Adele Harmer and Abby Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver: Good Practice for Humanitarians in Complex Security Environments*, New York: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2011, pp. 28–29, available at: [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Stay\\_and\\_Deliver.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Stay_and_Deliver.pdf) (accessed 2 November 2022).

<sup>1540</sup> Egeland, et al., *To Stay and Deliver*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>1541</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1542</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1543</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1544</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1545</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1546</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1547</sup> BBC News, ‘Karzai Abandons Plan to Scrap Private Security Firms’, 6 December 2010, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11925855> (accessed 25 October 2022).

<sup>1548</sup> BBC News, ‘Karzai Abandons Plan’.

against further instability and transnational risks.<sup>1549</sup> By 2010, the US perceived SSR as a primary alternative to risky combat interventions. For Gates, SSR was a preventative instrument helping those supported by Washington to ‘defend themselves’.<sup>1550</sup> A war-weary US still needed to limit risks spreading from fragile states, but without large ground force deployments. Military interventions was gradually being reduced to ‘Exchange and training programmes’ with client forces.<sup>1551</sup>

### 9.5.1. ANSF in crisis

Proxy interventions to support anti-ISIS military capacity in Iraq and Syria and to assist the SDF fighting Bashar al-Assad’s regime were prioritised in Obama’s later presidency.<sup>1552</sup> In Afghanistan, ‘surged’ combat forces were in initially combined with further ANSF training. When combat troops were reduced after 2011; ISAF’s focus began to shift to SSR to prepare the ANSF to independently take the reins for security in Afghanistan. When ISAF ended in 2014, SSR followed as the primary focus for RSM. SSR seemed an optimal response to the risk society demand to respond to dangers from fragile states with modest resources. However, achieving SSR aims in Afghanistan proved difficult. ANSF comprised Afghanistan’s military, police and internal intelligence as well as other agencies. Its ranks were plagued with widespread corruption. After 9/11, the West supported anti-Taliban warlords and strongmen. Afghans with links to these networks soon climbed the ANSF ranks. ANSF members commonly abused and preyed on the Afghan population. Violence and corruption from the Afghan police turned many Afghans against ISAF’s aims. Within the ANA, soldier discipline was often nonexistent; narcotics were rampant.<sup>1553</sup> Despite long-term SSR assistance from NATO, by 2015, the ANA was searching to replace 30 percent of the 170,000 soldiers it required because of ‘desertions, casualties and low re-enlistment rates’.<sup>1554</sup> Some ANA deserters defected to the Taliban.<sup>1555</sup>

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<sup>1549</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, ‘Constructing Sovereignty for Security’, *Survival*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2005, pp. 93–106.

<sup>1550</sup> Robert M. Gates, ‘Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of US Security Assistance’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 3, 2010, pp. 2–6.

<sup>1551</sup> Gates, ‘Helping Others Defend Themselves’, p. 3.

<sup>1552</sup> Gates, ‘Helping Others Defend Themselves’, pp. 2–6.

<sup>1553</sup> Matthew Rosenberg, ‘Drug Use, Poor Discipline Afflict Afghanistan’s Army’, *Wall Street Journal*, 28 July 2010, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704684604575381092012618892> (accessed 5 March 2019).

<sup>1554</sup> Sayed Sarwar Amani and Andrew MacAskill, ‘Desertions Deplete Afghan Forces, Adding to Security Worries’, *Reuters*, 18 January 2016, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-army-desertions/desertions-deplete-afghan-forces-adding-to-security-worries-idUSKCN0UW1K3> (accessed 5 March 2019).

<sup>1555</sup> James Bennett, ‘Afghan Governor Pleads for Australian Help as Soldiers Defect to Taliban’, *ABC News* (Australia), 7 Nov 2016, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-07/afghan-soldiers-surrender-and-defect-to-taliban/8000172> (accessed 5 March 2019).

ISAF personnel were regularly attacked by ANA members in ‘green on blue’ incidents. Western insensitivity to Afghan culture could have ‘deadly consequences’.<sup>1556</sup> ‘Coming out of the shower naked’ or ‘leaving one’s boots on a table’ insulted some Afghans.<sup>1557</sup> It is normal for a senior officer to shout at a subordinate for a minor misdemeanour in Western militaries. Many ANA recruits did not accept this. Discipline was weak. Cultural insensitivity or a dressing down could lead an ANA recruit sometimes turning a weapon on an ISAF soldier.<sup>1558</sup> In 2012, the Afghan government issued guidebooks to ANA recruits to help better understanding of cultural differences. A large number of ANA members were illiterate; it is dubious if this guidebook had much impact.<sup>1559</sup>

In 2006, it was estimated that 50 percent of ANA officers based in southern Afghanistan were illiterate.<sup>1560</sup> A 2009 estimate reckoned only 10 percent of ANA recruits were literate; average literacy for Afghan males was 30-40 percent.<sup>1561</sup> These statistics foreshadow later disaster. Officers are a military’s source of leadership for planning operations. ANA leadership was being artificially propped up by expertise and capabilities from the West. When its draw-down started in 2011, ISAF expected the ANA to plan more operations independently.<sup>1562</sup> Left to themselves, low-skilled ANA officers could no longer plan operations along more effective Western lines. The Taliban made steady territorial advances after 2014 culminating in its eventual rout of the ANA in 2021 when the ANA’s Western-supplied logistics and air support were withdrawn. These capabilities function best in highly specialised and educated Western militaries. From a low education level, the ANA was never likely to bridge this gap.<sup>1563</sup> As it was, it was a challenge to ensure skills for basic weapons such as M-16 rifles and M-4 carbines.<sup>1564</sup>

The ANA was bitterly divided along ethnic lines, even with quotas for ethnic balance among officers. Officer quotas caused unintended consequences. Many officers lied about their ethnicity, thinking that this could help for a promotion or other benefit.<sup>1565</sup> ANA enlisted ranks were filled with personnel from rural provinces. Forgoing poppy cultivation for legal crops failed to alleviate poverty.

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<sup>1556</sup> Frud Bezhan, ‘The Deadly Consequences of Cultural Insensitivity in Afghanistan’, *RFE/RL*, 13 September 2012, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-deadly-consequences-of-cultural-insensitivity/24707511.html> (accessed 5 March 2019).

<sup>1557</sup> Bezhan, ‘The Deadly Consequences’.

<sup>1558</sup> Bezhan, ‘The Deadly Consequences’.

<sup>1559</sup> Bezhan, ‘The Deadly Consequences’.

<sup>1560</sup> Scott Baldauf, ‘A “Half Full” Afghan Army’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 February 2006, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0210/p06s02-wosc.html> (accessed 26 October 2022).

<sup>1561</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, ‘The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?’, *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 154, no. 6, 2009, p. 41.

<sup>1562</sup> Giustozzi, ‘The Afghan National Army’, p. 38.

<sup>1563</sup> Giustozzi, ‘The Afghan National Army’, p. 41.

<sup>1564</sup> Giustozzi, ‘The Afghan National Army’, p. 37.

<sup>1565</sup> Giustozzi, ‘The Afghan National Army’, p. 38.

Many from lower social echelons joined the ANA for extra family income.<sup>1566</sup> Greater military recruitment from lower social classes is a global trend. However, in Afghanistan, these groups were especially disconnected from the Afghan government and ISAF.<sup>1567</sup> Allegiances were dubious, and with disorder plaguing the ANA, its organisation did not institutionalise a strong internal loyalty to the state.<sup>1568</sup> ANA soldiers that did not defect to the Taliban often left the ANA for better paying PMSCs.

### 9.5.2. A 'train-and-equip' approach

Afghan difficulties were compounded by ISAF SSR prioritising a risk society preference to only 'prevent the worst'. ISAF and RSM favoured a 'train-and-equip' approach so that the ANSF might at least contain if not defeat Taliban insurgents.<sup>1569</sup> This was directed by an outward battlefield focus suiting the West's uncertain commitments rather than longer-term state-building. 'Train-and-equip' neglected military and police synchronisation with liberal state-building aims involving stronger civilian and democratic control; respect for the rule of law; prioritising 'protection of the population'; and 'the creation of accountability mechanisms'.<sup>1570</sup> Mark Sedra argues that ISAF initially perceived SSR through a liberal state-building lens where 'good governance, respect for human rights, sustainability, and democratic civilian control' would guide the ANSF but the US soon became embroiled in Iraq and other NATO members were slow to commit.<sup>1571</sup>

A squandered period of dissipated violence in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2005 could have been a more permissible environment for liberal SSR. Urgency thereafter forced ISAF to jettison liberal principles for 'train-and-equip' to subdue a rising insurgency.<sup>1572</sup> Narrower and more realist SSR was still difficult to impart. By 2009, Giustozzi claims that the ANA was still fighting like an Afghan militia rather than following COIN.<sup>1573</sup> For Sedra, ISAF's SSR lost its 'people-centred focus' assisting popular legitimacy and liberal 'good governance' in Afghan security institutions. Patience for democratic values-based SSR was limited by 'domestic pressure for withdrawal' confronting NATO governments.<sup>1574</sup> Uncertain timeframes caused 'counterinsurgency' and 'regional security' to override values.<sup>1575</sup> SSR was 'regime-centric' with ANSF perceived as

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<sup>1566</sup> Giustozzi, 'The Afghan National Army', p. 38.

<sup>1567</sup> Giustozzi, 'The Afghan National Army', p. 38.

<sup>1568</sup> Giustozzi, 'The Afghan National Army', p. 38.

<sup>1569</sup> Goodhand and Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace?', p. 87

<sup>1570</sup> Goodhand and Sedra, 'Who Owns the Peace?', p. 87.

<sup>1571</sup> Mark Sedra, 'The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project in Afghanistan: The Case of Security Sector Reform', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2013, p. 371.

<sup>1572</sup> Sedra, 'The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project', p. 371.

<sup>1573</sup> Giustozzi, 'The Afghan National Army', p. 41.

<sup>1574</sup> Sedra, 'The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project', p. 371–372.

<sup>1575</sup> Sedra, 'The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project', p. 371–372.

protecting a corrupt and unpopular Afghan government.<sup>1576</sup> When liberal principles ‘hollowed out’, ISAF’s SSR indicated a risk society’s preference to solely settle for ‘safety first’ policies.<sup>1577</sup>

In the early 2010s, ISAF overlapped with wars breaking out in Libya and Syria, and the rise of ISIS. Some US attention was diverted elsewhere. Obama’s later preferences for ISAF and RSM had similarities with his approach in Syria. A large military intervention was ruled out, but small units of US troops ‘trained-and-equipped’ Western-backed proxies. PMSCs had a role and some ‘contactless’ air-support was provided. Amos Fox classifies proxy warfare into ‘exploitative’, ‘transactional’, ‘coercive’, ‘cultural’ and ‘contractual’ models, although clear separation between these is unlikely in reality.<sup>1578</sup> ISAF support for the ANSF primarily followed ‘exploitative’, ‘transactional’ and ‘contractual’ logics. One fatality count from April 2021 revealed that approximately 66,000 Afghan military and police were violently killed since 2021.<sup>1579</sup> 2,448 US soldiers and another 1,114 from other NATO states were killed in Afghanistan since 2021.<sup>1580</sup> The death toll for Afghan civilians was estimated at 47,000.<sup>1581</sup> Context around these figures creates insights on the risk society’s ‘post-heroic’ warfare.

Western societies were routinely frustrated about sacrifices made in Afghanistan. Afghan society suffered many more fatalities than ISAF contributors. In the West, the ‘post-heroic’ risk society saw itself on the edge of its sacrifice limit. Many more from within the ANSF perished. It is still unlikely that most ANSF did so under a ‘heroic’ belief to defend ‘modern’ Afghan statehood. ‘Pre-heroic’ logic entangling with warlordism, ethnic factionalism or basic financial need prevailed. Robert Egnell and Peter Haldén argue SSR as ‘laudable’ for reconstruction in fragile states, but it is also ‘ahistoric’ considering the centuries that stable state formation historically required in the West.<sup>1582</sup> SSR with broad liberal expectations to foster security institutions that are stable, democratic and accountable over a short timeframe is ‘overambitious’.<sup>1583</sup> ISAF’s ‘train-and-equip’ focus still left it well short of ‘overambition’. Twenty years was not enough to transform the ANA into a stable state institution or make it operationally effective. It largely remained ‘pre-heroic’, an amalgam of different militias intermingled with Western training, equipment and organisational features.

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<sup>1576</sup> Sedra, ‘The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project’, p. 371.

<sup>1577</sup> Sedra, ‘The Hollowing-Out of the Liberal Peace Project’, p. 371.

<sup>1578</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, ‘Costs of the Afghanistan War, in Lives and Dollars’, *Associated Press*, 17 August 2021, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f> (accessed 30 October 2022).

<sup>1579</sup> Knickmeyer, ‘Costs of the Afghanistan War’.

<sup>1580</sup> Knickmeyer, ‘Costs of the Afghanistan War’.

<sup>1581</sup> Knickmeyer, ‘Costs of the Afghanistan War’.

<sup>1582</sup> Robert Egnell and Peter Haldén, ‘Laudable, Ahistorical and Overambitious: Security Sector Reform Meets State Formation Theory’, *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, p. 27.

<sup>1583</sup> Egnell and Haldén, ‘Laudable, Ahistorical and Overambitious’, p. 27.

## 9.6. PMSC proliferation

When violence dissipated from late 2001 and 2005, some international civilian organisation staff mixed safety within Afghan society. These organisations were targeted in the spate of Taliban violence that followed thereafter.<sup>1584</sup> In 2011, it was estimated that approximately 100 aid workers were killed and ‘a further 200 kidnapped or injured in increasingly politically-motivated attacks’.<sup>1585</sup> In the 2010s, Afghanistan was ranked as the second-most dangerous place in the world for aid organisations to work after Syria.<sup>1586</sup> PMSC services were seriously attractive for civilian organisations supporting ISAF. Stereotyping depicted cooperation between humanitarian NGOs and PMSCs as an untoward alliance between hippie ‘tree-huggers’ (NGOs) and mercenary ‘baby killers’ (PMSCs).<sup>1587</sup>

### 9.6.1. Less political risks

It was not uncommon for the NGO community to perceive PMSCs as corrosive for ‘humanitarian neutrality’. Already critical of ISAF’s military force, NGO leaders might have viewed ‘privatised force’ with further abhorrence, but as state-building failed and security deteriorated, NGOs created additional demand for PMSCs as a ‘necessary evil’ for better protection.<sup>1588</sup> Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were major milestones in the 2000s global PMSC boom. Risk society anxieties were becoming more acute. NATO members lowered defence spending and reduced capabilities after the Cold War, but were continuing to lead on international security.<sup>1589</sup> Increased contracting from NATO governments to PMSCs is a response to the risk society contradiction where security is demanded, but where publics are reluctant to expend too many sacrifice or resources. PMSCs ease this contradiction. Conventional policy wisdom might understand that outsourcing might save some financial costs. Temporary contracting might reduce long-term military servicing burdens for governments. Both arguments are not always correct. For example, it is claimed that the US spent half its defence budget valued at \$370 billion in 2019 on contractors.<sup>1590</sup> PMSC outsourcing was originally a temporary solution to resolve conventional military gaps, but risk

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<sup>1584</sup> Weigand and Andersson, Florian Weigand and Ruben Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 506.

<sup>1585</sup> AJ/CB, ‘Staff Security – “Bunkerization” Versus Acceptance’.

<sup>1586</sup> Weigand and Andersson, ‘Institutionalized Intervention’, p. 507.

<sup>1587</sup> Birthe Anders, ‘Tree-Huggers and Baby-Killers: The Relationship Between NGOs and PMSCs and its Impact on Coordinating Actors in Complex Operations’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2013, p. 278.

<sup>1588</sup> Anders, ‘Tree-huggers and Baby-Killers’, p. 281.

<sup>1589</sup> Elke Krahnemann, ‘NATO Contracting in Afghanistan: The Problem of Principal-Agent Networks’, *International Affairs* vol. 92, no. 6, 2016, p. 1402.

<sup>1590</sup> Alex Horton and Aaron Gregg, ‘Use of Military Contractors Shrouds True Costs of War. Washington Wants It That Way, Study Says’, *The Washington Post*, 30 June 2020, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/06/30/military-contractor-study/> (accessed 3 November 2022).

society anxiety pressures governments to continually manage risk, propelling expanded demand for PMSCs.

In liberal democracies, it is theorised that responsibility for personnel safety in national militaries is shared between the soldier and the government, while with PMSCs responsibility shifts fully to the individual employee.<sup>1591</sup> This is not always completely correct. Insurance liabilities force Western PMSCs to treat staff safety very seriously. Nevertheless, burgeoning government demand for PMSCs indicates that governments planning expeditionary operations might fear political backlashes from soldier fatalities more than fatalities *per se*. PMSCs involved in Western expeditionary operations suffer high fatality rates, but governments do not face steep political repercussions. Between 2001 and 2020, it is estimated that 8,000 contractors for US-registered PMSCs died working in conflict zones across the Middle East, roughly 1,000 deaths more than for the US military in the same period.<sup>1592</sup> Governments are relieved from direct responsibility. PMSC staff work ‘at their own risk’. Epitomising ‘post-heroic’ warfare, contractors are regularly omitted from discourses of national sacrifice even if governments depend on ‘the market for force’ to meet security aims.

Heidi Peltier argues that contracting ‘hides the human cost [of war] and makes war more politically palatable’ while Mark Cancian remarks that ‘the public doesn’t care as much about contractors as much as it does about [national] military personnel, and therefore is more willing to let military operations continue’.<sup>1593</sup> It is claimed that the US is now ‘addicted’ to PMSCs to sustain its strategic posture. Unlike casualties in national militaries, there is little pressure on governments to publish PMSC fatalities.<sup>1594</sup> With less political repercussions from PMSC contracting, governments are more likely to use PMSCs to ‘purposefully mask distasteful aspects of war’.<sup>1595</sup>

### 9.6.2. Evading accountability

While Machiavellian, PMSCs do not necessarily have to inhibit stabilisation. PMSCs should not be automatically considered ‘bad’ or ineffective. Some are highly professionalised, offering capabilities superior to some national militaries, others have a substandard record, evade accountability and undermine public trust. PMSC proliferation frequently undermined stabilisation in Afghanistan. NATO governments perceived PMSCs as solutions to fill gaps and as

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<sup>1591</sup> Gallaher, ‘Risk and Private Military Work’, p. 783.

<sup>1592</sup> Horton and Gregg, ‘Use of Military Contractors Shrouds True Costs of War’.

<sup>1593</sup> Heidi Peltier and Mark Cancian respectively cited in Horton and Gregg, ‘Use of Military Contractors Shrouds True Costs of War’.

<sup>1594</sup> Sean McFate, ‘America’s Addiction to Mercenaries’, *The Atlantic*, 12 August 2016, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/iraq-afghanistan-contractor-pentagon-obama/495731/> (accessed 4 November 2022). And Horton and Gregg, ‘Use of Military Contractors Shrouds True Costs of War’.

<sup>1595</sup> Paul D. Shinkman, ‘Afghanistan’s Hired Guns’, *US News & World Report*, 26 April 2019, available at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2019-04-26/us-employs-unprecedented-number-of-security-contractors-in-afghanistan> (accessed 4 November 2022).

'force multipliers'. Supplying armed and non-armed services, PMSCs were rarely involved in direct combat. ISAF constantly struggled to achieve enough combat troops. PMSCs 'force multiplied' for non-combat tasks, relieving more ISAF forces for frontline deployments. PMSCs supplied services to foreign embassies, military bases, NGOs and businesses.<sup>1596</sup> This included transport; civilian and military logistics; escorts for ISAF and ANSF troops; guarding supply convoys; airfield services; fuel supply; facility management; and protection for personnel and organisations.<sup>1597</sup> Contractors provided SSR 'training and mentorship', among other services, to the ANSF.<sup>1598</sup>

PMSCs were a vital for Western and international organisations operating in Afghanistan, but many had an overbearing and harmful influence on Afghan society. In 2010, an Afghan president spokesperson confirmed that PMSCs employed 30,000-40,000 'armed personnel' in Afghanistan from 'more than fifty companies'.<sup>1599</sup> About half these companies were Afghan-owned, the rest were foreign owned.<sup>1600</sup> PMSCs were generally 'loathed' by Afghans 'for indiscriminately closing roads, setting up private checkpoints, commanding civilian vehicles off the road and frequently using the barrel of a gun to keep Afghans at bay'.<sup>1601</sup> Afghans routinely accused PMSCs of 'routine harassment and bullying behaviour' even if much of this was officially 'undocumented and unreported'.<sup>1602</sup> Whether foreign or Afghan owned, most filling the PMSC rank and file were Afghan nationals. This distorted the Afghan labour market, creating severe imbalances for its economy. In 2010, Allison Stranger claims that '90 percent of security contractors in Afghanistan are Afghans'.<sup>1603</sup> This was the total number, but national composition varied by company. For example, G4S, a UK headquartered multinational, disclosed that between 2003 and 2018 only half of its 1,200 employees in Afghanistan guarding diplomatic facilities were Afghan, the rest were international.<sup>1604</sup>

While drawing in Afghan labour, a global cosmopolitan 'market for force' strongly influenced PMSC structures. International personnel were specialists

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<sup>1596</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?', *BBC News*, 2 December 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46400647> (accessed 3 November 2022).

<sup>1597</sup> This list is combined from Krahmann, 'NATO Contracting in Afghanistan', pp. 1401-1402 and BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'.

<sup>1598</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'.

<sup>1599</sup> AFP, 'Karzai Calls for Disbanding of Private Security Firms' Within Four Months', *France 24*, 16 August 2010, available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20100816-afghanistan-president-hamid-karzai-calls-disbanding-private-security-firms-four-months> (accessed 16 November 2022).

<sup>1600</sup> AFP, 'Karzai Calls for Disbanding of Private Security Firms'

<sup>1601</sup> Aunohita Mojumdar, 'Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors Become a Source of Public Scorn', *Eurasianet*, 8 July 2009, available at: <https://eurasianet.org/afghanistan-private-security-contractors-become-a-source-of-public-scorn> (accessed 17 November 2022).

<sup>1602</sup> Mojumdar, 'Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors'.

<sup>1603</sup> Allison Stranger cited in AFP, 'Karzai Calls for Disbanding of Private Security Firms'.

<sup>1604</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'.

more likely to work in administration or management that involved less exposure to violence. Less skilled Afghan PMSC employees had far more encounters with danger. PMSCs were major employers, this obstructed ISAF and the Afghan government from curbing abuse. Vast Afghan labour upholding the PMSC industry structured more Western risk-shifting onto the Afghan population. Widespread PMSC use strengthened predatory warlords and ‘strongmen’. When militias were de-mobilised, personnel turned to PMSCs for alternative employment.<sup>1605</sup>

Originally hesitant, Karzai introduced a presidential decree in August 2010 to drastically restrict PMSCs.<sup>1606</sup> Established in 2009, the APPF was created as an Afghan state enterprise to replace and control PMSC tasks. Karzai’s disdain was palpable; he denounced PMSCs as another ‘parallel security system’.<sup>1607</sup> This was correct, but his policy response proved ineffective. Even when the APPF was formed, like the PMSC ‘system’, its structure unevenly exposed employees to violence based on educational attainment and social class. The APPF’s finance administration was ‘staffed with young and educated professionals from civilian backgrounds, fully business-oriented and proficient in English. They also enjoy relatively high salaries’.<sup>1608</sup> However, APPF ‘operatives’ tasked to “‘just fight’” come from an army [ANA] background, speak no English, [and] receive less pay’.<sup>1609</sup>

PMSCs offered better salaries that ANSF failed to compete with when recruiting skilled police and military personnel. Karzai blamed Western-funded PMSCs for ‘diverting resources’ away from the ANSF.<sup>1610</sup> Contrary to coherent state-building, three divergent security projects were chaotically competing for control: a PMSC system despised Afghans; ISAF’s and ANSF’s faltering support for the Afghan government; and the Taliban’s ‘shadow institutions’. All three overlapped in some destructive ways. Karzai’s PMSC criticism was accurate, but it was also hypocritical. His government’s failing efforts to ensure public order depended on PMSC assistance. PMSCs were a controversial answer for security vacuums caused by corrupt and ineffective governance.<sup>1611</sup> The ‘complex nature’ of PMSC organisation combining ‘parent companies, sub-

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<sup>1605</sup> Mojumdar, ‘Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors’.

<sup>1606</sup> Hamid Karzai, ‘President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Decree About Dissolution of Private Security Companies’, Kabul, 17 August 2010, available at: [http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/national\\_regulations/countries/asia\\_pacific/afghanistan/afghanistan\\_decree\\_number\\_52\\_dissolution\\_psc\\_2010-english.pdf](http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/national_regulations/countries/asia_pacific/afghanistan/afghanistan_decree_number_52_dissolution_psc_2010-english.pdf) (accessed 17 November 2022).

<sup>1607</sup> BBC News, ‘Karzai Abandons Plan to Scrap Private Security Firms’, 6 December 2010, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11925855> (accessed 17 November 2022).

<sup>1608</sup> Fabrizio Foschini, ‘Changing of the Guards: Is the APPF Program Coming to an End?’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 8 March 2014, available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/international-engagement/changing-of-the-guards-is-the-appf-program-coming-to-an-end/> (accessed 21 November 2022).

<sup>1609</sup> Foschini, ‘Changing of the Guards’.

<sup>1610</sup> AFP, ‘Karzai Calls for Disbanding of Private Security Firms’.

<sup>1611</sup> BBC News, ‘Karzai Abandons Plan’.

contractors and joint ventures' made it difficult to hold companies to account for atrocities and crime.<sup>1612</sup> To Afghan anger, foreign embassies sometimes offered immunity from prosecution to PMSCs. In June 2009, personnel from a US-contracted PMSC allegedly attacked an Afghan police station trying to free a colleague detained in a dispute over documentation. Eight civilians were killed when weapons were fired.<sup>1613</sup>

Responding to reports, Karzai requested that the US hand over the contractors involved to Afghan investigators. ISAF was hesitant, claiming that the attack was 'Afghan on Afghan' and that no foreign nationals were directly involved.<sup>1614</sup> Contractors from the US-registered PMSC XE, a successor to the infamous Blackwater, were involved in shootings where Afghan civilians were killed. Afghan investigations were avoided when the US permitted suspects to leave the country, while findings from its own investigation went undisclosed.<sup>1615</sup> According to Krahmann, PMSCs avoided accountability for abuses in Afghanistan through a combination of 'blame-shifting', 'back-scratching' and 'morphing'.<sup>1616</sup> For 'blame-shifting', accountability was obstructed when multiple organisations connected to controversial incidents blamed each other for failures.<sup>1617</sup> 'Back-scratching' caused collaborating actors to form 'mutually supportive coalitions' to suppress investigations.<sup>1618</sup> 'Morphing' allowed abusers to avoid accountability by switching to another PMSC or by joining a new or rebranded entity.<sup>1619</sup> For Afghan onlookers, these intricacies hardly mattered; they saw PMSCs with ISAF connections clearly avoiding justice for abuses committed.

Links between corrupt PMSCs and Taliban insurgents were a serious concern. In 2010, a declassified report from the US Senate Committee on Armed Services revealed a large number of incidents where US-financed PMSCs were also 'working hand in glove' with the Taliban.<sup>1620</sup> A further 2010 report from the US House of Representatives entitled 'Warlord, Inc.' documented widespread Taliban protection rackets extorting payments from PMSCs guarding US military supplies.<sup>1621</sup> Amazingly, these PMSCs were a conduit for US funding eventually

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<sup>1612</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'

<sup>1613</sup> Mojumdar, 'Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors'.

<sup>1614</sup> Mojumdar, 'Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors'.

<sup>1615</sup> Mojumdar, 'Afghanistan: Private Security Contractors'.

<sup>1616</sup> Krahmann, 'NATO Contracting in Afghanistan', p. 1416.

<sup>1617</sup> Krahmann, 'NATO Contracting in Afghanistan', p. 1416.

<sup>1618</sup> Krahmann, 'NATO Contracting in Afghanistan', p. 1416.

<sup>1619</sup> Krahmann, 'NATO Contracting in Afghanistan', p. 1416.

<sup>1620</sup> US Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Inquiry into the Role and Oversight of Private Security Contractors. Report with Additional Views of the Committee, Washington DC: US Government Publications, 28 September 2010, p. 7, available at: [https://irp.fas.org/congress/2010\\_rpt/sasc-psc.pdf](https://irp.fas.org/congress/2010_rpt/sasc-psc.pdf) (accessed 19 November 2022). 'Hand in glove' metaphor cited from BBC News, 'Karzai Abandons Plan'.

<sup>1621</sup> Report of the Majority Staff Chaired by Rep. John F. Tierney, *Warlord, Inc. Extortion and Corruption Along the US Supply Chain in Afghanistan*, Washington DC: US House of Representatives, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on

finding its way to strengthen Taliban insurgents.<sup>1622</sup> Karzai's attempts to replace PMSCs with the government-controlled APPF were ultimately unsuccessful. Diplomatic missions, IOs, NGOs and businesses lobbied strongly against his proposals.<sup>1623</sup> Loopholes were introduced allowing civilian organisations to choose their own PMSCs.<sup>1624</sup> Foreign-owned PMSCs continued to operate in Afghanistan's lucrative security market by 're-registering as a risk management company'.<sup>1625</sup> Kabul remained dependent on foreign owned PMSCs 'to vet, train and manage the guards employed by the Afghan government'.<sup>1626</sup>

Transnational surveillance from human rights NGOs had a weak effect when calling for stronger PMSC accountability. Multiple NGO reports were published on PMSC abuses, including publications from the high-profile HRW and Amnesty International.<sup>1627</sup> Information on abuses was freely available and largely uncontested by governments contracting PMSCs, but this still did little to limit contractor proliferation. PMSCs operating in Afghanistan declined when ISAF concluded in 2014, but the ANA remained dependent on contractors for vital logistics and air cover. This dependence was dramatically exposed in the ANA's quick battlefield collapse to the Taliban when Western governments withdrew contractor funding in 2021.<sup>1628</sup>

In 2017, controversial former Blackwater CEO, Erik Prince, proposed that 5,000 'proven veterans' recruited into PMSCs 'backed by a 90-plane private air force' take over from RSM to train the ANA, but also fight alongside Afghan forces 'where necessary'.<sup>1629</sup> Prince stressed multiple shorter rotations from the

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Oversight and Government Reform, June 2010, available at: [https://www.cbsnews.com/hdocs/pdf/HNT\\_Report.pdf](https://www.cbsnews.com/hdocs/pdf/HNT_Report.pdf) (accessed 21 November 2022).

<sup>1622</sup> Aram Roston, 'How the US Funds the Taliban', *The Nation*, 11 November 2009, available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/how-us-funds-taliban/> (accessed 21 November 2022).

<sup>1623</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'

<sup>1624</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'

<sup>1625</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'

<sup>1626</sup> BBC Reality Check, 'What Are Private Security Companies Doing in Afghanistan?'

<sup>1627</sup> For example, see Mariam Amini, 'Privatizing War in Afghanistan Endangers Civilians', *Human Rights Watch*, 2 October 2018, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/02/privatizing-war-afghanistan-endangers-civilians> (accessed 23 November 2022). And Rebecca DeWinter-Schmitt, 'Holding Private Security Contractors Accountable for Human Rights Abuses', *Amnesty International*, 28 June 2011, available at: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/holding-private-security-contractors-accountable-for-human-rights-abuses/> (accessed 22 November 2022).

<sup>1628</sup> Jack Detsch, 'Departure of Private Contractors Was a Turning Point in Afghan Military's Collapse', *Foreign Policy*, 16 August 2021, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/16/afghanistan-military-collapse-private-contractors/> (accessed 23 November 2022).

<sup>1629</sup> See Stephen Sackur, 'Interview with Former Blackwater CEO Erik Prince', *BBC Hard-talk*, 19 September 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswjfh> (accessed 23 November 2022). And William Gallo, Ayub Khawreen, Hasib Danish Alikozai 'Plan to Privatize US War in Afghanistan Gets Icy Reception', *Voice of America*, 12 August 2017, available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/plan-privatize-united-states-war-afghanistan-gets-icy-reception/3983217.html> (accessed 23 November 2022).

same personnel pool as likely to give PMSCs more effective longer-term ‘continuity’. Presenting PMSC benefits, Prince unsurprisingly forgets the PMSC atrocities, abuses and unaccountability that had previously undermined stabilisation. Commenting as an ex-president, Karzai denounced Prince’s proposals as a ‘blatant violation of Afghanistan’s national sovereignty’.<sup>1630</sup> Afghan sovereignty was a lesser concern for the Trump administration, with claims that Trump considered Prince’s proposal closely. It appeared to offer a ‘best of both worlds’ solution for the risk society: PMSC-led stability would cost NATO governments less political risks compared to national force alternatives.<sup>1631</sup> Soldier fatality risks would shift to PMSCs and individual contractors. However, a privatised stabilisation force proved too politically controversial even for Trump. He instead tried an alternative for military withdrawal from Afghanistan that would still limit probability for transnational risks, accepting a February 2020 peace agreement tolerating Taliban involvement in future Afghan governance.<sup>1632</sup>

Trump doubled-down on Obama’s previous pragmatism. As if consulting risk theory vocabulary, Obama’s policy team steering Washington towards withdrawal after 2010 even gave itself the nickname ‘Afghan good enough’.<sup>1633</sup> A ‘narrow’ set of options to facilitate US withdrawal without leaving Afghanistan as a source for global security risks were pursued. Aiming to downsize resources and leave with ‘credibility’, the US tried to limit its costs for the ANSF while determining just how much Afghan government corruption was acceptable.<sup>1634</sup> Bush began the GWOT with liberal discourses about building security by promoting democracy, but even this liberal veneer was dispensed with as Obama’s presidency reached its conclusion. James Dobbins, twice a US Ambassador to Afghanistan under Bush and Obama respectively, gave a revisionist retrospective in 2016: ‘We [the US] don’t invade authoritarian countries to make them democratic. We invade violent countries to make them peaceful and we clearly failed in Afghanistan’.<sup>1635</sup>

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<sup>1630</sup> Karzai cited in Gallo, et al., ‘Plan to Privatize US War in Afghanistan Gets Icy Reception’.

<sup>1631</sup> Sackur, ‘Interview with Former Blackwater CEO Erik Prince’.

<sup>1632</sup> See US Department of State, ‘Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan’, February 2020, available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/02.29.20-US-Afghanistan-Joint-Declaration.pdf> (accessed 24 November 2022).

<sup>1633</sup> David Fitzgerald and David Ryan, *Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 85.

<sup>1634</sup> Fitzgerald and Ryan, *Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention*, p. 85. Cf. Mark N. Katz, *Leaving without Losing: The War on Terror after Iraq and Afghanistan*, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

<sup>1635</sup> James Dobbins, ‘Interview of: Ambassador James Dobbins’, Washington DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [Afghanistan Papers, the Washington Post], 11 January 2016, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=dobbins\\_james\\_11\\_02212018](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=dobbins_james_11_02212018) (accessed 27 November 2022).

## 9.7. Drones for continued counterterrorism

The first US drone strikes against Taliban militants occurred under Bush. Leading Pakistani Taliban commander in the FATA, Nek Muhammad was struck in a ‘targeted killing’ in June 2004.<sup>1636</sup> Taliban leaders and aligned warlords including Muhammad, Haqqani, Mullah Nazir, Gul Bahadur Hafez replaced more moderate Pashtun tribal elders to exert control in the FATA straddling Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan after 2001. This was a platform for attacks against ISAF.<sup>1637</sup> Military UAV technology was advancing rapidly. Drone strikes targeting ISAF’s enemies occurred in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. These strikes became a pertinent solution for risks to ISAF originating from Pakistan’s unruly western borderlands. Combat drones made it possible to capitalise on Western intelligence identifying the coordinates of dangerous Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants seeking haven in Pakistan. Byman argues that drone strikes offer the advantage to continuously disrupt terrorist or insurgency networks with a much lighter military footprint than conventional warfare or with SOFs.<sup>1638</sup> Sovereignty is only minimally violated, decreasing political controversy. Counterterrorism with drone strikes reduces dependencies for cooperation with governments with poor human rights records.<sup>1639</sup>

### 9.7.1. Technological modernisation and strategic change

Advanced military drone technologies epitomise the risk society’s ‘ready to kill but not to die’ outlook. Those using them can gain ‘contactless’ combat engagement. Drone strikes can eliminate enemy personnel without running significant soldier fatality risks. Michael Boyle describes current warfare as ‘the drone age’ because of the appeal of this technology for COIN and counterterrorism operations.<sup>1640</sup> This ‘drone age’ is propelled by the risk society. Earlier risk theories highlight the RMA as a transformation paradigm aligning advances in military hardware, information and communications technologies with the risk society’s ‘safety first’ outlook.<sup>1641</sup> Proponents see the RMA ‘promising a remote controlled, high-tech, airborne war that makes war seem risk-free’, its critics argue that this is not always the case.<sup>1642</sup> This follows Shaw’s ‘risk-transfer militarism’ where Western societies accept ‘small massacres’ from collateral damage once

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<sup>1636</sup> Brian Glyn Williams, ‘The CIA’s Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan, 2004–2010: The History of an Assassination Campaign’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 33, no. 10, 2010, p. 873.

<sup>1637</sup> Glyn Williams, ‘The CIA’s Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan’, p. 874

<sup>1638</sup> Daniel L. Byman, ‘Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington’s Weapon of Choice’, *The Brookings Institution*, 17 June 2013, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-drones-work-the-case-for-washingtons-weapon-of-choice/> (accessed 30 December 2022).

<sup>1639</sup> Byman, ‘Why Drones Work’.

<sup>1640</sup> Michael J. Boyle, *The Drone Age: How Drone Technology Will Change War and Peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

<sup>1641</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p. 43.

<sup>1642</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p. 43.

more dangerous terrorists or insurgents are eliminated.<sup>1643</sup> Recent Western interventions in Libya and Syria highlighted that drone strikes were too rigid alone for local clients to find success. After some Western assistance with SOFs and PMSCs, most risks were ‘transferred’ to proxies.

Focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Obama made a headline speech in 2013 to stress ‘targeted killing’ from drone strikes as a last resort. He insisted: ‘America does not take strikes when we have the ability to capture individual terrorists; our preference is always to detain, interrogate, and prosecute’.<sup>1644</sup> This claim is dubious. Capturing high-value militants involves many risks that Western governments would prefer to avoid. Bin Laden was once the highest value US target. After his compound was raided by Navy Seals in Abbottabad in 2011, it remains unclear whether the US priority was to kill or genuinely capture him. This risky operation was hailed as a success, but disaster was only narrowly avoided when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed on approach.<sup>1645</sup> Drone technologies offer less risky options when attempting to disrupt or destroy militant networks. Placing increased policy emphasis on improved precision-strike and intelligence accuracy, Obama became ‘the drone president’ even if he controversially did not ‘utter a word’ on drone strikes during his first presidential term.<sup>1646</sup>

Military restraint rather than ‘hyperpower’ unilateralism was a popular policy promise from Obama prior to 2008. Controversy was soon sparked when US drone strikes escalated in Obama’s early presidency. In Bush’s final year as president in 2008, US drone strikes in Pakistan numbered about ‘several dozen’.<sup>1647</sup> This jumped to 117 by 2010 under Obama, a number too politically controversial to publicly elaborate on as he sought re-election in 2012.<sup>1648</sup> Obama only broached the subject when re-elected. As his administration began to explain its justifications, deputy national security advisor, Ben Rhodes, argued that drone strikes were ‘a better use of force. It’s a better way to keep us [US] safe’ compared to sizeable ground force interventions.<sup>1649</sup> Washington wanted less ‘big

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<sup>1643</sup> Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War*, p. 43. And Martin Shaw, ‘Risk-Transfer Militarism’, pp. 344–348.

<sup>1644</sup> Barack Obama, ‘Remarks by the President at the National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington DC’, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 23 May 2013, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university> (accessed 27 November 2022).

<sup>1645</sup> Andrea Shalal-Esa, ‘Helicopter Loss in Bin Laden Raid Highlights Risks’, *Reuters*, 4 May 2011, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-binladen-helicopter-idUSTRE7427G420110503> (accessed 27 November 2022).

<sup>1646</sup> Greg Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon in a High Altitude, Perpetual War’, *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2016, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/drone-program-strikes.html> (27 November 2022).

<sup>1647</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1648</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1649</sup> Ben Rhodes, ‘Interview with Jim Gilmore’, *PBS Frontline*, 24 August 2012, available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/government-elections-politics/choice-2012/the-frontline-interview-ben-rhodes/#seg7> (accessed 28 November 2022).

military footprints abroad'.<sup>1650</sup> Drone technology has caused a major strategic shift. For Rhodes, drone-led counterterrorism was not 'a global war on terrorism; it's a war against a very specific group of people, Al Qaeda and their affiliates'.<sup>1651</sup> Hoping to convince the US public, Obama later distilled the advantage of drone warfare into one easy phrase: 'Simply put, these strikes have saved lives'.<sup>1652</sup>

Labelled 'high altitude, perpetual war', drone strikes are a response to the risk society preference for risks to be continually managed.<sup>1653</sup> The MQ-1 Predator and the MQ-1 Reaper have been primary drone systems in US expeditionary operations. The Predator was the older system. Introduced for the USAF and the CIA in the mid-1990s, it was originally designed for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. Measuring 13 metres in length, the MQ-1C Gray Hawk is the US drone system used for broad intelligence gathering. It surveys 'larger landscapes' at an altitude of 18,000 metres 'monitoring electronic signals' while 'capturing reams of detailed imagery'.<sup>1654</sup> For SOFs or conventional ground forces, much smaller drones enhance situational awareness. For individual soldiers, the Raven (one metre in length) and the smaller Wasp equipped with a camera 'the size of a peanut' can 'fly just above the rooftops, transmitting video images of what's down the street or on the other side of the hill'.<sup>1655</sup> At over three metres, the Shadow enables surveillance of 'entire neighbourhoods' from heights around 450 metres.<sup>1656</sup>

Before being decommissioned in 2018, US Predators were retrofitted with AGM-114 Hellfire missiles in the 2000s to enable combat.<sup>1657</sup> Both the Predator and the newer Reaper operate at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 4,500 metres.<sup>1658</sup> Continuing to enable 'intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance', the US military introduced the Reaper in 2007.<sup>1659</sup> According to USAF General T. Michael Moseley, its advent marked 'a significant evolution in UAV technology and employment' because of its 'true hunter-killer role' that was first seen during operations in Iraq.<sup>1660</sup> The Reaper has more capabilities than the Predator

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<sup>1650</sup> Rhodes, 'Interview with Jim Gilmore'.

<sup>1651</sup> Rhodes, 'Interview with Jim Gilmore'.

<sup>1652</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1653</sup> Miller, 'How Drones Became Obama's Deadly Weapon'.

<sup>1654</sup> Peter W. Singer, 'Robots at War: The New Battlefield', *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 2008, pp. 34–35.

<sup>1655</sup> Singer, 'Robots at War', p. 34–35.

<sup>1656</sup> Singer, 'Robots at War', p. 34–35.

<sup>1657</sup> Senior Airman and James Thompson, 'Sun Setting on the MQ-1 Predator: A History of Innovation', *Creech Air Force Base*, NV, 14 February 2018, available at: <https://www.creech.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1442303/sun-setting-the-mq-1-predator-a-history-of-innovation/> (accessed 28 November 2022).

<sup>1658</sup> Singer, 'Robots at War', p. 34–35.

<sup>1659</sup> USAF, "'Reaper' Moniker Given to MQ-9 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle', Washington DC, 14 September 2006, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110914055555/http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123027012> (accessed 28 November 2022).

<sup>1660</sup> USAF, "'Reaper' Moniker Given to MQ-9 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle'.

including the GBU-12 Paveway II laser-guided bomb; the AGM-114 Hellfire II air-to-ground missile; and the AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missile.<sup>1661</sup> To reduce collateral damage, these weapons make a lighter impact when striking enemy targets than most conventional munitions. Technology standing to reduce this damage continues to evolve, even while ‘targeted killing’ still remains gruesome. Updated R9X Hellfire missiles are equipped with metal blades instead of explosives to enhance precision against a target and to minimise wider disruption.<sup>1662</sup> The R9X was used for the strike that killed Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul in August 2022.<sup>1663</sup>

Risk minimisation considerations propels drone design and development. Drones and other advanced military technologies might eventually reduce military manpower burdens, but this is still only an aspiration.<sup>1664</sup> Larger drone systems such as the Reaper still require high manpower numbers. David Axe explains: ‘A single Predator or Reaper requires as many as 170 personnel to launch, command, recover and repair, plus handle the imagery it gathers’, while USAF Lt. Gen Deptula remarks that there’s nothing ‘unmanned’ about UAVs.<sup>1665</sup> Large manpower is invested for a ‘safety first’ purpose. Few or any drone personnel will be physically exposed to combat. For drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, US pilots are remotely and safely hidden away, working from computer systems in military bases.

### 9.7.2. Downplaying ethics

The largest drone systems collecting large-frame intelligence to the smallest military drones for individual soldiers serve the risk society’s preventative preference. Intelligence from Black Hawks inform ‘network-centric’ warfare where Reaper strikes disrupt militants organising future terrorist attacks. Smaller systems such as the Raven, the Shadow and the Wasp provide individual soldiers with a clearer picture of what lies ahead while advancing on the battlefield. Intelligence is the primary driver for where and against whom drones can strike. The CIA has had a disproportionately large role in shaping drone policy. After 9/11, the CIA led in pioneering drone technology along with the US military. This created an uncomfortable dilemma for Obama. CIA drone operations disrupted Taliban militants and strengthened protection against wider terrorist threats, but the CIA drone programme also cast doubt on Obama’s efforts to be

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<sup>1661</sup> ‘Reaper: A New Way to Wage War’, *Time*, 1 June 2009, available at: <https://content.time.com/time/magazine/pdf/20090601drone.pdf> (accessed 28 November 2022).

<sup>1662</sup> Luis Martinez, ‘How the Hellfire Missiles Took Out Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Zawahiri With Minimal Collateral Damage’, *ABC News*, 4 August 2022, available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/hellfire-missiles-al-qaeda-leader-al-zawahiri-minimal/story?id=87885003> (accessed 29 November 2022).

<sup>1663</sup> Martinez, ‘How the Hellfire Missiles Took Out Al-Qaeda Leader’.

<sup>1664</sup> David Axe, ‘US Drones Trump China Theatrics’, *The Diplomat*, 7 February 2011, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2011/02/us-drones-trump-china-theatrics/> (accessed 29 December 2022).

<sup>1665</sup> Lt. Gen Deptula cited in Axe, ‘US Drones Trump China Theatrics’.

‘a human rights president’ to move US foreign policy away from the CIA abuses of the Bush era.<sup>1666</sup> However, the CIA programme expanded during Obama’s presidency. Protection from possible terrorism was prioritised above human rights concerns. In US law, the military must disclose drone strikes, but CIA strikes went under ‘Title 50 covert action authority’ and were not revealed, although details frequently leaked.<sup>1667</sup>

CIA drone strikes often occurred where Washington did not have a major troop deployment. The Obama administration claimed that counterterrorism approach was a departure from Bush’s expansive GWOT, but rather than a departure, it was a technology-enabled evolution. Persistent ‘targeted killings’ replaced conventional military and even SOF deployments. Without Bush’s GWOT terminology, Obama had renewed a broad, continuous and largely faceless US counterterrorism campaign. Some have heralded drone warfare as ‘new military humanism’.<sup>1668</sup> Modernised technologies improve precision-strike to target dangerous militants with reduced collateral damage and less suffering for innocent civilians.<sup>1669</sup> Enhanced intelligence and surveillance capabilities provide ever more accurate and detailed targeting information. This reduces flaws in critical intelligence likely to misguide preventative warfare, a serious problem in the earlier Bush Doctrine. The risk society has prioritised military technology to refine preventative warfare.

While some solutions to previous problems have been found, serious errors still occur that cost innocent human lives during drone strikes. ISAF insisted that cooperation with Afghan civilians was the key to stabilisation, but NATO’s intelligence emphasis did not always synchronise with this aim. Civilian-centred intelligence to effectively integrate ‘cross-cultural competence’; international civilian organisations; and ‘double- and triple-loop learning’ was often weak.<sup>1670</sup> A 2010 report headed by US Major General Michael Flynn, then NATO Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, damningly remarked that despite devoting the ‘overwhelming majority’ of intelligence ‘collection efforts and analytical brain-power’ to insurgent organisations, ‘the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to

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<sup>1666</sup> Laura L. Finley and Luigi Esposito, ‘Barack Obama as a Human Rights President: A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) Analysis’, *Humanity & Society*, vol. 35 no. 1–2, 2011, pp. 100–127.

<sup>1667</sup> Robert Chesney, ‘A Revived CIA Drone Strike Program? Comments on the New Policy’, *Lawfare*, 14 March 2017, available at: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/revived-cia-drone-strike-program-comments-new-policy> (accessed 1 December 2022). And Bradley Klapper and Ken Dilanian, ‘AP: Top Secret Clinton Emails Include Drone Talk’, *PBS Newshour*, 14 August 2015, available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/ap-top-secret-clinton-emails-include-drone-talk> (accessed 1 December 2022).

<sup>1668</sup> Hugh Gusterson, ‘Drone Warfare in Waziristan and the New Military Humanism’, *Current Anthropology*, vol. 60, no. 19, 2019, p. 77.

<sup>1669</sup> Gusterson, ‘Drone Warfare in Waziristan and the New Military Humanism’, p. 77.

<sup>1670</sup> Sebastiaan Rietjens, ‘NATO’s Struggle for Intelligence in Afghanistan’, *Armed Forces & Society*, Online First, 2022, pp. 1–2.

answer fundamental questions about the environment in which US and allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade'.<sup>1671</sup>

When overseas intervention is necessary to prevent terrorism or insurgency, Obama explained that that 'primary alternative to targeted lethal action [with drone strikes] would be the use of conventional military options'.<sup>1672</sup> He insisted that 'even small special operations carry enormous risks'.<sup>1673</sup> He even perceived drone strikes as more effective than conventional alternatives, explaining that 'Conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones, and are likely to cause more civilian casualties and more local outrage'.<sup>1674</sup> Nevertheless, Obama still displayed some ethical unease. With some public self-reflection on the ethical implications of the US drone campaign, he outlined that 'The very precision of drone strikes and the necessary secrecy often involved in such actions can end up shielding our government from the public scrutiny that a troop deployment invites'.<sup>1675</sup> The CIA drone programme needed to be curtailed to uphold 'norms of transparency and accountability'.<sup>1676</sup> It was distracting CIA attention from its primary function to 'collect and analyse' intelligence.<sup>1677</sup>

Atrocities from US drone strikes were reported by human rights NGOs throughout Obama's presidency. This only marginally impacted US policy. Only in 2016, the year his presidency concluded, did Obama introduce an executive order for the CIA to publicly disclose civilian deaths from drone strikes.<sup>1678</sup> Principles seeking to make US drone warfare more ethical were sometimes unclear and contradictory. In 2013, Obama insisted that 'lethal force' is used 'only against a target that poses a continuing, imminent threat to US persons'.<sup>1679</sup> Strikes were only sanctioned when there was 'a continuing and imminent threat to the American people...and when there are no other governments capable of effectively addressing the threat'.<sup>1680</sup> The US drone strike against Wali ur-Rehman, a Pakistani Taliban commander, in North Waziristan in May 2013, is a prominent example indicating that these principles did not always apply.<sup>1681</sup> Wali

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<sup>1671</sup> Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010, p.4, available at: <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/fixing-intel-a-blueprint-for-making-intelligence-relevant> (accessed 3 January 2023).

<sup>1672</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1673</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1674</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1675</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1676</sup> Chesney, 'A Revived CIA Drone Strike Program?'.

<sup>1677</sup> Chesney, 'A Revived CIA Drone Strike Program?'.

<sup>1678</sup> BBC News, 'Trump Revokes Obama Rule on Reporting Drone Strike Deaths', 7 March 2019, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47480207> (accessed 1 December 2022).

<sup>1679</sup> Spencer Ackerman, 'New Drone Strike Undercuts Obama's Promises on Robot War', *Wired*, 29 May 2013, available at: <https://www.wired.com/2013/05/drone-strike-restrictions/> (accessed 2 December 2022).

<sup>1680</sup> Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

<sup>1681</sup> Ackerman, 'New Drone Strike Undercuts Obama's Promises'.

was probably not ‘a continuing and imminent threat’ to the US, but he was a commander coordinating violence against ISAF.<sup>1682</sup> This strike reinforced Washington’s low trust in Pakistan. Drone technology offered a far less risky way to eliminate an important Pakistani Taliban leader than any effort to capture him with ground SOFs in cooperation with Islamabad.

Obama insisted that ‘before any strike is taken, there must be near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured’.<sup>1683</sup> However, the CIA undertook many ‘signature [drone] strikes’ named such because, under secrecy, the CIA had permission to strike where it estimated ‘signature’ militant behaviour.<sup>1684</sup> These strikes were guided by intelligence on ‘suspicious gatherings’ without knowing exactly who was being targeted.<sup>1685</sup> ‘Signature strikes’ were undertaken in multiple states – Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia – where the US military did not have major ground operations.<sup>1686</sup> These strikes increased civilian casualty risks manifold. Civilian casualties from US drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and Yemen remained significant despite lighter and more precise firepower. Greg Miller claims that ‘more than 500’ drone strikes occurred during Obama’s presidency where ‘hundreds of civilians’ along with 3,000 militants’ were killed in eight years.<sup>1687</sup> For Pakistan alone, Obama ordered 353 drone strikes, killing an estimated 1,659- 2,683 militants with the civilian toll estimated at 129-162 and the profile for 146-249 deaths unknown.<sup>1688</sup>

Obama’s 2016 restrictions on the CIA drone programme had a minor effect. CIA strikes ‘plummeted’ by late 2016, but this was partially offset by further responsibilities for drone strikes being transferred to the military’s JSOC.<sup>1689</sup> Requirements for more transparency on civilian fatalities likely had some restraining effect. Global human rights NGOs repeatedly criticised US proposals for rules of engagement in drone warfare for not considering civilian protection enough. These calls were heard in Obama’s policy.<sup>1690</sup> However, Obama’s 2016 executive order on CIA disclosure on civilian drone strike deaths was repealed

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<sup>1682</sup> Ackerman, ‘New Drone Strike Undercuts Obama’s Promises’.

<sup>1683</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1684</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1685</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1686</sup> Dan De Luce and Paul McLeary, ‘Obama’s Most Dangerous Drone Tactic Is Here to Stay’, *Foreign Policy*, 5 April 2016, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/05/obamas-most-dangerous-drone-tactic-is-here-to-stay/> (accessed 24 December 2022).

<sup>1687</sup> Miller, ‘How Drones Became Obama’s Deadly Weapon’.

<sup>1688</sup> Peter Bergen, David Sterman and Melissa Salyk-Virk, ‘America’s Counterterrorism Wars’, *New America*, 17 June 2021 available at: <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/> (accessed 29 December 2022).

<sup>1689</sup> Greg Miller, ‘Why CIA Drone Strikes Have Plummeted’, *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2016, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-drone-strikes-plummet-as-white-house-shifts-authority-to-pentagon/2016/06/16/e0b28e90-335f-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-drone-strikes-plummet-as-white-house-shifts-authority-to-pentagon/2016/06/16/e0b28e90-335f-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html) (27 December 2022).

<sup>1690</sup> Karen McVeigh, ‘Obama “Drone-Warfare Rulebook” Condemned By Human Rights Groups’, *The Guardian*, 25 November 2012, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/25/obama-drone-warfare-rulebook> (accessed 27 December 2022).

by Trump in 2017. Trump officials branded previous policy ‘superfluous’ and sanctioned a further drone strike ‘surge’. Washington undertook 2,243 drone strikes in Trump’s first two years as president compared to Obama’s 1,878 total for eight years.<sup>1691</sup>

### 9.7.3. Discarding stabilisation

Drone technologies allow Western governments to remotely conduct counter-terrorism across entire regions and potentially even globally. However, there is little evidence that drone strikes create much added value for stabilisation. Terrorist attacks resulting from long transnational chains like 9/11 have been less common for the US, UK and other NATO members in recent years. Drone strikes targeting leading militants have probably prevented more of these attacks. Highlighted by the 2015 Paris Attacks and 2016 Brussels Bombings claimed by ISIS, radical Islamic terrorism evolved towards radicalised ‘home grown’ militants.<sup>1692</sup> The extent to which NATO governments still perceive fragile states as a primary source of global terrorism is unclear. French- and EU-led military intervention aiming to stabilise Mali and the wider Sahel region from Islamic militancy after 2013 still indicates the risk society preference for rebuilding fragile states to prevent danger at distance. However, uncertain governance in Afghanistan was perceived with much less urgency by the West after 2014. Illuminated by al-Zawahiri’s ‘targeted killing’ in 2022, enhanced intelligence and precision-strike from drone systems allows Washington to routinely eliminate threatening militants without state-building.

For Mark Katz, the greatest current risks from an unstable Afghanistan are for its direct neighbours – some that actively undermined previous stabilisation efforts – than any state further afield.<sup>1693</sup> Biden thought similarly when agreeing to a full US withdrawal by August 2021. Trump was reluctant to withdraw without an agreement with the Taliban to retain some ‘credibility’ for Washington. However, as the Taliban seized control again in 2021, Biden was much less concerned about Afghanistan’s future governance than he was about preventing risks. He warned the Taliban of US military assets to intervene should it again facilitate global terrorism: ‘We [the US] will maintain the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries. We just don’t need to fight a ground war to do it’.<sup>1694</sup>

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<sup>1691</sup> Reuters Staff, ‘US Halts Reporting of Civilian Deaths by Drone Outside War Zones’, *Reuters*, 6 March 2019, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-drones-idUSKCN1QN2PD> (accessed 21 December 2022).

<sup>1692</sup> BBC News, ‘Paris Attacks: Who Were the Attackers?’, 27 April 2016, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34832512> (accessed 31 December 2022).

<sup>1693</sup> Mark N. Katz, ‘Taliban Rule in Afghanistan is Worse for its Neighbors than America’, *The National Interest*, 22 April 2021, available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/taliban-rule-afghanistan-worse-its-neighbors-america-183384> (accessed 31 December 2022).

<sup>1694</sup> Joe Biden, ‘Remarks by President Biden on the End of the War in Afghanistan’, Washington DC: the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 31 August 2021, available at:

Western belief in stabilisation unravelled between Afghanistan and Pakistan at least a decade before Biden's presidency. Cooperation with Afghans was understood as the decisive 'centre of gravity' for ISAF. This diminished as Obama's presidency progressed and subsequently. Trump's escalated drone campaign in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands was followed by Biden's disorderly withdrawal. Both Trump and Biden aimed to limit risk for the US with little concern for local populations. Even at the peak of the 'civilian surge' in the early 2010s, Abbas argues that NATO's 'hard' and 'soft' power for Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas was unbalanced.<sup>1695</sup> NATO members supported humanitarian funding for education projects only for this to be overwhelmed by rising 'Talibanisation'. Taliban supporters closed schools that previously served thousands. Crackdowns on female education were severe.<sup>1696</sup> This caused further destitution for populations already disrupted by violence.<sup>1697</sup>

Washington was reluctant to majorly reinvest in liberal 'soft' power after its 'civilian surge', it instead prioritised a military response to 'Talibanisation'. 'Most wanted' terrorist leaders operating between Afghanistan and Pakistan were threatened with drone strikes.<sup>1698</sup> Departing from the CA of the mid-2000s, NATO missed opportunities to better support civilian initiatives to reduce terrorist threats. Abbas argues that 'law enforcement' and 'prosecution through the courts' were 'likely to be far more damaging to the ideas that terrorists stand for' for local populations than drone strikes alone.<sup>1699</sup> He saw some strikes and civilian assistance for non-combatants as more likely to relieve terrorist violence. It is difficult to disagree in theory, but in practice, NATO's attempts to support the rule of law in Afghanistan were undermined by inconsistent funding and policies. ISAF backing for corrupt Karzai- and Ghani-led governments eroded any public trust. NATO's partnership with Pakistan was too weak and dysfunctional to exert enough diplomatic influence on Islamabad to support stronger state control its unruly tribal regions. Abbas admits combined civilian and military approaches take 'longer to deliver' and after two decades of stabilisation failure an impatient US had limited its focus to striking terrorist enemies.<sup>1700</sup>

Often the dominant ethnic group in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands, NATO never figured out *Pashtunwali* – the way of the Pashtun – laden with idiosyncrasies and intricacies.<sup>1701</sup> It is claimed that 'Pashtuns are generally convinced that their system of social order produces men superior to those of the Western model'.<sup>1702</sup> Interpretations of 'freedom, honour, revenge, and chivalry'

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<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-end-of-the-war-in-afghanistan/> (accessed 31 December 2022).

<sup>1695</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>1696</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203.

<sup>1697</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203.

<sup>1698</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>1699</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>1700</sup> Abbas, *The Taliban Revival*, pp. 203–204.

<sup>1701</sup> Johnson and Mason, 'No Sign until the Burst of Fire', p. 61.

<sup>1702</sup> Johnson and Mason, 'No Sign until the Burst of Fire', p. 61.

determine behaviour and assemblies of tribal leaders and elders (*jirgas*) settle disputes.<sup>1703</sup> Drone strikes in Pashtun-dominated areas inflamed detestation for NATO's alternative stabilisation proposals. Every Pashtun did not wholeheartedly support the Taliban, but, as surveys claim, Taliban violence upsetting Pashtun social codes rarely persuaded more Pashtuns to support ISAF.<sup>1704</sup> Damage from Western drone strikes still grew Pashtun support for the Taliban.<sup>1705</sup>

Drone strikes are ruthless and faceless, creating a 'siege mentality' galvanising local societies against the West, a diametrically opposite phenomenon to 'winning hearts and minds'.<sup>1706</sup> Strikes against 'most wanted' militants satisfy Western 'safety first' priorities, but lower priority militants still evade attention and remain a risk to regional security. Continuous drone strikes engrained paranoid fear and insecurity into Afghan and Pakistani societies. 'Talibanisation' restricted education for many, but parents in the FATA also stopped sending children to school under fear that larger gatherings could lead them being mistakenly targeted in a 'signature strike'.<sup>1707</sup> Militants were tiny in number compared to innocent civilians, but to continuous sounds of drone flights overhead, daily life was lived in constant fear that anonymously crossing paths with a targeted local militant could see one struck and killed.<sup>1708</sup>

## 9.8. Conclusion

Obama's 'surge' timetable had many negative unintended consequences for stabilisation. 'Safety first' anxiety could not allow Afghanistan to re-emerge as a source for global terrorists risks, but a longer 'surge' risked more soldier fatalities and a serious political backlash. Constant reformulation of the mission denied ISAF better cultural and situational awareness to better mediate with Afghan society. 'Surged' NATO troop numbers for 18 months did not subdue Taliban violence, but some military escalations such as intrusive SOF raids alienated Afghans. 'Surged' civilian reconstruction efforts failed to strengthen stabilisation while often being counterproductive. Contrary to converting Afghans to ISAF's aims, a short 'use it or lose it' civilian spending flood between 2009 and 2011 fuelled more Afghan government corruption or eventually drifted to Taliban insurgents and criminals. 'Safety first' concerns forced NGOs and other

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<sup>1703</sup> Johnson and Mason, 'No Sign until the Burst of Fire', p. 61.

<sup>1704</sup> Jason Lyall, Graeme Blair and Kosuke Imai, 'Explaining Support for Combatants During Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 107, no. 4, 2013, p.679.

<sup>1705</sup> Lyall, et al., 'Explaining Support for Combatants During Wartime', p.679.

<sup>1706</sup> Frank Sauer and Niklas Schörnig, 'Killer Drones: The "Silver Bullet" of Democratic Warfare?', *Security Dialogue*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2012, pp. 372–373.

<sup>1707</sup> Conor Friedersdorf, "'Every Person Is Afraid of the Drones": The Strikes' Effect on Life in Pakistan', *The Atlantic*, 25 September 2012, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/every-person-is-afraid-of-the-drones-the-strikes-effect-on-life-in-pakistan/262814/> (accessed 8 January 2023).

<sup>1708</sup> Friedersdorf, "'Every Person Is Afraid of the Drones"'.

civilian organisations to prioritise protection over closer reconstruction assistance with Afghans. ‘Bunkerisation’ restricted contact between civilian personnel aligned with ISAF and Afghans. Self-imposed security restrictions impeded monitoring to successfully adapt civilian reconstruction projects in remote parts of Afghanistan where populations suffered most from poverty and Taliban violence.

Extra protection for civilian and military organisations caused an overbearing PMSC presence. Widespread PMSC intrusion and abuse was detested by Afghans, further dismantling local support for ISAF. Whether Afghan or foreign owned, labour structures within PMSCs commonly distributed the most dangerous tasks to lower-skilled Afghans. ISAF support for the ANSF showed a similar risk-shifting pattern. Afghan forces suffered far greater fatalities supporting stabilisation aims than ISAF did. Strengthening local forces with further SSR rose as an important Western stabilisation alternative to prolonged combat intervention. However, ISAF’s hasty ‘train-and-equip’ approach solely preferred a battlefield response to Taliban violence without liberal ‘good governance’ principles. The US drone campaign along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the 2010s signalled the decline of the risk society’s stabilisation preferences. Obama attempted to prioritise human rights in US foreign policy, but the ‘safety first’ allure of drone warfare was difficult to resist. Counterterrorism with drone strikes was heralded as ‘new military humanism’ because of precision reducing harm to civilians, thus contrary to stabilisation emphasising some assistance for civilians in conflict zones. The US drone campaign eliminated and deterred some dangerous militants possibly coordinating attacks on Western interests, but this came with serious human costs for innocent populations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands.

## **CONCLUSION: WHEN 'GOOD ENOUGH' IS NOT ENOUGH**

This dissertation's opening research puzzle questioned the explanatory merit of both 'graveyard of empires' and flawed 'liberal hegemony' accounts often offered for NATO's stabilisation failure in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. The puzzle was interested in whether the risk society's main characteristics could offer a stronger explanation for this stabilisation failure than both alternatives. This conclusion discusses the dissertation's response to both research questions: (1. why – despite significant civilian and military resources applied – did NATO fail to stabilise Afghanistan? and; (2. how did risk society preferences (reflecting in NATO policy) influence stabilisation failure? Dealing first with the 'graveyard for empires' explanation, such accounts point plainly to Afghanistan's punishing physical terrain and its fractious ethno-political composition as formidable factors disposing inevitable failure on intervening powers seeking to enforce order. Contrary to these outlooks, this dissertation's analysis indicates that such inevitabilities were never preordained for Western governments between 2001 and 2021.

For sure, Afghanistan's geographic and social situations create stern challenges for powers attempting to intervene and stabilise, but these challenges were unlikely insurmountable. Rather, by undertaking a series of poor policies at critical times, NATO was its own worst enemy. The risk society's defining characteristics closely influenced many failed policies. A series of early intervention mistakes made accomplishing later stabilisation severely difficult. Pressure to manage security through a risk-averse approach largely limited NATO leaders to utilitarian and 'safety first' policies that were not optimal for stabilisation and that allowed many errors to creep in.

These outlooks set the tone immediately after initial intervention in 2001 when US security planners ignored the Powell Doctrine's 'overwhelming force' principle, selecting 'evasive warfare' instead. 'Evasive warfare' avoided riskier military manoeuvres that might have drawn coalition forces into lengthier 'quagmires' or towards larger soldier fatalities. However, this posture failed to stop many dangerous Al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives escaping to 'havens' in Pakistan. Many recovered to later revitalise Taliban networks. Despite this flaw, US-led military operations initially diminished and demoralised Taliban networks. Taliban capacity to disrupt stabilisation efforts was limited between late 2001 and early 2005, the US individually and NATO collectively squandered this crucial window. The risk society's especially fervent emphasis on utilitarian and 'safety first' policies sometimes denied the development of liberal policies that could have better supported state-building at some critical junctures. Nevertheless, while the risk society's characteristics largely dominated, residual liberal outlooks did sometimes intertwine with this, sometimes this was helpful for stabilisation and in other instances it was not.

Due to the risk society's strong utilitarian and 'safety first' priorities, not enough liberal 'soft power' through effective civilian reconstruction was wielded

to shape cooperation between ISAF and the wider Afghan population. Contrary to more 'soft power' for state-building, OEF's intrusive SOF raids to extinguish Al-Qaeda as a global risk alienated many bystanding Afghans. Afghan anger was compounded when the Western presence delegated governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban 'strongmen' and warlords that in-turn exploited and abused the population. Seen as a 'quick fix' for governance problems in the region, Washington harboured misplaced confidence that these unsavoury elements would provide reliable intelligence on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Rebellion and insurgency in southern Afghanistan continuously tormented ISAF's state-building aims. Taliban morale was eventually revived following an unforced error from Washington, unexpectedly 'quagmired' with violent turmoil in Iraq after 2003.

Explanation of ISAF's stabilisation failure is most regularly offered through US-centred narratives. These sometimes mislead from the explanation supported in this dissertation that stabilisation was also a failing of the wider transatlantic partnership. When the US diverted resources to a volatile Iraq between 2003 and 2008, European allies attempted to compensate by applying civilian and military power in Afghanistan. Many serious gaps remained in ISAF's posture. Failures to devote sufficient resources to critical policy areas were exacerbated by the acutely 'safety first' preferences of many European allies, imposing national caveats to restrict ISAF's military cooperation and mobility. With Obama elected US president after 2009, Afghanistan was synonymous as 'the good war' prioritised by Washington. 'Surged' US troop numbers and civilian reconstruction resources might be viewed at first glance as a departure from 'good enough' utilitarianism towards more ambitious liberal 'maximalism'. However, Obama displayed acute caution to oversee a strict and short 'surge' timetable that can be interpreted only as a modest and temporary upscaling. The 'surge' might have ultimately brought more problems than it did progress towards stabilisation.

ISAF marked a heyday in 'global NATO' discourses. Partnering with 'like-minded' governments beyond the Euro-Atlantic area was perceived as a 'force multiplier'. However, NATO was unable to raise much more for ISAF's resources through global collective action. Democracies like Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea only contributed modestly. Relations with Pakistan frequently resembled a partnership from hell. Seeing military and wider strategic benefits in GWOT cooperation with the US, geopolitical rivalry with India remained Islamabad's main priority. Links to Taliban extremists were perceived as an unconventional weapon to reverse deficits in conventional military power with New Delhi.

Pakistan's support was fickle, but ISAF had dependencies for supply transit, making it difficult for Western governments to coerce Islamabad better into line. MOOTW can be equally important for stabilisation as warfighting is. These can include peacekeeping, protection for civilian authorities and/or SSR for local forces. ISAF's SSR followed a utilitarian 'train-and-equip' model, aiming to leave the Afghan government with independently functioning military and police forces. This neglected state-building support for integrated allegiances between

the ANSF, Afghan society and government institutions. The ANSF was plagued by defection and desertion. Its forces quickly collapsed when the Taliban escalated its military campaign in 2021. A fragile Afghanistan's re-emergence as a global producer of illicit opium undermined ISAF for its duration. 'Safety first' instincts saw ISAF reluctant to intervene directly. It feared that this could stir further Afghan anger but alternatively delegating counter-narcotics to an inept ANSF was ineffective. All the while, opium revenues continued to fund the Taliban's insurgency.

Previous risk theory literature focused on how the arrival of the risk society changed Western outlooks on 'war' in a narrow sense. Extending analysis to stabilisation policy combined examination of civilian and military organisations contributing to conflict management. This dissertation found civilian organisations displaying many of the risk society tendencies that previous literature associated with military security policy. An acute 'safety first' preference fostered civilian 'bunkerisation' that hampered reconstruction performance. Protective cordons; fortified compounds with imposing blast barriers; and sizable PMSC presences installed by civilian agencies alienated Afghans from civilian reconstruction activities, reducing possibilities to win 'hearts and minds' for stabilisation. Unwilling to sacrifice personnel safety to enhance humanitarian outreach, many civilian agencies supporting ISAF contracted PMSC protection. Some PMSCs performed better than others, but widespread intimidation and abuse against Afghan populations was reported. Extending from another symptom of the risk society's acutely 'safety first' character, PMSC misdemeanours drained ISAF of Afghan 'hearts and minds' necessary for state-building. This conclusion continues with detailed discussion of the main arguments accounting for NATO's stabilisation in Afghanistan, before concluding with discussion of the dissertation's main contributions to theory-revision.

## **Early intervention mistakes**

Liberal discourses set the tone for thirty years of US hegemony after the Cold War. Clinton's initial liberal internationalism gave way to later liberal interventionism under Bush as Washington reacted to 9/11. Possible contrasts between US discourses and actions created important questions for rethinking risk theory in security policy. Neoconservative intellectuals and policy staff supporting Bush were regularly criticised for allowing unrealistic ideologies to dominate US counterterrorism policies. Ideological distortion is often given as a reason for why the GWOT was deeply divisive both within the US and globally. Nevertheless, defying many explanations that liberal ideologies simply malfunctioned as a cause of Western failures to stabilise Afghanistan and Iraq, risk theory informs expectations that policymakers instead emphasised risk prevention with a utilitarian focus. Transnational terrorism 'aggravated by globalisation' was a risk perceived as likely to build from Afghanistan and other regions with fragile governance. Emphasising a utilitarian focus rather than an

especially ideological outlook, risk theory sees policymakers seeking to ‘prevent the worst’ with solutions only ‘good enough’ to stop risks from spreading. Dangers from fragile states are thus turned into mundane ‘non-events’.

Risk theory visions are often replicated in separate literatures on stabilisation policy. Visions for stabilisation in response to fragile state insecurity are more realist and modest when compared with the liberal transformational discourses that Bush proposed at the GWOT’s outset. Similar contrasts exist between risk theory and idealist liberal peacebuilding aims for engaging local ‘grassroots’ in conflict societies. Despite Washington’s strong ideological discourses justifying intervention in Afghanistan, empirical evidence presented in this dissertation indicates that Western actions on the ground were in-practice disconnected from such discourses. Neoconservatives warned that dangerous global risks could stem from terrorist ‘havens’ in fragile states or from ‘rogue’ regimes. Military intervention was rationalised as a policy tool to extinguish these dangers, if diplomacy did not quickly achieve solutions. ‘Rogue’ or fragile states would then be pacified, reconstructed as liberal democracies with US or wider Western assistance.

Liberal discourses suggested ‘maximalist’ outlooks on reconstruction, but as chapter four discussed, early post-intervention policies in Afghanistan were instead minimal and badly organised. Unrealistically large ambitions for Afghan social transformation were chased with only modest means. In late 2001, immediately after intervention, US policymakers saw Afghanistan as a vaguely defined ‘reflexive security dilemma’, a ‘landscape of the mind’. Risk theory expects a ‘reflexive security dilemma’ to be imposed on Western governments by unipolarity without serious great power competition. Uncomfortable and self-conscious reflection is induced. Policymakers seek to navigate open-ended scenarios, forming reference points to guide policies. Both interesting and even somewhat contradictory, while the risk society is anxiously future-focused, it relies a lot on historical fears, parallels and analogies as a crutch to manage future uncertainties in security policy. Analysis of primary sources repeatedly illustrated this tendency in the reference points that US policymakers selected when trying to manage intervention and stabilisation in Afghanistan. Failed interventions by other great powers on the same territory resonated. Britain’s unsuccessful imperial wars in Afghanistan between 1839 and 1919 were examined, as was the Soviet Union’s torrid experience between 1979 and 1989.

Contrary to some ‘graveyard of empires’ anecdotes about Afghanistan spelling inevitable catastrophe for intervening outsiders, US officials also gained optimism from Afghanistan in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when it had a functioning government and a national army to maintain a monopoly on force. Caution drawn from failed British and Soviet interventions influenced the initial US ‘light footprint’ intervention where military leaders favouring ‘evasive warfare’. Influence from America’s own history was also important. ‘Quagmire anxiety’ was triggered by memories of US suffering in Vietnam and some later unsuccessful interventions. A ‘toe to toe’ fight with Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants was avoided, taking bin Laden and his accomplices by surprise.

Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants also seemed to draw from different historical reference points. Both expected the risk society's tentative even cowardly characteristics to quickly undermine US military operations. When the 1983 terrorist attack on a US military base in Lebanon claimed by the Islamic Jihad Organisation created panic. It caused the US to withdraw its forces. Washington also quickly departed following its military fiasco in Somalia in 1993. US adversaries in Afghanistan thought a similar imbroglio might be inflicted on the US once its forces quickly felt some stress. US leaders anticipated this pitfall. For what was later known as 'the Afghan model' for intervention, US commanders devised a posture to remain as 'contactless' or 'elusive' as possible. They front-loaded with air power and precision-strike when overthrowing Taliban rule. Anti-Taliban clients doing the ground fighting, the Northern Alliance, were supported with a US SOF presence. This was low risk. Efforts to limit soldier fatalities were central. Taliban rule collapsed quickly, its leaders and Al-Qaeda allies quickly fled as OEF entered a slightly riskier phase. Extending from late 2001 into spring 2002, the US led combat operations comprised of SOFs and some regular units in the Battle of Tora Bora and Operation Anaconda. Navigating some treacherous mountainous terrain, a wider Western military coalition cooperated with anti-Taliban Afghan factions against fighters loyal to the Taliban and/or Al-Qaeda.

Western actions remained dominated by 'safety first' preferences. US commanders made significant use of anti-Taliban factions as proxies in hazardous conditions. This was justified because Afghan fighters knew the terrain and climate better. However, these risk society preferences did leave some issues unaddressed, creating difficult consequences for later stabilisation. Quick-fire partnering with local proxies meant that coalition forces did not fully know the loyalties of fighters claiming to be anti-Taliban. Some might have duplicitously aided Taliban and/or Al-Qaeda leaders to escape to Pakistan while still collecting benefits from cooperation with Western forces. Cautious US commanders perhaps over-relied on Afghan proxies in preference to more direct use of US land power to pursue Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders when on the backfoot. Mattis has claimed that US Marines under his command might have captured bin Laden with a 'sweep and block manoeuvre' at Tora Bora had a reluctant CENTCOM instead been willing to accept more risk.

Capturing bin Laden was an obvious aim for US forces. He symbolised Al-Qaeda's violent menace to Washington, but beyond some videos released from hiding to global media attention after 2001, bin Laden's direct influence on Al-Qaeda soon waned in forced exile. A 'safety first' approach to early operations facilitated lesser-known Taliban or Al-Qaeda militants to escape, thus feeding later militancy. Even with Powell as Secretary of State, Washington deviated from the Powell Doctrine designed to prevent the US from suffering more costly military quagmires. Exaggerated by fears of a communist 'domino effect' during the Cold War, the Powell Doctrine aimed to ease US 'hyperpower' impulses for overseas interventions. Offering reference points to navigate the 'reflexive security dilemma', some considered the Powell Doctrine's principles as holding

continued wisdom for post-9/11 interventions. 'Overwhelming force' was stressed so that the later recovery of an adversarial insurgency would be impossible.

Uneasy from 'quagmire anxiety' during the early OEF, Rumsfeld and Franks ignored this principle from the Powell Doctrine. After the Taliban fell, the US did not deploy enough ground forces to block many Taliban or Al-Qaeda leaders from escape. Pakistan then became a neighbouring 'haven' allowing militants to persevere as a network to later revive Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. In titles for important publications, Farrell uses terms like 'unwinnable' for the Western-led war in Afghanistan and 'unbeatable' for the progress of Taliban insurgency. Evidence discussed in this dissertation creates doubt on whether this war was always 'unwinnable' or if stabilisation was predestined to fail. The Taliban was weak and demoralised immediately after 2002, but the US coalition and the later ISAF mission made numerous mistakes, leaving the door open for Taliban recovery.

In a momentary retreat from the risk society's 'safety first' vigilance, many early US and ISAF actions after 2001 were complacent. There was a naïve belief that violent global risks from Afghan territory had dissipated. The risk society has many contradictions. Complacent outlooks correspond with one central contradiction that the risk society will continually seek security, but with less strategic ambition. Transatlantic ambitions for reconstruction in Afghanistan were low until 2006 when fierce battles erupted between the Taliban and ISAF during Operation Medusa. Strategic attention of US leaders soon drifted after 2001, but Washington also introduced too many conflicting priorities into its reconstruction outlook for Afghanistan. This can be attributed to the open-ended 'reflexive security dilemma'. For the early GWOT, the US perceived global terrorism as far transcending Afghanistan. Colossal military power gave it unrestricted reach to tackle risks. It did not have a major geopolitical rival to 'check' or restrain this power. These circumstances encouraged the US to self-impose its own difficulties by overloading its strategic agenda.

Some US officials downgraded a still fragile Afghanistan from a security risk to a 'governance issue' and were even reluctant to allocate more than very modest financial assistance to support state-building after 2002. Conversely, other US leaders perceived Afghan fragility as a lingering source of global risks. OEF was retained for counterterrorism to robustly root out militants. These military intrusions were a rude awakening for many Afghans. Many Afghans were angered by the forceful interference from 'kill or capture' raids on terror suspects. When resources for civilian reconstruction were modest, few Afghans gained much opportunity to see alternative attraction in Western 'soft power'. These outlooks were particularly vivid in rural Afghan regions, later again cultivated into Taliban strongholds. Early stabilisation policies were shortsighted, influenced largely by the risk society's 'safety first' preferences rather than local reconstruction needs. Militarily preventing the spread of global terrorism was the primary US priority and a difficult 'safety first' impulse to suppress.

## Utilitarian compromises

Concepts are abstract simplifications of empirical reality. Contrary to an unrealistically rigid view of the risk society concept, as a theme that ebbed and flowed throughout this dissertation, traces of liberal ideology sometimes combined with ISAF's otherwise dominant utilitarian or pragmatic stabilisation focus. This liberal intermittence is important to observe while keeping risk theory expectations in mind. Early utilitarian decisions to outsource governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen' was a grave initial mistake that undermined later stabilisation efforts. Western governments perceived these actors as 'cheap and beneficial', expecting them to suppress anti-Western terrorism risks and offer intelligence on the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Most Afghan factions had duplicitous motives. Advantages from cooperation were never guaranteed. Immediately after intervention, the US prioritised 'safety first' counterterrorism much more than the promotion of liberal values. ISAF turned a blind eye to warlords and 'strongmen' unleashing abuse and exploitation against Afghan populations. These circumstances weakened Western legitimacy to support state-building.

ISAF gained some momentum after NATO established command in 2003. 'Winning [Afghan] hearts and minds' was a prominent slogan. This was especially emphasised in volatile southern Afghanistan, where it was believed ISAF's prospects for stabilisation hinged, but many Afghan 'hearts and minds' were already severely damaged or even lost because of violent abuse suffered at the hands of anti-Taliban governors and their accomplices. The Taliban were ousted, but for many in southern Afghanistan, one draconian regime had only been replaced with another. ISAF's outward communications supporting democracy and 'good governance' appeared hypocritical. While not legally accountable to the Afghan government, ISAF was still *de facto* supporting it. ISAF's tolerance of local abuses harmed the Afghan government by association and vice-versa, domestic corruption rife under Karzai also harmed ISAF in Afghan perceptions.

During the early intervention, the US was primarily responsible for state reconstruction, but utilitarian preferences were still not exclusive to Washington. Karzai's rule originated from the post-intervention Bonn Conference, extending to *loya jirgas* in Afghanistan in June 2002 and in December 2003-January 2004. His leadership ambitions were boosted by pragmatic and realist UN diplomacy. For agreements forged through tense negotiations to work, some dubious Afghan warlords and 'strongmen' were centrally integrated into various settlements. Retaining dubious interests further undermined Afghan initial perceptions of Karzai's government. Epitomised under Brahimi's stewardship, this UN negotiating style illustrated a wider global diplomatic preference for realist risk reduction over liberal aims. Once Afghanistan's domestic factions agreed a government that could function to some extent, even with many deep flaws, this was seen as pragmatic to build some stability.

This UN outlook was reinforced by US preferences for a centralised government in Kabul to maintain a single contact point to assist the wider GWOT. A

less utilitarian but more tedious alternative was a stronger federal state where Afghan provinces would have increased autonomy. This might have better satisfied Afghanistan's ethnic factions. More responsive local government might have boosted cooperation supporting ISAF's reconstruction efforts, particularly in rural areas with long histories of rebellion. De-centralised governance is not always a perfect 'silver bullet' to end unrest. Similar models have been tried in some other continually troubled multiethnic post-conflict societies such as Bosnia. Such systems can maintain a fragile peace, but this is regularly tested when violent risks continually loom. Such alternatives for Afghanistan would have stronger Western government devotion to long-term 'grassroots' solutions to build 'bottom-up' governance. This would have involved commitments far beyond what the risk society was willing to contenance. Deeper commitment to Afghanistan conflicted with US 'globality' propelling the GWOT. Afghanistan was only anticipated as the first stop in a wider global counterterrorism effort. Getting stuck in long-term 'nation-building' was not part of Bush's anticipated 9/11 response.

Between 2001 and 2006, Bush discussed reconstruction in Afghanistan through liberal transformational discourses, but these really only masked utilitarian action that combined military counterterrorism with a lacklustre civilian reconstruction effort. The wider West was slow to seriously start with humanitarian aid or with civilian development programmes. This 'soft power' vacuum was voluntarily created by Western contributors when the Taliban did not have much capacity to counteract Western efforts influencing Afghan populations for some years after 2001. Failing to capitalise with early stabilisation when Taliban networks were demoralised was a serious error with lasting and degenerative consequences. Larger Western humanitarian and/or development contributions later flowed into Afghanistan during Obama's 'surge'. Nevertheless, many negative Afghan attitudes towards ISAF had already hardened. Reversing these was an ominous challenge.

Much funding for civilian reconstruction during the 'surge' was tacitly tied to ISAF's military presence. Starting in late 2009, Obama's self-imposed US deadline for the 'surged' military footprint was tight, drawdown was scheduled for mid-2011. Within a short period, 'surged' funding for civilian reconstruction was spent with uncontrollable haste. This rush limited the impact of many civilian reconstruction projects. Even more damningly, it fuelled further corruption within both the Afghan government and in wider Afghan society. Obama's deadline encouraged a desperate rush by NGOs, IOs and government agencies to quickly spend vast sums allocated for civilian assistance. Much of this was corruptly siphoned off by many in authority, widening disconnects between Western-backed Afghan leaders and an angry population. Seemingly endless corruption first under Karzai and later under Ghani killed NATO aspirations to depart Afghanistan while leaving anything resembling a functioning government behind.

Civilian assistance providers regularly objected to military commanders combining civilian reconstruction with COIN efforts. Military outlooks on

securitising civilian assistance typify the risk society's 'safety first' preference. Civilian organisations saw this as unwelcome, spoiling the impartiality of 'humanitarian space'. Experience in Helmand highlighted that combining civilian assistance with military operations to 'win hearts and minds' did not always follow COIN's binary vision. Western COIN expects 'soft power' from civilian assistance to combine with security from military intervention to draw local populations away from supporting insurgents. Intelligence on Al-Qaeda as a global risk was prioritised before intelligence on wider Afghan society. This oversight was central to failure of ISAF's COIN in Helmand. ISAF's understandings of local politics were dangerously simplified. Since the mid-1970s, violence or warlord rule are normal political features in southern Afghanistan. Disastrous from a humanitarian perspective, southern Afghan society has still politically adapted to this. Indiscriminately accepting benefits from intervening outsiders with limited local knowledge was routine. As Freedman reminds, a serious flaw in ISAF's 'hearts and minds' outlook was to forget that the heart regularly contradicts the mind or vice-versa. Reality in Helmand was that Afghans saw ISAF and the Taliban as equally culpable for violence. Afghans stripped benefits from both without any lasting allegiance to either.

### **Civilian 'bunkerisation'**

Stabilisation policy depends on an amalgam of military and civilian security assets. Both can have equal importance in determining success or failure. This dissertation explained many faults in Western civilian security provision contributing to ISAF's stabilisation in Afghanistan. From a theory-revision perspective, previous literature linking risk theory and security policy was too narrowly focused on military affairs. This dissertation found multiple facets connecting risk society characteristics with the performance of civilian reconstruction organisations. The risk society was globally focused on sourcing civilian NGOs to service stabilisation. Most global NGOs remain products of the Western risk society. This is where most gain their resources and organisational leadership. When contributing to ISAF, risk society 'safety first' insinuations led NGOs to self-impose many security barriers, blocking out Afghan populations that they were trying to assist.

NGO 'bunkerisation' created mutual suspicion between civilians supporting ISAF and Afghans. NGO buildings were protected with imposing security infrastructure. When travelling within Afghan communities, personnel from civilian organisations did so in armoured or fortified vehicles. Creating an inadvertent insecurity effect, ISAF inflicted this problem on itself. 'Bunkerisation' alienated many Afghans from civilians contributing to ISAF reconstruction, assisting Taliban aims to leverage friction between Afghans and ISAF. Operating behind visibly heavy protection, strict security procedures instilled paranoia in civilian personnel themselves, inflating worries about violent intent from Afghans. Isolated areas in rural Afghanistan were often no-go-zones for 'safety first'

civilian organisations, making them ineffective to prevent these regions from gradually hardening into Taliban strongholds.

Western safety concerns saw reconstruction in dangerously isolated areas outsourced to Afghans. This better integrated local knowledge, but it also distanced Western managers planning at HQ from Afghans implementing plans in critical field locations. Some NGOs were aware that these problems were undermining performance. For example, *Save the Children* devised an alternative system emphasising more local contact and gradual trust-building with Afghan elders to improve community access. This created less necessity for *Save the Children* to employ overbearing safety protections, but it was a time-consuming and tedious policy that required persistence and patience. NGO financing usually works in short-term cycles. This creates pressure for an immediate impact that might seem ‘good enough’ while discouraging attempts to build longer-term trust. A pragmatic outlook was reproduced where ‘bunkerisation’ continued to be favoured despite performance difficulties. This was again usually seen as ‘good enough’, preferable to no reconstruction assistance.

NGOs were concerned cooperation with military organisations might violate ‘humanitarian space’, but many NGOs still hypocritically violated this principle by themselves forging close relationships with PMSCs. Global NGOs, government embassies, IOs and private enterprises supporting ISAF demonstrated an insatiable appetite for PMSC services. PMSCs operating in Afghanistan were diverse in both services offered and in professional standards. PMSC abuse against Afghan populations was rampant. ISAF received more blame by close association when Afghans perceived these PMSCs as integral to its presence. PMSC abuses got so bad that the Afghan government attempted to intervene with strict regulations, but with little impact.

## **PMSC abuses**

Residual prospects for success with ISAF’s flawed COIN approaches were further dented by widespread PMSC abuses. COIN stressed security for the Afghan population, but Afghanistan’s burgeoning PMSC market created severely unequal security circumstances. Wealthier Afghans and foreigners connected to ISAF affording PMSC services enjoyed greater protection. This was a relatively small elite distant from most poorer Afghans that remained exposed to violence and whose resentment only worsened when PMSCs working for privilege committed abuses. The risk society’s ‘safety first’ preference to minimise soldier fatalities changes slightly when national militaries and PMSCs are compared. Experience in Afghanistan illustrated that the risk society’s fatality concern was not as acute for PMSCs as it was for national militaries. Western citizens choosing PMSC employment do so fully on the premise of today’s neoliberal ‘turbulence of the risk society’. In the PMSC labour market, risk is completely individualised. By contrast, when deploying national forces, the risk society still imposes responsibility on governments to maximise soldier safety.

It is therefore a Machiavellian attraction for governments to shift military risk onto PMSCs, even when PMSCs are often unsuitable for direct combat.

Many PMSCs supporting ISAF employed poorer Afghans as foot soldiers for regular operations. Western employees or those from elite Afghan backgrounds usually managed PMSCs, illustrating another risk-shifting image where Western or Afghan managers were much less exposed to violence than poorer Afghan subordinates. Although in a private sector context, this mirrored a wider operational picture where, under ISAF mentorship, the ANSF still took the brunt of battlefield fatalities. Over 60,000 ANA members died for operations against the Taliban. ISAF numbers are much lower. The risk society's insatiable appetite for PMSC protection created a market that undermined ISAF's parallel support for the ANSF. When compared to ANSF employment, PMSC labour markets could offer Afghans better pay and conditions, helping to deplete a beleaguered ANSF of suitable police and military recruits.

### **SSR difficulties**

ISAF's failure to support an ANSF that could enforce public order helped to create burgeoning demand for PMSC services. As its mission prolonged, ISAF increasingly focused on SSR as a preventative instrument. If ISAF and later RSM could support the ANSF to defend against Taliban attacks, then future security risks from Afghanistan could be reduced without Western combat sacrifices. SSR seemed ideal for risk society expectations that dangers from fragile states be countered with modest resources, but establishing a functioning ANSF remained a daunting challenge, especially when SSR was mismanaged by ISAF. 'Safety first' preferences combined with sluggish ambition. After the West delegated governance to brutal warlords and 'strongmen' in southern Afghanistan, many from these strata started to fill the ANSF ranks where they continued as predators against the population. Corruption remained rife. Once ANSF corruption took shape as an early trend, it was a disease that ISAF assistance was unable to cure. Discipline did not exist in many instances with narcotic-use was widespread among ANSF personnel.

ANSF organisations leaked personnel in catastrophic numbers. Poor professionalism facilitated high casualties. Many personnel refused to re-enlist. Some ANSF deserters defected to the Taliban. Deployed in short-term rotations, ISAF units failed to hold knowledge that might have allowed its mentors to better navigate tense intercultural difficulties obstructing better ANA engagement. On a 2006 estimate, a staggering 50 percent of ANA officers were illiterate, thus a severe obstacle to ISAF's aims of enhancing leadership and good governance within its organisation. Many ANA soldiers struggled to operate even basic light weapons. Reflecting wider Afghan social trends, the ANA was bitterly divided along ethnic lines, but quotas to engineer ethnic balance created more harm than benefit. Many ANA officers lied about their ethnicity to boost opportunities for promotion or other rewards.

Despite civilian reconstruction efforts, impoverished living standards in rural Afghanistan were constant. Those choosing to grow legal crops instead of poppy to avoid reprimand soon found this failing to give enough subsistence to reduce poverty. Within rural societies, ANSF employment for some family members was desired as an extra opportunity to supplement income. This improved ANA recruitment numbers, but those from lower social classes still had little ideological allegiance to Afghan governments or ISAF's wider aims. This was highlighted by ANA soldiers quickly defecting to the Taliban or to better paying PMSCs. Improving ideological allegiance to the Afghan government was not a priority in ISAF's utilitarian SSR approach, let alone helping the ANA to respect liberal norms encompassing human rights, the rule of law and democracy. ISAF and RSM preferred a minimal 'train-and-equip' approach with an outward battlefield focus.

'Train-and-equip' was perceived as 'good enough' for the ANSF to at least contain if not defeat the Taliban, but even this more realist SSR was difficult for ISAF to transfer. Reports late into ISAF's tenure before 2014 were that the ANA continued to resemble a large and disorderly Afghan militia, contrary to a modern military organisation to credibly conduct COIN. Multiple reasons account for the ANSF's dramatic collapse amid Taliban escalation in 2021. Western governments reduced military enablers that the ANSF depended on, but this collapse was already laid long in advance due to the ANSF's failure to attract broad-based support or legitimacy from Afghan society.

## **Tentative commitments**

The risk society is acutely future-focused. Obsessing about future uncertainty breeds anxiety. Societies in later modernity operate through knowledge-based complexity. This has undisputed benefits, but it also brings problems. Perceiving security problems as highly complex further ratchets anxiety. Constructing reference points to manage uncertainties from the 'reflexive security dilemma' helps policymakers to cope with complexity. Policymakers also try to manage anxiety over future problems with heavy reliance on intelligence. GWOT priorities demanded different capabilities from those developed by Western governments during the Cold War. Recrafting capabilities for a new era instead defined by risks 'aggravated by globalisation' in a short time proved challenging. The US received early warning of the global dangers that bin Laden and Al-Qaeda might cause after the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York and the attacks on US Embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998. These warnings initially failed to drive radical change in the US security posture.

Washington relied heavily on its intelligence system for early operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Serious intelligence failures guided US-led coalitions into setbacks. Intervention in Afghanistan aimed to prevent global terrorism from spreading further, whereas the purpose of intervention in Iraq was to halt eventual WMD use. Both interventions were driven by a 'proactive' preventative

outlook. Policy reference points were assisted by intelligence projections. Some errors are unavoidable, and intelligence errors can have damaging repercussions for later policymaking. In Iraq, US intelligence grossly over-estimated Saddam's WMD capabilities. Intelligence flaws were regular even if more subtle in Afghanistan. These still significantly and gradually undermined stabilisation. Following Jervis' early prediction that the Bush Doctrine's emphasis on preventative warfare would be unsustainable, high margins of intelligence error seriously undermined both interventions.

US counterterrorism though OEF outweighed the fledgling ISAF in the early 2000s. OEF put 'safety first' to ruthlessly hunt down terror suspects. Intelligence resources were focused on immediate terrorism risks rather than 'soft power' to gain more Afghan support for state-building. This closely connected risk society preferences with GWOT human rights violations, most prominently the detention of suspects at Guantanamo Bay. Scandals were the result of US urgency to improve its intelligence information, highlighting the 'globality' of risk that Washington perceived in Afghanistan. Some suspects imprisoned in Guantanamo were forcibly collected from Afghan territory. US authorities believed that many had wider connections to Al-Qaeda's global networks. Some information extracted from militants captured along the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands assisted the US hunt for bin Laden, but much information forced through coercion or unethical methods proved unreliable.

Over thirteen years, ISAF was continually troubled by intelligence errors. Declassified primary sources highlighted that this was lamented by Rumsfeld from the beginning. He complained that the US did not have enough 'actionable intelligence'. Western outlooks on intervention and stabilisation dramatically evolved between 2001 and 2021. Stabilisation is utilitarian, it envisages state-building 'good enough' to 'prevent the worst'. This was ISAF's general thrust, but state-building did retain some residual liberalism. Commitment was lukewarm but some liberal humanitarianism compelled Western governments to support Afghanistan incoherently. Early stabilisation progress was undermined by half-hearted adherence to an ambitious liberal transformation narrative, where only modest utilitarian action was taken. ISAF did likewise when following a questionable liberal outlook in its approach to Afghanistan's opium problems.

On top of global terrorism, the risk society perceived limited governance facilitating narcotics production through a 'globality' lens that worsened its anxiety. Fragile Afghanistan became a world leader in illicit opium. Perceiving this along the 'global-local axis' that Beck theorises created tentative uncertainty to paralyse NATO's response. From a global angle, Afghan instability helped more heroin to hit Western streets and fuel organised crime. Incomes generated from this flowed back into Afghanistan, funding both corruption and Taliban insurgency. Dismantling this globalised security problem depended on local Afghan politics, but a combination of 'safety first' preferences and some liberal stubbornness made ISAF ineffective. Stronger military intervention to eradicate opium production risked a violent backlash from Afghans gaining subsistence from it, damaging any hope of winning 'hearts and minds' for COIN.

Further violence risked an uptick in ISAF fatalities. It largely left counter-narcotics to the ANSF, even if its forces were inept. Beyond military or police intervention, Goodhand argues that, were ISAF to pragmatically tolerate some corruption, 'joint extraction' of opium revenues between Afghan governors and private companies was an alternative option. Violence 'bad for business' would be reduced and these revenues could fund better public services. This might have helped state-building and stabilisation, but NATO governments supporting ISAF were morally unsupportive, even when existing policies were failing badly. Nevertheless, 'joint extraction' might not have reduced large opium supplies leaving Afghanistan for global markets.

### **US 'safety first' preferences**

Obama's 2008 US presidential campaign promised a fresh approach. Many interpreted this as refocusing US strategy from Iraq to Afghanistan, to prioritise an ideologically 'good' or 'just' war. Obama's realism grew more acute as his presidency progressed, not only on Afghanistan but in his overall foreign policy. Overseeing Afghanistan's 'reflexive security dilemma', Obama's officials did not generate too many new ideas. Some older reference points from Bush's Iraq 'surge' in 2007 into 2008 were reproduced. Under Obama, most US military leaders believed that a 'surge' for Afghanistan could achieve stabilisation like in Iraq, even though both societies had completely different statehood experiences. In Iraq, the stabilising effect of 'surged' US military numbers might have been inflated by Iraq's previous experience as a repressive yet stable authoritarian state. Most telling in Al-Anbar, memories of non-violent stability motivated many Iraqis to pragmatically support the MNF over violent chaos waged by AQI and other militants. This situation contrasted radically from southern Afghanistan, where a similar 'centre of gravity' from within the local society never emerged to assist a 'surged' ISAF.

The Obama administration was divided on many 'surge' questions. Obama and many among his civilian staff viewed risk differently to military leaders. In Vietnam, US military commanders were accused of being too politically accommodating, making military advice to government less reliable. For Afghanistan and Iraq, some senior commanders aimed to decouple military advice from political sentiments. This suited some civilian leaders more than others. Bush trusted Petraeus as his MNF commander for the Iraq 'surge'. Obama was unwilling to give US military leaders similar freedom. Outspoken remarks and dissent from frustrated senior commanders caused Obama to distrust military information. Reflected in McChrystal's fiasco resignation as ISAF commander in 2010, acrimonious civil-military relations made deciding US policy for Afghanistan even more difficult.

Encouraged by events in Iraq by 2008, as senior commanders, Petraeus, Mullen and McChrystal viewed a 'surge' for Afghanistan with greater ground forces over a sustained period as likely to defeat the Taliban, creating security

necessary to facilitate improved state-building. Through this vision, Afghanistan would no longer be exposed to global terrorist networks. Concurring with some dissenting civilian and military staff, Obama saw this plan as risking a politically arduous ‘quagmire’ creating higher soldier fatalities. An open-ended ‘reflexive security dilemma’ gave Obama freedom to define ‘surge’ parameters. He moderately increased US troop numbers in Afghanistan in early 2009, but his administration spent much of its first year anxiously reflecting. A lengthy planning process choreographed the ‘surge’, allowing the Taliban ample time to prepare.

While a ‘reflexive security dilemma’ gives Western leaders more freedom to decide reference points to guide policies, it also causes policymakers to anxiously perceive problem complexity as immeasurable. This freedom is turbulent. Obama’s reference points guiding the ‘surge’ were arguably motivated less by what Afghanistan required for successful stabilisation, but by the limited risk threshold that Washington and other Western governments were willing to accept. Obama’s ‘surge’ was half-hearted. Illustrative of ‘post-heroic’ thinking in military affairs, a sharp contradiction in risk society perceptions was affirmed where publics pressure governments to provide safety against global risks like terrorism but while unwilling to accept too many sacrifices to achieve this. Obama did not sustain a strong military presence for long enough to put the Taliban seriously on the backfoot.

Some NATO military leaders probably suspected an ineffective ‘surge’ as likely beforehand. Some military and civilian commentators have argued that it is only realistic to expect stabilisation from long-term deployments sustained with consistent resources. If insurgency is eventually defeated, military peace-keeping against relapses into post-conflict violence is still necessary for several years afterwards. As long-term multinational deployments, UNIFIL and KFOR are long-term deployments matching this purpose, but neither faces the same violent risks that ISAF or RSM did, highlighting that risk must be at an acceptably low limit before Western governments agree to continue.

Washington was less ‘safety first’ in military combat than most other ISAF members, but it remained very ‘safety first’ relative to the capabilities it could potentially call on. US military fatalities were substantially lower in Afghanistan than previously in Vietnam, but these two military failures are still currently compared on near-equal terms in the US public debate. The predetermined 18-month deadline imposed by Obama for a ‘surge’ in Afghanistan was dominated by ‘safety first’ mechanisms. His acceptance of a narrow window with a strict limit to achieve military stabilisation was created by an understanding to keep soldier fatalities at levels a short-term-focused US public could accept.

Surveillance and combat drones are quintessential in the risk society’s security vision. Technological development is accelerated by acute ‘safety first’ preferences. Surveillance technology improves intelligence to locate terrorist and/or insurgent networks. Militants orchestrating danger are clearly identified. Minus the risks of ground intervention, intelligence combines with precision-strike to target leaders enabling militant networks. Some Western risk society anxieties linking to counterterrorism are eased, but inequality in security expands

elsewhere. Drone strikes create paranoid anxiety within the societies where militant networks intermingle. This psychologically wounds many communities. US drone strikes eliminated many terrorists considered dangerous, but with Western drone strikes persisting in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands between 2010 and 2021, there was widespread worry among innocent civilians fearing that they might suffer as collateral damage.

Coinciding with the risk society's loss of confidence in stabilisation policy by the late 2010s, Western technologies for intelligence-gathering and profiling rapidly advanced. Stabilisation was quite a utilitarian approach for limiting terrorism risks from fragile states, but it was still eventually abandoned by the risk society for counterterrorism interventions dominated by drone strikes. This marked an acutely more utilitarian evolution in the risk society's outlook on risks 'aggravated by globalisation'. While insufficient for many ideological liberals, stabilisation policy nevertheless involved some dilute humanitarianism. Physical and psychological damage to societies along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border by persistent US drone campaigns in the 2010s shows that even marginal humanitarianism was later completely lost. Military technology combined with a changing geopolitical environment to offer a utilitarian order that Biden understood as 'good enough'. In the months before August 2021, the US envisaged a stalemated frozen conflict between the ANSF and Taliban insurgents. This deviated radically from ISAF's original state-building outlook.

Washington was left with some guilt when the ANSF collapsed and the Taliban re-conquered Kabul. It had abandoned the Afghan elements supporting the liberal freedoms it had rhetorically promoted, but its 'safety first' instincts soon rationalised that the Taliban would enforce an ideologically draconian but less violent and more stable Afghan order. Maintaining this would likely absorb Taliban resources for cross-border militancy affecting Pakistan. Drone systems allowed the US to flexibly retain 'safety first' contingencies, giving Washington vision and reach to surgically intervene against terrorists based in Afghanistan. Biden ordered a US drone strike against Al-Zawahiri in Kabul in 2021.

## **Transatlantic divides**

By August 2021, global media commentary mostly blamed the US for stabilisation failure in Afghanistan. However, with ISAF falling fully under NATO's command from 2003, significant blame must also be attributed to the alliance's European members. Turning ISAF into a NATO-led mission came from European initiative to repair transatlantic ruptures from tensions over US unilateralism. This was the political motive leading NATO Europe taking on some important stabilisation responsibilities. After 9/11, terrorist networks with links to Afghanistan and Pakistan were not only seen as a problem for the US. Many NATO governments perceived these as a global risk. European intelligence agencies, most prominently the UK's, had assessed that these networks were planning attacks on European societies. Global terrorism was perceived as a common risk

by most, if not all, Western governments, equitable NATO burden-sharing for ISAF was perceived as an important way to reduce this risk.

European actions frequently deviated from this rhetoric, many of its NATO allies imposed national military caveats to limit combat exposure, harming operational impact. Contrasting with most European governments, the US is a risk society with ambition to remain a global superpower, but it still does so by minimising military risks that serve this ambition. The US defence-industrial base pioneers most risk-efficient military technologies. As the 'coalition owner', Washington was more willing to take military risks to achieve stabilisation in Afghanistan than most other NATO members, but it also possessed more sophisticated risk-efficient military technologies than its European allies. European failings were multifaceted. Its NATO members were billed as preferring civilian 'soft power' components or 'doing the dishes' with military peacekeeping tasks. Nevertheless, during ISAF's infancy between 2002 and 2005, European commitments to civilian reconstruction and peacekeeping remained relatively weak. European governments were slow to mobilise resources. Afghan society was not supported with enough civilian assistance when violence had dissipated and more opportunities for development were available. ISAF was then in the shadow of the US-led OEF, its early mission did not have much reach beyond Kabul and northern Afghanistan.

ISAF's expansion accelerated after 2006. Europe's NATO members were expected to contribute more, with the US prioritising operations in Iraq. Upgraded civilian and military contributions followed, but European members still demonstrated acute 'safety first' concerns, weakening battlefield interoperability. US and UK deployments operated at maximum capacity without many excess capabilities to spare for others. Canada needed some critical enablers from its NATO allies to support its operations in southern Afghanistan. When the US or UK could not provide an air corridor for resupply, Germany remained unwilling to loosen its national caveats to facilitate this for Canada or other NATO members. Ottawa was forced to redirect its supplies through land convoys travelling from northern provinces to the south. These were left much more exposed to Taliban ambushes. Canadian troops relied on US air cover before Washington started relocating more military assets to Iraq. The Netherlands replaced the US in this role in 2006, but Amsterdam imposed some stringent caveats on its military activity. Assistance from Dutch Apache helicopters was restricted, these were not permitted to fly below unsafe altitudes. Canadian commanders sometimes reported Dutch enablers as slower than previous US support, a weakness that likely increased casualty risks for Canada during Medusa.

'Safety first' preferences varied across ISAF contributions made by Europe's three strongest NATO powers: France, Germany and the UK. Germany opposed US unilateralism on Iraq in 2003, but it understood that a prolonged standoff with Washington foretold some wider risks. Should transatlantic tensions continue, a weakened NATO would leave European security vulnerable. Berlin perceived its ISAF contribution as important to repair its US relations. While beneficial for transatlantic relations, this was not necessarily optimal for Afghanistan.

Cobbling two very divergent objectives together, appeasing Washington was elevated to the same status as Germany cultivating stabilisation in Kunduz. Once the former aim was served, Berlin was content to only do what was politically 'good enough' with the latter. Germany's ISAF outlook epitomised 'post-heroic' military thinking. Undermining its stabilisation effort, Berlin was unwilling to risk sacrifices necessary for more robust support of US interests.

Germany's political leaders characterised military operations as purely for peacekeeping or as support for civilian reconstruction. Speculation that German troops were involved in combat operations made evoked domestic discomfort. However, some self-imposed 'safety first' caveats when leading the Kunduz PRT accidentally undermined peacekeeping. Contrary to conveying safety, protection and assurance for local populations, it was mandatory for the German military to patrol in armoured vehicles. This strengthened force protection, but at the cost of intimidating Afghans, making it difficult for ISAF to bridge divides to gain support for its security and civilian reconstruction initiatives. This policy mistake was compounded by some grave operational errors.

Three Afghans were killed in 2008 when the German military opened fire on civilians failing to stop at an ISAF checkpoint. In 2009, a German commander called in a US airstrike that mistakenly killed an estimated 91 Afghan civilians. In 2013, as the Kunduz PRT was folding, German commentators noted successes with expanded educational opportunities and the local economy, but it was conceded that most economic progress centred on the military camp where German soldiers were based. This was an accidental result of Germany's 'safety first' failing to spread security beyond its 'bunkerisation' to more remote areas in Kunduz. Any economic progress was without self-sustainability, it remained dependent on the PRT. When the PRT concluded, progress was lost. German reconstruction efforts did not leave a legacy, with little left to halt the Taliban steadily reasserting control in Kunduz after 2014.

Like Germany, France was reluctant to deploy combat troops in volatile southern Afghanistan. Most of French forces were stationed in the comparatively more stable Kapisa and Surobi regions. While operating in northern Afghanistan, these regions remained important for NATO supplies, often a focus for Taliban ambushes. This contribution had some intermittent casualty risks for French troops. France was allegedly disadvantaged by the acute risk-aversion of the previous Italian deployment, with rumours that Italian commanders had discreetly bribed local Taliban not to attack. When payments stopped after France took over in 2008, areas under patrol were more volatile than anticipated. Blindsided French troops were susceptible to Taliban ambushes and sniper fire.

Early Afghan experiences soon hardened the French 'safety first' outlook. Paris changed its military hardware and sometimes broke with tradition to procure US-manufactured equipment was superior security features. This heavier armour intimidated Afghans, weakening French ability to win 'hearts and minds'. French soldiers became 'more aggressive' with intrusive raids against Taliban suspects, but were also 'more timid', spending more time 'bunkerised' within military bases and less building local cooperation outside. Every soldier

fatality created domestic controversy. By 2011, domestic politics was a much stronger influence on French policy than any vision for successful stabilisation in Afghanistan. During the 2012 French Presidential Election, Sarkozy and Hollande competed to please the public on who could withdraw France from ISAF at the earliest notice. Like Germany, France departed from ISAF leaving only a weak legacy in local security and civilian reconstruction.

The UK was the European power most willing to take risks to achieve stabilisation. After 2006, London deployed troops to Helmand in southern Afghanistan where Taliban violence would soon rise. Britain had at least two reasons to sacrifice more than most ISAF members. It understands that its great power status is closely linked to its US relations. Alliance dependence made it politically untenable for the UK to remain tentative on sending combat troops to southern Afghanistan. London might have also perceived terrorism originating from Afghanistan as a slightly higher national security risk than Germany or France. It was willing to pay a higher price to achieve stabilisation to reduce this risk. Nevertheless, the US expectations were subjective.

US expectations were higher for the UK than for France, Germany and many other ISAF members. While unfair for NATO's internal risk-sharing, this was a political reality. US criticisms were fed by British troops succumbing to Taliban insurgents and local militants angered by Afghan government corruption that forced ISAF's withdrawal from Musa Qala in 2006. Some US military commanders perceived UK approaches to COIN as too feeble to subdue violence. However, between 2003 and 2008, the UK still 'held the fourth' for NATO in southern Afghanistan, enabling the US to focus more on Iraq. Despite this, when Obama's 'surge' started in December 2009, the UK's role was relegated to US priorities. Afghan leaders complained about British performance. Helmand was a large but quiet 'backwater' before the Taliban escalated violence there in 2006. Like the local intimidation that armoured French and German patrols stirred elsewhere, Britain might have been too robust with some early patrols in Helmand.

'Safety first' force protection was preferred over local Afghan concerns. Many Helmandis were angered, some rebelled or joined forces with Taliban outsiders. Despite rebuking US criticism of its COIN, the UK did not always commit to its own beliefs. Long associated with UK expeditionary operations, the 'constabulary ethic' emphasises security to protect local populations, establishing loyalty and trust to draw populations away from supporting insurgents. Afghan leaders cooperating with ISAF claimed that the UK was instead detrimentally 'bunkerising' its forces. In 2009, the Governor of Helmand claimed that the UK-led Task Force needed to 'leave their bases and engage with the people', stating that it had done little for civilian reconstruction, but only built a reclusive military base on the outskirts of Sangin. Karzai occasionally claimed that UK operations had worsened security in Helmand, making it more unsafe than before 2006.

Planning for ISAF's wider expansion after 2006 almost coincided with NATO's second post-Cold War enlargement in 2004, following an earlier CEE enlargement in 1999. Most CEE states were small and without much ex-

peditionary experience. CEE allies still committed to ISAF in different ways. Some rose to meet an initially daunting challenge to support ISAF's important niches. Other CEE states, through either inexperience, incompetence or low motivation, weakened ISAF. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania all led PRTs. Estonia and Poland took on significant military tasks. Within the wider picture, these contributions were made from modest resources, while the CEE effect on NATO's military power, the most critical enabler for momentum towards stabilisation, remained marginal. Inadequate preparation or inexperience caused some states to make avoidable mistakes, stretching the resources of others. For example, poor performance from Hungary in Baghlan required remedial military action from New Zealand.

Nordic states had more expeditionary experience than CEE counterparts, but there was a similarly skewed picture in their uptake of civilian and military tasks. Like Estonia, the UK and the US, Denmark contributed troops without caveats restricting combat exposure to Helmand. Copenhagen has advanced a strong Atlanticist outlook in the post-Cold War era. A combat contribution to ISAF was seen as important to reinforce ties with Washington. Shutting down globalising risks at source was emphasised by Danish governments, explaining to domestic audiences that it was preferable for Danish forces to fight militants in Afghanistan than to later battle these on Danish streets. However, efforts to maintain domestic support reproduced a problematic short-term tactically-driven outlook. A steady stream of tactical advances or small civilian reconstruction successes were highlighted but, within the wider ISAF picture, a coherent strategy that could expel insurgents remained absent. Supported by NATO partner Finland, Norway and another NATO partner Sweden led PRTs in northern Afghanistan. Violence sporadically erupted leading to occasional firefights. For sure, a division of labour was necessary where some ISAF contributors guarded existing stability in the north to free resources for states undertaking combat further south. However, this was balanced unfairly, with less ISAF members willing to deploy to southern Afghanistan where the military risks were higher.

### **Damaging or dilute partnerships**

ISAF developed wide-ranging cooperation with NGOs, IOs and private companies, but its intergovernmental partnerships beyond the Euro-Atlantic area were disappointing. Intelligence is the lifeblood of the risk society's efforts to prevent future risks. The US needed to rely on NATO allies and partners for information. Contrary to some risk theory expectations that transnational risks can galvanise a consistent global response, multiple ISAF partners had a chequered record when sharing intelligence information. Pakistan was the biggest culprit. When shared, regional information from Islamabad was valuable for ISAF, but its ISI was duplicitous. Pakistan's geopolitical position vis-à-vis India outweighed other priorities. It perceived Taliban support as an advantage for its competition with New Delhi. While cooperating with NATO, Pakistan's ISI fed

other intelligence to the Taliban or decided to leave some intelligence on the Taliban unshared with ISAF. Similar duplicity was suspected of other US allies. Gulf state governments turned a blind eye when citizens financially supported the Taliban's campaign, often through connections in Pakistan. As hinterland states exposed to risks from more fragility in Afghanistan, Russia and the Central Asian states only tacitly aligned with ISAF, some allowed basing arrangements and others only transit rights.

Western freedom to formulate reference points responding to 'reflexive security dilemmas' accidentally escalated political tensions with Pakistan and India. Early in Obama's presidency, US officials experimented with visions like 'AfPak' and 'AfPakIndia'. This might have helped US policymakers to better frame regional interconnections fuelling violence in Afghanistan, but it also implied that these states shared culpability for the same problem. This was strategically accurate, but politically damaging. Soon discontinued in US policy discourses, terms like 'AfPak' and 'AfPakIndia' obstructed cooperation with Islamabad and New Delhi. At the GWOT's outset, the US saw partnership with Pakistan as vital for important intelligence information. Hopes for reliable intelligence cooperation withered with the ISI's damaging duplicity. Later technological advancement supporting military intelligence made the US and other NATO powers less reliant on information from partners. Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea are longstanding US allies beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. All contributed to ISAF, but with modest efforts, no state from this group was willing to accept serious military risks to enhance its mission. Australia did contribute militarily, but it refused to prioritise combat in Afghanistan like it did when supporting US aims in Iraq in 2003. It also shied away from PRT leadership which some smaller, less financially resourced European states took on. New Zealand's military contribution was small but helpful in some localities when matters went awry with other underperforming ISAF members.

Intergovernmental partnerships were a dilute dimension of global collective action supporting ISAF. Disagreements persisted on the 'globality' of transnational terrorism. Some NATO members supported ISAF more to prioritise US relations than to see a stable Afghanistan. Some remained effective ISAF contributors, but others were less so. A relatively small number of NATO members and partners combined a concern to reduce terrorism as a global risk from Afghanistan with a willingness to take significant military risks to strengthen ISAF. A larger number rationalised global terrorism as a risk linking to Afghanistan, but were unwilling to sacrifice much to limit this, 'free-riding' in one form or another on governments taking greater risks to strengthen stabilisation. This was a collective action problem manifesting mostly among Western states with little bridging to the Global South where most governments refused to mobilise resources for ISAF, seeing terrorism from Afghanistan less as a global problem affecting them, but as an insular problem for the West.

## Specific contributions to theory-revision

This conclusion discusses theory-revision undertaken in this dissertation, responding to the second research question: How did risk society preferences (reflecting in NATO policy) influence stabilisation failure? A theoretical framework was formulated to capture the risk society's security preferences. This integrated some important theoretical dimensions omitted or underdeveloped in previous literature. The dissertation aimed to advance risk theory beyond 'war' in an exclusively military sense. ISAF's failure in Afghanistan was not simply a narrow failure of Western governments at 'war', but a wider stabilisation failure also involving civilian, development and humanitarian dimensions. While vital at many junctures, warfighting was only a single component among others necessary for stabilisation.

MOOTW included peacekeeping, SSR for the ANSF and PMSC protection. Stabilisation was then further augmented by a multitude of other military, civilian and commercial activities. With this in mind, this conclusion is structured around the five conceptual propositions this dissertation reformulated from previous risk theory literature. Examined against analysis throughout the dissertation's case study, these propositions were:

- The risk society puts 'safety first'.
- The risk society prioritises utilitarian outcomes.
- The risk society is future-focused and emphasises prevention.
- The risk society seeks to continually manage risks.
- Risks 'aggravated' by globalisation are a prioritised concern.

From a theoretical angle, this dissertation made at least five theory-revising arguments. This chapter briefly summarises each argument, before evaluating each conceptual proposition in detail.

First, the risk society is acutely 'safety first'. This influenced stabilisation failure in multiple ways. From the beginning, the US 'hyperpower' struggled to effectively balance its military force. Sometimes 'safety first' impulses directed it into flawed restraint. 'Evasive warfare' during the early intervention neglected manoeuvres to capture more Al-Qaeda or Taliban operatives that later revived Taliban networks from 'havens' in Pakistan. Elsewhere, overly intrusive and inadvertently indiscriminate military force created anger and disillusion for Afghans. Intrusive SOF raids against Al-Qaeda as a global risk early after 2001 and during the 'surge' after 2009 were prioritised over 'soft power' to gain more Afghan 'hearts and minds' for state-building. Some commentators perceived Obama's 'surge' as belated civilian and military 'maximalism' for Afghan reconstruction. In reality, it was only a limited 'safety first' escalation.

Obama was reluctant to sacrifice too much more beyond eighteen months. He feared that any longer plan would make soldier fatality levels unacceptable in US public opinion. Predictable to some US military leaders beforehand, Obama's 'safety first surge' fell short of facilitating stabilisation. Washington was more eclectic in its 'safety first' behaviour compared to many European allies. France and Germany insisted on stationing most military forces in safer northern Afghan

provinces. National caveats restricted Germany from facilitating supply-routes for other NATO allies making combat sacrifices in southern Afghanistan. Caveats were 'safety first' measures implemented by multiple NATO governments that undermined ISAF's combat effectiveness, its military mobility and its coalition cohesion. The UK was the most willing European power supporting US priorities. Contrary to its continental counterparts, it deployed in southern Afghanistan. However, London was still criticised for too often 'bunkerising' its forces, even defying its traditional 'constabulary ethic' aiming to win support from local populations by visibly providing community security.

In the conflict literature, civilian organisations involved with development or humanitarian support are routinely reified as important influences for liberal peacebuilding. Opportunities for civilian organisations to maximise liberal ideological impact was significantly diluted by the risk society's 'safety first' preferences. Civilian organisation behaviour was a blind-spot in previous risk theories taking a narrower military focus on 'war'. Confirming wider risk theory expectations, this dissertation found that acute 'safety first' tendencies hampered reconstruction performance. Prioritising protection for key personnel, many civilian organisations in Afghanistan worked either behind protective cordons; aloof behind sizable PMSC presences; from fortified compounds with imposing blast barriers; or travelled in armoured SUVs.

These episodes of 'bunkerisation' significantly undermined any development and humanitarian 'centre of gravity' at ISAF's disposal. Following the failure of Obama's 'surge' by 2011, the US gradually minimised its security horizons to 'contactless' 'network-centric' counterterrorism in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands. Quintessential military technologies for the 'safety first' risk society, these counterterrorism campaigns relied on surveillance and combat drones. This notched a further departure from human development needs that stabilisation paradigms previously responded to, albeit it in modest and grossly imperfect ways.

Second, this dissertation made a varying evaluation on the proposition that the risk society is guided by utilitarian preferences. NATO's stabilisation actions confirmed many theoretical expectations in this vein, but traces of liberal ideology were sometimes influential. Espousing utilitarian solutions, the risk society modestly attempted to do what was 'good enough' to stabilise without striving for much liberal *grandeur*. Utilitarian pragmatism led to many stabilisation catastrophes. This included early outsourcing of governance in southern Afghanistan to anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen', an action that alienated many other Afghans. International mediators courted similar undesirables when nurturing Karzai's Western-backed government. When civilian agencies were unwilling to sacrifice personnel safety to enhance liberal humanitarian outreach, their utilitarian solution was to contract PMSC protection, producing a flood of PMSC personnel, many of which abused and intimidated the Afghan population. ISAF employed a utilitarian 'train-and-equip' SSR approach for the ANSF, indicating 'good enough' haste to deploy Afghan forces into battle against the Taliban. ISAF neglected efforts to better mature Afghan military and police

forces to support liberal state-building, failing to encourage stronger allegiances between the ANSF, Afghan society and government institutions. This dissertation argued that the risk society saw drone campaigns as an acutely utilitarian solution for counterterrorism that eventually replaced stabilising fragile states in Western policy thinking. This evolution drastically minimises humanitarian values when assisting conflict societies.

Contrary to theoretical expectations, liberal fragments remained interwoven with the risk society's otherwise dominant utilitarian outlook, but this still did not always assist stabilisation. Military intervention was partially undertaken with naïve liberal intent. This naiveté soon proved consequential when 'maximalist' liberal policy action failed to materialise despite the West's ideological intervention discourses. An uncertain security vacuum was allowed to fester. Later, Afghanistan became synonymous as 'the good war' when the Obama administration planned its 'surge'. This might have initially been viewed as departing from utilitarianism towards liberal 'maximalism'. In reality, following a strict and short timetable, the 'surge' was merely a modest and temporary upscaling. Afghanistan's re-emergence as a global opium producer after 2001 plagued ISAF. It had options to better contain this problem, were it not for some liberal stubbornness. ISAF did not support 'joint extraction' between opium producers and Afghanistan's regional governments, an alternative promising to reduce violence 'bad for business' while increasing revenues for public services.

Third, an anxiously preventative future-focus underpinned some serious flaws in the risk society's stabilisation posture. Previous literature largely focused on intervention rather than stabilisation when conceptualising this characteristic. Despite varying motives, 'proactive' prevention defined both GWOT interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Previous risk theories in security policy focused exclusively on military intervention. Furthering theory, this dissertation established that both MOOTW and civilian reconstruction were also vital in risk society attempts to ease its anxieties over globalised risks from fragile states. In Afghanistan, the US unilaterally and NATO collectively selected the wrong balance between military and civilian components at some critical times in the stabilisation effort.

When Taliban disruption was weak between late 2001 and 2005, opportunities were missed to establish better development assistance or humanitarian support for stronger 'soft power' ties with Afghan populations. When military prevention remained a utilitarian priority, OEF's efforts to prevent future terrorism with robust SOF raids against suspected Al-Qaeda members distressed innocent Afghans. To be successful, preventative stabilisation requires accurate intelligence information. Empowered by Western intervention, anti-Taliban warlords and 'strongmen' were expected to provide local intelligence on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This priority weakened Western 'soft power' alongside SOF raids for militarised intelligence-gathering. This emphasis on intelligence for counterterrorism smothered possibilities for cooperative local intelligence more suitable for state-building.

The risk society's preventative thirst for intelligence increased ISAF's dependence on Pakistan for information on Afghanistan. Islamabad was duplicitous in

its strategic priorities. It accepted partnership with ISAF, but while clandestinely supporting the Taliban. ISAF's dependence on Pakistan for many strategic assets made it difficult for NATO governments to coerce Islamabad into line. Departing from the 'surge' after 2011, Western security management evolved in an acutely utilitarian direction. SSR for the ANSF combining with drone strikes against Taliban and terror suspects became the main policies for the frontline. Both continued the risk society's emphasis on prevention, but these policies were not always effective. ISAF or RSM SSR aimed to prepare the Afghan government with military and police forces to independently support public order. However, along with other failures mentioned, 'train-and-equip' failed to professionalise the ANA along Western lines. Its ranks still mostly resembled a large and disorderly Afghan militia late into ISAF's tenure.

Satisfying the risk society's preventative emphasis, advanced military drone technologies combine improved intelligence with precision-strike. Stabilisation encompassing a hefty civilian or military ground footprint was downgraded. With Obama as the most prominent, risk society leaders justify 'targeted killing' with drone strikes with preventative discourses, arguing this as necessary to eliminate danger at distance. Nevertheless, preventatively emphasising 'remote' or 'contactless' counterterrorism helps to dispense with modest humanitarian, development, or reconstruction assistance that stabilisation paradigms include. Drone campaigns might make Western societies safer by eliminating future enemies. However, as seen at the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands in the 2010s, these campaigns also entrench global inequalities in safety, routinising fears in local populations when innocent citizens intermingle with terrorist networks.

Fourth, risk society anxiety pressures governments to continuously manage risk. This characteristic interlinked closely with fears over 'risks aggravated by globalisation' to prolong failed stabilisation in Afghanistan for twenty-years. ISAF's main contributors feared that withdrawal would leave more risks to mobilise elsewhere from Afghan territory, but remained 'half-hearted' in different stabilisation guises. A mere 'tactically-driven' campaign illuminated the risk society's contradiction, being 'increasingly anxious but less strategically ambitious'. Non-committal on long-term strategy, simultaneous anxiety propelled the risk society into a failed series of abrupt efforts. Fifth, fearing 'risks aggravated by globalisation', previous literature theorises that 'globality' increases risk society anxiety. Perceived 'globality' of risk overrode other factors to propel some of ISAF's flawed stabilisation preferences. For theory-revision, it is worth noting that the risk society likewise saw stabilisation solutions through a 'globality' lens. For example, risk society continued to emphasise the global NGO community as a 'force multiplier' to win Afghan 'hearts and minds' to assist COIN, even when civilian organisations had many faults. Even more controversial was its vision of the global PMSC 'market for force' as compensation for security deficits in Afghanistan. This fractiously widened inequalities in public safety between Afghanistan's small wealthy class or the international presence and a poorer majority. Many frontline PMSC operators were undisciplined and abusive.

Arising from the risk society's 'safety first' desires, this PMSC proliferation ultimately created serious friction between ISAF and the wider Afghan population.

The risk society's characteristics surface strongly behind NATO's stabilisation failures in Afghanistan, but there were still some influential deviations between risk theory and empirical events that concern theorised expectations that utilitarian pragmatism will dominate over ideological preferences. Overall, strong utilitarian preferences guided NATO's stabilisation policies, but some traces of liberal ideology were also influential. Contrary to some theoretical expectations, during early intervention, liberal fragments combined with the risk society's otherwise dominant utilitarian outlook. This did not necessarily assist stabilisation. Military intervention was undertaken with some naïve liberal intent. This naiveté soon proved consequential when 'maximalist' liberal policy action failed to materialise despite ideological intervention discourses. A large disconnect between liberal intervention discourses and utilitarian policy action between 2001 and 2005 allowed an uncertain security vacuum to fester in Afghanistan. Failure to fill this gap with a more comprehensive state-building effort was later exploited by a recovering Taliban. By 2009, the US refocused on stabilising Afghanistan, justifying this a liberal 'good war' worthy of renewed strategic attention. Obama's ambitious 'surge' rhetoric merely 'papered over' a modest and temporary upscaling of policy that ultimately failed to deliver stabilisation.

Afghanistan's re-emergence as a global opium producer from 2001 was a constant thorn in ISAF's side. Liberal stubbornness constrained its response. Due to ideological sensitivities, ISAF did not endorse 'joint extraction' between opium producers and Afghanistan's regional governments. This alternative might have reduced violence 'bad for business' while increasing revenues for Afghan public services. Nationalist ideology also retained a role in NATO's 'safety first' outlook when its attitudes on fatality risk for national forces are compared to attitudes on PMSC or ANSF fatalities. ISAF's casualties created anguish to the brink of possible withdrawal for some NATO governments, but similarly acute concerns were rarely displayed for ANSF deaths that dwarfed ISAF's fatalities.

Likewise, with PMSCs, contractor deaths never received the same attention as those for national forces. Shorn of nationalist sentiment, PMSC personnel were completely perceived by the risk society as 'professionals going about their jobs' at their own personal risk. PMSC protection is insatiable for the 'safety first' risk society. An absence of nationalist concern made it easier for governments to shift some dangerous risks to PMSCs, a temptation that incurred further problems for stabilisation. Contrary to Beck's prediction that many global risks will be perceived with de-nationalised universalism, some risk society concerns continue to 'follow the flag'. While lopsided in balance, contrasting liberal and utilitarian layers still defined stabilisation more so than the risk society's later alternatives aiming to manage 'risk aggravated by globalisation'. Stabilisation included some liberal undertones with humanitarian and development outreach, even if marginal and delivered with modest 'good enough' intent. Residual liberalism was gradually dropped as the West's stabilisation era faded after 2011 with 'contactless' drone strikes for counterterrorism prioritised to prevent risks.

This dissertation focused on the risk society's evolution during the GWOT era that was defined by US unipolarity. This era was in the rearview mirror when this dissertation was being finalised in 2025. It has been replaced by a new era of geopolitical competition. Introducing future directions for risk theory research in this new era, much of the conceptual framing developed in this dissertation remains relevant for this once it is adapted for evolving geopolitical realities. Russia's war in Ukraine began with its illegal annexation of Ukraine in 2014 and has escalated with Moscow's invasion since 2022. These events have so far been the main focal points for renewed global geopolitical tension. Three years on from Russia's escalation in 2022, the West's 'tentative power', albeit constituted differently to NATO's stabilisation practices in Afghanistan, might still be argued as having defined its response to Moscow's aggression.

Like in Afghanistan, Western governments have again missed a series of important 'windows of opportunity' to support Ukraine and punish Russia for its aggression. These squandered opportunities can be tallied to the risk society's hesitant, cautious and reflexive instincts that aim to put 'safety first'. Like in Afghanistan, the US Biden administration was accused of conducting its Ukraine policy without a coherent strategy to define how it can support victory for Kyiv. It instead cautiously preferred 'escalation management' to put 'safety first' to ensure that wider dangers did not spiral.

'Safety first' hesitation might have caused Western governments to 'miss their slot' to support Ukraine with advanced weapons to keep Russia on the backfoot after Moscow had suffered some crippling setbacks on the battlefield early after 2022. However, when military aid (modern tanks, longer-strike missiles) was eventually delivered, this often proved 'too little, too late' and the battlefield impact of these weapons was minimised. Worried about an escalation to a standoff where nuclear weapons might enter the equation, Western governments have even volunteered some advantage to Russia by making their 'red-lines' known on weapons that they will or will not transfer to Ukraine, while ruling out deploying 'boots on the ground' in Ukraine to reinforce both Kyiv and the West's wider security interests.

Some commentators have expressed the view that Western caution saw it transfer only enough military support to Ukraine for it remain competitive in the fight, but that it was too fearful to expand this support so that Ukraine could win the war by expelling Russian forces from its territory. This might be theorised as a risk society that is acutely anxious about triggering a wider crisis from a Russian collapse likely to open a plethora of severe risks on its doorstep in Europe. War is unfortunately a ruthless business. This is what Russia and possibly China understand. With the West seeming to have lost its ruthlessness to rigorously support its geopolitical interests in later modernity, its strategic competitors will likely aim to exploit this weakness in its risk society. This might further erode the material advantage that the West holds over competitors in terms of civilian and military power. These emerging issues open many more interesting questions for literature that links the risk society with security policy.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### **Riskiühiskonna stabiliseerimise ebaõnnestumine? NATO ja rahvusvaheliste julgeolekuabijõudude analüüs Afganistani näitel**

Selles doktoritöös analüüsitakse Põhja-Atlandi Lepingu Organisatsiooni (NATO) stabiliseerimisoperatsiooni ebaõnnestumist Afganistanis 2001. aasta 11. septembrile järgnenud sündmustest kuni lääne kaootilise sõjalise väljatõmbumiseni 2021. aasta augustis. Doktoritöö keskendub eelkõige NATO juhtimisel tegutsenud rahvusvaheliste julgeolekuabijõudude (*International Security Assistance Force*, ISAF) tegevusele aastatel 2003–2014. Afganistani stabiliseerimine oli üks ülemaailmse terrorismivastase sõja (*Global War on Terror*, GWOT) põhieesmärke, mille käigus rakendasid NATO ja teised Lääneriikide organisatsioonid ulatuslikke tsiviil- ja sõjalisi ressursse, tugevdamaks globaalsete julgeolekuriskidena tajutavaid nõrku riike. Külma sõja järgsel unipolaarsel ajastul jäi Lääne sekumis- ja stabiliseerimisvõimekus geopoliitiliselt suuresti vastustamata. Kuid vaatamata ISAFi prioriseerimisele soodsates materiaalse ja struktuurilise toetuse tingimustes, seisis NATO korduvalt silmitsi raskustega oma stabiliseerimiseesmärkide saavutamisel. Sellest uurimisprobleemist lähtudes keskendub see doktoritöö riskiühiskonna kontseptsiooni selgitusvõimele julgeoleku-uuringutes. Riskiteoreetikud väidavad, et riskiühiskonna esilekerkimine hilismodernsuses on oluliselt muutnud lääneriikide ja lääne julgeolekuorganisatsioonide strateegilisi väljavaateid. See tõstatab küsimuse, kas NATO ebaõnnestumine Afganistani stabiliseerimisel tulenes vigadest, mis on seotud riskiühiskonna iseloomulike tunnustega?

### **Doktoritöö loogika ja struktuur**

Selles väitekirjas analüüsitakse kontseptuaalselt riskiühiskonna põhitunnuseid ning uuritakse, kas need on NATO puudulike stabiliseerimispoliitikate aluseks. Töös tuvastatakse viis iseloomulikku tunnust: riskiühiskond lähtub põhimõttest „ohutus ennekõike“, prioritseerib puhtpraktilisi tulemusi, on tulevikukeskne ja rõhutab ennetustegevust, püüab järjepidevalt riske juhtida ning peab globaliseerumise tõttu „süvendatud“ riske prioriteediks. Ajaloolise analüüsi põhjal leitakse doktoritöös tugevaid tõendeid selle kohta, et paljud riskiühiskonna tunnused mõjutasid NATO suutmatust Afganistani stabiliseerida. NATO ebaõnnestumised osundavad riskiteooria vastuolule: kuigi julgeolek seatakse esikohale ja seda teemat saadab suur ärevustunne, jääb teisalt siiski vajaka julgeoleku tagamiseks vajalikest strateegilistest ambitsioonidest. Ehkki riskiühiskonna ärevust tekitav „ohutus ennekõike“ lähenemine oli paljude tsiviil- ja sõjaliste stabiliseerimisevigade juurpõhjus, näitavad NATO kogemused Afganistanis ka mõningaid olulisi kõrvalekaldeid riskiteooria eeldustest. Eelkõige pisendab riskiteooria ideoloogiliste tegurite mõju poliitikale, kuid NATO stabiliseerimispoliitika peamiste

puudujääkide kujunemist mõjutasid siiski ka liberaalse ideoloogia teatud aspektid.

Doktoritöö on üles ehitatud kahe keskse uurimisküsimuse ümber:

- Miks ei õnnestunud NATOI märkimisväärsetele tsiviil- ja sõjalistele ressurssidele vaatamata Afganistani stabiliseerida?
- Kuidas mõjutasid riskiühiskonna eelistused (mis kajastuvad NATO poliitikas) stabiliseerimise ebaõnnestumist?

Doktoritöö annab mitmekülgse panuse olemasolevasse kirjandusse, uuendades teoreetilisi seoseid riskiühiskonna ja julgeolekupoliitika vahel. Analüüs laieneb varasemalt alahinnatud kontseptuaalsetele mõõtmetele ning ajakohastab mõningaid varem esile tõstetud aspekte, rõhutades nende olulisust mitte ainult esialgse sekkumise, vaid ka hilisema stabiliseerimise faasis. Seda uuendatud kontseptuaalset raamistikku testitakse ajaloolise analüüsi abil, mis arvestab ka alternatiivseid, riskiühiskonna teoriast sõltumatuid seletusi ISAFi ebaõnnestumistele. Juhtumianalüüs tugineb nii primaar- kui sekundaarallikatele. Varasem riskiteoreetiline kirjandus on keskendunud peamiselt sõjalisele sekkumisele ja ennetavale sõjapidamisele. Käesolev väitekiri aga uurib, kas hilisemad stabiliseerimise puudujäägid tulenevad riskiühiskonna mõjudest. Samuti arendatakse edasi analüüsi riskiühiskonna rollist tsiviil-sõjalise sümbioosi kujundamisel, mis toetab Lääne stabiliseerimiseesmärke habrastes riikides.

Erinevalt varasemast kirjandusest, mis keskendub peamiselt riiklikele sõjalistele operatsioonidele, laiendab käesolev doktoritöö analüütilist haaret. Uurimisse kaasatakse ka „muud sõjalised operatsioonid peale sõja“ (*Military operations other than war*, MOOTW) ning sõjaliste erakompaniide ja eraturvafirmade (*Private Military and Security Companies*, PMSC) kasvav roll tänapäeva sõjalistes operatsioonides. Kuna humanitaar- ja arenguabi on Lääne stabiliseerimisprioriteetide seas keskse tähtsusega, käsitletakse ka riskiühiskonna mõju tsiviilpoliitika dimensioonidele. Metodoloogiliselt kombineerib doktoritöö „riskantselt“ riskiteooria ja juhtumianalüüsi. ISAFi missioon on valitud „kriitilise juhtumi“ põhimõttel, kuna see oli NATO ekspeditsioonilisel ajastul pretseedenditu tähtsusega. ISAFi juhtum pakub võimalust hinnata stabiliseerimistegevuse tulemuslikkust olukorras, kus NATO väitis end rakendavat kõiki stabiliseerimiseks vajalikke meetmeid.

Töös on üheksa peatükki. Esimesed kolm peatükki keskenduvad riskiühiskonna tunnuste kontseptualiseerimisele ja nende võimalikule mõjule julgeolekupoliitika kujundamisel. Teooria edasiarendamiseks luuakse teooria loomist ja teooria testimist ühendav uurimisdisain ning konstrueeritakse stabiliseerimispoliitika riskiteoreetiline mudel. Säilitatakse varasemast kirjandusest pärinevad, kuid stabiliseerimispoliitika seisukohast jätkuvalt asjakohased kontseptuaalsed postulaadid, samas kui väiksema seletusjõuga aspekte minimeeritakse. Lisaks revideeritakse teisi potentsiaalselt asjakohaseid riskiteooria kontseptsioone, mida varasem kirjandus on vähem rõhutatud või täielikult välja jätnud.

Esimeses peatükis antakse ülevaade varasemast riskiühiskonna-alasest kirjandusest julgeolekuuuringute valdkonnas. Teine peatükk keskendub stabiliseerimispoliitika lõimimisele riskiteooriaga, pakkudes kontseptuaalset edasiarendust.

Kolmandas peatükis analüüsitakse riskiühiskonna kontseptsioone, mida varasem riskiteooriat ja julgeolekupoliitikat kombineeriv kirjandus on kas alahinnatud või eiratud.

Neljas peatükk juhatab sisse doktoritöö juhtumiuuringu, keskendudes vigadele, mida Lääneriigid tegid 2001. aastal vahetult pärast sekkumist Afganistanis. Viiendas peatükis analüüsitakse Ameerika Ühendriikide (USA) strateegilise tähelepanu kandumise mõju Afganistanilt Iraagile pärast 2003. aastat. Selles käsitletakse Talibani taastumist, USA ja Pakistani konfliktset suhet ja NATO keerulisi alliansipoliitikaid, mis takistasid riskide jagamist. Kuuendas peatükis analüüsitakse strateegiliste diskursuste muutumist pärast Barack Obama USA presidendiks saamist, võrreldes tema eelkäija George W. Bushi ametiajaga. Algselt kujundas meedia Obama Afganistani-poliitikast liberaalse narratiivi „hea sõjast“, kuid tegelikkuses domineerisid tema strateegilistes vaadetes uuendatud realism ja riskiühiskonnale omane ettevaatlikkus. Obama administratsiooni korduvad kõhklused ja riskikartlikkus tekitasid pingeid USA poliitilise ja sõjalise juhtkonna vahel, mis ei soodustanud stabiliseerimispüüdlusi.

Seitsmendas peatükis analüüsitakse USA administratsiooni sisepeingeid aruteludes sõjalise kampaania jätkamise üle stabiliseerimise saavutamiseks. Need vaidlused eelnesid Obama nn „hoolöögi“ poliitika kujunemisele 2009. aasta lõpus. Kaheksandas peatükis väidetakse, et Obama välispoliitilised jõupingutused tugevdada ISAFit suurema globaalse vastutuse jagamise kaudu ei täitnud ootusi, sest Euroopa riikide ja teiste demokraatlike liitlaste panus jäi alla ootuste. Üheksandas peatükis uuritakse tsiviil- ja sõjaliste organisatsioonide vahelisi vastulusid ning nende destabiliseerivat mõju. Samuti väidetakse, et Obama „hoolök“ ebaõnnestus, sest NATO oli liiga riskikartlik, pühendumaks piisava suuruse ja kestusega sõjalisele kohalolekule. Obama „hoolöögi“ kokkutõmbamine algas juba 2011. aastal. Riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ põhimõtte ilmeka näitena oli NATO valitsuste peamine prioriteeti hukkunud sõdurite arvu võimalikult madalal hoidmine.

### **Tsiviil- ja sõjalise stabiliseerimise vead**

„Muud sõjalised operatsioonid peale sõja“ (MOOTW) põimuvad ISAFi tegevusajal lahinguoperatsioonidega. Paljud MOOTWid keskendusid julgeolekusektori reformile (*Security Sector Reform, SSR*), kuid NATO utilitaristlik „koolita ja varusta“ poliitika ei suutnud Afganistani riiklikke julgeolekujõude (*Afghan National Security Forces, ANSF*) efektiivseks organisatsiooniks muuta. Obama „hoolök“ põhjustas ajutise järsu tõusu ülesehitustöödeks suunatud tsiviilabi rahastuses. See aga süvendas korrupsiooni Afganistani valitsuses ning kahjustas stabiliseerimispüüdlusi. Lisaks õonestas ülesehitustöid sageli ka tsiviilagentuuride „kapseldumine“, mis võõrandas afaane. Samuti kujunesid riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ mõtteviisiga tsiviilagentuurid PMSCde suur klientideks, mille kuritahtlik käitumine tekitas afaanides sügavat rahulolematust.

Afganistani stabiliseerimise ebaõnnestumise levinud selgitused viitavad sageli Afganistani keerulistele geograafilistele ja sotsiaalsetele tingimustele, mis on muutnud riigi „impeeriumite surnuaiaks“. Alternatiivselt väidetakse ka, et Lääne stabiliseerimispüüdlused pärast 2001. aastat kujutasid endast pettekujutlusedest kannustatud liberaalset ülepingutust, mis oli läbikukkumisele määratud Lääne ja Afganistani elanikkonna vahelise väärtuskonflikti tõttu. Vastusena esimesele uurimisküsimusele leitakse selles doktoritöös, et kumbki nendest seletustest ei ole piisav. Selle asemel väidetakse, et ebaõnnestumist põhjustasid peamiselt NATO liikmesriikide valed poliitikavalikud ISAFi missiooni jaoks kriitilistel hetkedel.

Kui ISAF pärast 2001. aastat Afganistanis alles kujunemisjärgus oli, tegid NATO riikide valitsused rea välditavaid vigu, mis aetasid stabiliseerimispüüdlused kohe ebasoodsasse olukorda. Powelli doktriini üldine soovitus „ülekaalukaks jõukasutuseks“ interventsiooni algfaasis hüljati, selle asemel eelistati „vältimissõda“, vältimaks sõjalisi manöövreid, mille puhul hinnati nii operatsiooni venimise riski kui võimalikku hukkunud sõdurite arvu suuremaks. Kuigi Talibani režiim kukutati kiiresti, ei takistanud „vältimissõda“ paljusid Al-Qaeda ja Talibani võitlejaid põgenemast turvalistesse kohtadesse ja hiljem mässuliste võrgustikke taaselustamast. Aastatel 2001 kuni 2005 oli Taliban nõrgestatud ja demoraliseeritud, pakkudes NATOle soodsa võimaluse piirkonna stabiliseerimiseks, mis jäeti aga kasutamata.

Tsiviilrekonstrueerimise käigus ei kasutatud piisaval määral „pehmet jõudu“, mis soodustanuks tihedamat koostööd ISAFi ja Afganistani elanikkonna vahel. Eirates „pehme jõu“ kui tõmbefaktori potentsiaali, mis toetaks Afganistani riigi ülesehitamist, kujunesid operatsiooni Kestev Vabadus (*Enduring Freedom*, OEF) käigus läbi viidud erivägede (*special operations forces*, SOF) haarangud – mille eesmärk oli Al-Qaeda kui globaalse ohu likvideerimine – teiseks varaseks teguriks, mis paljusid afgaane võõrandas. Afgaanide rahulolematust süvendas seegi, et lääneriigid delegeerisid valitsemise Lõuna-Afganistanis varakult Talibani-vastastele „jõumeestele“ ja sõjapealikele, kes omakorda elanikkonda ekspluateerisid ja kuritarvitasid. Pärast seda, kui 2003. aastal puhkesid Iraagis USA sekku-mise järel ootamatud rahutused, võtsid NATO Euroopa liitlased Afganistanis suurema vastutuse, laiendades ISAFi tegevust aastatel 2003–2008 Siiski põhjustasid puudujäägid Euroopa riikide sõjalistes ja tsiviilsetes stabiliseerimisprioriteetides märkimisväärseid lünki ISAFi võimekustes. Paljude liitlaste „ohutus ennekõike“ hoiak väljendus riiklike piirangute seadmises lahinguoperatsioonides osalemisele. See omakorda takistas ISAFi raames laiemat sõjalist koostööd ja mobiilsust.

## **Ebaühtlane toetus**

Kui Obama 2009. aastal presidendiametisse astus, keskendus USA taas Afganistani stabiliseerimisele, kavandades nii sõjaliste kui tsiviilressursside suurendamist. Need uuendatud jõupingutused põhinesid siiski ettevaatlikul kompromissil: lisaressursse eraldati rangelt piiratud ajaks, hoidmaks hukkunud sõdurite arvu

koduse avaliku arvamuse jaoks aktsepteeritavalt madalal tasemel. Kui 2011. aastal algas taas ressursside vähendamine, oli stabiliseerimine endiselt kättesaamatu eesmärk. NATO pidas algselt partnerlussuhteid „sarnaselt meelestatud“ valitsusega väljaspool Euro-Atlandi piirkonda veel üheks ISAFi „jõudude mitmekordistajaks“, kuid koostöö selliste demokraatlike riikidega nagu Austraalia, Uus-Meremaa, Jaapan ja Lõuna-Korea tõi vaid tagasihoidlikku ressursilisa. ISAFi kriitiline partnerlus Afganistani naabri Pakistaniga ostus aga pigem kahjulikuks. Kuigi Pakistan sai terrorismivastase sõja alasest koostööst USAga mõningast strateegilist kasu, jäi Islamabadi prioriteediks rivaalitsemine Indiaga. Mõned Pakistani liidrid käsitlesid Talibani äärmuslasi ebaregulaarse relvana, millega tasakaalustada oma sõjalist nõrkust võrreldes Indiaga. Pakistani varjatud toetus aitas Talibanil mässutõrjeoperatsiooni kiuste vastu pidada. Samal ajal sõltus ISAF Pakistanist Afganistani missiooni jaoks elutähtsate varustusteede tagamisel, muutes Islamabadi survestamise Lääne valitsuste jaoks keeruliseks.

ISAF viis ellu mitmesuguseid MOOTW-operatsioone, sealhulgas rahuvalvet, tsiviilvõimude sõjalist kaitset ja Afganistani julgeolekusektori reformi. Julgeolekusektori reformi peeti Afganistani riigi ülesehitamise ning iseseisva ja jätkusuutliku Afganistani valitsuse loomiseks ülioluliseks. ISAF toetas ANSFi utilitaristliku „koolita ja varusta“ poliitikaga, mille eesmärk oli Afganistani vägede võimalikult kiire lahinguvalmidus. Riigi ülesehitamise eesmärki õnnestas aga ANSFi, Afganistani ühiskonna ja valitsusinstitutionide vaheliste sidemete tähelepanuta jätmine. „Koolita ja varusta“ lähenemine ei suutnud lahendada ANSFi kroonilisi probleeme, nagu deserteerimine ja ülejooksmine. Kui Taliban 2021. aastal oma sõjalisi rünnakuid intensiivistas, lagunes ANSF kiiresti.

Ettevaatlikud „ohutus ennekõike“ kaalutlused, mis on riskiühiskonnale iseloomulikud, ei piirdunud vaid sõjaliste operatsioonidega. Sarnased eelistused pidurdasid ka tsiviilrekonstrueerimist, mida peeti riigi ülesehitamise raskuskeskmeiks. „Ohutus ennekõike“ lähenemine tõi kaasa kaitsekordonid, kindlustatud kompleksid ja märkimisväärse PMSCde kohalolu, mida soodustas tsiviilagentuuride kapseldumiskultuur ehk turvakaalutlustest ajendatud eraldumine kohalikest kogukondadest. See „kapseldumine“ võõrandas afgaane veelgi ning nõrgestas ISAFi „südamete ja meelte“ võitmise püüdlusi. PMSCde kasutamine tsiviilagentuuride poolt oli iseäranis vastuoluline, kuid seda praktikat ei rakendanud üksnes humanitaar- ja arenguabiorganisatsioonid: ka diplomaatilised ning sõjalised institutsioonid soovisid PMSCde teenuseid kasutada. Eraturvafirmade laiaulatuslikud kuritarvitused õnnestasid aga „pehme jõu“ mõju, mida ISAFit toetavad tsiviilagentuurid püüdsid afgaanide seas saavutada.

### **Teoretiseerides riskiühiskonna mõjusid stabiliseerumise ebaõnnestumisele**

Teisele uurimisküsimusele vastamiseks keskendus doktoritöö teoreetiliselt sellele, kuidas riskiühiskonna eelistused võisid kaasa aidata stabiliseerimise läbikukkumisele. Empiirilistes analüüsidest kajastus riskiühiskonnale iseloomulik terav „ohutus ennekõike“ põhimõte selgelt NATO poliitikates ning oli laialdaselt

seotud paljude stabiliseerimisprobleemidega. See hõlmas varaseid otsuseid loobuda Powelli doktriini „ülekaaluka jõu“ printsiibist „vältiva sõjapidamise“ ka suks, hoidumaks kulukatest ja inimohvriterohketest operatsioonidest. Kuigi see läbi võidi vähendada sõdurite hukkamise riski, võimaldas piiratud sõjaline kohalolek Talibani võitlejatel põgeneda ja hiljem taasorganiseeruda. Riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ rõhuasetus ja „globaliseerunud“ vaatenurk mõjutasid oluliselt USA juhitud erivägede operatsioone Afganistanis, mille keskseks eesmärgiks oli Al-Qaeda globaalse võrgustiku olulise tugipunkti hävitamine. Esikohale seati julgeoleku tagamine terrorismivastaste meetmete kaudu, kuid see toimus „pehme jõu“ kaudu loodavate sidemete tugevdamise arvelt Afganistani ühiskonnaga.

Riskiühiskonnale iseloomulik „globaliseeritus“ ja jäik ennetav fookus kujundasid samuti nende operatsioonide olemust. NATO jaoks olid luureandmed globaalsete terrorikahtlusaluste kohta ennetustegevuse seisukohast kriitilise tähtsusega. Samas osutus enamik Afganistanis erioperatsioonide käigus kogutud luureinfost hiljem ebausaldusväärseks. Nõrgenenud „pehme jõu“ sidemed ISAFi ja Afganistani elanikkonna vahel takistasid sellise luureinfo kogumist, mis olnuks riigiehituse seisukohalt kasulik. ISAFi luurevõimekuse puudujäägid suurendasid NATO sõltuvust Pakistanist, andes Islamabadile suurema manööverdamisruumi ja võimaluse käituda kahepalgeliselt. „Strateegilise globaliseerituse“ keskus riskiühiskonna prioriteetides mõjutas NATO soovi kaasata konflikti lahendamisse ülemaailmseid võrgustikke. NATO käsitles globaalset valitsusväliseid organisatsioone ja eraturvafirmade „jõuturgu“ potentsiaalsete „jõukordistajate“ga, mis võiksid stabiliseerimisprotsesse tugevdada. Kuid Afganistani konflikti globaalse mõju ületähtsustamine hajutas ka NATO tähelepanu muudelt probleemidelt. Riskiühiskonna ärevusest kantud „ohutus ennekõike“ mõtteviisi teoretiseeritakse kui valitsuste pidevat survestamist riskide haldamiseks ja maandamiseks. Käesolev doktoritöö väidab samas, et riskiühiskonna „strateegilist globaliseeritust“ võib näha näiteks USA kiirustavas otsuses sekkuda 2003. aastal Iraagis, ennetamaks oletatavate massihävitusrelvadega seostatud ohtusid. Samal ajal ilmnunud kõhkklus jätkata süsteemset riskihaldust Afganistanis, kujutas endast kahjustavat vastuolu, mis on seletatav riskiühiskonna sisemiste paradokside kaudu.

Ühelt poolt tajus USA „rohujuuretasandi“ riigiehitust Afganistanis tülina ja ebavajaliku. Pärast Talibani kukutamist 2001. aastal pöördus Washingtoni tähelepanu kiiresti teistele globaalsetele riskidele. Afganistanis sekkumist nähti pelgalt ülemaailmse terrorivastase sõja esimese etapina. USA toetus tugevale tsentraliseeritud Afganistani valitsusele oli osa globaalse terrorismivastase strateegia tugevdamiseks, mis eiras kohaliku tasandi ülesehitustoid ja riigiehituse püüdlusi.

Teisalt kardeti Washingtonis, et Lääne enneaegne väljatõmbumine Afganistanist süvendaks globaliseerimisest tulenevaid uusi riske. See hirm pikendas leiget pühendumist ja hoidis missiooni käimas pea kaks kümnendit, vaatamata selle läbikukkumisele. Pärast 2003. aastat sattusid USA väed Iraagis vägivaldsete rahutuste keerisesse. See tõstis Talibani moraali, mille võitlejad taastusid

Pakistanis asuvates turvapaikades. Iraagi missioon neelas USA ressursse ning Euroopa liitlased Afganistanis ei suutnud paljusid USA väljaviidud võimekusi asendada. Christopher Cokeri teoreetilise käsitluse kohaselt ilmestas see episood NATOle omast riskiühiskonna strateegilist vastuolu: alliansi kasvav ärevus käis käsikäes strateegilise ambitsioonikuse vähenemisega.

NATO ekslik arusaam Lõuna-Afganistanist kui ebastabiilsest, ent perifeerselt piirkonnast tulenes samuti „ohutus ennekõike“ vaatenurgast. Liberaalsed väärtused jäeti kõrvale, kui kohalik valitsemine delegeeriti Talibani-vastastele sõjapealikele ja „jõumeestele“. „Ohutus ennekõike“ põhimõte peegeldus täiendavalt paljude NATO liitlaste vastumeelsuses riskide võtmisele: liikmesriigid ei soovinud saata oma vägesid Afganistani ilma riiklike piiranguteta otseses lahingutegevuses osalemisele. Ebavõrdne valmidus võtta sõjalisi riske õdnestas ISAFi operatiivset paindlikkust. Riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ mentaliteet segunes utilitaristlike lahenduste eelistamisega, kujundades ISAFi „koolita ja varusta“ poliitikat Afganistani riiklike julgeolekujõudude reformi kontekstis. ISAFi väljaõppe seos riigiehitusega jäi nõrgaks, mistõttu ei suudetud süvendada ANSFi lojaalsust Afganistani valitsusele ega kodanikkonnale. Selle asemel keskenduti baastasemel lahinguvõimekuse kiirele arendamisele, et ANSF saaks võimalikult kiiresti asuda ISAFiga jagama suuremad vastutust kõrge riskiga operatsioonides. ANSFi kiire alistumine Talibani vägedele 2021. aastal kinnitas, et see julgeolekusektori reformi poliitika oli läbi kukkunud.

Afganistani missiooni järkjärgulise lagunemise valguses 2010. aastatel võib riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ hoiakut tõlgendada ka kui NATO liikmesriikide kasvavat pettumust stabiliseerimispoliitika tõhususes. Stabiliseerimisprogrammide läbikukkumine soodustas USAs innovatsiooni „kontaktivabade“ sõjatehnoloogiate vallas. Mehitamata õhusõidukite jälgimis- ja täppislöögivõimekuste areng parandas Lääne võimalusi terrorismivastases võitluses. Riskiühiskonna ärevusele omane ennetav lähenemine koos fookusega globaalsetele ohtudele tõi kaasa olukorra, kus terrorismi kahtlustatavate ja mässuliste sihipärane kõrvaldamine muutus globaalse terrorismivastase võitluse keskseks taktikaks. Selle tulemusena marginaliseerus stabiliseerimispoliitika veelgi.

Varasem riskiteooriat ja julgeolekupoliitikat seostav kirjandus keskendus valdavalt sõjalistele operatsioonidele. Käesolev doktoritöö väidab aga, et riskiühiskonnale omane terav „ohutus ennekõike“ vaatenurk ilmnes selgelt ka paljude riigiehituses osalenud tsiviilagentuuride poliitikas. Tsiviilagentuuride „kapseldumine“ tekitas afgaanide seas vastumeelsust ning takistas ISAFi püüdlusi kohaliku elanikkonna usalduse võitmisel, mis oli stabiliseerimisüüdluste edu seisukohalt hädavajalik. Elanikkonna toetuse võitmist raskendas veelgi ISAFi eesmärkide tagasihoidlikkus ja valmisolek leppida „piisavalt heade“ tulemustega – hoiak, mis peegeldab utilitaristlikule riskiühiskonnale iseloomulikku lähenemist. Püüdlus teha üksnes nii palju kui vaja riskide ennetamiseks, ilma sügavama ideoloogilise pühendumiseta, viis leige pühendumuse ja suurte stabiliseerimisprobleemideni. Utilitaristlikud hoiakud mõjutasid ka USA ekslikku otsust usaldada valitsemine Lõuna-Afganistanis Talibani-vastastele sõjapealikele ja „jõumeestele“. Sarnast pragmaatilisust ilmnes ka USA ja ÜRO esindajate tegevuses pärast

2001. aastat, kui nad otsisid kontakte küsitava mainega kohalike juhtidega, lootes neid kaasata Lääne-sõbraliku Karzai valitsuse toetuseks. Need varased otsused, mida iseloomustas riskide maandamisele orienteeritud utilitarism, panid aluse mitmetele püsivatele probleemidele riigiehituse vallas.

### **Riskiteooria puudujäägid**

Käesolev doktoritöö leiab tugevaid argumente paljude riskiteooria väidete toetuseks, ent toob samuti esile mõningaid olulisi kõrvalekaldeid. Riskiteooria eeldab, et utilitaristlik pragmatism domineerib sügavama ideoloogilise pühendumise üle. Üldjoontes juhendusid NATO ebaõnnestunud stabiliseerimispoliitika Afganistanis tõepoolest utilitaristlikest kaalutlustest, kuid teatavatel võtmehetkedel mõjutasid stabiliseerimise ebaõnnestumisi ka liberaalse ideoloogia jäänukid. Vastupidiselt riskiteooria ootustele põimusid USA interventsiooni varajases faasis mitmed liberaalsed arusaamad pragmaatilise utilitarismiga. See kombinatsioon ei osutunud siiski stabiliseerimisele kasulikuks. Pärast Talibani kukutamist lähtus president Bush eeldusest, et liberaaldemokraatliku valitsemise kehtestamine Afganistanis on loomulik ja vältimatu protsess, mis on saavutatav Lääne ressursse liigselt koormamata.

Naiivselt liberaalsed ootused jäid aga sisuliste ja piiratud liberaalsete poliitiliste meetmete toetuseta. Talibani liikumine oli aastatel 2001 kuni 2005 nõrk ning NATO olid head võimalused stabiliseerimisprotsessi konsolideerimiseks. Kuid mõnede NATO liidrite liberaalsete transformatsioonidiskursuste ja ISAFi kohapealsete utilitaristlike piirangute vaheline ebakõla lõi julgeolekuvaakumine, mida NATO ei suutnud täita. See võimaldas Talibanil alustada omaenda riigiehitustegevust. Aastaks 2009 oli Taliban suutnud taastada oma tugipunktid Lõuna-Afganistanis. Obama õigustas USA taaspühendumist Afganistanile kui „head sõda“, mis aitab tugevdada liberaalset maailmakorda. Siiski näitab selle doktoritöö analüüs – kooskõlas riskiteooria ootustega –, et Obama ambitsioonikad retoorilised sõnumid maskeerisid tegelikult varasemate poliitika tagasihoidlikku, ettevaatlikku ja ajutist uuendamist-kohandamist.

Liberaalsed ootused panid NATO liikmesriigid keerukasse olukorda, kus väärtuste rakendamine nõudnuks ka piisavate ressursside eraldamist, mida riskiühiskond ei olnud aga valmis tagama. Vähemalt ekspeditsiooniliste operatsioonide kontekstis on see vastuolu liberaalsete ootuste ja riskiühiskonna pühendumispelguse vahel jäänud varasemates riskiteoreetilistes käsitlustes alahinnatuks. Täiendavad liberaalsed impulsid põimusid Lääneriikide utilitaristlike ülesehituspoliitikatega, mille „piisavalt hea“ lähenemine vähendas sageli humanitaar- ja arenguabi algatuste tõhusust. 2010. aastatel kasvas USA rahulolematuse oma stabiliseerimispoliitika suutmatusega maandada habrastest riikidest lähtuvaid julgeolekuriske. Selle tulemusel loobuti lõpuks stabiliseerimispoliitika poolt soovitud väikesest liberaalsest „viigilehest“, eelistades riske hallata kontaktivabade droonirünnakute kaudu.

ISAFi tegevusperioodil puhkes Afganistani oopiumiäri õide. Vastupidiselt riskiteooria ootustele pidurdas ideoloogiline jäikus aga NATO vastureaktsiooni.

Liberaalne vastumeelsus siduda end ideoloogiliselt sobimatute tegevustega pärssis ISAFi-poolsete utilitaristlike lahenduste, nagu näiteks oopiumitootjate ja Afganistani võimude „ühise saagikoristuse“ poliitika rakendamist. See alternatiivne lähenemine oleks potentsiaalselt vähendanud ärile kahjulikku vägivalda, kasvatades samas Afganistani avalikke teenuseid toetavaid maksumulusid. Selle võimaluse kõrvaleheitmise järel seisis NATO dilemma ees: kas rakendada otse- seid meetmeid Afganistani oopiumitootjate vastu – riskides kohaliku vägivald- lainega – või usaldada narkokaubanduse ohjamine düsfunktsionaalse ANSFi kätte. Viimase kui „väikseima halva“ variandi valimine viis ootuspäraselt eba- õnnestumiseni ning võimaldas oopiumi massitootmisel jätkuda. Oopiumikauban- dustest saadud tulu tugevdas omakorda Talibani liikumist.

Rahvuslik ideoloogia oli riskiühiskonna „ohutus ennekõike“ hoiakutes kõrva- lise tähtsusega. Selle mõju on siiski selgelt märgatav NATO riikide erinevas suhtumises ISAFi, ANSFi ja PMSCde kaotustesse. NATO sõdurite surmad vallandasid Lääne avalikkuses ulatusliku pahameele ning tõukasid mitmeid riike kaaluma enneaegset väljatõmbumist. Vastupidiselt Becki väitele, et globaalsete riskide juhtimist nähakse üha enam läbi denatsionaliseeritud universalismi pris- ma, järgisid nii mõnedki terrorismivastase võitluse poliitikad Afganistanis rahvuslikke huve. Lääne avalikkus reageeris harva pahameelega ANSFi kordades suuremate kaotuste üle, samuti suhtuti üsna ükskõikselt PMSCde kaotustesse, nähes neid pelgalt „oma tööd tegevate professionaalidena“, kes võtsid Afganis- tanis töötamisel teadliku isikliku riski. Teisalt oli riskiühiskonna „ohutus enne- kõike“ hoiakute ja avalikkuse ükskõiksuse kombinatsioon nende kaotuste suhtes PMSCde laialdase kasutamise peamiseks võimaldajaks. Riikide jaoks pakkusid PMSCd atraktiivset lahendust turvariskide delegeerimiseks globaalsele „sõjajõu- turule“. See lähenemine vähendas poliitilist vastutust ja otseste sõjaväeliste kao- tuste riski. Samas tõi Afganistani kogemus esile, et PMSCd on alati eksimustele professionaalses käitumises, mis võib stabiliseerimisprotsessi õõnestada.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

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*Foreign Policy Analysis* (responsible) 6 ECTS – 2017/2018; 2018/2019; and 2019/2020 academic years.

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Also contributing with seminars or lectures to courses led by other staff at the University of Tartu, these include: Conflict Management and Resolution (2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 6ECTS, led by Professor Eiki Berg); Practical Field Research in Conflict Areas (2015/2016, 2018/2019 3ECTS, led by Professor Eiki Berg); and EU-Russia Relations: Between the Vilnius and Riga Eastern Partnership Summits (2015/2016, 1ECTS, Online Course).

Supervisor or co-supervisor of 25 MA theses and 1 BA thesis at the University of Tartu.

### **Research publications**

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### **Selected conference presentations**

- Presentation, 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the Finnish International Studies Association (FISA), Imatra, Finland, 24–25 January 2025.
- Presentation, 16<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, University of Potsdam, Germany, 5–9 September 2023.
- Presentation, Launch of *Defence Forces Review* 2019, Irish Defence Forces and University College Dublin, Ireland, 5 December 2019.
- Presentation, 12<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, University of Economic, Prague, Czech Republic, 12–15 September 2018.
- Presentation, 11<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI), Spain, 13–16 September 2017.
- Presentation, Annual Conference of the Royal Irish Academy Standing Committee on International Affairs, Royal Irish Academy (RIA), Dublin, Ireland, 31 May 2017.
- Chair for Security Studies Section, 6<sup>th</sup> European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Graduate Conference, University of Tartu, Estonia, 10–13 July 2016.
- Presentation, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tartu Conference on Russian and East European Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia, 10–12 June 2016.
- Presentation, 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies, National University of Ireland, Maynooth 6–8, May 2016.
- Presentation, 44<sup>th</sup> University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) Annual Conference, University College Cork, Ireland, 1–3 September 2014.
- Presentation, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association, Ghent University, Belgium 7–10 July 2014.
- Presentation, 15<sup>th</sup> Maple Leaf and Eagle Conference on North American Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland, 12–16 May 2014.
- Presentation, “Cooperation, Integration and Alliances: Regional and Global Perspectives, Challenges and Solutions”. Jointly Organised by the Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (CRIS) of the United Nations University (UNU) and the Comparative Interdisciplinary Studies Section (CISS) of the International Studies Association (ISA), Bruges, Belgium, 19–21 July 2013.
- Presentation, 1<sup>st</sup> European Workshops in International Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia, 5–8 June 2013.
- Presentation, 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies, Dublin City University, Ireland, 15–16 March 2013.

# ELULOOKIRJELDUS

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## Peamised uurimissuunad

Atlandi-ülesed suhted; USA suur strateegia; NATO; sõja ümberkujundamine; julgeolek Põhja- ja Ida-Euroopas.

## Hariduskäik

- Tartu Ülikool, 2012–, doktoriõpingud politoloogia erialal
- Londoni Ülikool, 2011, MSc julgeoleku-uuringud
- Tartu Ülikool, 2011, MA Euroopa Liidu – Venemaa uuringud
- Iirimaa Rahvusülikool, 2009, BA ajalugu ja poliitika
- Bergeni Ülikool, 2007–2008, võrdlev poliitika (Erasmus)

## Akadeemiline töökogemus

- 2023– Soome välispoliitika instituut, Helsingi, teadur  
2021–2022 Soome välispoliitika instituut, Helsingi, külalisteadur  
2020 Lõuna-Taani ülikooli sõjauuringute keskus, Odense, külalisteadur (DoRa+ stipendium)  
2019 Praha rahvusvaheliste suhete instituut, 2019, külalisteadur (*Think Visegrad* stipendium)  
2013–2020 Riigiteaduste Instituut/Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut, Tartu ülikool, õppejõud  
2016–2018 Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut, Tartu Ülikool, nooremteadur

## Õppetöö

### Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut (enne 2016. aastat Riigiteaduste instituut)

*Välispoliitika analüüs* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2017/2018; 2018/2019; ja 2019/2020 õppeaastad.

*USA välispoliitika* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2019/2020 õppeaasta.

*EL rahvusvahelises poliitikas* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2017/2018 õppeaasta.

*EL julgeolekupoliitika* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2016/2017 ja 2018/2019 õppeaastad.

*Atlandi-ülesed suhted* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2013/2014 ja 2014/2015 õppeaastad.

*Turvalisus ja ebakindlus Kagu-Aasias* (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2013/2014 ja 2014/2015 õppeaastad.

*Turvaprobleemid Aasia ja Vaikse ookeani piirkonnas* (kaasvastutaja prof. Eiki Bergiga) 6 EAP – 2019/2020 õppeaasta.

*Liidud rahvusvahelises poliitikas* (vastutav) 3 EAP – 2016/2017 ja 2019/2020 õppeaastad.

Võim rahvusvahelises poliitikas (vastutav) 6 EAP – 2016/2017 ja 2018/2019 õppeaastad.

### **Eesti Diplomaatide Kool**

*Rahvusvahelised konfliktid* (vastutaja) 3 EAP – 2015/2016 õppeaasta.

Seminarid või loengud teistel Tartu Ülikooli kursustel: Konfliktide juhtimine ja lahendamine (2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 6 EAP, vastutav õppejõud professor Eiki Berg); Praktilised väliuuringud konfliktipiirkondades (2015/2016, 2018/2019 3 EAP, vastutav õppejõud professor Eiki Berg); ja EL-Venemaa suhted: Vilniuse ja Riia idapartnerluse tippkohtumiste vahel (2015/2016, 1 ECTS, veebikursus).

25 magistritöö ja 1 bakalaaurusetöö juhendaja või kaasjuhendaja Tartu Ülikoolis.

### **Teadustööde loetelu:**

#### **Eelretsenseeritud teadusartiklid**

McNamara E. M. 2020. Ireland, Atlantic Order and Military Burden-Sharing: Is the Global Island Pulling its Weight? *Defence Forces Review*, Vol. 17, (Óglaigh na hÉireann/Irish Defence Forces). Lk. 122–132.

McNamara E. M. 2019. Beware the Boomerang Effects: Western Risk Society and the Strategic Backlashes of Military-Technological Modernisation. *Defence Forces Review*, Vol. 16, (Óglaigh na hÉireann/Irish Defence Forces). Lk. 60–68.

McNamara E. M. 2017. Between Trump's America and Putin's Russia: Nordic-Baltic Security Relations amid Transatlantic Drift. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 28, (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin). Lk. 73–98.

McNamara, E. M. 2016. Restraining Rivalries? US Alliance Policy and the Challenges of Regional Security in the Middle East and East Asia. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 27, (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin). Lk. 201–222.

#### **Peatükid toimetatud kogumikes ja raportites**

McNamara, E. M. 2024. Ireland in Contemporary Geopolitics: From European Periphery to Global Island. Zak Cope (toim.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Geopolitics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Lk. 311–334.

McNamara, E. M. 2023. Ireland, NATO and the 'Return of Geopolitics' in Europe. Jonathan Carroll, Matthew O'Neill and Mark Williams (toim.) *The EU, Irish Defence Forces and Contemporary Security*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Lk. 373–392.

McNamara, E. M. ja M.-L. Sulg. 2021. The Baltic States in NATO: An Evolving Transatlantic Bargain From Newcomers to President Trump. Michele Testoni (toim.) *NATO and Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century: Foreign and Security Policy Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge. Lk. 142–166.

Kasekamp, A. ja E. M. McNamara. 2018. From the Cold War's End to the Crimean Crisis: NATO's Enduring Value for Estonian Security Policy. Arnold Kammel ja Benjamin Zyla (toim.) *Peacebuilding at Home: NATO and Its*

- “New” Member States After Crimea. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft. Lk. 43–58.
- McNamara, E. M. 2017. A Time for Alternative Options? Prospects for the Nordic-Baltic Security Community During the Trump Era. Mika Aaltola ja Bart Gaens (toim.) *Managing Unpredictability: Transatlantic Relations in the Trump Era*. Helsingi: Soome välispoliitika instituut. Lk. 75–97.
- McNamara E. M. 2016. Promoting Stability in the Middle East? The American Alliance with Saudi Arabia after the ‘Rebalance’. Mika Aaltola ja Anna Kronlund (toim.) *After Rebalance – Visions for the Future of US Foreign Policy and Global Role Beyond 2016*. Helsingi: Soome välispoliitika instituut. Lk. 141–158.
- McNamara E. M. 2015. When Contributions Abroad Mean Security at Home? The Baltic States and NATO Burden-Sharing in Afghanistan. Robert Czulda ja Marek Madej (toim.) *Newcomers No More? Contemporary NATO and the Future of Enlargement from the Perspective of Post-Cold War Members*. Varssavi Ülikool: Rahvusvaheliste suhete instituut. 2015. Lk. 153–168.
- McNamara E. M. 2015. Russian Strategy and Baltic Defence After Crimea. Andris Sprūds ja Diāna Potjomkina (toim.) *The Latvian Foreign and Security Policy Yearbook 2015*. Riga: Läti välispoliitika instituut. Lk. 104–120.

### **Poliitikapaberid**

- McNamara, E. M. 2024. Nuclear Arms Control Policies and Safety in Artificial Intelligence: Transferrable Lessons for False Equivalence? *Soome välispoliitika instituut briefing nr. 381*. Jaanuar 2024. 8 lehekülge.
- McNamara, E. M. 2022. US Global Security Partnerships in the Biden Era: Twilight or Regeneration? *Soome välispoliitika instituut briefing nr. 345*. Juuli 2024. 8 lehekülge.
- McNamara, E. M. 2019. Facilitation or Complication? The Visegrád Four and the Security of NATO’s ‘Eastern Flank’. *Think Visegrádi poliitikadokument*, 2019. 13 lehekülge.
- McNamara E. M., M. Nordenman ja C. Salonijs-Pasternak. 2015. Nordic-Baltic Security and US Foreign Policy: A Durable Transatlantic Link? *Soome välispoliitika instituut tööpaber nr. 87*. Juuni 2015, 26 lehekülge.

### **Valitud konverentsiettekanded**

- Ettekanne, 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the Finnish International Studies Association (FISA), Imatra, Soome, 24.–25. jaanuar 2025.
- Ettekanne, 16<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Potsdami Ülikool, Saksamaa, 5.–9. september 2023.
- Ettekanne, ajakirja käivitamine *Defence Forces Review* 2019, Iiri kaitsejõud ja Dublini Ülikool-Kolledž, Iirimaa, 5. detsember 2019.
- Ettekanne, 12<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Majandusülikool, Praha, Tšehhi, 12.–15. september 2018.

- Ettekanne, 11<sup>th</sup> European International Studies Association (EISA) Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Barcelona Rahvusvaheliste Uuringute Instituut (IBEI), Hispaania, 13.–16. september 2017.
- Ettekanne, Annual Conference of the Royal Irish Academy Standing Committee on International Affairs, Royal Irish Academy (RIA), Dublin, Iirimaa, 31. mai 2017.
- Turvalisuse uuringute sektsiooni juhtimine, 6<sup>th</sup> European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Graduate Conference, Tartu Ülikool, Eesti, 10.–13. juuli 2016.
- Ettekanne, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tartu Conference on Russian and East European Studies, Tartu Ülikool, Eesti, 10.–12. juuni 2016.
- Ettekanne, 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies, Iirimaa Rahvusülikool (Maynooth), 6.–8. mai 2016.
- Ettekanne, 44<sup>th</sup> University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) Annual Conference, Iirimaa Rahvusülikool (Cork), Iirimaa, 1.–3. september 2014.
- Ettekanne, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association, Genti Ülikool, Belgia, 7.–10. juuli 2014.
- Ettekanne, 15<sup>th</sup> Maple Leaf and Eagle Conference on North American Studies, Helsingi Ülikool, Soome, 12.–16. mai 2014.
- Ettekanne, “Cooperation, Integration and Alliances: Regional and Global Perspectives, Challenges and Solutions”. Piirkondliku integratsiooni võrdlevate uuringute instituut (CRIS), ÜRO Ülikool (UNU) ja Interdistsiplinaarsete uuringute võrdlev sektsioon (CISS), Interdistsiplinaarsete uuringute võrdlev sektsioon (CISS), Rahvusvahelise Uuringute Assotsiatsioon (ISA), Brugge, Belgia, 19.–21. juuli 2013.
- Ettekanne, 1<sup>st</sup> European Workshops in International Studies, Tartu Ülikool, Eesti, 5.–8. juuni 2013.
- Ettekanne, 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies, Dublini Linnaülikool, Iirimaa, 15.–16. märts 2013.

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