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Civilian Casualties:
A Multi-Purpose Insurgency Tool

Civilian casualties are a tragic reality of counter-insurgency campaigns in Afghanistan. There have always been debates at the policy level about the degree of risk commanders of counterinsurgency forces should assume in an effort to protect civilians from harm. Further, it is a major concern that counterinsurgent forces bear the cost for civilian casualties even when they are caused by insurgent groups. Unfortunately, civilian casualties have been rising since 2009 in Afghanistan. As a result, in the first half of 2018, 1,413 civilians have been killed and injured in suicide and complex attacks in Afghanistan. According to the UNAMA mid-year assessment Report, more civilians have been killed in the first six months of 2018 than in any year since 2009 when UNAMA started systematic monitoring. Nangarhar and Kabul provinces have witnessed the most civilian casualties and they have been the top target of the ISKH and terrorist groups.

However, preventing Civilian casualties have been one of the top goals of the Afghan government and the international community; however, the Afghan and government and the international community not only have not been able to decrease and manage this critical issue but Afghanistan witnessed an unprecedented rise in civilian casualties.

Why is it so difficult to Prevent Civilian Casualties?

Insurgents in Afghanistan hide inside of the populace. When this happens, civilians die when The ANSF or the International Community forces fight them. In such case, it doesn't matter how much training, how restrictive the rules of engagement are, or even how small of a presence the occupying power may have. Civilian deaths are part of the collateral damage of war.

Policies and practices to minimize civilian harm

Military experts believe civilian harm – death, injury and damage to property – can be avoided or minimized through many different methods. Choosing an appropriate weapons system, munitions warhead fuse and delivery system; considering the distance from which a weapon is launched; and the angle and timing of the attack all potentially affect the level of civilian harm inflicted. These new practices and policies when implemented strengthen adherence to the principles of proportionality, precaution and distinction. These practices and policies should be shared with armed actors and adjusted to different theatres and capabilities.

Summing up the topic, the relationship between civilian casualties and violent incidents in Afghanistan is characterized by three important facts: (1) there is a positive relationship between civilian casualties and levels of future violence in an area and that relationship is much stronger for NATO-caused civilian casualties. (2) Civilian casualties affect the long-run trends in violence, not short-term fluctuations. (3) The relationship between civilian casualties and violence does not appear to spill over district boundaries.

Preventing civilian casualties is a critical challenge before the Afghan government and the NATO forces. This has put the Afghan government and the international community under mounting pressures and criticisms of the people, Human Rights Organizations and Human Rights activists. It acts as a catalyst to help the insurgents to recruit from the communities as their anger and dissatisfaction grows against the government and the international community. The last but not the least, in closing, as much as we wish we could completely eliminates civilian casualties from warfare, or warfare all together, it is ultimately impossible. Even with the most advanced technology available. However, it can be minimized and all the measures shall be taken to put it in practice.

Afghan Security Institutions Must Respond to the Growing Need for Public Security

By Mohammed Gul Sahibbzada

As the country is grinding at war with international terrorists organizations since last one and half decade, Afghanistan government is yet to come up with a war strategy directed at types, styles and tactics used by these terrorists. Though the present army and police forces are relatively new, and established during the ongoing war on terror, the onus of responsibility for their training, modus operandi of operations, directions and setting objectives still lies on the shoulders of government leadership and senior military and police officers. Today's warfare tactics are no secret as countries in this region in particular and around the world in general have already experienced these types of wars during last 50 years. Examples of these countries include Sri Lanka, Tamil Tigers had waged insurgent war against central government for forty years until they were defeated in 2009, India continues to tackle insurgent war in its Assam, Punjab, Kashmir and other provinces, Colombia has grappled with very much the same kind of war with FARC insurgents for fifty years. United Kingdom was struggling at war with Irish insurgents for more than a decade. Experience of these countries and set of knowledge built up during their struggle to quell insurgents can be of tremendous help in imparting specialized fighting skills, reconnaissance, intelligence skills and observation and identification tactics, which are critically important for a police force engaged at war with ideological insurgents and terrorist organizations.

Police is a soft arm of the State, primarily for internal security. It is the only state institution allowed to use force in peace times'. Police is accountable to criminal justice system, community and government through established mechanisms. But police force in Afghanistan lacks credible accountability system in place. In addition they do not have well established mechanism of operations involving different level of policing activities, and priorities. This is one of the most important reasons that duties of army and police are mixed up, although they are different in their doctrines with some degree of operational overlapping depending on circumstances. Unless these two organizations are segregated in terms of duties by installing doctrines and appropriate structures of command and control and accountability, Afghanistan will continue to struggle and can suffer more casualties in the ongoing war on terror. Military should largely be accountable to the state and its government, and police institutions should be accountable to justice system, government and community. Military always follows the principles of proportionality of targets, and deploys force to destroy targets with less restriction on the quantum of force. Proportionality of force is the fundamental principle of police and hence, its use is incrementally successive and proportional to threats. Military actions may not follow activation of criminal justice system, but police actions are entailed with criminal justice system and appropriate accountability mechanisms. These mechanisms harmonize the needs of the government and the communities with judicial oversight. Other areas for improvement include proper investigation after occurrence of incidence. There have been many clues for classical and forensic investigations at bombing and suicide sites, but these clues are seldom exploited fully. The persons who had committed suicide and had died in the act, are not investigated thoroughly. Accepted norms should be to take the body, carry out judicial autopsy and identify the body through investigative clues. There are chances that important clues could emerge for obtaining links that can lead to center and support of the network dispatching these suicide idiots for attacks.

Ministry of Interior should field highly trained police officers and personnel to the field for patrol round the clock in major city centers and to areas crowded with high density of population. These police contingents should be part of a strategy that should include cooperation of people in the area, use of technology such as security cameras, metal explosive identifying tools, detective tools, behavioral psychology, checkpoints and a network of spies and observers throughout population centers. This mechanism

should be duplicated and put in place in major cities and districts. 'Police in metropolitan cities including in Delhi trained police personnel to eye contact, watch for behavior and non verbal symptoms of individuals on the streets and observe activities of people appearing strange in their behavior, which had paid big dividends in bringing relative reduction in the beginning and complete elimination of bombing incidents. Police also sensitized people to observe symptoms with massive campaigns. In addition, police behavior with general public and their treatment of people should be characterized in the framework of high morale and civilized manners. As mentioned above, police is the soft arm of government and any mistreatment on the part of police of general public can backfire severely – especially in societies where insurgents and terrorist groups are working hard to conscript fighters in their ranks. Bad manners and mishandling of general public by police and other security and government officials can backfire severely.

International community including United Nations and other friendly countries, mainly the United States of America, has undertaken huge training programs for Afghanistan police force. Billions of US dollars have been expended in the form of contract awards to DynCorp International, a US firm to train Afghan police force. But these training programs were devised and undertaken in the form spasmodic response to the changes that would occur in US policy about their Afghanistan intervention and mostly these were military led, more trained in militaristic role and doctrine. There was no long-term strategy and research on the ground as to in what framework should the training begin, and what kind of training was needed for the police force to face aggressive attacks by an entrenched insurgency and other terrorist groups. Police and army institutions were embarked almost in identical duties – engaged with enemy at front lines!? Highly costly workshops and training sessions were being organized for police officers and personnel at hotels and other expensive commercial buildings in civil areas, which have proved to have had no impact on the level of knowledge and skills of police personnel. These programs suffer with ad hocism without adequate attention to sustainability, continuous delivery and operational necessities. Instead, most drastic ways to organize training sessions should have been taking place inside the police institutions in the halls and training camps, and these could be organized by police trainers from neighboring countries police institutions. This could have left long lasting impact on the training, which could have provided opportunities for our officers to established working relationships with police officers of these friendly, neighboring countries for afterward follow-up on certain professional matters.

In the wake of almost daily fatal terrorist incidents in the country, leadership of the two large security institutions i.e. Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, should work together to address these issues. It is imperative to overhaul operations, command and control structure and modus operandi of the two forces' conducts and effectiveness in the field. Though it might seem unrealistic to completely pull out police force from Insurgency battle fields, Ministry of Interior should plan for this to happen. One solution could be to recruit local militia under direct control and command of Ministry of Interior, which can replace police force fighting along with army personnel at frontlines. Policing of society in its proper manner can earn support from general public. Much of the ongoing incidents of suicide bombings, road side bombing and other types of terrorist attacks can be reduced, which will translate into a more sanguine city life, increased commercial activities and investment. A strong, skillful and knowledgeable police and judicial institutions can evaporate any and all support for insurgency among populations, and people will gather around their legitimate government.

Mohammed Gul Sahibbzada is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammed.g.sahibbzada@gmail.com

Storm Warning for the Fossil-Fuel Industry

By Daniel Litvin

This has been a year of extreme weather events, from the "Beast from the East" that froze much of the United Kingdom in March to Hurricane Florence on the US East Coast and Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines. Scientists generally hesitate to say that any particular natural disaster is the result of climate change, but the overall intensity of storms certainly appears to be linked to the accumulation of human-generated greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.

But in the minds of many, assigning blame need not wait for full scientific certainty. There are tens of millions of people whose lives have been severely affected by natural disasters, and perhaps billions who have noticed changing weather patterns in recent years. Like a growing share of politicians and most of the media, many of these people are becoming convinced that our reliance on fossil fuels is one of the underlying causes. The fossil-fuel industry is a legitimate target for criticism, given that its products account for the bulk of annual GHG emissions. "Big Oil" firms, in particular, have been hit by a number of actions relating to their role in climate change. In addition to protests at their sites in recent years, they have faced shareholder resolutions demanding a shift toward renewable energy sources, divestment campaigns, and a growing number of climate-related lawsuits, particularly in the United States.

Yet, if anything, the political siege of the fossil-fuel industry has only just begun. Even if extreme weather events do not turn out to be as frightening as climate scientists predict, the public will most likely increasingly direct its ire at the industry whenever there is a major hurricane, flood, typhoon, heat wave, or freezing spell.

Moreover, as awareness of climate change spreads, politicians and the public will need a simple and easy target to blame. To be sure, one could point the finger at the billions of consumers who drive gasoline-powered cars and rely on fossil fuels to heat and light their homes. But any politician hoping to win an election would be foolish to blame the voters.

In practice, this means that fossil-fuel firms – particularly those headquartered in OECD countries – will have to navigate an intensely contested operating environment in the coming years. In terms of shareholder value, managing social and political challenges will be no less important than finding and producing hydrocarbons.

Nowadays, much of the shareholder activism against the industry focuses on the extent to which firms' hydrocarbon reserves ultimately may prove commercially nonviable as the world shifts away from fossil fuels. But in the near term, the political backlash against the industry will pose a bigger threat to valuations than will "stranded assets."

That backlash could come in a variety of forms. Divestment campaigns are likely to gain steam and attract larger shareholders. Climate-related lawsuits could begin to extend further beyond the US, ultimately leading to multi-billion-dollar damage awards, as in the cases against Big Tobacco. Protest movements to disrupt on-shore operations could become routine. And governments could decide to impose moratoriums on new hydrocarbon development, or to levy punitive taxes on fossil-fuel firms. In fact, the government of New Zealand recently banned all future off-shore oil and gas exploration – a move that other countries ultimately may follow.

Why should anyone shed tears for Big Oil and its investors? After all, many of the political pressures described here are helpful for tackling climate change, which requires reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and accelerating the shift to renewable energies.

Still, an unthinking backlash against fossil-fuel firms could also have some perverse effects. Politicians may use it to deflect attention from the slow pace of national energy policy reform. In most countries, such reform is urgently needed to meet climate targets. Also, even in a scenario in which the average global temperature increase is kept within 2° Celsius of pre-industrial levels (the upper limit under the 2015 Paris climate agreement), fossil fuels will still need to be produced. Like a giant supertanker, the global energy system cannot be turned around on a dime. The shift away from fossil fuels will take many years, during which oil, gas, and coal will remain in demand.

In light of these realities, one risk of the intensified political backlash against fossil-fuel firms is that the industry could be pushed into the shadows. Instead of shrinking in size or focusing on a transition to renewables, the industry might shift production to private rather than publicly listed firms. Or production could migrate to less transparent firms in non-OECD countries.

In either case, these corporate entities will be less susceptible to pressure from progressive activists and socially focused investors. Less scrupulous producers will be happy to keep exploring and extracting with abandon, because they will feel even less obliged than the distrusted bosses of Big Oil and Big Coal to demonstrate that they are helping to reduce GHG emissions. As the movement to tackle climate change continues to shape its strategy for the years ahead, this is one risk that it must keep in mind.

Daniel Litvin is Managing Director of Critical Resource, a consultancy that advises resource firms on sustainability and "license to operate" risk, and the author of Empires of Profit: Commerce, Conquest, and Corporate Responsibility.

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