

Defeating Hezb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin: A Whole-of-Government Approach

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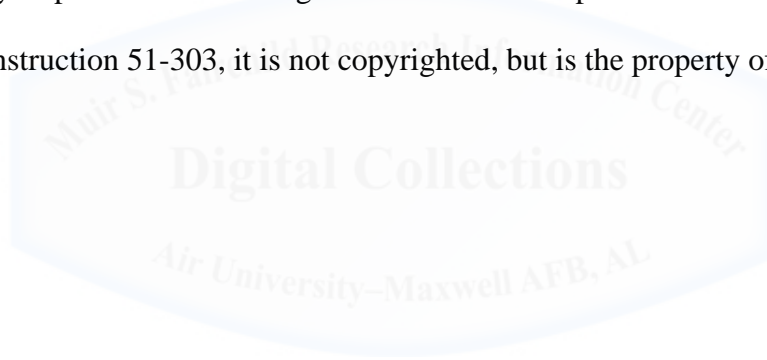


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A Recourse to Every Form of Violence: The History of Terrorism
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Over the last fourteen years, coalition partners and Afghans alike spent significant blood and treasure to promote the establishment of a legitimate Afghan government, create the conditions for regional stability and security, and eradicate Al Qaeda and their sanctuaries within Afghanistan. Afghanistan has made significant accomplishments with respect to human rights, the rule of law, and governance. The Afghans have fielded capable national police, border police, and army forces, which are now solely responsible for securing the Afghan population. The seeds of a uniquely Afghan democracy were sown as evidence by the establishment of an Afghan Constitution in 2004 and the two relatively successful presidential elections held in 2009 and again in 2014. Soon, a peaceful transition following an anticipated run-off election will yield the office of the executive branch from Hamid Karzai to either Dr. Abdullah Abudullah or Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, which will mark the first such transition of power in modern Afghan history. Both candidates are strong supporters of the Afghan Constitution and the proposed bilateral security agreement (BSA) between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the United States. Thus, we can anticipate a strong US diplomatic, economic, and military presence in Afghanistan in the near-term. However, several potential barriers to the future success and maturation of the fledgling GIROA exist and must be taken in to account when formulating our foreign policy and military strategy for a post-2014 Afghanistan. This paper focuses on the development of an operational approach for combating one such potential barrier, the terrorist organization, Hezb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin (HIG).

I contend that the United States will have to apply a whole-of government operation approach in support of Afghan-led lines of operation that include counter-terrorism and stability operations, insurgent reconciliation programs, and the reformation of the current Afghan Constitution in order to defeat Afghan insurgents. Staunch U.S. support of these proposed

programs is, in my opinion, essential to defeating the HIG, Taliban, Haqqani Network, and to prevent the resurgence of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. This paper focuses on how these proposed Afghan-led lines of operation can be tailored to defeat the HIG hardliners and transition their more conciliatory membership from militancy to legitimacy. To develop my concept of operations for combating the HIG with a whole of government approach, I conducted exhaustive research into their history starting from their inception in 1976 to the present. The results of this research are presented along with my assessment of the future threat they pose to U.S. and Coalition partners. Then, within the context of case studies based on Hamas and Hezbollah, and the theories on defeating terrorism and the mechanisms by which terrorism ends are explored and presented. Special emphasis is placed on drawing potential lessons-learned from this line of research to incorporate into a whole-of-government Afghan-Led Operational approach to combat the HIG. Finally, my proposed operational approach is presented as a potential mechanism to defeat the HIG.

HIG Overview

HIG is a militant Islamist movement designated as an “Other Selected Terrorist Organization” by the US State Department and a “Proscribed Terrorist Group” by the United Kingdom.¹ The group was founded in 1976 by its current leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, in Peshawar Pakistan to militarily oppose the communist government of Afghan President Daud Khan.² During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979-1989, the aim of the organization was the expulsion of Soviet Forces and establishment of a conservative Islamic government based on sharia law. The HIG was a major player in the Afghan Civil War and provisional government from 1992-1996 and is largely responsible for setting the conditions that allowed the Taliban to seize power. They have also been purported to have played a role in the

establishment of Al Qaeda terrorist training camps in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border during the late 90's and have thus been linked with Osama Bin Laden. Presently, the HIG strives to obtain the same political goal of establishing a strict Islamic state, but its enemies are now the Karzai Administration and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Honing their guerilla tactics through decades of fighting the Soviets, rival insurgent factions, and the ISAF backed Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), the HIG remains a highly credible threat to GIROA and ISAF military personnel.³

Origins of the HIG

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was born in 1947 in the northern Afghan province of Kunduz.⁴ His father was an ethnic Pashtun and a member of the Kharoti tribe which originated in Ghazni. The Kharoti and Ghilzai tribes were forced to relocate to the northern provinces in the late 19th century under the decree of King Abdur Rahman Khan of the Duranni tribe in an effort to consolidate power and weaken the influence of his rival Pashtun tribal leaders.⁵ As a youth, Hekmatyar secured an apprenticeship with a prominent textile manufacturer, the Spinzar Cotton Company. The company's owner, Ghulam Serwar Nasher, had developed Kunduz in one of the most affluent provinces in Afghanistan and saw a bright future for Gulbuddin. In 1968 Nasher arranged for Hekmatyar's acceptance into the Mahtab Qala Military Academy. However, Hekmatyar was expelled from the academy in 1970 for communist activities and alleged contact with KGB and Soviet political officials.⁶ Hekmatyar refocused his scholastic efforts shortly thereafter and began studying engineering at Kabul University where the moniker "The Engineer" was placed on him by his first followers.⁷ He joined an underground offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood known as Nahdat al-Shibab al-Muslim where he met his fellow engineer

and future rival Ahmed Shah Massoud.⁸ In 1972, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was sentenced to two years in prison for the murder of a rival Maoist militant.⁹

Nahdat's leader, Burhanuddin Rabanni, installed the imprisoned Hekmatyar as the group's political director. In this post, Hekmatyar is reported to have authorized throwing acid female students wearing western clothing.¹⁰ This was the first instance of radicalized Islamic terrorism conducted at the behest of the future leader of the HIG. He would remain active in the Nahdat movement until it was disbanded two years later but his ties with Rabanni and Massoud would shape his future as a Mujahedeen leader for decades.

In 1973 the King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, was deposed by his cousin and former Prime Minister, Mohammed Dauod.¹¹ Dauod installed a one-party reformist government and pardoned a majority of prisoners. This event allowed Hekmatyar to join Rabanni and Massoud who would flee to the refugee camps in Peshawar Pakistan.

By 1974 Rabanni became the head of the anti-Dauod opposition group known as Jamiat-e-Islami. The group's official stated mission was to protect Islamic teachings, defend the deprived classes, retain Afghan national prestige, and to represent Afghan Muslims.¹² Rabanni's Jamiat believed in a mainly political solution to bring about reform in the new government. He envisioned reforming the Dauod –government by infiltrating its institutions, slowing the pace of social reform, and then gradually winning over traditional Afghan Muslims to his cause. Massoud became a primary proponent of the Jamiat strategy and set off to secure the Panjshir Valley as stronghold for the movement in 1975.¹³ His attempt failed however due to Hekmatyar's last minute decision to hold back his forces and allow the Afghan Red Army to flank Massouds forces.¹⁴ Massoud and Rabanni never fully trusted Hekmatyar again and the

Jamiat movement splintered. Hekmatyar consolidated his followers into the militant corps of Hezb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin (HIG) in 1976.

In contrast to Rabanni and Massoud, Hekmatyar espoused a radical, militant, and revolutionary approach to toppling the one-party government of Dauod. He was determined to install a conservative Islamic government based on sharia regardless of whether he had the popular support of the afghan people.¹⁵ Furthermore, Hekmatyar's HIG was, and still remains, unique amongst the various Afghan insurgent and terrorist organizations because of their believe in the dissolution of the tribal system, which they view to be corrupt.¹⁶

The strength of the HIG grew in the late 70's with newfound support from the recently established Pakistan ISI under the rule of General Zia ul-Hag. During the "Great Saur Revolution" of 1978 President Daoud was assassinated and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power under Nur Mohammed Taraki.¹⁷ In December of 1978 the PDPA and the Soviet Union signed a "Treaty of Friendship."¹⁸ One year, and two Afghan Premiers later, the Soviet Union would commit a sustained force of 115,000 troops for ten years in an attempt to quell the rebellion against the communist Afghan government.¹⁹ General Zia, wanting a radical pro-Islamabad Pashtun to take power in any post-communist Afghan government, channeled a large portion of roughly three billion dollars in US aid to the anti-Soviet forces of the HIG.²⁰

The Soviet Occupation: 1979-1989

Soviet Special Forces seized Kabul International Airport on 24 December 1979 and began mobilizing the Red Army occupation of Afghanistan which would span a decade.²¹ The various Mujahedeen factions loosely coalesced into a formidable resistance bolstered by thousands of foreign fighters including some 6,000 Saudis, 4,000 Egyptians, and 1,000

Yemenis.²² Abdallah Azzam, a Jordanian of Palestinian decent, established the Maktab al-Khidmat ul-Mujahedeen (MUKUB) in the refugee camps around Peshawar. The MUKUB served as the recruiting, laundering, religious education, and propaganda machine for the Arab faction of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan.²³ Although the majority of Arab recruits would serve in supporting roles for the indigenous Afghan fighters, several Arabs such as Osama Bin Laden, Muhammad Atef, Abu Sayaaf, and Ayman al-Zawahiri would fight alongside Hekmatyar's HIG Mujahedeen and go on to form the nexus of Al Qaeda and its offshoots following the war.²⁴ Gulbuddin Hekmatyar would later take over the Administration of the MUKUB and use the camps in Shamshatoo and Jalozai as his recruiting base until the closure of the camps in 2008.

An estimated eleven billion dollars of US and Saudi aid was funneled through MUKUB by the ISI to support the Afghan resistance, with an estimated six-hundred million dollars allocated to the HIG. Large caches of rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), Kalashnikov AK-47s, and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) were procured and employed by the HIG during this era.²⁵

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Hekmatyar's forces focused their attacks in the N2K (Nangarhar, Nuristan, and Kunar) Provinces of Afghanistan, while Ahmed Shah Massoud's forces maintained the resistance in the Panjshir and Bahmyan Provinces just outside the range of the Red Army's artillery batteries. The ISI allowed some weapons and material to funnel into Panjshir but a vast majority of their support was given to the HIG. Hekmatyar used the camps in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Khyber Pukhtookhwa as both a base of operations for financial and logistical support and as a recruiting pool.²⁶

The tactics, techniques, and procedures utilized by the HIG during this time were guerilla warfare style tactics that employed small bands of fighters. These units would harass Soviet convoys, combat patrols, and helicopter operations with lethal short-duration strikes before disappearing into inaccessible sanctuaries within the Hindu-Kush Mountains.²⁷

As the war began to wind down in the late 1980s, the HIG was being accused of subverting the efforts of its fellow Mujahedeen, particularly the Jamiat-e-Islami fighter under Ahmed Shah Massoud.²⁸ Corroborating this accusation were the documented assassinations of intellectual Afghan-resistance leaders and three journalists who were less than complimentary of HIG's brutal dictator-like approach.

In the fall of 1987, American documentary filmmaker Lee Shapiro and his cameraman Jim Lindalos were invited to document the HIG on a trip throughout Eastern Afghanistan. The BBC had already released a favorable documentary of Massoud and his Jamiat fighters that cast the group as the main faction of the Afghan-resistance. Hekmatyar welcomed the opportunity to reshape his organization's image as the leaders of the Mujahedeen resistance and to show the public that the HIG maintained close ties to all Afghan fighters.²⁹ To the HIG's dismay, a firefight broke out on the trip between the HIG and a rival Jamiat group resulting in the death of both journalists.³⁰ Both the official U.S. Department of State report and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar asserted that the death was a result of a Soviet ambush. However, an Afghan interpreter that survived the attack who contended that Red Army soldiers were not present during the event rebutted this account.³¹ Additionally, in October of 1987 HIG operatives murdered a British journalist and former SAS operative named Andy Skrypkowiak, in an attempt to squelch favorable press on Massoud's faction from reaching the airwaves. Skrypkowiak was traveling from Panjshir with film of Massoud's recent successes and was invited to stay with Hezb fighters

overnight in a cave in Nuristan. While sleeping, his Hezb hosts crushed his skull with rocks and were later rewarded by Hekmatyar for their efforts.³² But the most prominent assassination by the HIG was perpetrated against Professor Sayid Bahuddub Marjuh in 1988.³³ Marjuh was a well-known resistance intellectual in Peshawar who had written critically of the HIG, and Hekmatyar specifically. In November of 1987, Marjuh published the results of a survey in which two-thousand Afghan refugees were polled as to their preference for a post-communist leader.³⁴ Much to the dismay of Hekmatyar, the polls supported the former King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, and indicated that even Hekmatyar's followers had lost faith in his ability to lead the country after the end of the Soviet occupation.³⁵ Subsequently, Hekmatyar had Marjuh assassinated at his home by four HIG gunmen in February of 1988.

Although several US Embassy and NGO official had routinely reported HIG atrocities in the late 80's, the CIA believed that it was impossible to confront the ISI on the issue of reigning in Hekmatyar that late in the war.³⁶ Additionally, since the Soviet Union had recently indicated that they would withdraw from Afghanistan, the CIA was not motivated to take on the endeavor.³⁷ Hekmatyar's HIG had survived the Soviet occupation, the Mujahedeen under his command numbered in the thousands, had accrued a large cache of weapons, and had successfully established a steady stream of recruits from his Peshawar refugee camp base.³⁸

The Afghan Civil War

Upon the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, President Najibullah was left to carry on the communist government of Afghanistan. By 1992 the Soviet Union had ceased to exist and the funding and military aid from Moscow dried up paving the way for the Mujahedeen's ambitious attempt to seize power and institute an Islamic government.³⁹ As the Najibullah government began to implode the various political, ethnic, and tribal factions allied themselves

with Mujahedeen warlords for protection. Pashtun officials sided with Hekmatyar's HIG, Shia with Hisb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami-ye, the communists and ethnic Uzbeks sided with General Dostum and the ethnic Tajiks and remaining remnants of the Afghan communists not loyal to Dostum allied themselves with Ahmed Shah Massoud's Shura-e-Nazar.⁴⁰ The HIG also bolstered its ranks with hundreds of radicalized war-orphan that had been trained in Hekmatyar's madrasas in Peshawar.⁴¹

A civil-war pitting the rivals against each other eventually resulted in a power sharing agreement with Rabanni installed as President and Hekmatyar assuming the conciliatory role as Prime Minister of Afghanistan. He served in this capacity in 1993-1994 before leading a failed revolt against the Rabanni government by joining with the forces of his former enemy General Dostum.⁴² Once again he accepted the office of Prime Minister under a cease-fire agreement in 1996 which was cut short by the overthrow of the provisional Mujahedeen government by the Taliban.⁴³

In the wake of 4 years of Rabbani's rule the Afghan people had endured a sporadic but devastating civil war that had left the "Jewel" city of Kabul in ruins. Afghans had been subjugated to draconian laws including those that restricted women for participating in public life and they had witnessed vicious acid attacks on unveiled women.⁴⁴ Thus the path was cleared for the Taliban to swoop in and assume power under the auspices of restoring honor, order, and security to Afghanistan.

HIG During the Taliban: 1996-2001

Prior to the overthrow of the Rabanni government by the Taliban in 1996, Hekmatyar's forces were defeated by the Taliban at the HIG strongholds of Chaharasayb and Sarobi, resulting in the losses of large weapons caches.⁴⁵ The remaining HIG fighters loyal to Hekmatyar fled

about the N2K region trying to reconsolidate their power and gain the support of local commanders. The HIG's brutality and inability to reconcile their patronage networks amongst former Mujahedeen commanders was largely responsible for mass defections to the Taliban in Pashtun dominated regions of Eastern and South Eastern Afghanistan.⁴⁶ Unable to hold off the impending onslaught of Taliban fighters, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar fled to Iran where he opened a HIG office, raised funds, and funneled support for Al Qaeda terrorist training camps via his well-established Peshawar networks.⁴⁷

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) : 2002-Present

In February of 2002 Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was expelled by Iran after the HIG offices were disbanded following a Bush Administration decree that stated that countries that harbor terrorists would be considered legitimate targets in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).⁴⁸ By late 2002, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's HIG, Mullah Omar's neo-Taliban movement, and Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda fighters had agreed in principal to a truce and vowed to focus their efforts on fighting the invading NATO forces. However, a formal alliance between the groups was never documented. Hekmatyar made several vitriolic statements towards U.S. forces in which he called on all fighters who had opposed the Soviets to wage a jihad against what he termed as "Foreign Interference" by the US coalition.⁴⁹ In May of 2002, Hekmatyar was specifically targeted by a failed drone strike and by 2003 he had been placed on the US terrorist list for supporting terrorist actions conducted in Afghanistan by Al Qaeda and the Taliban.⁵⁰ By the end of 2003, the HIG was the most significant non-Taliban organization fighting the Karzai government and had become heavily involved in illicit drug trafficking to fund their operations.⁵¹

Throughout the time period of 2003-2004, US forces conducted numerous raids against HIG affiliates in an attempt to stifle the resurgence of the group in the N2K region. However, by

2005 US forces had become embroiled in fierce fighting in Nuristan Province and the Korengal Valley of Kunar Province. Nuristan Province was reported to be the new base of operations for the HIG and the Korengal was the alleged home of an Egyptian Al Qaeda leader and several Soviet-era HIG fighters.⁵² On 28 June 2005, insurgents operating out of the Korengal Valley shot down a US Special Forces Chinook helicopter resulting in 16 US KIA. Following this disaster, the U.S. sent in the 173d Airborne Brigade to conduct psychological operations in an attempt to draw out HIG and Taliban fighters. Messages were belted out over loudspeakers calling into question the manhood of the insurgents and likening them to “cowardly dogs.”⁵³ Additionally, US forces blockaded the only highway into the valley, set up checkpoints, raided villages, searched and detained female prisoners, and conducted night raids. These actions were relatively successful at discovering caches, collecting intelligence, and detaining insurgents but the second order effect was that it turned the local populous against the US forces.⁵⁴ The hostile climate in Nuristan and the Korengal Valley provided the HIG with a valuable information operation victory with which to rally new support. Hekmatyar made several publicized statements from 2005-2006 that asserted that the US led coalition were conducting a “genocide of Pashtuns” because of the Pashtun people’s strict adherence to Islam and firm resolve against foreign oppressors.⁵⁵ He went on further to state that the “Americans have no consideration for our honor and the chastity of our women,” specially invoking the searching and detention of women and raiding of Afghan homes.⁵⁶ These declarations were further amplified by his statements in May 2006 where he pledged the HIG’s loyalty to Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda:

“We thank all Arab Mujahedeen, particularly Sheikh Osama Bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, and other leaders who helped us fight the Russians. They fought our enemies and made dear sacrifices. Neither we nor the future generations will forget this great favor. We beseech Almighty God to grant us success and help us fulfill our duty toward them and enable us to return the favor and reciprocate their support and sacrifices. We

hope to take part with them in battle that will lead and raise its banner. We stand beside and support them.”⁵⁷

In August of 2008, a joint HIG and Taliban attack in the Sarobi District of Patika Province was carried out by 170 insurgents and resulted in the death of 10 French soldiers.⁵⁸ This incident was a significant turning point for the OEF-era HIG in that it was the first major attack in which the HIG claimed responsibility and in which the Taliban had also participated alongside the HIG. Following the attack, Hekmatyar made a statement promising to conduct more guerilla attacks against coalition forces and contended that the only solution to the war was the removal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

In March 2010, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar sent a delegation of five HIG representatives to Kabul led by former Afghan Prime Minister Qutbuddin Helal to conduct peace negotiations with the Karzai government.⁵⁹ Helal presented the following 15-point proposal to the GIRoA:

- “1): Foreign troops must start withdrawal in July this year and complete the process in six months.
- 2): They should quit main cities and populated area and move to military bases.
- 3): Security issues must be completely handed over to Afghan army and the police. Foreign troops will have no rights to carry out military operations, house search and arrests on their own anywhere in Afghanistan.
- 4): The parliament and the incumbent government will continue to function unless new elections are held and new government is formed. But those people should not be part of the government who are controversial and accused of corruption, war crimes and who have secular ideas. And those people should not be in top military leadership who support a group against other.
- 5): A 7-member National Security Council will be formed with the consensus of all Afghan factions which will have the power to take final decisions on key issues. The Council's center will be in a province where security will be completely under Afghan forces and there will be no foreign troops there.
- 6): After the withdrawal of foreign troops, elections for the office of the President, National Assembly and provincial assemblies will be held simultaneously on proportional representation basis in (Afghan year 1390 Spring). (March 2011)
- 7): Cabinet members and governors can only be allowed to take part in the elections who

resign three months before the polls.

8): Every party will get representation in the first elected government in accordance with their seats in the parliament and they will secure trust vote from the parliament. And the largest group will not be bound to form coalition government.

9): That Group or Alliance will have the right to take part in coming election which will secure up to 10 per cent votes in the first election.

10): During this period there will be complete ceasefire among the warring factions, all political prisoners will be freed, all sides will make commitment that they will not fight against rival faction and they will not use illegal channels to grab power.

11): The first elected parliament will have the right to review the constitution and to take a final decision about the constitution.

12): No foreign country will have the right to establish their jails in Afghanistan. They will not arrest or put on trial any Afghan national and will not take any Afghan for trial outside of the country.

13): Those accused of war crimes, drug smuggling, corruption and plundering national wealth will be tried in Islamic courts. No side will defend them covertly or overtly.

14): Foreign fighters will not stay in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign troops.

15): Any internal and external elements who are opposed to this agreement and insist on fighting, we all will jointly deal with the war mongers to save our homeland from their curse. ⁶⁰

The response to the 15-point proposal from the U.S. was not favorable. Former CJCS Admiral Michael Mullen stated that the "HI rescue plan is unacceptable" and SECDEF Robert Gates stated that negotiations could not take place unless Kabul negotiated from an position of strength and the insurgents were convinced that they were defeated.^{61 62} The context behind SECDEF Gates remarks was that the HIG had been defeated earlier in the month during a battle with neo-Taliban forces in Baghlan Province. As a result of the defeat, 40 HIG fighters were killed and 11 HIG commanders defected to the Afghan Government.⁶³ Their ability to present a peace proposal on behalf of the insurgency was therefore suspect. Hekmatyar responded directly to SECDEF Gates in article posted in the Afghan Islamic Press on 11 April 2010 in which he stated that "We would rather sacrifice ourselves in God's path than bow down to the enemy. We will never surrender to this shame."⁶⁴

From the period after the failed 15-point peace proposal negotiations until the end of 2011, the HIG's numbers and support dwindled and subsequently they downplayed their guerilla-style ambush tactics in favor of improvised explosive devices (IED) and rocket attacks. On 20 November 2010, a district governor in Nangarhar Province was killed by a HIG-placed IED.⁶⁵ In another similar small-scale attack the HIG fired two rockets at Loya Jirga gathering site in Kabul on 17 November 2011 that resulted in one civilian casualty.⁶⁶

Once again Hekmatyar sent a peace delegation to Kabul, this time led by his son-in-law Dr. Ghairhat Baheer. Baheer met with CIA Director General David Patraeus and ISAF Commander General John Allen on two occasions in January of 2012 to revisit the 15-point proposal.⁶⁷ The U.S. government would neither confirm nor deny that the meeting took place. However, 50 suspected HIG fighters in Baghlan Province reconciled with the GIRoA and joined the reintegration process on 29 January 2012.

The HIG continued to take part in negotiations with GIRoA throughout the spring and summer of 2012 and did not take credit for any attacks conducted during this period. However, in response to the release on YouTube of an anti-Islamic movie called "Innocence of Muslims" by a US-based producer, the HIG attacked an airport shuttle filled with South-African workers on their way to work at Kabul International Airport (KIA) on 18 September 2012.⁶⁸ The attack was carried out by a female suicide bomber and was most likely intended to hit US military coalition members who frequently traveled to KIA in similar shuttles from ISAF Headquarters, the New Kabul Compound, and Camp Eggers. Thirteen people were killed in the attack.

The HIG attacks waned during the characteristic seasonal lull in fighting during the winter of 2012-2013. Then, days after an announcement by President Karzai that the U.S. planned to retain the services of eight bases in Afghanistan following the 2014 drawdown of

NATO forces; another HIG attack rocked the Kabul area. This time a NATO convoy of six civilian advisory personnel was struck by a vehicle-borne IED killing all of the occupants on 15 May 2013.⁶⁹

In October of 2013 the HIG conducted two attacks at Bagram Air Base. The first was a rocket attack that resulted in minimal damage to the base and zero casualties.⁷⁰ The second attack was a suicide-bomber attack conducted via bicycle at against a NATO convoy that also resulted in zero casualties.⁷¹

On 10 February 2014, the HIG claimed responsibility for a suicide car-bomb attack that claimed the lives of two US civilian contractors and six others near the Pol-e-Charki prison in the eastern section of Kabul.⁷²

Future Threat Assessment

Unlike the Taliban, Al Qaeda, or Haqqani, the HIG has been actively negotiating with both ISAF and the GIROA. The political wing, Hezb-e-Islami-Afghanistan (HIA), has several legitimate representatives in parliament and one first-vice presidential candidate aligned with a leading presidential candidate for the 2014 election. Additionally, the HIG has recently endorsed an independent presidential candidate, Eng Qutbuddin Helal who previously served a high-ranking HIG officer and was a former Afghan vice president under Rabanni.⁷³ These actions by the group are promising in that they show a modicum of acceptance of the current framework of government. However, as evident by the group's history in Afghan politics, this fragile support could wane if the outcome of the presidential election does not favor a strong role for the HIG in a post-2014 Afghan government. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to the official statements of the group following the 2014 election.

The number of active HIG fighters, once estimated to be in the thousands in the early 90's, has been significantly diminished through kinetic military operations, reconciliation programs, and infighting with rival Taliban fighters. However, the HIG has become increasingly active in vehicle-borne suicide bombing attacks in and around Kabul and has had recent success at killing US civilian advisors in 2013 and 2014. These attacks, while infrequent, have been successful at garnering the attention of the international press and have afforded them with an opportunity to voice their long held goal of removing all foreigners from Afghanistan. I assess that until all US and Coalition Forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan, there will remain a high probability that future HIG-launched suicide-bomb attacks against these military forces and their civilian enablers will occur.

Potential Mechanisms for How The HIG Ends

While Walter Laqueur describes terrorism as a war which has no end, many case studies have been compiled that provide evidence that localized terrorist entities can be effectively dismantled or reintegrated into society through targeted economic, political, and state policies.⁷⁴ In a special report compiled by the US Institute for Peace in 2007, Martha Crenshaw contends that terrorist organizations cease to exist due to five variables. The first is that the terrorist organization has achieved their primary goals. With respect to the HIG, a case can be made that, regardless of their true impact on current US and Coalition Force posturing in Afghanistan, many of the HIG demands have been met. To name a few, foreign troops have pulled out of villages and cities, ISAF and the US have announced plans to end combat operation by the end of 2014, the prisons were turned over to GIRoA, and the handover of security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has been completed. However, this only accounts for four of the fifteen demands of the HIG peace plan. As evident by their recent attack on two US

advisors in February of 2014, their success may depend on the achievement of more of the peace plan demands. The second variable that Crenshaw presents, preliminary success, asserts that terrorist organization often disavow terrorism once they have gained popular recognition for their organization and its cause. The HIG does not fit this scenario as they have garnered various degrees of support and recognition for almost 40 years without abandoning violence. The third way Crenshaw claims a terrorist organization lays down its arms is through organizational breakdown. The HIG has lost many of its mid-level commanders to reintegration programs and some high-level leaders who have chosen to transition into politics under the officially recognized Hezb-i-Islami (HIA) or Islamic Party of Afghanistan. Crenshaw warns that just because a terrorist organization is breaking down does not mean that they will cease engaging in terrorist acts. In fact, many times, as an act of self-preservation, these floundering groups become more dangerous as they view terrorism as the only alternative in order to cling on to existence. In my opinion, this accurately describes the current state of the HIG as evidenced by the diminutive effects of their most recent attacks when compared to the more complex and coordinated attacks of the Taliban and Haqqani Network (HQN) during the same period. Crenshaw's fourth variable is dwindling support. When you analyze the level of attacks, the frequency of attacks, and their geographical area of influence as compared to the Taliban and HQN, it is evident that their logistical and popular support is waning. Finally, the fifth variable, new alternatives, asserts that terrorist organization can cease the use of terrorism as a tactic when less-violent options for political change are presented.⁷⁵ The recent presidential elections in which the Independent Election Committee (IEC) approved former HIG operative Helal as a candidate provided just such an option, albeit a long shot as Helal received less than 4% of the popular vote according to exit polling statistics.

Based on my analysis of the HIG with respect to Crenshaw's five variables and my study of the history of the HIG, I contend that the conditions are ripe for their abandonment of terrorism if the correct policies are implemented by GIRoA and adequately supported by NATO and the United States post-2014. These policies include: (1) continued training, advising, funding and equipping of ANSF forces, (2) a robust Afghan-Led reconciliation program, (3) and Diplomatic support for reforming the current Afghan Constitution. When put in the construct of the Joint Operational Planning Process (JOPP), the line of effort (LOE) for my operational approach for combating the HIG are: (1) ANSF Support Operations, (2) Reconciliation Operations, and (3) Governance Support Operations.

The remainder of this paper details my proposed operational approach based on the aforementioned LOEs. Lessons-learned from Regional Command North's Reintegration Program as well as analysis from case studies on the Hamas and Hezbollah are presented to support my argument for a whole-of-government operational approach for defeating Afghan insurgencies in the long-term and the HIG in the near-term.

LOE 1: ANSF Support Operations

Martha Crenshaw suggests that there are four tools that governments can use to combat terrorism; deterrence, criminal justice, enhanced defense, and negotiations.⁷⁶ LOE 1 focuses primarily on deterrence as a defeat mechanism. Deterrence as defined by Crenshaw involves the use of military and police forces in a coercive manner to make the use of terrorism too costly.⁷⁷ Tactics of this defeat-enabling mechanism include military strikes against terrorist bases, assassinations of key leaders, and collective punishment of offenders. LOE 1, from a post-2014 NATO coalition viewpoint, would involve an advise, train and equip mission in support of offensive and defensive ANSF operations. The whole-of-government aspect of this approach

includes the economic aid required to fund the salaries and logistical support for over 350,000 ANSF soldiers and police which NATO Commander General Philip Breedlove (USAF) states is well beyond the capacity of the GIRoA.⁷⁸ The currently proposed post-2014 NATO mission is being dubbed as “Operation Resolute Support” and is contingent on the ratification of the BSA. Taking a retrospective dive into case studies on Hezbollah revealed their justification for maintaining an armed terrorist resistance. Hezbollah used the relative weakness of the Lebanese security institutions and their insufficient capacity to protect the Lebanese citizens from the Israeli bombing campaign of 2006 to effectively bolster their information operation (IO) campaign. During the 2006 bombing-campaign, relatively few Hezbollah fighters were killed compared to the losses suffered by ordinary Lebanese citizens to include Christians and Druze.⁷⁹ Additionally, Israel’s bombing campaign produced over 1 million internally displaced personnel and caused the flight of approximately 10-thousand foreigners from Lebanon. With great acumen, Hezbollah’s exploited this event and bolstered their IO position claiming to be the only organization sufficiently armed to protect their population from Israeli attacks. Subsequently, many Lebanese viewed Hezbollah as heroic, not terrorists.⁸⁰ Similarly, in the contested Gaza Strip in 2005, the strength of the US-backed Fatah Presidential Guard was reported to be 3,700 versus the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) of 168,000 troops aligned against them on the Gaza border. Hamas at that time, although not officially recognized as a legitimate political entity internationally, maintained a force of 6,000 fighters armed with SA-7 shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles.⁸¹ Furthermore, since the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) lack of sovereignty prevented them from fielding a standing army, Hamas’ rationale for fielding their Izz al-Din al-Qassam Squad resonated with the Palestinian people for the same reasons that Hezbollah was backed by a majority of Lebanese.⁸² With respect to the ANSF, the strength of their forces is significantly

higher than the insurgent forces aligned against them. However, according to General Breedlove, while the ANSF will be fully ready to take on full security responsibilities within Afghanistan by the end of 2014, they will require assistance in the form of advising, training, and logistical and financial support for years to come.⁸³ He goes on to state that since financial aid from the western world is dependent on a continued military presence in Afghanistan. If the western powers were to let the ANSF funding lapse, mass desertions and the subsequent alignment of former troops with traditional power brokers such as the HIG, HQN, and the Taliban would be a likely result. It is for these stated reasons that I recommend LOE 1 as vital to dismantling support for the HIG, and all Afghan insurgents, by ensuring that a credible deterrent force remains viable for GIRoA.

LOE 2: Reconciliation Operations

Tool number four in Crenshaw's haversack is negotiation. She contends that sometimes the only way to obtain an agreement from a terrorist organization to renounce violence and disband is to offer it concessions.⁸⁴ U.S. Army Colonel Christian M. Karsner and Dr, Sarah E. Kopenski offer an introspective account of their efforts at establishing and directing Afghan-Led reintegration operations in Regional Command-North (RC-N) in Afghanistan from 2009-2011. Reintegration is defined as the operational and tactical-level effort to bring rank-and-file members of the insurgency as well as low to mid-level commanders back into peaceful Afghan society.⁸⁵ Colonel Karsner's area of responsibility (AOR) included 62,600 square miles of terrain with an estimated insurgent population of 4,500 to 6,000 HIG, Taliban, HQN, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and United Tajik Opposition (UTO), of which an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 were fighters.⁸⁶ By the end of 2011, 1,840 former insurgents had joined the APRP with only seven participants returning to the battlefield.⁸⁷ This reconciliation process was

accomplished with the backing of President Karzai, Provincial Governors of nine provinces, and \$200 million dollars pledged by donor nations for the administration of the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP).⁸⁸ The tactical-level LOEs (TLOEs) for this initiative included Kinetic Operations, IO exploitation, Governance, and Development. Crenshaw's deterrence tool is therefore key to TLOE 1 as its objectives are to disrupt the insurgents command and control (C2) capabilities and to set the physical and psychological conditions for reintegration exploitation. TLOE 2, IO exploitation, utilizes positive messaging via radio, television, and friendly night-letter mediums to expedite the organizational breakdown and dissolution of support defeat mechanism through loss of public support for the insurgencies. Governance was the third TLOE for APRP in RC-N and focused on empowering local and district-level GIRoA officials to provide community stability and provide a forum for grievance resolution amongst insurgents and their supporters. This TLOE provides the political space in which alternative to violence can be considered by the insurgents. The fourth and final TLOE, termed development, encompassed localized employment, local government service positions, vocational training opportunities, and localized infrastructure improvement programs.⁸⁹ This TLOE embodies Crenshaw's fifth defeat mechanism, new alternatives.

Karsner and Kopyczynski concede that the security conditions in RC-N were relatively permissive when compared to RCs East, South, West, and Southwest but point several other factors that lead to the success of their APRP. They cite a strong relationship of trust between Provincial and District-Level GIRoA leaders and Coalition Partners, a significant mobilization of NGO organizations, and the development of apprenticeship/adult education program.⁹⁰ Their report also stresses the importance of negotiating from a position of strength with strong accountability placed on the GIRoA officials for the success of the APRP.

In their concluding thoughts, Karsner and Kopczynski note that any reintegration program will be unsuccessful if there is a lack of Afghan will or commitment.⁹¹ Furthermore, they warn that the future of the APRP is in question due to over-centralized control by Kabul and insufficient involvement of communities and districts in administering of the program. Based on the success of the RC-N APRP and their warnings, I recommend that LOE 2 be Afghan-Led with diplomatic support and funding provided by the US DOS, UN, NGOs, and international donors.

Additionally, expanded vocational opportunities offered through Afghan-owned and operated vocational institutions such as the Afghan Technical Vocational schools should be expanded and offered as incentives from disavowing terrorism and quitting the insurgency. Finally, Afghan-led and Afghan-administered Local Police Forces should be established within the confines of local customs and traditions. This will bolster the security prospects of reintegrated insurgents and enable them to return to peaceful and productive lives in their local communities with less chance of reprisals.

It is important to note that this LOE is also highly dependent on the deterrent effects enabled by supporting the ANSF through LOE 1. However, in my opinion, that absent LOE 2, the defeat of the HIG, and the entire Afghan insurgency as a whole, would be in jeopardy. Insurgents have the luxury of time on their side, whereas the GIRoA has a limited timeframe in which to show legitimacy to maintain the support of the west and international donors.

LOE 3: Governance Support Operations

Insurgents that have been interviewed during the reintegration process state that the factors that motivate them to continue to fighting against GIRoA include the presence of foreigners, the real or perceived corruption of central, provincial, district, and local government officials, and water or land disputes.⁹² LOE 3, governance support operations, focuses on

supporting the enactment of formal reforms to the 2005 Afghan National Constitution through diplomatic and financial means to enable a more representative form of subnational governance. Many provisions currently exist within the Afghan Constitution that would strengthen subnational governance and increase the legitimacy of the GIRoA. However, the Karzai Administration's heavy-handed interpretation of the executive powers afforded by this constitution has diminished the capacity of subnational governments to provide services and adequate representation to their constituents. Reforming and strengthening the subnational governments of Afghanistan would create political space for insurgents to maneuver and would also offer feasible alternatives to continuing terrorist insurgencies. For a terrorist organization in decline such as the HIG, having a voice in a truly representative political forum may enable the group to admonish militancy in favor of strong voice in local and provincial politics. However, in order to develop the rationale behind LOE 3, we must first examine the areas of the current Afghan Constitution that, if reformed, would elicit the greatest effects for enhancing and bolstering the legitimacy of Afghanistan's subnational governments.

The draft Afghan Constitution was debated and ratified in January 2004 by a constitutional loya Jirga (CLJ) consisting of 502 delegates selected by UN-run caucuses.⁹³ The document provided for a strong executive branch with broad powers to include the authority to nominate "high-ranking" officials by the president. Historically the Karzai Administration has interpreted this to mean that the president has the right to not only appoint cabinet ministers, but also members of the Supreme Court, judges, provincial and district governors, local security chiefs, mayors, and members of independent commissions.⁹⁴ Therefore, an insurgent's or terrorist organization's perception of corruption and cronyism within all levels of GIRoA is easily understood as is the tacit support the central government garners outside of the major

population centers. Further constraining good governance at the subnational level is the provisions of the Afghan Constitution that afford the executive branch the ability to appoint one-third of the upper house of the legislative branch.⁹⁵ Conversely, of the remaining two-thirds of the upper house, one-third is mandated to be elected by the Provincial Councils and the remaining one-third by the District Councils. Disappointingly, due to district boundary disputes, logistical shortfalls, and administrative issues with codifying voter registration processes, no formal election for the 407 district councils in Afghanistan have been held to date.⁹⁶ This has resulted in 2/3 of the upper house being appointed solely by Provincial Councils further weakening the perceived legitimacy of the legislative branch of the central government amongst rural Afghans. Logically it is not hard to conclude how these structural inefficiencies enable the insurgent's IO campaign against GIRoA.

I contend that a diplomatic and economic support structure composed UN, NATO, Donor-Nation Foreign Embassies, and US DOS personnel must be assembled immediately and trust into action following the inauguration of the next Afghan President. Their focus should be on creating the conditions for the convening of a second CJL. This will be accomplished through financial and diplomatic support with the operational objective of reforming the Afghan Constitution to limit the powers of executive branch of the central government and enhance the ability of subnational government to meet the needs of their constituents. The first suggested reform would include limiting the appointment authority of the Afghan president to Supreme Court Justices and cabinet ministers. Secondly, financial, logistical, and diplomatic support to enable the election of district councils must become a primary TLOE. Finally, independent commission appointments should be constitutionally mandated to be selected by the legislative branch of government to strengthen the legitimacy of these institutions. These multinational

diplomatic efforts have the potential to defeat insurgencies by offering credible alternatives to militancy and terrorism by offering a truly representative mandate to the people of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In summary, the HIG is a terrorist organization that, while a lethal threat to Coalition and US personnel and interests, poses little strategic threat to the future of Afghanistan. However, the second-order effects of dismantling and reintegrating the longest living Afghan insurgency would have profound positive IO effects for GIRoA. These effects include bolstering public support for GIRoA and eliciting increased pressure on the Taliban and Haqanni Network.

This paper has argued that the United States must apply a whole-of government operation approach in support of Afghan-led lines of operation that include counter-terrorism and stability operations, insurgent reconciliation programs, and the reformation of the current Afghan Constitution. The successful execution of these LOEs is vital to the defeat of the HIG and, eventually, the remaining Afghan insurgencies. An extensive historical background along with a threat assessment of the HIG was provided to help explain the operational environment and define the problem set. Furthermore, evidence based on academic research and operational assessments was presented to support an operational approach that incorporates a robust multinational team along three primary LOEs. The three primary LOEs of ANSF support operations, reconciliation operations, and governance support operations were analyzed and suggested courses of action for each LOE were presented and substantiated based on academic theory and operational lessons-learned.

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