



ON TRACK

CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE ASSOCIATIONS INSTITUTE | L'INSTITUT DE LA CONFÉRENCE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE LA DÉFENSE

THE LEGACY OF 9/11 & THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN LESSONS LEARNED & THE WAY FORWARD



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ON TRACK is the official journal of the CDA Institute. Through its pages, the CDA Institute promotes informed public debate on security and defence issues and the vital role played by the Canadian Armed forces in society. ON TRACK facilitates this educational mandate by featuring a range of articles that explore security, defence, and strategic issues that may have an impact on the Canadian strategic interests and on the safety of its citizens. The views expressed in ON TRACK are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the CDA Institute.

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The Legacy of 9/11 & the War in Afghanistan | Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

Twenty years have past since the U.S. military, with British support, began a bombing campaign against Taliban forces in Afghanistan in response to the September 11th attacks. This officially launched Operation Enduring Freedom, to which Canada pledged its future support. So began a twenty year long ill-defined military involvement in Afghanistan. The U.S. military's withdrawal from the region on August 30th 2021 marked the official end of that involvement, and a historic bookend to the 9/11 era. The world has had twenty years to grapple with the events of 9/11, the immediate and long term military responses, and their outcomes. This Fall 2021 edition of ON TRACK is dedicated to looking back on the 9/11 era, what lessons Canada can learn from it, and how to move forward.

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20 Years Since 9/11: Time to Re-Imagine Canada's Security

By Christopher Ankersen, PhD

Looking Back...

U.S. President Joe Biden, in a speech delivered on August 31, 2021, drew a line under the so-called Global War on Terror, a two-decade campaign that began on September 11, 2001.¹ He said that the time had come for the United States to re-evaluate the way in which it pursued its foreign policy and security objectives. An era, he said, was ending, and preparation for a new one was underway.

While 9/11 and the actions taken in its aftermath are rightly remembered as American, they were defining times for other nations. Canada was in no way isolated from what happened. From the twenty-four Canadian citizens killed in the World Trade Center², to the fact that a Canadian general led the NORAD response that day³, to Gander's role in accommodating rerouted air traffic (immortalized in the Broadway hit *Come From Away*), to our ambassador to NATO's suggestion that Article 5 should be invoked, 9/11 was a pivotal day for Canada.

The government understood how important 9/11 was; then-prime minister Jean Chrétien knew the importance of 'standing shoulder to shoulder' with the United States and, as a result, Canada was amongst the first countries to follow America to Afghanistan⁴, first in the shape of a special operations deployment, later as battlegroups, trainers, and advisors. While over 40,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces would eventually rotate through Kabul and Kandahar with 165 dying there, Afghanistan was more than a defence activity: for a time, the country became Canada's largest development programme⁵. Domestically, too, changes were made. As the U.S. moved to consolidate its internal security architecture into the Department of Homeland Security, Canada undertook a number of moves to strengthen its own security and reassure Washington.⁶

...To Move Forward

With twenty years having passed and the West out of Afghanistan, many are looking back at the past two decades. I want to take this occasion to suggest two ways in which Canada needs to take heed of President Biden's words: "it's time to look for the future". First, we need to understand what Canada's role is in a world where the United States has pledged to focus inwards. Second, we need to wake up to the reality that our security is not divisible. We must re-imagine Canada's security in a more comprehensive fashion, properly integrating its various dimensions.

Handmaid to the Hegemon?

Canada has always played the role of handmaid to the hegemon. For nearly 150 years, we have marched to the beat of drums played in London or in Washington.



Canadians were part of British adventures up the Nile, to South Africa to Flanders. While there were notable and important exceptions in Vietnam and Iraq, Canada has answered the call to support the dominant global power (even when the government in Ottawa has not been the one to approve it).⁷ Canadians followed Americans to Korea, to Kuwait, to Afghanistan. This is an important point worth reinforcing. Canada did not go to war with Afghanistan to defend human rights: the Taliban had been in power mistreating women and minority groups for five years prior to our involvement. Moreover, we did not go to war in defence of the abstract notion of the ‘liberal international order’ as some would suggest.⁸ We went to war in Afghanistan to reinforce our relationship with America. We stood ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with American troops in order to maintain strong bonds with our neighbour and largest trading partner.

What will happen now as the focus of the United States continues to shift? While the Trump administration is often blamed for adopting an ‘American First’ approach to global affairs, the U.S. began to change its view of international leadership under Obama’s tenure. ‘Leading from behind’ eventually evolved into ‘don’t do stupid

shit’.¹⁰ While cries of isolationism and even restraint are overblown¹¹, America is re-evaluating its role as ‘world cop’. Biden has spoken repeatedly about the need to develop a “foreign policy for the [American] middle class”.¹² Not only is the current hegemon considering a change, there are potential challengers waiting in the wings. China’s leader Xi Jinping has made it clear that he is working to “build a new type of international relations.”¹³

What does this all mean for Canada? Now is a good time for Canada to undertake honest, perhaps uncomfortable, reflection. How do we see ourselves? Will our traditional role as a ‘helpful fixer’ be demanded, or even appreciated, by a new, more introspective Washington? Will a more introspective Washington remain favourable to Canada’s security interests? Will the Arctic or our freshwater and other resources remain sovereignly Canadian?

If the torch of hegemony is no longer held high by American, or perhaps taken up by China, how should Canada respond? What are we willing to do without the United States, either on our own or with other ‘like-minded states’ to project and protect our interests and values abroad? Given that we

failed to obtain a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council how does the rest of the world see Canada?¹⁴ As Australia is learning¹⁵, and as we have experienced already with the plight of the two Michaels¹⁶, it is right to ponder what we can do in the face of Chinese opposition, especially on our own.

Stovepiped Understandings of Security

Now is also an opportune time to look at our security in a more comprehensive light. Traditionally, Canada—like most other countries—divvies up security into a number of different categories. Foreign and domestic; military and civilian. At one point, these divisions may have made sense. Today, however, in a globalized world where disinformation, cyberattacks, viruses, and the effects of the global climate emergency do not stop at borders, perhaps it is time to reconsider how we understand, address, and organize for our own security needs in Canada. Canadians expect to be safe, secure, and prosperous in their own country, and should not have to be concerned about bureaucratic niceties about department jurisdictions or budgets. They pay their taxes; the rest is detail. How, then, should we proceed?

While we often hear that we don't spend enough on defence¹⁷, "[t]he Department of National Defence (DND) is the largest department within the federal government in terms of budget and size. In 2019-20, DND's budget accounted for approximately 7.3% of the total Main Estimates for Canada."¹⁸ Does this mean that it should take on more and more of the security burden? As the effects of Covid threatened Canada's population and

economy, the CAF were called upon to provide support, whether that was to long-term care facilities, indigenous communities,¹⁹ or the national vaccine roll-out effort,²⁰ where they performed well. Responding to storms, floods and forest fires has always been a 'stand-by', task for the military. As the effects of climate change exacerbate, and the frequency and intensity of such contingencies increases, demand for CAF assistance will likewise ramp up.

Should these kinds of missions merely be absorbed by the military? If so, should training for domestic operations be beefed up, or will the extant capacity for disciplined and coordinated action, coupled with an array of logistical, communications, and transportation assets and a 'can do' attitude, be sufficient? If these types of tasks and the training and preparation they could entail persist, what effect will they have on the readiness of the CAF? In the real world of opportunity costs, what is being neglected while the focus shifts to these missions? Military leaders here (and elsewhere) are concerned with how they can best rise to the challenge of preparing for great power competition while attending to important domestic tasks, too.

Quite apart from issues of capability, though, does leaving these jobs to the CAF run the risk of militarizing domestic security, with whatever concomitant ethical and political risks that might come with that? As Rosa Brooks has noted in the United States, there is a danger in the military being regarded as a 'one-stop shop'.²¹

If, on the other hand, we don't want domestic response issues to become the stock in trade of the armed forces, what are we willing to do about it? Should the government invest in a different organization to take on these tasks?

A rapid response corps, perhaps formed as part of Public Safety Canada? Would it be efficient to have to recruit, train, equip, and deploy such an organization? How would such a mechanism work with regards to the various federal, provincial, and municipal responsibilities? That these questions are difficult should not be an excuse not to tackle them, leaving things as they are, hoping things turn out for the best.

What is to be done?

Anniversaries are a time for reflection. The twentieth anniversary of 9/11 presents just such an opportunity for Canada. Any such reflection on Canadian security policy needs to focus on four key areas: philosophy, priorities, strategy, and mechanisms.

1. Philosophy

As mentioned above, it is time for Canadians to examine the fundamentals that underpin much of our security. Rather than merely ‘carrying on as usual’ we need to be frank with ourselves as we take an honest look at the world around us, and rebuild a philosophy of security. Many observers believe that any such philosophy means focusing on our national interests. While this is a sound recommendation, we tend to express our national interests in ways that obscure rather than elucidate. Simply saying that we want to protect our territory and our people while promoting our prosperity and advancing our values is too generic to be helpful. While these goals are not incorrect, work must be done below that level, with much more specificity. That work could be guided by answering the following questions:

- What are the threats and hazards that have the potential to do us harm?
- Whence do they come?

- What is their likelihood and timeframe?
- What is their impact on our safety, security, and prosperity?
- Who is most susceptible to that harm?

However, it is not just specificity that is needed. It is time to re-imagine security as a comprehensive subject, not one that cleaves neatly into separate fiefdoms. There should be no *a priori* distinction between foreign and domestic here, no turf wars between particular government departments or agencies. Pre-existing notions about ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ should not blind us to the potential sources of harm.



2. Priorities

If done correctly, the process of answering these philosophical questions should shed light on what our priorities might be. By looking at more than just threats, and incorporating an evaluation of urgency, impact, and vulnerability, Canada would be in a much better place to identify and focus on those things that pose the greatest risk to Canada. The relative importance of public health and climate change, for instance, might call for more attention than other, more traditional security concerns. Particular areas of the world might present themselves as being worthy of focus. Prioritizing some issues or regions, of course, means ‘de-

prioritizing' other issues or regions. Political considerations (such as lobbying by vote-rich diasporas or affinity for historical friends) will doubtlessly enter into this process; that should not preclude a more objective assessment in the first instance.

3. Strategy

With these priorities in mind, Canada could then develop a new, revised comprehensive security strategy, one that incorporates all the various dimensions of security, from military, to cyber, to economic, to individual. Over the last twenty years, developments in areas such as cyber security, for example, have been subject to a great deal of legal attention, which is good. However, have those cyber objectives and capabilities been properly integrated into a wider, national security strategy? Rather than a mash-mash of separate aims and policies that either neglect other aspects of security or—even worse—act at cross-purposes to one another, a comprehensive security strategy would allow for more 'whole of government' solutions to complex security challenges, such as those categorized as 'hybrid', emanating from countries such as China and Russia.

4. Mechanisms

Only once a comprehensive security strategy is developed can a detailed examination of the mechanism be undertaken. Which tasks should be assigned to which organization (department or agency)? Do existing tasks need to be reassigned or dropped? What interdependencies exist? Is there a need for new mechanisms of delivery or oversight? For example, as recently suggested by a number of security observers, Canada lacks a permanent cabinet committee dedicated to security.²² Resources should be allocated according to the priorities determined. Do we

need new capabilities, platforms, laws, and relationships?



Conclusion

None of this will be easy. It will require a deviation from the norm in Canadian politics, but the circumstances call for just such a thorough-going approach. The recent re-election may convince some that nothing this drastic is possible. While it is true that governments without a majority have tended to be cautious, that is not a hard and fast rule. Lester Pearson's government, in power from 1965 to 1968, produced an impressive array of legislative achievements. It is time for Canada to take its security seriously and get to work re-imagining what it needs to do.

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2001-2021: Twenty Years After 9/11

By: M.E. Cox, PhD

In perhaps one of the quickest books published following 9/11, long-time observer of the Middle Eastern scene—LSE professor, Fred Halliday—brought out a short, brilliant volume, suitably entitled *Two Hours That Shook the World*.²³ In it, Halliday wisely warned the West of not overreacting to the attack, and in particular of not buying into the increasingly influential idea (first popularized by Sam Huntington) that this attack was but an expression of a wider ‘clash of civilizations’ between Islam and the West.²⁴ Three years later, it very much looked as if Halliday’s warning had not been heeded. As he gloomily put it: “Three years after the most spectacular guerrilla action of modern history, the coordinated events of 11 September 2001 in the United States, the world appears further away than ever from addressing the fundamental issues confronting it, and to be moving ever more deeply into a phase of confrontation, violence and exaggerated cultural difference”.²⁵

Few, I would suppose, disagreed with his gloomy diagnosis back then, and following two failed interventions in the Middle East—one just brought to a chaotic end in Afghanistan—it would be even more difficult to disagree with Halliday now. The picture

over the past twenty years has not exactly been a rosy one. From Iraq to Syria, from Africa to South-East Asia, the world has been forced to come to terms with terrorism in one form or another. The West itself has not been immune to the threat. Deadly terrorist attacks from Paris to Manchester and on to Madrid all indicate that what began with 9/11 (or even earlier) shows no signs of withering away any time soon. If, as Halliday implied, the terrorists set out to ‘shake the world’ in 2001, then by any measure they have succeeded only too well.

Of course, things could have turned out differently. There was no logical reason, for instance, for the Bush administration to have interpreted the attack as constituting the beginning of a ‘long war’. It could just as easily have viewed 9/11 as a one-off. Nor was there any necessary connection between 9/11 and the US decision to invade Iraq 18 months later. If anything, this action was less determined by 9/11 than by the nature of the Bush administration and its reading of the past—not to mention its idiosyncratic understanding of the Middle East and its problems. Indeed, another US administration, led by Al Gore, would almost certainly not have invaded Iraq.

Nor, in truth, did 9/11 come to define everything. For instance, it did not cause the climate crisis. We all did that! Nor was globalization much changed by 9/11: global business just went on and on! It is true that economist Jim O’Neill came up with the idea of the BRICs economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) in the wake of 9/11 and because of 9/11. But their later development had little to do with the attack itself. Asia’s economic rise moreover had little to do with

9/11. Unless I have been reading the wrong books, the great crash of 2008 was more determined by financiers and bankers than terrorists.

But, even if we accept that 9/11 did not define everything that has happened in the world since 2001, its impact nonetheless has been immense.

First, 9/11 changed the United States itself, and not necessarily for the better, making it less tolerant towards others, more nationalistic and increasingly more divided against itself. Moreover, when the war in Iraq began to go badly wrong—which many in the wider International Relations community predicted it might—it undermined trust in government or, more precisely, in the competence of those who ruled. In any functioning democracy, skepticism of those in power is no bad thing. But when a lack of trust segues into a complete distrust of all established politicians—something Donald Trump exploited to the full in his campaign to become President—then the way was left open for the populists. Populism in the US has many roots, but one clearly was an increasingly strong feeling amongst many ordinary Americans that the foreign policy elite had dragged the US into unnecessary wars, which the US then paid for in terms of blood and treasure. Moreover, it had done so in parts of the world where America had no vital national security interests. Thus, when Trump said ‘it was time to come home’, and went onto make a deal with the Taliban in February 2020 to achieve this end, few at the time seemed willing to oppose him.

However, if the cost of staying was too high, according to Trump, then as Biden has discovered, the price of getting out has (thus

far) proved to be possibly higher. The rationale for withdrawal was not without its own logic. It also happened to be popular amongst most Americans who agreed with Biden that there was little purpose to be served by staying on. Yet as even some of Biden’s strongest supporters have pointed out, the chaotic way in which the withdrawal happened, preceded by a complete victory for the Taliban, very much looks like a major setback for the West. There is little doubt, for instance, that the decision to withdraw has damaged the transatlantic relationship, and trust in the President—possibly in the United States itself. The Chair of the German parliament’s foreign relations committee Norbert Röttgen, could hardly contain his dismay: ‘I say this with a heavy heart and with horror over what is happening, but the early withdrawal was a serious and far-reaching miscalculation by the current administration’ which ‘does fundamental damage to the political and moral credibility of the West’. (*Politico*, August 17th, 2021)

Others in the UK were a little less diplomatic, including three former Prime Ministers. John Major even called the decision to get out ‘strategically stupid’, Tony Blair defined it as ‘imbecilic’, while Theresa May asked, in one of her more effective performances in the House of Commons, where global Britain was on the streets of Kabul? Several MPs also joined in the attack, one of whom, the influential Tom Tugendhat, even received a round of applause from all sides when he concluded his speech by reminding his fellow parliamentarian that, if the West’s chaotic withdrawal did not represent a defeat, ‘it damn well’ felt ‘like it’.

Finally, as we contemplate the future, we are bound to ask the question: who might gain



most from the debacle in Afghanistan? The answer normally provided is, of course, China. We shall no doubt have to wait and see. But we should not be surprised by this. After all, there was already a link of sorts between 9/11 and perhaps the most important development of the following 20 years—China’s explosive entry onto the world stage. China would no doubt have emerged without the original attack. But in the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT), which the United States then felt compelled to wage, Washington was prepared to make every concession to build bridges to potential rivals—now defined as ‘responsible stakeholders’—such as China. This may have been a wise and necessary policy back then. But while the United States remained bogged down fighting wars across the Middle East, China quietly got on with doing what it seems to do best: namely ‘rising’, that is until the US woke up to the

fact that it might have a serious long-term challenge on its hands. One that will prove every bit as difficult to deal with — if not more so — as 9/11. Indeed, once the smoke and dust begin to clear post-withdrawal from Afghanistan, this is bound to be Biden’s biggest challenge of all.

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Whole-of-Government Action: Has Canada Learned From its Afghanistan Experience?

By Colonel Charles Davies
(Ret'd)

Introduction

The world is changing rapidly and all countries face new threats both domestically, as a result of climate change and other trends, and globally. Increasingly, national responses require Whole of Government solutions involving integrated planning and execution of unified action by multiple agencies. In Canada, we do see ongoing efforts to better integrate the business of government – from aligning spending to “Whole of Government priorities,” to reporting against the “Whole of Government framework for environmental priorities,” to a “Whole of Government approach to Inuit employment and training”, and more – however it is less clear whether the concept has gone much beyond an alignment of policy and departmental priorities to the point of creating a real

capability for unified action by multiple departments.

After the 9/11 attacks, Canada joined the US and other allies in a significant military intervention in Afghanistan, which evolved into Canada’s first major post-World War II overseas Whole of Government mission. This paper looks at that mission and a current domestic national effort, the pandemic response, to assess whether the lessons from Afghanistan have led to improvements in the Government of Canada’s execution of integrated national responses.

Historical Case – The Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT)

Canada’s Whole of Government effort in Afghanistan began in 2005 when it took over responsibility for Kandahar Province from the US as part of the International Security Assistance Force.²⁶ The mission’s objectives were broadly set out in the Afghanistan Compact, an agreement between the host government and coalition forces, which laid out a wide-ranging program of activity across three interdependent areas of activity:

- Security;
- Governance, rule of law and human rights; and
- Economic development.

The second and third areas were the primary focus of the KPRT, which comprised diplomats, development workers, police and corrections officers as well as military personnel.²⁷ In 2008 former Cabinet minister John Manley led an independent review of the mission, and the resulting report called the KPRT “*a centrepiece of Canada’s engagement in Afghanistan.*”²⁸ However, it also identified a number of significant



problems, among other things noting *“While we acknowledge the courage and professionalism of the civilians posted to Kandahar, the Canadian-led PRT in Kandahar also displays signs of the fragmentation and uncoordinated effort that prevail throughout the programming of international development aid in Afghanistan. Effectiveness would be enhanced by aligning national and departmental priorities and operations more closely—and more collaboratively.”*²⁹

While the report did lead to improved coordination through the creation of a new Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, a supporting committee of Deputy Ministers, and an Afghanistan Task Force within the Privy Council Office,³⁰ the institutional weaknesses it identified had deep roots in the government’s legal and policy architecture and were never successfully overcome during the mission. Rather, a series of patchwork

fixes were applied, but the results were often sub-optimal. For example, in place of a unified local contracting and contract management system for the KPRT, contributing departments retained their own contracting responsibility, with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) providing contract management support as necessary (e.g. where security conditions precluded civilian visits to project sites).³¹ This was enough of a problem to be highlighted in a 2011 KPRT lessons learned review³² and illustrates the kind of institutional deficiencies that forced staff to divert effort away from doing the job at hand towards inventing the means to accomplish it. Similar issues could be found in areas of financial management, human resources management, and others.

More fundamentally, however, without the participation of the CAF the KPRT would have had no effective common framework for planning, managing and coordinating its

work, because departments contributing team members each had their own business practices, rules, lexicons and cultures.³³ Even with the military providing a common work methodology, the personnel on the ground had to improvise ways to collaborate in a highly complex and difficult environment. As the Manley Panel report made clear, the stovepiped nature of the management structures above them did not help. RMC Professor Howard Coombs put it this way: *“If twenty-first century interventions require teams of people familiar with each other and their capabilities, this suggests the establishment of integrated professional development systems and the wider use of cross-departmental assignments to increase operating familiarity between DND, DFAIT, CIDA and others.”*³⁴

Current Case – Canada’s Pandemic Response

The federal government’s pandemic response is a very different mission with different challenges. While it has yet to be studied as deeply as the KPRT mission, researchers and journalists have obtained enough primary source material through Access to Information to clearly identify significant issues. As in the Afghanistan mission, the dedication and professionalism of the public servants doing the difficult work involved are not the problem – the roots are in the strategic

fundamentals. Deficiencies have been revealed in areas ranging from intelligence gathering and early warning³⁵ to strategic analysis and planning.³⁶ However, they also extend into the integration of the Whole of Government effort.³⁷ This is particularly true at what the military calls the operational level, which is the bridge between the strategic goals set by political leaders and orchestrated action on the ground by multiple players. An example is the quarantine program for incoming international travellers, which has been characterized as “...unequal, incoherent and full of loopholes.”³⁸ It is noteworthy that the federal government (and at least two provinces) brought in military expertise to support the most critical, and most successful, area of the pandemic response: the distribution of vaccines from points of manufacture to points of use.³⁹ The question, though, is why the military? Canada has a civilian National Emergency Response System that coordinates federal government responses to emergencies and the provision of support to provinces through the Government Operations Centre.⁴⁰ This system has existed for over a decade, so why isn’t it the primary backstop to the departments executing the national pandemic response?

Professor Christian Leuprecht of RMC and Queen’s University has identified one reason, noting that the CAF are “...the only federal organization with the highly trained, well-educated and experienced roster of specialists and assets to plan and execute complex and large-scale operations...”⁴¹ This is supported by comments made to this author several years ago by a senior RCMP official that the key to success in the complex security operation for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics was the mission planning, command and



control expertise contributed by the military. This was not an indictment of the RCMP's institutional competencies, but rather an acknowledgement that these don't include the operational level capabilities the CAF maintains.

What Needs to Change

There is nothing fundamentally wrong with using the CAF's unique capabilities in the planning and management of Whole of Government responses, but this alone is not enough. Operations like the KPRT mission and the pandemic response can't be executed with any degree of agility, speed or effectiveness by simply pushing the routine machinery of civilian departments to work faster. They need a purpose-designed horizontal business architecture that enables the establishment of unity in thought, purpose and action across departments in the development and execution of well-integrated Government of Canada plans. Creating such an architecture requires action in at least three areas: legislation and policy; culture; and leadership.

Legislation and Policy. The legal and policy framework defining Canada's machinery of government is largely designed around the routine business of departments and not Whole of Government responses. The systemic obstacles that hampered the KPRT largely remain today, including rigidity in how departmental mandates are interpreted,⁴² inconsistencies in financial and human resource management practices between departments (a problem for interdepartmental teams), ponderous resource approval processes,⁴³ and more. A better legal and policy framework is required to enable more seamless cooperation, unified planning and

management of complex operations (including flexible pooling of resources by departments), and better policy pathways for collaboratively delivering results.

Culture. Departments naturally develop unique cultures, business practices and lexicons, and this influences the way they organize and operate.⁴⁴ While bringing internal strength, in a Whole of Government context this cultural diversity can impede communications and the development of common understanding; impair the coordination of activities; and hinder the establishment of the unity of thought, purpose and action required to succeed.⁴⁵ Military forces also have cultural diversity but they overcome its potentially divisive influences through common operational planning, command and control procedures⁴⁶ and training.⁴⁷ Their solution works and would not be difficult to adapt to the needs of civilian departments, although other models are possible.

Leadership. Effective conduct of any complex operation requires competent, experienced leadership to establish common intent and flexibly direct the integrated planning and control of activities. This is why military forces deliberately develop leaders through ongoing long-term investments in training, identification of leadership potential, and nurturing it through deliberate experiential development.⁴⁸ As the KPRT lessons learned review noted, the government similarly needs to establish a sustainable system for reliably identifying and developing future civilian leaders who are well-prepared for planning and managing complex Whole of Government activities.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Whole of Government has been a policy watchword in the Government of Canada since not long after 9/11, but our comparison of the KPRT experience to the current pandemic response shows that little progress has been made towards creating an effective capability to orchestrate collective action by departments. It is too soon to pass definitive judgement on the recent interdepartmental effort to evacuate Canadian citizens and others from Kabul, but early analyses point to a disjointed and stovepiped operation that failed to deliver anything approaching the required or expected results.⁵⁰ Researchers will need time to obtain relevant documents and fully assess the government's response, but the signs are not positive.

We need to do better. Canada is a G7 country with significant economic capacity⁵¹ and a globally connected population, and we are in an uncertain environment where the climate is changing, power balances are shifting and traditional international mechanisms for regulating affairs, adjudicating disputes and responding to threats are losing their effectiveness. If this country is to successfully respond to the kinds of complex domestic and international challenges we will face going forward, the Government of Canada must become much more competent and practised at planning and executing successful Whole of Government actions.

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²⁶“Operation Athena” Recently Completed Operations, Government of Canada Department of National Defence, last modified 19 November, 2014 and now archived, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/recently-completed/operation-athena.html>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Manley et al, “*Report of the Independent Panel on Canada’s Future Role in Afghanistan*.” (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2008)

²⁹ Ibid, Page 26.

³⁰ Howard Coombs, “*Canadian Whole of Government Operations: Kandahar – September 2010 to July 2011*” (CDA Institute Report, Conference of Defence Associations Institute, December 2012).

³¹ Author’s personal files. The author was the DND lead for efforts in Ottawa in 2006 and 2007 to provide the KPRT with a workable in-theatre contracting solution. Despite the best intentions of all departments involved (National Defence, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Department of International Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) the legal obstacles to a unified solution could not be overcome so instead individual departments were given exceptional contracting authorities. DND’s authority to contract locally up to \$1M expired at the end of the mission.

³² Kimberley Unterganschnigg, “Canada’s Whole of Government Mission in Afghanistan ~ Lessons Learned” *Canadian Military Journal* Vol 13 No2 (Spring 2013). See also Coombs.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Coombs. The acronyms refer to: DND – Department of National Defence; DFAIT – Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade; and CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency.

³⁵ See, for example, Grant Robertson, “‘Without early warning you can’t have early response’: How Canada’s world-class pandemic alert system failed” *The Globe and Mail*, July 25, 2020 and updated January 26, 2021. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-without-early-warning-you-cant-have-early-response-how-canadas/>

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³⁹ Major-General Dany Fortin, seconded to the Public Health Agency of Canada until being replaced by Brigadier-General Krista Brodie; General Rick Hillier (Retired) in Ontario; and Lieutenant-General Paul Wynnyk (Retired) in Alberta.

⁴⁰ “*The Government Operations Centre (GOC) provides an all-hazards integrated federal emergency response to events...of national interest. It provides... national-level planning and whole-of-government response management.*” Public Safety Canada website. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/mrgnc-mngmnt/rspndng-mrgnc-vnts/gvrnmnt-prtns-cntr-en.aspx>

⁴¹ Christian Leuprecht, “Military efforts at home are increasingly the norm. A Joint Task Force Canada is the next logical step,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 11, 2021).

⁴² Within the KPRT this sometimes led to disagreements between departments over boundaries. Unterganschnigg.

⁴³ For example, CAF mission budgets are typically authorized by Treasury Board months after troops first arrive on the ground. In the interim, DND has to cash-manage the additional costs within its regular budget.

⁴⁴ This was one of the issues highlighted in the KPRT lessons learned review. Unterganschnigg.

⁴⁵ Unterganschnigg and Coombs.

⁴⁶ See, for example: Department of National Defence Canada, “*Canadian Forces Joint Publication 5.0 (CFJP 5.0): The Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process*.” (Ottawa: Government of Canada, April 2008); and “*Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0 (CFJP 3.0) Operation*” (Ottawa: Government of Canada, July 2010)

⁴⁷ Much of it delivered through the Canadian Forces College, e.g. the Joint Command and Staff Programme for mid-grade leaders and National Security Programme for executive-level leaders as well as several shorter courses. See the College website at <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/248-eng.html>

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⁴⁹ Unterganschnigg.

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⁵¹ According to International Monetary Fund data, in 2020 Canada had the ninth-largest economy in the world, up from tenth place in 2019. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPD@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD>

The Implications of Who is Considered a Terrorist in the Post-9/11 Era

Shannon Nash, PhD.

An enduring legacy of the 9/11 attacks is the jihadi-centric threat narrative that quickly developed and has continued to influence what constitutes terrorism twenty years later. The fixation on Muslims or those framed as “other” as a threat to Canadian national security dominated threat perceptions. This hindered an appreciation for the rise of other terrorist threats, specifically ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE), sustained prejudice against Muslims, and affected how terror threats are compartmentalized, understood, and countered. Although it is not a new phenomenon, the rate of increase in frequency and lethality of IMVE has scholars, practitioners, and communities ringing alarm bells about the threat posed by racially and ethnically motivated terrorism. The threat environment has been changing and proponents of right-wing extremism have been responsible for far greater harm in Canada over the past decade than have “violent Islamists”.⁵² According to the 2020

Global Terrorism Index, far-right incidents have increased by 250 percent in North America, Western Europe, and Oceania since 2014, with deaths increasing by 709 percent over the same period.⁵³ In comparison to al Qaeda, the Islamic State (ISIS), and their affiliates, IMVE groups present relatively distinct organizational structures and patterns of violence, including significant roles for lone actors. Discrimination and prejudice are inflamed by racist attitudes, the espoused ideology of IMVE, and the social polarization, distrust, and fear that are becoming uncomfortably mainstream. Jihadi-inspired attacks have been used to drive a narrative of “radical Islamic terrorism,” and there is a growing concern of reciprocal radicalization and tit-for-tat violence that will further amplify discord and energize ideologically motivated violent extremists.⁵⁴

The Canadian system of counterterrorism was designed under the threat of al Qaeda, and terror offences align historically with the tactics and behaviour of al Qaeda-inspired terrorists. In this context, 56 of the 58 terrorism charges laid in Canada from 2001 to 2020 have been cases of individuals inspired by al Qaeda or ISIS, or the violent ideologies such groups espouse.⁵⁵ An analysis of Canada’s terrorist entity listings and the *Public Reports on the Terrorist Threat to Canada* from 2013 - 2018 indicates a nearly exclusive focus on al Qaeda and ISIS-inspired terrorism during this time.⁵⁶ In the Public Reports, IMVE, which includes racially and ethnically motivated terrorism, only briefly appears in the 2017 report framing the threat as right-wing extremism, and then again in 2018, with minimal, retroactive attention to the cases of Justin Bourque and Alexander Bissonnette as “The Face of Right-Wing Extremism in Canada”. The April 2018 van

attack is described as a “lesser-known” form of ideological extremism.⁵⁷ “Islamic” is by far the most used descriptor in the terrorist entity listings.⁵⁸ The threat posed by al Qaeda, ISIS, and those inspired by their ideologies, has framed the way Canada has understood and labelled terrorism for almost twenty years. The decades old counterterrorism toolbox established in response to hierarchical organization-based threats is ill-equipped to respond to increasingly nebulous extremist threats.⁵⁹ According to Dr. Eviane Leidig, a Research Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, “The phenomenon of incels (as well as far-right extremism) is fragmented, socially diverse, and perhaps most importantly, amplifies mainstream gender norms that appear acceptable to the public. The latter point reveals a bias in programming efforts that must be addressed in order to effectively counter this threat.”⁶⁰

Anger and fear led to aggressive actions to stop the next attack after 9/11 and Muslims became suspect en masse. Hate crimes and negative attitudes against Muslims surged in Canada after 9/11 and reports have not yet returned to pre-9/11 levels.⁶¹ Dr. Sunera Thobani, Professor at the University of British Columbia, explains that “This hatred of Muslims, it has been a constant feature of Canadian political life in the period since 9/11.”⁶² Furthermore, “There was a real feeling that the terrorists were everywhere,” Thobani says, “That was prevalent throughout the West, including in Canada.”⁶³ Reem Bahdi, Dean of Law at the University of Windsor, explains that the “war on terror” took the form of “a vast and complex array of laws, regulations, policies, and practices that cut across contexts like criminal law, tax law, laws regulating financial institutions, employment, intelligence services, and airport

security.”⁶⁴ This included refugee policies, deportations in the name of terrorism prevention, and the use of Security Certificates to detain and impose sanctions against five men of Arab descent with alleged ties to terrorist activities in Canada. All five have argued that information procured from torture was used against them. Security Certificates have drawn both speculation and condemnation on issues of constitutionality, denials of due process, and extended periods of delayed reviews resulting in cruel and unusual punishment.⁶⁵ Increased domestic surveillance sought to root out enemies within and allegations of domestic spying and collection of metadata by the Communications Security Establishment Canada inspired a great deal of confusion about the precise nature of surveillance.⁶⁶ In a critique of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001 Justice Lorne Sossin said “...the very fact that countries such as Canada showed such readiness to jettison fundamental civil liberties (e.g., the authorization of preventative detention) in the face of terrorist threats reflected an abnegation of the very values [that] stand so starkly opposed to the logic of terrorism.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, the listing of terrorist entities disproportionately affected Canadian Arab and Muslim communities, which created the perception of bias on the part of the state toward the affected groups.⁶⁸ According to Bahdi, racial profiling debates in the context of the war against terrorism did not revolve around whether it was happening or how to prevent it, but on whether Canadian society could morally, legally, or politically condone racial profiling.⁶⁹

A scapegoating of enemies within created multilayered societal unease and voices of hate, deliberate misinformation, and genuine misunderstandings. This has generated a

powerful message that Muslims are not to be trusted.⁷⁰ This hindered an appreciation of the rise of IMVE and often fuelled the social currents of hate it is derived from. Thobani speaks of an “othering” that never stopped and “That gap has been growing even larger since 9/11.”⁷¹ Over the past twenty years, a “Muslimization” of the problem of terrorism developed in the public sphere, and “an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ aspect to Canadian discourse and actions in the counterterrorism realm.”⁷² Conceptions of who is a threat has also affected immigration and refugee policies, including during the Syrian civil war in which Canada’s plan in 2015 singled out the acceptance of women, children, and families to, according to one source, “deal with some ongoing concerns around security” and unaccompanied men.⁷³ Canadian officials, intelligence and law enforcement agencies have made statements and delivered reports in recent years emphasizing that terrorism is not restricted to a particular group or religion. The Government of Canada added six IMVE groups and one American neo-Nazi to the terrorist entity listings in the first half of 2021. It also convened a National Summit on Islamophobia in July 2021 to provide a national platform for Muslim communities to identify concrete ways to combat Islamophobia across the country, including funding for projects through the Anti-Racism Action program. Canadian political leaders have spoken out against racism and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said “Islamophobia and hate have no place in our country.”⁷⁴ Even in the face of some recent progress, there is a dangerous legacy to how readily, consistently, and nearly exclusively the term “terrorists” has been applied to Muslims or those linked to what was labeled as “Islamic extremism.” The Summit in July was convened within weeks of the deadly

hate-motivated terrorist attack on a Muslim family in London, Ontario. On average, over 140 police-reported hate crimes against Muslims were reported each year between 2018 to 2020.⁷⁵ There have also been a spree of attacks on Muslim women in cities like Edmonton, and mosques are being threatened.⁷⁶ Hate grows in enabling environments and attacks, whether physical or rhetorical, are often invoked when victims are perceived to threaten racialized boundaries meant to separate “us” from “them.”⁷⁷

To begin to comprehend where we are now, there must be a reckoning with the legacy of 9/11 and the “war on terror” to contextualize the unacceptable toll of racism and violence targeting Muslim communities and how this racism is intertwined with contemporary IMVE threat perceptions in Canada and elsewhere for additional context. The unfair and misleading Muslimization of terrorism has had a lasting impact on extremism and conspiracy, both domestically informed and shaped by international politics. The longstanding jihadi-centric threat narrative is also inextricable from the rise of hate, prejudice, and IMVE. While there have been important shifts more recently in the way governments, policymakers, law enforcement officials, courts, the media, and the public define and discuss terrorist threats, this has been slow to develop, and the pandemic has intensified divisions and polarization. The threat posed by broader ideologies, groups, and motivations has coincided with what some have called for as an end to the 9/11 era.⁷⁸ However, former FBI counterterrorism agent and consultant Ali Soufan recently warned that “the terrorism era is far from over. A new, more dangerous phase has begun” after the withdrawal of U.S. forces

from Afghanistan.⁷⁹ It is not an either-or whip-lash between understanding the terrorism of al Qaeda and affiliated groups and domestic ideologically-motivated threats. Seeing it as such runs the risk of returning to dated strategies and tactics and leaves us unprepared for a domestic threat that continues to escalate.⁸⁰ Misinformation, disinformation, and foreign interference both fuel and are fuelled by the growth of populism and the rise of conspiracy theories. COVID-19 has provided “the perfect storm for the spread of misinformation” with its inherent and persistent uncertainty causing anxiety and vulnerability which has fuelled prejudice and hate against minority groups.⁸¹ The threat posed by IMVE, shifting global terror threats, social divisions, great power competition and power vacuums, technological vulnerabilities, and climate change insecurity continue to shape the threat environment with many intersecting points. Decades-long reinforcements of “what is terrorism” and “who is a terrorist” have shaped how perceptions of the threat are formed. This has fostered enduring repercussions for the safety and security of Canadian Muslims and impacted Canada’s ability to conceptualize and counter IMVE. Racism, Islamophobia, white supremacy, and how and who we frame as “other” or “terrorist,” are all profoundly connected.

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Lessons Learned – 20 Years After 9/11

What Would Jane Do? Urbanism & Peace-building in Afghanistan

By Victoria Willes, MPlan

Introduction

A lot went wrong in Afghanistan, or, at the very least, a lot did not go *right*. This article addresses the intersection of urbanization and security, particularly the traps of scale that characterized the mission, and offers lessons in conflict way-finding from an unlikely source: a little old lady in tennis shoes.

Traps of Scale in Afghanistan

The state has long served as the unit of analysis in security discourse, but interstate wars have evolved into predominately intrastate conflicts waged as much in city streets as on remote battlefields. That

evolution is fraught with traps of scale that characterized – and compromised – security and development work in Afghanistan. As a part of the NATO-led mission, for example, Canada's area of operations was provincial. From 2005 to 2011, the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) coordinated and implemented development projects in Kandahar province, but their outputs were underwhelming. The Dahla Dam initiative, intended to be one of Canada's signature projects, failed to become fully operational and illustrated the difficulty of developing and securing lasting liberal systems around remote infrastructure sites.⁸²⁸³ There was an irreconcilable tension between the PRTs' units of operation being territorially bound and the conflict's complex dynamics of power that transcended territory and complicated geographies of Canadian focus and concern.

It is self-limiting when interpretations of peace-building and development are obliged to be clearly divided between international, provincial, and local silos. The failure in Afghanistan demands a new lens that appreciates the complexity of modern conflict and emphasizes human security, social forces, and non-state actors in analysis. In addition to the need to develop longer-term partnerships within civil society, security practitioners are challenged to implement initiatives that are grounded in context and appreciate the political, mutually constitutive relationship between space and place.

Space, Place & Planning

Human geography and urban planning discourse differentiate between concepts of 'space' and 'place'. Where space is an objective and physical entity, place is its relational layer. Place is predicated on

experience, the subjective, and transcends merely territory. One of the greatest difficulties, it follows, is determining how-and-what it means to secure an ever-evolving place. As the prevailing units of conflict analysis and operation were the state and the province, the mission in Afghanistan suffered from a lack of vision and development at the scale of individual lived experience, of urban and civic life. In the pursuit of innovative approaches to de-territorialized conflict and peace-building, the underrepresented discipline of urban planning offers meaningful and actionable insights.

Good urban planning centers lived experience in development work, and its ‘peace-building’ is equal parts conceptual and literal. At the intersection of security and urbanization, planning works across scale to develop the building blocks of a safe and resilient community. Addressing how societies repair and reimagine themselves is invariably complex and spans competing scales and timelines. The aggregate layers of reward and grievance that propel conflict equally complicate its wake. In planning, the task becomes designing a built environment that positively reshapes dynamics of power in place; to create spaces that help undermine mechanisms of violence and facilitate community resilience. By adopting a system-view, a de-territorialized and networked understanding of space and conflict, urban planning can bring peace-building from theory into effective practice. And a little old lady in tennis shoes can help guide the way.

Jane Jacobs & Planning’s Value in Peace-building

Jane Jacobs, once dismissed as a housewife with a propensity for practical footwear, is a foundational theorist and renowned author

within urban studies. Considered the mother of contemporary urban planning, her once renegade theories have become conventional wisdom. “No one questions anymore that lively neighbourhoods require diversity of use and function...that historic buildings should be preserved, that investment in public transportation reduces traffic and promotes neighbourhood activity, that ‘flexible and gradual change’ is almost always preferable to ‘cataclysmic’, broad-stroke redevelopment”.⁸⁴ If urban life was Jacobs’s great subject, then her great theme was the fragility of democracy and the democratic laboratory that cities represent.⁸⁵ To engage cities means to engage life at its most complex and intense, and when cities succeed, they represent the purest manifestation of democratic ideals.⁸⁶ Jacobs further observed, “cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody”.⁸⁷ How people live fundamentally shapes the decisions that they make – for better or worse. By extension, Jacobs would have agreed that urban planning, strategic development at the scale of lived experience, thus offers a meaningful path to the social and economic resilience requisite for sustainable peace.

Pitfalls of Conflict Gentrification

Kandahar’s conflict economy, underpinned by construction contracts from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the PRT, ushered in an economic boom of sorts that reshaped the built environment and local structures of power. At its peak in 2010, US military investment eclipsed \$650 spent on each Kandahari – approximately three times the per capita annual income of

Jacobs, in 1969: an ordinary mom who set out to protect the neighbourhood. Photograph by Elliott Erwitt / Magnum and John J. Burns Library, Boston College



Afghanistan.⁸⁸ Powerful elites effectively captured the higher reaches of the economy in construction and trade, and their cash flows enabled the pursuit of developments in their own image – like the upmarket, gated suburb of Aino Mina.⁸⁹

Home to mainly ex-contractors with established ties to the Karzais or westerners in Afghanistan, the Aino Mina project has been controversial. Its monumental architecture, sweeping boulevards, fountains and shops stand in stark contrast to the eroding dwellings and infrastructure accessible to Kandahar's poorer residents. The project significantly increased local realty values and associated rents. The Afghanistan Independent Land Authority reported that in 2011, a plot of land in Aino Mina sold for \$22

per m². By 2015, the price had climbed to \$40-100 m².⁹⁰ Meanwhile, modest improvements throughout the rest of the city, including electricity and renovations to high-volume bazaars, failed to materialize.⁹¹ For many non-elites, the decaying public infrastructure coupled with higher net rents was untenable, and they were priced out to Kandahar's periphery.⁹² Undeniably, Aino Mina is the product of Kandahar's lack of planning institutions and oversight: a low-density, high-priced, private enclave for the city's few while excluding the precarious urban life of the many.

Kandahar's hyperinflated land values, particularly in elite neighbourhoods like Aino Mina and propelled by foreign contracts, reflect a socially inequitable and

economically unsustainable realty market. Moreover, it illustrates the absence of good urban planning in managing development, delivering collective public good, and best-orienting resilience in the city. Cities need density and diversity, the mixing of capital and communities, for vitality. On a purely economic level, urban density offers an economy of scale when developing city space and services that unlocks broader affordability and access. Importantly however, the built environment also serves as a tangible reflection of social and economic hierarchy. It can be a meaningful marker of change, but also of persistently unequal opportunities and outcomes. Just as in Western markets, resource flows earmarked for wealthy enclaves, particularly at the expense of common civic infrastructure, breeds frustration and resentment. When a city favours one group, it undermines the prospects of many, and with them the democratic project intrinsic to city life. For that reason, Jane Jacobs would have given Aino Mina a failing grade. The better the quality of urban life of all Kandaharis, especially its most vulnerable, the safer and more resilient Kandahar would be.

Mechanisms of Impact

But what, exactly, are planning's mechanisms of impact? How do planning principles help deliver meaningful change? Consider the following examples of mobility and security. Insecurity and precarious employment in rural areas prompted high levels of migration to Afghan cities that, unplanned and unmanaged, served as a destabilizing force. As is common in developing cities, migration rates outpaced urban service capacity, affordable housing, and employment prospects, and vulnerable new arrivals often

remained vulnerable in informal settlements on the city's periphery.

Across (post-)conflict contexts, peripheral settlements often lack access to liberal resource flows and struggle against the pull of illiberal actors. Indeed, rates of urbanization closely correlate with community violence in the Global South.⁹³ In many developing cities, the service-strain of rapid urbanization was compounded by legacies of Modernist planning – the once popular pursuit of an 'efficient' city form that prescribed separating uses (ex. developing a productive urban core and a residential suburban), grand boulevards, and large city blocks of uniform simplicity. The Modernist paradigm found a philosophical home in the USSR, and its planning principles were widely implemented in contemporary Soviet-occupied states – including Afghanistan.⁹⁴ The antithesis to Jane Jacobs's principles of dense, diverse, and mixed-use neighbourhoods, the spatial segregation intrinsic to Modernist planning precipitated intracity inequalities and structures of violence that relied on community isolation. As spatial segregation begets political, social, and economic segregation, these peripheral enclaves presented vacuums of power readily filled and governed by illiberal actors operating as employers and goods and service providers.

In contrast, planning initiatives that increase urban mobility, reconnecting and securing capital flows, have proven remarkably successful in undermining violent local monopolies. For example, Medellín, Colombia, once the 'murder capital of the world' and whose drug cartels maintained terrible neighbourhood controls, now offers a cable car system that connects the previously isolated and (more) dangerous hillside

settlements with the city center. In Damascus, Syria, an initiative that empowered cycling for women and girls challenged patriarchal taboos while also enhancing access to education and work. Complemented by peer-based infrastructures (ride-sharing platforms etc.), broad improvements to transportation networks that expanded residents' access to social and economic opportunities subvert mechanisms of oppression and violence that rely on spatial isolation.

Eyes on the Street

Cities in the image of Jane Jacobs are those whose density and diversity promote vitality, and whose vitality, in turn, lend to heightened security and resilience. Jacobs's dense, mixed-use neighbourhoods, where homes, shops, restaurants, and offices share close proximity, ensures that different people are on the street for different reasons at different times of day.⁹⁵ Vibrant urban landscapes provide a steady stream of “eyes on the street” – an organic system of healthy community surveillance. Sadly, in Kandahar, the benefits of this mechanism were realized in the streetscape tension between police and street vendors. Perceptions of street vendors as security threats prompted police to routinely clear the streets, driving vendors away from legitimate employ, and ultimately undermining intelligence-gathering efforts. Albeit belatedly, police recognized the value of a vibrant streetscape, the opportunity to collaborate with diverse vendor groups and build mutually beneficial security relationships.⁹⁶ Good planning, therefore, developing affordable urban housing, strong resettlement programs that connect new arrivals with capital flows and ethnic support networks, helps accommodate population influx and enhances stability in the city.

Conclusion

Understanding conflict and approaching peace, reconstruction, and reconciliation requires critical observation of *how* activity relates to space – not simply that it *does*. As ‘territory’ is redefined, so too are communities redefining themselves relative to it, and thinking of even the ‘local’ as a location unhelpfully encourages thinking in static terms. Rather, the ‘local’ is a verb and requires re-conception as relationships, activity, and networks. Good interventions should heighten connection over time and transcend traps of scale to navigate aggregate histories and their incentive systems. It is a lofty task, and it is admittedly idealistic to position a well-designed built environment as the keystone to safe communities in conflict environments. To be clear, there are no ‘silver bullets’ in peace-building and development work. That said, the process of interrogating *place*, of closely examining how power maps in a community, can yield meaningful and actionable insights.

In Afghanistan, too few sponsors built too few ladders – needing more projects of smaller, more sustainable urban scale whose successive rungs elevate collective experiences of city life. Developing a sense of shared ownership of urban space, a right to the city, could have served as a subtle gateway for larger rights-based, governance-building projects. Jane Jacobs's urban theories were drafted a long way from the busy streets of Kandahar or Kabul, but they provide valuable guidance for peace-building projects near and far. In her book *Vital Little Plans*, Jacobs states that we need “to respect—in the deepest sense— [the] strips of chaos that have a weird wisdom of their own”.⁹⁷ From density and diversity to vitality and

security, good urban planning does not tame chaos, but rather embraces it. Development at the unit of lived experience engages the complexity of conflict. Against non-ideologically motivated insurgents, the war's accidental guerrillas, planning can even help reshape their landscape to invite different accidents. Hope for Afghanistan was always in its cities, but at the time of writing, its cities are also now its front lines. Quite likely, they are also Afghanistan's last lines of defence. In the pursuit of resilience and peace, one of Afghanistan's great lessons, its weird wisdom, is to listen to the little old lady in tennis shoes.

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