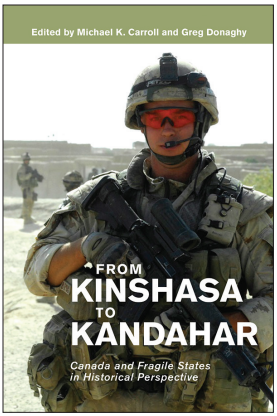
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Press



FROM KINSHASA TO KANDAHAR: Canada and Fragile States in Historical Perspective

Edited by Michael K. Carroll and Greg Donaghy

ISBN 978-1-55238-845-7

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Press
press.ucalgary.ca

Acknowledgement: *We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher,* **re.press**, *and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy* http://www.re-press.org

CHAPTER 8

SIX YEARS IN KANDAHAR: Understanding Canada's Multidimensional Effort to Build a Sustainable Afghan State[1]

Stephen M. Saideman

Introduction

In Afghanistan, Canada faced its most severe challenge with a contemporary failed state—trying to develop order and good governance in an extremely hostile and impoverished environment. The simple phrases used to define the key "pillars" of the effort—security, governance, and development—are more than a little deceptive, as they gloss over the reality that Afghanistan lacked the ability to provide any core function of government. While the entire country faced, and continues to face, incredible difficulties after thirty years of war, the history, geography, and demography of the southern province of Kandahar made it an exceptionally hard place to build "state capacity."[2]

For most of Canada's time in the province, its agents largely ran the international state-building effort in Kandahar, testing the Canadian government's capacity to coordinate its civilian and military efforts, and its

Figure 1: Map. (Credit: Marilyn Croot)

willingness to dedicate sufficient resources to the work. The combination of limited means and challenging environment was daunting enough. Managing the Afghan mission was made even more difficult since the intervention occurred during an unusual time in Canadian history—one of minority government. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments had a hard time generating enough support in Ottawa and in the rest of the country to maintain the effort. Indeed, the bipartisan manoeuvring through which the mission was extended in 2008 also ensured its ending—imposing an arbitrary deadline of 2011. Consequently, Canada had only six years to "fix" one of the most failed regions of one of the most failed countries in the world.

Given the context and the constraints imposed by Canada's limited capabilities and domestic politics, any evaluation of the effort must be a relative one. No international campaign was going to transform Kandahar into a functional, democratic, stable, productive, responsible, and sustainable success story in so little time. However, Canada's relative success in Kandahar, even if only for a short period, suggests that Canada has the potential to play a positive state-building role in other failed and failing states. In Afghanistan, as this chapter contends, Canada did make a difference, albeit a limited one that is likely to be of only temporary impact.

The Challenge of Kandahar

Afghanistan is a largely traditional society with very low literacy rates, an almost entirely agrarian economy, a history of decentralized political authority, and tribal divisions so complicated that outsiders brought in anthropologists to understand the complexities of local ties. The Soviet Union's invasion in December 1979 plunged the country into war, with nearly continuous fighting ever since. The successful fight against the Soviet occupiers and the internecine wars among the victorious factions that followed were extraordinarily brutal. Peace, relative and temporary, came in 1996 at a high price—a very repressive Taliban government, whose Islamic fundamentalist leaders aimed to destroy most of the country's surviving institutions and practices.[3]

The defeat of the Taliban in 2001–2 by the United States, working with the existing power brokers (warlords) in the northern corners of the country, provided only a temporary respite. The US and its allies defeated the Taliban quickly but responded slowly in rebuilding Afghan institutions. Other than anointing Hamid Karzai as the Taliban's heir apparent, the US did little in the early 2000s to reconstruct the country, since such efforts seemed akin to nation-building, a policy that was anathema to American President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.[4] Only in 2005–6 did NATO move outside Kabul to support the Afghan government as it sought to extend its authority beyond the capital and into the countryside.

Historic underdevelopment, decades of war, and the relatively slow Western response after 2001 have meant that Afghanistan consistently ranks near the top in any measure of state fragility or state failure. Indeed, that any country other than Somalia might be more "failed" than Afghanistan is stunning.[5] Despite efforts by NATO to stabilize the country, Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest producers of refugees. Indeed, the NATO strategy focused on providing growing bits of order in concentrated areas—the "ink spots" approach to counter-insurgency. This reveals precisely how limited the reach of the Afghan government was—to where NATO troops were standing and not much further. Indeed, since responsibility for security has transitioned from the International Security Assistance Force to the Afghan National Security Forces, we have seen the ink spots shrink, with the reach of the Afghan government decreasing and the zones of disorder becoming larger.

NATO's efforts to build the sound governing institutions required by a self-sustaining country have been constrained by the Afghan government itself. In contrast to the situation in Bosnia, where international stakeholders via the Office of the High Representative could remove recalcitrant politicians, the Afghan government was largely immune to outside interference. President Hamid Karzai appointed government officials from the highest levels to the lowest office, and his focus was not always on good governance. In Kandahar, Canadians were often frustrated, not just with the governors and bureaucrats appointed by Karzai but also with the region's key power broker: Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of the president.[6]

Within this badly failed state, Kandahar stands out as one of the most challenging parts of the country.[7] The province sits astride key trading routes between Pakistan and the poppy-rich province of Helmand. The Arghandab river provides not only irrigation but, potentially, electrical power for the region. The city of Kandahar is one of the largest in the country, and the closest population centre to the Taliban's safe havens in Pakistan. These features provide tremendous opportunities for whoever controls this area, which has most recently been the home of the Taliban. The Islamic movement emerged from Kandahar, where it was based on the strength of key tribes in the province. Any attempt by the government of Afghanistan to extend its authority into this region, even with the support of its international backers, could expect to face intense resistance. And it did.

The Canadian Effort

In 2005, Canadian politicians decided to deploy the Canadian Forces to Kandahar to support the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which was staffed by Canadian military advisors, officials from Foreign Affairs and CIDA, and individuals from various police forces and Corrections Canada. A NATO innovation to concentrate local governance and development efforts, most PRTs were led by a single country, which largely followed its own agenda. The Kandahar PRT drew the Canadian Forces and the rest of the Canadian political system to the southern Afghan province.[8]

To support the PRT, Canada sent a battle group to Kandahar to deter and thwart the Taliban. This decision has become quite controversial in Canada, with some arguing that the Canadian military duped its civilian partners and cabinet overseers.[9] The evidence, however, indicates that the decision was made by Liberal prime minister Paul Martin with the encouragement of both General Rick Hillier and the Canadian Forces, and the various civilian agencies.[10] While Foreign Affairs may not have had a clear corporate position, key elements within it advocated in favour of Kandahar as the choice for Canada's Afghanistan deployment as it would represent a more visible and, hopefully, influential effort.[11] CIDA considered Kandahar to be a place of maximum need, perhaps overlooking the reasons why it was so underdeveloped in the first place.[12]

Regardless of the blame casting, Canadian politicians knowingly sent a "whole of government" team to one of the most inhospitable and difficult regions in Afghanistan to help build a self-sustaining Afghan government, hopeful that they would make a difference. This represented a far more extensive effort than previous interventions in Somalia and Bosnia, since the PRT was developed not only to provide security but also to facilitate good governance as well as economic and social development.

Though Canadian agencies and departments often talked a good game of harmonious inter-agency cooperation, that effort was not coordinated and "synced." Unfortunately, each government agency brought its own baggage (standard operating procedures, bureaucratic tendencies, expectations) to the effort, and only the enormous political gymnastics and administrative changes required to have the mission extended in 2008

Figure 2: Canadian Master Bombardier Clint Godsoe, Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) patrols Kandahar in August 2008 on the way to deliver supplies to a local school. (Credit: ISAF Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Duran)

produced a relatively integrated effort. The sections below examine each major departmental role and assess the success of the "whole of government" approach to fragile states.

The Canadian Forces: Victory Despite Failure

Perhaps the best indicator of how the Canadian Forces feel about the Kandahar experience is the fact that nearly every commander of the Task Force has been promoted.[13] This is striking when compared to popular Canadian attitudes toward the effort in Kandahar—that the mission failed.[14] While the CF bore the brunt of the burden in the province, with over 150 killed in action and many more wounded, as an institution its prestige rebounded sharply from the "decade of darkness" that followed the deep post–Cold War cuts to its budget in the 1990s and the reduction of its

standing in Canada.[15] Why? Because Canada "punched above its weight," fighting hard in an unusually dangerous environment and contributing far more than larger and wealthier allies, most notably Germany.

Some analysts have argued that the CF effort was aimed largely at ending the peacekeeping myth that constrained Canadians' imagination of what the CF could do.[16] There is doubtless some truth in the charge that the CF had grown frustrated by the popular Canadian view of the armed forces as peacekeepers and not warriors.[17] The mission did see the CF fight differently than in the recent past, as commanders in Ottawa gave commanders in the field far more operational discretion.[18] The CF went on the offensive in 2005 and afterward, moving far afield, including into Uruzguan and Helmand to help out the Dutch and British respectively.

There are two very different ways to measure the CF's impact in Kandahar. On the one hand, one might ask if the Canadian military prevented the Taliban from winning. Or, one could ask, to what extent were the CF able to create a safe and secure environment to facilitate the rest of the state-building project? There is little doubt that Canadian troops prevented the Taliban from seizing Kandahar. Operation Medusa in the summer of 2006, for instance, thwarted a large-scale Taliban campaign to force the Canadians to flee the province.[19] Failing to take the city through direct combat, the Taliban had to rely on roadside bombs, suicide bombers, and assassinations to pressure NATO forces and the Afghan government. While such tactics would not win the hearts and minds of the people of Kandahar, they stopped the CF and NATO from meeting their stated goal of providing a safe and secure environment for the reconstruction of the failed Afghan state.

The CF faced real limitations on its capacity to operate in Kandahar. Most importantly, there were simply not enough troops on the ground, given the size of the population and of the territory they were supposed to pacify.[20] Indeed, the unsatisfactory ratio of counter-insurgents to population, far short of the 1:20 cited in the doctrine manuals, was a key part of a presentation by Brigadier-General Denis Thompson when he spoke in Montreal after his tour as commander of Task Force Kandahar.[21] Lacking troops, the Canadians needed others to help out, and the CF were forced to focus considerable attention on training and equipping the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) to bolster their numbers. This met the short-term goal of improving the numbers fighting

against the insurgents, and eventually helped address the long-term objective of building Afghan security capacity. However, until the American troop surge of late 2009 led to a significant reinforcement in the province, the Canadians simply did not have enough troops to build a safe and secure environment. They could *clear* the insurgents in keeping with the counterinsurgency strategy of "*clear, hold, build*," but they could neither *hold* nor *build*. Until 2010, the Canadian operation in Afghanistan's most dangerous province might be characterized as simply "mowing the lawn" or "serving as a fire brigade"—having a significant but temporary impact, which did not extend the control of the Afghan government beyond the city of Kandahar.

Training the ANA and ANP not only provided a supply of counterinsurgents, but also formed a critical part of the struggle to "un-fail" Afghanistan. Canada, with the rest of NATO, made a significant effort to restore and reinforce Afghan capacity in the area of rule of law. Years before outside actors focused on improved training for the ANP, NATO took seriously the task of training the ANA. Early success with the Afghan army encouraged many NATO officials to suggest that the police would experience a similar trajectory upward. In numbers of trained personnel and resulting improvements in policing the populated areas of Afghanistan, insisted the optimists, the ANP were just a few years behind the ANA. However, this assumes that police training and policing are rather similar to army training and army tasks. A corrupt army does not necessarily impact people very directly, but a corrupt police force undermines the government every single day.

Various measures indicate considerable success in training the ANA, which has continued to attract significant numbers of new recruits. Almost certainly, the ANA improved as a result of Canadian mentoring. However, reports on performance, especially in battle, remain mixed. So far, the ANA has fought hard despite serious losses, although civilian casualties have increased. The real test, of course, is occurring only now, after most NATO forces have withdrawn. Will the ANA perform well? Will the ANA hold together? The unhappy experience of the reconstructed Iraqi army in the face of the insurgent Islamic State during 2014 hardly fills one with optimism.

DFAIT and the Challenges of Governance

The endeavour to build modern governance institutions confronted even greater challenges than those faced by the Canadian military. Canada's foreign ministry had little experience in mounting expeditions of this kind and facilitating governance. Moreover, its putative partner and target, President Hamid Karzai's Afghan government, had little interest in reforming and developing itself. It was not an especially happy or productive partnership.

Canada's political operations were set back significantly soon after they started, when Glyn Berry, the head of the PRT, was killed by a roadside bomb in January 2006. This prompted Ottawa to withdraw most Canadian civilians from Kandahar for a time. The mission was restarted a few months later with a small team including five DFAIT staff. However, by the time the Canadian effort peaked in 2010–11, the PRT had almost sixty civilians, including nearly twenty DFAIT officials.[22] While there is much discussion online and in government reports about priorities (security, basic services, humanitarian assistance, border relations, national institutions, and reconciliation) and signature projects (the Dahla dam, polio eradication, and fifty schools), DFAIT's main job was to engage the Afghan political community in Kandahar to facilitate these various projects and to improve the quality of local governance.

The results were uncertain. Canadian diplomats made much progress in facilitating the work of other departments, but headway on governance and governing institutions was limited. Foreign Affairs officials assisted CIDA in developing and funding a variety of aid projects, in helping police and Corrections Canada officials build Afghan security and justice capacity, and in advising the Canadian Forces as they engaged with both local and international actors. Indeed, all of the various projects undertaken by Canadian agencies in Kandahar were possible only with DFAIT personnel managing the politics. This was especially true after March 2008, when Ottawa appointed diplomat Elissa Golberg as its first Representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK), enhancing the mission's capacity to coordinate inter-agency relations. Golberg and her successors played a tremendous role in coordinating civilian and military efforts, and working as the primary point of contact with senior Afghan officials in

Kandahar. Similarly, all development activities and funding depended on DFAIT easing the way.

DFAIT's success as a coordinating body in Kandahar contrasts sharply with its limited progress in improving governance in the province. Two basic, interrelated problems sharply constrained how much DFAIT officials, or anyone else, could improve governance: the reality that provincial governors, and key officials further down the chain of command, were appointed and replaced by President Karzai; and the fact that informal power brokers held great sway. Because the key officials in Kandahar were beholden to Karzai in Kabul, they were not as focused on making improvements in Kandahar, where the local population's satisfaction did not come into play. Indeed, when Canadian foreign minister Maxime Bernier publicly expressed Canada's frustration with Governor Asadullah Khalid, the embarrassing incident actually delayed the governor's departure.[23] Annoyance with the series of Kandahar governors was part of a larger problem—that the real power broker during Canada's time in Kandahar was Ahmed Wali Karzai, head of the provincial council. AWK, as he was known, said all the right things, but was associated with corruption, crime, and the US Central Intelligence Agency, and working with him tainted the Canadian effort. Yet, to get anything done, one needed to work with those who held power, and no one could wish away this difficult reality.

This speaks to a broader challenge for liberal democracies when faced with state failure or the prospect of intervening in a country after civil war. Conflict and intervention generally reward the most powerful actors—the people who destroyed the state and won the civil war battles.[24] State fragility often requires and empowers people who are corrupt and adept at surviving in difficult circumstances. It should not be surprising, then, that Canada faced some difficult challenges in Kandahar, as previous decades of violence had generated actors who were among the least inclined to facilitate transparency and good governance. Working around these inappropriate partners or forcing them from power would have required a much greater commitment of resources and willingness to bear significant costs than Canada was prepared to make.

CIDA and Developing from Ground Zero

Given the realities on the ground in Kandahar, CIDA, too, was compelled to shed its traditional operating procedures and aid priorities, and develop new expertise. Rather than supporting long-term development projects managed by intermediaries, it began to manage the processes itself and had to shift its focus from familiar Africa to Afghanistan. Suddenly, it was operating in an Asian conflict zone and required to organize development projects. This was a big change from its normal way of operating: funding international organizations and non-governmental organizations in national capitals. This section will explore how CIDA fared in making this transition by examining the most traditional project it backed—the Dahla dam. CIDA's Ottawa-centric approach and the agency's amazing opacity also erected barriers to success in Afghanistan.

The most high-profile of Canada's signature projects in Kandahar was CIDA's promise to rehabilitate the Dahla dam and Arghandab irrigation system. This involved spending close to $50 million to improve the flow of water to the Kandahar area, hiring vast numbers of contractors to dig out silt and reshape five hundred kilometres of canals, and paying guards to protect the workers.[25] It also included training farmers in irrigation maintenance and other related tasks. The dam project raised expectations and morale, but local farmers do not seem to be that much better off. The Canadian government's final reports and the more critical newspaper accounts contradict each other on how extensive the improvements have been.[26] Given that this kind of project has the most measurable of outputs—flows of water—it is disturbing that the results and assessments of this project are as unclear as they are.

CIDA also invested heavily in other aspects of Kandahar's development. Educational efforts focused on building schools and training teachers, while health care initiatives involved polio vaccinations and training health care workers. CIDA also sought to develop the regional economy through improving the marketplace. All these efforts represented a radical shift away from traditional CIDA activities, which previously had focused on longer-term projects and been aimed at poverty alleviation rather than supporting the Canadian Forces, who were focused on short-term, quick-impact projects. This, of course, met with significant resistance within the agency and between the agency and the development community.

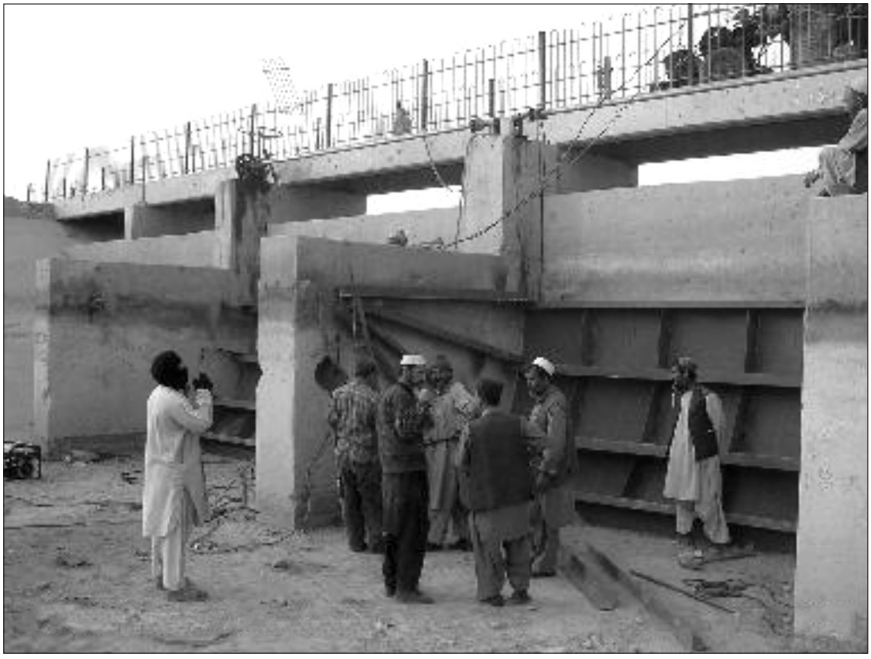


Figure 3: The repair of the Dahla Dam and the Arghandab Irrigation Rehabilitation Project was a key Canadian priority, which aimed to create jobs, transfer knowledge, build capacities, and ensure sustainability in water allocation and agricultural development for Kandaharis. (Credit: CIDA/Lisa Vandehei)

One of the greatest, yet least obvious, challenges for CIDA was that as a bureaucracy it operated very differently from the Canadian Forces. The CF increasingly delegated authority for key decisions to the commanders on the ground, best exemplified by Brigadier-General Jonathan Vance's "model village" program, which focused its efforts on a much smaller area.[27] CIDA, on the other hand, remained highly centralized, with senior managers in Ottawa making most key decisions. This traditional decision-making model might work well for long-term projects, but adaptation to conditions in Afghanistan required more local decision making than CIDA could manage.

Over-centralization also created problems for CIDA as it struggled to inform Canadians about its work and marshal domestic backers. CIDA posted a significant volume of information on its Kandahar projects on

its website but denied its field officers permission to speak to the media. This is one reason, observed journalist Murray Brewster, why reporters working in the province spent little time covering development work—Ottawa-based reporters could get the same story just as easily.[28]

Moreover, CIDA faced the most common challenge associated with working in all failed states—corruption. Just as it was almost inevitable that DFAIT personnel encountered bent officials and powerful warlords, CIDA worked in murky environments where public and private realms were often mixed and inseparable, co-existing uneasily with large pools of development funding. This presented a series of difficult trade-offs that had to be faced and finessed rather than denied and ignored.[29] Simply put, in places like Kandahar, there was no way to avoid dealing with corrupt actors and the diversion of some money from development projects. Failed states will not be as squeaky-clean and transparent as Norway or Canada when it comes to public administration. Surely it is no coincidence that among the world's most corrupt states are many of the most fragile and failed ones.[30] The question becomes not so much whether to tolerate corruption but which forms ought to be tolerated. Is it better to get a road built with kickbacks, or not at all? Future efforts will have to figure out ways to limit the ability of the local partners to divert resources, such as providing soldiers' pay via direct deposit rather than giving cash to superiors.

Whole of Government?

For most observers, Ottawa's enthusiastic talk of Whole of Government or Three D (diplomacy, defence, and development) approaches to state failure was unconvincing. It was always clear that the various Canadian agencies in Afghanistan were not cooperating as much as they should have been. Furtive leaks and open finger pointing made it apparent that the elements of the Canadian government were not "synced." The innovations propelled by the Manley Panel (see below) made a difference, mostly by empowering the RoCK and by creating a deputy minister–level position in the Privy Council Office to coordinate an interdepartmental Afghanistan Task Force to manage the mission. However, basic differences in priorities and management styles meant that significant friction remained.

The best example might be one of the government's signature projects—constructing fifty schools in Kandahar. The scheme envisioned providing better access to education, especially to girls, by building these schools throughout the province. In 2008, officials in Ottawa drew up a list of locations where the schools would be built. But when American troops surged into Kandahar, the Canadian Forces were no longer required to provide security for the entire province and were asked to cover just a few specific areas. Brigadier-General Vance focused on a handful of model villages, but some of the schools built within them did not count against the list of fifty developed in Ottawa. At the same time, the CF were no longer in a position to provide security for CIDA's schools outside their areas of responsibility, and the schools project foundered.[31] With agencies adopting different priorities and different processes for making decisions, friction was inevitable.

Minority Government, the Manley Panel, and Mixed Outcomes

Nearly the entire mission in Afghanistan took place during an unusual period in Canadian politics—one of minority government. "Un-failing" a failed state is tough enough, but it was made much harder as two of the three opposition parties—the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party—were firmly against the mission, whilst the Liberal Party was ambivalent. Frankly, it is surprising that Canada was able to stay in Afghanistan as long as it did. At any point, the minority Liberal government of Prime Minister Paul Martin or Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government could have faced a no-confidence vote. Because the opposition parties could not unite around specific policy demands and because they often wanted to avoid elections when they felt unprepared, the mission was extended twice. The first extension occurred in 2006, soon after the Conservatives replaced the Liberals, who had initially agreed to the Kandahar deployment. This made it difficult for the Liberal Party to oppose the mission. Within two years, the balance of domestic opinion had begun to shift, and Prime Minister Harper recognized that renewal in 2008 would be much more contentious. Seeking political cover, he

organized an elite, non-partisan commission, the Manley Panel, to study the Kandahar effort and make recommendations.

The panel was led by a retired Liberal cabinet minister and prominent businessman, John Manley, and included a former Conservative minister, Jake Epp, a journalist, and two former high-profile public servants. It engaged in serious research, conducted hundreds of interviews, travelled to Afghanistan, and developed a comprehensive set of recommendations. These shaped the course of Canada's mission. The panel recommended extending the mission, but only if the following conditions were met:

- NATO allies must provide more help in the form of an additional battalion;
- the Canadian Forces must receive helicopters and drones;
- Canada must improve its Whole of Government approach;
- aid must be better focused on Kandahar and distributed directly rather than through multilateral institutions;
- the government must improve its reporting to the Canadian people.[32]

These recommendations were largely followed. The Americans sent a battalion to Kandahar to meet the first condition in 2008 before sending several more military units when President Obama's troop surge kicked in a year later. The Canadian Forces leased new helicopters and bought used ones to meet creatively the commission's second recommendation. David Mulroney, the forceful associate deputy minister of foreign affairs, was handed a deputy minister–level appointment as head of the interdepartmental Afghanistan Task Force charged with coordinating the activities and policies of the various Canadian agencies working in Kandahar.[33] The RoCK was also empowered with more authority over CIDA and DFAIT officials, who had been micro-managed from Ottawa.[34] The RoCK was also authorized to allocate a small but significant portion of CIDA funds.

Unfortunately, the panel's findings led Canadian departments and agencies to emphasize signature projects that could be featured in quarterly reports to Parliament. These projects concentrated Canadian investments in an effective way—a good thing—but also limited flexibility as

the situation changed on the ground. Fifty schools throughout Kandahar Province might have made for good reporting back home in Canada, since voters can easily count that high, but whether those schools were staffed, maintained, and operating was not always as clear. Fewer schools in better locations where the Canadian Forces remained active would have been more sustainable.

Significantly, the Harper government ignored one key recommendation from the Manley Panel. Though the commission could have specified an end to the mission, it chose not to do so, suggesting that the mission ought to be evaluated as the conflict unfolded. Instead, in the spring of 2008, Prime Minister Harper shrewdly tabled a resolution in the House of Commons that called for the withdrawal of Canadian combat troops from Kandahar in 2011. With popular support for the war quickly eroding, this was a politically expedient compromise that put the mission on the sidelines of national politics and removed it as a potential election issue. The Conservative motion was also expedient for the Liberals, who were divided over the prospect of continuing the dangerous mission. With the Manley stamp of approval *and* a time limit, the Liberals could safely rally behind the mission. Consequently, Canada withdrew from Kandahar in July 2011, with the CF undertaking safer and less controversial training missions and the civilian agencies changing their focus to Kabul-based activities. The departing Canadians left behind them much unfinished business: a dam not yet complete, schools built but without teachers, partially trained police, and an uncertain security environment.

Implications

It is difficult to draw broad conclusions from the Canadian experience in Kandahar; so many factors were arrayed against it. History and geography and regional stakeholders and NATO allies with different interests and perspectives, as well as corrupt local officials, all made it exceptionally challenging indeed. But none of these conditions are unique to Afghanistan. In any failed state, outside interveners are unlikely to agree entirely on how to proceed. Locals will have a different outlook, too, as well as their own conflicting interests, with some individuals willing to profit at the

expense of their society. History will always be a challenge. Why? Because the dynamics that cause a state to fail do not dissipate when interveners show up. Also, the interveners will bring the same baggage they carry every time they intervene.[35] Agencies that normally do not get along are not going to cooperate very well when pressure and responsibility increase.

There are other lessons worth drawing from Canada's experience in Afghanistan that may be applicable the next time Canada intervenes in a failed or failing state. Indeed, the importance of learning lessons is the first lesson to learn. In contrast to Canada's earlier interventions in failed states, the government's civilian agencies have worked hard at the kind of "lessons learned" exercises that the military does as a matter of course.[36] Indeed, the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) was created to institutionalize these lessons within the Department of Foreign Affairs, with Elissa Golberg, an early RoCK and an advisor to the Manley Panel, serving as its first director.[37]

It is worth acknowledging, too, that success in failed or fragile states can be hard to quantify. Afghanistan reminds Canadians that they should expect this problem to continue in future interventions. Schools built, children vaccinated, and water pumped are measurable outputs, but it is not clear how counting these connects to the larger goals associated with "un-failing" a fragile state. State failure is fundamentally a political problem. When governments cannot provide services or domestic security, citizens will develop strategies to overcome their society's paralysis. Distrust, corruption, and the emergence of militias and warlords are all logical reactions to state failure. Canadians, policymakers, and voters alike must recognize that it is impossible to reverse such processes quickly. Our focus must be on modestly ameliorating, not radically transforming, fragile states.

Reducing expectations makes it easier to see that Canada did make a difference in Afghanistan. The Canadian Forces denied the Taliban control of Kandahar City and helped to keep most of the violence in the outlying districts. DFAIT personnel did much to mitigate the worst instincts of the local politicians. CIDA project officers did fund much development, including the Dahla dam, as well as roads, schools, and health care. Canadian police and corrections officers helped to improve the treatment of prisoners. But Canada's ability to extend good governance and

offer development aid was limited. Canada made a difference only in areas where Canadian troops worked and only for as long as those forces were present. The struggle is now almost entirely in Afghan hands.

Notes

1 This chapter borrows heavily from my latest book, *Adapting in the Dust: Lessons Learned from Canada's War in Afghanistan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

2 Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation Of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

3 Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

4 There has been much written on the early desire to avoid nation building. A good start on this is Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

5 See *Foreign Policy*'s *Failed States Index*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings (accessed 17 January 2012).

6 AWK, as he was known, was assassinated just as Canada's mission in Kandahar ended in July 2011.

7 Just using the simple measure of coalition troops killed in action, Kandahar is second only to Helmand: two-and-a-half times more were KIA in Kandahar than in the next province. See Operation Enduring Freedom, http://www.icasualties.org/OEF/ByProvince.aspx (accessed 17 January 2012).

8 Kenneth Holland, "The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team: The Arm of Development in Kandahar Province," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2010): 276–91; and Kimberly Marten, "From Kabul to Kandahar: The Canadian Forces and Change," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2010): 214–36.

9 Janice Gross Stein and J. Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007).

10 Murray Brewster, ed., *The Savage War: The Untold Battles of Afghanistan* (Mississauga, ON: Wiley, 2011). Also see Matthew Willis, "An Unexpected War, A Not-Unexpected Mission: The Origins of Kandahar 2005," OpenCanada.org, 8 January 2013, http://www.opencanada.org/features/an-unexpected-war-a-not-unexpected-mission/ (accessed 14 November 2015); and David J. Bercuson and J. L. Granatstein, with Nancy Pearson Mackie, *Lessons Learned? What Canada Should Learn from Afghanistan* (Calgary: CDFAI, 2011). I discuss this question at greater length in Chapter 3 of Saideman, *Adapting in the Dust*.

11 Interview, former Ambassador Chris Alexander in discussion with the author, 24 July 2013, Ottawa; interview, Wendy Gilmour, former DFAIT director general, in discussion with the author, 15 August 2013, Ottawa; interview, David Mulroney in discussion with the author, 18 July 2013, Ottawa.

12 Nipa Banerjee wrote the CIDA evaluation comparing Herat and Kandahar provinces. Interview, Nipa Banerjee in discussion with the author, 17 May 2013, Ottawa.

13 I discovered this in the course of interviewing nearly every Canadian who commanded in Afghanistan. Interviews in Ottawa, Montreal, and Edmonton, 2007–11.

14 It was not only Canadians who felt that efforts in Kandahar were a failure, as Rajiv Chandrasekaran's controversial book asserts. See Chandrasekaran, *Little America*.

15 Former chief of defence staff Rick Hillier made this quite clear in his memoir: see Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First: Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2010).

16 Eric Wagner, "The peaceable kingdom? The national myth of Canadian peacekeeping and the Cold War," *Canadian Military Journal* 7, no. 4 (2006–7): 45–54.

17 Hillier, *A Soldier First*.

18 For an extensive treatment of this evolution, see Saideman, "Canadian Forces in Afghanistan: Generational Change While Under Fire," in *Military Adaptation and War in Afghanistan,* ed. Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James Russell (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013), 219–41.

19 Bernd Horn, *No Lack of Courage: Operation Medusa, Afghanistan* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010).

20 Chandrasekaran notes the shortage and cites an American general as saying that the Canadians did not want to be reinforced in Kandahar; see Chandrasekaran, *Little America*, 62. This conflicts with everything I heard from Canadian officers, not to mention the public pressures represented by the Manley Panel and the parliamentary debate about the extension in 2008.

21 Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, "The Struggle for Kandahar: Canadian Soldiers Making a Difference in Afghanistan," presentation, 24 March 2009, Montreal.

22 Canada, Canadian Engagement in Afghanistan, http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/kandahar/kprt-eprk.aspx?view=d (accessed 16 May 2012). Also, informal information from DFAIT officials.

23 "Kandahar Governor Set To Leave Until Bernier Spoke, Says Afghan Official," *CBC News*, 22 April 2008, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2008/04/22/afghan-cda.html (accessed 17 May 2012).

24 Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

25 *Canadian Engagement in Afghanistan 14th and Final Report*, 2012, 17, http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/assets/pdfs/docs/r06_12-eng.pdf (accessed 16 May 2012). Alas, these

reports are no longer easy to find as the government of Canada has archived the relevant websites.

26 See CIDA's project browser page: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/projEn/A033627001 (accessed 18 July 2012); Paul Watson, "Canada's Afghan Legacy: Failure at Dahla Dam," *Toronto Star,* 14 July 2012, http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/1226412--canada-s-afghan-legacy-the-failure-at-dahla-dam (accessed 18 July 2012).

27 Brian Hutchinson, "Assignment Kandahar: Interview with Jonathan Vance, Canada's Top Commander in Kandahar," *National Post*, 13 August 2010, http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/08/13/assignment-kandahar-interview-with-jonathan-vance-canadas-top-commander-in-kandahar/ (accessed 11 October 2014).

28 Brewster, *The Savage War.*

29 In late 2007, I was part of a group of Canadian scholars who were given a tour of Kabul and Kandahar by NATO and by the Canadian Forces. The CIDA advisor in Kandahar seemed unwilling to face this trade-off in our conversation.

30 Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2011, http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/ (accessed 24 July 2012).

31 Based on interviews with Canadian officers.

32 Hon. John Manley, Derek H. Burney, Hon. Jake Epp, Hon. Paul Tellier, and Pamela Wallin, *Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2008).

33 Interviews with military officers and civilians seem to indicate that the Canadian Forces were least enthusiastic about being coordinated from on high. CIDA does such a good job of restricting access to its employees that it is difficult to determine how unhappy they were about being managed by Mulroney. Mulroney was replaced by Greta Bossenmaier when he became ambassador to China in 2009.

34 Interviews with two RoCKs: Ben Roswell in discussion with the author, 17 May 2011, Waterloo, ON; and Elissa Golberg in discussion with the author, 7 June 2011, Ottawa.

35 Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

36 Alas, the lessons learned effort by the Privy Council Office has been buried so deep that members of the government have not seen the report, let alone pesky academics filing Access to Information requests.

37 Interview, Golberg.