

Combining Exit with Strategy: Transitioning from Short-Term Military Interventions to a Long-Term Counter- Terrorism Policy

Sergei Boeke

ICCT Research Paper

August 2014

The past two decades have shown that it is arguably easier to start a military intervention than to end one. This ICCT Research Paper looks at exit strategies from a counter-terrorism perspective, focussing on the link between the end of military interventions and the establishment and implementation of a long term counter-terrorism strategy. While the entry strategy of an intervention is preferred to be clearly defined, ICCT Research Fellow Mr. Boeke shows that the exit strategy requires more flexibility. Using examples from recent military operations, he identifies four types of military exits and their consequences for implementing a long-term counter-terrorism policy. Where before military strategies mostly focussed on the actual war, this Paper shows the importance of combining traditional military actions with comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies in order to address the root of the issues.

About the Authors

Sergei Boeke joined the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague as a fellow in February 2013. After completing the Officer training for the Royal Netherlands Navy, he studied law at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, specialising in international and criminal law. After graduation he held several posts in the Navy, serving on different warships and with the Second Marine Battalion, deploying to Southern Iraq in 2003-4. After a short posting as fellow at the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael, he joined the diplomatic service and worked for the Department of Political Affairs in The Hague. Moving back to the Ministry of Defense in 2008, he was involved in supporting the Dutch comprehensive approach mission in Afghanistan. In 2011, he completed a 9 month training for civil servants at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in Strasbourg, France. His areas of interest include counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, and developments in the ACP region, Mali and Nigeria.

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Contact

ICCT – The Hague
Koningin Julianaplein 10
P.O. Box 13228
2501 EE, The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 800 9531

E info@icct.nl

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1. Introduction

The study of military interventions and research on terrorism share a common aspect. Both fields of research display a strong focus on the beginnings of the phenomenon. Much has been written on the decision-making procedures and processes for military interventions: how, why and under what conditions states decide to participate in military interventions abroad. On the subject of terrorism, whole libraries have been published on the possible (root) causes of radicalisation and terrorist activities: how and why seemingly ordinary people revert to committing extraordinary (violent) acts in the name of a cause.¹ Much less (academic) attention, however, has been devoted to how military interventions come to a close. This is unfortunate for policy, as the past two decades have arguably proved that it is much easier to start a military intervention than to end one.² How terrorism ends has also received far less academic attention, notwithstanding the quality of the few works that are devoted to the subject.³ The ongoing struggle against al Qaeda and its affiliates testifies to the difficulty of bringing this specific war to an end, even though much has been written on the semantic problems with the *global war on terror* narrative. Nonetheless, as President Obama stated during a speech at the National Defense University in May 2013, the war on terror, like any war, must also end.⁴

To complement the literature on this important field, this Paper will provide a preliminary analysis on the link between the closure of military interventions and the establishment and implementation of long term counter-terrorism (CT) policies. Terrorism is a worldwide problem that has led to several military interventions, while these operations often prove unable of addressing the underlying causes of insecurity. These interventions therefore need to invest in long-term, locally supported and implemented CT policies that are sustainable once the intervening military forces have drawn down. To enable this, the entry and exit strategies of intervening powers must be aligned with these goals. The defining issue for exit strategies is of course the entry strategy: once the troops have achieved their mission they can come home. But as events have proved in the past decades, clear-cut success in military interventions abroad, whether UN mandated or not, has often been elusive.⁵ As the first, introductory part of an explorative research project, this report is structured as follows. The initial focus will be on entry and exit strategies and why transitions to host-state authority have a tendency of being complex. Subsequently, this report will sketch the different CT approaches that are available to policymakers. Then, four different types of military exit are identified, namely time-driven, objective-led, democratic process and abrupt. In each category examples from recent military operations are highlighted and the consequences for implementing a long-term CT policy are briefly worked out. Finally, the Paper focusses on two of the most common long-term CT approaches in recent military interventions: a terrorist centric policy, with targeting of key leaders as one of its centre-pieces, and government capacity building. The results of these policies are briefly analysed and the Paper concludes with several recommendations for further research.

¹ See e.g. A. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011).

² See e.g. G. Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010) and D. Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³ See e.g. A.K. Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and S. Jones and M. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End; Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008).

⁴ The White House, "Remarks of President Barack Obama", 23 May 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-barack-obama>.

⁵ See e.g. B. Schuurman, "Trinitarian troubles: governmental, military, and societal explanations for post-1945 Western failures in asymmetric conflicts", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2011), pp. 32-54.

2. The Role of Entry and Exit Strategies

In the literature on exit strategies, the hypothesis “a good exit strategy depends on a good entry strategy” features prominently. From a logical perspective, if the decision to end a war were simply to spring from a rational calculation about gains and losses for the nation as a whole, it should be no harder to get out of a war than to get into one.⁶ The complexity of exits, coupled to political promises and public expectations, does not seem to support this logic. When studying the process of decision-making that culminates in military interventions, national security strategies offer the initial parameters for discerning strategic interests and the means available to further them. A specific example that illustrates the translation of strategy into action is the Bush doctrine on pre-emption, leading to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.⁷ For peacekeeping operations, a significant deterioration of a security situation in a conflict zone is often a prerequisite for mobilising public and political support at home for a military intervention, and in some countries lengthy parliamentary procedures need to be navigated. This leads to the paradoxical situation that interventions tend to take place once the situation has already spun out of control, demanding a much greater effort to stabilise the situation than would have been necessary at the beginning of the crisis.⁸

Every War Must End

One of the classic works devoted to the ending of military interventions is Iklé’s *Every War Must End*. Iklé wrote the book as United States (US) American involvement in Vietnam had become an agonising search for an exit. This process of extrication from entrapment would profoundly influence American thinking about war and peace, arguably even shaping subsequent interventions such as the first Gulf War in 1991 against Saddam Hussein.¹ The dilemmas involved in exit are clearly summarised in the 1 July 1965 Memorandum for the President *A Compromise Solution for South Vietnam* by George Ball, one of the documents revealed in the Pentagon Papers. In a short note to President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Undersecretary of State argues that the South Vietnamese are losing the war to the Viet Cong. “No one can assure you that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms, no matter how many hundred thousand white, foreign (U.S.) troops we deploy.” The Memorandum then posits a central question, the *Question to Decide*: “Should we limit our liabilities in South Vietnam and try to find a way out with minimal long-term costs?” Ball warns not to embark on an irreversible process of committing more troops, mentions the risk of humiliation and suggests a compromise settlement that achieves less than the stated objectives and thus cut losses while the US still has the freedom of manoeuvre to do so.¹ Direct US military involvement ended in 1973, but the capture of Saigon by North Vietnamese forces in 1975 – and the accompanying helicopter scene evacuating US personnel from the embassy – would symbolise the end of the war. Until the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Vietnam would remain the analogy of choice for politicians and pundits wary of military interventions abroad.

⁶ F.C. Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 16.

⁷ A. Anghie, “The War on Terror and Iraq in Historical Perspective”, *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, vol. 43, no. 1 & 2 (2005), pp. 45-66, http://www.ohlj.ca/archive/articles/43_12_anghie.pdf.

⁸ M. Houben, *No Blank Cheque: How and Why European States Precondition Their Participation in International Crisis Management Operations* (London: Routledge, 2003).

When defining the why and how of military interventions, a clear strategy is essential. The concept of strategy is often characterised by the relationship between the ends, ways and means, with the way directly linking the end and the means.⁹ The *end* has to be determined during the decision making phase of the intervention, but will need to remain clear throughout the other three phases of the intervention: entry, stabilisation and implementation, and transition to exit. For the Clausewitzian theorist, the tactical realm must be subordinate to the strategic goals, with events on the battlefield being but one of the means to achieve the overarching political goals. In practice, however, the pressures and complexities involved in political decision-making leave little allowance for academic theory on strategy, and even if strategic goals are identified they are seldom explicitly formulated and publicly shared. Unfortunately, political and bureaucratic reality impedes the formulation of the mission strategy on one sheet of paper at the beginning of an intervention. Important is a clear communication of the mission objectives through the government apparatus, with continuous effort to keep the overarching purpose visible to those in command during the other phases of the intervention as unexpected events change the course of operation.¹⁰ Communication to the public of a consistent *strategic narrative* is also desirable to maintain support for the mission. In theory of course, this all makes perfect sense, but in reality the challenge is considerable and the process will often lead to an adjustment of the initially defined purpose, or *end*.

In the early nineties, the term *exit strategy* became part of the vernacular, taken over from the business sector.¹¹ In the wake of the precipitous withdrawal from Somalia in 1993, the Clinton administration decried open-ended commitments and stressed the need for specific timeframes to be agreed in advance for the withdrawal of US troops.¹² In 1996, the National Security Advisor Anthony Lake formulated an explicit exit strategy doctrine, in which he set out the principle that “before we send our troops into a foreign country we should know how and when we are going to get them out.”¹³ At the end of a decade that saw an enormous proliferation of peacekeeping missions, many of which could not be qualified as a success, even the United Nations (UN) devoted a report to mission termination. In the report *No exit without strategy: Security Council Decision-making and the Closure or Transition of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* the UN Secretary-General analysed the rationales for staying, leaving or altering the mission’s mandate.¹⁴

The term exit strategy plays well to the public’s fear of messy military adventures abroad, and seems to offer a stalwart solution in the form of fixed planning that will avoid mission creep, quagmires and ultimately new Vietnam scenarios. But the focus on how to get the troops out detracts from a more important question: why are they going in and how should they attain the set objectives? The term risks turning a military intervention into a moon landing – sending men to a far-away destination and ensuring their safe return home. The US administration was less vocal using the term *exit strategy* in Iraq. While Obama did campaign in the 2008 Presidential election on bringing the conflict to an end, President Bush and Iraqi President Al Maliki had already signed an agreement that all American troops were to leave Iraq before the end of 2011. Even so, President Obama left the door open to the possibility of keeping US troops in Iraq as trainers. In October 2010, talks to agree on the Status of Forces Agreement collapsed and all US troops were withdrawn.¹⁵ In Afghanistan the term

⁹ A. Herberg-Rothe, “Clausewitz’s Concept of Strategy – Balancing Purpose, Aims and Means”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2014), pp. 1-23.

¹⁰ A.K. Cronin, “The Evolution of Counterterrorism: Will Tactics Trump Strategy?”, *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 4 (2010), pp. 837-56.

¹¹ In business as in military interventions, sunk costs – the investment already spent (money and reputation in business; blood, money and reputation in conflict) – can no longer be recuperated but often influence the decision to continue or pull-out. But a financial write-off can be accommodated in business far easier than military losses can be in politics. Another difference is that an exit from a business sector or market can really be an exit, while nation states are stuck with each other and need a minimum of goodwill and credibility to be able to interact in the future.

¹² See e.g. R. Caplan, “Devising Exit Strategies”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 54, no. 3 (2012), pp. 111-26.

¹³ A. Lake, “Defining Missions, Setting Deadlines”, *Defense Issues*, vol. 11, no. 14 (1996),

<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=898>.

¹⁴ United Nations, *No exit without strategy: Security Council decision-making and the closure or transition of United Nations peacekeeping operations*, Report of the Secretary-General: S/2001/394 (2001), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/343/62/PDF/N0134362.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁵ M. Gordon, “In U.S. Exit from Iraq, Failed efforts and Challenges”, *New York Times*, 22 September 2012,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/middleeast/failed-efforts-of-americas-last-months-in-iraq.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>.

exit strategy does not figure in the official lexicon, as the word *transition* to *Afghan lead* describes both the process and the goal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Since at least 2009, however, *endgame* has figured in many government reports, implying an end state, preferably well defined, for withdrawal. Bringing the troops home may not be stated as an explicit goal, but is certainly still a primary political preoccupation for governments that have deployed their military abroad.

When investigating the transition from military interventions to long-term civilian-led CT policy, the distinction between insurgency and terrorism deserves mention.¹⁶ Both concern means to achieve political goals, whereby an insurgency seeks to overthrow the ruling party or system and establish its own authority in a geographical area. Terrorism seeks to undermine an established authority by specifically threatening or using violence against civilians to spread fear and terror.¹⁷ There is debate as to whether al Qaeda is a global insurgency, with the aim of furthering the Muslim Ummah and replacing current states with the Caliphate.¹⁸ Important is the focus of the group: does it just aim to overthrow the government in the capital city, or are there wider regional or global goals? Al Qaeda related groups propagate an international agenda, and their listing on the al Qaeda sanctions list established and maintained by the UN pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) confirms that there is international consensus regarding their designation as terrorist organisations. The distinction between terrorism and insurgency is clearly illustrated by the current conflict in Afghanistan. Here dialogue and eventual political accommodation with the Taliban insurgency is possible, but both are politically out of the question for al Qaeda terrorism. This characterisation of conflict is important as the label should ultimately determine the policy response. A counter insurgency (COIN) programme would put the focus on winning the support of the local population (the *hearts and minds*) with arguably good governance as a policy requisite; a counter-terrorist policy could entail anything from a military approach aimed at degrading terrorist networks to a rule-of-law and criminal justice approach that also addresses the root causes of radicalisation and the underlying sentiments of injustice, perceived or real.

3. Defining Counter-Terrorism

For an effective response to terrorism and violent extremism, a good analysis of the problem is essential. This only partly concerns the modus operandi of a terrorist organisation, but needs to take into account their narrative and propaganda methods, whereby countering violent extremism (CVE) is a subset of CT that focusses on prevention.¹⁹ These contribute to explaining motivational factors, as well as the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and radicalisation towards violent extremism. The nature of Islamist terrorism has changed much this last decade. Although the strength and regional reach of al Qaeda-headquarters as a global terrorist organisation has diminished, the overall threat of Islamist terrorism has certainly not decreased, but has become more diffuse and geographically spread.²⁰ Various regionally or locally organised groups in Africa and the Middle East actively pursue their own agenda and interests, even though they share ideologies and cooperate on specific issues. In Syria, infighting between official al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusrah and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) illustrates that serious divisions also occur – with the latter, after taking over large areas of Iraq and declaring a new Islamic Caliphate, rebranding itself to the Islamic State. The regional organisations often have a more local agenda, legitimising their radical and violent goals and actions as a response to local, historically-

¹⁶ For the legal issues surrounding the terrorist/insurgent distinction, see C. Paulussen, *Testing the Adequacy of the International Legal Framework in Countering Terrorism: The War Paradigm*, ICCT Research Paper (2012), <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Paulussen-Legal-Framework-for-Counter-Terrorism-August-2012.pdf>.

¹⁷ M. Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4. (1981), pp. 379-99.

¹⁸ See for instance D. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2005), pp. 597-617.

¹⁹ A. Schmid, "Countering Violent Extremism: a Promising Response to Terrorism", *ICCT Commentary*, 12 June 2012, <http://www.icct.nl/publications/icct-commentaries/countering-violent-extremism-a-promising-response-to-terrorism>.

²⁰ B. Hoffman, "Al Qaeda's Uncertain Future", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 36, no. 8 (2013), pp. 635-53.

rooted circumstances and grievances, through promotion of for instance sharia law and a broader Islamist agenda.²¹

With regard to the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, a clear picture needs to be generated of the grievances as perceived by the members and supporters of an organisation. Understanding these underlying grievances is essential to be able to formulate an effective CT and CVE strategy. Social and economic factors can constitute grievances. Even though it is difficult to identify a direct causal relationship between economic conditions and terrorism, when issues are included such as access to decision-making and justice, levels of (real or perceived) social exclusion, relative deprivation and marginalisation, there appears to be a pattern in the way local terrorist organisations exploit these grievances for their own agenda and propaganda goals. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that poverty causes terrorism and that terrorists are predominantly uneducated and from socially deprived backgrounds has been clearly disproved by empirical data.²²

Recent years have shown a shift in policy measures used to counter the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. In the first years after 9/11, the focus lay mainly on the security issues and repressive and military responses. Since 2005, some consensus within the international community has developed that a more balanced approach, also focusing on prevention, development and rule of law, is more effective.²³ This shift was accompanied by a relabeling of measures involved, from CT to CVE, with more focus on prevention. Such a comprehensive and balanced approach can and should make use of various policy instruments. These measures could include, but are not limited to: improving governance and rule of law, policies to boost economic development, investing in education, nurturing of inter- and intra-religious dialogue, training young political leaders, and facilitation of an inclusive political dialogue. Which measure or combination of measures are most effective depends on the context, both in terms of regional circumstances, as well as in terms of the level of conflict between legal authorities and violent extremist organisations. As a way of illustrating how various policy instruments can play a more prominent role in different circumstances, the table below can be instructive.

²¹ B. Mendelsohn, "Al-Qaeda's Franchising Strategy", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 53, no. 3 (2011), pp. 29-50.

²² See e.g. M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

²³ I. Duyvesteyn, "Great expectations: the use of armed force to combat terrorism", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2008), pp. 328-51.

Table 1. Visualisation of applicability of counter-terrorism policy instruments to different contexts and threats

	Peace	Social grievances	Radicalisation	Recruitment	Foreign fighters / training camps	Terrorist attacks	Regions under control of violent extremists	Armed conflict
Counter-insurgency operation								X
Targeted operations					X	X	X	
Humanitarian action							X	X
Conflict-mediation							X	X
Political dialogue				X	X	X	X	X
De-radicalisation programmes				X	X	X		
Counter-radicalisation programmes			X	X	X	X		
Counter-narratives			X	X	X	X		
Community policing			X	X				
Capacity-building programmes: rule of law			X					
Capacity-building programmes: education		X	X					
Youth leadership programmes		X						
Women empowerment programmes		X						
Economic/social development programmes		X						
Inter-faith dialogue	X	X	X	X				
Employment programmes	X	X	X					
Democratic participation	X	X	X					
Law enforcement	X			X	X	X		

When combining the formulation of CT policies with military interventions, two challenges arise. First, although much has been written on terrorism, relatively little attention has been devoted to measuring the effectiveness of CT policies, with an often cited meta-analysis by Lum concluding that in about 20.000 studies on terrorism only seven contain information on the effectiveness of CT policies.²⁴ Although academic research has now discovered this hiatus, the focus is still predominantly on CT policies in Western nations themselves. This leads to the second point, with the CT aspect of military interventions framed and managed through military eyes and dominated by a counter-insurgency mind-set. From this perspective, the military mandate, culture and modus operandi have funnelled CT policies into a narrow span of actions in the host states. The challenge is therefore to not only broaden the CT effort to civilian led programmes, but also integrate the whole policy in the military transition. How a military exit can take shape is explored in the next section.

²⁴ C. Lum, L.W. Kennedy and A.J. Sherley, "Are counter-terrorism strategies effective? The results of the Campbell systematic review on counter-terrorism evaluation research", *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, vol. 2, no. 4 (2006), pp. 489-516.

4. On Exit Strategies

4.1 Contextual and external factors

Using historical examples, military interventions abroad can be classified into the following categories: colonialism, peacebuilding or peacekeeping operations, and occupations. In an analysis of Peace Support Operations (PSO), which combines peacebuilding and peacekeeping approaches, Durch identifies over fifty distinct PSOs with only eleven completed exits, in the sense that there were no follow-up missions that took over.²⁵ Kosovo, Haiti and Timor Leste are symbolic for the risks that an exit entails: a premature withdrawal of international troops from inherently instable countries can lead to a serious aggravation of the situation. Possible repercussions for international security could thus outweigh the costs of keeping peacekeepers in place. No definitive formula for a success-based withdrawal is possible, but grounds for exit can be seen in the accomplishment of key elements of the mandate. In the event of effective cooperation on the international diplomatic front for UN missions – for example consensus in the Security Council – and the successful formulation of an exit strategy in synchronisation with the mandate, circumstances on the ground can still completely frustrate its implementation. But without a strategy, the possibility of success is even more limited.

Historical examples of decolonisation offer useful guidance for current policy dilemmas, and often simultaneously provide the background for many current failed or failing states. The experiences are relevant as the colonial powers had to transfer power to a new indigenous authority while avoiding excessive violence and minimizing the loss of prestige. At the same time they had to keep relations with the new government as good as possible to promote a continuation of their own political and economic interests in the former colonies. In the book *Exit Strategies and State Building*, edited by Richard Caplan, several case studies and general observations analyse the decolonisation and exit process for British, French and Dutch regimes, each confronted by its own particular challenges and embedded in a specific ideological context. The hallmark of most colonial exits was haste and improvisation, elements that can be recognised in many recent military exits and transitions too. Decolonisation in India, for example, was carried out at breakneck speed in fear of a widespread collapse of state power and perhaps civil war.²⁶ As with many current interventions, it is unclear if failure was a result of the intractable nature of the problem or misplaced and badly executed policies devised to prevent it.

The authors in Caplan's edited volume identify several factors that strongly influenced the transitions and exit, which can be used to structure the possible external influences on actual or future transitions.

4.1.1 External environment

Decolonisation took place during the Cold War, and international geopolitical competition played an important role. If, for instance, the nationalists clamouring for independence also happened to be communists, the transition was often more contested by the colonial power and the US behind it (e.g. Vietnam and Laos). Neighbouring states also played an essential role in facilitating or complicating transition, with some third parties laying claim to newly independent territories (e.g., Indonesia to Malaysia, Egypt to Sudan and Iraq to Kuwait). A current example of the pivotal role a neighbouring country can play in determining the success or failure of a military intervention is Pakistan with regard to ISAF in Afghanistan. Unique for Pakistan is that on the one hand its policies exert a strong influence on the situation in Afghanistan, while on the other Pakistan also provides the logistic routes that enable supply and exit of ISAF troops and materiel. Pakistan thus co-determines the form and process of ISAF's exit from Afghanistan.²⁷

²⁵ W. Durch, "Exit and Peace Support Operations", in R. Caplan, ed., *Exit Strategies and State Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 79.

²⁶ J. Darwin, "Exit and Colonial Administrations", in R. Caplan, ed., *Exit Strategies and State Building* (2012), p. 24.

²⁷ See e.g. B. Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

4.1.2 Host state

Essential elements in securing a smooth transition would be aligning interests with the local elites and ensuring buy-in from key communities. In many countries and regions, especially sub-Saharan Africa, a minimal governing and security apparatus (the role of the night watchman) was possible through the support and cooperation of a minority tribe or ethnic group. After independence, these minorities, used to exercising power in the name of the imperial power, would have to face the wrath of the majority tribes or ethnicity. This dilemma is still current for many states, including for example Rwanda and Afghanistan. Another factor that complicated decolonisation was the creation of a political system that would be able to withstand the pressures of independence.²⁸ One aspect that all colonies shared was an inadequate civil service, and the quick construction of an effective, impartial bureaucracy, with corresponding professional culture, would prove elusive. This aspect still rings true for many interventions today, with all the energy devoted to the sharp end of security sector reform, but little to building the capacity of the broader government bureaucracies and institutions behind them. This is especially the case when peacekeeping or peace-enforcing operations take on state-building tasks in order to accomplish their mission.

4.1.3 National (home) politics

The political struggle within the intervening country affects every aspect in starting and ending conflict abroad. Foreign policy is always subordinate to domestic politics, and politicians advocating the termination of interventions do not formulate rational decisions in a political vacuum. Personal power, prestige, public opinion, bureaucratic processes and chance all play a role in the formulation of foreign policy. More empirical research is needed to further investigate relationships between foreign policy decisions and the electoral calendar, budgetary year or the state of the economy. Success in military interventions abroad does not guarantee re-election, but perceived or real failure will certainly hamper it.²⁹

4.2 Four ways of leaving

When categorising the ways an intervening country can withdraw its troops, it is important to view exit as a process, not a single event. Rather than merely a tactical outcome (retreat or withdrawal), transition policies should ensure that the long-term goals to which the intervention was aimed to contribute are sustained, preferably through local actors. Below, four different ways of withdrawal are identified, although it is important to note that a military exit does not necessarily imply the end of a nation's involvement. Ideally, civilian programmes that have been allowed to take root during the initial (military) phase continue their work in all fields, including CT.

4.2.1 Time-driven

Deadlines, usually self-imposed, form an important category in the different ways an intervening military power can plan its exit. In its most rigid form, the *end-date*, not *end-state*, determines the withdrawal, but policy is often more nuanced. For missions as well as mandates, an initial timeframe for engagement is frequently set, and as the deadline nears, a new political debate can either let the mission expire or prolong it for a next, clearly defined period. The course of the initial debate (and wording of the decision) to commit troops often sets the outer political margins for the future prolongation debate.

²⁸ J. Darwin, "Exit and Colonial Administrations" (2012), p. 34.

²⁹ This is illustrated by the quote symbolising Bill Clinton's election victory over George Bush in 1992: "It's the economy, stupid." George Bush's successful management of the end of the Cold War and the victory in the first Gulf War was not rewarded by the electorate with a second term.

Dutch and Canadian Missions in Afghanistan

A case in point is the 2008 Dutch decision to prolong its two year mission in Southern Afghanistan, Uruzgan province, by two more years. When, at the beginning of 2010, a new albeit shorter extension of the mission was requested in chorus by the Afghan government, NATO and the US, the Dutch governing coalition split on the issue and fell. The mission had become too unpopular and the Labour party felt it could not renege on earlier promises to end the mission. The political debate in 2008 simply did not allow another extension in 2010 without some parties losing face. Nonetheless, the subsequent governing coalition recognised the importance of contributing to ISAF and rigged up a completely new but smaller mission in the Northern Kunduz province and found a parliamentary majority to support it. Canada experienced a similar political process with its equally contested mission in Kandahar. In 2008 the mission was extended by three years, but the government felt it had to concede a concrete pull-out date to achieve backing for the motion. At the end of 2011, despite similar international requests for an extended deployment, the Canadian combat mission ended and the majority of troops left Afghanistan. But as with the Dutch case, Canadian involvement in Afghanistan did not end as nearly a thousand troops remained deployed, predominantly in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, to train the Afghan security forces.

Both the Canadian and Dutch examples in the above text box suggest that in spite of strong public scepticism, there was sufficient political will to continue to contribute in a different form to the military mission in Afghanistan. But (domestic) political promises had to be kept and (combat) missions and operations had to be seen to end, even as different (training) missions were set-up elsewhere in the country. Some academic research has focused on the public's disaffection with the Afghanistan mission in certain NATO contributing countries, exploring for instance casualty aversion or the strategic narrative for involvement.³⁰ There is still much research to be done on how political systems and political cultures facilitate or complicate mission extensions.

Announcing troop withdrawal dates might be an act of domestic political necessity, but in the age of worldwide communication the statement simultaneously affects international partners and the adversary on the battlefield. In Afghanistan, the quote "we have the time, you have the watch" is said to have originated from Taliban ranks and illustrates aptly how the insurgent only needs to sit out the intervention.³¹ From this perspective, announcing the withdrawal date only facilitates and encourages the insurgent to bide his time. As with Iraq, deteriorating security led to the US decision to surge, rather than withdraw troops. When President Obama announced a 30.000 troop surge for Afghanistan in December 2009, itself a product of compromise between US agencies involved, he explicitly mentioned that the withdrawal would *start* 18 months later, at the end of 2011. But exactly how many troops would then be withdrawn and in what time-span remained an open question. In the summer of 2011, a few months before the much heralded withdrawal deadline, a new tug of war within the US administration took place, with agreement on a token withdrawal of a few thousand troops before the end of the year, and initial disagreement on whether to pull back the majority before the summer or at the end of 2012.³² It would again be a compromise, and the remaining 23.000 surge troops were pulled out just after the fighting season ended in September 2012.

³⁰ See for instance J-C. Boucher, "Evaluating the 'Trenton Effect': Canadian Public Opinion and Military Casualties in Afghanistan (2006–2010)", *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2010). In general, Mueller's casualty aversion hypothesis does not seem to hold. The perceived probability of success is a greater determining factor in sustaining public support for the mission. See also C. Gelpi, P.D. Feaver and J. Reifler, "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2006), pp. 7-46.

³¹ C. Coughlin, "Afghanistan: The Clock is ticking for Obama as the Taliban bides its time", *Daily Telegraph*, 4 December 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/6724196/Afghanistan-the-clock-is-ticking-for-Obama-as-the-Taliban-bides-its-time.html>.

³² Two years after the initial surge decision, the backdrop of the continuing economic crisis would influence the withdrawal timetable. With an approximate price tag of \$ 1 million a year per soldier in Afghanistan and increasing unpopularity of the war at home, Obama wanted the troops back earlier than the military. In the televised speech from the Oval Office, he announced the withdrawal dates, adding that, for America, "it is time to focus on nation building here at home." R. Chandrasekaran, *Little America: the War Within the War for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 326.

However, 68,000 American soldiers and marines remained in Afghanistan, and thus the debate on whether announcing the start of the withdrawal of the extra troops aided the Taliban misses the point. The essential question remains whether, and if so, how many and for how long, US and NATO troops remain in Afghanistan post-2014. Obama's announcement was also interesting for its language. The word *exit* was not mentioned once; *transition* six times. An element of conditionality was also added: "the days of providing a blank cheque" were over, and the effort would be "performance based".³³ How exactly, remained unclear.

While President Obama's announcement on the withdrawal of extra surge troops from Afghanistan was open-ended, the French intervention in Mali offers an example of precisely formulated withdrawal dates that have not been met. In January 2013, after jihadists occupying the north of Mali unexpectedly attacked cities in the south, France intervened to stop their advance and reconquer the north. The French Operation Serval initially comprised some 4,800 French troops, supported by the Malian army and several thousand troops from the African-led international support mission to Mali (AFISMA). After the al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) sanctuary in the Ardara des Ifoghas had been cleared and the whole of the north had again come under government control, a withdrawal timetable was announced by President Hollande.

The strength of the French force would be cut to around 2,000 in July 2013, when the presidential elections in Mali were planned, to around 1,000 at the end of the year 2013.³⁴ But events on the ground would prove this planning to be far too optimistic, with security concerns and French insistence on holding the presidential elections in July and August necessitating a larger troop presence than earlier planned. In September 2013 there were still 3,200 French troops in Mali, and in January 2014 there were still more than 2,500 deployed.³⁵ This significant deviation of the withdrawal plan did not lead to political problems in France and symptomised continual changing of the numbers of troops committed to Mali.³⁶ Perhaps the considerable leeway that the French government enjoyed in the execution of Operation Serval, with the decision to intervene not even submitted to a parliamentary vote, also applies to its termination. Operation Serval continued as the parallel escalation force to the UN MINUSMA mission and will be replaced by a new, regional CT mission as from August 2014.³⁷

When combining an *end date* exit with a CT policy, the primary concern must be the timely mobilisation of bureaucracy to lay the foundations for a long term CT approach. After all, the available time-frame for building partnerships within the host government is known, and as the transition approaches, events and short-term concerns will dominate the agenda. An in depth understanding of bureaucratic working practices and cultures, of the intervening military and diplomatic services as well as the ministries of the host country, is essential to facilitate a timely implementation of policy. Robert Komer's 1972 assessment of US policy in Vietnam in *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing* can provide useful analogies on how to manage this aspect.³⁸ Depending on the end date, a timely plan can be formulated to accommodate the necessary CT policies to avoid the often hurried character of exits.

³³ The White House, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan", 1 December 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

³⁴ L. Lagneau, "Il devrait rester un millier de soldats français au Mali à la fin de l'année", *Zone Militaire Opex360*, 29 March 2013, <http://www.opex360.com/2013/03/29/il-devrait-rester-un-millier-de-soldats-francais-au-mali-a-la-fin-de-lannee>.

³⁵ L. Lagneau, "Le retrait des forces françaises retardé?", *Zone Militaire Opex360*, 18 September 2013, <http://www.opex360.com/2013/09/18/mali-le-retrait-des-forces-francaises-retarde>.

³⁶ The initial French military intervention, launched on the 11th of January 2013, only envisaged air assaults on the advancing jihadist columns. After the weekend, the operation seamlessly metamorphosed into a ground offensive, with President Hollande stating that up to 2,500 French ground troops could be involved. By the end of the month nearly double the number were deployed. A. Barluet, "Mali : François Hollande en président de guerre", *Le Figaro*, 15 January 2013, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/01/15/01003-20130115ARTFIG00657-mali-francois-hollande-en-president-de-guerre.php>.

³⁷ S. Diffalah, "Mali. De Serval à Barkhane : la mission française loin d'être terminée", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 July 2014, <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/guerre-au-mali/20140715.OBS3744/mali-de-serval-a-barkhane-la-mission-francaise-loin-d-etre-terminee.html>.

³⁸ R. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on US-GVN Performance* (Santa Monica: RAND corporation, 1972). See also T. Greentree, "Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: US Performance and the Institutional Dimension of Strategy in Afghanistan", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2013), pp. 325-56.

4.2.2 Objective-led

When transition is determined by the *end state* rather than the *end date*, the envisaged end state matters. Even if clear strategic objectives have been set, measuring whether they have been attained is not as straightforward as it seems. There can be debate as to whether the goals have been achieved, and different objectives are seldom met in synchronisation. If benchmarks are set, who decides whether they have been met? Is it determined locally or in the nation's capital? If, for example, the local security situation is defined as a critical benchmark, its estimation is for all intents and purposes a political judgment that will be vetted at the highest level.

Security Perceptions and Politics

An example is the Dutch contribution of 1.400 marines/soldiers to the Stabilization Force Iraq (SFIR), which after a first prolongation of 8 months was set to end in March 2005. The UK, responsible for the regional command under which the Dutch fell, had no replacement troops available and preferred the Dutch to stay in Al Muthanna until after the summer. The British ambassador in The Hague was mobilised and cleverly referred to an official Dutch government letter that preconditioned the planned Dutch exit in March 2005 on the readiness of Iraqi security forces. The British regional commander judged that the Iraqis in the Dutch sector would only be ready after the summer, and the Dutch themselves had only weeks before questioned the competence of the Iraqi Security forces when they had failed to prevent an attack on Dutch troops. The British ambassador subsequently set about forming a parliamentary coalition to delay the Dutch withdrawal by a few months. The Dutch Minister of Defence, however, was not amused by this so called meddling in national politics and upheld the initial drawdown to pull back all troops by March.

Although in the case of the drawdown of Dutch contribution to SFIR (see text box) form as well as substance played an important role, security perceptions on the ground and allied requests would be subordinate to domestic politics and ministerial reputations.

Even if measuring achievements at the strategic level is extremely difficult, measuring progress at the tactical level is proving to be equally challenging. For at least the first decade of the intervention in Afghanistan, ISAF has predominantly focused on measuring SIGACTS (significant activities), with countless PowerPoint presentations devoted to displaying the number of *contacts* with the Taliban. Divided into those that were initiated by the enemy and those that were not, these figures were used to conclude whether areas were more or less secure than the same period in the preceding year. The problem with these metrics, including the favoured military metric *number of enemy killed in action*, is that they are meaningless when it comes to measuring security in an area. An area can have no incidents and be under complete insurgent control. As David Kilcullen explains, metrics need to focus on *outcome* indicators rather than *output* indicators. He advises to be wary of enemy body counts, military accessibility and the number of enemy initiated incidents (SIGACTS).

Kilcullen offers some indicators that give a more nuanced picture of the situation and splits them into two categories: population-related metrics and host-nation government indicators.³⁹ In the first category, he identifies several different metrics, including: voluntary reporting, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) reported versus IEDs found, the price of exotic vegetables, transportation prices, progress of NGO construction projects and many more possible indicators. For the host nation government indicators, Kilcullen identifies the assassination and kidnapping rate, civilian accessibility, where local officials sleep, officials' business interests, percentage of officials purchasing their positions, budget execution, capital flight and other metrics. His suggestions, although valid, would necessitate a far closer military-civilian cooperation to collect and register the data, and probably imply a far broader focus of the intelligence services involved. This would require a significant extra capacity,

³⁹ D. Kilcullen, "Measuring Progress in Afghanistan", NATO Unclassified document (Kabul: 2009), <http://literature-index.wikispaces.com/file/view/Kilcullen-COIN+Metrics.pdf>.

perhaps outweighing the benefits considering the ever present dilemma of handling politically undesirable information.

Setting and measuring objectives on an institutional level is also proving difficult. ISAF has a challenging task in providing an objective assessment of the quality and professionalism of local security forces as the transition to local responsibility progresses. After 2009, the build-up of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) became a central part of NATO's exit strategy and NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) was set up. The insurgency was to be reduced to a manageable level and the burden of responsibility for combat would be transferred from ISAF to the ANSF.⁴⁰ Since 2005, US Congress has appropriated almost \$53 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund – the single largest US fund for the reconstruction of Afghanistan – to train, equip, and sustain the ANSF.⁴¹ But measuring the readiness of the ANSF for its task has not proven to be easy.⁴² Initially, much attention was given to quantitative indicators such as the numbers of soldiers recruited and the numbers that passed alphabetisation courses. ANSF growth figures were impressive and were heralded in press releases and ISAF reports, but desertion figures – which reached up to 50.000 a year in 2012 – were not or underreported.⁴³ The criteria for judging ANSF professional readiness would also change frequently. A US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found “key definitions used in ANSF assessments have changed several times and assessments did not fully measure ANP (Afghan National Police) capability until recently.” For example, in January 2011, the Department of Defence's highest capability rating for Afghan army units was “independent” – capable of operating without US assistance. But by August the highest rating was “independent with advisors”.⁴⁴ That meant a significant downward adjustment, implying that even the best Afghan units still needed US help to operate effectively. Besides the frequent changing of metrics, the measurement system would also be adjusted in favour of the poorly performing ANSF. Initially an independent authority was responsible for validating the professional status of the ANSF unit, while after January 2012 the ISAF partnering units would be charged with grading the effectiveness of the ANSF unit they had trained themselves. This put an end to the objectivity of the assessments, as ISAF units would de facto be judging their own effectiveness in accomplishing their core task.⁴⁵

Measuring the readiness of local security forces such as the ANSF remains difficult and opaque. Quality, loyalty and professionalism can be measured by metrics but require more reflection on what information is needed and how to acquire it. This would make the security sector a legitimate and primary focus of intelligence services and imply a shift in focus from enemy centric intelligence (*the red picture*) to political, tribal and economic intelligence as described in the report *Fixing Intel* co-authored by Major General Flynn.⁴⁶ The *green-on-blue* or *insider threat* phenomenon, whereby ANSF attack coalition troops, illustrates the complexity of analysing trends from what are very specific and individual actions. An investigation by terrorism expert Marc Sageman, only available on an audio track, concludes that earlier publicised conclusions are not supported by the facts. Variables and definitions changed over time, databases were incomplete and spread over differently classified

⁴⁰ The initial Bonn agreement in 2001 envisaged an Afghan Army of 70.000 men and a police force of 60.000. Illustrative for the explosion of the insurgency is the inflation of the ANSF to combat it. In 2014, the ANSF will total (excluding Afghan local police and other paramilitary initiatives) 352.000 men and women.

⁴¹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Afghan National Security Forces: Actions Needed to Improve Plans for Sustaining Capability Assessment Efforts*, SIGAR 14-33 Audit Report 2014, http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/Audits/SIGAR_14-33-AR.pdf.

⁴² A. Cordesman, *The Uncertain Role of the ANSF in Transition: Establishing Real World Criteria and Metrics*, Testimony to the House Armed Service Committee, 27 February 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/130226_Afghan_Uncertain_Role_ANSF_Transition_AHC.pdf.

⁴³ MIVD, *2012 Jaarverslag Militaire Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Defensie, 2013) <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/jaarverslagen/2013/04/25/jaarverslag-militaire-inlichtingen-en-veiligheidsdienst-2012.html>.

⁴⁴ C.M. Johnson Jr. and S.L. Pickup, *Long-standing Challenges May Affect Progress and Sustainment of Afghan National Security Forces*, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Armed Forces Committee, House of Representatives, 24 July 2012, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/592913.pdf>.

⁴⁵ G. Owen, “Paint it Pink: The U.S. redefining ANA success”, *Afghans Analysts Network*, 1 August 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/paint-it-pink-the-us-redefining-ana-success>.

⁴⁶ M. Flynn, M. Pottinger and P. Bachelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington: Centre for a New American Security, 2010), http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf.

networks and earlier reporting of facts was unreliable.⁴⁷ In short, building up a security force is by itself a significant challenge, but measuring its proficiency and readiness to shoulder the burden of responsibility is much more so.

Integrating CT policy with an objective-led transition has the advantage of immediately clarifying the role of CT in the mission: is it part of the primary objective or is it secondary to other concerns? CT goals and benchmarks can thus be identified, established and integrated in the broader mission and international involvement. Measuring progress and ascertaining whether benchmarks have been attained will be difficult, and when estimating the level of security new indicators should be used. A secondary advantage is the less restrictive timeframe imposed on the mission. While initially there might be leeway in interpreting whether objectives have been attained, as the mission progresses political pressure to conclude that the mission has been achieved and that the troops have to come home will probably grow.

4.2.3 Democratic process

Elections often play a central role in exit mechanisms for military interventions, with for example the UN-mandate for the administration in Cambodia (1993) and Bosnia (1996) emphasising elections as central to the exit of the international administration.⁴⁸ Elections are highly symbolic events, signifying a transition of authority to the new government or possibly even new political institutions. They confer them legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, and hopefully also in the eyes of the local population. The stamp of democratic process is an important one, as many Western countries can or will only transfer significant sums of aid if the regime has come to power through elections. As such, elections offer intervening countries a convenient door to military exit as the act of self-determination should lead to self-administration, whereby the principle of national sovereignty – perhaps emphasised less during the pre-intervention phase – can again be fully mobilised to argue that the country should now run its own affairs. The holding of elections does however, present three important challenges to the intervening countries: When should elections be organised, how should one react to irregularities in the process, and what to do with the results?

In states torn by conflict, elections can be held too soon or too late. If they are held too soon, they can cement the position of *spoilers*, such as the 1996 elections in Bosnia confirming the nationalists' hold on power. This helped ensure the continued need for NATO's presence, albeit at reduced levels.⁴⁹ In Afghanistan post 9/11, elections were certainly not held too soon, taking place in 2004 after a transitional period. But the Bonn Agreement which determined the timeline for elections, did legitimise and institutionalise a whole generation of warlords and powerbrokers, effectively sowing the seeds for a Taliban resurgence from 2005 onwards. The question of timing elections also played an important role in Mali 2013, after the French intervention. The French wanted to hold presidential elections in Mali as soon as possible, as the mandate of the interim president appointed after the coup of March 2012, was running out. Serious reservations were voiced by several parties who considered July and August too soon. The inability of the many displaced refugees to vote and the technical unreadiness of the government risked an extremely low turn-out and ensuing lack of legitimacy for the new President.⁵⁰ The Malian and French governments persisted in adhering to the set date for the Presidential (but not parliamentary) elections, and these were held without serious problems. Voter turnout was more than 50%, some 15% higher than the Malian average since 1991. Perhaps most important was the lack of violence during the elections. Elections are prime targets for terrorists, offering ample civilian targets clustered together in accessible

⁴⁷ M. Sageman, "The Problem of 'Green on Blue' Attacks in Afghanistan (audio)", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 29 May 2013, <http://www.fpri.org/multimedia/2013/05/problem-green-blue-attacks-afghanistan-audio>.

⁴⁸ D. Zaum, "Exit and International Administrations", in R. Caplan, ed., *Exit Strategies and State Building* (2012), p. 147.

⁴⁹ W. Durch, "Exit and Peace Support Operations" (2012), p. 91.

⁵⁰ L. Arbour and H. Yabi, "Mali: Election Threatens to Exchange One Crisis for Another", *International Crisis Group*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/mali/op-eds/arbour-yabi-mali-election-threatensto-exchange-one-crisis-for-another.aspx>. See also the diplomatic point made in article 79 of the UN Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali, S/2013/338 (2013), http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/338.

locations and a podium to spread terror with a political message. In Mali, despite some terrorist groups warning people not to vote and threatening to attack polling stations, not one single attack took place. Although only a hypothesis, the different terrorist groups were probably still recovering and regrouping from the defeat they suffered at the beginning of the year.⁵¹ There were also still sufficient French troops present to secure voting day. Postponing elections would have given more time to spoilers to prepare their actions and prolonged the presence of large numbers of French troops.

When intervening powers help organise, secure and finance elections, they become an accessory to the process and must ensure its smooth execution. This applies to the *free and fair* aspect, but also to maximising voter turnout and security, as all these factors contribute to the legitimacy of the voting results. The Afghan presidential election of 2009 is perhaps the prime example of an election falling short on every count. The Taliban launched a concerted effort to disrupt the elections, with polling day on August 20 recording the highest number of attacks and other forms of intimidation since registration began.⁵² This led to an extremely low voter turnout in the Southern Pashtun areas, which was compensated in the electoral results through industrial scale ballot stuffing by Karzai supporters.⁵³ According to the European Union observer team, whose head of mission General Morillon had to quickly leave the country before Karzai could declare him *persona non grata*, more than thirty percent of the votes were suspect or fraudulent.⁵⁴ After pressure by the international community to accept that his 54% majority was invalid, Karzai was persuaded to agree to a second round. But his main rival Dr. Abdullah Abdullah pulled out of the race days before the second vote as his demands for changes to the Electoral Commission were not met. The run-off was cancelled and Karzai proclaimed President for another five years. According to Peter Galbraith, the deputy of the UN envoy: “The fraud handed the Taliban its greatest strategic victory in eight years of fighting the United States and its Afghan partners.”⁵⁵

In May 1993, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) facilitated Cambodia’s first democratic elections in spite of enormous obstacles. There was a huge turn-out and the Khmer Rouge dithered on whether to boycott or violently disrupt the elections, in the end managing to do neither. Ensuring a secret ballot was lauded as one of UNTAC’s successes, while on the other hand it failed to disarm the Khmer Rouge and other factions during its mandate. The outcome of the election led to a shaky interim coalition government facing huge challenges. Chief of the UNTAC mission, the Japanese diplomat Akashi, compared his organisation’s role in the elections to a midwife that had helped to deliver an unhealthy child.⁵⁶ The mandate of UNTAC ran out in October of that year and the international community effectively walked away and left the country to fend for itself. In subsequent years violence flared up, the unstable coalition government increasingly cracked down on dissent through press censorship and the judiciary, until a bloody coup in 1997 put an end to the government.

There is a danger that elections, like exits, are seen as an event or the end of a process rather than the beginning of one. As the process as well as outcome can be uncertain, proper scenario planning can facilitate contingency planning. In Afghanistan 2009, for instance, there were many prior indications of a large scale fraud looming, but the reaction of the UN and international community was muted and minimalist when it did occur. If terrorism is caused by feelings of real or perceived injustice, then a good CT policy would also have to ensure free

⁵¹ S. Boeke, “Al Qaeda during the Elections in Mali: The Dog that Did Not Bark”, *ICCT Commentary*, 19 August 2013, <http://www.icct.nl/publications/icct-commentaries/al-qaeda-during-the-elections-in-mali-the-dog-that-did-not-bark->.

⁵² Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *AIHRC-UNAMA Joint Monitoring of Political Rights, Presidential and Provincial Council Elections, Third Report, 1 August – 21 October 2009* (2009), http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BC8B2AE8972877DA852576570063AB49-Full_Report.pdf.

⁵³ See different statements and articles by Peter Galbraith, deputy to U.N. Envoy Kai Eide, who was requested not to speak about fraud and was fired when he did so: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/6259530/US-diplomat-claims-UN-tried-to-gag-him.html>.

⁵⁴ EU Election Observation Mission to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Final Report: Presidential and Provincial Council Elections, 20 August 2009* (2009), http://eeas.europa.eu/afghanistan/docs/2010_election_observation_afghanistan_final_report_0809_en.pdf.

⁵⁵ P. Galbraith, “U.N. isn’t addressing fraud in Afghan election”, *Washington Post*, 4 October 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/02/AR2009100202855.html>.

⁵⁶ T. Brockades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power – supporting or substituting civil authorities in peace operations during the 1990’s* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 159.

and fair elections. The combination of an election-based exit strategy and CT policy does channel international effort into institutional capacity building, political dialogue and participation, which target the root causes of radicalisation and violent extremism. From this perspective, a focus on a political process including elections would be a far more fundamental approach in addressing the causes of terrorism than just fighting the symptoms such as the terrorist groups themselves.

4.2.4 Abrupt exit

The most unfavourable scenario in terms of transitioning to a long term strategy concerns an abrupt exit. An abrupt withdrawal can be a *cut and run* decision, an expulsion or an exit by default, when the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) has expired and attempts to renegotiate it failed. The latter would constitute an involuntary exit and, theoretically at least, a mission failure (presuming the troops were present to fulfil a mission). If the mission is not going to plan, the decision to cut and run can be a tempting option when domestic political pressures clamour for a return of the troops. In 1993, US Secretary of State Colin Powell argued that for Somalia the US “should not cut and run because things have got a little tough”, which nonetheless the US ended up doing.⁵⁷ After the failed special forces operation in Mogadishu where two Black Hawk helicopters crashed and 19 US servicemen died, members of Congress shifted their position in response to public cries for a quick American exit. But the general public’s perceived reaction to the fatalities was not supported by opinion polls. If anything, later research suggested that the first reaction of the majority polled was a preference to *hit back hard*.⁵⁸ This is one of several specific examples that do not support the casualty aversion hypothesis.

Public support in the US for the 2007 troop surge in Iraq and the 2009 surge in Afghanistan illustrate how, rather than to cut and run in times of difficulty, the case for an extra military commitment can also be made successfully. The reason for the success of the Iraq surge has been debated extensively, and there is some consensus that it was neither the extra troops nor a new population-centric modus operandi that led to the decrease in violence.⁵⁹ Conversely, the *Anbar awakening* was a result of al Qaeda’s extreme brutality and insensitivity to local issues, leading to Sunni tribes abandoning the insurgency and allying with the government. Nonetheless, the presence of US troops was certainly instrumental in providing security guarantees to the tribes courageous enough to switch sides, and it is doubtful that the descent into civil war could have been reversed without the extra surge troops. The current developments in Iraq, with the resurgence of ISIS and its capture of several key Iraqi cities, illustrate how temporary some of these gains have been and how difficult it is to effectively implement and sustain a long-term CT policy.

In the end, the US exit from Iraq would still be abrupt, but a result of the Iraqi and US governments failing to renegotiate the SOFA. Although President Obama had termed Iraq the *war of choice* and Afghanistan the *war of necessity*, the Department of Defence initially planned to keep some 16.000 troops in Iraq after 31 December 2011, when the 2008 SOFA expired. The US troops would train the Iraqi forces, prepare them to carry out CT missions, protect Iraqi airspace, cushion Arab and Kurdish tensions and maintain American influence.⁶⁰ The main stumbling block was the US demand to prolong the full legal immunity of their troops. Iraqi negotiators argued that the issue would not pass in an Iraqi parliament conscious of public anger at controversial incidents involving US troops and defence contractors.⁶¹ With reluctance on the side of the US to drive a deal to maintain an unpopular military presence (at home as well as in Iraq), the net result was a break-down of talks and a complete military withdrawal a week before the troops’ legal immunity expired. With no US troops on Iraqi soil, Iranian

⁵⁷ R. Caplan, “Devising Exit Strategies” (2012), p. 116.

⁵⁸ S. Kull and C. Ramsay, “The Myth of the Reactive Public: American Public Attitudes on Military Fatalities in the Post-Cold War Period”, in P. Everts and P. Isneria, eds., *Public Opinion and the International Use of Force* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 205-28.

⁵⁹ S. Biddle, J.A. Friedman and J.N. Shapiro, “Testing the Surge; Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?”, *International Security*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2012), pp. 7-40.

⁶⁰ M. Gordon, “In U.S. Exit from Iraq, Failed efforts and Challenges” (2012).

⁶¹ E. MacAskill, “Iraq rejects US request to maintain bases after troop withdrawal”, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/21/iraq-rejects-us-plea-bases>.

influence on Iraqi politics and society increased further, Iraqi airspace would be used by Iranian planes supplying Bashar Al-Assad's forces in the Syrian civil war, and al Qaeda in Iraq would recover from its defeat in 2007-8. Not only would violent extremism in Iraq play an important role in the conflict in Syria, but in January 2014 militants regained control of the towns of Fallujah and Ramadi. In 2004, Fallujah was occupied twice by insurgents and had to be cleared each time in heavy combat operations by US marines, with the second battle of Fallujah in November costing nearly 100 American lives and over 500 wounded. The Iraqi army lacked the professionalism and precision strike capability that the US forces had, and the decision to intervene in a Sunni area by a Shia government will not be popular. Iraqi forces did manage to roll up an al Qaeda chemical weapons cell, but outside help from an undisclosed intelligence service was vital to the operation.⁶² In short, the full departure of US troops from Iraq has had a detrimental effect on CT efforts in the country. Current developments indicate that sectarian conflict, responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in 2006-2008, is again on the rise.

The SOFA matter is currently the subject of negotiations in Afghanistan, with similar contentious issues at stake. Theoretically, an (semi-)abrupt departure of US and NATO troops is possible, as Karzai is proving to be a difficult and unpredictable partner as well as negotiator. But he is in his last term of office and a new president should be sworn in before the end of summer 2014. It seems in the interests of both parties that the withdrawal of international troops is not complete and abrupt, as the ANSF are not yet capable of operating independently and the government in Kabul is fragile and exposed.⁶³ Of course, US presence in Afghanistan also has a strategic function: it is a balcony for looking into and safeguarding over Pakistan. Many in the American defence establishment see Pakistan, not Afghanistan, as the most worrying threat to regional East-Asian stability.⁶⁴

As the exponent of an often unplanned and involuntary withdrawal, abrupt exits can frustrate long term CT policies. For a withdrawing nation, all effort should be devoted to keeping a constructive relationship with the host country, and finding ways to speed up non-military assistance and improve cooperation on CT issues.

5. Long-Term CT Policies in Interventions

Although the spectrum of available CT options is broad and encompasses capacity building, de-radicalisation and CVE programmes (see table 1), military interventions often only integrate a limited number of CT policies. Turning different programmes into one comprehensive, sustainable CT strategy requires coordination, planning and a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the available programmes. Roughly speaking, there are currently two main approaches used by troop sending nations in their military operations that have been used as long-term CT policies, namely combating terrorist groups and building the host government's capacity to provide security. In the first, the targeting of terrorist leaders is seen as a very effective and focused use of military power. For the second, institutional capacity building with the military focusing on building and training security providers is an important objective during interventions. Next to the current UN mission in Mali for example, the European Union has deployed a training mission (EUTM) to build and strengthen the Malian army. This section will look briefly at the main approaches in CT policies in military interventions and which issues are involved.

Besides the strategy of the intervention, the mission architecture also determines the position and role of CT policies. There are two ways of structuring a mission, as used in Iraq and Afghanistan: through the COIN-doctrine or via a 3D approach (Defence, Diplomacy and Development), also known as a whole of government approach. These two options offer different starting principles and diverging interpretations of the military

⁶² B. Roggio, "Iraq breaks up Al Qaeda chemical weapons cell", *The Long War Journal*, 1 June 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/iraq_breaks_up_al_qa.php.

⁶³ H. Cooper, "Hard Talk Aside, Little Desire by the West to Leave Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 26 February 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/world/asia/hard-talk-aside-little-desire-by-west-to-leave-afghanistan.html>.

⁶⁴ R. Moran, "US Intelligence targeting Pakistan, citing nuclear security worries", *American Thinker*, 3 September 2013, http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2013/09/us_intelligence_targeting_pakistan_citing_nuclear_security_worries.html.

presence and role.⁶⁵ In COIN, there is a clear military lead of the overall operation, and the sequence of activities is more or less dictated by doctrine: shape, clear, hold and build. The whole of government approach does not fall under military command and, as such, less is planned or encoded in doctrines and concepts of operations. Although in practice the 3D approach is far from defined, it does offer more flexibility in terms of sequence as the various development or military activities do not necessarily follow each other but can occur concurrently or even in a different order. Coupled with the civilian leadership and various civil components, the 3D approach effectively enables the adjustment of the military presence in relation to diplomats, aid workers and other actors at different times in the mission.⁶⁶ The advantage for the implication of long-term CT policies is that the civilian aspect has been implanted early in the mission and is not just seen as a substitution to withdrawing soldiers.

5.1 Terrorist-centric approach

The targeting of terrorist leaders and key-facilitators has become central to many states' CT strategies. This *kill or capture* strategy, with in practice a strong emphasis on the former due to the added difficulty of the latter, has aimed to decapitate terrorist groups in Iraq, Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan. New techniques combining data from drones, signals intelligence (SIGINT) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT), have allowed special forces or drones to hunt specific individuals with enormous effect.⁶⁷ Targeting has therefore become one of the main operational activities during the military intervention, and will probably continue to be carried out after most combat troops withdraw from Afghanistan post-2014. Whether using drones or special forces, targeting is seen as a surgical and effective method to disrupt future attacks and degrade a terrorist or insurgent organisation.⁶⁸ Although there are many other options available, such as negotiating with terrorist groups, the reliance on targeting merits closer scrutiny.

The effectiveness of targeting as a CT measure is open to debate. In Afghanistan, where thousands of Taliban mid-level commanders are killed every year by special forces, the insurgency has clearly not been defeated with insurgent violence consistently on the rise. The Taliban strategic leadership is securely holed up over the border in the Pakistani cities of Quetta and Karachi, while the organisation seems to be more of a confederation of tribal and personal networks than a clear, pyramidal hierarchy. The military metaphor of *cutting off the snake's head* cannot be applied to a resilient network consisting of different nodes. Taking out specific nodes simultaneously or in a pre-determined order might disorientate a network, but in many cases new, more radical commanders replace previous inefficient ones. While the Taliban insurgency seems to withstand the onslaught of special forces operations well, the drone-raids in Pakistan do seem to keep al Qaeda on the back foot in North Waziristan.⁶⁹

The problem for academics and policymakers alike is that there is little reliable data available on the specifics of insurgent or terrorist networks and the effect targeted operations have on them. The methods of locating terrorist or insurgent leaders often involve SIGINT and are therefore classified top secret, as SIGINT is deemed most sensitive of all intelligence acquisition methods. Whether by drone or a special forces operation, the effectiveness of targeting terrorist and insurgent leaders needs more analysis, as does the analysis of the side-effects (political and legal) that this controversial policy creates. As national stakeholders need to consider the CT policy legitimate, there is a risk that the negative and unintended consequences of targeting by drones greatly

⁶⁵ T. Brockades Zaalberg, "The Use and Abuse of the 'Dutch Approach' to Counter-Insurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 36, no. 6 (2013), pp. 867-97.

⁶⁶ S. Rietjens, J. Soeters and P. C. van Fenema, "Learning from Afghanistan: Towards a compass for civil-military coordination", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2013), pp. 257-77.

⁶⁷ SIGINT involves the interception and eventual decryption of electronic communications, from satellite, mobile and fixed phones to all that is currently done over the Internet.

⁶⁸ A. Krishnan, "Dead on Target? The Strategic Dead End of Targeted Killing as a Way of War", in M. Aaronson and A. Johnson, eds., *Hitting the Target? How New Capabilities are Shaping International Intervention* (London: RUSI, 2013), pp. 89-95.

⁶⁹ J. Jordan, "The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda Central: a Case Study", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2014), pp. 4-29.

exceed the benefits.⁷⁰ It is notoriously difficult to positively identify individuals and cases of mistaken identity abound, whereby it is not actually clear who has been killed in the targeting operation.⁷¹ A more effects-based approach on targeting, rather than the most efficient use of intelligence and technology to take out enemy commanders would have a double advantage. It would not only entail a better registration of targeting data to enable outcome-analysis, but also improve accountability and shape the current debate on the legality of drones and targeted killings.

Although the primary sources on targeting in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen are scarce and/or unreliable, there is some academic literature on the effect of targeted killings in general.⁷² These focus on historical cases such as Israel's fight against Hezbollah and Hamas, the IRA, Peru's Shining Path terrorist group, and the PKK in Turkey. On the whole, factors such as the size of a terrorist group, its age and the charisma of a leader (and the *personality cult* that it might accompany), play a large role in determining whether decapitation is effective. According to Audrey Kurth Cronin, the law-enforcement approach, whereby the leader is captured and put on trial rather than killed, seems to have the most enduring positive effect.⁷³ This, of course, excludes scenarios where the terrorist leader either continues to run his organisation from his prison cell or restarts his activities once he has managed to leave prison. Creating martyrs that must be avenged risks further encouraging terrorism and its leaders' fame and immortality.⁷⁴ An example of a targeted killing with a direct counterproductive effect would be the Nigerian security force's extrajudicial execution of Boko Haram's founder and leader, Mohammed Yusuf, in 2009. A sharp spike in violence, with an increase of insecurity in the Northern region of Maiduguri was the result and the movement has only increased in momentum since.⁷⁵

The policy of targeting poses two dilemmas when considering the transition to local authorities and the exit of international troops. Firstly, there will probably be strong bias towards the military approach of killing terrorists rather than bringing them to (local) justice, as the chance of a functioning and reliable justice system being in place is often slim, and the outcomes are uncertain. Porous prisons walls, corrupt judges, police officers, prosecutors, lawyers or a confession-based system all complicate the local law-enforcement approach. *Neutralising the terrorist* will thus seem preferable to running the gauntlet of a corrupt legal system while it might be more effective to capture him – and likely also more appropriate in legal and moral terms. Secondly, when planning future targeting operations, the host's national sovereignty and accountability issues will need to be negotiated. From a practical perspective, support bases and sufficient (human) intelligence will remain vital to be able to carry out targeting operations.

5.2 Government capacity building

Security Sector Reform (SSR) has been an important element in CT and counterinsurgency policies around the globe. During the Cold War, security-related assistance usually focused on improving the operational capacity of security services, but with limited to no attention to rule of law or democratic governance aspects. In the nineties, as peacebuilding missions spread, the development and aid community recognised that development and security are interdependent. On the one hand, corrupt or oppressive security services were seen as undermining stability and thus the effectiveness of committed development aid, while from another perspective positive reform of the security sector was seen as a catalyst for broader good governance and democratisation

⁷⁰ See for instance the joint letter to President Obama on drone strikes and targeted killings by a number of human rights organisations, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/05/joint-letter-president-obama-drone-strikes-and-targeted-killings>.

⁷¹ J. Scahill and G. Greenwald, "The NSA's Secret Role in the U.S. Assassination Program", *The Intercept*, 10 January 2014, <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/article/2014/02/10/the-nsas-secret-role>.

⁷² See for instance J. Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation", *Security Studies*, vol. 18 (2009), pp. 719-55 and P. Johnston, "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Targeting in Counterinsurgency Operations", *International Security*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2012), pp. 44-79.

⁷³ A.K. Cronin, *How Terrorism End* (2009), p. 32.

⁷⁴ See M. Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism" (1981).

⁷⁵ A. Olojo, *Nigeria's Troubled North: Interrogating the Drivers of Public Support for Boko Haram*, ICCT Research Paper (2013), <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Olojo-Nigerias-Troubled-North-October-2013.pdf>.

programs.⁷⁶ SSR promotes the accountability of security forces to elected civil authorities and civil society (and implies a hierarchy in these relations), and the adherence to international law and domestic constitutional law. As such, SSR reconstructs the management, practices and operations of a state's armed forces towards Western norms and is closely related to state building.⁷⁷

The literature on the effectiveness of SSR is still limited. An objective and holistic analysis of different SSR case-studies is lacking but Iraq and Afghanistan will soon undoubtedly offer enough data to establish which aspects of the SSR policies were effective and which were less so. For instance, it will become clear if the ANSF can live up to the expectations (and metrics) described previously in this report. Perhaps a new Achilles heel will be revealed: the Afghan air force. An air force is much harder to build from scratch than an army or police force, and air power is an essential force multiplier in combat, transport and medical evacuation.⁷⁸ If there were to be insufficient air power available after transition, it could for instance lead to the Taliban regaining influence in the open country and pushing back security presence and influence to the cities.

The effects of SSR during and after a military intervention should also be analysed in comparison to SSR without intervention. Mali's special forces were trained from 2005-2012 in the cadre of the Pan-Sahel initiative and later the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative. US, French and Canadian troops ran different military training programmes in Mali, Niger Chad and Mauritania, and local troops were trained by Western special forces in Flintlock, the annual regional exercise among African, Western, and US CT forces since 2006. Nonetheless, in Mali years of training did not manage to prevent the state's collapse at the start of 2012. Malian troops that were trained and equipped by the West deserted to the attacking Tuareg rebels, and the captain who launched the coup had completed extensive training in the US.⁷⁹ As a result of the coup the bulk of the foreign trained troops, the country's elite red berets (who were seen as the Presidential guard), were shut in their barracks by the regular army while the rebels and jihadists conquered and occupied two thirds of the country. As mentioned above, in 2013 a further jihadist attack obliged the French to intervene to help expel the rebels/jihadists. In this case, a failed SSR policy effectively preceded an international military intervention.

Besides training by and of special forces, local intelligence and security services – a crucial factor in counterintelligence – also need partnering. As this field of work is by its nature closed and secretive, there is little analysis on the effectiveness or best practices of intelligence capacity building. Often local intelligence services need little advice in the traditional tradecraft of human intelligence, with intervening powers justifiably more concerned for the respect of human rights and installation of a system of oversight and accountability. By investing well in personal relationships with key players in the partner services, intervening countries can ensure that after withdrawal intelligence will still be shared. The sharing of intelligence is after all based on trust and a *quid pro quo* relationship. As for the more technical intelligence acquisition, such as SIGINT, the intervening countries can set up a local capacity to intercept communications – a crucial CT asset.

Where government presence is weak, there is a temptation to rely on local militias to fill in the void and provide security. In Afghanistan, various irregular armed groups have been resurrected by ISAF and the Afghan government as a quick-fix, particularly in the north of the country. Hundreds of small new militias have also been created, either by powerful local figures or by communities themselves, to respond to the deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country. But as the well-researched report *Just don't call it a Militia* by Human Rights Watch concludes, these groups operate with impunity and often commit abuses when furthering the interests of their commanders and local strongmen.⁸⁰ Instead of providing security they actually undermine it, by

⁷⁶ A.J. Bellamy, "Security Sector Reform: Prospects and Problems", *Global Change, Peace & Security*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2003), pp. 101-19.

⁷⁷ See e.g. M. Chalmers, *Security Sector Reform in Developing Countries: An EU Perspective* (London: Saferworld, 2000).

⁷⁸ G. Owen, "Another Post-2014 Capability Gap: Spin and reality of the Afghan air force's readiness", *Afghan Analysts Network*, 11 July 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/another-post-2014-capability-gap-spin-and-reality-of-the-afghan-air-forces-readiness>.

⁷⁹ B. Whitehouse, "Captain Amadou Sanogo: Power is his Middle Name", *Think Africa Press*, 29 March 2012, <http://thinkafricapress.com/mali/captain-amadou-sanogo-power-his-middle-name-coup>.

⁸⁰ R. Reid and S. Muhammedally, "*Just Don't Call It a Militia: Impunity, Militias and the 'Afghan Local Police'*" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover_0.pdf.

alienating large segments of the local population and driving the *have nots* or oppressed into the arms of the insurgency.

6. Conclusion

Whether labelled as *transition* or *exit strategy*, the issue of military withdrawal from an intervention must be seen as a process, and not an event. The parameters of this often politically delicate process are determined by the entry, and specifically the initial strategy that has been defined for the mission. As such, a good entry facilitates an orderly exit, but the popular understanding that an exit strategy should entail a clear and linear road map to withdrawal is misleading and unrealistic. Even if such a plan could be created, the destination may change over time and local actors need to be bought in (or refrained from sabotaging the process) if the process is to run smoothly.⁸¹ Equally important is the realisation that military troops are but one component of international involvement in a conflict situation, and that parallel to and in combination with military operations, a civilian effort contributes to the mission. This civilian effort, that focuses on development, capacity building and CVE, should ideally even be increased as troops draw down to ensure the continuation and durability of the results achieved.

Of the four ways of transitioning identified, the objective-led transition has most to offer policymakers. First, this approach necessitates the establishment of clear and realistic objectives to be attained, an aspect that is often neglected in the haste of high-level decision-making. This sharpens the notions of *ends* and *means*, and offers guidance as unexpected events shape and change the course of the intervention. Second, as it will always remain difficult to objectively measure whether some or all of these goals or benchmarks have been met, the political and military leadership is less constrained by a rigid time-table and can adapt policies to developments on the ground. This can also benefit the formulation of a necessary strategic narrative for public support back home, as the military intervention can be seen to serve a mission that must be accomplished rather than just a timeframe to sit out. Ideally this objective-led approach is combined with aspects of the electoral process, addressing the political aspects of conflict and instability and simultaneously ensuring a legitimate government in the host state. These are all prerequisites for a successful CT policy.

The formulation and implementation of a long-term CT strategy needs to be more firmly embedded in the general strategy of military missions that have a CT objective. Currently, much effort is devoted to the aspects that the military are traditionally comfortable in doing: hunting terrorists and training local security forces. The spectrum of available CT tools is however much broader, ranging from community policing to CVE programmes that address specific local grievances. These policies should not fall under the remit of military operations, but to be successful need to be implemented as soon as possible during the intervention – during the initial military phase. A possible further avenue for research would be to investigate the practicalities of integrating these programmes in broader transition strategies, using the categorisation of transitions offered by this Paper. By constructing a matrix of ways of leaving with CT policies, key decision-making moments can be identified and situated in the mission timetable. By comparing operational lessons learned from different military interventions, a set of best-practices could be identified. As such, a successful integration of these policies in the underlying mission strategy would have an important side-effect: it would refocus attention on the long-term purpose of international involvement, rather than the singular issue of bringing troops back home.

⁸¹ J. Record, "Exit Strategy Delusions", *Parameters*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2001), pp. 21-27.

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