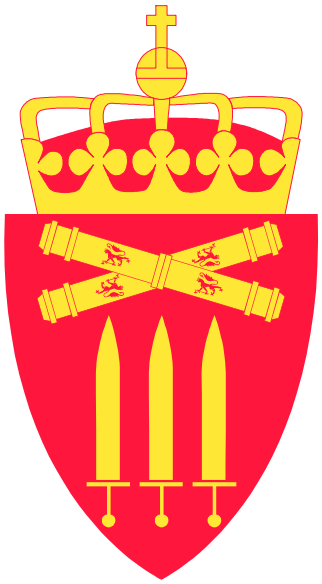

**Forsvarets stabsskole**

**Våren 2010**

**Masteroppgave**

# Intelligence in Complex Conflicts – Does Intelligence Provide Decision-Makers with Relevant Knowledge?

*With a Case Study on the Dutch Operation in Uruzgan Province, Southern Afghanistan*

**Arie Laurens Hendrik van Vliet**

## Summary

The shift from ‘industrial wars’ to the contemporary paradigm of ‘war amongst the people’ has had enormous consequences for the theory, concepts and ideas about how contemporary wars (complex conflicts) are waged. What is the impact of this paradigm shift on the role and influence of intelligence? How relevant are intelligence reports for the decision-making processes concerning these complex conflicts?

The purpose of this study is to support the intelligence community in the process of making intelligence more relevant for decision-making. It is aimed at creating a better understanding of the intelligence needs of complex conflicts, and at identifying bottlenecks and potential solutions.

The fist part of this study provides a conceptual framework by discussing relevant concepts of intelligence and complex conflicts. In the second part, the bottlenecks and potential solutions are identified. This part of the study is conducted by using a single case study - the Dutch operation in southern Afghanistan.

This study shows that a culture of ‘secrecy’ and an output-driven process within the Dutch intelligence community has a negative effect on the relevance of intelligence for decision-making. It further identifies a need for a closer relationship between the decision-makers and the intelligence producers, and a more pro-active role for the latter.

## Table of Contents

# 1 Introduction

Theory regarding "contemporary complex conflicts", including counter-insurgencies, is booming, if the number of books and debates is any indication. There is considerable discussion today about "what is new" and "what has changed." However, there seems to be no disagreement about certain trends, like the relation with the media, the importance of the role of the local population, and a *comprehensive approach* or 3D-approach.[1] But how about intelligence? What is the impact of these trends on the role and influence of intelligence? How relevant are intelligence and security agency reports for the decision-making processes concerning these complex conflicts? These questions are largely unanswered. This is probably due to the fact that most studies within the field of intelligence are neither focused on the population, nor on a comprehensive approach. Most studies are related to counter-terrorism; they have a narrow perspective of security issues; or they are focused on an opponent's intentions and capabilities. Most of these studies are based on foreign policy objectives and intelligence structures of the US, and only a very limited number of studies are addressing the situation in smaller countries like The Netherlands.

In his initial assessment of august 2009 general McChrystal, commander of the NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, points out that the war in Afghanistan has reached a critical phase.[2] According to him, a change in strategy and additional resources is needed to retake the initiative from the resurgent Taliban. McChrystal warned that failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum within a year "risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible".[3] If McChrystal's assessment is right, you could assume that during the last eight years of the conflict some wrong decisions have been made.

In the literature a wide variety of definitions about intelligence can be identified. However, most definitions have in common that the purpose of intelligence is linked to

[1] The idea behind the concept of a comprehensive approach is that success will never be achieved through military means alone, but through an integrated approach that involves social, economical, political and military means. And 3D (diplomacy, defence, development) relates to the states elements of power.
[2] McCrystal S.A., "Commander´s Initial Assessment", HQ ISAF, Afghanistan, 30 august 2009.
[3] The Washington Post, 2 October 2009.

action of some sort, including policy and decision-making. Hence the question can be asked: what role did intelligence play in the decision making on Afghanistan? An answer to this question is given by McCrystal himself. According to McCrystal, the senior leaders are not getting the right information to support decision-making, and is it mainly the media who is driving the issues. He identifies a need to reshape the intelligence-process, all the way from the sensors to the political decision makers.[4]

How does this apply to the Netherlands? Based on discussions with a large number of people inside an outside the intelligence community, the assumption can be made that with regards to Afghanistan, the Dutch are confronted with the same challenges as the US. Also concerning Iraq the intelligence service's reports seemed to be less relevant for policy and decision-making. According to the Committee of Inquiry on Iraq[5], the nuances of the Dutch intelligence service reports concerning Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programme were not reflected by the relevant ministers or departments. "Ministers and departments extracted those statements from the reports that were consistent with the stance already adopted. The government was to a considerable extent led by public and other information from the US and the UK".[6]

It is very likely that the broadly accepted trends/ideas about contemporary complex conflicts, such as a comprehensive approach and a focus on the population will have a considerable impact on intelligence concepts. A quick analysis of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq - as indicated – suggests that a significant impact is that both intelligence producers and consumers seem to have problems with making intelligence relevant for policy and decision-making.

Managing this problem of relevance drives two lines of thought. Firstly, there is a need to understand the trends of complex conflicts from an intelligence point of view. Secondly, the most significant current problems with regards to the relevance of intelligence, and possible solutions have to be identified. To contribute to the thinking

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[4] Flynn, "Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 9.

[5] The Committee of Inquiry on Iraq (a.k.a. Committee Davids) investigated the decision-making concerning the Dutch support for the Iraq war. The committee started its research in March 2009 and presented its report in January 2010.

[6] Report Committee of Inquiry Iraq, 12 January 2010, p. 531.

on how to make intelligence more relevant, the following research question has been developed.

**Central research question**

The purpose of this study is to support the intelligence producers in the process of making intelligence more relevant for policy and decision-making. It is aimed at contributing to the process of creating a better understanding of the intelligence needs of complex conflicts, and to identify or develop solutions for the bottlenecks. In other words: what is different, what problems do this cause, and what can be done about it? These aims lead then to the following central research question of this study:

> *From a Dutch perspective concerning complex conflicts,*
> *what makes intelligence relevant for decision-making,*
> *what bottlenecks can be identified, and what are potential solutions?*

This study needs a thorough explanation of three topics, namely complex conflicts, intelligence, and relevance. These topics will be described and analyzed in chapter 2 and 3.

As indicated, it is very likely that the trends of contemporary complex conflicts will have a broad impact on intelligence concepts. However, the focus of this study lies on relevance of intelligence for policy and decision-making. Relevance can be measured by the consumer's possibility to assimilate and use the product in their decision-making process, which requires a constant interaction between producer and consumer.[7] Because the objective of this study lies in the field of intelligence and not in the field of decision-making, the study will be conducted from the perspective of the intelligence producers. Despite the close relation between the concepts of relevancy and quality, they should not become intertwined. On the one hand, an intelligence report can be of high quality (valid, reliable, and robust), but still of no use to the decision-making process (giving good answers to the wrong questions). On the other hand, a report can be of a bad quality, but very relevant (giving bad answers to the right questions).[8]All aspects of

[7] Sims, 1995, p. 5.
[8] A good example of this are the US intelligence reports concerning Iraq´s WMD-programme. These reports were very policy-relevant, but the assessments were of poor quality.

intelligence, which are related to the concept of quality, are outside the scope of this study.

**Research methodology**

The first aspect of the central research question is to create an understanding of the trends of complex conflicts and their possible impacts on intelligence concepts. To create such an understanding, first, a conceptual framework for the study is needed. To develop such a framework a literature search of the field of intelligence will be conducted. The aim is to identify intelligence concepts and ideas, which are relevant to the purpose of this study. Thereafter, the essential characteristics of complex conflicts will be described. The description of these characteristics will be based on a search, from an intelligence perspective, of some influential literature on the field of complex conflicts. The aim is to identify those characteristics that most probably will have significant consequences for the role of intelligence in decision-making processes.

After having described this conceptual framework of intelligence and complex conflicts, the next issue is to identify and discuss the most significant bottlenecks, and potential solutions. This part of the study will be conducted using a single case study. As this study is written within the Dutch context, the role of the Netherlands Defence Intelligence and Security Service (NL-DISS) in support of the Dutch operation in the province of Uruzgan, Afghanistan, is chosen for this research.[9]

As this study attempts to identify factors concerning the relevance of intelligence for policy and decision-making, this part of the study will be exploratory of nature. As there will be many variables involved, with only a single case, the factors cannot be identified through statistical manipulation. Instead, analytical generalizations will be used. Therefore, not only causal explanations based on the findings of the case will be used, but also of hypothetical expectations from the study from the literature on complex conflicts and intelligence. To identify more precisely the factors that are of influence to the relevancy of intelligence, hypotheses are developed throughout the first two chapters of this study. These hypotheses are focused issues of which there is insufficient information in the literature, or of which there are dissimilar opinions.

[9] At national/strategic level, there are two agencies: the AIVD (General Intelligence and Security Service) and the MIVD (Military Intelligence and Security Service)(NL-DISS).

*Sources*

For the case study – to serve its different objectives – a wide variety of sources are consulted. Interviews are held with both intelligence producers (analysts and managers of the NL-DISS) and intelligence consumers (staff members at the military strategic and operational level).[10] Use is made of different types of archives (policy documents and intelligence reports), open sources, and literature from the fields of intelligence and complex conflicts (from both scientists and practitioners).

Regarding the literature on intelligence, Michael Herman´s famous works *Intelligence power in peace and war* (1996), and *Intelligence services in the information age* (2002), will provide background data and references to intelligence in general. This basis formed on Herman's work will be complemented by articles published by intelligence practitioners, and military doctrine publications.[11] Regarding the understanding of the distinctive characteristics of complex conflicts, the theories/concepts of Christopher Coker, *War in an Age of Risk* (2009), Rupert Smith, *Utility of Force – The Art of War in the Modern World* (2005), and the JP 3-24[12] will play a central role in this study.

This study will not give an overall picture of the state of affairs of the Dutch intelligence, which is beyond the purpose of this study. The aim is not a descriptive generalization of the relevancy of NL-DISS-reports. As noted before, the aim is to identify, through analysis, bottlenecks and potential solutions. Knowledge of this will be very useful, if we want to improve the relevancy of intelligence products, and thereby improving the quality of policy and decision-making.

**Composition of the study**

To answer the central research question, this study is composed of three components - conceptual, descriptive and analytical. In the first section, the concepts of intelligence and complex conflicts are discussed to provide a conceptual framework. In the second section, the case is presented. In the third section, the bottlenecks and potential solutions are discussed and recommendations are presented.

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[10] Because of legal restrictions the interviewed persons from NL-DISS are not mentioned by name. These interview objects will be referenced as 'Confidential interviews by the author, on date….'.
[11] NATO, Doctrine AJP-2.1; Dutch Military guidelines on intelligence in Leidraad 5 (LD 5).
[12] US, Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, (2009).

The first section of the study is represented in chapter 2 and 3. In chapter 2, an introduction to intelligence is presented. It outlines the main characteristics of intelligence and describes, and provides an overview of the field. The focus will be on aspects that are relevant to the relevance of intelligence – such as the dialogue between producers and consumers. In chapter 3 these characteristics of complex conflicts are described, which most probably will have a significant impact on the discussed intelligence concepts. Attention is paid to hypotheses that are developed to identify more focused the bottlenecks.

In the second section – chapter 4 - the case (the Dutch perspective) is presented. It describes the context, the strategy, intelligence support, and achievements and challenges of the Dutch operation in the Uruzgan province.

The third section deals with the analytical issue of factors of influence on the relevancy of intelligence. In chapter 5, the biases and pitfalls are identified and analyzed. In chapter 6, the possible solutions are identified and discussed. Finally, recommendations bring this study to conclusion.

# 2 Intelligence: Concept, process, context, and factors of influence

What do we mean by intelligence? What processes are used and how does it relate to its (policy and decision-making) context? What makes intelligence relevant? Insights into these aspects of intelligence are needed to understand the factors that influence the relevance of intelligence.

First of all, a definition of intelligence is discussed? (2.1). After positioning the concept of intelligence, some basic insights are given into the process that leads to the production of intelligence reports (2.2), focussing on the intelligence cycle and its limitations. This introduction of concept and process is followed by setting intelligence in its policy and decision-making context (2.3). Attention is paid to the interaction between producers and consumers, and the place of intelligence in the decision-making process. This introductory chapter is concluded by presenting factors that influence the relevance of intelligence (2.4).

## 2.1 Concept

What do we mean with intelligence? How does it differ from mere information? Even in the Dutch vocabulary there are no words that make this distinction. The following section discusses the definition of intelligence.

There is certainly no lack of definitions of intelligence. The definition can be used to describe a product, or to describe a process, or both. Some definitions include the element of secrecy, and others are focussing on the purpose of intelligence. These different points of views are reflected in the following definitions. NATO defines it as "the product resulting from the processing of information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations."[13] Michael Warner defines it as "secret, state activity to understand or influence foreign entities."[14] Robert Bowie simply defines it as "information designed for action."[15]

[13] NATO AAP-6, "Glossary of Terms and Definitions", 2010, p. 2-1-6.
[14] Andrew, 2009, p. 9
[15] Sims, 1995, p.4

However, as this study focuses on the relevance of intelligence for policy and decision-making, the definition should describe process and product, as well as the purpose of intelligence. However, NATO's and Warner's definitions are too narrowly focused on the product or process. Although Bowie's definition highlights an essential element of intelligence –purposefulness- it is way too broad and does not distinguish intelligence from other forms of information "designed for action." Therefore, none of the described definitions are suited for the purpose of this study, and merging them into one single definition is difficult.

Intelligence is best defined as information collected, processed, and/or analyzed on behalf of actors or decision makers.[16] However, to fit the context of this study – national intelligence, relevance, complex conflicts - a few remarks about this definition have to be made. If the information is collected, processed, or analysed on behalf of national consumers, it is often called national intelligence. These consumers can be anyone from the minister-president to a platoon-commander in Afghanistan. However, for information, to be intelligence, it must be collected, processed, and/or analyzed "on behalf of" these actors or decision maker. The "and/or" is essential in the definition, and explains that relevant knowledge can be pulled by the consumer or pushed by the producer. In most cases the information is collected, processed, and analyzed for the consumer (pull). However, if the information is relevant but not collected for the consumer, then it must be processed or analyzed for him (push).[17]

In the Dutch context the national intelligence concerning complex conflicts is the responsibility of the NL-DISS. Secrecy has always been an important component for agencies like the NL-DISS. Even though open sources form the majority of information, clandestine sources (technical means, human agents) still play an essential role. Secrecy relates to the need to protect sensitive information, sources, and methods. So it is well known and accepted that secrecy is a significant, but not exclusive, factor within intelligence agencies, and therefore it is not needed to include secrecy within the definition.[18] The essence of purposefulness and the secret part of intelligence is well described by Sir David Omand: "intelligence enables action to be optimized by reducing ignorance; and secret intelligence achieves this objective in respect of information that

[16] Valk, 2005, p. 8
[17] Sims, 1995, p. 5
[18] This is not only within intelligence agencies, but in general with all intelligence that is exclusively collected for a customer.

others wish to remain hidden. Thus stated, the purpose of intelligence is not linked simply to knowledge for its own sake but to organized and analyzed information that can be put to use.[19] A last remark is about the context of complex conflicts. Because of this context it is an open door that most intelligence concerns foreign entities. For this reasons "foreign entities" is not included in the chosen definition.

## 2.2 Intelligence process

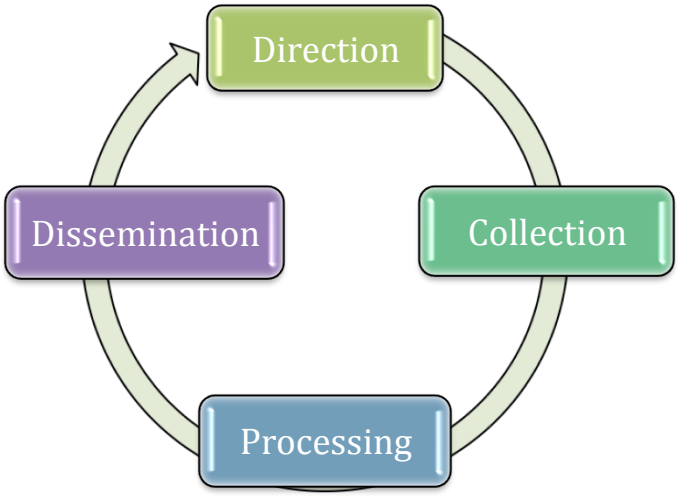
What do intelligence processes look like? What is the intelligence cycle? This study focuses on the relevance of intelligence reports, which is the output of an intelligence process. As stated in the definition, intelligence reports are the result of collecting, processing and analyzing information. In other words, the process by which information is converted into intelligence and made available to consumers. To describe this process, different models are used. The model that is most referred to in the literature on intelligence is the intelligence cycle.[20] The intelligence cycle is the fundamental model for thinking about intelligence and constructing intelligence systems. Its objective is to provide a sound intelligence process that assists producers as well as consumers in understanding their role in the process.

### Military intelligence cycle

The intelligence cycle is described in many ways. Here, the focus lies on the military intelligence cycle. The military intelligence cycle is the sequence of activities whereby information is obtained, assembled, converted from information into intelligence and made available to the consumers. This sequence consists of 4 phases.[21]

[19] This description of intelligence was presented by Sir David Omand at the Professional Advanced Intelligence Course at FHS, Oslo, September 2009.
[20] Other models which are often referred to in the intelligence literature are the intelligence matrix, and the warning cycle. These models are described in Valk, 2005, p. 14-18.
[21] NATO, Doctrine AJP-2.1; Dutch Military Guidelines on Intelligence in Leidraad 5 (LD 5).

**Model 2.1 The military intelligence cycle**




*Direction* – The first phase starts with the determination of the consumer's information requirements, planning the collection effort, issuance of orders and requests to collection agencies. The cycle starts again with, when the consumers restate their requirements in the light of received intelligence products.[22]

*Collection* – The second phase of the process is the exploitation of sources by collection agencies and the delivery of the information obtained to the appropriate processing unit for use in the production of intelligence.

*Processing* – The third phase is about processing. This concerns the conversion of information into intelligence through collation, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation.

*Dissemination* – This is the fourth and the last phase of the intelligence cycle. This is the timely conveyance of intelligence to the consumers. This phase also concerns the reception and feedback of the policy or decision-makers.

As noted, the intelligence cycle exists in many other variants with for example five, six or even more phases.[23] However, these additional phases are nothing more than an

[22] Herman, 1996, p. 285.
[23] For example the intelligence cycle used by the US. This model consists of six phases: planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and production, dissemination and integration, and evaluation and feedback;

aspect of some phases of the military intelligence cycle, and do not describe different activities. For example, the processing-phase can be spilt in three separate phases: processing, analysis and reporting.[24]

It is arguable which model describes the intelligence process best. For example, an argument to list analysis as a separate phase is that analysis on its own is such a crucial element of the process that it should have its own status in the cycle as to emphasize its importance. However, the different models are "just modifications", and in the context of this study the majority of stakeholders are familiar with the military intelligence cycle. Hence, for the purpose of this study, the military intelligence cycle is most suited. This model will also be used as a tool in chapter 5 and 6 to identify and analyze the bottlenecks and solution directions.

**Limitations**

The intelligence cycle is nowadays a questionable concept. It is often seen as model based on WWII and the Cold War. Wilhelm Agrell argues that the cycle can be useful as a tool at tactical and operational level to handle mass data, but that the model is absolutely not suited as tool for creative problem solving, and, moreover, prevents an intelligence system from thinking.[25] This aspect of creativity, as will be discussed in the next chapter, is in fact an important requisition in dealing with complex conflicts.

It is correct that the intelligence cycle has its roots in the period of the Cold War in which intelligence had to deal with major crises, or routine reviews.[26] In this period, in which relative long decision-cycles existed, a clear sequence of the different phases did result in relevant intelligence products. However, in the contemporary period of complex conflicts, the decision-cycles have shortened dramatically. A clear sequence of intelligence activities will not lead to relevant intelligence for the decision-making processes. To be useful in complex conflicts a flexible interpretation of the model is needed. Hence, nowadays in practice, steps are omitted, and there are side loops and feedback moments in between every step of the cycle. To cope with these aspects Sir David Omand speaks of the "new intelligence cycle" (model 2.2) which incorporates

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www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/i/4856.html

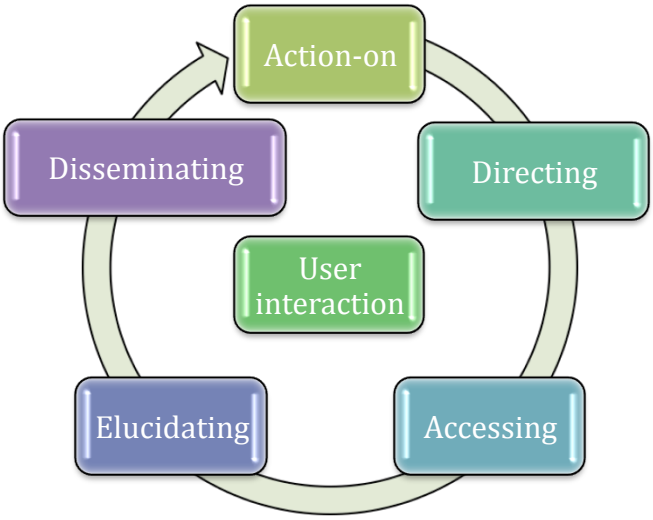
[24] Valk, 2005, p. 13.

[25] Wilhelm Agrell, University of Lund, discussed this in a RAND workshop about intelligence theory, 15 June 2005; www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF219/

[26] Andrew, 2009, p. 21.

these many cross-cutting connections.[27]

**Model 2.2 The new intelligence cycle**




Despite the limitations, the military intelligence cycle, if used in a flexible way/manner, remains an appropriate tool for the understanding of intelligence.[28] The most important prerequisite is the functioning of the feedback mechanism that is supposed to be embedded within the existing framework of the cycle. As discussed, the feedback mechanism is needed between the different elements on the producer side (for example between analysts and collectors), but more importantly between the producers and consumers. The following section focuses on this relation between producers and consumers.

## 2.3 Intelligence context

As noted, the relationship between producers and consumers is crucial.[29]A functioning intelligence process depends on both the producers and the consumers. Insight and understanding into each other's world is hereby a prerequisite.

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[27] This model was presented by Sir David Omand at the Professional Advanced Intelligence Course at FHS, Oslo, September 2009. This model has one extra phase: Action-on, which is the application of the intelligence to appropriate missions, tasks, and functions. *Accessing* and *Elucidating* are in principle other terms for *Collection* and *Processing.* The most important element of this model is the central place of *User interaction*.

[28] A good explanation of the intelligence cycle from another perspective is provided by Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, p. 36-57.

[29] In the intelligence literature the interaction between producers and consumers is often described as *the intelligence dialogue.*

### 2.3.1 Intelligence dialogue

As Sir David Omand pointed out "intelligence enables action to be optimized by reducing ignorance" and "the purpose of intelligence is not linked simply to knowledge for its own sake but to organized and analyzed information that can be put to use." In other words: the purpose of intelligence is to provide politicians and commanders with relevant knowledge so they can take better decisions. To make intelligence relevant it must be tailored to the consumer's needs. How does this process of making intelligence relevant works?

Reviewing the 'old' intelligence cycle, it is the policy and decision makers who, in the first phase (direction), are initiating the process by requesting intelligence products that addresses the issues they are dealing with (and later restate their requirements in the light of received intelligence products). The consumers are the driving force of the process, constantly adapting their requirements to optimize their intelligence inputs.[30]But this is not how any knowledge-based system works.[31] Often the consumer's requirements are incomplete or unreliable: they simply do not know what they should ask. Henry Kissinger recognized this dilemma, he stated that he did not know what intelligence he needed but recognized it when he saw it.[32] For this reason Michael Herman concludes that not the consumers but the producers should be the driving force. Rather than simply responding to the consumer's requirements, they should actively seek for the consumer's needs. As explained in section 2.2, feedback plays a here a crucial role. The consumers will know if a report interests them or wastes their time, and therefore will have reactions (positive and negative). The producers should seek for these reactions and optimize them.[33] This approach leads to an adjusted intelligence cycle, with intelligence as the controlling element and user reaction as its primary input. Herman speaks of the 'real intelligence cycle' in which the 'push' has to be emphasized, together with the importance of feedback, rather than 'pulls' (model 2.3).[34]

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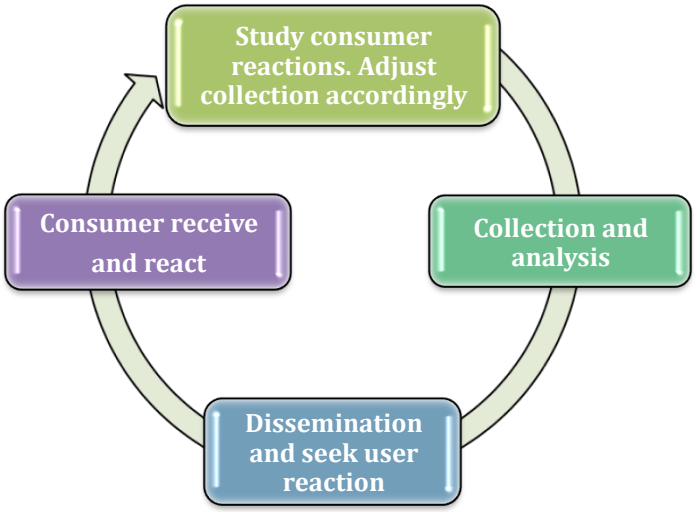
[30] Herman, 1996, p. 293
[31] An explanation about knowledge-based theory is provided in Jaap Boonstra (ed.)(2004), *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning*, p. 429-445.
[32] Herman, 1996, p. 293.
[33] Ibid, p. 294.
[34] Ibid, p. 295.

**Model 2.3 The real intelligence cycle**




In practice, the main driving force is dependent on the issue at play. If the issue is a major crisis or a routine review, such as Iraqi WMD, the policy or decision-makers will be leading. If the issue involves large-scale intelligence production, for instance, intelligence concerning the current operation in Afghanistan, it is the producers who are the critical factor. Whoever is the main driving force, the process has to be collaborative and not unidirectional. The effects of this line of thought on the value of intelligence will be further discussed in the next paragraph (2.4 Conditions for relevant intelligence).

### 2.3.2 Decision-making process

Although decision-making itself is out of scope for this study, it is an important prerequisite for making intelligence relevant to producers to have insight and understanding into some crucial aspects of this process.

In the literature on intelligence consensus exists about the producer's role to manage and evaluate the process, but not to assess its significance for policy options or considered actions. Even though producers may, because of their extensive knowledge of the issue, be able to offer options for policy or action, yet it is the policy and decision-makers, who need to conduct the assessment.[35] To describe these responsibilities the Director NL-DISS, general-major Cobelens, often used the metaphor of weather forecasting: "… our

[35] Sims, 1995, p. 14.

job is to predict whether it is going to rain tomorrow, but it is the decision-makers who have to assess whether to wear a rain-jacket or to use an umbrella".[36] Whether this principle is still valid in complex conflicts will be discussed in chapter 5.

Within the intelligence community, it is accepted for policy or decision-makers to ignore advices of intelligence because of additional considerations. They can make the decision to neither wear a rain-jacket, nor use an umbrella. It is the responsibility of decision makers to evaluate all considerations and to set their own priorities.[37] These considerations can comprise of both policy and operational issues. In the case of the Iraqi WMD, the Dutch government decided to politically support the invasion in Iraq despite the nuances that the intelligence services presented of Iraq's capabilities and intentions. This decision was mainly based on international political considerations (being a reliable ally). On the other hand, the consideration to take no active part in the war was based on the majority view of the Dutch public opinion.[38] Another important consideration often described in the intelligence literature is that of risk-management. Risky events are frequently difficult to forecast, since there is only a small chance that the event will actually take place.[39] However, if the event takes place, the consequences are often considerable.[40] So in the case of Iraq a hypothetical consideration could have been: even though there is only a small chance that Iraq has WMD-capabilities and/or has the intention to use them, if it is the case the consequences for the regional security are so high that an invasion is still justified. Linking this back to the Dutch decision making process this small but high-risk chance supported the political decision to support the invasion.

A second aspect is that decision-making processes are seldom tied to specific intelligence products. The reality is that consumers are reacting to a wide variety of information. The decision-makers frame of mind is not only shaped by intelligence, but also by other sources of knowledge such as the media, external and internal advisors, and even sources from other countries.[41] Intelligence is competing with other sources of

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[36] General-major Cobelens explained this principle in several meetings in which the author anticipated.
[37] Gazit, "Intelligence Estimates and the Decisionmaker", CIA/SII, Fall 1988, p. 32.
[38] Report Committee of Inquiry Iraq, 12 January 2010, p. 529-530.
[39] Valk, 2005, p. 69.
[40] A risk is composed of chance and consequences (risk = chance x consequences).
[41] In the case of Iraq the Dutch government was to a considerable extent led by public and other information from the US and the UK: Report Committee of Inquiry Iraq, 12 January 2010, p. 531

knowledge. In addition, it is important to realize that most intelligence products have more long-term effects in shaping the consumer's frame of mind rather than short-term effects on identifiable decisions. It is the constant flow of intelligence and 'other' knowledge that shape decisions and actions, rather than specific sets of intelligence. This way the role of intelligence is educating the decision-makers. The products provide them with knowledge that may influence unforeseen future decisions. According to Michael Herman intelligence can have the same unpredictable effect as newspapers; a background item today turns out to be relevant for decision-making tomorrow or next year.[42]

The described processes can lead to decisions in which the consumers, based on other considerations or other sources of knowledge, ignore advice from intelligence. However, this can still be considered as a rational process. The reality is that 'clean' rational or analytical decision-making does not exist in complex situations (including complex conflicts). As stated above a decision-maker's frame of mind can be shaped by additional factors besides to the formal information inputs. Herman points out that besides information, decisions involve leadership, judgment, political sense, and determination.[43] This rather irrational process is well described in Herbert Simon's famous model of 'bounded rationality'.[44] Policy and decision-makers may also believe that they are objective and rational, but forget their psychological investment they made in previous decisions. If they have participated in a decision, they develop a stake in that decision. And as they participate in further related decisions, their stake even increases. This may lead to a situation where they ignore facts and dangers that stand in contradiction to their policy or action.[45] Hence, good intelligence 'is a means of reducing government's recklessness; that encourages leaders to value information, reason and argument rather than conviction, emotion and impulse.'[46] In the next section is discussed what makes intelligence 'good' – the requirements on intelligence.

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[42] Herman, 1996, p. 144.
[43] Ibid, p. 141.
[44] Simon, 1959, p.93. He showed in this model that the assumptions that economic rationality made about human capacities, knowledge and information-processing procedures were rather unreasonable.
[45] Herman, 2002, p.15.
[46] Quoted from Herman, 2002, p.21.

## 2.4 Factors of influence

What are the requirements for relevant intelligence? What happens if these requirements are not met? In the literature on intelligence, a large number of factors are described that influence the value of intelligence.[47] Most important are relevance, objectivity, acceptance, brevity, being on time, and accessibility.

*Relevance & Objectivity*

Relevance is the focus of the central research question. Relevance can be measured by the consumer's ability to assimilate and use the product in its decision-making process[48]. Intelligence should be relevant to decision-making otherwise it remains information. The previous sections explained the requirement of a constant interaction between producer and consumer for intelligence to be relevant. If the consumers do not get the information collected, processed, and/or analyzed on their behalf, or if the consumers fail to provide adequate feedback, the intelligence process will break down. Objectivity is needed to ensure the quality of intelligence. Where relevance requires a close relation between producer and consumer, objectivity demands a certain distance.

There are two models concerning this relationship between consumers and producers. These models are presented here as ideal types – the 'Kent' and 'Gates' models.[49] The Kent model represents the view that if producers are getting too close to the policy or decision-makers, they will lose their objectivity. Producers should only respond to specific intelligence requests rather than initiating direct interaction with consumers. This means that the consumers are the driving force behind the process. The criticism on this model is that producers, because of their strict independence, provide intelligence that is not addressing the consumer's issues.

The Gates model advocates a closer relationship between producers and consumers through the development of a two-way flow of information and feedback.[50] To make intelligence relevant, the producers must be sensitive to the context of the policy or action context. The consumers need intelligence that relates to the objective

[47] See NATO Doctrine AJP-2.1; Dutch Military Guidelines on Intelligence in Leidraad 5 (LD 5); CIA Studies in Intelligence.
[48] Sims, 1995, p. 5.
[49] Betts, 2003, p. 60.
[50] Valk, 2005, p. 39.

they are trying to achieve.[51]In this model the producers are the driving force. A reproach of this model is that the producers become too involved in the decision-making process. This may lead to a situation where producers will develop a stake in decisions, ignore facts and dangers that stand in contradiction to these decisions, in the same way as the policy and decision-makers themselves.[52] In the literature on intelligence this process is known as 'politicization'. Jennifer Sims describes politicization as 'the skewing of intelligence to influence policy outcomes or vindicate policy choices.'[53] This skewing can happen consciously or unconsciously.[54]

Whatever the view is, the challenge remains to produce intelligence that objectively assesses relevant policy or decision issues – regardless of whether it supports or undermines these issues.[55] Betts is stating that politicization is a fact of intelligence producer's life, which has to be dealt with in the most effective way. The producer's aim should be to strive to minimal political contamination, but zero is not possible without placing intelligence out of the political realm.[56] Or as Michael Herman puts it:

> *"A mixture is therefore needed of intimacy and distance; intelligence needs to be a part of governments brain, but with a permeable membrane separating it from the decision-taking centre".*[57]

*Acceptance*

Tailoring intelligence to the needs of the consumer is only a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to make intelligence relevant to policy and decision-making. One of the most critical phases in the intelligence cycle is convincing the consumers to make best use of the provided intelligence.[58] Three aspects play an important role in the acceptance of intelligence: the producer's reputation, a good chemistry between producer and consumer, and marketing.[59]

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[51] Betts, 2003, p. 61.
[52] As described in § 2.3: The discussion about decision-making and 'bounded rationality'.
[53] Sims, 1995, p. 6.
[54] For more about politicization see Betts, 2003, p. 59-75.
[55] Robert Gates, ¨Guarding Against Politicization¨. CIA/SII, 1992, Vol 36 No 5, p.6.
[56] Betts, 2003, p. 71.
[57] Herman, 1996, p. 110.
[58] Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 26.
[59] Herman, 1996, p. 142.

The consumers will be more receptive to intelligence if the producer has a good reputation concerning objectivity, accuracy, and quality of assessments. If an intelligence product shows to be polluted by the analyst's own position and perspective, not only the product itself will be disregarded, but it will also have negative effects on the receptivity of future reports. The same accounts for worst-case assessments. If the producer comes too often, because of a "play-it-safe" and bureaucratic attitude, with bad news, they will lose at a point in time their credibility.[60]

There can be a tension between the ability of cooperation between the producers and consumers on the one hand, and the need for objective intelligence on the other. The ideal combination would be one of an open-minded policy or decision-maker, who seeks the advice of a producer who is sensitive to the context but who has enough courage to provide objective intelligence – also when it undermines the policy or action. Unfortunately this ideal combination is rare in reality.[61]

Producers - with or without enough sensitivity and/or courage - can be confronted with dogmatic and stubborn policy and decision-makers who pamper wishful thinking. In these situations the producers have to put a lot of effort in persuasion, building personal relations and marketing.[62]

According to Robert Gates nothing is wrong with producers conducting some marketing to get their reports read. It does not mean 'sugar-coating' analysis, but an open and unbiased discussion of the issues. Policy and decision-makers may have a different perspective of an issue from the producers. This perspective should not be rejected, but it should rather address its strengths and weaknesses, and should clarify the evidence and reasoning behind it. Acceptance can also be improved if producers meet consumers on a regular basis to exchange views and explore new ideas.[63] On some occasions a physical presentation can be more persuasive and efficient than a written report. From a marketing perspective, the routine output of intelligence can be useful. Consumers get accustomed to it and this will help building up credibility for the future.[64] Routine output can also be helpful in getting difficult information between the consumer's ears. Similar as in the advertisement world – the strength of the messages lies in the repetition. For these reasons, marketing can be a helpful tool in increasing the

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[60] Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 21.
[61] Ibid. p. 32
[62] Herman, 1996, p. 143.
[63] Robert Gates, ¨Guarding Against Politicization¨. CIA/SII, 1992, Vol 36 No 5, p.7.
[64] Herman, 1996, p. 143.

acceptance of intelligence products. However, getting the policy and decision-makers to read the intelligence products, should not threaten the producer's objectivity. Judgments should never be modified to make intelligence more acceptable – which at the longer term will be counterproductive anyway.[65] Other conditions that have an influence on the level of acceptance are being on time and brevity.

*Timely*

Intelligence has only value if it can be embedded in the decision-making process at the right time. This also requires an effective interaction between producers and consumers. It is important to realize that there can be a significant difference in the time needed to produce intelligence reports, depending on the amount of direct available information and collection capabilities. The decision-maker must understand the producer's time limitations to timely forward his intelligence needs. On the other hand, it is for the producers essential to know when important decisions are going to be made. This is not always clear and the producers must be sensitive to the policy and decision-making context. This context also involves the receptiveness of the policy and decision-makers. Issues often develop through four phases. In the first phase the produced intelligence is part of routine reviews, but is not affecting the decision-makers. In the second phase the issue has become relevant, but a decision is not yet needed. In this phase the decision-makers are most receptive to factual intelligence and to intelligence that helps developing policy or possible actions. In the third phase, they have made up their position and taken a decision. In this phase the decision-makers are mainly interested in intelligence of the effects and implications of their decision. The last phase concerns the implementation of the chosen policy or action. The decision-makers have developed a stake in their decision and are not receptive to intelligence that question the success of the implemented policy or action.[66]

*Brevity*

In the literature on intelligence, is often stated that consumers value intelligence based on brevity, timeliness and relevance, and that it's valued in this order of sequence. The value of intelligence has no correlation with the number or size of packages of

[65] Robert Gates, ¨Guarding Against Politicization¨. CIA/SII, 1992, Vol 36 No 5, p.7.
[66] Gardiner, ¨Dealing with Intelligence¨, CIA/SII, Summer 1989, 3-5.

intelligence products.[67] Producers do not always realize this. They should keep in mind that the policy and decision-makers are consumers of large amounts of information they receive on the issue.[68] Richard Clarke pointed out that an information overload is one of the most important reasons why intelligence sometimes fails. Too much intelligence can cloud the fact that there is not enough relevant intelligence. It also makes it difficult to identify the significance of single reports or of pieces of information hidden in lengthy reports. According to Clarke this was one of the main reasons why 9/11 could happen: 'not able to connect the dots, because there were too many dots on the radar screen.'[69]

*Accessibility*

The last condition discussed in this section is that intelligence should always be available to those who need it or it will be of no value at all. The most dominant aspect that influences the accessibility of intelligence is that of secrecy. Michael Herman is describing secrecy as '…intelligence's trademark: the basis of its relationship with government and its own self-image.'[70] However, there is a continuous debate about the dichotomy openness/secrecy. On the one hand, if intelligence is too unrestricted, the risk exists of sensitive information, sources, and methods to be compromised.[71] On the other hand, if it is too secret, intelligence might not be used in the best and most profitable way in policy or decision-making. [72]

However, the discussion is not focused on the protection of the clandestine sources and methods, but on the protection – classification – of information and intelligence products. In the literature on intelligence, it is argued that the issues and aspects that need to be kept secret must be reduced to a minimum.[73] As noted, an important argument to release reports is that it will improve the usability for policy and

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[67] Herman, 1996, p. 298.
[68] Valk, 2005, p. 23.
[69] Richard Clarke, was counter-terrorism adviser on the National Security Council during the Clinton and the Bush administration, and is the author of *Against all Enemies*. He explained this at the Professional Advanced Intelligence Course at FHS, Oslo, 8 October 2009.
[70] Herman, 2002, p.5.
[71] The negative effects of being 'compromised' can be explained by the reciprocal nature of Intelligence: the process that, if the other party knows what you know, or knows what you are looking for, or knows your collection capabilities, he will take counter-measures. The result will be that policies or actions are less effective or that in the future it will be more difficult to obtain information.
[72] Excessive secrecy can even lead to exaggerated compartmentalization that exist within and among intelligence organizations as well as between the intelligence community and other military or civilian agencies; Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 40.
[73] Valk, 2005, p. 42.

decision-making. An aspect that in complex conflicts, with its large number of stakeholders, is even more relevant. Another argument to put less emphasize on secrecy is the amount of open sources information used by intelligence agencies. According to most estimates, about 90 percent of the information used in intelligence analysis today comes from open sources.[74] Some argue that it is even possible that a small group of experts working solely on the basis of open source material provides more relevant knowledge than a large inefficient agency that is using classified information.[75] According to former director of the CIA – William E. Colby – another reason to advocate openness is the additional knowledge that can be obtained from academic- and other experts. Comparable with the scientific method, independent criticism can be utilized to improve own assessments.[76]

The issues and aspects to be kept confidential should in each case carefully be considered. The aim is to find the right balance between the risks of disclosure and the need for usability. However, the reality is that producers seem to have a tendency to err in the direction of too much risk aversion and under-utilization of intelligence products.[77]

### 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on providing a conceptual framework for the other components of this study. By providing an overview and insights in the aspects of intelligence that are related to the concept of relevance, direct links have been made to the central research question.

First, insights in the intelligence concept and process were explored. It provided a definition of intelligence - information collected, processed, and/or analyzed on behalf of actors or decision makers. It showed that, the intelligence cycle, if used in a flexible way and with functioning feedback mechanisms, remains an appropriate tool for the understanding of intelligence.

Thereafter is explained how significant the intelligence dialogue is for an effective intelligence process. It made clear that is has to be a two-way and not unidirectional process, in which both producers and consumers have a distinctive role to play. If the issue at play is a major crisis or a routine review the policy or decision-

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[74] RAND workshop report 15 june 2005, p.7.; www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF219/
[75] Laqueur, "The future of Intelligence", CIA/SII, Spring 1986, p. 61.
[76] Colby, "Intelligence in the 1980s", CIA/SII, Summer 1981, p.38.
[77] Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 41.

makers will be leading. If the issue involves large-scale intelligence production it will be the producers who are the main driving force.

Finally, the most dominant factors of influence were presented which are related to the relevance of intelligence – relevance & objectivity, acceptance, brevity, being on time, and accessibility.

With this conceptual framework in mind, the next chapter focuses on these distinctive characteristics of complex conflicts, which could have an impact on the discussed aspects of intelligence.

# 3 Complex conflicts

What do we mean with complex conflicts? What are its distinctive characteristics? Contemporary armed conflicts occur in the context of an evolving strategic environment.[78] The key drivers of this changing environment are: globalization, interdependency, demographic and environmental change, and the impact of technology.[79] In recent years there has been a continuous debate on the shape of future warfare and the utility of force in this increasingly dynamic and complex environment. 'Fourth generation warfare', 'irregular warfare' and 'low intensity conflicts' are a few of the 'big ideas' or 'grand narratives' in contemporary strategic discourse. In addition, some scholars speculate about 'new wars' opposed to 'old wars'. [80] These terms are often fashionable intellectual labels but ones that, when placed under the microscope, are not always watertight.

As Clausewitz explained 'all wars are things of the same nature'[81]. The factors *friction, uncertainty and chaos*, *danger and stress* together with the *trinity* of 'violence, enmity, and hatred', 'chance and probability', and 'reason'[82], will always be present. Hence, there are no new types of armed conflicts obedient to some distinctive nature of their own. While the nature of war is unchanging, there are differences in the way wars are waged - warfare. Just like other social processes warfare is - as a consequence of both internal and external factors - constantly developing. Many books and articles have been written about these changes or transformations. Martin van Creveld spoke about a 'transformation of war' and predicted the replacement of large-scale, interstate wars by 'low intensity wars'.[83] Rupert Smith describes in *The Utility of Force* the contemporary paradigm of 'War Amongst the People' as a synthesis between industrial wars and the classical revolutionary wars.[84]

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[78] The concept of 'war' can have different meanings depending on the context and who is using it. What constitutes war in a legal sense and what is normally understood by the concept do not necessarily coincide. Today the sharp distinction between war and peace is far less clear than in the past. From international law perspective the concept of 'armed conflict' is preferred rather than the concept of war. The concept of armed conflicts is used in the Geneva Conventions and the UN Treaty.
[79] NATO, *Allied Joint Publication* 1 (2007), section 0104 – 0109.
[80] Gray, 2007, p.36.
[81] Clausewitz, On War, p. 606.
[82] War subordinate as means to politics
[83] Martin van Creveld (1991). *The Transformation of War*. New York: Macmillian.
[84] Smith, 2005, introduction.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'complex conflicts' is not used as a theory or one of the 'big ideas' about new wars or a new generation warfare. Complex conflicts can be seen as an umbrella concept for the description of the characteristics of the armed conflicts as they occurred at the end of twentieth and beginning of twenty-first century. The concept is used to describe the context, and the applied means and methods on both sides – Rupert Smit's paradigm.

*Nothing new?*

In the debates about contemporary conflicts the bandwagon is often *counter-insurgency* (COIN). Despite all the discussions, there is a wide acceptance of the following principles: there is no military solution to an insurgency, only a political one; the necessity of an integrated and coordinated strategy; and a focus on the population.[85] But, as Colin Gray points out, COIN is an old story, and so are the methods applied to wage it, on both sides. In recent years, the defence and security community has in fact rediscovered what in the UK was called 'grand strategy' – in the US, 'national security strategy' - to be a good idea.[86] Not all characteristics of Rupert Smit's paradigm are new.

*Is it only about COIN?*

Within NATO, COIN is one of the four so called predominant campaign themes - *major combat*, COIN, *peace support*, and *peacetime military engagement*. The themes are determined at the political-strategic level and are used to identify the character of a campaign. The different themes can be discriminated by four criteria: level of acceptable risk, strategic end-state, character of combat, and type of adversary.[87]

COIN is nowadays also seen a political correct umbrella concept in which all characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts are integrated. However, most of the terms and concepts related to COIN - hearts & minds campaign, reconstruction, asymmetric threats, comprehensive approach, role of the media, non-state actors etc. - are also applicable to the other campaign themes. Hence, Rupert Smit's paradigm is not only about COIN.

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[85] MoD, *Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Combined Arms Operations. Part 9 Tactics for Stabilization Operations,* London: MoD, 2005, p. A-3.
[86] Gray, 2007, p. 38.
[87] NATO, *Allied Joint Publication* 1 (2007), section 0135. The US speaks about Irregular Warfare as a campaign theme, in which COIN is just one of the types of operations (next to Foreign Internal Defence, Combating Terrorism, and Unconventional Warfare). USA, *Field Manual 3.0 Operations* (2008) p. 2-5.

*Is it about all types of warfare?*

In Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, two types of warfare are discussed – the *traditional* large scale warfare between states, and *irregular warfare*. The important distinction between these is the focus. In traditional warfare the conflict focuses on the control of an adversary's forces or territory, whereas in irregular warfare, the conflict focuses on the control or influence over, and the support of the population.[88] It is this focus on the population what makes the concept of irregular warfare to provide a better understanding of complex conflicts. Clausewitz tells us that every era or period fights wars in its own way, which is why every era of armed conflicts has its own defining characteristics. It is what Clausewitz calls the cultural 'grammar' of irregular warfare that describes the best way in which the West thinks about contemporary armed conflicts.

### 3.1 Conventional wisdom

After this first positioning of what complex conflicts are about, this section provides an overview of the most relevant characteristics. Despite all the debates and discussions, nowadays there also exists a sort of conventional wisdom about the most dominant characteristics of complex conflicts. The following characteristics will most probably have an impact on the discussed intelligence concepts: changing ends, integrated approach, cultural understanding, local grievances, population-centric, adapting competition, fragile states, media, and intelligence rules.

*Changing Ends* - In traditional warfare the political objective was attained by the achievement of a strategic military objective. The conflicts had clear-cut strategic goals and were focused on defeating the opposing force through engagements on the battlefield, and influencing the government by taking control of their territory. These 'hard' strategic objectives were often expresses in terms like 'take', 'hold', and ' destroy'. The achievements on the battlefield decided the political outcome. In complex conflicts, however, the military objective is to establish a condition in which the political objective can be achieved by other means. These 'softer' military objectives are more complex and sub-strategic. The focus is on the control or influence over, and the support

[88] US, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (2007), p. I-6.

of the population and not on the control of adversarial forces or territory – 'the will of the people'. The military achievements create time and space for diplomacy, economic, and social incentives to create the desired political outcome. 'If a decisive strategic victory was the hallmark, of industrial war, establishing a condition may be deemed the hallmark of the new paradigm of war amongst the people.'[89]

*Integrated approach* – The objective of military forces is 'limited' to establishing a condition in which the political objective can be achieved by other means. Complex conflicts usually stems from political, economic, religious and social grievances, which can only be successfully countered by an integrated and coordinated strategy that employs all instruments of power – the *comprehensive*-, *whole-of-government*-, or 3D-approach. [90]

*Cultural understanding* – Complex conflicts is above all about the control of or influence over, and the support of the population. If we do not know much about their beliefs, values, expectations, and behaviour, it is unlikely that we register much progress. Even worse, by behaving like strangers in a strange land we do more harm than good to the achievement of this objective.

*Local* - Complex conflicts usually stem from political, economic, religious and social grievances. However, the majority of the core grievances are caused by local disputes. Addressing these local grievances will help to achieve the objective of winning the will of the people. A careful exploitation of local personalities and local conflicts could also drive a wedge between the adversary and the population at large.[91] On the other hand, if this is not done carefully enough, it could strengthen the band between the adversary and the population. Hence, a deep understanding of the social relationships, economic and other disputes, and power brokers of the local communities is crucial. Another significant effect is that the achievements at the local level will create time for diplomacy, economic, and social efforts at national level.

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[89] Smith, 2005, p. 272.
[90] MoD, *Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Combined Arms Operations. Part 9 Tactics for Stabilization Operations,* London: MoD, 2005, p. A-3.
[91] Flynn, "Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 11-15.

*Population-centric* – Complex conflicts is about winning the support of the population - the will of the people. According to General McChrystal, "the conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy."[92] As stated, the military objective in complex conflicts is 'limited' to establishing a condition in which the political objective can be achieved by other means. To achieve this objective the adversary has to be suppressed to such a level that they cannot effectively interfere with the efforts to win the support of the population. However, in complex conflicts the adversary will on the one hand have opposite objectives – establishing a condition in which our political objectives can 'not' be achieved – and the on other hand have the same objective of winning the support of the population. He will try to achieve these objectives by following a strategy of provocation and propaganda of the deed, and using a combination of subversion, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and conventional warfare.[93] For his strategy the people form the battleground, and a requirement for his method is sufficient support of the local population. Hence, in complex conflicts the battle is about the will of the people.

*Adapting competition* – In complex conflicts, success depends for an important part on our ability to adapt, evolve to new responses, and get ahead of a rapidly changing threat environment. As stated conflicts are becoming more protracted. But the longer conflicts continue so the more innovative adversaries become. They are more open-sourced and decentralized and organized around distributed or quasi- independent groups. Adversaries will constantly shift between military and political phases and tactics - what works today may not work tomorrow.[94]

*Fragile states* - Complex conflicts occur in essence only in states where the government's legitimacy and effectiveness is weak or nonexistent - fragile states. States can be assessed as weak or fragile when they are unable or unwilling to provide the population with so called 'deliverables'. These deliverables essentially refer to the provision of four public services: physical security, economic management, legitimate

[92] Flynn, "Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 24.
[93] Kilcullen, 2009, p. 12.
[94] Kilcullen, 2009, p. 294.

political institutions, and social welfare.[95] In complex conflict most states have critical gaps in all these four areas of governance. Analytical distinctions between failing states can be made on the basis of level of legitimacy and capability and capacity to provide the deliverables – failed, failing, and recovering state. [96] Patrick Stewart distinguishes in a different manner. He identified four categories of fragile states based on distinguishing between capacity and will (table 3.1). [97]

**Table 3.1 Capacity and Will as dimensions of state weakness**

| | Strong Will | Low Will |
|---|---|---|
| High Capacity | **Relative good performers** | **Unresponsive/corrupt/ repressive** |
| Low Capacity | **Weak but willing** | **Weak and not willing** |

*Media* - The media plays a significant role in complex conflicts. The media brings the conflict direct in the homes of both leaders and the public. The policy and decision-maker's frame of mind is not only shaped by intelligence, but also by what they see and read in the media, and by their understanding of the public opinion.[98] As Clausewitz explained, every government and military must maintain the support of their people. Therefore, the public opinion can have more influence on decisions than the events in the area of operations. Another reason why the media play such a crucial role is related to the political objective in complex conflicts – the will of the people. The public opinion of the local population will influence the achievement of this objective. And depending on the accessibility, the media can have a substantial effect on the public opinion. According to Rupert Smith, the media has become the medium that connects the three sides of the Clausewitz's triangle – domestic and local.[99]

*Intelligence rules* – As General McChrystal stated, "the conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy". This statement should be

[95] Stewart Patrick, ¨Weak States and Global Threats: Facts or Fiction?¨, Washington Quarterly, Spring 2006, p.29.
[96] US, JP 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, 15 October 2009, p. I-2.
[97] Stewart Patrick, ¨Weak States and Global Threats: Facts or Fiction?¨, Washington Quarterly, Spring 2006, p.30.
[98] As explained in section 2.3.1.
[99] Smith, 2005, p. 288.

reflected on intelligence efforts. Intelligence should be focussed on identifying the social relationships, economic and other disputes, and power brokers - at local, regional, and national level. This knowledge is crucial for the exploitation of the core grievances and the elimination of the root causes of the conflict. By doing this the support of part of the population can be won. Efforts to achieve this objective without accurate intelligence may alienate the population and drive them towards the adversary. Support of the local population is also crucial for efforts to suppress an adversary. Local people are in general far better than outsiders at finding the rather formless adversaries. The local character has a considerable impact on the intelligence process. The most relevant intelligence in complex conflicts will come from the bottom up, not from the top down.[100] The intelligence process will include actors – consumers and suppliers of information – not traditionally associated with military operations, such as other governmental actors, willing NGOs, economic structures/ local businesses and local security forces.[101] Hence, a prerequisite for complex conflicts is a 'comprehensive intelligence approach'.

The essence of this overview of the dominant characteristics of complex conflicts is captured by David Kilcullen when he describes the 'counterwar theory' of the French brigadier-general Francart.

> *"In the twenty-first century, ground forces would mainly be required to intervene in extremely complex conditions of state failure and in humanitarian or peacekeeping environment, where law and order were compromised and state institutional frameworks were lacking. Such forces would have to uphold the law of armed conflict in the face of adversaries who ignored it, and Western countries would be seeking to control or end violence rather than, as in traditional warfare, to achieve policy ends through violence. This approach could be considered a 'counterwar strategy', where the key threat to be mastered would be the conflict environment itself, rather than a particular enemy."*[102]

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[100] Flynn, "Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 23.
[101] NATO, *Allied Joint Publication* 1, section 0130.
[102] Kilcullen, 2009, p. 5.

## 3.2 Other insights

After this 'conventional wisdom' about complex conflicts, this section provides some further insights. In the literature about complex conflicts dozens of other theories, concepts, or ideas, can be found describing additional characteristics. Because of the relevance to the central research question the focus of this section will be on the concepts of 'risk management' and 'wicked problems' of Christopher Coker and the concept of 'the political economy of war and peace' of Mats Berdal.

### Risk management and wicked problems

*Risk management*

In his book, *War in Age of Risk*, describes Christopher Coker how we find ourselves living in *risk societies,* a term popularized by, among others, the German sociologist Ulrich Beck.[103] Risk society is a term to describe the manner in which modern society organizes itself in response to risk. According to Beck, a risk society is increasingly preoccupied with the present (and also with security), which generates a notion of risk. Beck defines it as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself.[104] A consequence of living in today's risk society is that we are concerned with the risk management of everything. Risk has not only become the language of business, politics and public policy, but it has also become the language of war – *war in age of risk*.[105] Whereas in the past, war has been seen as a battle of wills, Cristopher Coker is arguing that war has evolved into an exercise in risk management. If a concern about defence and threats were defining characteristics, of industrial war, a concern with security and risks are the defining characteristic of Rupert Smith's paradigm of war amongst the people (table 3.2).[106] This concern about security and risks has caused the political ambitions are much more modest now than they have been for some time. Given the endless risks, a New World Order is no longer seen as a realistic goal. [107] In the words of Condoleeza Rice: "We strive to make our world ultimately safer. Not perfect, just better."[108] However, an objectively secure world does

[103] Coker, 2009, p. 63.
[104] Ulrich Beck (1992), *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity, p.21.
[105] Coker, 2009, p. 26.
[106] Ibid, p. 63.
[107] Ibid, p. 132.
[108] Washington Post, 26 july 2007.

not exist. Whether we feel secure or not is a matter of perception. Our social experience gives us the feeling that we are at risk most of the time from terrorists, transnational organized crime, as well as global pandemics. According to Coker, we find ourselves living in a world in which anxiety has become part of everyday.[109]

**Table 3.2 The transition to the risk age**

| Industrial war | War amongst the people |
|---|---|
| War as Defence | War as Security |
| Threats | Risks |
| Fear | Anxiety / individual safety |
| New World Order | Global disorder |

As stated, a consequence of living in today's *risk society* is that we are concerned about the management of all possible risks. However, what makes risk management problematic is that the world has become incredibly complex, dynamic, and interconnected– everything has consequences. Many of the risks we try to manage are associated with the unintended consequences of our own actions – consequence management. These often arise from the fact that everything we do usually has side-effects.[110] Besides that, many actions have long-term effects, which do not always become clear until it is too late. It is this uncertainty about the outcomes from our own actions that makes us more concerned about the management of short-term risks, than dealing with long-term threats - "a frantic wish to secure today rather than tomorrow".[111]This uncertainty also causes us to interrogate ourselves more intensively than ever. We have become hopelessly self-reflexive and as a result increasingly risk-averse.[112]

As Rupert Smith pointed out, 'If a decisive strategic victory was the hallmark, of industrial war, establishing a condition may be deemed the hallmark of the new paradigm.'[113] The aim of any military intervention must be to establish certain conditions on the ground from which political outcomes can be decided. Hence, in an

[109] Coker, 2009, p. 65.
[110] Ibid, p.70.
[111] Ibid, P.24.
[112] Ibid, p.60.
[113] Smith, 2005, p. 272.

age of risk victory is no longer possible and it is more useful to talk about success. Success can be defined as reducing insecurity to more acceptable levels – risk management. However, there is a constant debate about how to define the concept of success. Amongst others, David Kilcullen is arguing that 'measuring progress' is the best way to assess whether a campaign is on track – is successful - or not. The next challenge is how to measure progress because "organizations manage what they measure, and they measure what their leaders tell them to report on." [114] This requires a new operational culture. The focus on the achievement of total objectives seems to be irrelevant; risk management requires a different framework of analysis in which intelligence has an important role to play.[115]

*Wicked Problems*

Closely related to 'risk management' is the concept of 'wicked problems'.[116] Rittel and Webber described this concept of "wicked" problems in contrast to relatively "tame," solvable problems. Complex conflicts bear many of the characteristics of wicked problems.[117]

*Difficult to define* - Nobody can define wicked problems. Defining the problem and the solution is essentially the same task. Each attempt at creating a solution and its unforeseen consequences changes your understanding of the problem. As the situation evolves, the definition of the problem will also change.[118]

*You are part of the problem* - Every implemented solution to a wicked problem has consequences. However, in our complex, dynamic and interdependent world cause and effect is increasingly non-linear. Solutions to wicked problems generate a chain of events and it is impossible to know how this chain of events will eventually play out.

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[114] David Kilcullen, *Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, December 2009, Kabul, p.1.
[115] Coker, 2009, p. 122.
[116] Wicked problem is a phrase used in social planning to describe a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize. Moreover, because of complex interdependencies, the effort to solve one aspect of a wicked problem may reveal or create other problems. See for more Rittel, H. and Webber, M. (1973), "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning", *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 4, Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., pp. 155-169.
[117] Coker, 2009, p. 129.
[118] Ibid, p. 156.

Because of these so-called 'cascading effects', every objective that is set tends to produce an unforeseen range of new problems.[119]

*No best solution* - There is no best solution to wicked problems, only better or worse developments. The causes of a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. Many stakeholders often have different aims and perspectives and thus will have various and changing ideas about what might be the problem, what might be causing it and how to resolve it.[120] Because of this disagreement there can be no indisputable best solution. Often is the result of this a 'muddling through approach'.

*Can never be solved* - Since a wicked problem cannot be defined, it can never be resolved. Problems that are 'wicked' can only be managed. The most efficient way of dealing with wicked problems is to manage the developments in the right direction – progress. This requires a more process-orientated than an action-orientated approach. You should not think in projects, tasks, and solutions but in management. This is a particular challenge for soldiers, who are educated and trained in problem solving. The managing process often ends when resources are depleted, stakeholders lose interest, or political realities change. In other words: "when a problem ceases to be problematic, the problem goes away."[121]

**The political economy of war and peace.**

The last issue discussed in this chapter is the importance of economic motivations in complex conflicts. Clausewitz famously described war as a continuation of politics by other means. David Keen has adapted this rule and he concludes that complex conflicts can often be better understood as "the continuation of economy by other means".[122]

The strategic objective in complex conflicts is winning the will of the people. An absolute prerequisite for the achievement of this objective is legitimacy. According to Mats Berdal, building legitimacy should be the main focus of the activities of both the military and civilian side of the operation. The relative success in winning the will of the people depends heavily on the degree of perceived legitimacy of the intervening force

[119] Ibid. p. 107.
[120] Ibid, p. 155
[121] Ibid, p. 156
[122] David Keen (2005), Conflict & Collusion in Sierra Leone, New York: Palgrave, p. 48.

itself - a function of its actions, identity, and ability to meet local expectations - and on the degree of perceived legitimacy of the administrative and governance structures.[123] To build this legitimacy he identifies three priority tasks -providing a secure environment, creating and stabilizing government structures, and ensuring the basic and life-sustaining needs of the local population.[124]As discussed earlier, in complex conflicts the short-term stabilization objective is to establish a condition in which the political objective – vital to long-term stability - can be achieved. Berdal's three priority tasks are not only crucial for building legitimacy, but also for the achievement of the objective of security and political stability in the short term. Hence, legitimacy and the stabilization objectives have a dynamic relationship.[125] More legitimacy supports the achievement of the objectives and the achievement of the objectives supports the building of legitimacy.

As stated, the exploitation of core grievances and the elimination of root causes require a deep understanding of the conflict environment. The same accounts for building legitimacy. Trying to achieve these objectives without sufficient knowledge can deepen societal divisions, generate more conflict, and may alienate the population. As a framework for the understanding of the conflict environment, Berdal identified four 'contextual categories: the question of the political end-state, historical context and psychological climate, violence and insecurity, and the political economy of war and peace.[126] All four sets of issues are essential to the understanding of the conflict environment. However, the aim of this section – provide additional relevant insights – focuses on the category of 'the political economy and peace'.

Knowledge about the issues of this category is fundamental to understand why complex conflicts tend to persevere regardless of all outside efforts to resolve them. Despite the majority of the population is longing for peace, there always will be forces that for several reasons wish to extend the conflict. These *spoilers* amass power and riches by exploiting the anarchy and lack of central control that typifies complex conflicts. They are not interested in rapid solutions but would rather work for the continuation of the conflict as long as possible. 'Conventional wisdom' shows that complex conflicts usually stem from political, economic, religious and social grievances. Berdal is stating that these grievances interacted with economic incentives and opportunities are triggering the outbreak of armed conflicts, but "that economic agendas

[123] Berdal, 2007, p. 127.
[124] Ibid, p. 113.
[125] These 'priority tasks' are the same as the elements of the 3D-approach.
[126] For a particularly clear analysis of all four categories, see Berdal, 2007, p. 114.

play a more critical role in sustaining violence once war has broken out".[127]However, he also argues that it will never be possible to separate the political and economical agendas completely. It is knowledge about the interaction between these agendas that is essential for the understanding of the conflict environment.

Hence, it is important to realize that armed conflicts are not just a "violent breakdown of a system, but also as the emergence of a new and alternative system of power, profit and protection".[128] In complex conflicts the spoilers that form this network can not only be found on the adversarial side, but also within the government structures that the outsiders are trying to create or stabilize. It is these *spoiler-networks* that can have a devastating effect on the efforts to build legitimacy and stability. Without a deep understanding of these spoiler-networks, outsider's actions will continue to produce wicked and unintended consequences and will do more harm than good to the achievement of winning the will of the people.[129]

These spoiler-networks will also disrupt the achievement of long-term policy objectives. Economic development, the institutionalisation of rule of law, respect for human rights, and the spread of democracy are vital for reducing the chances of renewed conflict. However, according to the American-Iranian philosopher Vali Nasr these objectives are unachievable without a middle class.[130] These objectives will not be embraced if they do not serve the economical and social interests of the population.[131] In complex conflicts a substantial part of the population depends, for these interests, on the structures and networks of spoilers. And as long as these dependency-relationships exist, it will be problematical to win the will of the people.

### 3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the term complex conflicts is presented as an umbrella concept to describe the most relevant characteristics of the contemporary armed conflicts. This

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127 Berdal, 2007, p. 124.
128 Ibid, p. 125.
129 Ibid, p. 126.
130 NRC Next, 7 October 2009. www.robwijnberg.nl/blog/essay-zin-82-geen-democratie-zonder-economie-in-afghanistan/
131 This concept is materialized in the U.S. DoD Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) which was established in June 2006 to aid in the revitalization of Iraq's economy and in creating jobs for the Iraqi people. In 2010, TFBSO began operations aimed at creating economic opportunities for the people of Afghanistan; http://tfbso.defense.gov/.

chapter provides enough insights into complex conflicts to understand the intelligence needs of policy and decision-makers. In chapter two certain aspects of intelligence were explored, which have influence on the relevance of intelligence. These two chapters combined provide a framework of analysis that will be helpful in identifying bottlenecks, and in identifying or developing solutions.

To gain more insight in relationships concerning the relevance of intelligence, four hypotheses have been developed. These hypotheses are focused issues of which there is insufficient information in the literature, or of which there are dissimilar opinions.

***HYPOTHESIS 1****: If intelligence does include the assessment of own policy choices or decisions, the relevance will increase because of the significant effects of own actions on the operational environment.*

In complex conflicts policy and decision delivery is not a linear process – leading from policy ideas through implementation to change on the ground – but rather a more circular process involving continuous learning, adaption and improvement with policy and decisions changing in response to implementation and vice versa.[132] What is the role of intelligence in this circular process?

***HYPOTHESIS 2****: If intelligence reports are publicly shared, their relevance will increase because more stakeholders can use it in their policy and decision-making process, and it will improve the exchange of information.*

This hypothesis refers to continuous debate about the dichotomy openness/secrecy. Releasing reports will improve the usability for policy and decision-making. An aspect that in complex conflicts, with its large number of stakeholders, is even more relevant. But what is the actual effect of the intelligence reports, on your information position, when they are made public?

***HYPOTHESIS 3****: If intelligence is focussed on the opponent's intentions and capabilities, this will influence the relevance of intelligence in a negative way.*

[132] Coker, 2009, p. 166.

A deep understanding of the social relationships, economic and other disputes, and power brokers is crucial to achieve the objective of winning the will of the people. However, many of the intelligence models and processes have their roots in the Cold War period in which intelligence had to deal with major crises, or routine reviews. One of Michael Handel's statements is a typical example of this period: "All information gathered by intelligence concerns either the adversary's *intentions* or his *capabilities*".[133] To what extend are the current models and processes still useful in conflicts where the key threat to be mastered is the conflict environment itself, rather than a particular enemy?

***HYPOTHESIS 4**: If the intelligence producers are close to the policy and decision-makers, this will influence the relevance of intelligence in a positive way.*

In a complex, dynamic, and interdependent conflict environment, it can be difficult for the policy and decision-makers to recognize relevant or actionable intelligence. Another potential weakness is that – because of the complexity - they act on irrelevant intelligence. The closer the producers are to the policy and decision-makers, the better the latter may be in recognizing relevant intelligence. To make this possible relationship explicit, it is presented as a hypothesis.

After having described the conceptual framework and the hypotheses, the next issue is to identify and discuss the most significant bottlenecks, and possible solutions. This part of the study will be conducted using a single case study - the Dutch operation in the province of Uruzgan, Afghanistan.

[133] Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 10.

# 4 The Dutch perspective

In this chapter the case is presented. What is the political context of the Dutch mission in Afghanistan, and what is the context of the Uruzgan province? What are the significant elements of the Dutch approach? How is the intelligence support for this mission organized? What are the achievements, and what are the challenges in Uruzgan?

## 4.1 Context

*Political context*

Since the overthrowing of the Taliban regime in 2001, the international community is struggling to establish Afghanistan as a viable nation state. This mission has been facing many challenges. The first challenge is an ongoing insurgency predominantly conducted by the Taliban. Secondly, a crisis exists of popular confidence originating from various factors like weakness of government institutions[134], the unlimited and unpunished abuse of power by corrupt officials and power-brokers, and a longstanding lack of economic opportunity.[135] To deal with these challenges two parallel missions were created. The first was the American-led counter-terrorist campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The second mission, which initially had little or no bearing with the Taliban insurgency, was the creation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The UN-mandated ISAF operation was created in 2001 essentially as a peacekeeping operation. The intention of the operation was to establish a secure environment from which political, economic, and social reconstruction of the state could commence.[136] The initial, multi-national ISAF mission was restricted to increasing the security in and around the capital Kabul. In august 2003 command was transferred to NATO, which conducted a phased expansion of the mission over Afghanistan. Phase 3 of this expansion involved the deployment of ISAF to the problematic and dangerous south of the country, which was seen as Taliban country/heartland. This phase involved the deployment of 12.000 NATO ISAF troops to the six southernmost provinces: Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Day Kundi, and Uruzgan. This was implemented on 31

[134] Hillary Clinton, 10 November 2009. www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5AB1IG20091112.
[135] McCrystal, "Commander´s Initial Assessment", HQ ISAF, Afghanistan, 30 August 2009, p. 2-5.
[136] UN, Security Council Resolution 1386, 20 December 2001.

July 2006, when ISAF assumed command of the southern region of Afghanistan from US-led Coalition forces (OEF).[137]

As part of this phase the Netherlands has deployed a taskforce to Uruzgan province, and started acting per 1 August 2006 as *lead nation*. The total Dutch contingent in southern Afghanistan – including an Air Task Force and the contribution to the headquarter Regional Command South (RC-S) in Kandahar - is about 2,200 troops strong.[138] Initially the Dutch government decided that the mission would end after two years, but decided in November 2007 to extend the mission to 2010.[139] After a long and difficult political discussion, which led to the fall of the Dutch government on 20 February 2010, it was inherently decided for the Dutch lead nation role in Uruzgan to 'definitely' end per 1 August 2010.

The rationale of the Dutch government to contribute to the Afghan mission is the consideration that the stabilization of Afghanistan is of great importance for the development of international peace and security and for countering international terrorism, which also threatens Europe.[140] However, in the difficult Dutch political landscape the backgrounds to the decision-making process were rather diverse. Depending on the political party, the rationale was a mix of humanitarian motivations, international peace and security, counterterrorism, atlantism, being a reliable ally, and military ambitions.[141]

*Uruzgan province*

In the beginning of the mission in 2006, Uruzgan was considered as one of the poorest and most conservative provinces of Afghanistan, with a population traditionally depending on agriculture and animal husbandry. However, caused by a long period of drought and conflict, poppy had become the main source of income. The province was faced with serious lack of stability, governance and development. These problems were not only due to its marginal location and geographical characteristics, but has multiple

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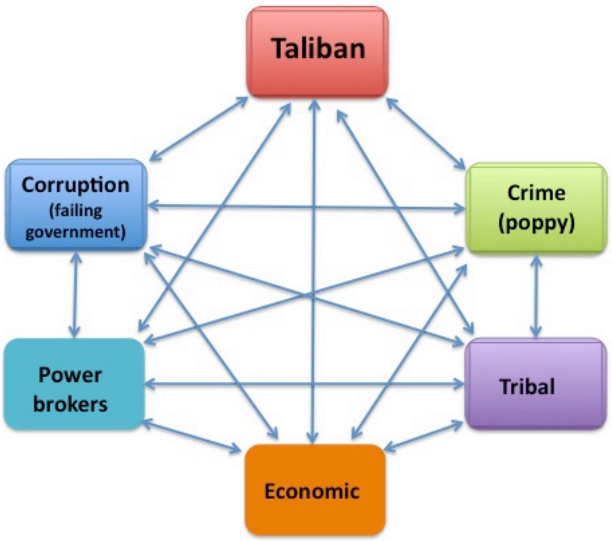
137 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm#evolution.
138 Kamerstuk 2008-2009, 27925, nr. 330, Tweede Kamer.
139 Kamerstuk 2008-2009, 27925, nr. 279, Tweede Kamer, p.3.
140 Kamerstuk 2005-2006, 27925, nr. 193, Tweede Kamer; 'Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking aan de voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal', 22 December 2005.
141 Interview with Wilfred Rietdijk by the author, 22 March 2010.

dimensions that developed historically: ethnic, presence of competing tribal militias, conflicting political and ideological inclinations, fundamentalist religious groups, presence of drugs syndicates, access to natural resources (land, water, wealth), and insurgency from outside the province supported from within. [142]

The former governor of Uruzgun, Jan Mohammad Khan, played a crucial role in the process in which a substantial part of the population alienated from the government and choose the side of the Taliban.[143] In his period as governor, 2002-2006, he favored his own Popalzai tribe and used extreme violence against rival tribal groupings. These marginalized tribal groupings were more or less forced to choose the side of the Taliban. Supported by these marginalized groupings, the Taliban had in 2006 an extensive presence in the province. For the Afghan government and international forces was access to substantial parts of the province extremely problematic.[144]But, Jan Mohammad is not the only reason for the population to choose the side of the Taliban. It is an extremely complex process in which coercion by the Taliban, social relationships, economic and other disputes, power brokers, and a failing government all play a certain role (figure 4.1).

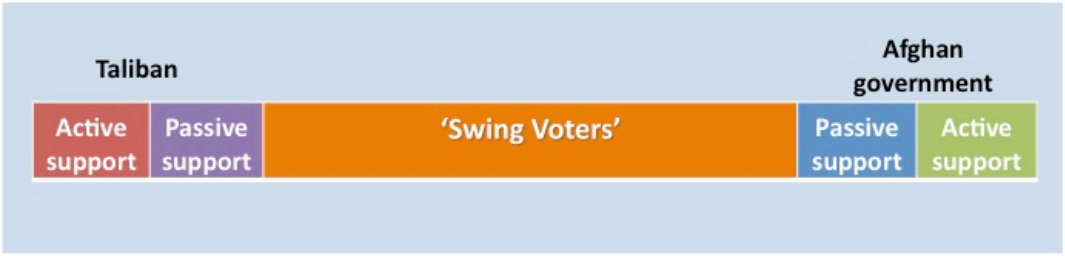
**Figure 4.1 Model of local dynamics**




[142] Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 3.
[143] Martine van Bijlert, Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles, Taliban Networks in Uruzgan, in Giustozzi A, Decoding the New Taliban, London: 2009, p. 158; Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 2.
[144] Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 4.

Another important factor to realize is the opportunistic character of the Afghan population. Based on the just described dynamics, a substantial part of the population will choose the side of the Taliban or the Afghan government. However, the effect of the Afghan opportunism is that the population will make this choice based on short-term considerations. They will choose to support the other side, if that benefits them at that moment the most. This 'swing-voters' behavior makes it extremely difficult to measure how much progress is made in winning the will of the people.

**Figure 4.2 Concept of Swing Voters**




## 4.2 The Dutch approach

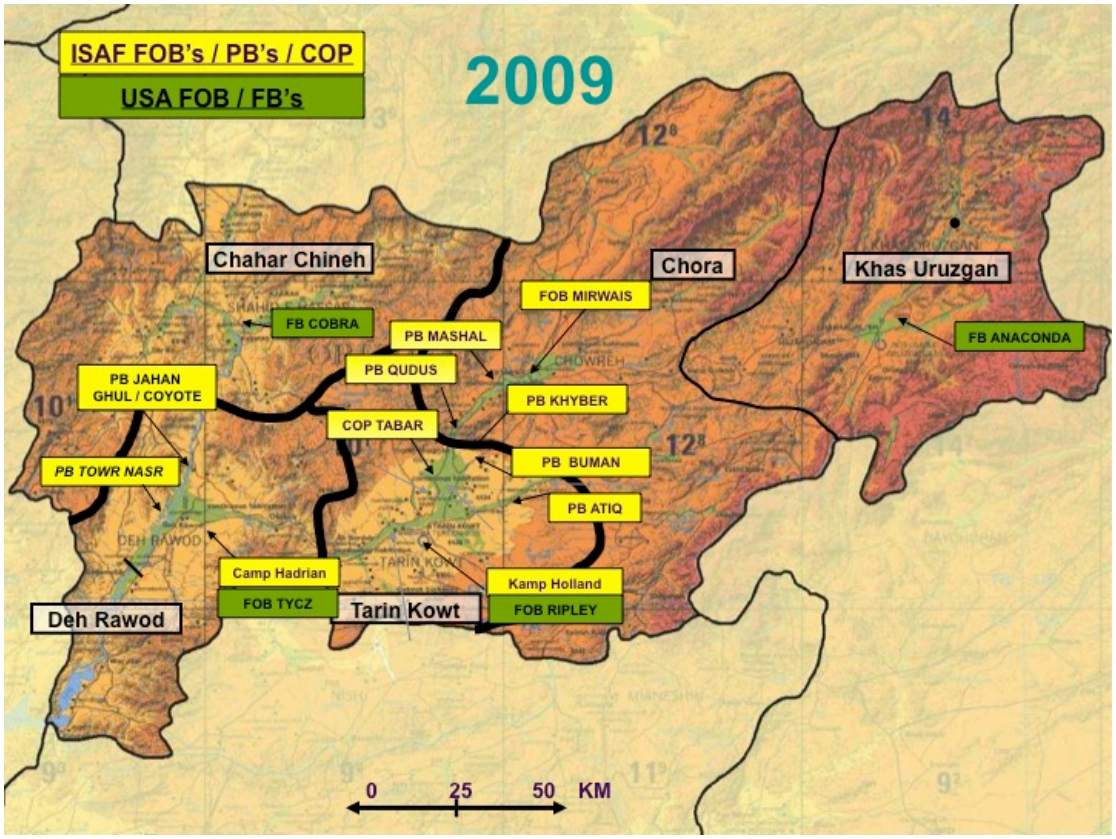
The mission of the Dutch taskforce is to assist the Afghan authorities in protecting the people of Uruzgan against the influence of insurgents, to improve their basic living conditions, and to accelerate structural and sustainable Afghan-led development.[145] The intention is to create a condition in which the Afghan authorities themselves are able to guarantee a secure environment for sustainable stability within the province. To support the Afghan authorities in this development process the priority of the mission is the reconstruction of the Afghan capacities within the administration, security (army and police), and the social-economical field.[146]

The core elements of the task force Uruzgan (TFU) are a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) and a battle group. Other elements are an Australian mentoring task force (MTF) and the operational mentoring and liaison teams (OMLTs) for training and assisting the

[145] OPLAN 008 (BAZ) rev 1. This is the four month operation plan based on COM ISAF OP TOLO Rev 1, RC(S) OPO 005 and the Uruzgan Campaign Plan (All these documents are classified).
[146] Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 3.

Afghan army.[147] The TFU is deployed in three forward operating bases – Camp Holland, Camp Hadrian, and the smaller Camp Mirwais in Chora – and several Platoon Bases (PBs), and Combat Out Posts (COPs)(map 4.1).

**Map 4.1 Uruzgan Province**




*Inkblot strategy*

The first pillar in the Dutch approach is the so-called 'inkblot strategy'. This typical counterinsurgency concept was reintroduced and implemented in South-Afghanistan by, amongst others, General Richards, commander ISAF from July 2006 till February 2007.[148] However, from the very first beginning of the mission the Dutch government already spoke about an *inkblot* approach.[149] The TFU focus their operations on the populous areas of the districts of Tarin Kowt, Deh Rawod, and Chora (map 4.1). These three inkblots - or Afghan Development Zones (ADZs) – are areas where a relative large

[147] Besides two Dutch OMLTs, there is a participation of Hungary, France, and Slovakia.
[148] Cyres Hodes and Mark Sedra, The Search for Security in post-Taliban Afghanistan, Routledge Adelphi Paper 391, New York:2007, p. 46.
[149] Kamerstuk 2005-2006, 27925, nr. 226, Tweede Kamer.

part of the Uruzgan population lives (about 70%).[150] Another reason to focus on these areas is that because of the tribal composition, where the population has a relative positive attitude towards the Afghan authorities and ISAF. Therefore ISAF expected that in these areas most progress in winning the will of the people could be achieved. Within and adjacent to the ADZ the intention is to achieve progress on all three lines of operation - *Defense*, *Diplomacy*, and *Development* (3D). The aim is to create conditions for the Afghan government to be able to execute its authority, Afghan security forces to be able to guarantee a secure environment, and reconstruction efforts to be able to take place to improve the quality of life of the population (including infrastructure, education, and health care). The creation of such a condition is essential for the achievement of the overall objective: winning the will of the people.

Outside the ADZs the objective is to suppress the Taliban to such a level that they cannot effectively interfere with the efforts to stabilize and extend the ADZs. This disruption of the Taliban is achieved by focussed operations on all three lines of operation.[151] Not only by kinetic operations aimed at the Taliban, but also by a careful exploitation of local personalities and local grievances that can drive a wedge between the Taliban and the population of Uruzgan.

During the operation it became clear that a prerequisite for the level of success of the inkblot strategy is the availability of Afghan capacity in the field of administration and security. If the TFU was going too fast in the expansion of the ADZs, the danger existed that TFU's assets were too much spread out and thereby overstretched. The removal of the Taliban, without sufficient own or Afghan capacity to 'hold' the area, resulted in the opponent regaining the control over the area in due course. The consequence of this was a decrease of the credibility of the TFU and Afghan authorities.[152] As a result, the TFU has chosen for the approach of a slow extension of the ADZs. The lesson learned is that expansion can only take place if there is sufficient Afghan and/or ISAF capacity available to fill the vacuum. The starting point in the planning and execution of operations is nowadays 'permanent presence'.[153] Operations with the aim of removing the Taliban are directly followed by reconstruction activities –

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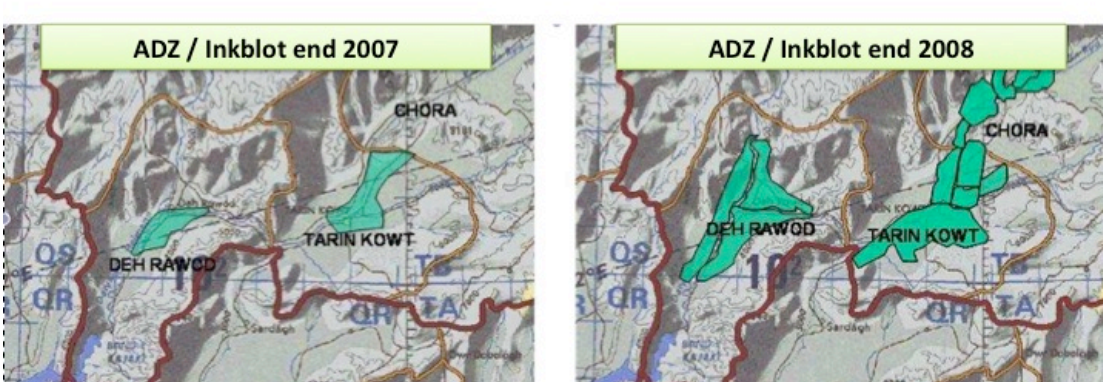
[150] Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 2.
[151] Kamerstuk 2008-2009, 27925, nr. 279, Tweede Kamer, p. 30.
[152] G.R. Dimitriu and B.A. de Graaf, The Dutch COIN-approach: three year Uruzgan, 2006-2009, Militaire Spectator, jaargang 178 nummer 11, 2009, p. 621.
[153] Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 29.

the concept of *shape, clear, hold and build*.[154] However, this Dutch approach is according to major-general De Kruif, commander RC-South from 1 November 2008 till 1 November 2009, not different from that of the other countries in RC-South.[155] What is remarkable is that it seems that each country – at least the Dutch – had to learn this expensive lesson on its own.

**Map 4.2 ADZs / Inkblots end 2007 and end 2008**




*3D-approach*

The second pillar of the Dutch strategy, the 3D-approach, is also not a unique one. More or less all partner nations are employing the same combination of civilian and military means in assisting the stabilization and development of Afghanistan, however, often using another name for the same concept such as '*comprehensive approach', 'whole of government approach'*, or '*integrated missions*'.[156] The 'Dutch approach' may have specific characteristics, the general concept behind it is conventional wisdom.

Three characteristics are identified, in which the combination and the degree of implementation are considered specific to the 'Dutch-approach'. Firstly, from the beginning of the operation the Netherlands has invested a considerable amount of resources in understanding the context of the operation. On the local level ethnic, tribal, economic, criminal, and political grievances play a decisive role. Efforts to win the support of the population without knowledge of these root causes were not seen to lead

[154] Some international documents do not describe the 'shape' aspect. For example JP 3-24 is describing a 'clear-hold-build operation'.
[155] Major-general Mart de Kruif in conversation with colonel Gary Keck, US DoD 20 March 2009. http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/03/mil-090320-dod02.htm.
[156] MoD, *Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Combined Arms Operations. Part 9 Tactics for Stabilization Operations,* London: MoD, 2005, p. A-3; Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine, 2007, p.170.

to a sustainable result and were seen to be counterproductive.[157] Secondly, a real integrated approach. The Netherlands has chosen to integrate the military and civilian staff into one organization, already in the preparation phase of the operation. A further outcome of emphasizing the civilian element is that since the beginning of 2009 the PRT is civilian-led.[158] Thirdly, by 'below the radar' development efforts and also giving the security efforts as much as possible an 'Afghan face', the support of the population and the legitimacy of the Afghan authorities has increased significantly.[159]

*Concept of restraint*

As of the beginning of 2008 a third pillar was added to the Dutch strategy – the concept of restraint. The aim of this concept is to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. Civilian casualties and collateral damage resulting from an over-reliance on firepower and force protection severely damaged ISAF's legitimacy in the eyes of the Uruzgan people. Therefore, the intention is to limit any form of violence as much as possible. In principle the use of violence is limited to self-defence and focussed targeting operations on Taliban leadership.[160] However, it is important to realize that there is a certain limit on this principle. An important objective is still to suppress the Taliban to such a level that they cannot effectively interfere with efforts to stabilize and extend the ADZs. Hence, offensive operations are occasionally a 'necessarily evil'. This concept of restraint is nowadays also part of McCrystal's new approach, and is considered as an important factor in not losing the will of the people.[161]

### 4.3 Intelligence support

This section focuses on the intelligence support of the policy and decision-makers of the Dutch government and the Dutch contingent in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and the intelligence support of the mission is according to the so-called 'assignment decision' of the Minister-President a responsibility of the NL-DISS.[162] For intelligence agencies like the NL-DISS secrecy is an important component of its activities. As explained in chapter

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157 Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 41.
158 http://www.yourdefence.nl/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=68.
159 Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 41.
160 Interview with Wilfred Rietdijk by the author, 16 May 2010.
161 McCrystal, "Commander´s Initial Assessment", HQ ISAF, Afghanistan, 30 August 2009, p. 2-10.
162 With the 'aanwijsbesluit' the Prime-Minister assigns the intelligence responsibility over a certain country to the MIVD or AIVD; NL-DISS, Jaarverslag 2008, 29 April 2009, p.8.

2, the NL-DISS has a need to protect its sensitive information, sources, and methods. Hence, there are limitations to what can be described in this section. The pitfalls and biases of intelligence support are discussed in the next chapter.

During the mission in South-Afghanistan, the cooperation between the NL-DISS and their most important partners has significantly intensified. The most tangible result of this intensification is Dutch membership of the so-called *5-eyes* community for the duration of the mission.[163] *5-eyes* relates to the far-reaching intelligence cooperation between the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK, which has its origin in the Second World War. Because of this participation the NL-DISS has access to intelligence sources and products that are normally not available to them. As a result, the NL-DISS is able to provide its consumers – policy and decision makers in The Hague, TFU, and partners – with higher quality intelligence.[164]

An important element in the intelligence support of the mission is the operational team (Team Afghanistan) within the NL-DISS. This team has a crucial role within the intelligence cycle. Firstly, it is responsible for all analysis and production of intelligence products – almost the whole processing phase. Secondly, this team acts as the most important feedback mechanism within the entire framework of the cycle. As Sir David Oman pointed out, the most important prerequisite for a functioning intelligence process is such a feedback mechanism.[165] The feedback ability of the team is positively influenced by the fact that the NL-DISS is a relative small agency. The analysis and production division and the collection divisions - human intelligence (HUMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) – are part of the same organization. The result is very short lines, which are even further exploited by the fact that the collection divisions are represented within Team Afghanistan. To guarantee the feedback with the consumers in theatre the NL-DISS has deployed forward elements – National Intelligence Support Team (NIST) or National Intelligence Cell (NIC). These forward elements act as an interface between Team Afghanistan, the TFU, and other consumers in theatre. They are the assurance function for the operational team to know the consumer's intelligence requirements, and for the consumers to know/understand the relevant intelligence or

163 DNI, Intelligence Community Directive, 503,15 September 2008, p.7.
164 Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 21.
165 Presentation by Sir David Omand at the Professional Advanced Intelligence Course at FHS, Oslo, September 2009.

information. It is policy for team-members to deploy on a regular base to these forward elements. This concept is not unique for NL-DISS. Most partners in Afghanistan are using a similar concept.

### 4.4 Assessment

Eight years after the overthrowing of the Taliban regime and four years after a more intense ISAF-presence in the South, ISAF did not succeed to improve peace and stability in the Afghan Pashtun-provinces.

With the arrival of additional US forces mainly in the South and ISAF's increased operational tempo, the level of violence has risen, as expected. Considering the low number of violent incidents, Uruzgan seems to be 'quieter' than the other provinces in the South.[166] Despite initial skepticism from larger NATO members when the Dutch took command of Uruzgan in August 2006, the troubled province is now widely seen as one of the few positive developments in Afghanistan's increasingly insecure South.[167] According to the Tribal Liaison Office (TLO) in Uruzgan the security situation has improved, the provision of basic services is improving, and the economy is showing initial positive changes.[168] This relative success in Uruzgan is often believed to be the result of the 'Dutch Approach'.[169] However, speaking about a Dutch success is perhaps premature. A different reason for the relative stability could be the fact that Uruzgan is outside the Taliban's main effort. Taliban operations are mainly focussed on Kandahar province and the northeast of Helmand. Besides this, the Taliban within Uruzgan have significant leadership issues, which was a cause for major problems with the coordination of their operations.[170] These leadership issues were even further exploited through direct actions of US and Australian Special Forces.[171]

The security, development and rule of law gains made in Uruzgan are also both fragile and limited. A main problem is transferring responsibility to an Afghan government that many citizens see as unrepresentative and either unwilling or unable to

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166 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Stand van zaken brief Afghanistan, 14 Octobr, 2009, p.11.
167 See for example, "U.S. takes Dutch Military as Role Model in Afghanistan", *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 May 2009 ; http://online.wsj.com/articl e/SB124105482098871505.html
168 Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 2.
169 See for example, "The Dutch model; Afghanistan's Uruzgan province", The Economist, US edition, 14 March 2009.
170 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Stand van zaken brief Afghanistan, 14 Octobr, 2009, p.11.
171 Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 11.

offer basic service provision or security to the population at large.[172] One more reason why the developments are fragile is the role of Jan Mohammad Khan's network. Jan Mohammad can be considered to be the most important 'spoiler-force' on the side of the Afghan government. Since 2006 Jan Mohammad stopped being the official governor, but de facto he still represents President Karzai. In this position he succeeded to extend his power due to the cooperation with coalition forces and the increase of foreign funds that were spend in Uruzgan as development- and military aid. Because his network is providing security to most of the military and civilian logistic transports, the coalition forces are to a certain degree dependant on him. This dominant position allows him to control a significant part of the transport of opium – the major source of income in Uruzgan.[173] According to the TLO the growing polarization between Jan Mohammad's network and most of the rest of the population is the main driver of politics, conflict and violence in the province.[174] Hence, the cooperation with Jan Mohammad will most probably have a negative effect on TFU's efforts to build legitimacy.

### 4.5 Conclusion

The beginning of complex conflict wisdom is to grasp the implications of Clausewitz's famous rule. He insisted that "the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive".[175] It seems that the Dutch policy- and decision makers had a thorough understanding of the conflict from the beginning, and that most of the characteristics of complex conflicts have been taken into consideration in the decision-making processes. From the start, the focus of the mission was on the construction of the Afghan capacity within the administration, security, and the social-economical field.[176] This focus reflects the way in which the *inkblot strategy* and *3D-approach* is planned and executed. A logical consequence of this is, that the PRT is the main effort of the TFU.

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[172] Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 16.
[173] Confidential interview by the author, 30 March 2010.
[174] Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 4.
[175] Clausewtiz, On War, p. 88-89
[176] Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer, p. 3.

This Dutch approach is sometimes presented as something unique. However, the concepts and principles used in the Dutch strategy are all in line with the conventional wisdom about complex conflicts, and nowadays implemented by all partners. However, some countries were faster than others in implementing these principles in their strategy. Just as it took a while before the Dutch discovered that 'clear' activities, if they are not directly followed by 'hold' and 'build' activities, will result in little or even negative effects.[177] And, since one of the significant characteristics of complex conflicts is that they are considered as an adapting competition - the actor who learns and adapts the fastest will win – you cannot afford to lose expensive time to adapt. Therefore, if General McChrystal's initial assessment is right, you could assume that during the last eight years of the conflict the international community did not learn and adapt fast enough. In essence, the Taliban were given the time and space to recover from their defeat in 2001; they made good use of this time to expand and consolidate their control of a substantial part of the Pashtun population.

*Relation with complex conflict theory*

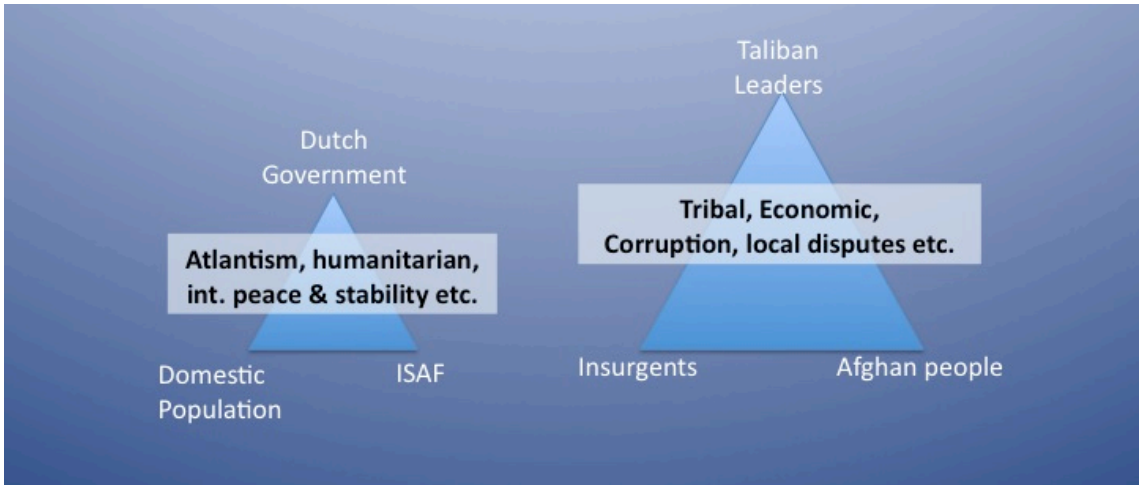
As stated, the Dutch approach in Uruzgan is often sold as a success story. The Economist praises the approach in an article titled: The Dutch model. "Amid the gloom of recent assessments of the progress of its war in Afghanistan, Nato has seen a flicker of light in an unexpected province: Uruzgan," the magazine writes. But The Economist also warns that "Afghanistan has a history of turning success stories into horror movies."[178] The most important reason for the 'success' might be that Uruzgan is not important for the Taliban. What are the effects if the Taliban focuses more on Uruzgan? What are the effects of the increasing power of Jan Mohammad's spoiler network? The gains made in Uruzgan are both fragile and limited. Mats Berdal's concept of 'the economy of war and peace' seems to be very relevant in Uruzgan.

It is understandable that the public opinion in the Netherlands has always been rather sceptical about the mission in Uruzgan.[179] News about Afghanistan, including Uruzgan, is mostly negative. The public does not have the feeling that ISAF is on track in

[177] See for more, G.R. Dimitriu and B.A. de Graaf, The Dutch COIN-approach: three year Uruzgan, 2006-2009, Militaire Spectator, jaargang 178 nummer 11, 2009.
[178] The Economist, "The Dutch model; Afghanistan's Uruzgan province", 14 March 2009.
[179] Ministerie van Defensie, Monitor publieke opinie Uruzgan; http://www.defensie.nl/missies/afghanistan/actueel/monitor_publieke_opinie

stabilizing Afghanistan - which was also McCrystal's opinion. The combination of this lack of progress and 'soft' political objectives makes it difficult for the Dutch government to maintain the support of the population. There are limits to what the Dutch population -and thus the government - is willing to invest, both time and resources in stabilizing Afghanistan. It is this weak 'Clausewitzian triangle' that makes the policy and decision makers more concerned about the management of short-term risks, than dealing with long-term threats - not dealing with the problem anymore, but managing the risk at acceptable level.

**Figure 4.3 Dutch and Taliban Clausewitzian Triangle**




In addition, Christopher Coker's concept of 'wicked problem' appears to be applicable in Afghanistan. The international community does not agree on a definition of the problem. Some feel they can talk to the Taliban; that the movement has to be part of the solution. Some stakeholders question the wisdom of trying to eliminate opium production, and denying a considerable part of the population a source of income. Others claim that it is the spoiler networks that feed instability and corruption. None of these views is mutually exclusive, and none of them is necessarily wrong.[180] According to Coker, the managing process ends when resources are depleted, stakeholders lose interest, or political realities change.[181] Afghanistan most probably stops to be a wicked problem for the Netherlands as of 1st August 2010.

[180] Coker, 2009, p. 155.
[181] Ibid, p. 156.

*Insurgents can, against costs which are unlimited acceptable, create costs by their opponent which are limited acceptable, even if they lose every (tactical) battle, win the war (*Sir Robert Thompson, "Regular Armies and Insurgency", 1979*)*

# 5 Bottlenecks

After the description of the conceptual framework and presentation of the case, the next topic is the identification and discussion the most significant pitfalls and biases concerning the relevance of intelligence for policy and decision-making. These bottlenecks will be identified and analyzed within the context of the case and within the provided framework of intelligence and complex conflicts. The identification and discussion of the bottlenecks is based on interviews with relevant intelligence producers and consumers, and the study of 'practitioners insights'.

In January 2010, McChrystal's senior intelligence officer, Major General Michael T. Flynn, published an extremely relevant, and within the intelligence community well-known report about the failure of intelligence in Afghanistan over the last eight years.[182] According to Flynn "the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which US and allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade. Ignorant of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations between various development projects and the levels of cooperation among villagers, and disengaged from people in the best position to find answers".[183]

Flynn's essential line of thought is not that they are doing a bad job, but that they are doing the wrong sort of job. Too focused on the enemy and not able to see and, more import tell the big picture of the country they are in. He urges them to get out of headquarters, work with soldiers on the ground, talk to people and act more like journalists, as well as historians and librarians. Flynn states that ninety percent of intelligence work these days is "open source", and quotes a former head of intelligence saying that the job should be more Sherlock Holmes than James Bond.[184] A single-minded obsession with IEDs is understandable but inexcusable if local commanders cannot outsmart insurgents as a result, and concludes "the intelligence community - the brains behind the bullish might of military forces - seems much too mesmerized by the

[182] Flynn, "*Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*", Center for a New American Security, January 2010; http://www.cnas.org/node/3924.
[183] Ibid, p. 7.
[184] Ibid, p. 23.

red of the Taliban's cape. If this does not change, success in Afghanistan will depend on the dubious premise that a bull will not tire as quickly as a Russian bear".[185]As McChrystal stated, “the conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy”. According to Flynn is too much of the intelligence community deaf to this direction.[186]

The aim of Flynn’s report is to provide the intelligence community with a blueprint for the process of making intelligence relevant in Afghanistan. Hence, the purpose of Flynn’s report is closely related to the purpose of this study. Some of the bottlenecks in his report discussed are very recognizable in the Dutch situation, some in a much less degree, and some not at all. Besides the Dutch context, the main distinction is that whereas Flynn has an operational/problem solving perspective, this study is conducted from an academic/theoretical perspective. Hence, this study and Flynn’s report complement each other in the process of providing the policy and decision-makers with more relevant knowledge.

**Accessibility**

The first bottleneck to be discussed refers to continuous debate about the dichotomy openness/secrecy. In the literature on intelligence, it is broad accepted that the issues and aspects that need to be kept secret must be reduced to a minimum, and that releasing reports will improve the usability for policy and decision-making.[187] However, during the mission in South-Afghanistan, the NL-DISS did not produce one single unclassified intelligence report.[188] The released ‘open’ information was limited to an input in several policy documents.[189] The accessibility of the reports was even further limited to the fact that The Netherlands was part of the earlier described 5-eyes community. Due to this membership the NL-DISS had access to large numbers of relevant intelligence reports and single source information (mainly SIGINT and HUMINT). Even when the NL-DISS used a fraction of 5-eyes information in its own reports, the consequence was automatically a considerable restriction on the releasability of these reports. Hence, most

185 Ibid, p. 24.
186 Ibid.
187 Valk, 2005, p. 42.
188 Confidential interviews by the author, 23 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
189 For example “Artikel-100 brief”, Kamerstuk 2007-2008, 27925, nr. 279, Tweede Kamer; Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 9 September 2009, Tweede Kamer; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Stand van zaken brief Afghanistan, 14 October, 2009.

of the NL-DISS reports were limited released to the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.[190] This classification of reports has broad and significant consequences – in theatre, international, and domestic.

The consequences in theatre are well known and rather obvious. As stated, the stabilization and development of Afghanistan requires a combination of military achievements and diplomacy, economic, and social incentives. Hence, tackling the Afghan problem requires a large number of civilian actors such as NGOs, development organizations, IOs, and even commercial businesses. All these stakeholders have the same need as ISAF to understand the ethnic, tribal, economic, criminal, and political grievances - the context of their operation. Without this knowledge their efforts will contribute less to the stabilization and development of Afghanistan/Uruzgan.

The international consequences are rather obvious as well, but less recognized. International actors such as the UN, EU, ISAF, and even NATO only have limited own intelligence assets. Therefore, these organizations depend mainly on national intelligence inputs.[191] The more restricted national intelligence reports are, the less accessible they are for these organizations. For example reports with a 5-eyes releasability will not be accessible by NATO. Already at the end of 2006 the assessment of the NL-DISS, and some other 5-eyes partners in South-Afghanistan, was that the stabilization and development was not heading in the right direction. The intelligence reports stated clearly that, although some progress could be identified, many indicators suggested the overall situation was deteriorating. The Taliban had the initiative and there was a crisis of confidence among Afghans in both their government and the international community – we were losing the battle over the will of the people.[192] However, it took until the second half of 2009, when General McCrystal presented his initial assessment, before the international community really woke up.[193] Before that, NATO's general assessment of the situation in Afghanistan was that progress was going (too) slow, but the operation was still heading in the right direction. This did not mean that NATO was not concerned about the situation, though NATO's concern was mainly based on the fear that the contributing nation's support would disappear because there was not enough

[190] Confidential interviews by the author, 23 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
[191] Herman, 2002, p. 22.
[192] Confidential interviews by the author, 23 March 2010, 25 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
[193] McCrystal S.A., "Commander´s Initial Assessment", HQ ISAF, Afghanistan, 30 august 2009.

progress.[194] It seems that NATO still did not realize that they were losing the battle over the will of the people.[195]

The domestic consequences were neither obvious nor recognized, at both the strategic and tactical level. At the tactical level the classification of intelligence reports has negative effect on the mission-preparation. A key factor in winning the will of the people in Uruzgan is a careful exploitation of local personalities and local grievances.[196] A prerequisite for this is a thorough knowledge and understanding of the social relationships, economic and other disputes, and power brokers of the local communities. To obtain this knowledge and understanding requires an investment in a considerable amount of time, which will not be available during the execution of the mission. Hence, the main part of this knowledge an understanding should be obtained during the preparation-phase, which requires sufficient access to the most relevant intelligence products. Unfortunately at the tactical level access to classified documents is problematic, and the usability for the preparation is far from optimal.[197]

At the political strategic level there is only very limited group of policy-makers who have access to intelligence products on a regular base. Within the relevant ministries – defence, foreign affairs, and general affairs - intelligence has always been available on a daily base. A small group of parliament members, the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Services Committee (the 'Secret Committee') had access on a regular base. However, a vast majority of members of the parliament and other ministries did not have access at all.[198] After the presentation of the report of the Committee of Inquiry on Iraq, in January 2010, the government made some decisions, which slightly improved this situation. For example, from that moment, the NL-DISS has to agree about how the government incorporates their reports in various policy documents.[199] The bottom line is that still the vast majority of policy-makers – government as well parliament members – do not have access to NL-DISS assessments on a regular base. This context has significant consequences for the relevance of intelligence for policy-making. As explained in chapter 2, intelligence products have

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194 Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, "Afghanistan: We can do better", Washington Post, 18 January 2009.
195 Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
196 Flynn, "Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 11-15.
197 Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
198 Confidential interviews by the author, 26 March 2010.
199 Kabinetsreactie rapport commissie-Davids, Kamerstuk / 09-02-2010; www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2010/02/20/kabinetsreactie-rapport-commissie-davids.html.

more long-term effects in shaping the policy-maker's frame of mind rather than short-term effects on identifiable decisions. It is the constant flow of intelligence and other sources of knowledge such as the media that shape decisions and actions, rather than specific sets of intelligence.[200] Hence, most policy-maker's frame of mind is not shaped by NL-DISS reports.

The conclusion of this discussion is that the classification of intelligence products decreases significantly the relevance for several important policy and decision-making processes. So the question arises, why the NL-DISS did not put more effort in the production of unclassified reports? The interviews conducted with several analysts and managers of the NL-DISS did not result in a clear answer. The 'intelligence culture' could be a dominant factor in explaining this predisposition - as Michael Herman pointed out "secrecy is intelligence's trademark: the basis of its relationship with government and its own self-image."[201] Without any doubt, the risk exists, if intelligence is too unrestricted, for sensitive information, sources, and methods to be compromised. However, in many cases it is attainable to paraphrase the reports in such a way that they can be declassified without the risk of disclosure, and without losing its significance.[202] Two arguments were given for the reason why the declassification of reports is never done. Firstly, the high stress on the production-process. There is simply no production capacity (made) available to spend time on declassification. Secondly, the most direct and obvious consumers - Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Defense staff, and TFU – all have access to classified reports.[203]

With this approach the NL-DISS significantly under-utilizes its products. The intelligence needs of the indirect and less obvious consumers are not given enough attention, which to some extent is caused by a false assumption that unclassified reports are less relevant, and by too much risk aversion.

**Acceptance**

According to Michael Handel, one of the most critical phases in the intelligence cycle is convincing the policy and decision-makers to make best use of the provided

[200] Herman, 1996, p. 144.
[201] Herman, 2002, p.5.
[202] Confidential interviews by the author, 26 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
[203] Confidential interviews by the author, 23 March 2010.

intelligence.[204] The policy and decision-makers of the Dutch government and the Dutch contingent in Afghanistan will be more receptive to intelligence if the NL-DISS has a good reputation concerning objectivity, accuracy, and quality of assessments. In addition, the relationship between the policy and decision-makers and the NL-DISS plays an important role.

In general the conclusion is there are no significant shortfalls identified during the operation in this field. The relevance and importance of the NL-DISS assessments for the decision-making processes at both the strategic and the operational level, is broadly accepted and well regarded.[205] For example the Dutch government demanded from President Karzai for Jan Mohammad to be removed as governor, before they took over the lead nation role in Uruzgan. The knowledge and insights to understand the need for this demand was provided by NL-DISS intelligence.[206]It was only in the first year of the operation that especially PRT-commanders were complaining about insufficient intelligence on the field of diplomacy and development.[207] Nowadays, it is estimated that about ninety percent of all relevant intelligence in Uruzgan is originated from the NL-DISS.[208]

However, on a few occasions the policy and decision-makers did not make best use of the provided intelligence. Insights and understanding of the processes, which led to the disregarding of relevant intelligence, will help answering the central research question. The most evident examples are the NL-DISS assessments as from end of 2006 concerning the deteriorating situation in southern Afghanistan. The assessment, that the ISAF was in fact losing the battle over the will of the people, was difficult to accept for the majority of the Dutch policy and decision-makers.[209] The main cause for this phenomenon is a combination of three well-known causes for failures in the literature on intelligence – 'discourse failure', 'confirmation bias', and 'cognitive dissonance'. These causes for intelligence failures can be identified within three different actors – US Intelligence, ISAF commanders, and Dutch policy-makers.

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[204] Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 26.
[205] Interview with Tony Keijzers by the author, 25 March 2010.
[206] Confidential Interviews by the author, 25 March 2010, 29 March 2010, 31 March 2010.
[207] Interview with Tony Keijzers by the author, 25 March 2010.
[208] Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
[209] Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010, 31 March 2010.

Within the US Intelligence a 'discourse failure' caused for their assessments to be too positive about the achievements in Afghanistan. The concept of discourse failure is based on the idea that what we see as threats are, to a certain extent, shaped by the ideas we have of the world around us, and this is likely to have a direct impact on the focus and perception of the Intelligence agencies.[210] In contrast with the 'soft' political objectives of the Dutch government, the rationale behind the US involvement in Afghanistan is in the context of the 'global war against terror'. Statements like "we'll smoke them out of their holes", or Obama's message to al-Qaeda "we will defeat you", are part the US discourse concerning Afghanistan.[211] In such a context it is explainable that most US intelligence was enemy-centric, and that they were not receptive to indicators concerning winning the will of the people. The US discourse failure is a failure of comprehension: the limitation of the language and vocabulary to identify, analyze, and accept that the overall situation was deteriorating.

The assessment of most ISAF commanders about the situation in Afghanistan was that progress was going slow, but the operation was still heading in the right direction. For example Major General Ton van Loon, former commander RC-S, stated in June 2007 that the Taliban have "lost the war", they remain dangerous in some parts of the country, but are unable to launch an effective offensive.[212] A 'confirmation bias' was the main cause for this shortfall to see that the situation was deteriorating. Confirmation bias is the human tendency to notice and look for information that confirms one's beliefs, and ignore, not look for, or undervalue the relevance of information that contradicts it.[213] This within the social psychology well known bias is, to a certain extent, recognizable within most military commanders in Afghanistan.[214] Van Loon and his colleagues may believe that they were objective and rational, but forgot the psychological investment they made in the development of their own campaign plan.

According to David Kilcullen 'measuring progress' is the best way to assess whether a campaign is on track or not. He also pointed out that the focus on the

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[210] Neumann, P.R., & Smith M.L.R. (2005). Missing the plot: Intelligence and discourse failure. *Orbis* (winter), p. 106.
[211] BBC News, 27 March 2009; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7969071.stm.
[212] The Dutch Major General Ton van Loon was in control of Regional Command South from 1 November 2006 till 1 May 2007. He made this statement in a presentation for the Atlantic Council on 5 June 2007; http://www.acus.org/event_blog/ton-van-loon-taliban-have-lost-war
[213] Bar-Joseph, 2005, p. 246.
[214] Confidential interviews by the author, 25 March 2010, 29 March 2010.

achievement of total objectives is not the appropriate framework of analysis to assess progress.[215] It is this focus on the achievements of (irrelevant) objectives in combination with the psychological investments that lead to the situation where ISAF commanders were not receptive for facts and dangers that stand in contradiction to their campaign plan.

From the beginning, the Dutch government and parliament were heavily divided about the rationale behind the decision to contribute to the mission.[216] This resulted in a political discussion about the main characteristic of the mission[217] – a 'fighting-mission' versus a 'reconstruction-mission'.[218] The Dutch policy-makers knew that the political and popular support for the mission was vulnerable. The policy-makers realized that, if the mission was not heading in the right direction, the support would decrease even further.[219] In other words, policy-makers needed 'good news' to be able to 'sell' the mission and retain popular support. However, the NL-DISS assessments did not contain much good news, which led to 'cognitive dissonance' amongst the policy-makers. Cognitive dissonance is the human tendency to prefer information that confirms existing belief to information that refutes it. Cognitive dissonance leads to similar results as confirmation bias.[220] However, cognitive dissonance is more prominent when the discrepancy between one's viewpoints about the situation in Afghanistan and the intelligence received about it is clear and cannot be ignored. Under these circumstances, the discrepancy is resolved by putting more weight to the information or interpretation that coincides with the present viewpoint and underestimating the evidence that contradicts it.[221]

The information that coincided with the policy-maker's beliefs was available in the form of the US and ISAF assessments. Hence, the acceptance of (dissident) NL-DISS assessments was negatively influenced by the combination of a discourse failure within

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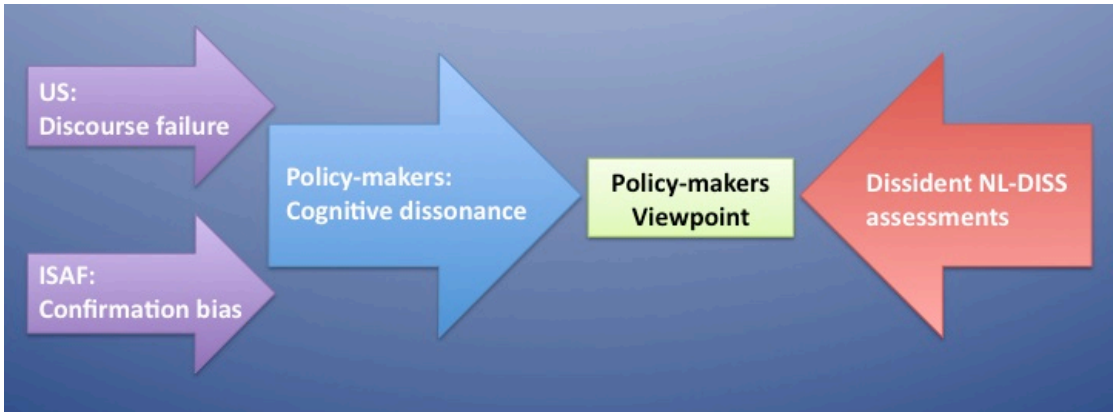
215 David Kilcullen, *Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, December 2009, Kabul, p.1.
216 Interview with Wilfred Rietdijk by the author, 22 March 2010.
217 See for example: Kamerstuk 2005-2006, 27925, nr. 222.
218 That neither of these terms was accurate and that the operation in South-Afghanistan was in fact a counterinsurgency was not yet conventional wisdom amongst the Dutch policy-makers at that point in time; See for more, G.R. Dimitriu and B.A. de Graaf, The Dutch COIN-approach: three year Uruzgan, 2006-2009, Militaire Spectator, jaargang 178 nummer 11, 2009.
219 Confidential interviews by the author, 25 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
220 Bar-Joseph, 2005, p. 247.
221 Ibid.

US intelligence, confirmation bias amongst ISAF commanders, and cognitive dissonance amongst Dutch policy-makers. (figure 5.1) However, it is important to realize that all causes will be present within all actors. For example a discourse failure will also play a role amongst the Dutch policy-makers, nevertheless the effect of cognitive dissonance is most prominent. Other causes such as the NL-DISS 'track record', personal relationships, and accessibility of intelligence will also have an influence on this process, but are less prominent.

**Figure 5.1 Process of policy-maker's acceptance of dissident assessments**




**Root causes**

The social, economical, and political factors of the operational environment formed from the beginning of the mission an integral part of Team Afghanistan's analyses and assessments.[222] However, many team members and consumers have the perception that the collection efforts and analytical brainpower are often still too much focused on insurgents instead of population-centric information.[223] The main reason for this is that the necessary change of focus from enemy-centric to population-centric information is not yet embedded in a proper conceptual framework.[224] Too much of what is done in the last years to make intelligence more relevant – population-centric – is based on the insights and achievements of individuals. The discussion in this section provides some insights into why there frequently is too much focus on insurgents, which will be useful for the development of a conceptual framework.

[222] Confidential interviews by the author, 25 March 2010, 31 March 2010.
[223] Confidential interviews by the author, 25 March 2010, 31 March 2010.
[224] Interview with Tony Keijzers by the author, 25 March 2010.

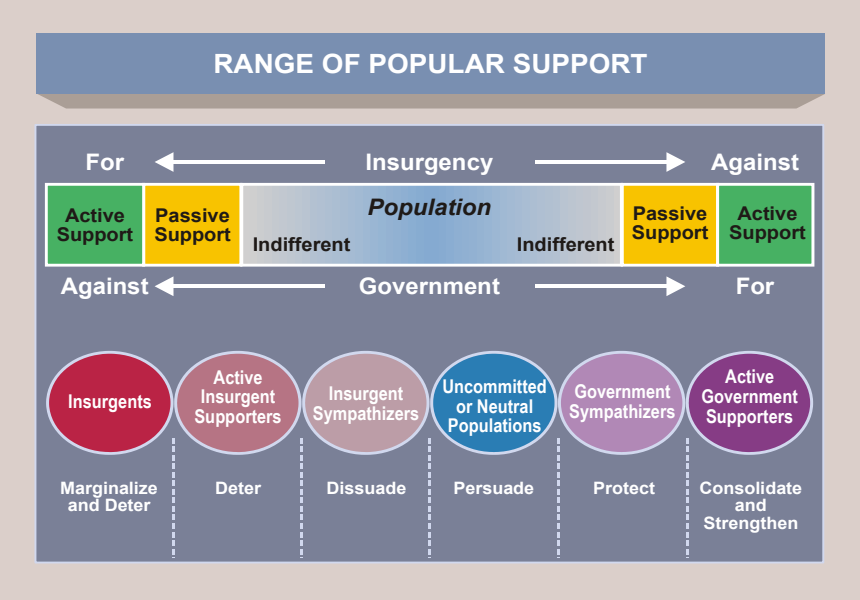
*Validity of models*

All Dutch policy and decision-makers and intelligence producers understand that the conflict in Afghanistan is about winning the will of the people, and that addressing the core grievances is crucial for the achievement of this objective. However, translating these ideas and concepts in real plans and actions is something else. Many of the used concepts and procedures are not optimized for the utilization in complex conflicts.

Clear examples of this can be found in the counterinsurgency 'bible', the JP 3-24. This US doctrine publication is considered to be the leading document for the development of other nation's counterinsurgency doctrine – including The Netherlands. The process for the analysis of the operational environment is the Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE). In contrast with the Cold War based Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB), the JIPOE emphasizes on socio-cultural and civil factors.[225] However, not all characteristics of complex conflicts as described in chapter 3 are reflected in a proper way. In step one of the JIPOE the population is divided in four main categories based on their attitude towards the government – positive, neutral, negative, and hostile. The crucial shortfall here is that the significance of the 'spoilers' is not enough emphasized. They are shortly mentioned, but do not play an important role in the further analysis.[226] In the JP 3-24 is also stated that the support of the people is the most vital success-factor in the success of any COIN effort, and that the reinforcement of the legitimacy of the government should be the main objective.[227] This is translated in a concept for how the approach the population, based on their attitude towards the government. (figure 5.2).

[225] US, Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, (2009), p. VIII-3.
[226] Ibid, p. VIII-3 – VIII-24.
[227] Ibid, p. III-1.

**Figure 5.2 Range of popular support**[228]




As explained in chapter 4, dividing the population in categories based on their attitude towards the government is helpful in understanding the 'swing-voters' behaviour of a large part of the population (figure 4.2). However, if the attitude towards the government is the leading principle for how to engage the population, something crucial goes wrong. The spoilers cannot only be found on pro-Taliban side, but also on the pro-government side, and both can have a devastating effect on the efforts to build legitimacy. A clear example of such a pro-government spoiler is the former governor of Uruzgan, Jan Mohammad. His network is considered to be the main driver of politics, conflict and violence in the province.[229] The consequence of the US model is that Jan Mohammad and his network is positioned on the 'right' side. Promoting him instead of marginalizing him will produce wicked and unintended consequences and most probably will do more harm than good to the achievement of gaining the support of the people.[230]

The second shortfall can be found in step 3 and 4 of the JIPOE. While in step 1 and 2 – 'define the operational environment' and 'describe the impact of the operational environment' – the focus is on the socio-cultural and civil factors. In step 3 and 4 – 'evaluate the adversary' and 'determine adversary courses of action' – the focus is

[228] Ibid, p. III-2.
[229] Tribal Liaison Office, "Three Years Later", Kabul, 18 September 2009, p. 4.
[230] Berdal, 2007, p. 126.

almost entirely on insurgents.[231] Thus, where the US doctrine is promoting a holistic analysis of the operational environment with emphasis on social-cultural and civil factors, the 'end-product' of the intelligence process is 'Insurgent Courses of Action'?

In conclusion, this leading COIN-document reflects the importance and relevance of population-centric information. However, it is less useful as a tool for the process in providing the policy and decision-makers with relevant intelligence.

*Personal skills*

Most Dutch policy and decision-makers are educated and trained in the context of 'industrial wars'. As a result, some Dutch actors have problems understanding the consequences of their role in 'wars amongst the people'. Problems with understanding and accepting that the objective of the military efforts is 'limited' to establishing a condition in which the overall objective can be achieved by diplomacy and development efforts. In other words, understand and accept that the PRT is the main effort of the TFU. However, in reality security operations are often leading before the PRT-activities.[232] The main cause can be found in the extreme complex dynamics of the operational environment. As a consequence, the decision-makers often do not recognize actionable intelligence about the root causes, local conflicts, and spoiler networks. This is not only a matter of not recognizing it, but also of ignoring it. Ignoring because in some occasions the decision-makers recognize that the intelligence is relevant, but they do not have the skills to translate the intelligence into actions.[233] The effects of both 'not recognizing' and 'ignoring' are the same - a focus on less relevant intelligence. This focus on less relevant intelligence will result in the achievement of short-term successes – building schools, placing water pumps, and disrupting the Taliban. To what extent this process of 'not recognizing' and ignoring' will take place, depends mainly on the personal capabilities of the key decision-makers in combination with the intelligence officers. To what extent is a commander able to recognize and deal with relevant intelligence, and to what extent is the intelligence officer able to explain and convince his commander.

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[231] US, Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, (2009), p. VIII-3 – VII-24.
[232] Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
[233] Ibid.

*Risk-management*

As stated, the Dutch policy-makers realized that the political and popular support for the mission was weak.[234] This weak support base in combination with the uncertainty about the outcomes from own actions makes policy-makers more concerned about the management of short-term risks, than dealing with long-term threats.[235] Not dealing with the root causes anymore, but focusing on short-term successes. Consequently, the mission is managed on output indicators such as the number of people that has access to education and medical care, the number of trained police officers and army soldiers, and the relative security in the districts.[236]

Hence, 'risk-management' and the process of 'not recognizing' and 'ignoring' can have the same effect on the intelligence process. Based on risk-management The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence will have intelligence requirements that address the short-term issues, and based on 'not recognizing' and 'ignoring' the TFU will have the same requirements. It is important to be aware that these effects are not absolute. Depending on the political climate, the personalities of the key policy and decision-makers, and the situation in Uruzgan these effects will be present in a greater or lesser degree.

**Adapting competition**

The ability to learn and adapt to the environment is considered as one of the most crucial elements in COIN. As McChrystal stated, "Communicate and share ideas. Challenge the conventional wisdom if it no longer fits the environment. This is a battle of wits – learn and adapt more quickly than the insurgent."[237]

A prerequisite for the ability to adapt is basically that you are able to identify what works and what does not work. As David Kilcullen explained, 'measuring progress' is the best way to assess whether a campaign is on track – is successful - or not. He also pointed out that this process is rather complicated if the main objective is winning the will of the people.[238] Measuring progress is a complicated process. However, factors

[234] Ibid.
[235] Coker, 2009, p. 65.
[236] Interview with Wilfred Rietdijk by the author, 22 March 2010.
[237] ISAF, "*Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*", 8 September 2009.
[238] David Kilcullen, *Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, December 2009, Kabul, p.1.

such as ‘cascading effects’, consequences of a ‘wicked problem’, and ‘swing-voters’ behaviour makes figuring out what caused this progress (or deterioration) even more problematic.

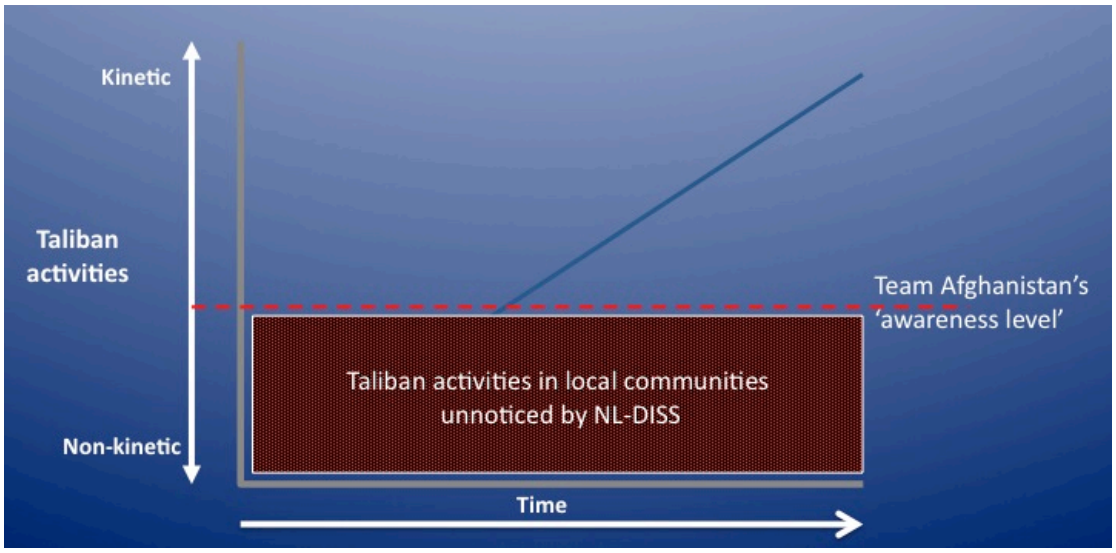
*Case study*

In 2008 Team Afghanistan performed an analysis with the intention to become better in this process. The analysis was based on the events in the ADZ Deh Rawod in late 2007. In this period the Taliban took in fact control over the ADZ. The Taliban were able to deny physical access to the northern part of the ADZ to both ISAF and non-Taliban local nationals. They isolated Camp Hadrian, and had physical and psychological control over the larger part of the population. With the operation ‘Patan Ghar’ in January 2008, ISAF was able to regain the control over the ADZ. [239]

What was alarming for Team Afghanistan was that they were not able to forecast these Taliban efforts in an earlier stage. The moment that Team Afghanistan became aware of the Taliban intentions, it was already too late for the TFU to take preventive measures. The aim of the case study Deh Rawod was twofold. The first aim was to identify significant events in relation to Taliban and their insurgency effort in Deh Rawod. The second aim was to evaluate the NL-DISS ability to identify these events ahead of time and the team’s ability to assess these events. The case study was based on a chronological analysis of the Taliban main events versus the TFU main events. The main results of the case study were a better understanding of the Taliban modus operandi, vulnerabilities and strengths, and a better understanding of the local dynamics (figure 4.1). Based on these findings, the Team was able to develop a set of indicators, which allows them to detect deeper trends in the environment that may not be directly observable.[240] In other words, improve Team’s environmental ‘awareness level’ (figure 5.3).

[239] Confidential interviews by the author, 26 March 2010, 29 March 2010.
[240] Confidential interviews by the author, 26 March 2010, 29 March 2010.

**Figure 5.3 Team Afghanistan awareness level**




*Collective intelligence*

Christopher Coker is pointing out that because of the social complexity, solving a wicked problem such as Afghanistan is fundamentally a social process. "It is a socialization process involving collective learning through shared experiences".[241] The problem is that the neither ISAF nor NL-DISS is aware enough of this.

Within Team Afghanistan, the development of a thorough understanding of the conflict, the environment, and the insurgency has not been an optimized social process. The team did assimilate and used intelligence provided by foreign intelligence agencies in their analyses. However, most likely based on an excessive focus on secrecy, the analysts of Team Afghanistan did not have the authority to exchange information with alternative sources of knowledge such as academic and private sector experts.[242] Another reason could be the notion that this open-source information is of inferior quality. This despite the fact that ninety percent of intelligence comes today from open sources, and that as a consequence these external experts can provide very relevant information.[243] With this approach the NL-DISS under-utilized the potential of external subject matter experts, and as consequence did not optimize team's learning process.

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[241] Coker, 2009, p.158.
[242] Confidential interviews by the author, 26 March 2010, 31 March 2010.
[243] RAND workshop report, 15 june 2005, p.7.; www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF219/ ; Laqueur, "The future of Intelligence", CIA/SII, Spring 1986, p. 61.

The multinational character of the operation in combination with Afghanistan being a 'wicked problem' is slowing down ISAF's learning process. The contributing nations do not agree on a definition of the problem. Consequently there is for example no agreement whether negotiation with the Taliban, and poppy-eradication is a good idea or not. None of these views are necessarily wrong. However, because of the disagreement between the nations there is no clear ISAF strategy towards these issues, and as a result hinder potential solutions. ISAF does not recognize the opportunities the local character of the conflict has to offer for the learning process. For instance, the local character could be exploited by conducting an 'experiment' in Uruzgan on the issue of negotiation with the Taliban.[244] The lessons learned from such an experiment could be beneficial for all actors. In spite of this, such national initiatives are often hampered by international sensitivities.

**Production stress and deconfliction**

A brief discussion on the 'production pressure' of Team Afghanistan and the 'deconfliction' of intelligence responsibilities concludes this chapter.

The production of intelligence by Team Afghanistan is a mainly output driven process. The management of the analysis and production division sets goals for the quantity of reports to be produced by the team. In practice this means reports about actual issues on a daily basis, security assessments Uruzgan once every second week, and more extensive intelligence reports about phenomena once every few weeks. The demands about the quantity and subjects of these reports are more or less fixed for a whole year and are mainly based on a feedback between NL-DISS and the major customer, the Ministry of Defense. On an irregular base there are requirements for additional specific intelligence reports. A majority of the team members experiences this output driven process as extremely stressful.[245]

The complexity of the Afghan environment in combination with the responsibilities as a lead nation in the Uruzgan province was a great challenge for the NL-DISS. It was for the first time in the history of the NL-DISS that it played such a central role in the

[244] Confidential interviews by the author, 31 March 2010.
[245] Confidential interviews by the author, 23 March 2010, 29 March 2010, 31 March 2010.

intelligence support of not only the strategic but also the operational level. One of the identified bottlenecks is that the division of intelligence responsibilities between NL-DISS and the operational intelligence assets was not always clear. Measures to deconflict the intelligence efforts were for the most part initiated on ad hoc basis. A deficient conceptual framework on this issue caused a certain degree of friction and misunderstanding between the NL-DISS and the TFU.[246]

**Summary**

The most relevant identified bottlenecks can be summarised as follows:

- The culture of secrecy and the disregarding of the indirect consumers led to restricted releasability of intelligence reports, and as a result a significant under-utilization of NL-DISS intelligence.
- A mixture of psychological biases caused that policy and decision-makers did not always accept the NL-DISS assessments, and as result did not make best use of the available intelligence reports.
- A combination of shortfalls in the used models, the limitations of decision-makers, and risk management by the policymakers caused too much emphasis on short-term risks and results, and not enough emphasis on long-term threats – the root causes of the conflict.
- There was not taken enough advantage of the opportunities to improve the learning process. The potential benefits of the evaluation of own actions and intelligence efforts, and the exchange of knowledge with external subject matter experts were not exploited.

[246] Interview with Tony Keijzers by the author, 25 March 2010.

# 6 Potential solutions

After having identified the most significant pitfalls and biases, the next topic is to identify and discus potential solutions. These potential solutions will be discussed in the shape of more theoretical concepts and ideas, and not as ready to use practical solutions. The aim is provide the Dutch intelligence community with considerations about how to make intelligence more relevant.

**Openness when possible, secrecy when needed**

The most obvious potential solution concerns the classification of intelligence reports. The basic approach should be for each report to be kept to the lowest classification level possible. The issues and aspects to be kept confidential should in each case be carefully considered. The aim is to find the right balance between the risks of disclosure and the need for usability. The following is a first thought about such a balance.

Intelligence about short-term security issues will inevitably incorporate large amounts of classified data. All customers for whom this intelligence is essential within their decision-making process will always have sufficient access to these reports. Hence, there is no need for declassification.

A highly relevant product for most customers is a comprehensive description of the districts, province, and region. These reports have to be periodically updated, reviewing the changes in the overall situation. Also these reports will inevitably incorporate classified data. However, unclassified versions of each report could be made available.[247]

Besides these geographically based reports, descriptions of certain phenomena are important to understand the operational environment. The releasability of these reports should in each case be considered. For example reports about the strategy and modus operandi of the Taliban – the state of the insurgency – could be released without any restriction. However, unclassified versions of reports with detailed information about the Taliban- and other spoiler-networks will not be possible or necessary.[248]

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[247] Flynn, "*Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*", Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p.19.
[248] Confidential interviews by the author, 31 March 2010.

A prerequisite for this 'new' approach is that the intelligence community, and especially the NL-DISS - has to be convinced that the releasability of reports will improve the relevance of intelligence. To make this happen, this is not only a matter of rational arguments, but also a matter of emotions: the culture with an emphasis on secrecy has to change. Both McCrystal and Flynn demonstrate that they understand the benefits of unclassified reports. McCrystal's 'Initial Assessment' and 'Counterinsurgency Guidance', and Flynn's 'Fixing Intel' have shown to be extremely relevant for policy and decision-makers as well as intelligence professionals, in Afghanistan and in the US and Europe.[249] It is not without a well thought reason that these documents are unclassified.

**Gates plus**

The second potential solution relates to the discussion about the closeness of the relationship between the analysts and the policy and decision-makers should be – the 'Kent' versus the 'Gates' models. The essence of this discussion is that where relevance requires a close relationship between producer and consumer (Gates), objectivity demands a certain distance (Kent). The Gates model advocates a close relationship between producers and consumers through the development of a two-way flow of information and feedback.[250] To make intelligence relevant, the producers must be sensitive to the context of the policy or action context.[251]

The Dutch situation can be considered to be in accordance with the Gates model. Analysts have relative easy access to policy and decision-makers and are in principle able to identify their needs. The result of this close interaction means that in most cases the produced intelligence is relevant for policy and decision-making. Nevertheless, this 'ideal' situation can not avoid for policy and decision-makers in some occasions to ignore the available intelligence, and to put too much emphasis on intelligence about short-term risks and results.

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[249] McCrystal S.A., "*Commander´s Initial Assessment*", HQ ISAF, Afghanistan, 30 august 2009; ISAF, "*Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*", 8 September 2009; Flynn, "*Fixing Intell: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*", Center for a New American Security, January 2010.
[250] Valk, 2005, p. 39.
[251] Betts, 2003, p. 61.

A potential solution could be an even more pro-active role for the intelligence producers – a 'Gates plus' model. Not only actively seeking for the consumer's needs, but also actively convincing the consumers about the relevance of the intelligence. The necessity for such a pro-active model is that in complex conflicts like Afghanistan there is an increasing knowledge gap between the decision-makers and the intelligence specialists.[252] This knowledge gap has two causes. Firstly, a thorough understanding of the dynamic complex environment requires a considerable investment in time. Intelligence specialists are investing in this understanding on a daily basis and for a longer period of time – it is the essence of their job. On the contrary, decision-makers have to deal with a lot of other issues as well, and are only focused on the environment for the duration that they are involved in the operation. Secondly, the complex environment cannot be simplified. You need to understand the 'nitty-gritty' details of the social relationships, economic and other disputes, and power brokers of the local communities.[253]

In this more pro-active role the intelligence specialists should actively address the strengths and weaknesses of the different perspectives, and they should clarify the evidence and reasoning behind the assessments. The acceptance and recognition of relevant intelligence will improve if the intelligence specialists meet the policy and-decision-makers on a regular basis to exchange views and explore new ideas.[254] On several occasions a physical presentation can be more persuasive and efficient than a written report.

A danger of this pro-active model is that the intelligence producers become too involved in the decision-making process. This may lead to a situation where producers will develop a stake in decisions, ignore facts and dangers that stand in contradiction to these decisions in the same way as the policy and decision-makers themselves.[255] But, as Richard Betts pointed out, this danger of losing objectivity is a fact of intelligence producer's life anyway, which has to be dealt with in the most effective way.[256] In the

[252] Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
[253] Interview with Wilfred Rietdijk by the author, 22 March 2010.
[254] Robert Gates, ¨Guarding Against Politicization¨. CIA/SII, 1992, Vol 36 No 5, p.7.
[255] As described in § 2.3: The discussion about decision-making and 'bounded rationality'.
[256] Betts, 2003, p. 71.

literature on intelligence enough concepts and ideas can be found about how objectivity can be safeguarded.[257]

Henry Kissinger stated that he did not know what intelligence he needed but recognized it when he saw it.[258] In complex conflicts the policy and decision-makers frequently do not only know what intelligence they need, but also do not recognize it when they see it. For this reason, the producers should not only actively seek for the consumer's needs, but also actively convince the consumers of the relevance of the intelligence.

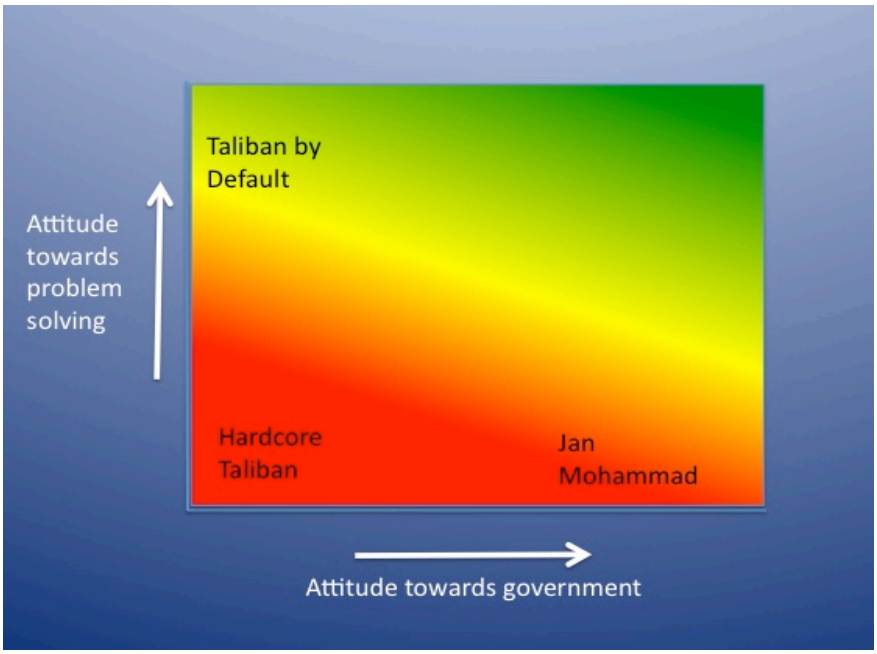
**Improve the models**

Many of the used concepts and procedures are not optimized for the utilization in complex conflicts. To come up with 'new' models is beyond the scope and possibilities of this study. Nevertheless, it is possible to discuss a few thoughts on this issue.

The concept of approaching the population, based on their attitude towards the government is not suited for complex conflicts (figure 5.2). The consequence of this model is that spoilers are positioned on the 'right' side. Promoting them instead of marginalizing them will do more harm than good to the achievement of gaining the support of the people. More suited than this one-dimensional model would for example be a two-dimensional based on attitude towards the government and attitude towards solving conflicts. Such a model would provide a better framework for how to approach the population in addressing the root causes of the conflict (figure 6.1).

[257] For example 'competitive analysis', 'devils advocate' or formulating the essential assumptions as hypothesis; For more see Michael Handel, "*Intelligence and the problem of Strategic Surprise*", in Betts, 2003, p. 42-46.
[258] Herman, 1996, p. 293.

**Figure 6.1 Spoilers versus stabilizing factors**




In population-centric conflicts, which require a holistic analysis of the operational environment with emphasize on social-cultural and civil factors, are 'Insurgent Courses of Action' less relevant. They can be supportive of security operation at the tactical level, but for a comprehensive approach in addressing the root causes they are of no use. A possible solution could be that the assessments are supported by comprehensive scenarios in which all actors are described (including own actions).[259] An integral element of such scenarios are sets of indicators, which need to be developed in close cooperation between the decision-makers and the intelligence specialist.

**Less output, more outcome**

The production of intelligence within Team Afghanistan can be considered as a mainly output driven process, with an emphasis on analysis and production of reports. However, the various previous discussions showed that the quantity of reports has no or even a negative correlation with the relevance of intelligence.[260] According to Richard Clarke an information overload is one of the most important causes for intelligence failures. Too much intelligence can cloud the fact that there is not enough relevant intelligence,

[259] Confidential interviews by the author, 29 March 2010.
[260] Herman, 1996, p. 298.

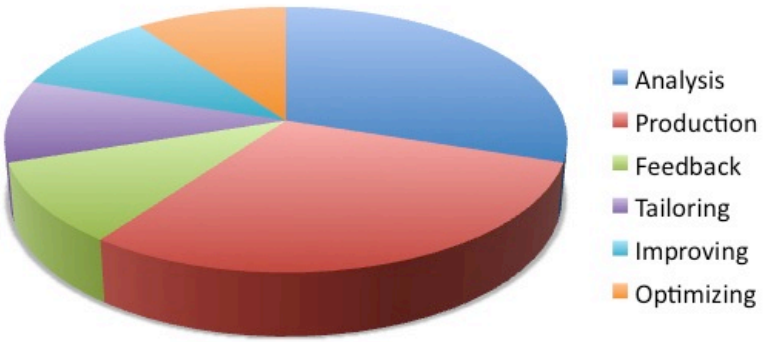
and makes it difficult to identify relevant intelligence - 'not able to connect the dots, because there were too many dots on the radar screen.'[261]

Another consequence of this output driven process is that there is not enough focus and attention for other activities, which can have a positive effect on the relevance of intelligence. These other activities are already mentioned in the previous sections.

- The evaluation of own actions, and the evaluation of the team's ability to identify and assess events in the environment – case studies.
- The feedback processes between the intelligence specialists and the policy and – decision-makers – the pro-active role.
- Optimizing team's learning process - the exchange information with alternative sources of knowledge.
- Tailoring the products to more the needs 'all' consumers - unclassified versions.

The conclusion of this is that NL-DISS should reconsider its priorities. The degree of relevance for the policy and decision-making process is depending on a right balance of, analysis, the production of reports, feedback with the consumers, tailoring the intelligence to the consumer's needs, improving the team's abilities, and optimizing team's learning process (figure 6.2). Too much emphasis one or more elements, will degrade the others.

**Figure 6.2 Example of priority of intelligence activities**




[261]Richard Clarke, was counter-terrorism adviser on the National Security Council during the Clinton and the Bush administration, and is the author of *Against all Enemies.* He explained this at the Professional Advanced Intelligence Course at FHS, Oslo, 8 October 2009.

# 7 Conclusions

The shift from ‘industrial wars’ to the contemporary paradigm of ‘war amongst the people’ has had enormous consequences for the theory, concepts and ideas about how contemporary wars (complex conflicts) are waged. What is the impact of this paradigm shift on the role and influence of intelligence? How relevant are intelligence reports for the policy and decision-making processes concerning these complex conflicts? To answer these questions the following research questions was formulated:

*From a Dutch perspective concerning complex conflicts,*
*what makes intelligence relevant for decision-making,*
*what bottlenecks can be identified, and what are potential solutions?*

To answer this question, this study was structured as follows. Firstly, the concepts and context of intelligence were discussed. The focus was on those aspects that are relevant to the relevance of intelligence. Secondly, the meaning of the term complex conflicts was discussed. ‘Complex conflicts’ was presented as an umbrella concept to describe the most relevant characteristics of the contemporary armed conflicts. The presented concepts of intelligence and complex conflicts formed a conceptual framework for the further analysis of the study. In addition, to gain more insight in relationships concerning the relevance of intelligence, four hypotheses were developed. Thirdly, the case (the Dutch perspective) was presented. It described the context, strategy, intelligence support, and achievements and challenges of the Dutch operation in the Uruzgan province. The final part of the study dealt with the identification and discussion of the most significant bottlenecks and possible solutions. These bottlenecks and solutions were identified and analyzed within the context of the presented case and within the provided framework of intelligence and complex conflicts.

## 7.1 Relevance for decision-making

The answer of the first part of the central research question – *what makes intelligence relevant for decision-making* – is based on the provided conceptual framework of intelligence and complex conflicts, complemented with conclusions from the case study.

Intelligence was defined as information collected, processed, and/or analyzed on behalf of actors or decision-makers. Relevance relates to the purposefulness of intelligence –the purpose of intelligence is not linked simply to knowledge for its own sake but to organized and analyzed information that can be put to use. Relevance can be measured by the consumer's possibility 'and' ability to assimilate and use the product in their decision-making processes. In other words, if intelligence could have led to better decisions the intelligence is relevant. However, if the decision-makers do not make best use of the provided intelligence, it is of less relevance for decision-making. For this reason convincing the decision-makers to make best use of the provided intelligence, and tailoring intelligence to the decision-makers needs both essential aspects of the intelligence process. Based on this analysis on what is meant by 'relevant for decision-making' the factors that influence the relevance were identified.

*Issues at stake*

Intelligence should address the issues at stake otherwise it is not relevant for decision-making. But what are the issues in complex conflicts, and how are they identified?

The identification of what intelligence is needed – the intelligence requirements - is a two-way and not unidirectional process. However, because of the extreme complex dynamics of the operational environment, the decision-maker's requirements are often incomplete or unreliable: they simply do not know what they should ask. Hence, rather than simply responding to the decision-makers requirements, the producers should actively seek for their needs.

Complex conflicts are about winning the will of the people. Consequently, intelligence about an adversary's intentions and capabilities is only a small part of the puzzle. For intelligence to be relevant a holistic analysis of the operational environment with emphasis on social-cultural and civil factors is required. Intelligence should not only address the short-term risks, but also the long-term threats – the root causes, local conflicts, and spoiler networks.

*Recognition*

If the intelligence addresses the issues at stake, but the decision-makers do not recognize it, it will be of no relevance for decision-making. The extreme complex dynamics of the operational environment will not only have an effect on the decision-maker's ability to identify his own needs, but also on his ability to recognize actionable intelligence about the long-term threats. For this reason, the producers should not only actively seeking for the decision-maker's needs, but also actively elucidating them the relevance of the intelligence.

*Acceptance*

If the decision-makers recognize the relevance of intelligence, but they ignore it, it will also be of less relevance for decision-making. Decision-makers may have a different perspective of an issue, or the intelligence may be undermining their policy or decisions. In this situation the danger exists that they disregard relevant intelligence – cognitive dissonance. Hence, the producers should also actively convince the decision-makers about the relevance of the intelligence.

*Accessibility*

Intelligence should always be available to those who need it or it will be of no relevance at all. The most dominant factor that influences the accessibility of intelligence is the classification of reports. Releasing reports will improve the usability for policy and decision-making. An aspect that in complex conflicts, with its large number of indirect and less obvious consumers, is even more relevant. Tailoring intelligence to the consumer's needs can also mean keep it to the lowest classification level possible.

### 7.2 Bottlenecks

The second part of the central research question - *what bottlenecks can be identified* – relates completely to the discussions in chapter 5 (bottlenecks). The conclusions of this chapter were:

1. The culture of secrecy and the disregarding of the indirect consumers led to a too high classification of intelligence reports, and as a result a significant under-utilization of NL-DISS intelligence.

2. A mixture of psychological biases caused for policy and decision-makers to not always accept the NL-DISS assessments, and as result not to make best use of the available intelligence reports.
3. A combination of shortfalls in the used models, the limitations of decision-makers, and risk management by the policymakers caused too much emphasis on short-term risks and results, and not enough emphasis on long-term threats – the root causes of the conflict.
4. There was not taken enough advantage of the opportunities to improve the learning process. The potential benefits of the evaluation of own actions and intelligence efforts, and the exchange of knowledge with external subject matter experts were not exploited.

If these bottlenecks are related to the factors that influence the relevance, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The classification had a negative effect on the accessibility of intelligence for a part of the consumers.
- The psychological biases had a negative effect on the acceptance of certain intelligence.
- Too much emphasis on short-term risks and results had a negative effect on both the acceptance and recognition of intelligence concerning the root causes of the conflict.
- The non-optimal learning process had a negative effect on the ability to identify the issues at stake

**Table 7.1 Relationship factors – bottlenecks - causes**

| Factors of influence | Bottlenecks | Causes |
|---|---|---|
| **Issues at stake** | Non-optimal learning process | -no best use of evaluation<br>-no best use of exchange of knowledge |
| **Recognition** | Focus on short-term risks | -shortfalls in the used models<br>-decision-maker's limitations<br>-risk management |
| **Acceptance** | Psychological biases<br>Focus on short-term risks | -cognitive disclosure<br>-confirmation bias<br>-discourse failure<br>-decision-maker's limitations<br>-risk management |
| **Accessibility** | Inappropriate classification | -culture of secrecy<br>-disregarding indirect consumers |

To identify more precisely the factors that are of influence to the relevancy of intelligence, four hypotheses were developed throughout the first two chapters of this study. These hypotheses were focused issues of which there was insufficient information in the literature, or of which there were dissimilar opinions.

***HYPOTHESIS 1****: If intelligence does include the assessment of own policy choices or decisions, the relevance will increase because of the significant effects of own actions on the operational environment.*

***HYPOTHESIS 2****: If intelligence reports are publicly shared, their relevance will increase because more stakeholders can use it in their policy and decision-making process, and it will improve the exchange of information.*

***HYPOTHESIS 3****: If intelligence is focussed on the opponent's intentions and capabilities, this will influence the relevance of intelligence in a negative way.*

***HYPOTHESIS 4****: If the intelligence producers are close to the policy and decision-makers, this will influence the relevance of intelligence in a positive way.*

The findings and conclusions of this study seem to support hypotheses 1, 3 and 4. Hypothesis 2 is only supported for an element of the intelligence reports. Intelligence about short-term security issues will inevitably incorporate large amounts of classified data. All customers for whom this intelligence is essential within their decision-making process will always have sufficient access to these reports. Hence, there is no need for declassification. However, because this study is based on a single case study, the assessments can be no more than an indication for the relationships concerning the relevance of intelligence.

### 7.3 Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are made regarding how to make intelligence more relevant for decision-making. This links with the third part of the central research

question - *what are potential solutions.* These potential solutions were discussed in chapter 6.

*Openness when possible, secrecy when needed*

To improve the accessibility NL-DISS should have the policy that each report will be kept to the lowest classification level possible. The issues and aspects to be kept confidential should in each case be carefully considered. The aim is to find the right balance between the risks of disclosure and the need for usability. To make this change of policy possible the intelligence community has to be convinced that the releasability of will improve the relevance of intelligence reports. To make this happen is not only a matter of rational arguments, but also a matter of emotions – the culture with an emphasis on secrecy has to change.

*Gates plus*

A potential solution to improve the recognition and acceptance of relevant intelligence is a quite pro-active role for the intelligence producers – a 'Gates plus' model. Not only actively seeking for the consumer's needs, but also actively elucidating and convincing the consumers about the relevance of the intelligence. In this more pro-active role the intelligence specialists should actively address the strengths and weaknesses of the different perspectives, and they should clarify the evidence and reasoning behind the assessments. The acceptance and recognition of relevant intelligence will improve if the intelligence specialists meet the policy and-decision-makers on a regular basis to exchange views and explore new ideas

*Improve the models*

Certain models have to be optimized for the utilization in complex conflicts. Analytical tools are required for the assessment of the root causes, local disputes, spoiler-networks and stabilizing factors. The 'end-product' of the intelligence process could be assessments supported by comprehensive scenarios in which all actors are described (including own actions).

*Less output, more outcome*

The priorities within NL-DISS should be reconsidered. The degree of relevance for the policy and decision-making process is dependent on a right balance of analysis, the

production of reports, feedback with the consumers, tailoring the intelligence to the consumer's needs, improving the team's abilities, and optimizing team's learning process (figure 6.2). Too much emphasis on certain elements will degrade the others.

These potential solutions will have various positive effects on the identified bottlenecks and thus on the factors that influence the relevance.

- A more pro-active role of the producers will reduce the risks of psychological biases and too much focus on short-term risks and results.
- Less emphasis on secrecy will have positive effects on the learning process and will lead to a more appropriate classification.
- Improved models will reduce too much focus on short-term risks.
- Less emphasis on output related activities and more on outcome related activities will have a positive effect on the learning process, the psychological biases, and the focus on short-term risks and results.

The identified factors of influence, bottlenecks, and potential solutions lead to the following general conclusions about how to make intelligence more relevant for policy and decision-making:

- The secrecy-dominated culture within the Dutch intelligence community has to change.
- The NL-DISS has to realize that producing relevant intelligence is more than an output focused process – it is more than analysing and the writing of reports.
- A conceptual framework has to be developed in which the 'new' strategic 'and' operational role of the NL-DISS concerning complex conflicts is embedded.

### 7.4 Discussions

To conclude some comments are made to set this study within the larger context of developing intelligence as a discipline. As stated in the introduction, this study is only one step in the process of making intelligence more relevant for policy and decision-making.

Concerning the findings of this study, four additional comments need to be made. The first concerns the adapting competition. Solving a wicked problem such as Afghanistan requires a social process involving collective learning through shared

experiences – collective intelligence.[262] The impact of this on intelligence concepts is only briefly discussed in this study.

The second concerns the need for less secrecy. What are the consequences for the NL-DISS? Is the current organization suited to this need, or should the NL-DISS be divided into two; one part dealing with secret intelligence, the other with open sources?

The third comment is concerning the fact that this study is conducted from the perspective of the intelligence producers. Because of the identified need for a close relationship between the intelligence producers and the policy and decision-makers, a study conducted from the perspective of the latter is desirable to get a more complete picture about how to make intelligence more relevant.

The last comment is about the impact of the identified needs for less secrecy, a more pro-active role for the producers, and collective intelligence on the entire intelligence process. The distinction between the sequence and separation of activities is more and more fading. Therefore the question arises, is the intelligence cycle still suited as the dominant model for the understanding of intelligence, or should the cycle be disposed because it limits the process of making intelligence more relevant for policy and decision-making? All four issues may be object of future research.

[262] See for example Brown, Philip; Lauder, Hugh (2000). "Collective intelligence". in S. Baron, J. Field & T Schuller. *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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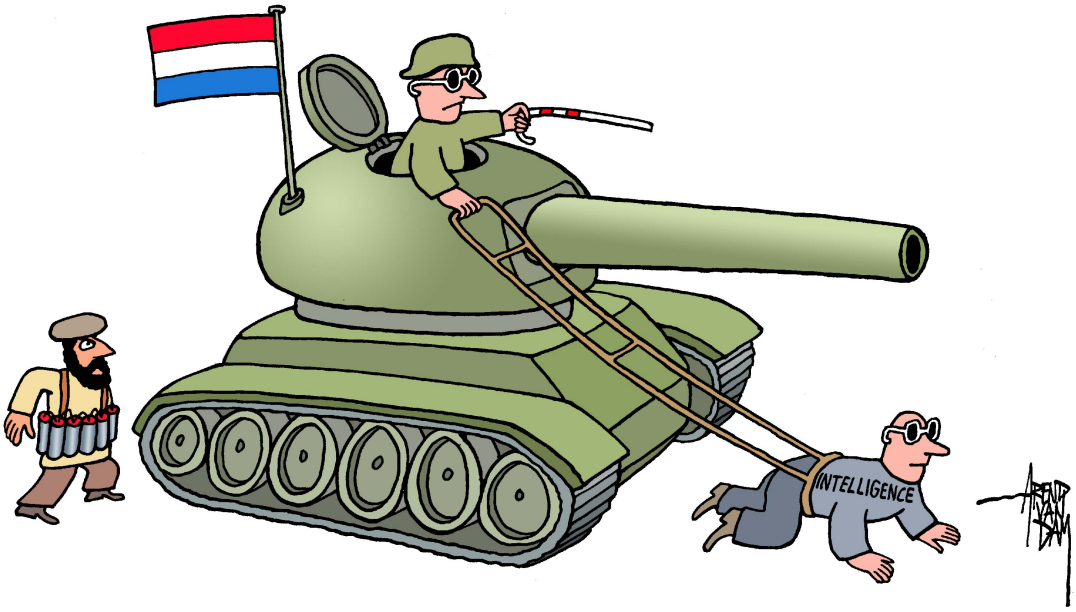
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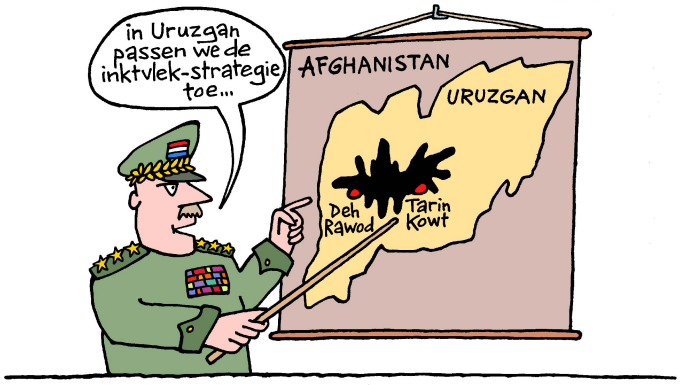
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