

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESS: USING ROAD CONSTRUCTION
AS A TOOL IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

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NICHOLAS O. MELIN, MAJOR, US ARMY
DPhil, Oxford University, Oxford, England, 2005

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Major Nicholas O. Melin

Thesis Title: The Challenge of Access: Using Road Construction as a Tool in
Counterinsurgency

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Ethan S. Rafuse, Ph.D.

_____, Member
Stuart Lyon, MPA

_____, Member
Daniel P. Marston, DPhil.

Accepted this 10th day of June 2011 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESS: USING ROAD CONSTRUCTION AS A TOOL IN COUNTERINSURGENCY, by Major Nicholas O. Melin, 222 pages.

This thesis seeks to illustrate both the benefits and limitations associated with using road building in COIN campaigns in South Asia, as well as highlight factors that should be considered from planning through long-term use. When employed in a counterinsurgency, roads are tools for access and control. They are key terrain that facilitates the operations of the force that controls them. Roads are not, however, short-term tools. The process of building a road takes years to complete, and the effects of a road project on the population cannot be accurately be measured during the construction process itself. Roads require dedication by the counterinsurgent not only to the process of building the road itself, but to a population-focused COIN effort along its length long after the road itself is completed. Roads may not be acceptable to local people in all areas, and road construction without local acceptance can result in the expensive project being perceived as a tool of control rather than a conduit for development. In light of these considerations, the road construction campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan should be curtailed, with emphasis on nesting road projects directly within the COIN effort.

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I also owe a debt of gratitude to the officers who discussed the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road with me and helped me understand how it came to be and what it is now. The goal of this work is to better understand how roads can contribute to the counterinsurgency fight. The potential of road construction is fairly well known, the commitment necessary to achieve it is not.

I would like to sincerely thank my loving and very patient wife Jessica. You always support and help me, and I could not have done this or anything else I have accomplished without you. Our son Jude Thomas Melin will always be a part of us and we will never forget him.

This work is dedicated to the Engineer Soldiers who have given their lives in Afghanistan to rebuild the country's infrastructure and provide lasting safety for the American people. Your sacrifices are not forgotten.

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ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
CENTCOM	Central Command
CERP	Commander's Emergency Relief Program
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CNA	Comprehensive Needs Analysis
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CTF	Combined Task Force
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
FATA	Federally Administrated Tribal Area
FM	Field Manual
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ID	Infantry Division
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security and Assistance Force
JSOA	Joint Special Operations Area
KAU	Kandak-e Amniate Uruzgan
LBG	Lewis Berger Group
LOC	Line-of-Communication
MAGTF	Marine Air Ground Task Force

MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
PLFO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RC	Regional Command
SETAF	Southern European Task Force
TF	Task Force
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mountains are our forests. . . . Just as the Americans could not compete with the Vietnamese in the jungle, the Russians will fail in the mountains.

— Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, *Roads and Rivals*

—“It’s suicide to come up this road without Matiullah’s men,” declared

Mohammed, an Afghan driver transporting sandbags and light fixtures on one of the logistics convoys that routinely run from Kandahar to the coalition base near the city of Tarin Kowt.¹ Without the security provided by a local warlord, Matiullah Khan, the highway linking these two cities would be impassable. At a rate of \$1,200 per truck, totaling over \$2.5 million each month, his small army of mercenaries opens the 100-mile road and allows commerce to flow from one provincial capital to another.² Independent of the weak government in the area, Khan uses the highway to finance his private army and a host of other enterprises, including drug trafficking and pay-offs to insurgents in the area.

This story of corruption in southern Afghanistan, published by the *New York Times* in June 2010, is lamentable but not surprising.³ Mountainous terrain and few navigable roads make most of Afghanistan physically inaccessible and difficult to govern. Insurgents use the mountainous terrain as a sanctuary, planning their operations free from the influence of the government. For this reason, a major component of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) counterinsurgency strategy is expanding the road network into these areas from the ring of highways constructed by the Soviet Union and United States during the Cold War. With 1,700 miles of road

constructed at a cost of over \$1.8 billion between 2002 and 2008, the effort to provide access across Afghanistan is well underway.⁴ According to the strategy, the extension of roads into isolated areas will facilitate better governance and economic development.

What is not noted in the *New York Times* article is the fact that the road Matiullah Khan now controls was built by United States Army and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from June 2004 to September 2005. In fact, the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road project is a prominent example of the road construction strategy. Using \$22 million of U.S. funds, a multi-national construction task force built a two-lane paved highway through the mountains separating Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces in just over a year. Over a thousand Soldiers worked eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, to complete the highway prior to Afghanistan's provincial elections on 18 September 2005. As the first major highway constructed by the United States in Afghanistan since 2001, it was touted as a symbol of progress in the country where the Taliban first began its fundamentalist movement. During the construction effort, U.S. forces employed the full array of counterinsurgency tools, from building schools and digging wells to providing medical treatment and installing power generation in local villages. The completed road would connect the people, it was thought, empowering them to prosper economically and take greater control of their security.

The contrast between the promise of stability along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in 2005 and the reality just five years later is stark. It calls into question the wisdom of the current international road construction strategy in Afghanistan. While it is possible that the road is facilitating economic development, its impact on stability and governance is unclear. Although there is consensus among theorists and practitioners on the value of

access for the counterinsurgent and indigenous government and the benefits of the building process on local people, little attention has been given to the effect that roads have after they have been completed.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to contribute to efforts to understand when roads are an appropriate tool in a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign, what limitations they have as a product of their construction and what benefits they can provide if employed appropriately. Understanding how ISAF currently uses road construction and its methods for judging the efficacy of its efforts provides a baseline from which to begin analysis. With almost ten years of operations in Afghanistan, there is an established road construction program. Within this broad effort, there is the potential for distinguishing between profitable and ineffectual uses of road construction. Examining the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road's history from planning through use by the local population offers valuable insights about the challenges associated with using road construction as a tool. These results are compelling, in that they are drawn from experience within the current operational environment and can therefore be applied most directly to future ISAF efforts.

Historical Case Studies

Historical uses of road construction in counterinsurgency provide another avenue for determining effective methods. From the Roman roads that criss-crossed Europe to jungle clearance operations in Vietnam, there are innumerable examples of states using roads to subjugate and bring civilization and development to "backward" populations. Choice of case study was based on finding the closest match between historical counterinsurgencies and ISAF operations. The historical roads considered in this study

are those constructed by the British in Baluchistan and Waziristan between 1849 and 1947. The British, in their efforts to pacify the North-West Frontier of British India, employed a relatively small number of troops in a vast, mountainous area. The tribes in these areas extend across the border into Afghanistan and are of the Pathan ethnic group. The British made extensive use of road and rail construction as a key component of their campaign to pacify the rebellious tribes, with varying degrees of success. Most importantly, however, was the intention of the British to both pacify the region and, in the words of Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Bruce, “to work for the ‘betterment’ of the tribes and bring the blessings of civilization within their reach.”⁵ The similarities in resources, geographical size, tribal and ethnic groups and intentions provide a solid base from which to compare British efforts to current operations.

Contemporary Case Study

The contemporary road chosen for examination in this thesis is the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. Through examination of the road during planning, construction, and in the years following its completion an understanding of its effectiveness can be determined. Utilizing after action reports, published information on the road efforts and interviews with the leaders who built and later used the road, a picture of current efforts in Afghanistan is developed. Lessons from the British experience in Baluchistan and Waziristan will inform the contemporary analysis, identifying a set of practices that can be used when considering future use of roads in Afghanistan.

The Aim of this Study

One result of analyzing contemporary and historical case studies is a redefinition of the value of roads in counterinsurgency campaigns waged in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This thesis demonstrates that roads are catalysts. For the counterinsurgent, all the tools utilized to develop governance and economic development become more effective when roads facilitate access to population centers. However, these positive effects generated during and immediately after construction when the counterinsurgent has a presence in the area are often misconstrued. Decreased violence and increased government participation make it appear that the existence of the roads themselves weaken the insurgency. Too often, security forces are then shifted away from these roads, leaving a vacuum that the insurgent or other opportunists may quickly fill. The roads then serve their new masters, providing improved access to areas the counterinsurgent already deemed secure.

The clear implication is that ISAF must integrate its road construction campaign into the counterinsurgency strategy more completely. By focusing efforts in areas where coalition forces and the host nation government are committed to an enduring presence and where tribal support is strong, the road can act as the backbone for sustained gains. The transfer of security responsibilities along roads to indigenous forces should only occur, however, when there is a partner to take responsibility and provide security independent of ISAF forces. Plans to expand the road network in areas unsupported by coalition forces should be carefully considered. Only when strong tribal or host nation support exists and insurgent threat is low can these projects achieve success. By

narrowing and focusing the road construction effort, both development and security objectives can be accomplished.

Definition of Terms

To provide both clarity and context for the analysis in this study, it is first necessary to define some key terms. The first is insurgency. Insurgencies have occurred throughout history in many different forms. Due to their variety and dependence upon the conditions in the country where they occur, a general definition is inevitably going to be broad. Bard O'Neill, author of *Insurgency and Terrorism*, describes an insurgency as ~~a~~ struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.”⁶ According to O'Neill, insurgencies come in nine types related to their objectives: anarchist, egalitarians, traditionalists, pluralists, apocalyptic-utopians, secessionists, reformists, preservationists, and commercialists. They can use any combination of small cells and larger mobilization of the population to achieve their aims. The spectrum of violence used by insurgents varies as well, from terrorism to guerilla warfare and more conventional methods of warfare.⁷

Applying this definition, it is possible to develop a general characterization of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Though it consists of multiple groups, there are elements seeking to restore the Taliban regime and tribal power structures, as well as reactionary elements, namely Al Qaeda, aiming to recreate the so-called Islamic golden age. The methods used by insurgents also vary, but in general smaller groups utilize terrorism, intimidation of the local population and guerilla warfare to engage ISAF and the Afghan

government. Many attacks focus on the road network that ISAF relies upon for both logistical resupply and tactical maneuver. There are instances of massed conventional attack on ISAF elements. These often focus on isolated combat outposts, lacking roads connecting them with larger bases.

A counterinsurgency campaign, intuitively, consists of all instruments of national power utilized by the government to confound the plans of the insurgent. There are a multitude of different methods applied throughout history to counter insurgencies. The one that best resembles ISAF efforts in Afghanistan is known as the “oil spot strategy.” As defined by John J. McCuen, author of *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, this strategy seeks to first secure bases of support for the government and then gradually widening them by clearing contested areas of insurgents, holding the cleared areas and building government support.⁸

As illustrated by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s statement in the epigraph, inaccessible terrain can, potentially, aid the insurgent. If available, isolated areas provide a sanctuary from which the insurgent can build his strength and prepare for operations against the government. Mahnaz Ispahani, in her work *Roads and Rivals*, defines a route as a geographical and political entity that creates access. For the counterinsurgent, routes can be a means of centralization and a conduit for the distribution of resources and movement of troops.⁹ Making previously inaccessible areas open denies the insurgent his sanctuary, facilitates military operations and makes the population accessible for governmental control. The benefits provided by routes are not, however, one-sided. Insurgents or opportunists can use the access provided by routes if the central government is unable to maintain control over them. The perception of the value of access may also differ

between the government and the population. Local tribal groups may not favor the purported advantages of access over their traditional way of life. Thus, routes are complex instruments that require careful consideration before employment.

This thesis focuses on addressing land routes, either roads or railroads, and their uses by the counterinsurgent. While similar in function, it is worth noting that railroads are generally usable only by the counterinsurgent. This provides an advantage in terms of preventing exploitation of the route by opportunists or insurgents. It is more difficult, however, to demonstrate the value of the railroad to the population as a tool for their development rather than governmental control.

The final definition required for this study is the composition of the counterinsurgent force itself, which consists of both host nation and foreign elements. The distinction between these two groups is critical for understanding how they can use roads advantageously, because successful prosecution of the campaign requires a transition of responsibility and control. No matter how dedicated, foreign commitment to a COIN campaign is never open-ended. As foreign presence inevitably decreases, host nation capability and responsibility must increase correspondingly. This transition, both for the population and the roads that connect them, therefore, is an important consideration for the prospective road builder. The counterinsurgent force that is the focus of the conclusions developed in this study consists of the International Security and Assistance Force and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). ISAF consists of 42 countries organized to conduct a security mission in Afghanistan authorized by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386.¹⁰ Established as an interim entity in 2002 and fully established as a result of national elections in 2004,

GIRoA is the host nation government with which ISAF partners in its operations in Afghanistan.

Limitations

Limitations, both for ISAF operations in Afghanistan and in the scope of this work, must be considered. As announced by President Barack Obama in his address to the U.S. Military Academy Corps of Cadets on 9 December 2009, the surge of 30,000 Soldiers to Afghanistan will be followed by a phased, conditions-based withdrawal starting in July 2011.¹¹ GIRoA capability and responsibility will be increased correspondingly, with key districts under its complete control by the end of 2011 and the Afghan government in the lead by 2014.¹² Given diminishing foreign support, approaching departure dates, and the fact that large road construction projects can take years to complete, it is realistic to assume that ISAF will be faced with the need to limit the scope of its counterinsurgency and road construction campaigns and transition responsibility to Afghan partners. It is in this context that road construction efforts are examined in this study.

The method utilized to identify the benefits and limitations of road construction is the case study. One current road construction project from Afghanistan and two historical studies of the British experience in Baluchistan and Waziristan are considered. Examining only a few roads out of the hundreds constructed in both periods makes compilation of a list of best practices problematic. The roads examined in this study were chosen based upon their relevance and the availability of information on their construction and subsequent use. Furthermore, the literature review will demonstrate that road construction ultimately proves useful in places with poorly developed infrastructure

and isolated areas. Not all physical environments require road construction as an aspect of the counterinsurgency plan.

While this work endeavors to address road construction comprehensively, only road construction efforts executed during an active counterinsurgency campaign are considered. Road construction as a development tool in pre or post-conflict operations is not addressed.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has the following structure: chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature on road construction methods in counterinsurgency. The methodology used to determine effective road construction efforts in both contemporary and historical case studies is presented in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the British road construction effort in Baluchistan and Waziristan are considered, and chapter 5 examines the current road construction campaign in Afghanistan, focusing on the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. In chapter 6, the case studies are analyzed using the methodology. Chapter 7 concludes the study and details the benefits and limitations of road construction as a tool for the counterinsurgent. As a culminating objective, it is hoped that systematic study of road construction in counterinsurgencies will empower ISAF, and more directly the maneuver commander, to effectively use routes as a tool for prevailing in the current conflict in Afghanistan.

¹Dexter Filkins, —With U.S. Aid, Warlord Builds Afghan Empire,” *The New York Times*, 5 June 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/world/asia/06warlords.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1 (accessed 16 September 2010).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴United States Government Accounting Office, GAO-08-689, *Afghanistan Reconstruction: Progress Made in Constructing Roads, but Assessments for Determining Impact and a Sustainable Maintenance Program Are Needed* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 2008), 2.

⁵Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936-1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and their Solutions* (Aldershot, England: Gale and Polden, Ltd., Wellington Works, 1938), 76.

⁶Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism, From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 15.

⁷Ibid., 19-29.

⁸John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company, 1972), 196.

⁹Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals*, 3.

¹⁰United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1386 (2001): Adopted by the Security Council at its 4443rd meeting," 20 December 2001, 2.

¹¹ABC News.com, "President Obama's Speech on Afghanistan," <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/full-transcript-president-obamas-speech-afghanistan-delivered-west/story?id=9220661> (accessed 28 October 2010).

¹²Peter Baker and Rod Nordland, "US. Plan Envisions path to Ending Afghan Combat," <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/15/world/asia/15prexy.html> (accessed 16 May 2011).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The world is very old; we must profit by its experience. It teaches that old practices are often worth more than new theories.

— Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Bruce, *Waziristan*

The problems associated with using roads as a tool in counterinsurgency are not new. Roads are often used in campaigns to pacify and incorporate isolated and rebellious populations. To understand the body of knowledge relating to the use of roads in counterinsurgency, it is therefore necessary to consider the conclusions of both historical and contemporary studies to identify the gap in knowledge this thesis proposes to fill. As indicated in chapter 1, the British colonial experience in present day Baluchistan and Waziristan provides the closest parallel to the current ISAF mission. Beginning in 1849 with the annexation of the Punjab and ending in 1947 with British departure from the region, a small western force attempted to pacify and incorporate a region the size of Montana. Moreover, British attitudes toward administration and “civilization” of their colonial subjects mirror in many ways the development efforts currently underway in Afghanistan. The British colonial efforts in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier and the role of roads are first examined, followed by a survey of the principal 20th century counterinsurgency experts. Finally consideration will be given to current thought on road construction in Afghanistan.

Britain's Policies towards the Afghan Frontier

For imperial powers in the 1800s, roads served as a tool of access. Both building roads and deliberately choosing not to build them were tied to the expansion and

consolidation of colonial control. In Central Asia, it was Britain and Russia that struggled for power. Britain's Indian colony was its most profitable possession, often referred to as the crown jewel in its colonial crown.¹ Preserving its security preoccupied decision-makers and shaped British policy towards the region. For Russia, constructing routes towards India facilitated access to recently conquered Central Asian khanates and consolidated Russian control. It also brought Russia closer to an overriding strategic objective, the procurement of a warm water port from which to project its power. Critical terrain to both powers was mountainous Afghanistan. Though poor and isolated, the country's rugged terrain acted as a barrier standing between the Russians and British India. Examination of Britain's policies towards its North-West Frontier with Afghanistan from 1849 to 1947 provides insight into how roads have been used in Central Asia for access and control.

With Britain's defeat in the first Anglo-Afghan war in 1842, it became clear that occupying Afghanistan with foreign troops was untenable. Instead, British leaders began the process of establishing a defensible border region. The capture of Sindh in 1843 and the annexation of Punjab in 1849 established a North-West Frontier of British India that extended to the mountainous region adjacent to Afghanistan.² Thereafter, two competing schools of thought emerged on how to address the border and Afghanistan. The first, the Forward Policy, espoused the establishment of direct administration of the border in order to fully control the mountain passes into India. Establishment of bases as far forward as Kabul and Kandahar would, in the minds of Forward Policy advocates, provide a line of defense from which to effectively resist Russian expansionism.³ The Close Border Policy took the opposite view. As long as hundreds of miles of steppe

separated Russia from Afghanistan, advocates saw no need to directly administer the rebellious tribal region or engage in any route construction to control it.

From 1849 to the onset of the Second Anglo Afghan War, the Close Border Policy was ascendant. The British fortified the administrative border between the Punjab and Afghanistan and set up the Punjab Irregular Force (Piffers), a local army, to patrol and prevent incursions by tribal raiders.⁴ The Close Border Policy sought to minimize interference with both Afghanistan and the Pathan border tribes. Remembering the difficulties it faced during the First Anglo Afghan War with the fiercely independent and violent tribesman, officials viewed any efforts to exert direct influence over the tribes as a costly proposition that was as likely generate fierce resistance. Though limited efforts were made to pacify border tribes through cross-border trade and resettlement of Pathan tribes within the administered area of the Punjab, they were largely ineffective. In fact, the Piffers conducted fifteen large-scale punitive expeditions across the border between 1849 and 1855.⁵ Periodic tribal raiding over the administrative border followed by British punitive expeditions characterized the Close Border Policy.

While efficient in terms of manpower, the Close Border policy proved both unpopular with the tribes and was at odds with Britain's colonial mindset. Periodic "burn and scuttle affairs" ran counter to the British view of colonization as an extension of western civilization.⁶ However distasteful, the policy was necessary as Britain faced a major internal threat to its Indian colony. The massive mutiny of Bengal Regiments of the Indian Army in 1857 and subsequent year-long insurrection across northern India required the priority of Britain's military efforts.⁷ Thus, the effort to re-establish control of the profitable Indian colonial holdings further entrenched the Close Border Policy. Sir

John Lawrence, Viceroy of India from 1864 to 1869, summarized the views of many British administrators in defending the posture of the British on the frontier:

We object to any active interference in the Affairs of Afghanistan by the deputation of a high British officer with or without a contingent, or by the forcible or amicable occupation of any post or tract in that country beyond our own frontier, inasmuch as we think such a measure, under present circumstances, engenders irritation, defiance, and hatred in the minds of the Afghans, without in the least strengthening our power either for attack or defence. Should a foreign Power, such as Russia, ever seriously think of invading India from without . . . our true policy, our strongest security, would then . . . be found to lie . . . in full reliance on a compact, highly-equipped, and disciplined army stationed within our own territories, or on our own border.⁸

Road construction; indeed any infrastructure development within the tribal region was negligible during this period.

Escalating tensions with Russia, however, led to a renewed interest in asserting direct authority over the North-West Frontier. Beginning in 1863, the Russian military commenced with the annexation of the Central Asian Khanates that separated it from Afghanistan and British India. Between 1864 and 1872 the Russians seized Tashkent, Bokhara, Samarkand and finally Khiva on the northern border of Afghanistan. For the British, possibility of Russian aggression seemed to be becoming a probability. In order to defend the key passes out of Afghanistan, the British needed access to the North-West Frontier. Initial efforts by Major Robert Sandeman, administrator for the Dera Ghazi Khan, from 1875 onwards to cultivate relationships with Baluch and Brahui tribesman along the route to the critical Khojak Pass proved fruitful, encouraging further consideration of administering the border directly.⁹

The Second Anglo-Afghan War provided the most powerful justification for direct administration of the border. The arrival of a Russian mission at Kabul in 1878 and a subsequent refusal by Amir Sher Ali Khan to receive a British mission threatened the

status of Afghanistan as a buffer, and resulted led to a second war in Afghanistan from 1878-1880.¹⁰ The result of this conflict was direct British control of Afghan foreign policy and over the frontier itself.¹¹ Britain's war in Afghanistan did little, however, to end Russia's expansion into Central Asia in the 1880s. Russia seized control of modern day Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and cemented their control through completion in May 1888 of an 879 mile long railroad from Caspian Sea to Samarkand.¹² The implications of this development on British strategy were profound. Lord George Curzon, future Viceroy of India from 1898-1905, declared that —the construction of the railway means the final russification of the whole Turkoman steppe from Khorasan to Khiva, and from the Caspian to the Oxus.”¹³

The difficulties associated with prosecuting the war and continued Russian expansion demonstrated the need for unfettered access to key passes out of Afghanistan. Britain fully adopted a Forward Policy towards its border with Afghanistan. The new approach endeavored initially to impose the rule of law and administer the tribes right up to the frontier with Afghanistan as a means to allow free movement for British forces. The establishment of British forts along the border, most notably Quetta, and expansion of the road and rail network into the tribal areas typified the new British approach.

Tribal interaction during this period was characterized by the application of various schemes to integrate the local people. Sandeman's successful pacification and integration of Baluchistan into British India encouraged the view that tribal populations could be incorporated into the British system. The spectrum of tribal interaction from 1878 to 1901 ranged from indirect rule of the region through tribal elders to the payment of allowances, essentially bribes, to the tribes to allow safe passage along the roads

running their territory. Schemes to improve the lives of the local people, from the planting of trees to the construction of schools and hospitals were all attempts to curry the favor of the Pathan tribesmen. While none of these policies met with total success in dealing with the tribes, increasing expense associated with administering Waziristan led to a reconsideration of the application of direct administration on the border tribes. Insurrections by the Mahsud and Wazir tribes escalated between 1894 and 1901, requiring costly mobilization and punitive expeditions near the Afghan Border. Unlike Baluchistan, these tribal territories provided little prospect of profitable administration.¹⁴

The appointment of Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India in 1901 ushered in an alteration of the Forward Policy that would remain British policy up until its departure from the frontier in 1947. Recognizing both the necessity of maintaining access and the intolerable cost of administering rebellious and independent Pathan tribes, Curzon restructured British administration of the frontier. He established the North-West Frontier Province, separating it from the Punjab and dividing the settled areas into six districts. The districts were administered in the same manner as the rest of British India, and a Frontier Constabulary force of was established in addition to the local police to administer British law.¹⁵

Beyond these districts and across a newly established administrative line lay the tribal territories, such as Waziristan, that the British struggled to control. In this area, 300 miles long by 100 miles wide, there would be no attempt at administration or taxation outside of designated protected areas that lay along key routes to Afghanistan.¹⁶ British political officers would interact with the tribes and were authorized to raise and equip uniformed tribal units, referred to variously as scouts or militia, to act as the agent's

military forces. Militia corps of over 1,850 tribesmen were armed with modern rifles trained in British tactical methods. Each corps was commanded by as few as six British officers.¹⁷ Additionally, local tribes would be paid to provide un-uniformed tribal police, known as khassadars, to assist with policing of the protected areas.¹⁸ Only in the event of a major uprising or incursion across the border would military units from British India move forward into this region.¹⁹

Britain's application of this Modified Forward Policy relied both on the construction of roads and the denial of Russian access. To inhibit Russian expansion into Afghanistan, Britain would resist any road construction within the Afghan state. British routing policy developed during this period, as enunciated by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, captures the strategic response to Russia:

Russia [is] making steady progress toward Afghanistan and railways [are] under construction which could only be strategic A war on the North-West Frontier would be chiefly a problem of transport and supply. We must therefore allow nothing to be done to facilitate transport. Any attempt to make a railway in Afghanistan in connection with Russian strategic railways would be regarded as an act of direct aggression against us.²⁰

Thus, Britain resolved to use Afghanistan as an obstacle to block Russia's efforts to threaten India. This policy aligned with the desires of Amir Abdur Rahman, who viewed roads as a tool used by great powers to subjugate weaker nations. Witnessing the aggressive actions of the British and the Russians, the Amir considered Afghanistan to be —like a poor goat on whom the lion and the bear have both fixed their eyes.”²¹ He and his successors would resist any road construction, both within Afghanistan as well as on its borders.

From 1907 onwards, the strategic threat posed by Russia would be replaced by the difficulties posed by the tribes themselves. The signing of the Anglo Russian Convention

of 1907 established Afghanistan as a British protectorate recognized by the Russians, and the Triple Entente between Britain, France, and Russia soon followed. Germany's imperial ambitions were a far larger threat than Russian activity in Central Asia. The onset of World War I and the subsequent expansion of the British Empire into Mesopotamia led to a decrease in British military presence on the frontier and far greater reliance on local forces, like the Khyber Militia and the Tochi Scouts.²² The invasion of the North-West Frontier by Afghan Amir Aminullah in 1919 and collapse of these local forces initiated both the Third Anglo-Afghan War and an insurrection in Waziristan by the Mahsud and Wazir tribes. Though the poorly organized Afghan invasion failed after only a month, the damage dealt to the British tribal security structure was more profound. Deployment of the Army in India to Waziristan led not to a quick punitive action, but rather a drawn-out and bloody two-year struggle against tribal forces. Between conclusion of a peace with Afghanistan and the end of 1919 alone, over 180 raids were conducted by the Wazir and Mahsud tribes in Waziristan.²³ Though the insurrection was eventually put down by British forces, the threat from Afghanistan and Russia were supplanted by the problem of the tribal resistance to British administration.

On 5 March 1923, Sir Denys Brays, the British Foreign Secretary, set out a new policy for British efforts in Waziristan. Asserting that tribal autonomy sprang from their inaccessible strongholds along the Afghan border, he advocated the construction of routes and penetration of tribal lands.²⁴ In the thirteen years following this pronouncement, a flurry of road construction ensued in the tribal areas. Road construction during this period was viewed as a method to extend civilization into Waziristan and also facilitate military operations. British colonial officials viewed roads as:

the great carriers of civilization . . . [they] are the first steps towards the accomplishment of a new frontier policy—a forward policy in the highest and truest sense of the word. Civilising influences can now penetrate, and are penetrating, the wild highlands whose name has hitherto been a synonym for terror and bloodshed and degradation.²⁵

The tribes, however, often greeted road construction with resentment. Not all roads furnished the advertised advantages to the tribes, and the frequency of military movement on them betrayed their fundamental use as methods of access into tribal territories. Protection of routes became a significant requirement for British forces, as they provided predictable avenues of approach on which tribal forces could set ambushes. Rather than dissuading the British from road construction, however, the program was expanded and combined with punitive expeditions against the tribes. Lieutenant Colonel George Roos-Keppel, High Commissioner for the North-West Frontier Province from 1908 to 1919, later described the British policy as —civilizing the frontier tribes up to the Durand Line, first by crushing their fighting power and disarming them, and then by making roads throughout their country.”²⁶

These methods, obviously in conflict with the British desire to develop and pacify the country, were executed with increasing cost up to the end of British colonial rule in 1947. The Modified Forward Policy, though directed toward securing India, was at least partially intended to pacify the tribal region and improve the lives of the local people. It clearly failed in that objective. Road construction stood at the heart of the policy, and the most strident critic of the road construction policy was C. E. Bruce.

C. E. Bruce

The most prominent thinker on road construction that emerged from the British experience on the North-West Frontier was Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Bruce. His father,

Richard Bruce, served with MAJ Sandeman in Baluchistan and was a strong advocate of pacification and administration of the tribal frontier. His book, *The Forward Policy and its Results*, detailed both Sandeman's efforts in Baluchistan and Bruce's own attempt to administer Waziristan using the same principles. It was the perceived failure of Richard Bruce's pacification of Waziristan in the 1890s that contributed to Lord Curzon's enacting the Modified Forward Policy. C. E. Bruce served in the Northwest Frontier from 1920 to 1937. As colonial administrator, he executed the Modified Forward Policy in the same area his father administered and had the opportunity to observe British road construction efforts through the 1936-1937 insurrection in Waziristan. In his only published work, *Waziristan, 1936-1937*, Bruce criticized the British road construction campaign in detail. His fundamental assertion was that the construction of roads does not, in itself, lead to the pacification of restive tribal populations. They are important, but must be tied to into ~~the~~ whole policy of civilisation."²⁷ Such a policy would aim at empowering tribal leaders, working through them to enforce governance and delivery of material improvements to the tribal way of life.

Road construction would only be accepted, according to Bruce, once tribes could see that they benefit from connection to the central government.²⁸ Bruce cited examples from his administration of Waziristan where tribes asked for roads to be built into their isolated valleys so they would receive the benefits they witnessed other tribes receiving. Key to achieving a ~~—~~peaceful penetration," according to Bruce, was persuading the local tribes that the road was both for their benefit and for the counterinsurgent's.

In critiquing British efforts in Waziristan, he indicated that ensuring security of the roads leading to frontier bases as a first priority directly resulted in the 1936 insurrection. He stated:

Having, as it was thought, ensured the safety of the roads, did we not lose sight of what was happening in other parts of the country and begin to forget that roads were merely a means to an end—a way to better things—the things being increased agriculture, employment, conservation of forests and other benefits which should always accompany a policy of civilization?²⁹

This policy of protected areas, while facilitating the day-to-day movements between remote bases in Waziristan, neglected development of the surrounding population. In doing so, the roads themselves were recognized rightly as tools of military occupation, and provoked violent response.

Bruce advocated that roads be used as a tool for securing the trust and support of the tribes, and be built within the context of development and tribal control. Use of force, if ever necessary, should only come as a result of tribal request. When constructing roads, it was the tribes themselves that should provide the labor for construction, to directly send the benefits of the road to the tribe.³⁰ Ultimately, Bruce viewed road construction as an aspect of a larger policy aimed towards the tribes themselves, rather than the terrain. He summarized his views most directly as follows: ~~In~~ short, control the country—make roads—stop tribal feuds—encourage the tribesmen to come to you with their troubles—and have faith in your mission to bring peace and prosperity to those who are so badly in need of it. A policy based on these principles is deserving of success and must succeed in the long run.”³¹ Though well received, Bruce’s views on the frontier were promulgated late in the British efforts in the region. World War II and the subsequent British withdrawal from India resulted in an obscuration of routing policy as a facet of counterinsurgency.

20th Century Counterinsurgency Theorists

In the wake of World War II and the collapse of the colonial system, two trends developed with respect to the role of roads in counterinsurgency. First, the development of nuclear weapons and airpower theoretically decreased the strategic requirement to garrison and control isolated areas in order to deter conflict. The ability to rapidly mobilize and cover vast distances obscured many of the lessons that were drawn from the British colonial experience in India. Prominent advocates like Sir Hugh Trenchard, the First Chief of the British Air Staff, asserted that the air force could police colonial holdings more cheaply and effectively than traditional methods of military occupation.³² Second, conflicts in developing nations proliferated. The contest between democracy and communism, as well as the rise of nationalist sentiment in the former colonies led to a multitude of small wars and counterinsurgencies throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Within this context, a number of thinkers emerged who addressed counterinsurgency in the 20th century. The role of road construction and the continued significance of access in isolated, underdeveloped countries were especially emphasized in the works of Sir Robert Thompson, Sir Frank Kitson, and Bard O'Neill.

Sir Robert Thompson published *Defeating Communist Insurgency* in 1966. Basing the work on his experience in the successful British counterinsurgency in Malaya and as an advisor to the United States effort in Vietnam, Thompson examined closely the characteristics of a communist insurgency and how to counteract it. While road construction was only explicitly mentioned at the end of the work, Thompson consistently emphasized the importance of development, which he referred to as civic action. Thompson argued, as C. E. Bruce did before him, that an insurgency cannot be

defeated through military means alone. Rather, development of the country must occur concurrently in order to address the underlying conditions that fed the insurgency.³³ He also emphasized the need for balance between developmental and military efforts. Military actions without integrated development efforts would not produce lasting results.

Interestingly, Thompson made an especially definitive statement on the efficacy of development efforts unsupported by military action. He said, “Civilian measures, particularly in areas disputed with the insurgents, are a waste of time and money if they are unsupported by military operations to provide the necessary protection. Because a government’s resources, notably its trained manpower, are limited, the plan must lay down priorities both in measures to be taken and in areas to be dealt with first.”³⁴ With limited resources and manpower, he felt that focus should be placed on expansion of the counterinsurgent base. A unified civil and military effort is a defining feature of his description of the oil spot strategy, as explained in chapter 1.

Thompson warned, however, that developmental efforts, such as road construction, should be presented as a benefit of supporting the government, not as a bribe for good behavior.³⁵ Thus, road construction for developmental purposes should follow successful securing of public support rather than leading it. His view of road construction in counterinsurgency again finds commonality with Bruce’s view. In fact, Thompson’s only direct reference to road construction comes in his discussion of isolated areas, such as mountains and jungles. He indicated that the construction of a road is a final step in securing central control. First, the local people must be separated from insurgents and won over to the side of the central government. Ultimately, locals must agree to build the road for it to be effective as a tie to the central government.³⁶

Writing only five years later, Sir Frank Kitson also emphasized the importance of integrating development and military action. In *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping*, Kitson concurred with Thompson's oil spot strategy for counterinsurgency. Drawing from his experience in multiple insurgencies, he expanded Thompson's argument by warning against the dangers of premature shifting of security forces. For a Western nation with a limited supply of troops, an often used method in counterinsurgency was to pacify an area and then shift troops in order to expand the region supportive of the local government. The success of this method is directly tied to the capability of the local forces. Whether affiliated with the government or not, they must provide security without support from the counterinsurgent. If this is managed incorrectly, he declared the results could be dire: "If a pacified area is allowed to slip back completely under insurgent control it will be more difficult to reclaim, because many of those sympathetic to the government will have shown their hand during the period of the government's ascendance and will have been killed when the insurgents regain control."³⁷

Kitson's observation is critical in the context of development efforts described by Thompson. In order for gains within an area to persist, material developments such as roads must be paired with the development of local security structures. As Bruce noted in his analysis of the British effort in Waziristan, roads themselves did not provide sustained security. Moreover, Kitson indicated that commitment of leaders to the development efforts exposes them to targeting by insurgents. Thus, the roads themselves become promises of security from the government to the locals who support it.

In 1980, Bard O'Neill published a comprehensive analysis of 20th century counterinsurgencies in *Insurgency in the Modern World*. O'Neill's analysis captured the lessons explained by both Thompson and Kitson, but also examined the role of roads in a military context. O'Neill explained that the status of transportation networks within a country play a critical role in the formation of and potential for success of an insurgent movement. Underdeveloped countries are especially vulnerable to insurgency because poorly developed road systems contribute to isolation in rural areas. This allows the insurgent to establish a base of operations from which to gain and secure the support of the population. Rugged, isolated terrain decreases the asymmetric advantage afforded to the counterinsurgent by modern technology.³⁸ In fact, O'Neill asserted that insurgencies areas with vast expanses of rugged terrain are the most difficult to counteract.³⁹

The solution to this difficulty, according to O'Neill, is roads. Construction of a communications network facilitates the operations of the counterinsurgent and mitigates the isolation needed for an insurgency to sustain itself. Once built, however, O'Neill clearly demonstrated through historical example that these roads must be secured lest the insurgent make turn them to his advantage. O'Neill examined both the Guatemalan insurgency in the 1960s and Oman's insurgency in the 1970s to support this conclusion. In Guatemala, the main insurgent stronghold existed in the Sierra de Las Minas mountain range. Standing between the country's capital and major sea port, guerillas operating out of this area were able to disrupt traffic along the Puerto Barrios-Guatemala City Highway early in the insurgency. After government forces mobilized, however, they used the highway and network of roads into the mountains to destroy guerilla strongholds and

ultimately undermine the insurgency.⁴⁰ The road acted, essentially, as a tool. It enhanced the operations of the force that held it.

In Oman, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PLFO) insurgency based itself in the rugged and isolated Dhofar region in the southern portion of the country. With few roads into the region, government efforts to stem the influence of the PLFO were initially unsuccessful. A key to the success of the Omani government and its allies was the construction of roads into the Dhofar allowing access to the insurgent strongholds. Roads, in this case, functioned much as they did for the British in the Northwest Frontier. They facilitated access into the Dhofar region and allowed the government to neutralize insurgent safe havens. Interestingly, the counterinsurgent in this case did not simply build the roads, but also erected barriers and checkpoints to ensure that the PLFO could not move away from the Dhofar. By isolating the insurgents and facilitating their own movement, the government ensured that the PLFO could not spread to other areas of the country and effectively eliminated it by 1977.⁴¹

From the works of these three prominent thinkers, a number of themes emerge. Roads can and do function both as a tool of development and military access. When used in a developmental context, unity of action between military efforts and road construction are essential. Developmental efforts unsupported by the military are not only wasteful, but could potentially result in the deaths of those in the population who support the initiatives. The construction of roads can facilitate military operations against insurgent safe havens, but must be controlled in order to avoid use by the insurgent to both control the population and spread to other secured areas of the country. When combined with the

observations of Bruce in his efforts in Baluchistan and Waziristan, a coherent picture emerges of how to integrate roads into a counterinsurgency campaign.

The Current Debate

As noted in chapter 1, the United States has used road construction as a tool in its counterinsurgency campaign since 2002. The need for roads is clear when Britain's routing policy is considered. Afghanistan served as an anti-route for Russian expansion, and British policy up to 1947 was to actively discourage any road construction. Though both the U.S. and Soviet Union invested heavily in road construction there from 1950 through the Soviet invasion in 1980, Afghanistan still has the lowest density of paved roads in Central Asia. Countering the escalating insurgency in Afghanistan therefore requires use of roads to facilitate military access, connect people to the weak and historically isolated Afghan government and foster economic development.

Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, acts as the foundational document for the American way of counterinsurgency. Published in December 2006, it establishes a doctrinal approach to combating insurgencies and represents the efforts of the United States military to adjust to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Curiously, there is only a single mention of road construction in the entire document.⁴² Although the manual provides general outlines for developmental lines of effort and identifies restoring infrastructure as a priority, it fails to capture the vital nature of road construction to any counterinsurgency campaign where poverty and inaccessibility combine to foster an environment favorable to the insurgent.

In partnership with the military, the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) has invested significantly in development of infrastructure in

Afghanistan and defined its development objectives. Its overall goal in Afghanistan is to support ongoing counterinsurgency efforts and promote economic development.⁴³

USAID identifies as its focus the southern and eastern portions of Afghanistan for its road construction campaign, emphasizing improved regional transit routes and engineered non-paved roads that link rural communities. Between 2001 and 2007, it completed the construction of 1,000 miles of paved roads and 700 miles of gravel roads.⁴⁴

USAID constructs three categories of roads in Afghanistan: primary, secondary and tertiary. They characterize them as follows:

- The primary roads, such as Kabul's main Ring Road, are called "regional highways," connecting Afghanistan with its neighbors and forming the largest road network in the country.
- USAID's secondary roads, called "national highways," connect the capital to Afghanistan's provincial capitals. All regional and national highways are paved.
- And finally, the tertiary roads built by USAID are called "provincial roads" and "district roads" and connect district centers to other district centers and to provincial capitals. These roads are generally paved with a gravel surface.⁴⁵

USAID road construction priorities are driven by the long-term development objectives enumerated in the 2006 Road Sector Master Plan. Created by the Government of Afghanistan with assistance from the Asian Development Bank, it coordinates the efforts of major donors and identifies areas requiring infrastructure improvement. Coordination of these efforts is executed primarily through the Afghan government, and USAID employs construction contractors and locally hired security for the majority of their projects. USAID has developed measures of effectiveness for their efforts. They measure the following variables: number of people connected, the social and economic impact of a road in terms of reduced vehicle costs, and travel times along roads.⁴⁶

Clearly, the USAID road construction campaign focuses on development in a manner suited to pre and post-conflict security situations. Their measures of effectiveness focus on quantifiable variables that, without the context of security in the regions they connect, may provide a deceptively positive perspective in contested areas. While USAID and the military do act in partnership in numerous locations, the magnitude of the road building effort certainly incorporates construction efforts separated from military.

The best source for discerning the United States use of roads in counterinsurgency is David Kilcullen. An internationally recognized authority in counterinsurgency, Kilcullen has acted as both an advisor to ISAF in Afghanistan and senior advisor to General David Petraeus in Iraq. In his book *Accidental Guerilla*, he examines closely United States efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, using both his personal experience in those places and interviews with senior commanders. One vignette he focuses on in Afghanistan relates to the use of road construction in Kunar Province from 2006 to 2008. Kunar Province is mountainous and compartmentalized, with a tree-like system of valleys formed by the Kunar and Kabul Rivers.⁴⁷ The majority of the population lives in these valleys, which have historically been isolated from the central government. With only rough dirt roads leading into and out of Kunar and no history of development from either the British or the Soviet Union, efforts from 2006 to 2008 to connect the people with roads led Kilcullen to formulate a counterinsurgency methodology that leverages the power of roads.

Kilcullen argues that the success of the counterinsurgency effort in Kunar resulted from leveraging of the process of road construction as a framework for developing a full spectrum strategy, which he refers to as political maneuver. This process begins with

securing the people where they live. The counterinsurgent must control and safeguard the human terrain through the construction of local outposts and connection of the outposts with roads. This 24 hour a day protection is a critical first step to establishing trust with the local people. This process, which retired General Karl Eikenberry referred to as the Ink Line Strategy, uses roads as the backbone for expanding counterinsurgent influence. Road projects should be built, as much as possible, by the local people. The revenues from the project should flow to local people, and the establishment of a tribal security force to guard the construction crew and the road itself should be established from the local people. Similar to the British khassadars, these local police might later be integrated into the Afghan Police force.⁴⁸

Securing the road and bases while working with the local people separates the insurgents, pushing them out of the bubble of security. In this space, the counterinsurgent can build local allies and use the economic development that comes from the building of the road to cement relationships and demonstrate the purpose of the road as a benefit of supporting the government.⁴⁹ As road construction can take many years, Kilcullen notes that the road communicates a persistent presence to the people. Just as Kitson noted in his analysis, the roads themselves act as a promise to the people of consistent and prolonged interaction with the counterinsurgent. With this base built, the counterinsurgent now has the leverage to further integrate the population with the government, while continuing the ink line into the next valley or unsecured area.

This model, demonstrated during two years of operations in Kunar, encapsulates many of the lessons described by Bruce and more recent theorists. Kilcullen does, however, introduce some important caveats. He notes that a succession of three

commanders in Kunar worked together to maintain momentum on the plan. This consistency is uncommon in Afghanistan given twelve to fifteen month deployment cycles. According to Kilcullen, it is nevertheless critical to successfully building a relationship with the local people.⁵⁰ Kilcullen also emphasizes that the persistent presence methodology ties soldiers to a location for an extended period of time. The implication of this is that a large counterinsurgent force is necessary to secure and keep securing the population instead of surging to a different location in theater.⁵¹ Insufficient forces to execute this strategy may, therefore, demand a relatively ruthless triage in which commanders decide to protect some areas and leave others outside government control.”⁵²

Ultimately, Kilcullen’s model provides some valid tactical observations about the process of road construction. With hundreds of road projects in progress and an insufficiency of resources, however, only the most critical areas could receive the persistent presence he advocates. The limitations facing the ISAF effort in Afghanistan indicate that this problem of insufficient resources will only increase in coming years. Kilcullen’s study also examines only the process of building the road, not what happens with it after it is completed and the problems of transition of ownership to a local force. Further study is required to determine where and how to construct a road that will make an impact on a counterinsurgency effort. Examination of Kilcullen’s methodology, as well as those of C. E. Bruce and the 20th century counterinsurgency theorists demonstrates a gap in knowledge that currently exists in ISAF’s road construction efforts.

The Gap in Knowledge

The current ISAF road construction effort, in partnership with USAID and other international organizations, aims to develop the country and suppress the counterinsurgency simultaneously. An examination of the history of road construction in British India and survey of the views of key 20th century experts reveals that the current thought on road construction requires refinement. An understanding must be developed of what is occurring with the many roads that ISAF does not directly secure and have no reliable security forces to secure them. Is the result wasteful and ineffective, as Thompson would predict? Does Kitson's caution about the difficulty of regaining control of areas relinquished to the insurgents hold true? By building roads indiscriminately has ISAF exposed those sympathetic to its cause to retribution from insurgents? Has ISAF made an effort to develop barriers to transit for insurgents along these very same roads to prevent the spread of insurgents into neutral or sympathetic areas of Afghanistan?

The Ink Line Policy advocated by General Eikenberry in 2006, if insufficiently supported by either U.S. troops or competently trained local troops, may become a mirror image of the British Protected Areas policy, which focused on securing roads to facilitate military maneuver between bases. ISAF must recognize the bottom line admonition of C.E. Bruce from his experiences in Waziristan, that the welfare of the tribes should be paramount. Moving forward, a coherent policy for construction of roads is needed to guide investment and development and avoid the dangers of unintended consequences. This is the gap in knowledge that this thesis aims to fill. The next chapter will define the methodology used to explore these questions and close the gap in knowledge.

¹Matthew W. Williams, “The British Colonial Experience in Waziristan and Its Applicability to Current Operations” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, 2005).

²Ibid., 60.

³Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 2.

⁴T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849–1947* (Great Britain: MacMillan Press LTD, 1998), 5.

⁵Ibid., 8.

⁶Bruce, *Waziristan*, v.

⁷Michael Barthrop, *The British Troops in the Indian Mutiny, 1857-1859* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 1994), 3-6.

⁸Martin Ewans, *Conflict in Afghanistan: Studies in Asymmetric Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 50-51.

⁹Christian Tribodi, —‘Good for one but not the other’: The ‘Sandeman System’ of Pacification as Applied to Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier, 1877-1947,” *Journal of Military History* 73 (2009): 777-778.

¹⁰Stephan Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York: De Capo Press, 2002), 204.

¹¹Ibid., 217.

¹²Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals*, 92.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴General Staff Army Headquarters India, *Operations in Waziristan: 1919-1920* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1921), 23-25.

¹⁵Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 15.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 70.

¹⁹Ibid., xii-xiv.

²⁰Jeffrey J. Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 31.

²¹Ispaphani, *Roads and Rivals*, 98.

²²Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 218-219.

²³*Operations in Waziristan: 1919-1920*, 85-88.

²⁴Ispaphani, *Roads and Rivals*, 102.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 104.

²⁶Brandon Douglas Marsh, —Ramparts of Empire: India's North-West Frontier and British Imperialism, 1919–1947” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2009), 50.

²⁷Bruce, *Waziristan*, 32.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*, 36.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*, 38.

³²David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), 16.

³³Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 51.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 55.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 143.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 155.

³⁷Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1991), 182.

³⁸Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts eds., *Insurgency in the Modern World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 18.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 17

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 122.

⁴¹Ibid., 219-220.

⁴²United States Army, Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 15 December 2006), 5-21.

⁴³United States Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2010*, USAID.gov, <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2010/> (accessed 2 November 2010), 500.

⁴⁴USAID.gov, “USAID Afghanistan: Frequently asked Questions,” <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Page.FAQ.aspx> (accessed 2 November 2010).

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 92.

⁴⁸Ibid., 94.

⁴⁹David Kilcullen, “Political Maneuver in Counterinsurgency: Road Building in Afghanistan,” *Smallwarsjournal.com*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/04/print/political-maneuver-in-counterinsurgency> (accessed 16 September 2010).

⁵⁰Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 93.

⁵¹Ibid., 97.

⁵²Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

U.S. agencies know little about the impact of road projects, since they have not conducted sound evaluations to determine the degree to which the projects have achieved the goals of economic development and humanitarian assistance.

— Government Accounting Office,
Report on Afghanistan Reconstruction

The purpose of this study is to discern when roads are an appropriate tool in a COIN campaign in Afghanistan, what requirements they introduce as a product of their construction, and what benefits they can provide if employed appropriately. Study of selected historical and contemporary road construction campaigns will illustrate both the potential and pitfalls of this tool. Rather than broadly surveying many road projects, a few roads are studied in detail. Their history, from inception through their long-term use, is considered. Quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation are applied to determine the efficacy of each road project. A total of three case studies are examined in this thesis. Two historical counterinsurgencies are analyzed to provide a basis for evaluating current uses of roads through the lens of history. Then, a significant contemporary road project is evaluated. This methodology chapter defines the process for choosing the historical counterinsurgencies most appropriate for analysis and then develops a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a road construction mission.

Case Study Criteria

The initial impulse of military decision-makers attempting to use history to answer contemporary questions is to search for rules or absolutes. The definition of

practical approaches that transcend the context of the individual conflict, famously championed by the French military theorist Antoine-Henri Jomini, seem to simplify the complex calculus of war. While appropriate, perhaps, in the consideration of tactical methods such as the cordon and search of a village or defense of a mountainous area, this approach is inadequate when considering the wide range of factors that shape the character of each conflict. Understanding the context of both current and past experiences is critical in discerning meaningful lessons from history and understanding where it is appropriate to apply them.

In order to understand the current use of roads in ISAF's COIN campaign, it is necessary to choose historical case studies that most closely resemble the current effort. COIN campaigns that share characteristics with the current effort in the Afghanistan lend validity to the case study approach and allow more direct comparison. Table 1 lays out the screening criteria used by the author to choose the British COIN campaigns in Baluchistan and Waziristan as appropriate historical case studies.

Table 1. Case Study Selection Criteria

Criteria	ISAF Operations in Afghanistan (2002 - present)	British Operations in Waziristan (1900-1937)	British Operations in Baluchistan (1866-1889)
Similar Human and Physical Terrain	Yes	Yes	Yes
Foreign and Host Nation components to Counterinsurgent Force	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurgency has a state sponsor	Yes	No	No
Absence of Ground Access	Yes	Yes	Yes
Road Construction used as a COIN tool	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Created by author.

The British COIN effort in Baluchistan and Waziristan was prosecuted in similar terrain as the current ISAF effort in Afghanistan. In addition to the porous and arbitrary border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the tribal and ethnic makeup is sufficiently similar, as well. Both the British and the current ISAF force conducted operations in areas with weak or non-existent host nation governance and actively sought to address this deficiency. Though the British made use of tribal constabulary forces and native troops within its military units, its status as an external power attempting to assert itself along the Afghan border resembles the efforts of the U.S. and its coalition allies.

One major difference between the contemporary and historical case studies is state sponsorship. Though the Amir of Afghanistan attempted to disrupt British efforts and inflame the passions of the border tribes, he exerted little appreciable control over their actions and failed to mobilize them during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. In the case of ISAF's current campaign, the relationship between Pakistan and the various insurgent groups is unclear. At minimum, insurgent leadership finds sanctuary in the tribal areas along the Afghan border. Assertions by U.S. leadership that Pakistan needs to more actively target insurgent operations in its country seems to indicate some measure of complicity exists.

The role of roads in both COIN campaigns provides the most definitive commonality for conducting meaningful comparison. Britain used and ISAF uses roads to provide strategic access for their military forces. They also attempted to use the access provided by roads to enhance their pacification efforts in geographically isolated tribal areas. Though ISAF's presence in Afghanistan is only ten years old, the British spent over a century west of the Indus River. An examination of the British experience can provide

an idea of the long-term effects of roads that is not available when considering current efforts in Afghanistan alone.

The specific roads considered in this study were chosen for their importance to the COIN effort and the availability of source materials. The construction of the Sind to Peshin State Railway in Baluchistan is considered, as well as the system of military roads built in Waziristan from 1900 onwards. The contemporary case study considered is the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. As the first National Highway constructed in Afghanistan after 2001, it has the longest history to consider and is familiar to the author. Its status as a centerpiece of the COIN effort in Regional Command South also makes it an appropriate road from which to make inferences about the overall road effort in Afghanistan.

Road Construction Analysis Methodology

Once case studies are chosen, a methodology for analyzing road missions standardizes comparison between projects and counterinsurgencies. Field Manual (FM) 3-24, the Army's counterinsurgency manual, provides an established methodology for understanding the progression of a counterinsurgency campaign. It describes three methods: clear-hold-build, combined action, and limited support. Both clear-hold-build and combined action methods are used in active insurgencies, and are methods currently utilized in Afghanistan. The limited action method is not applicable to this study. The clear-hold-build method is utilized to break insurgent influence over a populated area, establish and maintain security for the population while establishing local governance, and finally build local capacity to deny haven to insurgents.¹ The combined action model is a variant of the clear-hold-build methodology where the counterinsurgent force lives

among the population, partnering with local government forces throughout the hold and build phases.² As the counterinsurgent utilizes this method with a widening ring of population centers, insurgent influence wanes and the fledgling government has the opportunity to take hold.

Within both the clear-hold-build and combined action approaches, road construction is identified by FM 3-24 as occurring in the build phase of operations.³ Developing local capacity is a broad task encompassing governance development, training of host nation forces, and restoration or establishment of essential services. Transportation networks are identified as an essential service category, with roads and bridges identified as potential objectives in the build phase of the counterinsurgency campaign. Though examples of progress indicators are provided for consideration, methods of assessment detailed in FM 3-24 are left to the commander to decide.⁴

In light of the absence of assessment criteria within doctrine, this thesis endeavors to examine each road effort from inception through long-term use. A shortcoming identified in Kilcullen's analysis of road construction in COIN is the lack of scrutiny given to the fate of the roads after the unit or units that envisioned using them have been replaced. Considering a few roads from their inception to long-term use may provide valuable insights. Firstly, the plan to build the road and integrate it into overall COIN effort in the area is scrutinized. Next, the COIN effort while the road is in-progress is considered. Finally, the enduring effects of the road after its completion are considered. Within each of these phases, factors that describe the relationship with the local population, the integration of the road into COIN effort and the continuity of approach

are used to assess the efficacy of a road construction project. Assessment factors for each phase are listed in table 2:

Table 2. Assessment Factors by Phase

Phase 1: The Plan
Significance of Route Integration of Road Plan into COIN Effort Local Engagement prior to Construction Commitment of Forces Command and Control Relationships Completeness of Construction Plan
Phase 2: Road Construction Operations
Construction Process as a Tool for Engagement Tribal Engagement away from the Road Continuity of Road's Role in COIN Effort Continuity of Construction Effort Transition of Responsibility
Phase 3: Long Term Development
Coalition Presence Control of Road Status of Local Governance Presence and Activity of Business Security Perception along Road Achievement of Initial Objectives

Source: Created by author.

Methodological Limitations

Determining the efficacy of any specific aspect of a counterinsurgency campaign is inherently difficult. Road construction is only one of the many tools available to commanders within their areas of operation. Definitively determining the causal relationship between the execution of a road construction project and subsequent changes in insurgent activity, governance or economic development may not be possible if other efforts occur in the area at the same time. Trends can be examined, however, and the road

can be judged against the counterinsurgent's initial expectations. While limitations exist for the determination of efficacy through measurable criteria, use of the indicators listed in Table II will provide a baseline from which constructive uses of roads in counterinsurgency can be deduced.

Contemporary Case Study Data Collection

One of the virtues of conducting a contemporary case study is the ability to directly question decision-makers and participants who participated in the COIN effort in Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces. This study leverages the experiences of those involved with the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. Primary source material was gathered through oral interviews and written questionnaires completed by individuals who had involvement with the road project or its use upon completion.

The author conducted interviews with key participants in the road construction process over the telephone, in person and through written responses to a list of questions. Each telephonic interview was recorded for accuracy, and the written responses of each interviewee were collected. These documents, as well as the list of questions for each interview subject, are available upon request. For each interview, the purpose of the study was first described and how the individual's own experiences fit into the author's work. The interview subject then provided informed consent for the use of their responses in the study. The interview addressed a series of questions tailored to the interviewee's experiences. Finally, each subject was provided an opportunity to discuss their view of how road construction should be used in a COIN campaign. A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix A.

The availability of source material for operations in Afghanistan since 2001 is limited due to the fact that operations are ongoing and materials pertinent to this study are classified at this time. This study uses the official U.S. Army history of operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2005 as well as a variety of articles from print media. Independent studies, congressional reports, and material gathered directly from individuals involved in the road are also leveraged to provide a more complete picture of the road and its use.

Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology for investigating the use of roads in counterinsurgency. Examination of contemporary and historical case studies is the research model utilized in this study. Two road construction efforts will be examined using the factors detailed in table 2. Determination of the pertinent historical case studies to this model is achieved through the use of screening criteria detailed in table 1. Though determining causality with relation to the use of roads may be problematic, utilizing the indicators listed in table 2 will enable comparison of historical and contemporary case studies and illustrate uses of road construction to enable counterinsurgency operations.

¹United States Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 5-18.

²Ibid., 5-24.

³Ibid., 5-21.

⁴Ibid., 5-26.

CHAPTER 4

BRITISH ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN BALUCHISTAN AND WAZIRISTAN

[T]he advantages of a railway to trade will mean that satisfactory relations between all will be developed by the ties of self-interest.

— Major Robert Groves Sandeman, 3 May 1881

Britain's earliest use of roads along the Afghan border as a facet of its strategy occurred during Sir Robert Groves Sandeman's administration of British Baluchistan. Stretching from the city of Sukkur on the Indus River to the British frontier of Chaman on the Afghan Border, the Sind to Peshin State Railway's driving purpose was strategic. Facing both the threat of Russian expansion to the Indian Ocean and numerous conflicts with the Afghan regime to its northeast, the British utilized the Sind to Peshin Railway as an enabler for its military efforts. What makes this road worthy of study, however, are the methods employed by Sandeman as he worked to facilitate British strategic objectives. Recognizing Baluchistan's strategic importance and rejecting the ineffective Close Border System, Sandeman pioneered a new method of peaceful penetration into the restive tribal areas. Understanding both the financial and military constraints imposed on a small force pacifying a vast area, Sandeman sought to empower the indigenous tribes and address the root causes of unrest and instability in the region he administered.

Examining how the Sind to Peshin State Railway fit into Sandeman's efforts in Baluchistan provides insight into the proper role of roads in COIN. Further examination of how his methods were employed in Waziristan illustrates how incomplete application of his system can have unexpected results. This chapter examines the strategic context of the road, the physical and human terrain, the precepts of the Sandeman System, the

conduct of the road construction itself, the enduring effects of the road after its completion and the subsequent misapplication of the Sandeman System in Waziristan.

Background and Strategic Context:

Though the first spike of the Sind to Peshin State Railway was driven on 21 September 1879, the idea of constructing a railroad through Baluchistan was conceived much earlier. In 1857, soon after the annexation of Punjab and the Sindh, there was public discussion of the value of building a railway connecting British India with Kandahar. Sir William Andrew, Chairman of the Sind, Punjab, and Dehli Railway, asserted that the construction of a strategic railway through the Bolan Pass and Khojak Passes would strengthen the British ability to respond to Russian expansionist ambitions.¹ Over 20,000 British and Indian troops marched through these passes enroute to Kandahar during the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1838, requiring uninterrupted logistical support over difficult terrain and long distances. Building and securing a railway simplified the logistical challenges and deprived the Russians of possession of the critical route.

Why then, did construction begin over twenty years after its first consideration? The answer is the Close Border Policy. With Afghanistan subjugated to Britain, the strategic context for a route seemed less pressing. Additionally, the hostile tribes and barren terrain of Baluchistan made its pacification both difficult and unprofitable. Maintaining security in the Punjab and Sind Provinces with local forces allowed Britain to focus on consolidating its hold on India with its scarce manpower and financial resources. For the political officers and administrators on the border of Baluchistan this was a frustrating policy. The responsibility for facilitating power projection into

Afghanistan would fall to them in a time of crisis. It was into this complex environment that Robert Sandeman began his efforts in the region.

Sandeman was appointed as administrative commander of the Dera Ghazi Khan Region, bordering the province of Sind in the South and the tribal territories of Baluchistan to the west, in 1866.² Soon after his arrival, Sandeman concluded that the Close Border Policy was ineffective. Having served in the British civil service in Punjab soon after its annexation by Britain, he witnessed the pacification efforts there. Rather than exclusive use of military force, the administration empowered indigenous political structures and made conciliatory gestures to the indigenous tribes.³ The British colonial administrators engaged in a campaign to economically develop Punjab while placing authority in the hands of the local tribes. The contrast between Britain's policy in Punjab and its decision to avoid interaction with Baluchistan struck Sandeman, and he soon made efforts to address it.

The majority of Baluchistan fell under the nominal control of the Khanate of Kalat. In theory, the existence of a centralized feudal government headed by Khan Mir Khododad should have provided opportunities for meaningful political interaction. In reality, however, the state of Khelat had been in disarray since the early 1870s due to a conflict between the Khan and his subordinate tribal chiefs, known as *Tumandars*. Sandeman aimed to resolve this dispute, and in doing so cement British influence in the region.⁴ From 1875 to 1876, Sandeman deliberately violated the Close Border Policy and conducted repeated mediations between the Khan and his *Tumandars*. These negotiations culminated in the Mastung Settlement, referred to subsequently as the Magna Carta for Baluchistan. The treaty increased the Khan's income from his chiefs but required him to

respond to their complaints. It also established Britain as final arbiter in tribal disputes and secured the critical stronghold of Quetta for British use. The Khan would pay Britain a subsidy in return for administrative rule and the construction of roads and railroads to support its internal development.⁵

The effects of this first treaty between the British and Baluchistan were far-reaching. Coming at a time of renewed fears of Russian expansionism, it supported the new Forward Policy espoused by the British government. Now, the barriers to development that made a pacification campaign infeasible in Baluchistan were relieved. Sandeman was named as Agent to the Governor General in Baluchistan and given the authority to administer the tribal regions.⁶ The British government commissioned the construction of a railroad connecting British India to Afghanistan via the stronghold at Quetta, though the railway would not begin until crisis drove colonial authorities to action.⁷ It is in this context that Sandeman would develop and refine his system for tribal pacification, a method that used roads and railroads extensively.

The Sandeman System

At its heart, the Sandeman System, also referred to as the policy of Indirect Rule, relied upon the empowerment of indigenous tribal structures. Recognizing the limits of British military and financial resources in India and its vast responsibility to the 200 million people living in the subcontinent, Sandeman endeavored to establish a method of administration that minimized the disruption and resentment of military occupation and leveraged the tribe as a source of legitimate authority. He was pragmatic, recognizing that each tribal group within Baluchistan had a different character and thus the British government's response to each should be tailored to the situation at hand. Sandeman

hoped that through the use of tribal groups for both administration and policing of the territory, the majority of the inhabitants would perceive themselves to be under self-rule and not resist.⁸

While tailored to the particular tribal make-up of an area, the Sandeman system was grounded in a few core principles that can guide a government as it embarks on a pacification, COIN, or administrative campaign in a tribal area. First it is important to know the tribes in the area, and to develop positive relationships with them. It is from this basis that tribal customs can be learned and strictly followed by the pacifying force. Working through tribal leaders is critical, and must be done whenever possible. This may require supporting specific leaders depending on the situation. Next, the tribes must be bound to the government through paid tribal service. The raising of local tribal militias to secure roads for government and local use is the most common form of tribal service. Employment of tribal groups as labor for construction projects was also effectively employed. Economic development can also bind the tribes to the government from self-interest. Finally, it is necessary that overwhelming force be available and used as a last resort against tribal aggression.⁹

Commitment is critical to the successful execution of this system. Building and maintaining relationships with tribal leaders is a time consuming process that can be easily undermined by false promises or changes in policy. Sandeman employed his methods in Baluchistan consistently for over a decade until his death, and they continued to be employed by his successors. Commitment is also expressed through development of the region and improvement of the lives of the people. Sandeman firmly believed that poverty was a primary factor that led to unrest. Over his time in Baluchistan, Sandeman

built over 1500 miles of roads and railroads to support economic development and administration.¹⁰ These routes took years to build, employing the local people and communicating to them the investment of Britain in the territory. They also presented a significant expense to the British government. Maintaining a policy of indirect rule, therefore, required both a political and financial commitment to stay in an area and maintain the relationships that underpin the system.

The final ingredient in the Sandeman system that cannot be overlooked is the credibility of British military power in the region. Though he aimed to minimize punitive expeditions, Sandeman recognized their usefulness in responding to negative tribal behavior. The willingness to use force, and massive British capability deterred irresponsible behavior and brought restive tribal leaders to the bargaining table throughout Sandeman's tenure. The construction of the Sind to Peshin Road from 1879 to 1890 illustrates Sandeman's employment of this system.

Human and Physical Terrain

To understand how the Sind to Peshin Railway was integrated into Sandeman's System of pacification, it is important to first consider the human and physical terrain through which the railroad ran. Although initially envisioned as connecting Kandahar with British India, when completed the railway ran from the Indus River to its eventual terminus at Chaman on the Afghan Border. Its route crossed through a tapestry of tribal and ethnic groups and ascended through the Khojak Pass before reaching the plain of Kandahar. The route of the railway is highlighted in yellow below on figure 1.

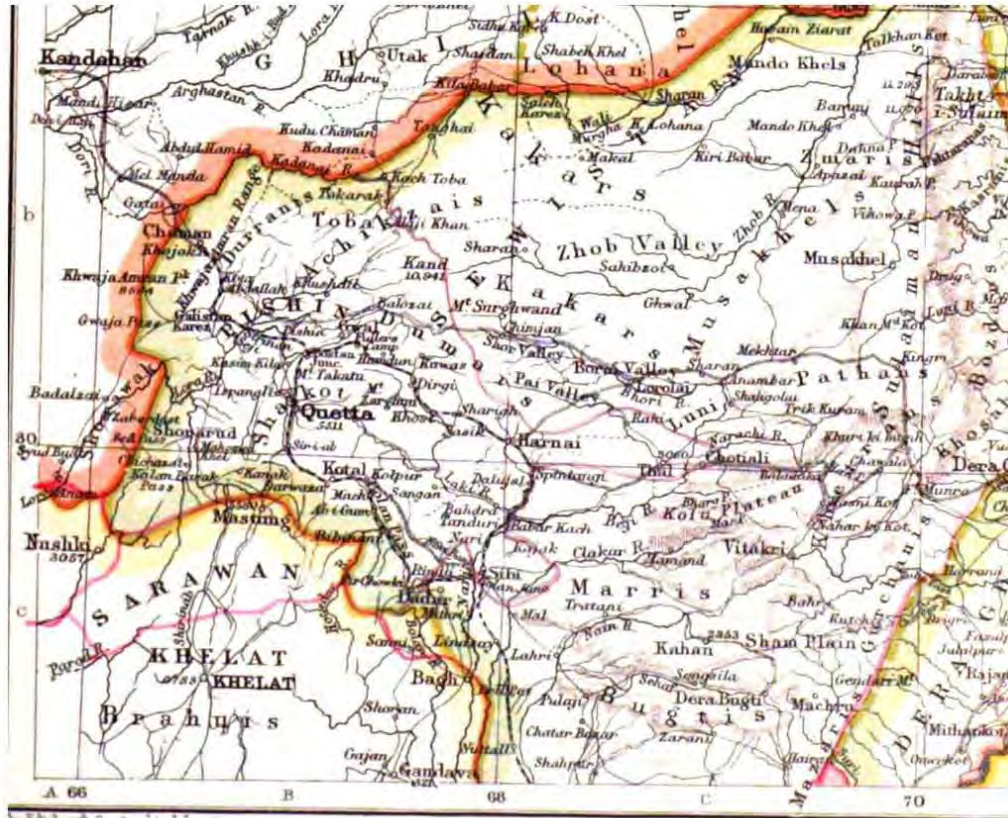


Figure 1. Baluchistan Physical and Tribal Map with the Sind to Peshin State Railway
Source: John George Bartholemew, *Constable's Hand Atlas of India* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1893), plate 24.

The area through which the first section of railroad was constructed from the Indus River to Sibi is unique both ethnically and topographically from the remainder of the route. Lying in the alluvial valley of the Indus River, this region, referred to as the Katchi Plain, is an arid desert formed over centuries through the deposition of soil carried by streams and the river itself. The slope of the route is 1 in 1,200 from Sibi southwards until approaching the Indus River, which is elevated.¹¹ While prone to massive flooding when the Indus overran its banks, the first section of the railroad was generally waterless and barren, as shown in Figure 2. For British troops marching towards the Bolan and

Khojak Passes during the First Anglo Afghan War, crossing this desert was a major obstacle. Sir Thomas Keaton, a junior officer during the war, recounted vividly his first impressions of the desert in his memoir *From Cadet to Colonel*.

Day dawned upon the frightful waste—a boundless plain of hard alluvial soil, apparently deposited by the Indus. . . . Not a tree, brush, shrub or blade of grass was to be seen—nothing but a scene of dreary desolation; and the road over this horrible plain was distinctly marked by the skeletons of men, camels, and horses abandoned by kafilas, or by the army that had preceded us.¹²

This area was controlled by the Khan of Khelat, and was ethnically Brahui. The Brahui tribal group occupies the central plateau of Baluchistan and is closely related to and intermarried with the Baluch tribe that dwells in southern Baluchistan. Both the Brahuīs and Baluch traditionally follow the Islamic faith. Each ethnic group is composed of a large number of sub-tribes with their own leaders, known as tumandars, though as a whole the Brahui and Baluch tribes were amenable to the centralized leadership provided by the Khan.¹³



Figure 2. The Katchi Plain

Source: P. S. A. Berridge, *Couplings to Khyber: The Story of the North-Western Railway* (Great Britain: David and Charles Limited, 1969), 130.

Moving north from Sibi, the terrain and population along the route changed dramatically. From flat desert, the terrain becomes mountainous as it approaches the Afghan frontier. Colonel Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, Superintendent of Frontier Surveys and veteran of the Second Anglo Afghan War, characterized the topography of the region in the following manner:

If we transfer the general view of a system of steep and narrow parallel ridges, alternating with equally constructed valleys, and given an altitude to the hills such as will carry their peaks 8,000 feet above sea level; clothe them with scanty vegetation of grass, wild olive and juniper; widen out certain intermediate valleys, and fill them with occasional bunches of tamarisk jungle and coarse grass, admitting narrow bands of cultivation bordering streams that are sometimes perennial, we shall gain a fair general conception of the Baluchistan of the highlands lying west of the Sulaiman range and extending to the frontier of Afghanistan.¹⁴

The path of the railway ran north through the conflict-ridden and largely depopulated Sibi Valley and followed the path of the Narri River through the mountains. This valley narrowed dramatically at the Narri and Kuchali defiles and Spintangi, the white gorge. Steep, cliff-like valley walls rose almost vertically from the river's edge before opening up to the wide and fertile Harnai valley.¹⁵ Densely populated and fertile, the valley was dotted with towns and farmers' fields. A distinctive characteristic of the valley was its many mud-built towers that dotted the valley. Contemporary observers recall seeing hundreds of these structures in the valley, some with only a few hundred yards between them. They functioned as a defensive system for the population of the valley, and hinted at the tribal tensions that characterized the area.¹⁶

The agricultural river valley of Harnai, as well as the Thal and Chotiali river valleys that connected to the valley to the east, was populated by the Pathan Luni and Dumar tribal groups. These tribes focused on agriculture and the livestock trade for their

livelihood, and were largely peaceful. Like the agricultural settlements in the Punjab and Sind valleys, they were constantly threatened by the aggressive tribal groups that inhabited the mountainous areas to the east and north of the valley. The Marri tribe, whose tribal lands directly abutted the path of the Sind to Peshin State Railway, constantly harassed and raided the agricultural valley, requiring the villagers to flee to their towers in order to protect their lands and themselves. The aggressive and defiant nature of the Marri tribe is a constant in the political history of Baluchistan. The Marris continue to aggressively resist outside control to this day, and are at the heart of the long-running insurgency that resists the present-day Pakistani government.¹⁷ To the north of the Harnai valley, the Kakar Pathan tribe not only joined in the harassment of the agricultural tribes but also defied the leadership of the Khan of Khelat, to whom they were nominally affiliated. Occupying the Zhob river valley, the Kakar's independent and intensely democratic tribal structure limited even the authority of the maliks (Pathan tribal chiefs) and sirdars (a Persian term used synonymously with malik by the British). Instead, the Kakar Pathans relied on tribal meetings, also known as jirgas, to decide communal issues.¹⁸ The depredations of the Marris and the Kakars were so severe at the beginning of Sandeman's tenure that the Luni and Dumar tribes in the fertile river valleys repeatedly appealed to the British for protection against their neighbors.¹⁹

The path of the railway continues northwest from Harnai through the rocky Sharigh valley, ascending in elevation as it approaches the main obstacle along the route to Peshin, the rift through Chappar Mountain. The deep gorge running through the center of the mountain stretches over two miles, and is characterized by near vertical cliffs dropping hundreds of feet to the river below, as shown in figure 3. The route emerges

from the gorge and continues northwest onto the Peshin Plateau. The plateau itself was characterized by an alluvial plain watered by tributaries of the Lora River and capable of extensive cultivation. With over 1,200 square miles of cultivatable land and over 81,000 inhabitants, the Peshin plateau was a potentially profitable area for the British and strategically valuable.²⁰ Populated predominantly by the Sayad and Tarin Afghan tribes, the area was nominally controlled by the Amir of Afghanistan. In reality, however, the area had few governing structures and suffered from the aggression of the Kakars to the north.



Figure 3. The Chappar Rift

Source: P. S. A. Berridge, *Couplings to Khyber: The Story of the North-Western Railway* (Great Britain: David and Charles Limited, 1969), 116.

The final barrier along the route between Afghanistan and the Sind was the Khojak Pass. At an elevation of over 7,500 feet, it was the avenue of invasion for the British into Afghanistan in the First Anglo Afghan War and was key terrain to both the British and Russians.²¹ Control of the pass was critical, and ultimately provided the

impetus behind the construction of the railway itself. The obstacles that needed to be surmounted to control the Khojak Pass, both in terms of human and physical terrain, were significant. Traversing desert and mountains, the 323 mile route would climb from an elevation of 433 feet above sea level at Sibi to over 7,500 at the pass.²² To ascend the Narri Gorge and cross the Chappar Rift tunnels would need to be dug and massive bridges erected. Clearly, the cost associated with this railway would rival the largest projects executed in the British Empire. The human terrain was certainly no more forgiving. With a history of violent inter-tribal disputes and weak central governance, the seven major tribal groups along the route would not easily agree to a railroad through their lands. Indeed, even the Khan of Khelat could not control the turbulent Marri and Kakar tribes. Completing the route would require a significant commitment from the British, and test Sandeman's system only two years after he became administrator to Baluchistan.

Building the Road: Phase One (January 1878 to June 1880)

Given the challenges and expense associated with building the railroad, it should be no surprise that it took escalating tension with the Amir of Afghanistan and the looming threat of Russian expansion to invigorate the British. The expansion of British influence in the traditional Afghan border territories threatened the Amir of Afghanistan, Sher Ali Khan. In response, he sought to incite the border tribes and embarked on a threatening course of diplomacy with Russia. In early 1878 he declared a jihad (holy war) throughout his territories, which included the Peshin plateau, against British expansion. He also dispatched secret emissaries to conduct a jirga with both the Khan of Khelat and

other tribal chiefs at the village of Huramzai near Quetta.²³ He hoped to disrupt access to the route to Afghanistan through the Bolan Pass to Quetta and onwards through the Khojak Pass to Kandahar, which the Khan kept open at all times as one of the conditions of the Mastung Settlement.²⁴

For Sandeman, the challenge of securing a 300 mile long route would be daunting even if provided with significant military resources. Given that his efforts would lay in the rear of the main British effort should conflict with Afghanistan ensue, however, military assets were positioned only at key locations along the route. How would he prevent the tempting logistical convoys from suffering attack? It was here that his efforts with the Khan of Khelat and his Tumandars bore fruit. Sandeman arranged for the establishment of tribal levies to secure the route along its length from Sibi. He sought to both ensure unrestricted traffic through the critical passes and co-opt some of the more troublesome tribes by employing them. In a letter written to his father on 5 August 1875, Sandeman related the many ways these levies were of value. By employing troublesome tribes like the Marri, he gained leverage in dealing with them. Instances of violence or plundering along the Bolan route resulted in both fining of the Marri tumandar and use of the Marri tribesman to bring their own countrymen to justice. Oftentimes, much of the plunder could be reclaimed by the tribes themselves and returned to the British. Thus, the tribes themselves profited from the Bolan route and had a stake in keeping the route open and British administrators satisfied with their performance.²⁵

Though tribal levies and military garrisons stabilized Baluchistan, war with Afghanistan proved unavoidable. The arrival of a Russian delegation in Kabul brought the prospect of a strategic alliance between Afghanistan and Britain's rival in Central

Asia. When the Amir refused a delegation from Britain in August, military forces began movement. The three columns of British troops that advanced on 21 November funneled into Afghanistan through the Khyber, Kurram and Khojak Passes. Sandeman, as civil administrator of Baluchistan, would facilitate the advance of 13,400 British Soldiers commanded by Lieutenant General Donald Stewart as they marched toward Kandahar.²⁶

Sandeman's efforts with the tribes and use of tribal levies bore fruit in the early stages of the campaign. Upon the column's arrival in Peshin, a delegation of tumandars met Sandeman and offered support for British efforts in defiance of the Amir of Afghanistan. Moreover, the Khan of Khelat pledged support to the British and even attached his son, Mahmud Khan, to General Stewart's headquarters.²⁷ During the first Anglo-Afghan war the tribes in the Khojak Pass harassed British supply convoys consistently, endangering the line of communication to the forces in Afghanistan. During the advance in late December, however, tribal groups supported the British advance and subsequent successful seizure of Kandahar on 8 January 1879. With Britain controlling much of Afghanistan by February when Sher Ali Khan died, his son Yakub Khan had little choice but to sue for peace. The Treaty of Gandamak stipulated the British would control Afghan foreign policy, while the Amir would provide a subsidy to the British Empire and surrender his claims on the provinces of Sibi and Peshin.²⁸

While the first phase of the war demonstrated the success of Sandeman's policy of indirect rule, the limited access to and through Baluchistan introduced serious concerns. The advance to Kandahar was successful, but supplying it was a difficult and costly endeavor. In order to provision the army, Sandeman mobilized the tribes to provide over 20,000 camels and bearers to transport supplies through the Bolan and

Khojak Passes. The Khan of Khelat and his Brahui chiefs came close to exhausting their capability to transport supplies, which could have put a more prolonged campaign in jeopardy.²⁹ While the importance of a railroad was acknowledged, no efforts to marshal materials had occurred prior to the beginning of the conflict. Recognizing the importance of a route that bypassed the Katchi Plain and seeing an opportunity to expand British influence in Baluchistan, Sandeman began aggressively engaging with the tribes that might fall along the route of the railroad.

For Sandeman, the railroad afforded an opportunity to integrate tribes on the periphery of British influence into his system of administration. He proposed development of a route connecting Fort Munroe near Dera Ghazi Khan with Quetta by way of Thal, Choteali, and the Harnai Valley. It would avoid the deadly Katchi Plain and place the vulnerable Luni Pathans tribal group under British administration. To this end, he held a jirga in January 1879 with the Luni and Kakar Pathan tribes of the area, and came close to agreement. Only Sirdar Shahjehan, leader of the Kakar Pathan tribes of the Zhob Valley, resisted his proposals.³⁰

Foreshadowing future resistance to the route, the Kakar tribes refused to surrender their independence. Sandeman's response was prompt and aggressive. With the war in Afghanistan seemingly winding down after the seizure of Kandahar, military forces began to retrograde through the Khojak and Bolan passes. Sandeman convinced one of the retrograding British columns to march along the contested route in order to demonstrate British strength and eliminate opposition to British administration. As expected, Sirdar Shahjehan opposed the provocative march through his territory with a force of over 3,000 Kakar Pathans. Intent on breaking resistance to his plans, Sandeman

and the British forces attacked and dispersed the force after a three hour action.³¹ The requirement for an armed escort to force the Thal-Choteali route ruled it out in the near-term as an alternative to the Katchi Plain. It also inflamed tribal resistance to the enlarged British presence in Baluchistan.

The Afghan uprising in Kabul and subsequent murder of Sir Pierre Cavagnari and the rest of the British delegation on 3 September 1879 forced a decision on the construction of a railroad as a matter of necessity. British troops withdrawn only months earlier rushed back to Afghanistan through the passes for a more prolonged punitive campaign against the Afghans. Driven by desperation, the long delayed construction of the railroad began almost overnight. Superintended by Colonel R. Lindsay, Royal Engineers, the effort started with the collection of materials from across India at a frantic pace. In the haste to construct the railway to support the forces in Afghanistan, rails and sleepers of various sizes and types were rushed to the construction site.³² The most difficult stretch of the route for pack animals lay through the Katchi Plain between Ruk and Sibi. Over 3,500 workers, mostly Hindu and Sikh laborers, lived and worked along the route for the next 101 days as it advanced across the desert at an astonishing rate of over a mile a day.³³ Consideration of potential flooding issues and proper alignment were set aside in favor of rapid advance of the work. As the Katchi Plain was largely depopulated and barren, the work of the engineers was uninterrupted by the tribes. By 14 January 1880, the entrance to the mountainous borderlands at Sibi was reached and preparations could begin for the far more challenging ascent to Chaman and onwards to Kandahar.³⁴

Though impressive in the speed of its completion, the first section of the railroad would seem easy and cheap in comparison to the efforts required to reach Peshin. As earlier described, entering the mountains required a massive engineering effort. Initial efforts to survey the route also revealed some difficult choices. The railroad could pass through the Bolan Pass to reach Quetta, or proceed through the Harnai Valley and then northwest to Peshin, as shown in figure 4. The path through the Bolan was steeper than Harnai, but ran through familiar and largely uncontested tribal areas. By contrast, the Harnai valley was the site of repeated tribal clashes and discontent. Ultimately, the decision to build along the Harnai route was the result of a combination of the engineers needing shallow slopes to facilitate the transport of supplies and Sandeman's desire to open up and pacify a new area for the British.³⁵ Thus, when work progressed through the spring and summer of 1880 in the Narri and Kuchali divides and the southern end of the Harnai Valley it aimed not only to advance the railroad but also to use the construction process as a tool to incorporate the rebellious tribes.

stretched for almost fifty miles from the tunnel borings all the way back to the advancing rail line. In the best of situations, the large and sparsely defended construction effort would be a tempting target to the Marris and Kakars that bordered the construction.³⁷ The decisive defeat and slaughter of almost 1,000 British and Indian soldiers at Maiwand was more than sufficient to incite a tribal uprising and threaten the future of the road.

Phase Two: Maiwand and the Marri and Kakar Uprisings

After the murder of their delegation to Kabul in September 1879, the British realized anew the difficulty of controlling the turbulent Afghan tribes. After quickly crushing resistance in Kabul, British forces led by General Frederick Roberts faced escalating attacks from religiously motivated tribal armies. Remembering their slaughter of the British in the First Anglo-Afghan War, Afghans flocked to the *jihad* raised by the influential mullah Mushk-i-Alam. The situation became so desperate by December that Robert's force was forced to fight a pitched battle from its cantonment, echoing the disaster forty years earlier in the First Anglo-Afghan War. In response, Stewart led a large contingent from relatively quiet Kandahar north to Kabul to consolidate control of the capital and install a new Amir who would enforce the Treaty of Gandamak. The Battle of Maiwand, fought on 27 July 1880 outside of Kandahar, disrupted these plans. A small army of only 2,500 British and native forces was defeated and almost destroyed by a tribal force of over 30,000. The remnants of the British force fled to Kandahar, where it was besieged.³⁸ The potential of defeat in Afghanistan loomed.

For the British, the impending destruction of the Kandahar garrison forced a re-prioritization of all efforts in British India. First, a force led by General Roberts rushed south from Kabul to relieve the garrison before it fell. Second, colonial administrators

decided that all available troops in the vicinity of Kandahar should be massed and redirected to support the offensive against the Afghan tribes. In this moment of crisis, the success of Sandeman's efforts with the Khan of Khelat bore true fruit. Soon after hearing of the loss at Maiwand, the Khan sent a telegram pledging his support. It said, "I am certain the enemy will get their reward soon. I am glad to afford help. My head and my all belong to the British. I shall never draw back. Whatever grain or money is required by the British Government, I am ready to supply."³⁹ Throughout the crisis, there were no attacks in Brahui-controlled areas and Sandeman relied heavily on his tribal allies to support the British force in Afghanistan.

The response from the tribes in the newly controlled areas was not so positive. With unstable tribal relationships and an immature administrative apparatus, the aggressive and anti-British tendencies of the Maris and the Kakars could not be internally controlled. Although the construction effort critically needed military security as a deterrent, it could not be spared. The effort to build the railroad was suspended until the situation stabilized. British and native troops were withdrawn from their garrisons in the Harnai Valley and the Thal-Choteali corridor and massed to move through the Khojak Pass to Kandahar. In their place, native troops from Bombay occupied critical forts in order to provide a minimum level of security. Sandeman worried that these new troops would be unfamiliar with the local tribes. His system, which relied on enduring relationships between the government and the tribes, could be undone by inexperience. He feared that newly emboldened tribes would discard their ties to the British in favor of conflict. Worse yet, the thousands of construction workers who were on the road began to

move south to the secure garrison at Sibi, retrograding as many supplies as could be quickly transported.⁴⁰

To tribal leaders in the area, it appeared the British were abandoning their efforts in the area. News of the disastrous defeat at Maiwand spread quickly, inciting the Marri and Kakar tribes to action. Sirdar Shahjehan of Zhob and Bhai Khan, chief of the Saranzai Pathan tribe, gathered 2,000 tribal warriors and launched a surprise attack on the fortified post at Kach in the Sharigh Valley. Held by a company of Bombay native infantry, the base was very nearly overrun.⁴¹ Though troubling, this attack was overshadowed by even more serious aggression by the Marri Tribe. Though its levies were tasked to guard the railroad that ran through its territories, a group of 200 tribesmen attacked a lightly guarded construction convoy moving south from the Harnai Valley to Sibi. In an effort to execute the withdrawal of equipment and workers to Sibi, a convoy of over 100 vehicles and 2,000 local workers moved south with only 100 British and native troops securing it. As it entered the narrow Kuchali Gorge on 6 August, Marri tribesmen attacked the column and killed ten Soldiers and ten railway workers. The Marri seized the entire payroll for the native workers and large quantities of supplies. A total of 73,500 rupees were taken by the Marri budmashes (bad men) during the unprovoked attack.⁴²

Given the severity of these attacks, British policy supported the launching of punitive expeditions against the Kakars and Marris at the soonest opportunity. Unlike the Brahui *Tumandars*, these tribes actively supported the Afghan insurrection and capitalized on British weakness. Sandeman's approach, however, rejected immediate reprisals in favor of working through tribal leadership and discerning the reasons for the attacks. First, he suspended subsidies to the Kakar tribe and issued an ultimatum

demanding that leaders of the attack on Kach come forward. Next, he contacted Mehrullah Khan, the leader of the Marri tribe. Sandeman had dealt with the tribe since the beginning of his tenure in Baluchistan, and felt confident that the actions against the convoy were not sanctioned by tribal leadership. Through discussions he discovered that Mehrullah Khan had not been in the area of the attack. Admitting he lost control of his tribesmen, the chief anxiously assured Sandeman that he was willing to work with the British. Applying tribal law, Sandeman asserted that the supplies and money taken from the convoy would have to be repaid. The Marri tribe would pay blood money for the lives of the British soldiers and workers, as well as turn over leaders of the attack. Mehrullah Khan agreed to the terms, but asserted he could not compel the robbers, who belonged to the Quat-Mandai section of his tribe, to make restitution without British aid.

Though Sandeman could not act immediately due to siege of Kandahar, he would not have to wait long. After a twenty day forced march, General Roberts defeated the Afghan army besieging Kandahar on 1 September 1880.⁴³ The British reaffirmed the Treaty of Gandamak with the new Amir, Abdur Rahman, and the victorious armies returned to India. For Sandeman, the victorious armies marching through Baluchistan gave him the opportunity to demonstrate the overwhelming military strength of the British Empire to his unruly tribal leaders. He reiterated his demand of restitution from Mehrullah Khan, and directed he should come to Sibi in order to make the settlement.⁴⁴

The chief again expressed concerns. Fearing a backlash from his tribe if he capitulated too readily, the Marri chief requested that the British march through his territory. The rigorous terms demanded by the British could only be collected when directly backed by the use or threat of force. Acceding to Mehrullah Khan's request,

Sandeman arranged for a brigade of the returning army under command of Brigadier General C. M. MacGregor to march into Marri territory and seize the village of Quat-Mandai. The British force, effectively acting under the authority of the Marri Chief, forced the rebellious section of the tribe to surrender the leaders of the attack and provide restitution.⁴⁵ In the wake of this show of force, the culprits of the Kakar raid also came forward. Bhai Khan surrendered to Sandeman, accepting a term of imprisonment for his actions in order to save his tribe from further alienation with the British administration.

Through an understanding of the tribes, application of tribal law and demonstration of British strength Sandeman quelled the insurrection along the path of the railroad without firing a shot. Marri tribesman peacefully resumed their duties as tribal levies along the road, and Mehrullah Khan's authority was maintained. Even Bhai Khan, the imprisoned Pathan chief, returned to his tribe after a time and rendered loyal service to the British in the Sharigh Valley.⁴⁶ Though the construction would not begin again for three years, Sandeman laid the groundwork for tribal acceptance of both British authority and the railroad itself.

Phase Three: Completing the Road

In wake of the costly conflict in Afghanistan, the British government balked at the commitment of the Forward Policy and the need for further, significant expenditures on the Sind to Peshin Railway. Though peace was concluded with the Afghans, even those who fought were uncertain about the efficacy of controlling Afghanistan. General Roberts, hero of the Battle of Kandahar, was outspoken in his views on further relations with the Afghans. After returning to England after the conflict he said

We have nothing to fear from Afghanistan, and the best thing to do is to leave it as much as possible to itself. It may not be very flattering to our *amour propre*, but I feel sure I am right when I say that the less the Afghans see of us the less they will dislike us. Should Russia in future years attempt to conquer Afghanistan, or invade India through it, we should have a better chance of attaching the Afghans to our interest if we avoid all interference with them in the meantime.⁴⁷

In light of these concerns, all facets of the British policy in Baluchistan were re-examined. Though the first section of the railway greatly decreased the cost of crossing the Katchi Plain, further construction was put on hold. Its purpose was even called into question. Disagreement ensued between the colonial and home governments as to the future of the Peshin and Sibi districts. A policy of non-interference would make control of these border areas unnecessary, and members of the home government gave serious consideration to returning the districts of Sibi and Peshin to Afghan control in order to reduce the cost of administration.

Sandeman's response to these arguments, expressed in letters to his contacts in the British government, centered on three main points. First, he reminded the government of the strategic value of the passes into Afghanistan, and the necessity of retaining border districts in order to control them. Second, he emphasized that the Afghan Amir had little historical control over Peshin and Sibi. With a mixed Afghan and Baluch population, even an ethnically based argument for returning the districts was faulty. Finally, he argued the British had obligations to the populations in the Peshin and Sibi Districts that they administered since 1878. Many tribes had supported the British during the war effort, and one withdrawal from railroad construction had illustrated problems that would ensue with British departure from the region. Incorporating Peshin and Sibi into British India would eliminate uncertainty within the tribes about British intentions and further solidify British influence in the region.⁴⁸

Though convincing enough to secure retention of Peshin and Sibi, Sandeman's arguments did not alone convince British authorities to invest again in the railway. The Russian conquest of Merv (in present-day Turkmenistan) in 1883 provided the impetus to restart the project. Fearing a Russian incursion into Afghanistan, the British government initiated the innocuous sounding Harnai Road Improvement Scheme. To avoid further Russian provocation, the railroad would be built in stages with the metal ties placed after all other works were completed.⁴⁹ Prosecution of the project would span the next seven years, and at completion would advance all the way to the Afghan border at Chaman. The magnitude of the construction effort would rival the largest projects in the world, and communicated unambiguously the British commitment to retaining and developing the Peshin and Sibi Districts both for strategic and administrative purposes.

To restart the road, a constructing force composed of locally hired workers and military construction units was assembled. Two half-battalions of pioneers from Madras and Bengal were dispatched, as well as five companies of Bengal Sappers and Miners. These units consisted of a few British officers overseeing hundreds of native troops from the Punjab, northern and southern India. They were augmented by over 10,000 hired workers, coming from India, the Punjab and the local areas surrounding the road.⁵⁰ These workers performed the extensive earthmoving required to construct the railway embankments. In all, over fifteen thousand people began work again stretching from Sibi Station to the mouth of the Harnai Valley in 1883.

Securing the route would fall to a combination of British and tribal forces. Remembering well the Kuchali Raid, the British constructed a series of fortified bases along the railway route. The Harnai and Sharigh Valleys were historically accosted by the

Pathans of the Zhob Valley. Still under the leadership of Sirdar Shahjehan, they would resist the advance of the road. Military detachments would secure the construction sites themselves while the tribal levies, arranged by Sandeman along the route of the road, would provide an outer cordon of security. The levies were nominated by their tribal chiefs and paid by Sandeman and his civil administrators. Beyond patrolling roads, they provided information on tribal movements and performed a police function both in the vicinity of the railroad and in tribal areas adjoining the road.⁵¹ These levies would eventually assume fixed positions established by the British military, but only when relationships with the tribes were robustly developed and the threat of uprising minimized.⁵²

Over the first year of construction the magnitude of the task facing the engineers became clear. Tunneling and construction of bridge piers commenced to facilitate the northward passage of the railroad. As the railroad would pass through a number of narrow river valleys with steep walls, it was necessary to cut the path of the railroad out of solid rock in order to avoid the rushing river below. In one area, over 400 native pioneer soldiers worked six days a week for five months on a single rock cutting to allow passage through the Narri Gorge.⁵³ Despite these difficulties, interest in the railroad increased as Russia continued its march toward Afghanistan. In May 1884 all pretense about the intentions of the railway were cast aside and the Sind to Peshin Railway project was officially acknowledged by the British Government. The works were reinforced with three regiments of engineers, the 4th Madras and the 23rd and 32nd Punjab Pioneers, and the engineer commander, Brigadier General James Browne, was also assigned a brigade of troops to secure the works against any interference.⁵⁴ Work was expanded along the

entire line from Sibi to the Chappar Rift, and progress accelerated considerably as work continued year-round.

When completed, the railway to the Harnai Valley was an engineering marvel. To pass through the Narri Gorge, the railroad was cut into the sandstone walls of the 14-mile long gorge. No less than four tunnels of over 300 feet were required, each of which was excavated by local laborers. Crossing the Narri River six times over bridges of 600 feet in length or greater, with a height of over 45 feet from the river below.⁵⁵ As the railroad moved north into the 5 mile long Kuchali Divide, the need to excavate tunnels increased. The walls of the Kuchali Gorge were almost vertical, requiring the construction of retaining walls and cutting of embankments into the gorge walls to support the railroad. Three tunnels, each more than 500 feet in length, bored through treacherous clay-shale soil that made them prone to collapse. The three bridges required in the gorge were each over seventy feet above the base of the gorge and required extensive, heavy duty bridge piers to withstand flood waters.⁵⁶ One of them, named Massacre by its builders, stood at the spot of the infamous Kuchali Raid.⁵⁷ The final obstacle, the Spintangi, proved far easier to cross than the Narri and Kuchali gorges due to its white limestone walls. The final tunnel was easily constructed, allowing access to the Harnai Valley.⁵⁸

Completion of the railroad to Harnai by the end of 1885 was not accomplished without challenges. With over 10,000 workers to feed, engineers discovered quickly the local economy was unable to cope with the increased demand. Fearing a famine, it was quickly determined that the majority of the sustenance for the workers would be imported. Inadequate supplies of construction materials also increased the logistical burden. The climate and its effects also impacted early efforts on the railway as well.

Record rains and heat from 1883 to 1885 combined with poor sanitation to cause severe cholera epidemics among the local workforce. In 1885 alone, over 2,000 of the 10,000 local workers employed on the railway died due to disease.⁵⁹

Construction operations were also hampered by persistent attacks launched by the Kakar Pathans of the Zhob Valley. Launching raids against supply columns and weakly defended areas, the Pathan tribes sought to disrupt the British effort to secure and pacify the Harnai Valley and Thal-Choteali. Resistant to negotiation or peaceful settlement, Sirdar Shahjehan goaded the tribes into escalating attacks throughout the spring of 1884, culminating in an attack on the garrison at Thal-Choteali that resulted in eight deaths.⁶⁰ In response, Sandeman urged the British colonial government to act against Sirdar Shahjehan and the Kakars. A punitive expedition that fall marched through the Zhob and Bori Valleys, destroying Sirdar Shahjehan's compound and dispersing 500 tribal warriors.⁶¹ Though small-scale attacks would continue, the security efforts of the British would actively seek to punish tribes unwilling to support the railroad effort.

Despite these obstacles, the railway advanced quickly through the open Harnai and Sharigh Valleys as it approached the major obstacle to its progress, the Chappar Rift. Though only three miles long, the rift presented an almost insurmountable engineering challenge.⁶² The walls of the rift rise vertically from the river below, and the slope of the rift, 1 in 20, proved too steep for railway construction. To accomplish the crossing of the rift, over a mile of tunnel was excavated into the limestone walls of the rift. As the walls were vertical, work on blasting the tunnel was accomplished by lowering men from the crest of the rift using cradles and platforms. The demands of the tunneling were so intense that cutting edge technology was employed to speed the work. A lightweight

Ingersoll Rock Drill was imported from the United States. Though lighter than the on-hand drilling equipment, it still took two elephants to haul to the summit of the rift, one of which was severely injured in the effort.⁶³ The crowning achievement of the work, however, was the bridge that spanned the rift itself. Named the Louise Margaret Bridge after its first visitor, the Duchess of Connaught, the 420 foot bridge spanned the rift at a dizzying height of 200 feet above the river before plunging immediately into a tunnel. Though further engineering challenges were faced as the line continued to Peshin and then south to Quetta, by March 1887 the first train passed from Sibi to Quetta.⁶⁴



Figure 5. The Marie Louise Bridge

Source: Fred Bremner, —Chappa Rift Baluchistan,” *Harrapa.com*, <http://www.harappa.com/bremner/al15.html> (accessed 4 May 2011).

The final step to providing strategic access was extension of the railway to the Kandahar Plain. Standing between Peshin and Kandahar is the Khwaja Amran mountain range, a barrier through which the Khojak Pass is the only route. To ascend to the summit of the pass at 7,457 feet was deemed impassible, so it was decided to tunnel from

Shelabagh Station through the mountain. At a total length of 2.4 miles, the Khojak Tunnel was one of the longest in the world when it was finished on 5 September 1891. A stockpile of supplies to extend the railroad to Kandahar were stockpiled at Chaman, and British strategic access to southern Afghanistan was assured.

Enduring Effects: The Railway as a Conduit for Pacification

In the short term, completion of the Sind to Peshin Railway could be considered a military success. British troops could now rapidly move to the Afghan frontier and receive logistical support using the best technology available, the railroad. British forces could counter Russian aggression and control critical avenues of approach into India. From the Marie Louise Bridge to the Khojak Tunnel, the astounding engineering efforts on the railroad attracted international attention and acclaim. While impressive, these achievements paled in comparison to the positive effects achieved in support of the pacification of Sind and Peshin. Sandeman leveraged the road as a tool for improving the lives of the people of the districts and extending his control over adjoining areas. More critically for the British long-term presence in the area, he worked to make the districts stable and profitable.

Construction of a massive railway system in the Sibi and Peshin Districts had an effect on the economy in the region that was quickly observable. When first administered by the British in 1878, the Sibi valley was largely depopulated and poor due to the raiding of the Marri Tribe. By 1885 the region was completely changed. A new township had sprung up around the Sibi Station aptly named Sandemanabad. With 1,000 houses, 800 shops and a population of 5,000 people, the area became a bustling economic center. Revenues for the British government from the Sibi District jumped from 35,382 rupees in

1879 to 1,020,512 rupees in 1885. The total yearly cost of administration, including tribal levies, police and judicial expenses totaled 68,000 rupees. Thus, the district was generating yearly profits. Similar changes were noted in the Peshin District, as well. From 1879 to 1885, yearly revenues jumped from 46,592 to 92,578 rupees with 78,000 rupees in annual administrative costs. Even the hotly contested Thal-Choteali and Bori Valleys that lay adjacent to the railroad became more profitable. Revenues jumped from 26,000 rupees in 1879 to 80,000 in 1885, with a yearly administrative cost of 78,800 rupees.⁶⁵

While these annual profits are small in comparison with the expenditure to build the railroad itself and were certainly stimulated by the British investments in the region, they demonstrate a critical achievement of Sandeman's efforts: self-sufficiency. Whereas the Close Border Policy required punitive expeditions against border tribes that were both costly and ineffective, Sandeman's System in Baluchistan was paying for itself. It was the act of building the railroad, and actions necessary to make it successful that generated the increased prosperity of the Sibi, Peshin and Thal-Choteali. Though the railroad commenced due to a strategic need, Sandeman and his civil administrators understood the tribes along the route and their relationships. Through his empowerment of tribal chiefs, from the peaceful agricultural tribes to the troublesome Marri, he strengthened governance while demonstrating the primacy of the British government. When construction of the railroad did begin the effort was made to route it through the populated Harnai and Sharigh Valleys rather than through the Bolan Pass. Though challenging, this route connected the population centers of Sibi and Peshin and incorporated them into the process of construction.

Security of the railway construction was truly accomplished through securing the entire province. Given incentives through payments, tribal elders organized levies that both policed the areas surrounding the road and kept the most violent tribal members employed. When uprisings occurred, Sandeman used the minimum force necessary to reintegrate the tribal group into his system. For the Marri, this necessitated a remarkably bloodless demonstration of British power. For the Kakar tribes of the Zhob Valley, it required a punitive expedition and the eventual invasion of Zhob in 1890.⁶⁶

Overwhelming military power was the unspoken threat that underlay the levy system, and Sandeman was willing to use it when necessary. Its application was not vindictive, however. After punitive actions against both the Marri and the Kakar tribes, Sandeman moved quickly to again employ these tribes as levies and renew the relationship of indirect rule. Indeed, Sandeman viewed the levy system as the most effective tool for co-opting rebellious local leaders.⁶⁷

However valuable as indicators, profitability and security alone fail to capture all the long-term benefits of Sandeman's System and the railroad that supported it. Other aspects of British administration expanded into Sibi and Peshin during the railroad construction. Postal services, consisting of 19 offices and over 450 miles of postal access roads were developed during and after completion of the railroad. These roads facilitated the extension of services to tribes in the districts, and were so successful that villages arranged for local postal delivery. These postal services were largely run and administered by local people.⁶⁸ Medical services, paid for through taxation, also improved the quality of life for the local people. At the Khalat dispensary alone, over

50,000 patients were treated in a single year. Vaccination programs were implemented in the districts, and proved popular.

Most impressively, British civil administrators demonstrated commitment to the tribal people by assisting them in adjusting to the negative effects of the railroad. One example of this is the effort to establish a system of forest administration. Always a scarce resource in mountainous Baluchistan, demand for wood increased dramatically with peace between the tribes and increased economic opportunities. Accessible resources were quickly consumed without any thought to sustainability. In Sibi District alone, 11,000 acres of juniper were harvested in only two years. In response, British administrators established a system for forestry administration. With a goal of empowering tribal leaders with stewardship of the program, the British worked to educate the tribes on conservation and empower them to manage their own resources.⁶⁹ At the heart of Sandeman's philosophy for administration was the admonition that revenues should only be drawn from a people if their lives were improved by British efforts. From the extension of postal services to the stewardship of resources, the administration made these efforts in Peshin and Sibi.

Perhaps the most powerful indicator of the effectiveness of the Sind to Peshin Railway was the peaceful expansion of the road and rail network into adjacent districts. The Sind to Peshin Railroad, as a strategic route, was constructed without the complete consent of the local people. The tribal turbulence that resulted required both financial and military commitment by the British. The roads completed thereafter were a product of consent with tribes whose territory they entered. Roads were completed connecting Khalat and Peshin with Quetta, and numerous secondary roads to villages and population

centers in the districts. The most notable project, however, was the construction of the 300 mile road between the Harnai Valley and Dera Ghazi Khan via Thal-Choteali and the Bori Valley. The very route that had to be forced open by British troops in 1879 was peacefully completed less than a decade later, with the approval of both the agricultural tribes and the Kakar Pathans.⁷⁰ The tribes in the areas surrounding the road could clearly see the benefits of roads to them in their communities, and invited the British to connect them to the British administration.

In summary, the Sind to Peshin Railway was conceived as a strategic route to support the defense of British India. As a facet of the Forward Policy, it was important to the defense of the Bolan and Khojak Passes. Its construction was intertwined with the events of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, both the rapid completion of the first section and the halting of construction after the disaster at Maiwand. While certainly valuable militarily, its value in pacifying the rebellious tribes along its path was tied to Sandeman's system of tribal integration and economic development. It was viewed by British civil administrators as a public utility that was used by both the British government and the tribes. By the mid-1890s the shorter Bolan Route supplanted the Sind to Peshin Railway as the critical conduit for troops and supplies to the frontier. Its role in enhancing the development and integration of the Sibi and Peshin districts, however, continued to throughout the British administration of Baluchistan.

After Sandeman: The Misapplication of his System in Waziristan

Sandeman's success in Baluchistan led to his method's use in other areas along the frontier, most notably Waziristan. The 4,400 square mile territory was far smaller than the 150,000 square miles added to British colonial holdings by Sandeman.

Nevertheless, the perceived failure of his system there resulted in Sandeman's methods being discredited in many British eyes and forgotten. The required commitment in terms of funding, manpower, and time were unpalatable to the British government. The problem of access was central to the struggle for control of Waziristan, and roads were an important tool used to control the restive tribes there. A review of the British experience there illuminates the limitations associated with the use of roads, and the unforeseen effects of their employment on the local population.

For almost 40 years after occupying the Punjab, the British successfully avoided becoming entangled in Waziristan. Seeing little economic potential in the province, the British launched periodic punitive expeditions to punish tribal raiding from 1849 onwards but established no lasting presence. Only the Amir of Afghanistan's blatant attempts to gain control of the area after 1884 led the British to assert their authority. Though rejected by the tribes, the Afghan occupation of Wana in 1892 resulted in strong British protest and the specter of another Anglo-Afghan conflict. The subsequent negotiated settlement of Afghanistan's border, the controversial Durand Line, incorporated Waziristan into the British Empire and resulted in a creeping policy of further administration of the tribes.⁷¹

Waziristan's human and physical terrain presented a significant challenge. Situated between the Gomal River Valley in the south and the Tochi River Valley in the north, the terrain of Waziristan was characterized by towering mountains separated by narrow river valleys. Roughly the size of the state of Connecticut, the relatively small area directly bordered Afghanistan. The Tochi and Gomal Valleys were the main routes through Waziristan and into Afghanistan. They also had the most fertile land. In the

1890s, no lateral communications routes connected the valleys, making the majority of Waziristan inaccessible to anything but foot traffic. With forbidding terrain and poor soil, Waziristan was a barren and isolated place with little prospect of profitability for the British.⁷²



Figure 6. The North-West Frontier Province

Source: T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1998), 2.

The tribes able to survive in this environment were fiercely independent and warlike in nature. Four major tribes occupied Waziristan: Daurs, Bhitannis, Waziris and Mahsuds. The Daurs and Bhitannis occupied the Gomal and Tochi Valleys and were, by and large, more peaceful and easily influenced by colonial authorities. The Mahsuds and

Wazirs, however, implacably resisted any sort of control, even within their own tribal structures. Intensely democratic, even the mandates of their own maliks were often ignored. Tribal jirgas were the only established decision-making instrument in these societies. Blood feuds and revenge were facts of tribal life, which made the punishment of troublemakers a complicated affair. The fact that the tribes were also fanatically religious compounded this problem, as charismatic mullahs often subverted the maliks' authority. To a certain extent, the tribes existed in a constant state of internal conflict. Heavily armed, aggressive and unable to sustain themselves on their own lands, the Mahsuds and Wazirs raided caravans passing through their territory, neighboring tribes and the rich Punjab valley to the east.⁷³

For the British, the Gomal and Tochi routes were critical as their control was an essential element of the British defensive strategy against Russian incursion. In the event of Russian aggression, British troops would rush to the border in the same way they had during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. As such, the policy that developed starting in 1890 focused on maintaining physical control of the routes. The strips of land running along these valleys up to the Afghan border were designed —“protected areas” and administered by British political agents. Posts, manned by tribal levies supervised by British officers, maintained security and subsidies were paid to tribal maliks to maintain the peaceful nature of the tribes.⁷⁴

Richard Bruce, protégé of Sir Robert Sandeman and veteran of the pacification campaign in Baluchistan, became chief political officer for Waziristan. Having witnessed the success of Sandeman's system, Bruce endeavored to repeat it himself by empowering the tribal maliks administering the turbulent province through their tribal systems. Unlike

Sandeman, however, Bruce lacked both military and economic tools to empower the maliks. After the Second Anglo-Afghan War and the demarcation of the Durand Line, the Indian Government decided to focus its limited troop resources on profitable districts. Though 100,000 rupees a year was made available for the employment of tribal levies and the payment of subsidies, the government sought to minimize expenses in what it considered a deficit province.⁷⁵ They wanted to pass *through* Waziristan, not garrison or develop it. As a result, the maliks were left to enforce justice without British support. Programs to ameliorate the poverty of the tribal people and demonstrate the benefits of peaceful interaction with the British were never attempted. The only evidence of British intentions given to the tribes was the occupation of their fertile land in the Tochi and Gomal River Valleys.

Predictably, this tenuous relationship proved ineffective and a series of insurrections followed. The first of these occurred in 1893. Responding to the murder of a British survey agent and his tribal guide within Mahsud tribal lands in July, Bruce called for the maliks to bring the murderers forward for punishment in accordance with tribal law. This occurred, and a council of tribal elders found the five men responsible guilty and sentenced them to a term of imprisonment. Tribal backlash was immediate. The three leading maliks were murdered by rebellious factions led by a local holy man, Mullah Powindah. Recognizing the threat to his system of administration, Bruce requested a punitive expedition against Powindah be launched immediately. Given its policy of limiting direct military involvement on the frontier, however, the British Government refused to intercede.⁷⁶

Unwillingness to support the local chiefs had a dramatic effect. A British expedition to mark the Afghan border was attacked by more than 2,000 tribesmen led by Mullah Powindah at Wana in November and killing five British officers and 30 native troops. This aggression was sufficient to warrant a response. By December three brigades advanced into Mahsud country, burning their grain and destroying their tribal fortifications. Though attempts were made to punish the guilty, ultimately the costly and manpower-intensive campaign disaffected the entire tribe for the actions of a single faction and thus reinforced Mullah Powindah's position. Though the Mahsud maliks capitulated in January, the mullah would continue to plague British efforts in Waziristan until his death ten years later.

Though small in comparison to the uprisings that followed in 1897 and 1919, the 1894 insurrection highlighted the flaws in the British approach. Protecting strategically important areas seemed like a prudent way to avoid inflaming tribal resentment. It also conserved British resources. This approach relied on tribal leaders effectively policing themselves, but provided no resources to support their efforts. Bruce recognized the ineffectiveness of this approach. Assessing the effectiveness of his tenure as Chief Political Officer in Waziristan, he stated, —“Until we are in a position to afford the Waziri Maliks material assistance within their own country for the coercion of criminals, and our tribal levies adequate protection, we cannot expect the same successful results in Waziristan as are attained in Baluchistan.”⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Bruce's admonition fell on deaf ears. Attention focused on the establishment of new protected areas to make future punitive expeditions easier. The 1894 settlement required the Mahsuds to allow a new road into their territories from Shapur to Wana. Despite the protest of the maliks that this

would disaffect the tribe and occupy scarce and politically important farm land, the issue was forced and British protected areas advanced deeply into tribal held areas.⁷⁸

The routing policy that followed in Waziristan fed an escalating cycle of tribal insurrection and punitive response. The terrain presented a difficult tactical problem to military units conducting punitive operations. Securing the high ground with temporary outposts, called piquets, required large military units and deliberate procedures in order to protect against tribal attack.⁷⁹ With the mechanization of the military in the wake of World War I, increased offensive capability and protection came at the cost of mobility. Military columns moved as slow as a mile per day by 1919, and the installation of permanent security positions overlooking key routes slowly increased the military presence.⁸⁰

General Sir Andrew Skeen, who commanded during the 1919 insurrection in Waziristan and eventually rose to Chief of Staff of the British Army, summarized the British military's response to this tactical problem: the construction of roads. Roads sped military movement into the tribal areas and decreased the vulnerability of military convoys. Mechanized assets could more easily maneuver, and the requirement for extensive piqueting of the high ground decreased. Road building would therefore be a facet of every punitive expedition and were constructed even as columns advanced against the tribes.⁸¹ Instead of acting as both a military conduit and a symbol of development, these routes were tools of control. Designed to rob the tribes of their greatest military asset, isolation, road construction boomed. The last vestiges of Sandeman's efforts to empower tribal leadership and peacefully penetrate the restive border areas were discarded in favor of an aggressive military approach. British routing

policy is concisely summarized by the terms it offered the Wazir tribe at the conclusion of the 1919 insurrection:

The British Government will make roads, station troops and build posts wherever it may deem necessary or desirable in any part of the Tochi Agency. . . . The Tochi Wazirs will not interfere in any way with the construction of roads within the Tochi Agency. Such roads may be constructed with any labour the British Government may wish to employ.⁸²

The reluctance of the Indian Government to invest money and manpower into a pacification strategy in Waziristan in 1890 ultimately resulted in increasing expenditures and military commitment until its withdrawal in 1947. The yearly cost of administration and military action doubled from 14 million to 28 million rupees from 1921 to 1931, and the military stationed 16 battalions in Waziristan alone and a further 30 stationed elsewhere in the North-West Frontier Province.⁸³ If these efforts aimed to make Waziristan more peaceful, they failed. Tribal resentment against British occupation increased, and the tribes used funds they received for contracted road construction labor to purchase arms and ammunition. The tribal rifle factory in the Kohat Pass produced arms using construction money, and the tribes also purchased British and European weapons as well.⁸⁴ The tribal levies paid to protect the road learned British tactics and frequently sided with insurgent leaders instead of their British paymasters. Thus, the British faced a well-armed and tactically astute enemy when the Faqir of Ipi, a local religious leader, mobilized a massive insurrection in 1936 that even the significant military assets already stationed in Waziristan were insufficient to halt. The cycle of insurrection and military response became so costly that British colonial leadership even gave serious consideration to a return to Sandeman's methods of peaceful penetration.⁸⁵

The legacy of the British experience in Baluchistan and Waziristan was a mis-remembering of both Sandeman's system and the role of roads in COIN. The increasing tribal hostility after 1920 was attributed to the difficult Waziri tribal culture and the failure of Sandeman's system. The tactical lessons associated with operating against the tribes were recorded, but their negative contribution to the pacification strategy received little official note. Only the work of C. E. Bruce, as detailed in Chapter Two, recorded the shortcomings of road construction in a pacification campaign.

¹P. S. A. Berridge, *Couplings to Khyber: The Story of the North Western Railway* (Great Britain: David and Charles Limited, 1969), 86.

²Christian Tripodi, —'Good for one but not the other'; The 'Sandeman System' of Pacification as Applied to Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier, 1877-1947," *Journal of Military History* 73 (2009): 775.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 776.

⁵Thomas Henry Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on our Indian Frontier* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1895), 92-93.

⁶Thornton, 114.

⁷Berridge, 87.

⁸Tripodi, 781.

⁹Ibid., 780.

¹⁰Ibid., 796.

¹¹Berridge, 90.

¹²Major General Sir Thomas Seaton, *From Cadet to Colonel: The Record of a Life of Active Service* (London: Hurst and Blacklett, Publishers, 1866), 128.

¹³Thornton, 110.

¹⁴Colonel Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, *India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), 37.

¹⁵Thornton, 110.

¹⁶Richard Isaac Bruce, *The Forward Policy and its Results* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900), 122.

¹⁷Carlotta Gall, —In Remote Pakistan Province, a Civil War Festers,” *The New York Times*, 2 April 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/02/world/asia/02pakistan.html?_r=1 (accessed 23 February 2010).

¹⁸Thornton, 110.

¹⁹Richard Bruce, 121.

²⁰Thomas Henry Thornton, —Baluchistan and the New Indian Province,” *Asian Review* 5 (1888): 70.

²¹Ralph Hughes-Buller and Jamiat Rai, *Baluchistan District Gazeteer Series: Quetta –Pishin* (Ajmer: Scottish Mission Industries Co., Ltd., 1907), 304.

²²Berridge, 138.

²³Richard Bruce, 85.

²⁴Thornton, 89.

²⁵Thornton, 317.

²⁶Richard Bruce, 125.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 126.

²⁸Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 228.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 156.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 93.

³¹Thornton, 131.

³²Captain G. K. Scott-Moncrieff, —The Frontier Railways of India,” *Professional Papers of the Corps of Engineers. Occasional Papers* 11 (1885), 218.

³³Berridge, 94.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Scott-Moncrieff, 219.

³⁶Berridge, 141.

³⁷Thornton, 143.

³⁸Tanner, 216.

³⁹Thornton, 123.

⁴⁰Ibid., 142.

⁴¹Richard Bruce, 103.

⁴²Ibid., 106.

⁴³Tanner, 217.

⁴⁴Richard Bruce, 108.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 110.

⁴⁷Tanner, 216.

⁴⁸Thornton, 340.

⁴⁹Berridge, 136.

⁵⁰Scott-Moncrieff, 274.

⁵¹Asian Review, 76.

⁵²Bruce, 125.

⁵³Ibid., 223.

⁵⁴Ibid., 224.

⁵⁵Ibid., 231.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Berridge, 140.

⁵⁸Ibid, 140.

- ⁵⁹Scott-Moncrieff, 226.
- ⁶⁰Asian Review, 84.
- ⁶¹Richard Bruce, 138.
- ⁶²Berridge, 153.
- ⁶³Ibid., 145.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., 136.
- ⁶⁵Asian Review, 72.
- ⁶⁶A. L. P. Tucker, *Sir Robert G. Sandeman K. C. S. I.: Peaceful Conqueror of Baluchistan* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 63.
- ⁶⁷Richard Bruce, 151.
- ⁶⁸Asia Review, 79.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., 80.
- ⁷⁰Ibid., 78.
- ⁷¹General Staff Army Headquarters India, *Operations in Waziristan: 1919-1920* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1921), 7-12.
- ⁷²T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849–1947* (Great Britain: MacMillan Press LTD, 1998), 4.
- ⁷³General Staff Army Headquarters India, 3-5.
- ⁷⁴Ibid., 10.
- ⁷⁵Richard Bruce, 266.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., 258-260.
- ⁷⁷Ibid., 248.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., 296-297.
- ⁷⁹Colonel J. P. Villiers-Stuart, *Letters of a Once Punjab Frontier Force Officer to his Nephew* (London: Sifton Praed and Co., Ltd., 1925), 38.
- ⁸⁰General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing it On: Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the North-West Frontier of India* (London: Gale and Polden, LTD., 1939), 18.

⁸¹Ibid., 17.

⁸²General Staff Army Headquarters India, 159.

⁸³Tripodi, 797.

⁸⁴General Sir Andrew Skeen, 16.

⁸⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

THE KANDAHAR TO TARIN KOWT ROAD

Where the roads end, the Taliban begin.

— General Karl Eikenberry

The challenge of pacifying a restive, tribal population in an isolated and mountainous region bedeviled the British throughout their tenure on the Afghan frontier. Sir Robert Sandeman demonstrated that peaceful incorporation of tribal populations with little history of central government was possible. It required a committed and flexible approach that empowered local governance but also displayed willingness to use force. Though pursuing strategic objectives, this approach established the welfare of the population as its foundation and the tribal structure as its tool. As demonstrated by the British efforts in Waziristan, however, this approach was ineffective if executed in a piecemeal fashion.

Roads in both Baluchistan and Waziristan met the British operational requirement to move into and through tribal areas on the Afghan border. They proved valuable when nested within a pacification effort that integrated military and development efforts. When used purely as a method to enhance military operations, however, road construction fed an escalating cycle of tribal uprising and punitive response. The question addressed in this chapter is how roads are incorporated into current efforts in Afghanistan. This question is explored through examination of the history of the construction of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in southern Afghanistan and the use of the road since its completion on 15 September 2005.

Background and Strategic Context

For both the Mullah Mohammed Omar and future Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the area through which the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road passed was the starting point for their rise to power. Mullah Omar, a member of the Hotak branch of the Pathan Ghilzai tribe, was born in a small village in Deh Rawod District of Oruzgan Province west of the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt. As a village Mullah in Panjwai District, west of Kandahar City, he led an uprising in 1994 against a local warlord who had abducted two young girls. His militia of Taliban (religious students) killed the warlord and in doing so sparked a religious and political movement rooted both in strict adherence to Islam and the Pathan ethnic identity.¹ Expanding outwards from its heartland in Kandahar, Oruzgan, and Zabul Provinces, the Taliban rapidly gained control of a majority of the country. Though opposed by a grouping of Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara tribal militias referred to as the Northern Alliance, by 2001 the Taliban were on the verge of completing their victory in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar's government, based out of Kandahar, enforced strict religious law and even sheltered Osama bin Laden in a compound near the airport.

Hamid Karzai, as the head of the influential Popalzai branch of the Pathan Durrani tribe, viewed Kandahar as his ancestral home and base of power within Afghanistan. Historically, the Popalzai tribe provided the rulers of Afghanistan. Ahmed Shah Durrani was the first Amir of Afghanistan after seizing power in 1747. From that point until the overthrow of King Zahir Shah in the 1973, Popalzai Durrani led Afghanistan.² Karzai lived in Quetta, Pakistan, throughout the Taliban's rise to power and actively politicked against Mullah Omar. The Taliban murdered Karzai's father in

1999, and sought to eliminate the Popalzai threat to their authority amongst Pathans.³ After his father's death, Karzai courted dissident tribal chiefs in Quetta and planned a Pathan insurgency against the Taliban. All he needed to mobilize his network and start the insurgency was external support. To the international community, however, Karzai was an intellectual rather than a fighter. Unlike other former Mujahedeen commanders, Karzai was well-educated and fluent in six languages. Though he participated in the insurgency against the Soviets in the 1980s, he never directly fought them. To gain the support of the United States, he would have to first prove himself as a capable military leader.⁴

The struggle for control of Kandahar, and in turn the Pathan tribal group, played out along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in fall 2001. Driving north from Quetta along the route of the Sind to Peshin Railroad, Karzai crossed the Afghan border at Chaman and moved north to Kandahar (see figure 7). Riding a motorbike with only a few of his trusted advisors, Karzai aimed to reach Tarin Kowt where he would foment an insurrection against the Taliban. Karzai later described Tarin Kowt as —the heart of the Taliban movement.”⁵ Taliban leadership had family connections to the area. Separating Tarin Kowt from the Taliban would be an enormous psychological victory that he hoped would spark a wider uprising. His two day trek from Kandahar took him up a road which at that time was no more than a dirt trail. It was one of only two passes through the Shah Maqsud and Kafar Jar Ghar ranges of the Hindu Kush Mountains.



Figure 7. Kandahar Province with Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road Marked in Black
Source: Carl Forsberg, *Afghanistan Report 3: The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar* (Washington, DC: the Institute for the Study of War, 2009), 10.

Over the next few weeks Karzai built his base amongst the tribes, communicating with the outside world by satellite telephone. His efforts were noticed by U.S. forces, which dispatched a 14-man Special Forces detachment to directly support Karzai. When on 16 November the elders of Tarin Kowt decided to oppose the Taliban and took control of the city, Karzai and Captain Jason Amerine, the leader of the Special Forces Detachment, knew a battle was looming. Mullah Omar, furious at the insurrection in Tarin Kowt, dispatch 1,000 fighters in Toyota pickup trucks to move north along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in order to retake the city and capture Karzai.⁶ On the 17th, Captain Amerine engaged the Taliban column in a running battle along the road from the northern border of Kandahar Province to the outskirts of Tarin Kowt. Using American air power, his team largely destroyed the Taliban forces and Karzai's militia secured victory.⁷ In the eyes of both his U.S. backers and the Taliban, Karzai's Pathan uprising now became legitimate.

The effects of Karzai's victory were almost immediate. With the Northern Alliance advancing southward, Karzai in Tarin Kowt, and U.S. airpower decimating his forces, Mullah Omar and most Taliban fighters in Kandahar fled to Pakistan using the same route Karzai had less than two months earlier. On 27 November the various factions of the anti-Taliban movement met in Bonn, Germany to decide on interim leadership for Afghanistan. Only one clear choice existed from the Pathan tribal group. On 5 December, Karzai was named interim president of Afghanistan while he still directed operations from Tarin Kowt.⁸ With Pathan tribes rallying to him, Karzai and Gul Agha Sherzai, another resistance leader, seized Kandahar on 8 December 2001.⁹

The events that occurred in late 2001 along the route of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt road resulted in a startling reversal of fortunes for both Hamid Karzai and Mullah Omar. In only two months, control of this critical region and leadership in Afghanistan changed hands. Though Karzai would preside over the interim government in Kabul, he never forgot the events that brought him to power. In fact, he kept the satellite telephone he used in Tarin Kowt as a keepsake in his bedroom in the presidential palace.¹⁰ For Omar, regaining control of Kandahar and Oruzgan provinces was critical to the re-establishment of Taliban authority in southern Afghanistan. Reconstituting his forces in Pakistan throughout 2002, Omar was clear about his intentions. He stated: “~~the~~ battle [in Afghanistan] has [just] started, its fire has been kindled and it will engulf the White House, seat of injustice and tyranny.”¹¹ Clearly, the battle for Kandahar and Oruzgan was far from over.

Throughout 2003, the Taliban infiltrated fighters, equipment and supplies into southern and eastern Afghanistan. With only 19,000 U.S. - led coalition troops and 9,000 NATO-ISAF forces to conduct operations throughout the country, efforts to cut off the flow of Taliban men and materiel were only partially effective.¹² Omar established a new leadership council for the Taliban in June, and exhorted his followers to increase violence against both coalition forces and the Karzai government.¹³ Violence in Kandahar, Zabul, and Oruzgan provinces increased throughout the year. On 29 May, over 500 Taliban fighters led by the new Taliban commander in southern Afghanistan, Mullah Dadullah, fought U.S. forces for nine days in Zabul province in order to protect lines of communication into Kandahar and Oruzgan. Bases of operation were established in the isolated and mountainous northern districts of Kandahar Province. Mountainous, north-

south running river valleys on the border of Zabul and Kandahar provinces became staging areas for Taliban operations, the most important of which was the Chenartu River Valley. The towns of Zamto Kalay, El Bak, and Ordobagh were strongholds for Taliban operations. They also lay along the road from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt, the same one Hamid Karzai travelled in 2001.¹⁴

With mandated, nation-wide presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for October 2004, pressure mounted on the interim Afghan government and the international forces supporting it. Disruption of the first election in twenty five years was critical to the Taliban's effort to discredit Karzai and his government. Nowhere would this effort have more impact than in Tarin Kowt, where Karzai established himself as a Pathan leader and many were still sympathetic to the Taliban cause. Since 2001, coalition forces had failed to establish a continuous presence in both northern Kandahar and Oruzgan provinces. The nearest coalition base was Kandahar Airfield, over 85 miles away. Any military operation in the province, let alone an election campaign, would face serious obstacles. It was these factors that led to the decision to commit the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) theater reserve, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to Afghanistan with the mission of setting the conditions for and securing the election effort in Oruzgan Province.¹⁵

The 22nd MEU's was designated the main effort of a theater-level operation to support the upcoming elections and thwart the expected upsurge in Taliban activity in spring 2004, code-named Mountain Thrust. The MEU's mission was to re-assert government authority in Oruzgan Province and facilitate the election process there. Deploying to Kandahar Airfield as a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), the 22nd

MEU, also known as Task Force Linebacker, began long-range patrols into Oruzgan Province on 25 March. These missions identified a dirt airstrip in the vicinity of Tarin Kowt as the best potential site for a new FOB, named FOB Ripley, to support both the ground and air components of the MAGTF. FOB construction occurred concurrently with operations focused on facilitation of voter registration and combat operations against Taliban safe havens and insurgent concentrations. For its end state, the MEU aimed to set conditions for successful elections without significant interference from the Taliban.¹⁶

To accomplish this mission, Task Force Linebacker faced a significant obstacle: the road. Just as Karzai discovered in his clandestine trip to Oruzgan in 2001, the trip from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt required traversing a narrow trail through mountainous terrain. Military convoys could travel no faster than seven miles per hour along the route, and the entire trip took two days to complete. Large, vulnerable convoys carrying construction materials required dedicated security that detracted from combat operations.¹⁷ Although a C-130 transport aircraft capable airstrip was under construction within the new FOB, aerial resupply alone was insufficient to support the needs of the task force in later phases of the operation.

The lack of a high-speed line of communication between Kandahar and Tarin Kowt not only hampered the MEU's mission, but also jeopardized the planned counterinsurgency strategy for Oruzgan. The 25th Infantry Division (ID) and its attachments, designated Combined Joint Task Force 76 (CJTF-76), planned to expand on the MEU's success and assert control over restive Oruzgan Province. Combined Task Force (CTF) Bronco, consisting of 3/25th ID and its attachments, was assigned responsibility for Oruzgan and assigned 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment (2-5 IN) to

operate in Oruzgan after the MEU's departure. A provincial reconstruction team (PRT) would be established in Tarin Kowt and Special Forces units would operate from the FOB.¹⁸ Colonel Richard Pedersen, the CTF Bronco commander, knew that without a reliable, high speed road to Kandahar the long-term support of the FOB would be impossible. A road would provide a reliable main supply route for forces operating in Oruzgan and open the isolated and mountainous province by connecting it to the Afghan government.¹⁹ The MEU began the clearance of Oruzgan, and now the area would be held by CTF Bronco and connected to the Afghan government through the initiation of road construction in spring 2004.

Human and Physical Terrain

To understand the challenges that faced the builders of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, it is first necessary to examine the human and physical terrain through which the road passed. A map of the road is provided in figure 8. Following the Arghandab river northeast from Kandahar City, the road traverses the open and fertile plain of the Arghandab and Southern Shah Wali Kot Districts before entering the southern edge of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Following a narrow valley that passes between the Shah Maqsoud and Kafar Jar Ghar mountain ranges, the route criss-crosses dry riverbeds and low hills before turning westward and entering Nesh District. Moving north through more open terrain, the road then ascends an escarpment and crossing into Oruzgan Province. The 85 mile long route reaches its terminus in the —Tarin Kowt Bowl,” a small valley ringed by mountains where the capital of Oruzgan Province is situated.



Figure 8. The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, Carl Forsberg
Source: Carl Forsberg, *Afghanistan Report 3: The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar* (Washington, DC: the Institute for the Study of War, 2009), 10.

The beginning of the road, the city of Kandahar, is situated in the fertile plain between the Arghandab and Dowrey rivers. It has a population of over 400,000 people and is the second largest city in Afghanistan. Highway 1, also known as the Ring Road, connects Kandahar to Herat on the Iranian border and Kabul, the largest city and capital of Afghanistan. Highway 4 runs southwards from Kandahar, crossing the border with Pakistan at Spin Boldak and continuing to Quetta. Thus, Kandahar is the major transportation and economic hub of southern Afghanistan. Control of the city dominated Pathan tribal politics since the 1700s, and continues to shape the human terrain today. Prior to Ahmed Shah Durrani's ascension to power, the Hotak Ghilzai tribal group was

dominant amongst Pathans and controlled Kandahar. After 1747, however, the Zirak Durrani Tribe seized power and systematically weakened Ghilzai influence.²⁰ Durrani himself oversaw the first of two large forced migrations of Ghilzai Pathans north into Oruzgan Province. Amir Abdur Rahman then forced many of the Ghilzai to move northward from Oruzgan and replaced them with Popalzai Durrani only a century later. By forcing Ghilzai north, the Durrani secured Kandahar for themselves and extended Pathan influence north into mountainous areas historically controlled by the Hazara ethnic group.²¹

The ramifications of these forced migrations are evident today. The Zirak Durrani tribes control Kandahar while Hotak Ghilzai influence is minimal. The Popalzai, Barakzai, Alokozai, and Achakzai off-shoots of the Zirak Durrani all control different areas of Kandahar Province. In the city itself, the Barakzai and Popalzai tribes exert the strongest influence. Though communist, warlord, and Taliban rule weakened Popalzai influence from 1973 to 2001, the rise of Hamid Karzai has restored Durrani control. Ahmed Wali Karzai, Hamid's brother and a leader in the Popalzai tribe in Kandahar has consolidated control since Hamid's installation as interim President in 2001 and assumed leadership of the Kandahar Provincial Council in 2005.²²

The route to Tarin Kowt passes through the northern suburbs of Kandahar from Highway 1 paralleling the Arghandab River. The Arghandab district's population is concentrated in the fertile areas watered by the river. Populated primarily by the Alokozai tribal group, the district was characterized in 2004 as having strong tribal structure as well as military capability under the leadership of Mullah Naqib.²³ Throughout the insurgency against the Soviets in the 1980s, the district served as a fortified stronghold

for Mujahedeen fighters from which operations were launched into Kandahar city. The network of orchards, irrigation canals, and tightly spaced fields made Soviet armored forces ineffective, and numerous battles were fought for control of the fertile valley. The largest occurred in June 1987, when the Mujahedeen successfully defended their stronghold, which lay along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. For 34 days they withstood a combined arms offensive by Soviet and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) forces. After a loss of over 250 soldiers, 100 vehicles and 13 aircraft the Soviets broke off the attack and never again attempted to control Arghandab. The leader of the Mujahedeen defense was Mullah Naqib, the subsequent leader of the Alokozai tribe.²⁴ Taliban leadership well remembered the role of the Arghandab as a fortified base and sought to control it after 2001. The district's proximity to Kandahar and availability for arable land also led to competition for control between the provincial government led by the Popalzai Ahmed Wali Karzai and the Alokozai leadership.

Perhaps more significant than tribal differences is the divide between urban and rural Kandahar Province that begins in Shah Wali Kot District. In contrast to the fertile Arghandab Valley, a sparse population of only 34,000 people huddles closely to the Arghandab River and its tributaries.²⁵ The road passes both the Dahla Dam and Arghandab Lake as it moves northward, as shown in figure 9. Built by the United States in the 1950s, the dam and its downstream channels provide water for irrigation across the Arghandab River Valley. The benefits of the dam and lake have little impact on Shah Wali Kot, however, as is evidenced by the barren series of low ridges and hills that characterize the terrain.²⁶



Figure 9. Arghandab Lake and the Dahla Dam

Source: Mitch Potter, "Security Standoff stalls Canadian Dam Project in Kandahar," *thestar.com*, <http://www.thestar.com/News/Canada/AfghanMission/article/820752> (accessed 27 March 2011).

Ethnically, the southern half of Shah Wali Kot is dominated by the Popalzai and Alokozai tribal groups, with smaller Ghilzai enclaves.²⁷ The Popalzai are the largest land owners in the area, and preside over an exploitative agricultural system. Though farm products are the main export of the district, the majority of farmers work on rented land, where they receive only three to six percent of the crop.²⁸ As a result, the population of the southern half of the district is impoverished in comparison to its neighbors to the south. With only a 6 percent literacy rate in the district and, in 2004, only a dirt road connecting it to Kandahar, Shah Wali Kot was isolated from both the government and Kandahar city.²⁹

Traveling north from the Dahla Dam, the path of the road reaches the village of Dilak, where the Shah Wali Kot District Center and Afghan National Police (ANP) District Headquarters are co-located. In 2004, the district chief was Hayatullah Popal, a Popalzai tribesman with little influence outside of the district center itself. ANP patrolled

only south of the district center, choosing not to attempt to exert government influence into the northern half of the district. Passing Dilak, the road passed through narrow valleys and over low ridge lines. With towering 8,000 foot ridge lines on either side, the trail followed one of only two passes through the mountains. The population of northern Shah Wali Kot district was congregated in narrow, interconnected river valleys through which tributaries of the Arghandab River run. The largest of these valleys, the Chenartu and Baghtu river valleys, are the most populated of the areas along the road as it moves north through a series of small villages.

Ethnically, a dramatic transition occurs along the road as it moves through the Baghtu and Chenartu valleys. Unlike the rest of Shah Wali Kot, these valleys are populated by Hotak Ghilzai tribesmen. The villages of Wech Baghtu, Bowraganah, Katasang, El Bak, and Ordobagh all have stronger tribal connections to Ghilzai-dominated Zabul Province to the east than to the Popalzai-dominated Afghan government and police.³⁰ In 2004, the Afghan government had no control in this isolated area and the Taliban utilized the area surrounding the road for sanctuary. Less than 30 kilometers to the west of the road, the village of Gumbad was a known Taliban staging area. Nestled in a small valley amongst towering Shahmardan Mountains, the area was referred to as the “~~bdy~~ button.” The Chenartu valley, which also harbored Taliban within its sympathetic population, lay only six kilometers to the west of the road. Thus, the route acted both as a path for the Afghan government to reach Tarin Kowt and provided access for the Taliban into the fertile Arghandab valley and Kandahar City.



Figure 10. The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, entering the Baghtu River Valley before Construction

Source: Photograph taken by the author.

Progressing northeast into the Nesh district, the road emerges from the mountain pass and into a wide valley, as shown in figure 11. Sparsely populated and part of Oruzgan Province until 2004, the district was vitally important to the Taliban. The large, east-west running valley in the southern portion of the district connects Zabul, Kandahar and Helmand Provinces. The Taliban line of communication from Pakistan ran through this valley, which was isolated from the Afghan government as well as U.S. forces.³¹ The road next progressed north into Oruzgan Province, ascending the ridge line from which CPT Amerine first engaged the Taliban during the Battle of Tarin Kowt in 2001.



Figure 11. Looking South from the Ridgeline used by CPT Amerine in the Battle of Tarin Kowt

Source: Photograph taken by the author.

Entering the Tarin Kowt district, the road passes through low hills into the fertile —Tarin Kowt Bowl.” At the confluence of the Tiri, Dorafshan and Garmab Rivers, the valley is home of the capital city, Tarin Kowt. With a population of 17,000, it is the largest population center in Oruzgan and, by June 2004, also the location of FOB Ripley.³² Ethnically, Oruzgan’s population is predominantly Popalzai and Ghilzai Pathan, with Hazara minorities present only in the northern districts. Its rugged terrain and isolation make the province an ideal safe haven for insurgents, and it was used as such throughout the Soviet conflict. Dehrawod district was critical to the Mujahedeen effort, serving as a supply base for operations in Helmand, Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces. In October 1984, a 1,000-man insurgent force laid siege to the DRA militia base in the district. For 45 days, the fighters attacked the district center while the Soviets worked to move armored columns through the mountainous terrain. Foreshadowing future coalition efforts, the Soviets constructed roads into Dehrawod to facilitate movement of the forces

to finally counter insurgent activity.³³ After their defeat in 2001, the Taliban used Oruzgan's rugged mountains and isolated valleys in the same way the Mujahedeen had 20 years earlier.

Governance in Oruzgan is dominated by the Popalzai branch of the Zirak Durrani tribe. In 2004, provincial governor Jan Mohammed Khan presided over a relatively isolated government enclave in an otherwise Taliban-dominated province. A prominent Mujahedeen fighter during the 1980s, Jan Mohammed was rabidly anti-Taliban as a result of imprisonment and torture at their hands when they were in power. As the leader of the Popalzai tribes in Oruzgan, he provided critical support to Hamid Karzai in 2001 and was one of the leaders of the anti-Taliban uprising in Tarin Kowt.³⁴ He was rewarded with the governorship of Oruzgan in 2002. He utilized a "divide and rule" policy reminiscent of governance in Kandahar, in which Popalzai tribal groups received preference in distribution of government and ISAF aid.³⁵ Minority groups, such as the Ghilzai, held less influence in government and were allegedly targeted by Jan Mohammed and his nephew, Matiullah Khan. Given its isolated position and divisive policies, the Oruzgan's government was in a tenuous position. It relied upon Kandahar as both a political and economic lifeline.

As demonstrated in the above analysis of the human and physical terrain, the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt road was key terrain for all parties operating in Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces in 2004. For the Afghan Government, the road was the only access to its embattled government centers in Shah Wali Kot District and the city of Tarin Kowt. For the insurgents, the road ran between the safe havens of Gumbad and the Chenartu Valley. Additionally, the road both crossed its line of communication into Helmand and

offered a route into the fertile Arghandab River Valley and Kandahar city. The population along the route had no access to government or economic development and little incentive to support coalition efforts. Though prompted by Operation Mountain Storm, the road had the potential to affect much more than simply military mobility.

Building an Interagency Partnership: U.S. Army and USAID Develop a Plan

For CJTF-76, bringing the idea of constructing a road into reality was a challenge that would require interagency partnership. When Task Force Linebacker's mission in Oruzgan ended in July, 2-5 IN would continue operations and require logistical support. Capitalizing on the momentum generated by Operation Mountain Storm and beginning construction quickly would limit the insurgents' ability to interfere. The project would require commitment, however. Building the road was expected to take more than a year given the severity of the terrain and harsh Afghan winter. When combined with the insurgent threat in northern Shah Wali Kot District, it became apparent to one division planner that ~~the~~ reconstruction of the road could and should have been an actual combat maneuver."³⁶

While the reasons for building the road quickly were clear, the method was not. Initial cost estimates for contracted road construction ranged from \$15 to 60 million, which greatly exceeded the authorized \$750,000 limit on use of operations and maintenance (O&M) funds for military construction. The project could be requested as a Contingency Construction Project, which would allow rapid funding without the normal checks and balances provided by traditional United States Congressional oversight. Unfortunately, using Contingency Construction was also assessed by the CJTF Engineer

as too time-consuming for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road project. CJTF-76 needed a partner in the project, and found one in the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).³⁷ USAID's role in building roads in Afghanistan was one part of an international road construction effort that was established and well-funded by 2004.

After the cessation of hostilities in 2001, the magnitude of the challenges facing post-Taliban Afghanistan became clear. Twenty five years of almost continuous war decimated almost every aspect of Afghan society. A fledgling Afghan government could not establish itself successfully without significant development efforts. International aid organizations took the lead in developing the Afghan strategy for reconstruction while at the same time mentoring fledgling Afghan ministries as they established themselves. Initial commitments of aid for Afghanistan flowed in during early 2002, with \$4.5 billion coming from Asian nations alone.³⁸

The Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Program, and the World Bank conducted assessments of various aspects of Afghan infrastructure, natural resources and economy. The product of these efforts, the Comprehensive Needs Analysis (CNA) published in August 2002, provided a harsh assessment of the transportation infrastructure. Only 17 percent of the 3,300 kilometers of roads designated as primary highways were rated as fully functioning and 26 percent were considered to be in fair condition. Over 50 percent of the highways were in poor condition. Bridges and tunnels were damaged or destroyed across the country, and the status of the paved Ring Road was especially desperate.³⁹

Both the CNA and Afghan Government's National Development Framework, published in April 2002, identified road repair and construction as a critical need where

international aid could be effectively applied. Repairing the Ring Road was identified as an immediate need to re-establish connection between Afghanistan's cities and neighboring countries. As an intermediate need, roads were also necessary to connect geographically isolated provincial capitals to the Ring Road and in the process, the central government.⁴⁰ Throughout 2003 the focus of international aid focused on repairing the ring road.

The plan for roads in Afghanistan gained further clarity in 2004 as repairs to existing roads approached completion. Though still driven by the international development community, a strategy for integrating the road network into the larger development strategy was established. Presented in March 2004 at an international donor conference in Berlin, Germany, the plan spelled out the type of roads required in Afghanistan and their priority. Entitled *Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishments and the Strategic Path Forward*, the plan and its technical annexes sorted roads into three categories, from highest to lowest priority. Four-lane paved highways, called Super Corridors, would connect Afghanistan to its neighbors. Two-lane National Highways were next in priority. They would connect the provincial capitals with the Super Corridors. Finally, a network of two-lane gravel roads, called Provincial Roads, would spread from the National Highways.⁴¹

More than priorities, specific projects were identified and funding responsibility assigned from amongst donors. As shown in figure 12, donor countries were assigned to fund the completion of roads across Afghanistan. Benchmarks for success were established, such as raising the density of paved roads from its 2003 level of 0.15 km per 1000 people to 0.23 km in 2010 and 0.46 km in 2015. In only ten years, the plan aimed to

triple the number of paved roads, and even more drastically increase the gravel road density.⁴²

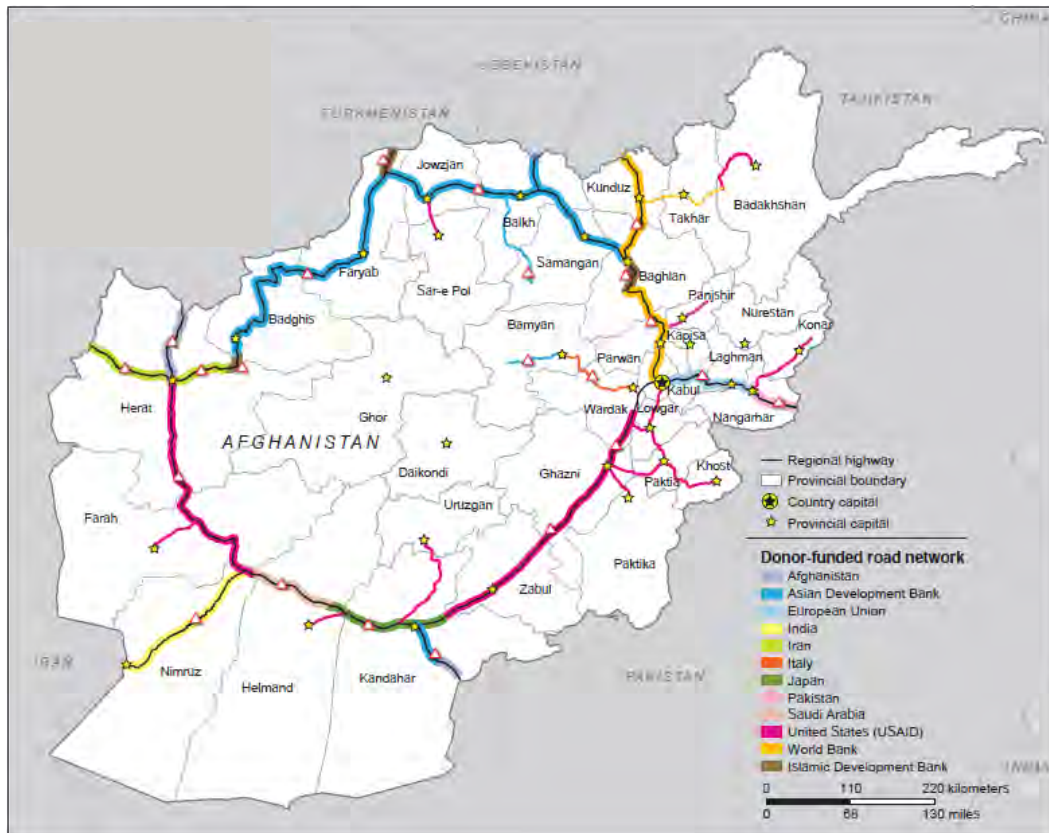


Figure 12. Donor Funded Road Construction from 2002 to 2008

Source: Government Accountability Office, GAO-09-626SP, *Afghanistan: U.S.-and Internationally-Funded Roads* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2009)

High in the priority of projects identified in the plan was the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. Designated National Highway 617, it was slated for contracted construction in 2004 and funded by USAID. With a total budget of \$25 million, it would be the first new National Highway constructed since 2001.⁴³ The insurgent threat along the road and lack of government presence, however, delayed initiation of the project. Few Afghan

construction companies existed at that time, and international companies would not work in unsecured areas. With escalating insurgent attacks on non-governmental agencies conducting humanitarian aid and reconstruction tasks, it was clear that the road could not progress without significant security support.

In early 2004 USAID and CJTF-76 shared a desire to construct a road, and through partnership bring complementary capabilities to the mission. CJTF-76 would provide security and dedicate its military construction capability to the road building effort. USAID would provide technical expertise, project funding, and contracted construction assistance to execute portions of the project outside the military engineers' capabilities. CTF Bronco would secure the construction effort, especially in insurgent sanctuaries in northern Shah Wali Kot District where international contractors were unwilling to work without dedicated military security.

While the immediate military requirement was the establishment of military mobility to FOB Ripley and forces operating in Oruzgan, it appeared at that time that both USAID and CJTF-76 shared the same long-term goal and possessed the capabilities to successfully execute the construction project. Establishing a new National Highway had the potential, in the words of one CJTF-76 planner, to strike a —low aimed at the heart of the Taliban movement.”⁴⁴

Starting the Road: June 2004 to April 2005

For the CTF Bronco Commander, COL Pedersen, the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road was a key facet of his efforts to develop the —“circulation system” of the Afghan government and economy in southern Afghanistan.⁴⁵ As the Regional Command (RC) South Commander, his task force had responsibility for five southern provinces:

Kandahar, Helmand, Oruzgan, Nimruz, and Zabul. Pedersen aimed to deny insurgent influence over the population by pushing his forces away from large forward operating bases, such as Kandahar Airfield, occupying areas controlled by the Taliban and building relationships with the center of gravity, the people.⁴⁶

Recognizing the arc of Taliban controlled terrain running from Zabul Province through northern Kandahar, Oruzgan, and Helmand Provinces, CTF Bronco arrayed its forces accordingly. In Zabul Province, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment established fire bases both along Highway 1 and in the southeastern population center of Shinkay in order to interdict Taliban cross-border movement. 2-5 IN occupied company-sized bases in northern and eastern Oruzgan and FOB Ripley in Tarin Kowt. The brigade's artillery battalion, 3-7 Field Artillery (3-7 FA), operated out of Kandahar Airfield and patrolled Kandahar city and north into Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot. A Romanian Infantry Regiment secured Kandahar Airfield, and the Task Force Ares, a French Special Operations Task Group, would operate around Highway 4 and the Pakistani Border in eastern Kandahar Province. With an enormous area of operations and terrain ranging from mountains to deserts, CTF Bronco accepted risk in Helmand and southern Kandahar province.⁴⁷

Acting on guidance from Lieutenant General David Barno, Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (CFC-A) Commander, Pedersen also established a Kandahar Redevelopment Zone in which reconstruction and development efforts would, it was hoped, jump-start the local economy.⁴⁸ One element of his strategy involved leveraging the capabilities of existing provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Kandahar city and Qalat and establishing two more in Tarin Kowt and Lashkar Gah. The other major

development initiative would be road building. Initiation of major road construction projects in both Kandahar and Helmand Provinces aimed to connect farm to market and outlying communities to the center. Most important, the road construction effort visibly demonstrated to the populace the positive intentions of coalition forces. In summarizing his attitude toward development, COL Pedersen later recalled an encounter he had with a village elder early in his task force's tenure in RC-South. The local man asked him —“are you here to build or are you here to destroy?” COL Pedersen responded, —“I am here to build.”⁴⁹

The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road began as a partnership between CTF Bronco and TF Coyote, the 109th Engineer Group from the South Dakota National Guard. TF Coyote was the engineer task force for Afghanistan. It executed construction engineering and route clearance missions in support of CJTF-76. Commanded by COL Nancy Wetherill, the Coyotes positioned the 528th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) at Kandahar Airfield in May 2004. The 528th was initially tasked with improving facilities on Kandahar and expand the capacity of the airfield itself. Once assigned to the mission of constructing the road, TF Coyote cooperated closely with COL Pedersen and CTF Bronco in order to achieve his intent for the road project.⁵⁰ The concept for construction was to complete the road in three sections, as shown in figure 13.

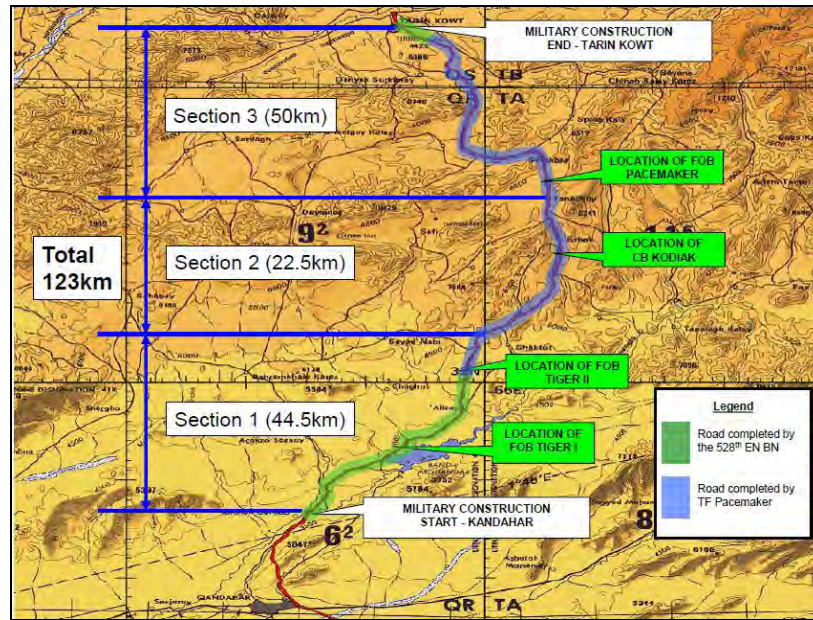


Figure 13. Construction Plan for Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road
Source: Created by author.

The first 28 mile section of the road ran from the northern suburbs of Kandahar city, through the Arghandab district and to the village of Dilak in Shah Wali Kot. In close proximity to Kandahar Airfield, this portion of the road would be completed first. Both CTF Bronco and TF Coyote assessed the next 14 miles of the road to be both the most difficult to construct and most dangerous in terms of enemy threat. The pass through mountainous northern Shah Wali Kot district would require massive earthmoving operations in order to build a reasonably flat road. It lay between two known insurgent safe havens, and had no Afghan government presence whatsoever. In the northern 31 mile section of road the terrain opened up considerably, facilitating more rapid construction and making security operations easier for the constructing force.

COL Wetherill understood that the construction project would not be completed before transferring authority to another unit.⁵¹ Estimates for completion of the road

ranged from February to May 2006. Consequently, efforts on the road would focus on setting the conditions for completion of the middle and northernmost sections of the road. Work would begin in the southern section by establishing a FOB in southern Shah Wali Kot, near the Dahla Dam. Operations would then commence from this base of operations southward into Arghandab District and northwards into Shah Wali Kot. The construction force would then move north along the route past the farthest point of completed road, relocating the FOB north of the district center at Dilak in order to continue construction northwards and southwards. The 528th would also establish an engineer base at FOB Ripley in Tarin Kowt and start building southwards. The challenge of moving along the road and providing logistical support for construction equipment, however, kept this effort small during the 528th's tenure on the road.⁵²

The United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) acted as the contract manager for USAID's contribution to the construction effort. The organization employed Lewis Berger Group, an international construction firm, to execute aspects of the construction project outside of the capability of military engineers.⁵³ After a series of meetings between military engineers, USAID, and UNOPS, it became clear that the requirements for the road would extend beyond the 528th Engineer Battalion's capabilities. Given its status as a National Highway, USAID envisioned a two-lane paved highway as the end product of the construction effort. COL Wetherill and TF Coyote asserted, however, that military engineers possessed many but not all the capabilities necessary to complete the paved road. The 528th would assume responsibility for establishing the alignment of the road, cutting a smooth route through the mountainous terrain, installing culverts and other drainage features along the road, and constructing the

load bearing base of the road. These tasks could be accomplished using available military construction equipment at Kandahar Airfield.⁵⁴

Lewis Berger Group (LBG) would have supply, testing, and construction roles. It would provide gravel, water, and culverts required by the 528th to build the base of the road. Given USAID's required end-state, stringent testing was needed to ensure the road would stand up to highway traffic and support the paved surface. Rather than emplacing a concrete or asphalt surface, it was decided that a double bituminous surface treatment would be applied instead. Two layers of tar and gravel would be placed over a compacted gravel base in order to provide a smooth, durable surface. USAID engineers envisioned that this surface would be easier to construct and within the capability of Afghan engineers to maintain.

As the centerpiece of his development plan for Kandahar and Oruzgan Province as well as the critical supply line for his northernmost battalion task force, COL Pedersen developed an aggressive plan to secure the engineers and tie the road construction effort into his efforts in RC South. CTF Bronco requested and received the Division's cavalry squadron, 3-4 Cavalry. With an OH-58 helicopter equipped troop and a ground troop, the squadron would conduct active patrolling in Shah Wali Kot district to disrupt insurgent activity and engage with the local villages. C Company, 3-7 Field Artillery also conducted operations in Shah Wali Kot, and coordinated the efforts of an Afghan National Army (ANA) company as well. In Tarin Kowt, 2-5 IN would coordinate with the construction effort and conduct operations in southern Oruzgan and Nesh District in order to mitigate the threat to construction forces. When construction progressed to the difficult middle section of road, CTF Bronco was prepared to establish a company area of

operations in the pass in order to support completion of the construction effort. In all, elements from three separate battalion sized elements would provide security to the construction force when operations began in June 2004.

The plan for integration of the new road into the COIN effort was expressed through CTF Bronco's commitment to initiation of the project and its support. The road would act as a conduit for a battalion-sized maneuver force in Oruzgan Province, and perhaps aid in the patrolling of southern Shah Wali Kot as well. Due to an insufficiency of forces, it was unlikely that a persistent presence would remain in the area surrounding the mountainous middle section. The plan for completion of contracted construction projects along the road and transition of maintenance was less clear. TF Coyote assumed the traditional role of the building agent, executing the scope-of-work established with USAID. Funding for construction of bridges along the road and paving of the mountainous middle section of the road was not yet established, so construction of funded elements would either occur later in the construction process or after completion of military efforts. COL Wetherill recalled disagreeing with USAID on the appropriateness of constructing a paved road the local people were unlikely to be able to maintain, but viewed the responsibility for maintenance as an Afghan one. She remembered:

The way I looked at it, it wasn't our road to begin with. We were there constructing it. The Afghans were using it as we were constructing it. So it really wasn't a matter of whether we would turn anything over to them. We were just constructing it and they were using it as we went along. Regardless, they were using the existing road and they were using the road we just constructed.⁵⁵

As road construction was officially inaugurated in the first week of June 2004, it was clear from the groundbreaking ceremony that the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road was

a project of national significance. The United States Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Patrick Fine, Director of USAID-Afghanistan, represented the State Department. Major General (MG) Eric Olson, commander of CJTF-76, as well as Colonels Pedersen and Wetherill represented the military. The governors of both Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces attended, as well prominent Kandahar power brokers Gul Agha Sherzai and Ahmed Wali Karzai. Most importantly, the tribal and village elders along the route of the road witnessed the ceremony.⁵⁶ The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt road would be a united effort and the well-publicized centerpiece of the development effort in RC-South.



Figure 14. COL Pedersen escorts U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad to the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road Groundbreaking Ceremony
Source: Photograph by COL(R) Pedersen.

Initially, the construction and security plans were executed without interruption. Throughout the summer, the road progressed in Arghandab and southern Shah Wali Kot districts. Even with hundreds of military engineers working daily to advance the road, daily progress was measured in hundreds of meters rather than kilometers. The road

builders also presented a vulnerable and predictable target to insurgents. In order to build the road efficiently, it was necessary for construction vehicles to operate within job sites of two miles or more in length. Construction each day would inevitably begin at the location where it left off the night before. Even though the engineers established static security positions on dominant terrain, this would itself be insufficient to counter potential insurgent attacks.⁵⁷

Mitigation of this threat was accomplished during the summer through the active patrolling of Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot by CTF Bronco. By fall, however, the strategic situation in Afghanistan shifted. Maintaining the synchronization of security and construction efforts on the road emerged as a challenge for maneuver forces given the insufficiency of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. In September 2004, the division cavalry squadron, 3-4 Cavalry (3-4 CAV), received a change-in-mission from CJTF-76. The Karzai government's decision to remove Ismael Khan, a prominent warlord, from the governorship of Herat had resulted in rioting and instability.⁵⁸ With only 19,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, it was necessary for CJTF-76 to employ its reserve to assert authority in the western province. 3-4 Cavalry would move to Herat, where it was designated CTF Longhorn and acted as the maneuver land owner for the newly formed RC-West.⁵⁹

Given its dispersed posture across RC-South, CTF Bronco had limited assets to address the sudden vulnerability of the engineers. The solution developed to allow continued construction was an unorthodox combination of military and contracted security. While 3-7 FA assumed 3-4 CAV's area of operations around the construction effort, it could not match the reach and manpower of the cavalry squadron. In total, 3-7

had two maneuver platoons to provide security throughout Kandahar Province. Though securing the construction effort was a high priority, there was insufficient manpower to effectively counteract insurgent targeting of the over 500-Soldier construction effort. As no other maneuver forces were available, the military was forced to turn to USAID for assistance. In what was later described by a USAID official who was working in Afghanistan at the time as a humorous and convoluted arrangement, USAID agreed to contribute funds for the employment of Afghan security contractors to secure military construction operations.⁶⁰

The source for the hired Afghan security was a former Afghan Militia leader and warlord, Sher Agha. A native of Shah Wali Kot, Sher Agha lived near Gumbad and was a member of the Barakzai tribal group.⁶¹ He attended the Afghan Military Academy and served in the Afghan Army prior to the Soviet invasion. He fought with the Mujahedeen, and then became a local tribal warlord after the Soviet departure.⁶² Though ostensibly disbanded during the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program in 2004, Sher Agha still commanded a Barakzai tribal militia that was available for employment.⁶³ In a contract funded by UNOPS and directly managed by the engineer construction battalion, his forces were employed to augment the security effort. Each of the 150 militia members employed by the construction effort would receive \$5.00 a day, with Sher Agha and his sub commanders receiving \$10.00 plus reimbursement for providing vehicles, fuel and arms for his troops. Though low according to western standards, this pay exceeded that of both the Afghan National Army and Police that operated in the area. At a reasonable price of \$30,000 a month, a new security force was available for employment along the road almost overnight.⁶⁴



Figure 15. Sher Agha, Leader of the Contracted Afghan Security Force
Source: Photograph provided by CPT(R) Gregory Parranto.

Thanks to the new security arrangement, construction progressed without incident through the fall and early winter of 2004. The road was completed in Arghandab District, and the engineers constructed a new base, FOB Tiger II, north of the Shah Wali Kot District Center at Dilak. A small construction team moved before winter set in to FOB Ripley in Tarin Kowt, with the intent of starting construction from the northern end of the road southwards. Both the partially completed road and engineer bases contributed to the success of national elections in October. To both the engineer and maneuver commanders, the lack of insurgent action against the construction effort defied expectations. There were no direct or indirect fire attacks or improvised explosive devices (IEDs) employed against the engineers during the effort in the southernmost section of the road, despite the road's vulnerability and potential appeal to the people. To COL Pedersen, the possible explanation lay in the role the road might play for the insurgency. Transit from Tarin Kowt and the isolated valleys of northern Shah Wali Kot was as difficult for insurgents as it was for U.S. troops and the Afghan people.

Unconfirmed reports from intelligence sources indicated that even the Taliban welcomed

the construction of the new road, albeit for its enhancement of their operations.⁶⁵ Also, the road had not yet penetrated the mountainous safe havens in northern Shah Wali Kot or threatened the Taliban LOC through Nesh District. Opposition to the road project was sure to increase when efforts entered these areas.

Progress would not advance into the middle section of the road during the tenure of CTF Bronco and TF Coyote. The Afghan winter was especially harsh in early 2005, grinding construction operations to a halt until March 2005. As is typical in road construction, wet and freezing weather prevented the construction of the structural base of the road. The construction season, therefore, spans from spring to the onset of sustained freezing temperatures. The consequence of a longer, more severe winter was a delay in the estimated completion date of the road to no earlier than February 2006. Thus, the maneuver task force and construction engineers flowing into Kandahar Airfield would face the challenge of advancing the road through the mountains and completing both the middle and northernmost sections of the road.

Changing Task Forces and Priorities

Spring 2005 was characterized by transitions in both units and priorities in RC-South. In February, command of CJTF-76 transitioned from the 25th Infantry Division to the Southern European Task Force (SETAF), led by MG Jason Kamiya. Starting in March, the 173rd Airborne Brigade flowed into Kandahar to relieve CTF Bronco in RC-South while 1st Brigade, 82d Airborne Division assumed responsibility for RC-East. Faced with intelligence that indicated increased insurgent presence in eastern and northeastern Afghanistan, 1st Brigade, designated CTF Devil, became the CJTF-76 main effort. Thus, RC-East received four U.S. infantry battalions while CTF Bayonet received

only two. MG Kamiya assumed risk in RC-South by not backfilling one of the three battalion areas of operation.⁶⁶ 2-5 Infantry, operating in Oruzgan Province, was not replaced by CTF Bayonet. Rather, Oruzgan Province would be designated as a Joint Special Operations Area (JSOA) where four Special Operations A teams positioned in the former company fire bases established by CTF Bronco focus their operations on targeting insurgent safe havens.⁶⁷

The implications of this change for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road were profound. The primary reason for starting the road project had been to support an expanded COIN effort in Oruzgan Province focused on the population. The context of the security relationships developed between the engineer forces constructing the road and the maneuver land owners were tied to the necessity of the road as a lifeline to FOB Ripley and the maneuver battalion operating there. Even with three maneuver battalions, the task of securing the construction effort stretched CTF Bronco's capabilities and required the employment of Afghan contractors. For CTF Bayonet, the situation completely changed. Now, Oruzgan was not in the Bayonet area of operations. With only two U.S. maneuver battalions and designation as a shaping effort, the brigade would have to restructure its approach from that taken by CTF Bronco. Though the road may provide some benefits to the battalion task force operating in Kandahar, it was no longer as vital to the brigade's effort.

CTF Bayonet's disposition of forces reflected these considerations. 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment assumed responsibility for Zabul Province, which remained a Taliban stronghold. It both occupied CTF Bronco's FOBs and expanded into platoon-sized combat outposts. 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment

(3-319 AFAR) assumed responsibility for Kandahar Province. Designated TF Gundevis, it had the task of executing both a fires and maneuver mission in Afghanistan. In its fires capacity, two batteries operated under the tactical control of CTF Devil and conducted fire support missions across both RC East while one battery supported fires in RC South. The battalion also supported the operation of its radar assets across Afghanistan. In its maneuver capacity, Gundevis received numerous attachments to facilitate its operations in Kandahar. A rifle company, an anti-tank company, a long range surveillance detachment, a Romanian infantry company, and other enablers all became part of Gundevis. Additionally, it converted its Headquarters and Service Battery into a maneuver platoon.⁶⁸ Like CTF Bronco, Bayonet would also incorporate international partners, such as Romanian and Canadian forces. In all, the task force numbered over 3,500 men and women.⁶⁹

With the assumption of risk in Oruzgan and the decreased number of maneuver battalions operating in RC-South, a lowering of the priority of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road seemed inevitable. In fact, the opposite occurred. Parliamentary and provincial council elections were scheduled to occur across Afghanistan in fall 2005. Unlike the presidential election in 2004, these elections would involve local people voting for their provincial and parliamentary representatives. There would be hundreds of candidates actively campaigning across Afghanistan. Though military priorities shifted, the importance of the road to national and provincial leaders was unchanged. The road would be both the conduit for ballots from Oruzgan and northern Kandahar and the fulfillment of the development promises made by the Afghan government in the area. The fanfare of the groundbreaking ceremony was a promise to both the provincial leadership

and tribal elders who attended it. Failure to follow through on the promise of completing the road prior to the elections had the potential to delegitimize the efforts of the Afghan government. President Karzai's expression of willingness to attend the opening ceremony of the road upon its completion prior to the elections is evidence of the road's importance.⁷⁰

For the 18th Engineer Brigade, which replaced the 109th Engineer Group as CJTF-76's engineer headquarters, the mission was clearly defined. MG Kamiya set the completion of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road as the top priority among all military engineering efforts across Afghanistan. The remaining 56 miles of road had to be completed prior to the elections on 18 September 2005.⁷¹ The 18th received prioritized support from CJTF-76 to accomplish the mission, and was given the latitude to mass engineer forces on the road. Though this directive provided clarity to the engineer effort, it also revealed an inconsistency in approach towards Oruzgan Province. MG Kamiya was assuming risk in the COIN effort in Oruzgan by not replacing 2-5 Infantry, but at the same time placed unprecedented emphasis on the completion of a road project in the same area in support of the election. This operational-level dissonance in approach would manifest itself during the execution of the road and its use thereafter.

To complete the road, the 18th Engineer Brigade, designated TF Sword, assembled a construction task force that would ultimately reach almost a third of the size of TF Bayonet. TF Pacemaker, consisting of the 864th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) and attachments, was a 1,000-Soldier task force tailored to rapidly execute road construction and limited security operations. With four construction companies, a sapper company equipped to both routes and minefields and an Afghan National Army engineer

element it possessed the majority of the U.S. military road construction capability in Afghanistan. Recognizing the requirement for the task force to operate independently out of both the existing FOBs along the route and future ones that were yet to be built, CJTF-76 also placed two maintenance companies and two signal platoons under the task force's tactical control for the duration of the mission.⁷²

The shift in CJTF-76 maneuver priorities resulted in a unique security arrangement for TF Pacemaker. As with CTF Bronco and TF Coyote, CTF Bayonet would have no command-support relationship with the engineer construction team. TF Sword maintained operational control of the construction effort where the majority of its engineer assets were employed. This is where the similarities ended. Instead of receiving security support from CTF Bayonet, TF Pacemaker would control its own battle space. Two kilometers on either side of the road belonged to the construction team, which meant that Pacemaker would secure itself. TF Gundevil was required to provide a maneuver platoon to the construction task force, but would otherwise execute operations in its own battle space surrounding the road.⁷³ Additionally, the size of the Sher Agha's militia force was increased from 150 to 200 in anticipation of insurgent activity in the middle section of the road. TF Pacemaker's task organization is depicted in figure 16.

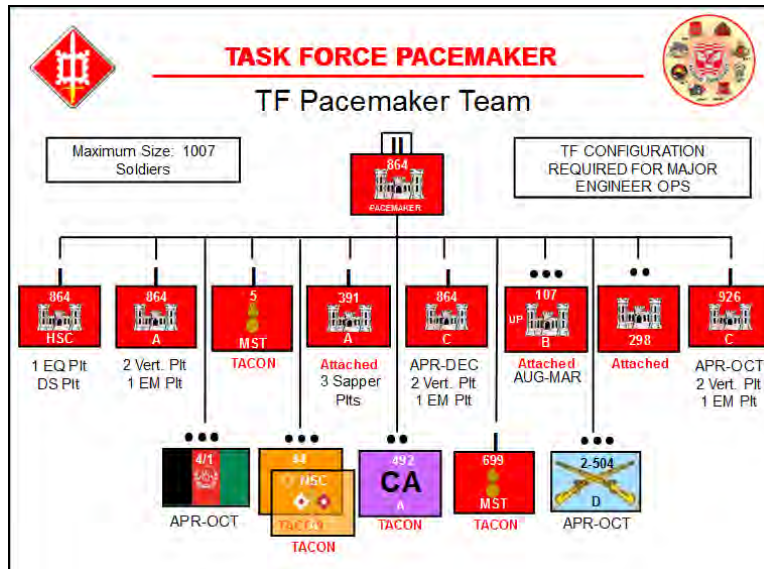


Figure 16. TF Pacemaker Task Organization

Source: Task Force Pacemaker Society of American Military Engineers Presentation, 11 May 2006.

In aggregate, the security arrangement reflected the split in engineer and maneuver priorities that was predictable at a tactical level given the CJTF guidance. As Bayonet had no forces operating in Oruzgan Province and no command-support relationship with TF Pacemaker, the dedication of additional forces to operate in the areas surrounding the road would detract from its efforts within its own battle space. The assignment of one TF Gundevil's platoons to TF Pacemaker for its own security effort further solidified the separate security responsibilities of the two task forces. TF Sword's retention of control over the efforts of the task force executing the decisive engineer operation in Afghanistan, though necessary given the accelerated timeline for completing the project, gave Bayonet no direct stake in the completion of the road effort or its status afterwards. The effects of the split between the engineer and maneuver efforts in would manifest themselves upon completion of the project.

For Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Paul Paolozzi, commander of TF Pacemaker, and his staff, the mission of completing the road was daunting even with the changes in task organization. The requirement to finish the road before the elections meant five fewer months of construction time than the 528th Engineer Battalion had estimated was required. Over the first year of construction operations, the daily progress rate of the 528th hovered between 200 and 300 meters of finished road, with a maximum output of 500 meters. TF Pacemaker would need to complete 550 meters of road each day, at minimum, to complete the mission. The terrain in both the middle and northern sections of the road was also more challenging than that in the section completed by the 528th, and the insurgent threat more elevated. To achieve on a daily basis 110 percent of the maximum daily production by the 528th EN BN during the first phase of construction required a new approach.⁷⁴

Building the Road (April to September 2005)

TF Pacemaker acted quickly to redistribute the construction effort along the entire length of the road. Too much engineer effort was focused at FOB Tiger II working north, with little progress southward from FOB Ripley due to the small size of the construction team there. To address this problem, LTC Paolozzi formed two independent construction teams to build the road from both its northern and southern ends. Each team was tailored to both terrain and security situation in their areas of operation. The task force needed to conduct near continuous construction operations to complete the road by September. Operations continued seven days a week, and to maximize daylight productivity the construction effort continued from dawn until dusk. The task force leadership deliberately

pushed both Soldiers and construction equipment to the limits of their capabilities to meet the accelerated completion date.

The northern construction team, Team Cougar, based itself in FOB Ripley and worked southwards. It received two thirds of the road construction assets in the task force in order to make rapid progress in the open terrain, but was required to secure itself due to a lower insurgent threat. The primary challenge facing the northern effort was logistical. FOB Ripley was both isolated and suddenly empty. After 2-5 Infantry's departure, only a PRT and Special Forces headquarters remained in the FOB. Reliant on local national shipping and resupply via C-130 transport planes, the base regularly experienced shortages of food, fuel and water. Major (MAJ) Jerry Farnsworth, the TF Pacemaker executive officer, later recalled the lack of maneuver presence resulted in limited aerial resupply support, with only four C-130 landings every 14 days. Feeding the hundreds of Soldiers in Team Cougar and repairing the overworked military construction equipment remained a consistent challenge for the northern effort, and one that TF Pacemaker would have to accomplish itself.⁷⁵ Beginning construction in early May, Cougar worked in partnership with LBG in order to rapidly build and pave the road. Though required to produce a minimum of 350 meters of finished road each day, the construction team exceeded 500 meters of finished road on average and by mid-June entered Nesh District.



Figure 17. Team Cougar Operations

Source: Photographs provided by author.

The southern construction team, Team Kodiak, continued north into the middle section of road through mountainous northern Shah Wali Kot district. The terrain faced by Kodiak was characterized by deep ravines and low hills that required significant earth moving operations in order to establish a level and smooth road surface. Prone to flash flooding, the road through the narrow pass also required extensive drainage structure emplacement to support all-weather traffic. Unlike both the northern and southern sections of the road, the middle section passed directly through local villages and crossed the local people's fields and orchards. Negotiating the route of the road was a daily task for Team Kodiak. Completing its minimum required production of 250 meters of road each day was a consistent challenge for the Team Kodiak, without even considering the insurgent threat. The majority of Pacemaker's security capability was committed to the middle section of the road, including both the contracted Afghan militia and the attached infantry platoon. By June its construction operations reached the village of El Bak.



Figure 18. Team Kodiak Operations

Source: Photograph provided by TF Pacemaker Public Affairs Officer.

To connect the northern and southern efforts, it was necessary to move the construction teams closer to each other by establishing new construction bases. As the teams built the road farther from their bases of operation, the commute to work each morning lengthened. Building a base past the end of the completed road and then moving the construction team to it would allow for both the ability to build road in two directions and a shorter commute. In June, TF Pacemaker built two bases to support completion of the construction effort. The first, Construction Base Kodiak, was built to support the southern effort near the pass south of the village of El Bak. The second and larger base, named FOB Pacemaker, was built south of the village of Ordobagh in Shah Wali Kot District. Once completed the teams occupied these bases and proceeded with construction throughout the month of July.

For task force leadership, the USAID-defined end-state for the road was a concern. Though funding for the construction of the many bridges required along the road was scheduled for future contract construction, the funding and contracting process

would not be complete before the elections. The road bypassed potential bridge locations, such as one running through the village of Dilak, and continued on the other side. While LBG was willing to pave the road constructed by Team Cougar in the northern section, both the insurgent threat and a lack of funds constrained its ability to complete the middle section of the road. CTF Sword initiated a \$3 million CERP contract to apply an asphalt chip and seal covering directly to the road surface in order to prevent the immediate degradation of the road surface. It was not, however, the more permanent paving that USAID had executed along the rest of the road, and with contractor mobilization was unlikely to begin before October. The combination of these factors led MAJ Craig Quadrato, the task force operations officer, to describe the end state for construction in the middle third of the road as “good construction access.” Because it would not initially be paved and bridges were not in place, the road would not be all-weather passable.⁷⁶

Building Support—Fostering Support for the Road and the Government

Road construction is, by its nature, tied to the population it connects. The process of building a road provides opportunities for sustained interaction with the communities the road connects and serves. Pacemaker’s road building teams worked on job sites that stretched numerous kilometers and progressed relatively slowly. The road crossed tribal and privately owned land and passed through villages clustered in the valley through which the road’s path travelled. Each kilometer of road required intensive negotiation with local leaders, many of whom needed education on the benefits of the project. For LTC Paolozzi, this process of interacting with and educating the local people was as critical to the success of the engineering effort as the daily construction progress.

In order to support this line of effort, the task force aggressively engaged the villages along the route and worked to enlist their support for both the road and government. Employing funds provided by the Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP), the task force entered each village along the route soliciting their needs and working to address them. Though the \$375,000 allocated to TF Pacemaker was modest in comparison to the \$3.3 million provided to TF Gundeil over the same period, it was focused on reinforcing relationships formed with the local people for whom Pacemaker was building the road. Through its attached civil affairs team, the task force provided generators, farming tools, and seed to each village in the middle section of the road. Open air markets and road-side stands and latrines were also built in anticipation of future traffic along the route, and the task force provided medical treatment at each main village.⁷⁷

The reaction of village elders to the road and overtures of the construction teams reflected both the isolation of northern Shah Wali Kot and its disparate tribal makeup. The villages along the route had no connection with the government. There was no electricity, water distribution, sewer, or other services that are normally provided by the government. For MAJ Quadrato, who conducted many of these engagements, it was clear that some village leaders were suspicious of the road and unwilling to support its construction. He recalled discussing the road construction project with a skeptical elder in the village of Katasang after a humanitarian aid distribution. The elder's only comment on the project was —Why do we need a road? We have no cars.”⁷⁸ LTC Paolozzi recalls a similar interaction with a local sheepherder who attended a village shura (meeting) in the village of Bowraganah. He asserted, —Before the Soviets were here I was a poor Afghan

sheep herder. When the Soviets were here I was a poor Afghan sheep herder. Now that the Americans are here I am a poor Afghan sheep herder. So your road makes no difference to me.” As LTC Paolozzi later asserted, these sentiments expressed a short-sighted view point a citizen might find at any town hall meeting. Building the road required some people to give up portions of their land or deal with the inconvenience of having a construction site outside their home. It was comments like the one that LTC Paolozzi later heard that captured the potential of the road to change the lives of the people along it. An elder in the village of Garlungi stated —~~W~~ have some sick children. We want to be able to get them to the hospital. I want my son to be able to go to one of the Madrassahs. We just want to be able to buy some sugar for our tea.”⁷⁹



Figure 19. LTC Paolozzi meets with Tribal Elders and provides medical treatment to villagers

Source: Task Force Pacemaker Society of American Military Engineers Presentation, 11 May 2006.

Securing the Road

To CPT Gregory Parranto, the commander of the security effort, preventing attacks on the construction effort was a deliberate process. The large job site and slow, predictable progress of the construction effort that aided in interaction with the local people also made it an easy target for insurgents. Moreover, it quickly became clear that construction operations would no longer be uncontested. Insurgents successfully targeted the first reconnaissance mission of the road in April with an improvised explosive device (IED) and routinely attacked and burned local national trucks transporting supplies north to Tarin Kowt.⁸⁰

To counter the threat, the TF Pacemaker security plan required daily IED clearance of both the road and the area surrounding it. Sher Agha's militia established an outer ring of security on the high ground surrounding the construction site, as well as traffic control points along the road. Concerned about both the loyalties and effectiveness of the Afghan guards, who outnumbered his own U.S. security element, Parranto established an inner ring of U.S. security utilizing elements of the construction team. He worried the militia force was paid to provide security, and might actually facilitate sporadic insurgent attacks in order to justify continued employment. The infantry platoon conducted local patrols both inside and outside the security perimeter, as well as patrols along the path of future construction, and conducted negotiations with village leaders on the future path of the construction.⁸¹

While the local government leadership demonstrated a willingness to assist in the road effort, the police proved far less helpful. Hayatullah Popal, the district chief of Shah Wali Kot, held weekly meetings with village elders along the road in order to resolve

disputes and made requests for support from TF Pacemaker that reflected these discussions. Escorted by the Pacemaker security team, he traveled multiple times to directly resolve land disputes associated with the road. His ability to travel outside of the district center, however, was non-existent due to the quality of the ANP. The police refused to travel north into the mountain pass without U.S. security. Requests for support by the ANP chief appeared geared more toward self-enrichment rather than improved security. Despite arranging for the police force to receive new vehicles, radios and generators, at no time did the police execute an independent patrol throughout the summer and fall of 2005. The problem was compounded by the adversarial relationship that existed between them and Sher Agha's Barakzai militia due to different tribal backgrounds.⁸²

Though the combined efforts of Pacemaker and the local government were effective at preventing attacks within the secured perimeter, insurgent harassment continued throughout the remainder of the construction effort. Over five months, there were twelve IEDs emplaced along the construction route and two emplaced against the Afghan militia securing the high ground. Multiple direct fire attacks against convoys moving along the route also occurred, but had no effect on the progress of the construction effort. The most concerted insurgent effort to disrupt construction occurred before the construction of FOB Pacemaker in June. Efforts to conduct an IED initiated ambush on the 100 vehicle construction convoy, which was moving north to conduct the FOB construction mission, were thwarted by the security team. Insurgents continued to probe the security of the construction effort but chose not to decisively engage it.⁸³

Pacemaker's population-focused road building effort provided benefits for the operations of TF Gundevis in northern Shah Wali Kot but was not its focus. Gundevis conducted presence patrols and task force-level combat operations in Shah Wali Kot to interdict insurgent safe havens there. LTC Bertrand Ges, TF Gundevis commander, assessed northern Shah Wali Kot as the highest threat area amongst the eleven districts in his task force area of operations.⁸⁴ Unlike insurgents in other areas, those in Shah Wali Kot demonstrated willingness to mass in order to engage in extended battles to protect their safe havens. Though Gundevis initiated projects to improve medical, veterinary, and governance capacity in places like Gumbad, preventing insurgents from influencing Kandahar city was the first priority. Shah Wali Kot District was on the periphery and simply did not warrant the same level of effort.⁸⁵

The improvement of the road provided more rapid access for TF Gundevis and simplified the logistical challenges of large operations. Throughout the months of May and June the task force executed Operations Diablo Reach and Diablo Reach Back in order to destroy platoon sized and larger insurgent elements in both Gumbad and the Chenartu River Valley. Fires for these operations were supported out of FOB Tiger II, where the TF stationed a gun team. Upon completion of FOB Pacemaker and Construction Base Kodiak, Gundevis also made use of the established bases along the road to extend the reach of their patrols. Able to refuel and resupply themselves in northern Shah Wali Kot rather than returning to Kandahar Airfield, Gundevis units could extend patrols for a longer duration.⁸⁶

For CPT Parranto and the security team, the opportunity to receive intelligence from these units as they passed through the Pacemaker area of operations enhanced

security operations. Thus, both task forces benefitted indirectly each other's operations. In fact, then CPT Jeremy Turner, the commander of D/2-504th PIR, observed that the road affected the lives of the villagers in Zamto Kalay and other generally hostile villages off of the road. Before the road project, the village would send one person a month to shop in Kandahar for the needs of all families living there. After the completion of the road, families traveled once a week to Kandahar. LTC Ges, commander of TF Gundevil, emphasized the construction of the road as a theme in shuras he conducted across Shah Wali Kot and had a positive view of the potential of the road to transform a hostile and isolated area.⁸⁷ Though Pacemaker and Gundevil's operations achieved complementary effects, they were not nested with each other. As evidenced by both early disagreements on the use of the Gundevil infantry platoon that secured the construction effort and later inability of Pacemaker to receive additional maneuver support for large security operations, the task forces viewed themselves and their COIN efforts as separate.

The failure of insurgent efforts to disrupt the construction effort led to a change in tactics. Insurgents instead targeted those who appeared willing to aid the road effort, especially in the Ghilzai villages. Reports of efforts to intimidate local residents were common at Hayatullah Popal's weekly shura meetings. Many elders expressed the belief that the U.S. would leave the area just as the Soviets had twenty years earlier, while the Taliban would remain and punish those who helped the Americans. The effects of local intimidation became evident when the task force attempted to hire local people to provide an —Aghan face” to the building effort. Road construction routinely disrupted the local farmers' irrigation ditches, and Team Kodiak sought to employ the local people to make repairs. Despite offering \$4.00 a day, which was more than many residents in the area

made in a week, not a single villager came forward to assist in the construction. This impasse was resolved only when one of Sher Agha's commanders was used as an intermediary who employed the local people and paid them.⁸⁸

Intimidation was not the only tool used by the insurgents in the area. Kidnapping and poisoning were also employed against village leaders and the construction team. The village elder of Garlungi, a Ghilzai village that accepted U.S. assistance in the form of the construction of a new well, was kidnapped and beaten by insurgents in June. Threatened with death if he did not obey, he received instructions to poison U.S. troops with a white powder that was later identified as opium. At a shura meeting two weeks later in Bowraganah, a nearby village, the elder attempted to follow through on his instructions. CPT Parranto, Hayatullah Popal, and the ANP Chief had traveled to the village to resolve a property dispute, and sat down to share a meal with the village leaders. Goat's milk was offered as a welcoming gesture, and CPT Parranto's bowl was discovered to be poisoned. Parranto's interpreter drank the milk and became gravely ill. When later interrogated by U.S. forces, the elder explained that he was targeted for accepting aid from the Americans, and was unwilling to further support the construction effort.⁸⁹ Clearly, the insurgents aimed to influence the population's perceptions at the same time as Task Force Pacemaker.

Transitioning the Road (August to October 2005)

As construction of the road progressed, a looming transition dominated planning for both CTF Sword and CTF Bayonet. In accordance with an 8 December 2005 agreement by foreign ministers of the NATO member countries, ISAF would take charge of the military operations of all member militaries in Afghanistan, to include the majority

of U.S. troops. As part of this process, U.S. military forces would move to RC-East in 2006 and ISAF would assume control for Kandahar, Oruzgan, Zabul, Helmand, and Nimroz Provinces. Task Force Bayonet would be replaced in RC-South by a Canadian Battle Group consisting of 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group and a Canadian Provincial Reconstruction team. The 2,000 Soldier unit would assume responsibility for RC-South in March 2006.⁹⁰ In Oruzgan, over 1,700 Dutch and Australian Soldiers would replace the Special Forces at FOB Ripley, which was renamed Kamp Holland, and assume charge of the PRT.

Troops moving from established bases in RC-South such as Kandahar Airfield to RC-East would require facilities from which to live and fight. These facilities did not exist in summer 2005. CTF Sword, as the engineer task force in Afghanistan, would lead the effort to expand existing FOBs and build new ones to accommodate the surge of manpower. More than half of its military engineer capability resided in TF Pacemaker, which would also need to move east upon completion of the road. With a required completion date of 18 September, planning began for the movement of the task force east to begin the FOB construction effort. Pacemaker's new mission, the construction of a battalion-sized forward operation base in Paktika Province, would commence in mid-October 2005.⁹¹

For Pacemaker, the question of transitioning security of the road and the communities it connected became pressing. By the end of August the task force occupied and operated three separate bases in northern Shah Wali Kot and Nesh districts. On the 18th, the leading bulldozers from the northern and southern construction teams met each other and the final stages of military construction were approaching completion. Given

the level of activity by Gundevis in the area and the status of the road as the top priority for development from CJTF-76, the task force anticipated that one or more of the bases would be occupied and relationships fostered through the construction process would be continued by CTF Bayonet after its departure. When considering the contribution by USAID, military construction costs and the CERP money spent in local villages, the total cost of the road effort exceeded \$55 million.⁹²

Despite numerous challenges, TF Pacemaker finished the military portion of the road construction project on 2 September, almost two weeks earlier than required. While small improvements would continue until October, the Afghan government had successfully connected Kandahar and Tarin Kowt. The road served as a vital conduit for election-support activities. The incomplete paving and bridge construction projects remained significant, however. President Karzai decided not to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the road on 15 September specifically because the middle section of the road was not yet paved. He still intended to inaugurate its opening, but would only do so once the paving effort was complete.⁹³ As Pacemaker turned its attention to its upcoming move to Paktika province, transition needed to occur quickly. Given weak Afghan governance and policing structures in the area, there was no realistic possibility of the government assuming responsibility for security and the management of contracts. Pacemaker needed CTF Bayonet to incorporate the road into its COIN effort.



Figure 20. Teams Kodiak and Cougar meet Each Other on 18 August 2005
Source: Task Force Pacemaker Society of American Military Engineers Presentation, 11 May 2006.

For CTF Bayonet, however, the road project had always been a positive development effort outside its sphere of influence rather than a critical element in its plan. The road complemented Gundevis's operations and provided a good news story for local shuras, but was not critical to Bayonet's success in fall 2005. The effort to support the upcoming parliamentary and provincial council elections was the main effort of the task force. Across Afghanistan, there was a significant increase in violence leading up to the election, with 1,000 Afghan civilians and 77 American servicemen and women killed by September.⁹⁴ With only 19,000 troops in Afghanistan in total and just 3,500 in RC-South, the focus of all maneuver efforts in August and September centered on election support. Though the road certainly facilitated the election, there was simply insufficient combat power available to occupy bases or secure the road after its completion. The Canadian unit replacing CTF Bayonet was smaller in size and possessed different capabilities. Occupying new bases in Shah Wali Kot and Nesh would stretch the ISAF force and make the transition more complicated. The COIN strategy implemented by the

Canadian and Dutch forces would potentially differ from Bayonet's approach, and commitment to new bases would be an effort they could make upon developing their own visualization of the situation in RC-South.

The transition between TF Pacemaker and CTF Bayonet did not occur. The bases along the road were not occupied by either U.S. or Afghan forces. Instead, Pacemaker dismantled the portions of FOB Pacemaker, Construction Base Kodiak and FOB Tiger II that could be transported to Kandahar Airfield and abandoned the rest as it withdrew. The task force conducted a number of meetings with the Tarin Kowt PRT in hopes that it would supervise the maintenance that the middle section of the road would certainly need after a harsh Afghan winter. No definitive commitments were made from these interactions, however. A rear detachment from Task Force Pacemaker would remain at Kandahar Airfield after the rest of the battalion moved east in order to supervise the construction contracts for drainage structures and the paving of the middle third of the road. While contractors were mobilizing to execute the contracts, it appeared unlikely that they would be prepared to begin work prior to the onset of winter weather.⁹⁵

The future of Sher Agha's militia was also undetermined. The commander was eager to continue as an employee of U.S. forces, and even expressed a desire to move to other locations in Afghanistan to provide security augmentation. The road was complete, however, and USAID funding for the militia was at an end. In total, \$330,000 was paid to Sher Agha's militia over the 18 months he was employed. Parranto feared that the militia leader might attempt to facilitate attacks on the retrograding Pacemaker forces in order to justify continued employment. He also questioned whether the militia should be disarmed or made a legitimate part of the Afghan government. As with the transition of FOBs and

the road itself, these questions were ultimately unresolved. The militia's contract expired and Sher Agha's militia left the road. By mid-October, the area that once had almost 1,000 U.S. troops and 200 Afghan security guards conducting daily operations was suddenly left unoccupied.

After Construction—Operations along the road
from 2006 to 2009

In the first six months after the departure of Task Force Pacemaker, the effects of the rapid transition both on the road and the local governance became apparent. The departure of Pacemaker left a vacuum in the area that was not, and could not be filled by CTF Bayonet. Operations by TF Gundevis continued in Shah Wali Kot, centering on the newly established Gumbad Platoon House which housed an Afghan National Police element and platoon of U.S. troops. Extended patrols continued in the Chenartu River Valley as well, but no consistent presence replaced the construction team. Evidence of the Taliban's re-establishment of control came in the form of attacks on local government and police leadership. On 5 December, the Shah Wali Kot District Chief Hayatullah Popal, the district ANP chief and his brother were all killed by an IED emplaced by the Taliban directly outside the district center in Dilak.⁹⁶ In February 2006, the insurgents attempted to kill Sher Agha as well by placing a mine directly outside his home in Shah Wali Kot.⁹⁷ Agha, who assumed the role of Afghan Highway Police commander for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in the months after Pacemaker departed, was preparing to meet with local leaders on the plan to provide security on the road.

The contractor hired to pave the middle third of the road was unable to mobilize prior to the onset of winter. As predicted, the quality of the surface degraded due to wet

weather and continued traffic. LTC Ges later recalled that rutting of the road surface was evident in early 2006, and the gravel surface of the road began to unravel under both local and military traffic.⁹⁸ This type of wear and tear is common for gravel roads during the wet conditions caused by a spring thaw. The maintenance efforts suggested by Pacemaker for the following spring did not occur, however. Instead, the paving contractor was tasked to repair and shape the road as he executed paving operations during the following spring and summer. For the detachment from TF Pacemaker tasked to supervise the construction effort, the degradation of the security situation and lack of coalition presence made inspecting the paving process difficult. Canadian forces were arriving in theater to replace CTF Bayonet, and efforts to conduct the relief-in-place took precedence over providing security for engineers interested in supervising a local contractor. Moreover, movements north of the Shah Wali Kot district center were considered combat operations that required deliberate planning and integration of indirect fire and attack aviation support.⁹⁹

In light of these difficulties, thorough inspection of the road did not occur prior to the next transition in responsibility for Shah Wali Kot. In March 2006, the 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group (Task Force Orion) replaced TF Gundevis in Kandahar and soon thereafter decided to push north into Shah Wali Kot. Recognizing the necessity of reasserting control over Kandahar city, TF Orion positioned its three mechanized infantry companies in FOBs around the province. One company would secure the border crossing at Spin Boldak, one constructed Patrol Base Wilson in Zhare District to the west of Kandahar City, and another would establish security along the key avenue of approach into Kandahar from the north, the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt

Road.¹⁰⁰ Only seven months after Construction Base Kodiak was abandoned, Canadians constructed FOB Martello overlooking the village of El Bak. As illustrated in a video expose focusing on the operations of the company stationed there shown on the television program *Frontline World*, the Canadian soldiers occupying the base struggled in summer 2006 to build relationships using the same tools that TF Pacemaker used less than a year before. Promises to repair the local people's generators, medical treatment and agricultural support were again employed to demonstrate the benefits of supporting ISAF efforts.¹⁰¹

With renewed security, the progress of the Afghan contractor tasked with paving the middle section of the road could finally be checked. As TF Pacemaker completed its year-long deployment to Afghanistan in March, it handed over responsibility for the construction contracts on the road to the Afghanistan Engineer District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Tasked with managing reconstruction efforts across Afghanistan, the Corps administered road construction projects across Afghanistan. Executed by both Afghan and international construction firms, these projects aimed to directly contribute to meeting the objectives set by Afghanistan and the International community for improvement of transport capacity. MAJ John Litz, Resident Engineer in the Kandahar Area Office of the Corps, received the mission to supervise the paving effort. During the winter and early spring, the contractor mobilized and began his paving operation. Though aerial overflight of the job site by TF Pacemaker indicated that the contractor had, indeed, initiated construction, the lack of stringent inspection prior to the Canadian occupation of FOB Martello had a negative effect on the construction effort.

Inexperienced with paving operations and perhaps corrupt, the Afghan contractor's work was quickly determined by MAJ Litz to be unacceptable. Through both conversations with the contractor and direct inspection, Litz came to the conclusion that the Afghan contractor had —no clue how to build a road.”¹⁰² After receiving escort from Canadian forces to examine the contractor's attempt at paving in May, Litz ordered the contractor to cease forward progress, remove the flawed work he already completed and repave the road in order to receive further payment. When the contractor refused, the contract was terminated and efforts to complete the paving of the middle section of road ceased. To Litz, the contract for paving had numerous issues that led to its failure. Successful contracted road construction operations require frequent inspection and mentorship of Afghan construction firms employed by ISAF. Additionally, stringent contracts were required to force the locally hired firms to actually demonstrate capability. Finally, and most importantly, the area must be sufficiently secure to support the successful meeting of the above requirements.¹⁰³

In the case of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, there was again a disconnect between the construction and security effort. The contracts envisaged to bring the road to its USAID-defined end-state of a two-line paved highway fell short due to a shift of emphasis away from northern Shah Wali Kot after TF Pacemaker's departure. Though the contractor hired security guards to support his operations, the lack of a consistent maneuver presence undermined the mentorship and inspection efforts. The Canadian's renewed emphasis on the road provided the window to discover the contractor's malfeasance, and if sustained would support the effective implementation of a new local contract. The cost of the interruption of emphasis, however, was high both in terms of

both money and local relationships. Mobilization and approved initial progress by the contractor resulted in partial payment of the \$3.1 million contract.¹⁰⁴ Shoddy and incomplete work undoubtedly generated negative opinion amongst the local people.

Most damaging, however, was the termination of the local security contract. The warlord employed by the contractor was named Matiullah Khan.¹⁰⁵ A nephew of the governor of Oruzgan province, Matiullah had worked with U.S. Special Forces in Oruzgan since 2001. Employing a mix of local people and Popalzai tribesmen from Oruzgan, the young militia leader began to develop relationships with the same villages and tribes Pacemaker courted a year earlier. When payment of his security contract was terminated in mid-2006, Matiullah's security forces set fire to the contractors' construction equipment and attacked those employed to pave the road. Not only had paving of the road halted, but a new militia leader had established himself in the area.¹⁰⁶

Though the disruption of the paving process was a blow to the progress of the road, Canadian forces and the Corps of Engineers continued the effort in summer 2006. With a mechanized infantry company operating in the area, it appeared that security support was available to effectively administer a new contract. The Corps of Engineers therefore set aside new funds for the paving of the road and began the process of soliciting new contractors to execute the work.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, a shift in maneuver priorities and insufficiency of forces would once again negatively impact efforts around the road. The initiation of a major Taliban offensive in Zhare and Panjwai districts in early summer 2006 resulted in the initiation of Operation Medusa. Using its east-west line of communication in northern Kandahar Province, referred to as a "jet stream" for Taliban fighters, insurgents built strength in Helmand Province and aimed to infiltrate the

districts surrounding Kandahar city itself.¹⁰⁸ Canadian forces became decisively engaged with insurgents attempting to gain control of the city of Kandahar. In an effort to fix Canadian forces in Shah Wali Kot as its main effort attacked Kandahar, insurgents attacked FOB Martello in early September. After a three day battle, insurgents broke contact after failing to overrun the base. Coalition presence in Shah Wali Kot was short-lived, however. In December, the escalating fight west of Kandahar city resulted in both FOB Martello and Gumbad Platoon house being abandoned.¹⁰⁹ It would be over a year before any ISAF force reasserted a presence along the road.

While priorities changed, the need for transiting the road had not. The Dutch and Australian task force operating in Oruzgan Province numbered over 2,000 men and women. The hub for logistical support in RC-South remained Kandahar Airfield, so all logistics would need to flow either by air or along the road. Although the road was necessary for logistics, the Dutch and Australian emphasis was their COIN campaign in Oruzgan. Once again, a vacuum of power developed along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road through restive Shah Wali Kot District that Matiullah Khan and his militia filled. With experience securing the road and a demand for security to support both the local economy and ISAF operations in Oruzgan, he was ideally placed to profit from the road. Though his uncle, Jan Mohammed Khan, was removed as Oruzgan's governor in 2006 due to Dutch pressure, Matiullah drew support from his Popalzai tribal connections and moved to establish control over the main corridor linking Oruzgan with Kandahar.¹¹⁰

Throughout 2007 and into 2008, the road acted as a valuable tool through which Matiullah Khan consolidated power in Oruzgan Province and northern Shah Wali Kot. Just as its builders predicted, the route served as a lifeline to Tarin Kowt and enhanced

Khan's efforts to expand his influence. As detailed in chapter 1, Matiullah's men provide security for large coalition and local supply convoys to enable them to travel the route safely. Opening the route as often as once a week on the so-called "security day," Khan's militia collect tolls from coalition forces and Afghans alike.¹¹¹ His control over the road was so complete that another Afghan security contractor remarked that "Matiullah has the road from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt completely under his control. No one can travel without Matiullah without facing consequences. There is no other way to get there. You have to either pay him or fight him."¹¹²

The profits of this enterprise fuel an effective pacification campaign both along the road and in Oruzgan. With an established militia of 1,500 men, known as the Kandake Amniate Oruzgan (KAU), drawn from both the local people and his tribe, Khan quickly demonstrated an ability to dissuade the Taliban from attacking. Profits from security operation allowed Khan to pay wages above that provided by the ANP, just as Sher Agha had years before.¹¹³ His militia gained the legitimacy that the police force and local government failed to develop since 2001. Khan invested in a development campaign reminiscent of both the U.S. and ISAF effort. Occupying his uncle's compound directly across from Kamp Holland, Khan set up a parallel government. Constructing mosques in local communities and conducting outreach programs to impoverished local people, he built his base of support amongst the local Popalzai population.¹¹⁴ Unlike U.S. and Canadian efforts, he maintained a continuous presence along the road. Much like the British in Baluchistan, he profited from the road but also delivered a service to the local people in the form of security and development appropriate to their needs.

For coalition forces that needed to transit the road, an uneasy but symbiotic relationship developed. Although the Dutch task force understood his connection to Jan Mohammed Khan and initially sought to marginalize him, it soon became apparent that Khan's influence in Oruzgan outstripped the government. Thus, in 2009 Matiullah Khan and his militia were incorporated into the Afghan National Police. Appointed police chief for Oruzgan Province and given the rank of colonel, the KAU was given official authority over the road that it already unofficially controlled. Over 600 of Matiullah's men became policemen, though none of Khan's unofficial activities ended.¹¹⁵ An assessment by an Oruzgan provincial elder summarizes Maitullah's position. "If he was not in Oruzgan, the Taliban would have captured the province a long time ago," said Maulvi Hamidullah. "I have no link with him but he is a very good person for Oruzgan. The people love him and he loves the people."¹¹⁶ By 2009, Matiullah Khan was a major power in southern Afghanistan due largely to his effective employment of a road built by the United States.

Current Operations along the Road

In 2009, the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan increased dramatically. Starting in February, President Obama authorized increases in troop strength that would eventually bring the total number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to almost 100,000.¹¹⁷ This almost five-fold increase in troops from 2006 rendered obsolete the fundamental assumption that had underlay operations along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt road since construction began in 2004: insufficiency of forces. The purpose of the troop increase was to facilitate a COIN strategy that would focus on protection of major population centers and development of Afghan security capability. In 2009, the greatest threat to the

Afghan population was located in southern Afghanistan. Facing emboldened Taliban operations on Kandahar city itself, ISAF rushed forces to Kandahar and its surrounding districts. Critical to the ISAF strategy for Kandahar would be control of the critical routes that fed into the city. The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt road was important again.

In the districts north of the city, ISAF faced a determined and entrenched enemy. The death of Mullah Naqib, leader of the Alokozai tribe in Arghandab, in 2007 set the conditions for Taliban resurgence in the district. Through intimidation and direct attacks throughout 2008, the insurgents sought to establish a base there in the same way the Mujahedeen had two decades earlier against the Soviets. Though Canadian forces established a new base, FOB Frontenac, on the site where FOB Tiger had stood in 2004, they were unable to prevent Taliban seizure of Arghandab by mid-2008.¹¹⁸ The unit tasked to regain control of Arghandab in February was 5th Brigade (Stryker), 2nd Infantry Division. It received the mission to conduct COIN operations in Arghandab and Shah Wali Kot Districts. Throughout 2009 the brigade engaged Taliban elements, with only a platoon-sized element positioned at the Shah Wali Kot District center as an economy of force mission intended to block insurgent transit into Arghandab.¹¹⁹

In December, as President Obama announced a 30,000 Soldier surge to Afghanistan, 5-2 received a new mission. The RC-South commander, Major General Nick Carter, directed the unit to provide freedom of movement for Afghan civilians, Afghan Security Forces and ISAF. A light infantry task force would assume the mission in Arghandab, freeing 5-2 to execute a mobility-oriented mission for which its Stryker equipped units would be well-suited. The battalion task forces in 5-2 would each control

a major mobility corridor into Kandahar City. The critical routes were Highway 1, Highway 4, and the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road.

Task Force 1-17 Infantry, commanded by LTC John Neumann, assumed responsibility for the road from Arghandab District north to Tarin Kowt. His three Stryker companies moved north into Shah Wali Kot, relieving the small Canadian force located at FOB Frontenac. With freedom of movement as its end state, the task force targeted the population through efforts to improve security, the efficacy of local governance and the economic opportunities available to the people of Shah Wali Kot. In addition to Frontenac, TF 1-17 also established a base on the site of FOB Tiger II, FOB Baghtu.¹²⁰ Plans for expanded ANA presence along the road progressed as well. A new battalion-sized FOB began construction on the site of FOB Pacemaker. By spring 2010, coalition forces had established a footprint almost identical to that of the engineers who built the road four years earlier.¹²¹

The challenges the task force faced were similar, as well. The local government and police were restricted to the district center, just as they had been prior to Pacemaker's arrival. Haji Ubeidullah Popal, who replaced the prior district leader who was assassinated in 2005, was unable to travel more than two miles from Dilak, and elders were afraid to attend the weekly shura meetings.¹²² The police were, according to LTC Neumann, —aag-tag outfield and basically besieged in the scattered checkpoints and stations where they provided fixed-site security.”¹²³ Insurgent attacks maintained the same pattern as in 2005, but had intensified. Ambushes initiated in restrictive terrain with IEDs placed in the road remained the method of choice. Insurgents aimed to deny freedom of movement for ISAF. An attack on a coalition convoy on 3 November 2008

that led to the bombing of a wedding party in Wech Baghtu received international attention and proved an enormous information operations victory for the insurgents.¹²⁴ Subsequent attacks in the Baghtu River Valley escalated as the population became more sympathetic to the Taliban. The road acted as key terrain where attacks culminated. The planning, preparation and staging for the attacks occurred off the road corridor. The major staging areas for the insurgents remained the same: the Chenartu and Baghtu River Valleys and Gumbad. As TF 1-17 arrived, LTC Neumann assessed that “the enemy had absolute freedom of maneuver and initiative.”¹²⁵

At the heart of LTC Neumann’s visualization of his mission was the road. With companies arrayed in zones along the route of the road that overwatched IED hotspots and local population centers, the battalion task force worked to deny the enemy the ability to interdict coalition and Afghan traffic. The zones ran from northern Arghandab District to the Baghtu Valley, where the Matiullah Khan’s forces provided security. While tasked occasionally with convoy escort missions, it was Khan’s forces that continued to operate much as they had before 1-17’s arrival. For Neumann, the KAU served as a reliable partner in the route mobility mission. Interlocking security positions on the high ground and a well-trained militia were the most reliable local force north of Kandahar city. There was no comparison between the KAU and ANP in southern Shah Wali Kot. Matiullah Khan’s positive relationship with the people also netted positive results in the form of timely intelligence. In June 2010 locals provided the KAU information about a planned attack in the Baghtu valley where insurgents massed over 100 fighters to cut the route into Kandahar. During the five day battle that ensued, insurgent losses were estimated at 90 percent due to the advanced warning provided to

Matiullah Khan. According to Neumann, the local people both admired and respected Khan and his KAU force.¹²⁶

The most significant challenge facing Neumann and his task force was tied to the road itself. Despite the establishment of a Corps of Engineers contract in 2006, the middle section of the road was still unpaved when 1-17 transitioned responsibility for the road to 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (1-2 SBCT). While the first contract to pave the road failed due to lack of contractor capability, the one initiated in 2006 failed due to enemy action. Again, Matiullah Khan was at the center of the controversy. In early 2007, an insurgent attack on the road construction team resulted in the death of 30 construction workers. In the confusion that followed the contractor fleeing the job site, Matiullah Khan claimed he was owed over \$2 million for unpaid security services. According to MAJ John Raso, the Corps of Engineers Resident Engineer in Tarin Kowt in 2010, Khan demanded that his security services receive payment before work could begin on the project. As a result, 18 months passed with no further construction.¹²⁷ With four years exposed to the elements and no maintenance conducted, the route was significantly deteriorated. Though paving the road would have development value, Neumann's primary concern lay in the elevated IED threat. While not impervious to IEDs, the paved surface of the northern and southern sections of the road made emplacement more complicated. The effort to implement the contract began anew under 1-17's watch. The inability of contractors to operate unsupported by coalition security was not limited to the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road. An Afghan government funded project to connect western Shah Wali Kot and Khakrez District to Kandahar city failed due to insurgent interdiction of the construction effort.¹²⁸

For TF 1-17 and the current task force operating in Shah Wali Kot, 1-2 SBCT, the road project has proved as strategic as it was initially intended to be. The mission to provide freedom of maneuver on the road is paired with sufficient manpower to accomplish it with a credible Afghan partnering force. In Matiullah Khan and the ANA battalion established along the road there is the possibility of transition in the future. Though important, security of the road itself is less critical than securing the population and developing relationships. TF1-17 sought to re-establish relationships with the local people for the third time since 2005, and as of today military presence on the road has not shifted elsewhere. With the drawdown of U.S. military presence beginning in July 2011 and transition of security to the Afghan government in 2014, the future of the road and the people along it is still an open question.

The Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road: Enduring Effects

Measuring the enduring effects of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road is difficult because of the lack of a consistent strategy for the road and the population that surrounds it since the groundbreaking ceremony on 1 June 2004. The road has alternately been vital to the COIN effort and peripheral to it. It has been the top development priority in Afghanistan and then, only a year later, unoccupied by any ISAF or Afghan force. Trends can be identified, however, by considering the stakeholders involved with its construction and the effects that the road was supposed to have on the insurgency in the districts through which it passed.

The road achieved its purely military purpose, in that it enhanced mobility for the maneuver units operating in Kandahar and Oruzgan Provinces from 2005 onwards. TF Gundevis, the Canadians and most recently 5-2 SBCT all used the road to achieve more

rapid penetration into insurgent safe havens. The product of this increased military mobility has not been decreased insurgent threat along the route. Insufficiency of forces led to reliance on a local warlord for security. Recent assignment of a continuous ISAF presence along the route and incorporation of Matiullah Khan into the police force many result in future improvements in this area.

From an engineering standpoint, the road must be considered incomplete five years after its completion due to the difficulties in executing construction operations in its middle section. Though both USAID and CJTF-76 considered it complete in September 2005, problems persist today. The heroic efforts of the engineers who continued work despite concerted insurgent attacks was not for nothing, but a good deal of their work will require repair or replacement when the road is finally finished. Still, the route is actively used by both ISAF and local people. Matiullah Khan earns millions of dollars a month securing it. Ethical considerations aside, this fact illustrates the importance of the route to the local economy. Moreover, it is the only economic indicator available for consideration. The road is designated as a National Highway, and routes to district centers have been constructed off of it in accordance with the Afghan transportation strategy.

Politically, the road has helped deliver short-term success in elections and further bolstered the position of Afghans already in power. The election efforts in Oruzgan in 2004 and 2005, as well as the most recent presidential election in 2010 were all made easier by the presence of the road. Although President Karzai declined to attend the opening ceremony, his tribes control in southern Afghanistan is stronger than ever. Matiullah Khan, a Popalzai tribesman, is the Chief of Police in Oruzgan and considered

by some the most powerful Afghan in the province. Along with Abdul Razzak, the warlord controlling Highway 4, Matiullah is one of a newly emerging generation of power brokers that control and profit from access to Kandahar city. The extent of Khan's connection to security operations is best summarized by the comments of Australian General John Cantwell, commander of Australian forces in the Middle East. In response to questions about the decision to bring four of Khan's militia men to Australia in 2010 for additional military training, Cantwell responded, "Matiullah Khan might not be the most angelic character, but I've got to know him pretty well, he's effective, he does what he says he'll do, he's achieved things we've asked him to achieve, he's our guy and we should work with him."¹²⁹ It is an open question who Matiullah really is, and what he will become. It is likely that he will continue to attempt to be what ISAF wants him to be until the coalition leaves.

For the people that the road was meant to empower, it is hard to say that that the road has been anything but a failure. The commitment to development and security made on 1 June 2004 may come to fruition before 2014, but not without a high cost in the lives of those Afghans who supported ISAF. Earnest promises of development and security were given repeatedly from 2004 to 2010, only to be followed by the abandonment of area due to insufficiency of forces and lack of a nested plan for transition. The kidnapping of local elders while Pacemaker was occupying the road on a daily basis were undoubtedly followed by harsher punishment when no coalition forces were present. The documented assassination campaign against the local leaders involved with the road project is ample evidence. The cycle of departure and return also delegitimized whatever

Afghan government presence that had begun to grow when the coalition operated along the road.

In truth, Shah Wali Kot was an in-between place from 2004 to 2009. It connected two important population centers, and periodically was important to ISAF. Recognizing the value of the road for exercising control, Matiullah Khan has provided the most enduring presence along the road. Current ISAF efforts along the road seem positive, and illustrate the potential the road always had if nested in the COIN effort. The road may yet again decline in emphasis, however, as coalition forces begin the process of winding down their presence in Afghanistan.

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¹¹⁵Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 25.

¹¹⁶Jeremy Kelly, —Long Road to Tarin Kowt,” *The Australian*, 28 April 2009, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/long-road-to-tarin-kowt/story-e6frg6so-1225704435431> (accessed 11 April 2011).

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¹¹⁸Forsberg, *Afghanistan Report* 3, 40.

¹¹⁹LTC John Neumann, Commander of TF 1-17 Infantry, 5-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Kandahar Province from July 2009 to July 2010, Telephone Interview, 13 March 2011.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹Commander Mark Edelson, —Building for the Afghan Army in Uruzgan,” *NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan*, 24 October 2010, <http://www.ntm-a.com/component/content/article/19/1603?lang=> (accessed 12 April 2011).

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¹²⁴Jason Straziuso, —US official: Taliban sought wedding party deaths,” *USA Today*, 7 November 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-11-07-3963072919_x.htm (accessed 11 April 2011).

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¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷MAJ John Raso, Resident Engineer for the Tarin Kowt Area Office, Afghanistan Engineering District, United States Army Corps of Engineers from June 2009 to May 2010, Electronic correspondence with author, 19 April 2011.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Dan Oakes, —General defends Afghan Warlord Ties,” *The Age*, 7 December 2010, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/general-defends-afghan-warlord-ties-20101206-18mum.html> (accessed 28 April 2011).

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS

Maintenance indicates settlement rather than nomadism; faith in—and thus planning for—the future, rather than expectation that what is here today may be gone tomorrow. Maintenance indicates organization, frugality, and responsibility: you don't build what you lack the money, the time, and the determination to maintain. Maintenance manifests a community and a system of obligation, without which substantial development is unlikely.

— Robert Kaplan, *An Empire Wilderness*

This study aims to define both the advantages afforded to the counterinsurgent and the limitations imposed on his operations by using road construction. While some aspects of both the use of existing roads and the utility of the road construction process to the counterinsurgent have been studied, a gap of knowledge exists. Little consideration has been given to the potential effects of roads on the COIN effort if not nested within the campaign. The role that roads play after their completion also needs further consideration. As illustrated in the above epigraph, the ability of the local government to maintain infrastructure is, potentially, a barometer of its effectiveness and legitimacy with the people. This chapter will examine road usage in COIN during three phases: the plan, road construction operations and long-term development. The three road campaigns detailed in chapters 4 and 5 are analyzed using the methodology defined in chapter 3. From this analysis, the role of roads as a tool in counterinsurgency is more thoroughly considered.

The Plan

A number of factors require consideration when planning to use road construction in a COIN campaign. First, the road must be of sufficient significance to warrant

sustained military and economic commitment both during construction and its subsequent use. Next, the process of building the road should be integrated into the COIN effort and appropriate to the methods employed in the area of operations. The preparation of local people along the route to both accept and take part in the road effort must also be considered. Sufficient security and construction assets must be committed to the road, and command-support relationships established to maintain unity of effort. Finally, the construction and maintenance plan for the road must be complete and appropriate to the road's intent. Analysis of the British and U.S. construction plans using these factors will illustrate their importance and the potential effects of their incomplete consideration.

For Britain, the mountain passes connecting Afghanistan and India were critical to its strategy for defending its colonial possessions. After the costly and disastrous First Anglo-Afghan War, it was clear that direct administration of Afghanistan was untenable. Constructing roads along the Sind to Peshin, Gomal and Tochi routes allowed the British to rapidly react to Russian or Afghan aggression without permanently manning the border. The events of the Second Anglo-Afghan War and the continued threat of Russian expansion into Central Asia confirmed British fears and provided the military and political will to sustain multi-year road construction projects.

While British roads in Baluchistan and Waziristan shared a common strategic justification, they differed in their integration into a larger pacification effort. Sir Robert Sandeman saw the potential of the road construction effort as a tool for integrating local tribes and achieving long-term changes in local quality-of-life. Hiring tribesmen to secure the Sind to Peshin Railway and help build it would occupy rebellious tribesmen. Administering the payment through tribal chiefs empowered local leadership and gave

them a stake in the success of the project. Planning for the extension of services, such as new hospitals, schools and shipment of tribal products made the railway beneficial to the tribal people while maintaining its strategic role. Thus, the railroad was a means that Sandeman used to achieve his objective of pacifying Baluchistan and making it profitable for the colonial government.¹

In Waziristan, however, access was the end in itself. The mountainous terrain and fiercely independent tribes made the potential expense of pacification high and the prospect of profitability for the British low. Forced to assume responsibility over Waziristan only after the Amir of Afghanistan's instigation, the British established protected areas around the important Gomal and Tochi Routes. Tribal levies for security were used to minimize the manpower and financial cost of occupying the protected areas, and the surrounding tribal regions were left to their own devices. Subsequent road construction efforts came as a reaction to insurrection. Roads became tactical expedients dictated by the British to the tribal chiefs.

The deliberate engagement with local tribes prior to beginning road operations provides a further distinction between the British efforts in Baluchistan and Waziristan. First as administrator of Dera Ghazi Khan and then as Agent to the Governor General in Baluchistan, Sandeman cultivated relationships with the tribes that lay along the Sind to Peshin Route from 1866 through the initiation of road construction in 1879. The need for the road was well established, and through negotiations Sandeman secured the route for British using tribal levies. He developed relationships with the tumandars and maliks of the tribes along the route, and even conducted shuras to gain acceptance of the railroad

project prior to its initiation. Though approval for the project occurred only after the Maiwand disaster, Sandeman already set the stage for its acceptance by the local people.

While Richard Bruce aimed through his interaction with tribal maliks in Waziristan to follow Sandeman's example, his efforts were frustrated by the military focus on using roads to reduce tribal isolation and ease the tactical challenges of launching punitive expeditions.² The forcing of the Shapur to Wana Route on the Mahsud maliks after the 1894 uprising was only first of many new protected areas imposed on the tribes against their will. Road policy was dictated to tribal leadership without seeking tribal acceptance. After the 1919 insurrection, road building was even incorporated into military doctrine as an aspect of its tribal warfare methodology.

Of the three road efforts considered in this study, it was the Sind to Peshin Railway that faced the greatest challenges with the commitment of security and construction resources and command and control relationships. Though long considered a strategic requirement, the road project was initiated due to emergency. The murder of the British delegation in Kabul in September 1879 necessitated the rapid deployment of a military force into Afghanistan for an extended period. No plan existed for construction of the railroad. In less than a month construction materials and engineers were rushed from around British India to initiate the railroad construction through the Katchi Plain. While there was no shortage of labor or materials, troops were required in Afghanistan and could not be spared to secure the construction effort. Sandeman was forced to rely heavily on tribal levies for security of thousands of construction workers and engineers.

In Waziristan, the tactical role of roads resulted in construction operations being nested within the overall military plan and well-resourced. Although the protected areas

policy initially sought to minimize military presence, the escalating cycle of insurrection and punitive expedition led to increased military presence and more roads. As the British increased its use of motorized vehicles, both military maneuver and logistical support required roads. Indeed, after the 1919 insurrection road construction and military maneuver became largely inseparable from each other.³

In terms of construction planning, the British effort in Baluchistan and Waziristan possessed an important advantage: a consistent strategic requirement that drove resourcing despite incomplete planning. As already stated, the Sind to Peshin Road was initiated in response to crisis without any construction plan. No surveys existed of the terrain along the route, and the materials gathered for the project was mismatched and in some cases unusable. With each successive section of railroad new and unforeseen challenges arose that placed the railroad project at the forefront of engineering innovation at the time. How could the railroad succeed in the face of these challenges and the lack of planning? The British needed it, resolved to retain long-term control of it, and were willing to devote vast resources to its construction.

The effort in Waziristan was strikingly similar. The British initially resisted any route construction outside of the Gomal and Tochi Valleys, even if it would support the administration of the tribes. Ironically, British spending on roads increased as the tribes became more hostile. Road projects were considered so important to the British effort that they were dictated in the terms of capitulation provided to the tribes after both the 1894 and 1919 insurrections. In terrain more challenging even than Baluchistan, the British railway and road network expanded regardless of cost and difficulty.

Comparing the U.S. plan for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road to the British in Baluchistan and Waziristan highlights both strengths and shortcomings of the U.S. approach. Initially, the U.S. envisioned the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road as both a military and administrative conduit to support the short-term goal of facilitating national elections and a longer-term COIN effort. The success of the scheduled national elections in 2004 and 2005 was critical to the success of the new Afghan Government. Facilitating their success was the justification for expanding the COIN effort into Oruzgan. In the wake of Operation Mountain Thrust and CTF Bronco's positioning of 2-5 IN in the province, a road became necessary to support sustained military operations. As the lifeline linking the second largest city in Afghanistan to the heartland of the Taliban movement, the road was also a symbol of the Afghan Government's resolve to administer its people. For the international community, the road was part of a strategic effort to expand Afghanistan's transport infrastructure and thereby connect farm to market and governed to the government.

In its focus on the COIN effort in Oruzgan Province, the plan for the road included few efforts to pacify the population along its length or to use the construction process as a tool. There was no plan for any sustained presence in northern Kandahar Province due to insufficiency of forces and low population density. Moreover, the threat in this area made contracted construction efforts difficult and necessitated the planned use of military engineers and security provided by CTF Bronco. No CERP funds were initially allocated to development projects along the length of the road, and tribal labor or security was not planned. The road was a military effort initiated to enable military operations, which bears a strong resemblance to the British use of roads in Waziristan.

As evidenced at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road in 2004, the approval and support of the Afghan government was actively sought prior to initiating construction. The Popalzai-dominated government's ability to deliver the support of the people, however, is questionable. Government presence in Shah Wali Kot district was weak, at best, and Hotak Ghilzai tribal minorities in the Baghtu and Chenartu river valleys were actively hostile to the established government. There is no evidence of a sustained campaign to engage these groups prior to construction, and the lack of integration of local people into the construction process provided little incentive for them to change their opinion of the government once construction began.

For CTF Bronco, the necessity of the road for successful execution of its COIN effort in Oruzgan and the commander's personal interest in the project led to well-resourced effort despite the lack of any command-support relationship between CTF Bronco and TF Coyote. Three separate battalions contributed to security of the construction effort. The partnership between USAID and TF Coyote provided a construction team capable of operating in areas local contractors refused to operate. While robustly resourced and nested with each other, the unofficial relationship between the maneuver task force and the construction effort was tenuous and subject to changes in priority due to both enemy action and insufficiency of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

The construction plan for the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road was both incomplete and inflexible. Though the road was part of the international plan for infrastructure improvement and \$25 million was provided by USAID to complete it, no survey of the road was conducted to determine the real costs. No provision was made for the construction of bridges or the paving of the most dangerous portion of the road. The rapid

initiation of the road project and high insurgent threat might provide some justification for these oversights, but rigid funding procedures inhibited efforts to adapt the initial plan. As a result, the U.S. effort lacked the flexibility that the British efforts in Baluchistan and Waziristan enjoyed. Perhaps the most critical oversight in construction planning, however, was the lack of a transition plan for the road. It was assumed that the road would be turned over to the Afghan government, but no capability of existed or was developed to assume responsibility.

Road Construction Operations

The process of building a road is lengthy. Construction of the Sind to Peshin Railway took ten years to complete. While the main elements of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road took less than two years to finish, some parts of the road remained incomplete five years later. Maintaining commitment to the construction process and capitalizing on the opportunities it affords is a challenge for the counterinsurgent. Both the enemy and friendly situation is bound to change over the multi-year construction timeline, altering or even invalidating the most thorough construction plan. The factors utilized to analyze the British and U.S. road building efforts are use of the construction process as a tool for engagement, COIN efforts away from the road itself, continuity in both the road's role in the COIN effort and the counterinsurgent's commitment to the construction process, and preparation for transition of responsibility.

Construction of the Sind to Peshin Railway was a massive effort that afforded Sandeman the opportunity to attack the center of gravity of tribal discontent: poverty. Construction of the road from Sibi to Peshin required over 10,000 workers, as well as vast quantities of construction materials and other supplies. In many of areas that had

previously been isolated and rural, this doubled the population. Sandeman sought to harness the economic potential of the construction effort through employment of local workers, development of locally-run services, and connection of the people to the Indian economy. His emphasis on the employment of local people to manage postal services is only one example of how he aimed to grow a sustained local capability. While the growth of railway towns, such as Sandemanabad, undoubtedly arose from the massive injection of British money, sharing the use of the railroad with the local people facilitated economic activity independent of the project. Administration through and enrichment of friendly tribal leaders encouraged others to accept the British, thereby expanding the sphere of influence. The marked increase in profitability of even the most hostile provinces demonstrates Sandeman's success integrating them into the colonial economic system.

In Waziristan, the dictatorial road building approach stimulated both the economy and the insurgency. Road building efforts required local support in the same way as in Baluchistan, and construction continued throughout the 50 years of British presence in the province. The flow of funds into tribal hands from both the levies used to secure the construction and the local laborers employed was used by the tribes to arm themselves against British aggression. The economic benefits imparted by the road effort contributed to the escalation of conflict between the tribes and the British rather than serving as a tool for incorporating the local population into the colonial system.⁴

The infusion of troops and money that accompanies road building was adroitly used by Sandeman to prosecute a pacification effort that extended far beyond the railway itself. He understood the relationships between the tribes along the route, as well as the

limitations of the tribal chiefs. His judicious use of force away from the road not only facilitated the project's success, but also pacified the most troublesome tribes in Baluchistan. In response to the Kuchali Raid, Sandeman employed forces returning from Afghanistan to, essentially, support the Marri chief against portions of his own tribe. In response to both the request of the peaceful Luni and Dumar tribal groups and aggression against the road effort by the Kakar Pathans led by Sirdar Shahjehan, Sandeman compiled the case for extensive military action in Zhob. As a result, the restive province was incorporated into British India and Sirdar Shahjehan removed from power.

Britain's policy of protected areas deliberately restricted the COIN effort away from the key routes with disastrous results. As illustrated by Mullah Powindah's insurrection, failure to operate outside the protected areas and support tribal leaders resulted in their assassination and widespread unrest. The security of the routes and the stability of tribal governance surrounding them proved inseparable. Instead of repairing relationships with the Mahsuds and Wazirs, however, the British utilized punitive expeditions and road construction to subjugate the tribes. This compounded already simmering anger, pushing the tribes and the British farther and farther apart.

In both Baluchistan and Waziristan, employment of roads as a tool by the counterinsurgent force was consistent, whether right or wrong. In Baluchistan, the positive effects generated by the Sind to Peshin Railway led to an expansion in road usage for administration. The construction of postal and access roads from the railway actually came at the request of tribal leaders. They hoped to reap the benefits of the road's prosperity. Even the original route that Sandeman sought from Harnai through Thal and Choteali was completed peacefully when discussion of the project provoked a

revolt by the Kakar Pathans only a decade earlier. In Waziristan, roads remained the tool of choice for the British despite the numerous negative effects of their construction.

Clearly, road construction amplified the COIN efforts of the British in both locations.

British commitment to road efforts on the border with Afghanistan waxed and waned based upon the perception of threat to British India. The Sind to Peshin Railway was long envisioned as necessary but not initiated until required for military efforts in Afghanistan. After the Second Anglo Afghan War, work on the road stopped for three years before Russian expansion to the northern border of Afghanistan prompted restarting of the construction effort. The railway was then completed during a period when the British government supported direct administration of the tribal border with Afghanistan. British policy began to change after 1890. Unwillingness to bear the cost of road construction outside of protected areas in Waziristan initially hampered Richard Bruce's efforts at expanding governance and administering the tribes. Once roads became a tool of the military, however, willingness to commit funds to the construction effort increased dramatically.

Though the British intended to maintain control over its strategic routes to the Afghan border, transfer of responsibility for administration and security to the local people was always desirable in order to minimize cost. Though seemingly paradoxical in the eyes of cost-conscious colonial administrators, the more that was invested initially in the pacification effort the more successful the transition effort became. Sandeman's efforts to empower tribal leadership and build its capacity to administer itself required expenditure on roads, development programs and military support for tribal leaders. While this approach was expensive up-front, the tribal structure proved capable of

supporting many of the administrative functions required by the British with the added advantage of providing the perception for local people of tribal control. In Waziristan, cost cutting measures undermined the pacification effort, and with it the possibility of transferring responsibility. Those tribal leaders who supported Bruce were murdered or sidelined as flagrant British expropriation of tribal lands inflamed tribal anger.

The process of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road's construction purported to achieve the same effects as Sandeman, but its inconsistent approach bore more resemblance to the British effort in Waziristan. The assignment of a four kilometer wide area of operations to TF Pacemaker was similar to the protected areas established around the key routes in Waziristan. Within this area, Pacemaker attempted to apply the same techniques used by Sandeman to capitalize on the road construction effort. Consistent engagement with local government and tribal leaders typified the construction task force's operations. The weak Shah Wali Kot District Government and Police proved poor partners, however. Pacemaker executed development projects and attempted to incorporate the local people into the construction effort occurred on a small scale, but were resisted by the villagers fearful of insurgents who had sanctuaries outside of the protected area. While Sher Agha's militia may have bribed local leaders in order to prevent attacks, there is no evidence that local people were employed by the warlord to provide security. The combination of these factors failed to build local commitment to the project and squandered some of the opportunities afforded by the road project.

Outside the TF Pacemaker AO, Gundevis focused more on disrupting insurgent safe havens than building lasting relationships. Though attempts were made to improve the quality of local governance, priority for the task force's COIN efforts was the 400,000

people living in Kandahar city. Periodic task force-level operations and patrols complemented Pacemaker's security plan and undoubtedly prevented large insurgent attacks on the road effort, but were insufficient to support the efforts of local village leaders who saw the benefit of the road project. The kidnapping and intimidation of village elders demonstrates that, just as in Waziristan, the security of routes and the stability of tribal governance surrounding them are inseparable.

The disconnect between Pacemaker and Gundevis's approaches to COIN in Shah Wali Kot arose from a theater-level change in focus. With the acceptance of risk in Oruzgan by CJTF-76 and establishment of CTF Devil as the CJTF main effort, the military justification for the road ceased to exist. The redoubling of construction efforts on the road to support a short-term political objective, the 2005 elections, was therefore out-of-sync with the military realities imposed by the withdrawal of the infantry battalion from Tarin Kowt. The road effort, which was focused on the population, was destined to produce only temporary effects because it was not nested with the efforts of CTF Bayonet. The results at a tactical level were inevitable given the change in operational focus, and illustrate the extent to which road construction efforts require continuity of approach and unity of effort to be successful.

While completion of the military portion of the road project was accelerated by the 18 September 2005 national elections, setting a short-term goal for the road resulted in premature withdrawal of construction assets. As required by CJTF-76, the structural base of the road was completed five months ahead of schedule by TF Pacemaker. USAID also completed its scope-of-work by that date. The shortcomings in the construction plan were identified and the process of procuring funding and hiring contractors was even

initiated. Both the military engineers and USAID declared their efforts complete, however, even though significant tasks remained. Had the construction effort been nested in CTF Bayonet's operations it is possible that the contracts would have been successfully completed. Nevertheless, the accelerated completion date and achievement of short-term objectives resulted in a rapid re-allocation of engineer assets.

Migration of U.S. troops eastward and transition of RC-South to ISAF doomed any attempt at transition road and its security. Though the engineers building the road attempted to leverage its construction to pacify the population, a prolonged effort at pacification in Shah Wali Kot was never envisaged by the maneuver commanders in the area. While the road was initially useful for the COIN effort in Oruzgan, the acceptance of risk in that province shifted maneuver priorities away from the road. USAID's involvement with the project ended with the completion of its scope-of-work. The capacity of the Afghan government and police in between Kandahar and Tarin Kowt was minimal, and they were certainly incapable of providing security along the road. Though Pacemaker made efforts to arrange for transition the road, the lack a command-support relationship with CTF Bayonet and the pressing nature of its follow-on missions resulted in withdrawal from the road and its bases.

Long Term Development

Upon completion of a road project, the metrics employed by the international aid community and the military can be measured. Indicators such as travel time reduction, number of communities connected to the government, length of road constructed, and paved road density are all used to demonstrate progress in the development of an area of operation. They require no further elaboration after the ribbon cutting ceremony of a new

highway or provincial road. The construction team packs its equipment and departs for another project. Who stays behind to advance the gains achieved during the construction process is a fundamental and overlooked question. As demonstrated in the case studies detailed in chapters 4 and 5, roads are inseparably connected to the populations through which they run. The following factors are used to consider the long term effects of the road on the COIN effort: continuity of counterinsurgent presence, status of local governance, control of the road, economic activity, security perception and achievement of planned objectives for the road project.

For the roads in both Baluchistan and Waziristan, their significance to the defense of India resulted in a continuous counterinsurgent presence. In Baluchistan, Sandeman's system of tribal administration and security continued after the railroad was finished. Tribal constabulary forces, supervised by only two or three British officers in each unit, manned forts along the route of the railway. The success of Sandeman's pacification effort facilitated a continuous military presence with minimal British troop commitment. Though the railroad through the Bolan Pass eventually supplanted the Sind to Peshin Railway as the primary route to Quetta and onwards to the Afghan border, the route to Peshin remained significant for administration of newly profitable tribal territory. In Waziristan, the active and increasingly intense insurgency resulted in increasing and direct military commitment. Establishment of permanent piquets along the sides of major routes provided direct security of the major routes within the protected areas.

The result of continuous British presence on the routes was that they maintained control of the routes themselves. As the British provided the locomotive service along the Sind to Peshin Railway, they maintained direct control over the route's use. While the

postal and access routes that branched off of the railway were not directly monitored by the British themselves, the system of tribal levies and local administration facilitated freedom of movement across Baluchistan. Because the local people were ably administered by their own government, peaceful and increasingly prosperous, the security of the routes themselves was an afterthought. In Waziristan, the opposite occurred. While the escalation of troop presence in the district and establishment of permanent positions overlooking important routes provided control when military used the roads, insurgents asserted themselves in the absence of British presence and harassment of piquet positions and patrols was common.

Economic activity in both Baluchistan and Waziristan can be best measured through the revenues of British taxation and the costs of administration. As documented in Chapter Four, Sibi, Thal and Choteali, and Peshin Provinces all became profitable in the wake of the railroad project. Though the stimulus of the project itself obviously contributed to the increase in tax revenue, the railroad and the linkage to the Indian economy also contributed to the rise in profits. In fact, the profits from taxation fully covered the cost of administration, making Sandeman's system self-sustaining. In Waziristan, the costs of administration, which included military action and road construction, continued to increase through the 1936 insurrection. The most interesting aspect of the economic activity in the provinces was the fact that the British examined economic activity and costs so closely. The colonial system was predicated on the necessity for the administered provinces to provide profit to Britain. While this may seem exploitative, it provided the British a reason to maintain connection with the people in areas they pacified and an incentive to develop local capacity. While the impulse to cut

costs backfired in Waziristan, it was self-interest that kept the British engaged and committed over many decades along the Indian frontier.

A key component of enabling economic activity is the perception of security. For both the counterinsurgent and the local people, a secure environment is a necessary precursor to sustained economic growth. Thus, the economic indicators in Baluchistan and Waziristan provide a powerful indicator of security of the roads. The British used similar methods in both areas to secure their routes. Manned outposts and tribal levies provided day-to-day overwatch of the routes, with larger forces poised to use the routes themselves in response to aggression. In Baluchistan this system was made effective by the authority and loyalty of the tribal leadership. Sandeman's thorough approach to these leaders used all four elements of national power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic). In Waziristan, the dysfunctional relationship with the tribes undermined security no matter how many roads were built or how many troops stationed in the province. These measures actually increased tribal resentment.

Did the British achieve the objectives they sought with the Sind to Peshin Railway and the road network in Waziristan? The objective in both areas was the same: rapid access to the border. Sandeman succeeded because he developed an awareness of the variable influencing access and identified the critical requirement, functional and British-friendly tribal governance. Though the railroad was a key requirement, it was not an end in itself. Rather, it provided a potent means to cultivate tribal relationships and cement them. A pacified Baluchistan provided dividends to the British both in peace and during times of crisis, as demonstrated during the Second Anglo Afghan War. In Waziristan, the problem of access was defined more narrowly through the establishment

of protected areas. The desire to minimize cost undermined the effort to empower tribal leaders. The cycle of insurrection, punitive campaign and road construction that followed only increased the distance between the British and the tribes. Security and economic activity suffered, and ultimately the British had to invest vast sums of money and station large numbers of troops in Waziristan to maintain access. This approach was of questionable effectiveness, and was far from self-sustaining.

For the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, the drop in counterinsurgent presence after construction was dramatic. TF Pacemaker's withdrawal was not backfilled by any coalition force. What local governance was in place in Shah Wali Kot was ineffectual, and the key leadership was murdered by insurgents. Canadian and Dutch re-establishment of presence along the road aimed to build relationships with the local tribal leadership, but it too withdrew as insurgent activity around Kandahar escalated in 2006. For the next three years, ISAF forces focused on engaging insurgents in the area surrounding the road much as TF Gundevis had during the construction process. The population centers of Kandahar and Tarin Kowt were important; the places in-between were not. In absence of counterinsurgent control, an opportunist established authority. Recognizing the value of controlling the route, he assumed a day-to-day control that he maintains today. With the surge of U.S. forces to Afghanistan, a battalion was assigned the mission of restoring the fractured tribal relationships in the area. How long ISAF will ensure freedom of movement along the road is unclear, as are Matiullah Khan's true intentions.

After its completion, the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road was consistently identified as being important but was not integrated into the COIN effort until 2009. With limited troop presence in RC-South, Shah Wali Kot District remained a place to assume

risk. Efforts to complete the paving of the road and construction of bridges were hampered by this lack of emphasis, and Matiullah Khan capitalized on the requirement for security support to further enrich himself. In fact, Khan's efforts with the local people aimed at cementing their support and thereby consolidating his control. The incorporation of the KAU into the Afghan National Police and his position as Police Chief for Oruzgan Province despite the objections of the Dutch task force is a testament to his effectiveness. By virtue of his relationship with the people, and perhaps the insurgents, he controls local access to the road and is recognized as an emerging power broker in southern Afghanistan.

While only anecdotal reports collected by journalists are available for analysis, it appears that the road plays an important economic role in the region and is controlled by Matiullah Khan. The establishment of "security day" and the charging of over \$1,000 a vehicle for transit give some indication of the economic potential of the route that is being harnessed by the militia leader. With his support as a requirement for contracted construction along the route, Khan profits from and controls the progress of the paving the road. Khan's economic incentive has led him to maintain control and security in the area in a way that ISAF has not. Like the British, Khan has a vested interest in the road because he taxes it. His intentions are less clear, however. As a leader in the Popalzai tribe and relative of Jan Mohammed Khan, Matiullah may be using his position to consolidate his tribe's control. As his control is based on the need to secure the road, his relationship to insurgent groups, drug traffickers and other non-governmental actors is unclear.

Just as Khan is central to the economic activity on the road, he is at the heart of the security efforts as well. His KAU militia is viewed as a credible military partner by the U.S. battalion with responsibility for the road, and he has a strong relationship with the Australian force operating in Oruzgan. The fact that military commanders from his organization are receiving training in Australia provides a clear picture of who the commanders in the region believe will maintain security after ISAF departure. While his militia is partly integrated into the Afghan National Police, the fact that Khan continues to profit from both the road and private security contracts indicates that he is not wholly aligned with the government.

The initial objectives of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road were to facilitate the COIN effort in Oruzgan, expand government authority to Oruzgan Province and advance the state of transport infrastructure in Afghanistan. In each of these areas, the effort achieved at least mixed success. Where the effort failed was in the areas between the cities at either end. Building the road opened access to the population, whether the U.S. and ISAF wanted to engage it or not. Sporadic counterinsurgent efforts along the road achieved, at best, temporary effects. It exposed local leaders to retribution, and in the vacuum of power that resulted from Pacemaker's departure an opportunist emerged. Committed to the road because of self-interest, Khan has engaged in a pacification campaign of his own. As a result, he has become —ouman” along the road and a major power broker in Afghan politics.

The analysis of British and U.S. use of road construction illustrates that it is a tool that has both benefits and limitations. Although roads provide easy metrics to report, they are no quick answer to development. Road construction influences the populations they

connect regardless of the intentions of the counterinsurgent. Their use requires commitment and broader efforts with the populations that surround them.

¹Sir Robert Sandeman served on the North-West Frontier from 1866 until his death in 1892. As Agent to the Governor General of Baluchistan, he successfully pacified the Baluchistan and facilitated its incorporation in British India. His method of peaceful penetration is detailed in chapter 4.

²Richard Bruce served with Sir Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan and was appointed Chief Political Officer for Waziristan from 1890 to 1897. His attempt to apply Sandeman's System in Waziristan failed due to insufficient support to his empowerment of tribal maliks and, partly, the Mahsud and Wazir tribal culture. His efforts in Waziristan are detailed in chapter 4.

³British use of roads to facilitate their military operations in Waziristan is documented in the official history of the British effort to put down the insurgency, *Operations in Waziristan: 1919-1920*. General Sir Andrew Skeen, a commander in the 1919 campaign and later Chief of Staff of the British Army details the role of roads in frontier tactics in *Passing it On: Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the North-West Frontier of India*.

⁴The most vocal critic of British road policy on the North-West Frontier was Lieutenant C. E. Bruce. Son of Richard Bruce, he served in Waziristan from 1920 to 1937. His single published work, *Waziristan, 1936-1937*, details how British policies led to the massive 1936 insurrection by the Faqir of Ipi.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

The *supreme test* of any policy, if it is to be successful, must still be the welfare of the people—the welfare of the tribes—because any policy which has subordinated their welfare to purely political considerations has always failed.

— C. E. Bruce, *Waziristan*

The current body of knowledge related to using roads as a tool in COIN is overly simplistic and narrowly focused on the process of road building itself. David Kilcullen's study of the road construction effort in Kunar provides valuable tactical observations about the road construction process but little consideration of the operational and strategic implications. His examination of a well-resourced road construction effort that was still in-progress furnishes an overly-simplified view of how roads influence the population. He does not consider what happens to roads once they are completed, or the fate of the many roads under construction in Afghanistan that are not nested into a counterinsurgent approach. Given the magnitude of the internationally funded road construction campaign since 2001 and the extensive contracted military road construction effort, these areas require consideration. The benefits of roads are extolled by Kilcullen, but the limitations and possible counterproductive effects are insufficiently considered.

The international aid community and USAID increasingly view building roads in Afghanistan as an end in itself. Road construction efforts can be planned years in advance. Spending on roads is palatable to international donors, and when completed there is tangible evidence of progress. Success is measured in terms of road density, travel-time reduction and the number of communities connected to roads. There is little consideration given, however, to the road's effect on the population and how the process

of using contractors to build roads in areas with dysfunctional local governance empowers both opportunists and, potentially, the insurgents ISAF aims to neutralize. This thesis sought to illustrate the limitations associated with using road building in COIN, as well as highlight factors that should be considered when using roads as a tool from the first consideration of their employment through their long-term use.

Roads: What they Are, and What they Are Not

When employed in a counterinsurgency, roads are tools for access and control. In the parlance of military planners, they are key terrain that facilitates the operations of the force that controls them. For the counterinsurgent, building roads reduces the tactical advantage that isolation affords the insurgent. They allow better use of modern technology and help a small military force operate over large distances. In the words of LTC Paolozzi, roads provide the capability to “~~at~~ move to the places you need to counter the insurgency.”¹ While they certainly provide tactical advantages, roads also can make the counterinsurgent’s movements more predictable and targetable. LTC Neumann observed “~~for~~ the enemy the key terrain of the roads provide a place to focus their attacks. . . . the place where their attacks culminate. All planning, prep and approach happens off the road corridor.”² Roads can therefore become the focus of the struggle for control of an area, and the tactical problem of securing them lay outside the boundaries of the road itself.

Roads can also act as a conduit for commerce and government services. They can enhance both the local government's efforts at securing itself and administering to the needs of its people. These are the uses of roads most often highlighted by the counterinsurgent, but, in reality, roads are seldom built in a counterinsurgency for this

purpose. The benefits afforded to the population connected by roads are not assured, however, by the completion of the road itself. Rather, the security of the road and the benefits it can provide are inextricably linked to security and governance of the population through which it passes. COL Paolozzi and other leaders interviewed in this study therefore likened roads to military obstacles, in that roads must be secured and monitored in order to achieve their intended effect.

Relationships built with the local population before and during the construction effort shape the perception of the road in the eyes of the people it connects. The British experience in Waziristan demonstrates that roads, if built against the wishes of the local people or without their approval, can be perceived as tools of control or even acts of aggression. If built upon the invitation of the people or in such a way that reinforces the authority of local leadership, however, roads can become beneficial extensions of government administration. Sandeman's efforts in Baluchistan demonstrate how roads can act as catalysts for rapid economic and governmental development if properly employed and nested in the larger operational and strategic vision. Sir Robert Thompson's assertion that roads, like any other development effort, should be presented as benefits of supporting the counterinsurgent rather than as a bribe for good behavior remains as true today as it was when he wrote it in the wake of the Vietnam War. Road building should not lead the counterinsurgent's efforts in an area, but rather be nested within it.

Roads influence the population they connect, whether the counterinsurgent aims to utilize them that way or not. If left unsecured by the counterinsurgent, opportunists, or insurgents can use roads to impose control on the populations along their length to enrich

themselves. Sandeman's use of trial levies raised by local chiefs to secure the Sind to Peshin Railway demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing the people themselves to secure the road that passes through their area. Local control of the road, administered by British political officers, ensured that British access was maintained with minimal troop presence. While Matiullah Khan may fill that role today along the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, it is unclear whether his efforts are representative of all the tribal groups that lay along the road. If published allegations of his actions against the Ghilzai tribal group are true, it may be that Khan is imposing his will on the tribes along the road rather than allowing the tribes to exert their own influence. It is clear that Khan has cemented his place as a power broker in Oruzgan through his control of the road, which is a development unanticipated during the planning for and construction of the road.

The road building process, if integrated by the counterinsurgent, can enhance a COIN campaign focused on the population it connects. The slow progress of a road and its path through populated areas brings the counterinsurgent into daily contact with the people and visibly demonstrates his intentions. Integrating local people into the construction and security effort builds investment in the road and provides the opportunity to empower local leadership. The COIN effort cannot end, however, only a few kilometers from the edge of the road. As evidenced by the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, a road building effort centered on the population must be nested within a larger pacification effort in the area through which the road passes. Security of the road cannot be accomplished within a protected area alone. Moreover, the places in between the end points of the road are as important as the end points themselves. COL Paolozzi's assessment of the importance of these places is as follows:

If the anti-coalition forces are controlling those areas in between you really don't have an effective campaign. You're sort of delusional if you believe you have some type of security on the ground. [Road building] does require you to secure large areas of ground and it does require you to have an impact with those people in the places in between.³

The implication of the need to secure and integrate populations is that roads may not be the right tool to use in areas where the counterinsurgent is unwilling to commit himself.

Thus, roads are not short-term tools. The process of building a road takes years to complete, and the effects of a road project on the population cannot be accurately be measured during the construction process itself. The infusion of money into the local economy and presence of counterinsurgent forces in the area provides a misleadingly positive impression of governance, security, and economic development. When the road is completed, all of the metrics related to its construction can be reported and, more often than not, forces are shifted elsewhere. Because the situation improves when the counterinsurgent is present and spending money does not, however, mean that it will stay that way. As MAJ Craig Quadrato observed, this is a myopic approach that leads to unintended consequences:

Whenever you go out to build a [road] you have to be clear on who will operate and maintain [it]. That is typically whoever wants [it] built; typically forgotten. . . . You've got to think of the project not just during construction but [over the] long-term. Part of the job of the constructing unit is to try to educate [the customer] on the standard that the road that is going to be built and the responsibilities into the future to make sure the road serves its purpose.⁴

Failure to plan for and execute an effective transition of the road itself and the security of the people along it makes the benefits accrued during construction transitory. If promises of security and governance are not kept past the completion of the road, those who aided in the road effort are exposed to reprisal. As Sir Frank Kitson observed and was demonstrated on the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, there is a human cost associated with

premature transition of authority. Reclaiming control of the area surrounding the road and convincing the population to again trust the counterinsurgent becomes much more difficult after the cost of supporting the counterinsurgent is demonstrated to the people by insurgents.

Taken in aggregate, these characteristics of roads in a COIN environment illustrate the limitations of route construction as a tool. Roads require dedication by the counterinsurgent not only to the process of building the road itself, but to a population-focused COIN effort along its length long after the road itself is completed. Roads may not be acceptable to local people in all areas, and road construction without local acceptance can result in the expensive project being viewed more as a tool of control rather than a conduit for development. Roads take a long period of time to construct and care must be given to transition them to locally appropriate governing and security institutions. In many areas of Afghanistan, this may not be the ANP or ANA. Embarking on a road construction project is therefore a commitment that is costly in terms of both money and manpower.

What does this mean for the billions of dollars of road construction executed by the international aid community since 2001? Hiring contractors to build roads in hostile areas with only periodic monitoring certainly fails to fully integrate the population. The benefits of the road construction process are, in fact, wasted. Hiring of security contractors like Sher Agha and Matiullah Khan who do not even reside in the area where the road is constructed is probably not representative of the local tribal governance. Some portion of the funds used to pay for the road may even aid the insurgents, as occurred during the British effort in Waziristan. While road metrics can be reported higher and the

slide show depicting the theater road campaign shows progress, the actual impact of the road on the people remains unmeasured unless a long-term commitment is made to engage the area through which the road passes. Perhaps MAJ John Litz is correct when he describes the difficulties associated with contracted road construction: —You are hiring the devil to do your work. What have you done? Yeah, you’ve got a road, but how did you get it and what are the impacts of empowering the warlord. You are giving him money; what is he doing with that money? Are you just moving the problem around?”⁵ Given the complex nature of roads, it is therefore useful to provide some guidelines for their use in COIN.

Guidelines for Employment of Roads In Counterinsurgency

When considering the employment of road construction in an area of operations, the purpose of the road must be clearly defined in terms of the needs of the counterinsurgent, the population that it connects, and the capability of local governance. The level of commitment required for the road effort is inversely proportional to the ability of local governance to provide security. In insurgent-held or contested areas, the road must be of sufficient significance to warrant sustained military and economic commitment both during construction and its subsequent use. This may span years, so the counterinsurgent or capable local forces should be apportioned to safeguard the population and the progress made after the road’s completion. Since the road is costly and requires commitment, it does not make sense to build roads in areas where the counterinsurgent does not intend to build relationships with the population. Though roads may simplify the tactics of targeting insurgents, the benefits are outweighed by the potential costs associated with their use by opportunist or the insurgents themselves.

For any road project, the consent of the people is necessary to capitalize upon the potential benefits of the construction project. Unilateral road construction efforts have the potential to disaffect the population and are easily identified for what they are: efforts to facilitate military maneuver and dominate an area. Sufficient military and construction assets must be planned for in order to ensure the road is completed, and flexibility in the funding of the road is important to allow the constructing force to adapt to unanticipated challenges. A command-support relationship must also exist between the constructing force and the maneuver force that secures it. This ties the builder to the customer and facilitates the nesting of the road construction effort within the COIN effort in the area. Finally, and most importantly, provision must be made in the plan for the transition of the road's security and upkeep. Setting the conditions for withdrawal from the —ink linè in planning facilitates the development of security, governance and maintenance capability amongst the local people.

During construction of the road itself, continuity of counterinsurgent presence is necessary to both facilitate completion of the road and safeguard the local population endangered by their support to the construction effort. The long-term security of the road is inseparable from the governance and security of the population that surrounds it. Thus, the COIN effort must extend well beyond the road into the communities and tribal areas. Use of contracted construction and security forces does not relieve the counterinsurgent of this requirement. Rather, attention must be redoubled to ensure that the security force guarding the road is representative of the tribes that live along it and that the security force is not complicit with insurgent groups. The conditions required for transition of the road and its security must remain the priority for the counterinsurgent. Completion of the

construction effort within the span of the counterinsurgent's surge of security and construction assets on the project is also essential, as efforts to complete the effort after transition are both more difficult and vulnerable to attack.

Ultimately, the counterinsurgent cannot force local governance of its own choosing upon the people. Figures like Matiullah Khan may emerge that provide the people the security they need in the long-term. It is, perhaps true, that COL Paolozzi is correct when he asserts that —maybe Matiullah Khan is the road to democracy.”⁶ Effort must be then directed towards mentoring figures like Khan and incorporating them into governance structures that are representative and not self-serving. The current efforts to train and integrate Matiullah and his lieutenants seem to aim at converting him and his organization into one that both provides security and represents the people. Given the importance of tribal allegiances and the scheduled withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2014, it is questionable whether his behavior and allegiances can be altered. It is likely that Matiullah will endeavor to appear as ISAF wants him to appear until coalition forces depart. Better than mentoring opportunists, however, is setting conditions that do not allow figures like Khan to rise to power through the control of U.S. and internationally built roads.

Implication for Efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan

In light of both the commitment required to capitalize on the benefits of road construction and the potential for unintended second and third order effects due to improper use of roads, the ISAF road construction campaign should be narrowed. Building fewer roads that are better integrated into the COIN strategy will yield the effects intended by international donors and the U.S. government when contributing

funds to rebuild Afghanistan. This approach conforms to the strategy currently underway in Afghanistan to focus on clearing, holding, and building in the most populated areas of the country. While the road strategy developed by the Afghan government sets out admirable road construction objectives, it insufficiently considers governance capability and insurgent presence. Building roads without consideration of these factors is wasteful and potentially damaging to the nation building effort in Afghanistan. Therefore, the blanket use of contracted road construction and security assets to expand infrastructure in areas where counterinsurgents do not have sustained presence should be reconsidered.

Road construction holds the potential to transform the environment and isolate insurgents from the local population, but only if executed as a part of a larger COIN effort in an area where the counterinsurgent intends to maintain continuity of approach over a period of years. Given the drawdown of forces beginning in July 2011 and culminating in a U.S. troop withdrawal in 2014, many potential road projects not already in progress may be inappropriate. Those road projects that are conducted must maximize integration of local tribal groups as well as capable Afghan governance. Achieving unity of effort across the span of deployments of multiple units should be a goal for ISAF commanders. As evidenced with the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road, each successive unit that attempted to reassert authority along the road duplicated the efforts of the units that preceded it. Institutional memory, as communicated during a two week left-seat right-seat ride is insufficient to ensure the consistency required in a population-focused COIN campaign. If road efforts tie commanders to the approaches of their predecessors, there may be value in them as a tool for maintaining counterinsurgent unity of effort.

Road construction efforts in Pakistan in support of counterinsurgency operations also deserve further scrutiny. The British experience in Waziristan demonstrated the unintended consequences of using roads as a tool of control. The rebellious Mahsud and Wazir tribes resented British incursion and recognized the road construction campaign as an effort to deprive them of their isolation and independence. The more the roads the British built in Waziristan, the more the tribes resisted. Additionally, the funds provided for building the roads was utilized, at least in part, to fund the purchase of arms and further tribal resistance. The current State Department road construction campaign in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) resembles the British effort to control the tribes under the auspices of development. The USAID-funded, \$80 million project to construct two 100 kilometer roads has the potential to incite resentment from the tribal people that it purports to serve.⁷ Given that the project is being executed by local contractors and supervised by a foreign military, it is unclear how the road project will be successfully supervised and integrated into the COIN effort. The road campaign in Waziristan should be audited in light of historical precedent.

At the heart of any road efforts made in Afghanistan or Pakistan must be the welfare of the tribes and communities they connect. The admonitions of Sir Robert Sandeman and C. E. Bruce about using roads as tools to improve the lives of the people rather than ends in themselves must be remembered and followed. The strategic communications narrative that accompanies the many road projects executed across the Afghanistan speaks to the improvement of local peoples' lives and the many benefits that accompany the improvement of infrastructure. The builders of the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road believed in these principles as they labored seven days a week to complete

the road despite enemy attacks and the loss of two of their comrades. The local leaders who supported the road effort believed as well, and paid the price after coalition forces departed. The tragic cost in lives caused by inconsistency in approach and a short-term focus can and should be avoided by future leaders who consider the employment of roads in a COIN campaign.

¹Paolozzi, Interview.

²Neumann, Interview.

³Paolozzi, Interview.

⁴Quadrato, Interview.

⁵Litz, Interview.

⁶Paolozzi, Interview.

⁷ Matthew Green, —US Plans Route to Stability in Tribal Region,” FT.com, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/48aea8c6-3541-11e0-aa6c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1Meo1ZPc3> (accessed 17 May 2011).

GLOSSARY

Amir. A ruler or king.

Budmashes. Bad men.

Fakir. An Islamic holy man.

Jirga. A Pashto term for an assembly of male elders where decisions are made and disputes between rival parties are resolved.

Kassadar. Tribal levy or policeman employed by the British on the border with Afghanistan.

Madrassah. A religious school.

Malik. A tribal chief in the Pathan ethnic group.

Mullah. An Islamic holy man.

Mujahedeen. A military force of Muslim guerilla warriors.

Shura. The Arabic word for consultation. A meeting of where tribes select leaders and make major decisions.

Sirdar. A Persian term for tribal chief used synonymously with malik by the British.

Taliban. Religious Student. Movement founded by Mullah Mohammed Omar that gained control of much of Afghanistan in the late 1990s.

Tribal Levies. Locally raised militia forces employed by the British to provide security on static locations and for tribal policing.

Tumandar. A tribal chief in the Baluchi and Brahui ethnic groups.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS FOR THE KANDAHAR TO TARIN KOWT ROAD STUDY

Name	Position	Date and Type of Interview	Timeframe in Afghanistan
COL(R) Nancy Wetherill	109th Engineer Group Commander	Oral–2 February 2011	2004-2005
COL(R) Richard Pedersen	Combined Task Force Bronco (3/25 ID) Commander	Oral–30 March 2011	2004- 2005
COL Bertrand Ges	Task Force Gundevel (3-319 AFAR) Commander	Oral–14 February 2011	2005-2006
MAJ George Whittenburg	Task Force Gundevel Intelligence Officer	Written–11 March 2011	2005-2006
MAJ John Gibson	CTF Bayonet Assistant Operations Officer and TF Gundevel Deputy Operations Officer	Written–11 March 2011	2005-2006
COL Paul Paolozzi	Task Force Pacemaker Commander (864th EN BN)	Oral–25 February 2011	2005-2006
LTC Jerry Farnsworth	Task Force Pacemaker Executive Officer	Oral–8 February 2011	2005-2006
LTC Craig Quadrato	Task Force Pacemaker Operations Officer	Oral–31 January 2011	2005-2006
CPT(R) Gregory Parranto	Task Force Pacemaker Security Company Commander	Oral–6 March 2011	2005-2006
MAJ John Litz	Resident Engineer for the Kandahar Regional Office of the United States Army Corps of Engineers	Oral–27 February 2011	January to July 2006
MAJ John Raso	Resident Engineer for the Tarin Kowt Regional Office of the United States Army Corps of Engineers	Written and Oral–19 April 2011	June 2009 to May 2010
LTC Jonathan Neumann	Commander, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 5th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division	Written and Oral–13 March 2011	2009-2010

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Department of Military History
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Mr. Stuart Lyon
Department of Joint and Multinational Operations
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Dr. Daniel Marston
Ike Skelton Distinguished Chair in Counterinsurgency
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

Mr. Steven Boylan
Department of Leadership
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301