



Afghan Perceptions of ISAF – Difficult Questions

Dr D F Mikulskis (SCIAD (L)) and F D Butcher (Dstl)

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(Covers UNCLASSIFIED)



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- “Any views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not, necessarily, represent the views of either the UK Ministry of Defence or the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory or of NATO.”



Introduction

- Aim – Describe a case-study with lessons for OA
 - Not a focus on particular statistics
 - *Use of Thematic Analysis*
- Reasons for GoB events in Afghanistan are not fully understood
 - Bordin paper
- SCIAD (L) deployed May 2012 to Helmand
 - Survey into Afghan perceptions of ISAF (LSCC)
 - Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) and Afghan National Army (ANA) were interviewed
 - A number of questions were posed by the surge team
 - How successful was the team?
 - What are the lessons for interviewing local nationals in an operational context?
 - Operational impact?



Data Collection & Quick-look Analysis (1)

- Semi-structured Interview Protocol
 - Closed & open questions, “conversation”
 - Not formally piloted, surge effort for timely effect
 - Designed to understand perceptions of UK troops
 - Inc. social dynamics, partnered/mentored context
 - Characterise effectiveness, behaviours
- Interview ANSF
 - Varying ranks, locations, units, development
 - Facilitated by ISAF troops



Data Collection & Quick-look Analysis (2)

- Preparation
 - Self-introduction
 - Prompt cards, Likert scale, Pashtu, Dari
 - Scepticism
 - Loose plan
 - Days, where, when, how long, who?
 - Interview in tandem
 - Either as 121 or 12many
- Interpreters



Data Collection & Quick-look Analysis (3)

- Interviews around 30 mins
 - Hand-notes, consolidated onto laptop
 - “data” discussion, interpretation of responses
- Analysis initiated in-theatre
 - Demographics confirmed
 - Difference in ANA vs. AUP responses
 - Difference Interviewer vs. Interviewee concepts of Qs
 - Inc. *Having* a viewpoint to articulate



Recognising the Limitations of the Environment

- Best-laid plans
 - Grab-bag environment?
 - RSOI, movement
 - Senior ANSF sanction in situ, interviewees as available
- Use of Interpreters
 - Significant “lens”
- Use of facilitators
- Selection of Interviewees
- Selection of Interviewers
 - Another lens?
 - Cultural understanding vs. burden
- Interview Protocol
 - *Not* verbatim



Deeper Methodology and Thematic Analysis (1)

- Post surge-deployment
 - Dstl social-science analysts
 - Deeper work for LSCC post deployment
 - Closed questions - mixed ANOVA
 - Confirmed the Quick-look analysis but further pair-wise comparisons (95% CI), difference only for specific questions
 - Thematic analysis of interview transcripts
 - Deeper nuanced understanding
 - Two stage process, X3 social science analysts
 - » help mitigate for analyst bias
 - » improve the inter-rater reliability of the thematic coding
 - » *Inductive approach*
 - Two-stage and iterative



Deeper Methodology and Thematic Analysis (2)

- Thematic stage 1
 - Independent review, identify themes, triangulate
 - Agree thematic coding
- Thematic stage 2
 - Apply coding framework
 - Counts
 - Avoided over-emphasis
 - Sub-themes emerged



Impact of Difficult Questions Posed in a Difficult Environment

- Lessons for this approach
 - Shared definitions?
 - Filters on the data
 - Interviewer, Interpreter
 - Including cultural/linguistic expertise vs. planning horizon
 - Interview Protocol
 - Increased ethnographic approach
 - Note-taking context during interview
 - Necessity for more interviewee content
 - Use less structure, 121 vs. 12many?
- Troops about to deploy, Review of training, Comprehensive approach to IT aspects



Conclusions

- Surge concept delivered relatively timely response
 - Civilians flexibility changed the collection plan
 - Cultural differences not as stark as reported
- Non-optimal approach
 - Showed statistical difference between two ANSF groups
 - Despite conditions, environment and data-collection
- Operationally-relevant case-study
 - methods and applicability of Thematic Analysis
 - an additional tool for Operational Analysis



Questions?

