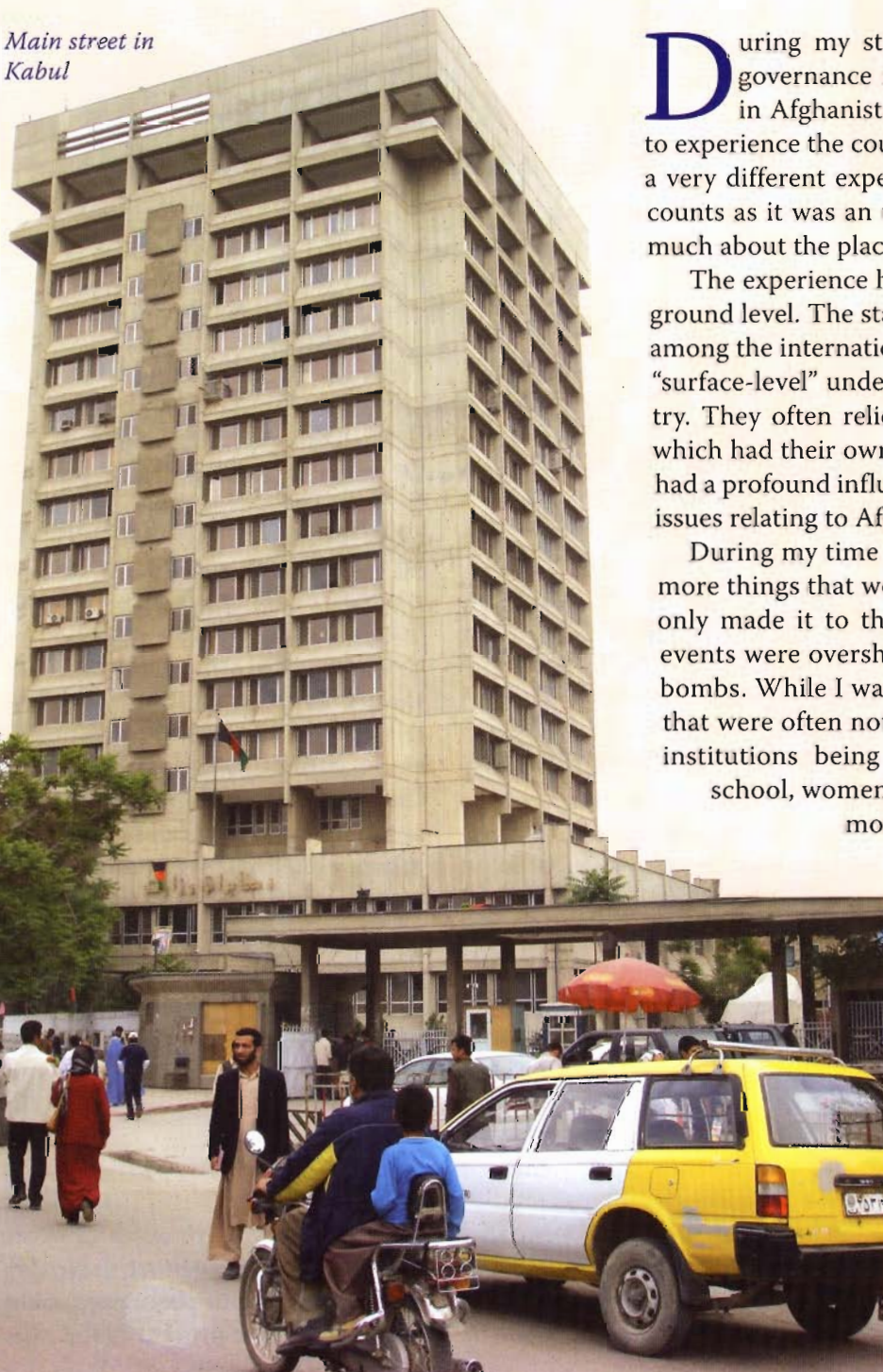


An Analyst's Time in Ka

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at RSIS conducts research, training and outreach programmes that are aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and mitigating its effects on the international system. It sends its analysts to affected areas and relevant related institutions to study conflict and violence. Recently, one of its counter terrorism analysts, Mr. Prakhar Sharma, spent five months at the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS) in Kabul. Here are some of Mr. Sharma's thoughts and reflections about his time in Kabul.

Main street in
Kabul



During my stint at CAPS, I researched on various governance issues that were related to the conflict in Afghanistan. Being on the ground, it allowed me to experience the country and its people at first-hand. It was a very different experience from reading other people's accounts as it was an unmediated experience. I had learnt so much about the place while I was there.

The experience has taught me a lot about conflict at the ground level. The starkest realization, to me, was that many among the international aid community in Kabul had only a "surface-level" understanding of the "realities" of the country. They often relied on reports from the foreign media, which had their own way of framing agendas. This, in turn, had a profound influence on the way the masses understand issues relating to Afghanistan.

During my time there, I found out that there were a lot more things that were happening in Kabul than those that only made it to the news reports. Many times, positive events were overshadowed by reports of violence and car bombs. While I was there, there were encouraging stories that were often not reported by the media. These include institutions being established, children going back to school, women entering the workforce, and more and more people respecting the rule of law, to

name a few. And by experiencing everyday life in Afghanistan, I also got the chance to share in these little "successes" of the people first-hand. It made me feel positive and encouraged about the future of the place.

Afghanistan and Iraq are shaping the global "threatscape". It is therefore very important to understand the present and future trends of terrorism in these two conflict zones. This experience sharpened not only my research and analytical skills, but also my skills in managing people

Abul: Some Reflections



Prakhar Sharma (second from the left) with Director of CAPS, Hekmat Karzai (third from the left)

and projects. I believe that I am now more organized at work and am far better at interacting with people than I was before.

International development is based on the idea that skills and resources should move in the direction where they are needed the most. I feel that this is very true for Afghanistan too. I would encourage the more educated and skilled workers to move to developing countries to help them help themselves. As a committed researcher and an advocate of international development, I am encouraged by the results of my work in Afghanistan. I learnt immensely from my time there and feel that my experience could be put to good use in the future.

I see that the work done by ICPVTR through CAPS has proven that ICPVTR's efforts can help initiate, transfer and build counter-terrorism capacities and capabilities, even in the most challenging conflict zones. And as my experience has taught me, future threats can only be reduced by de-

veloping a deep understanding of conflict zones. This can be achieved by providing help to affected governments and having the international community work together to try and stabilize these troubled areas.



Staff of CAPS with their bodyguards

CAPS in Afghanistan – An ICPVTR/RSIS Initiative



Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies

As part of its offshore counter-terrorism capacity-building efforts, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at RSIS helped in the establishment of the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CAPS). Besides providing staff support such as Mr. Prakhar Sharma to assist in research, training and networking, RSIS also facilitated the Risk Management Fellowship (RMS) for CAPS's director, Mr. Hekmat Karzai, to complete a Master's degree in Strategic Studies at RSIS. During his time at ICPVTR, Mr. Karzai also underwent training as a counter-terrorism analyst.