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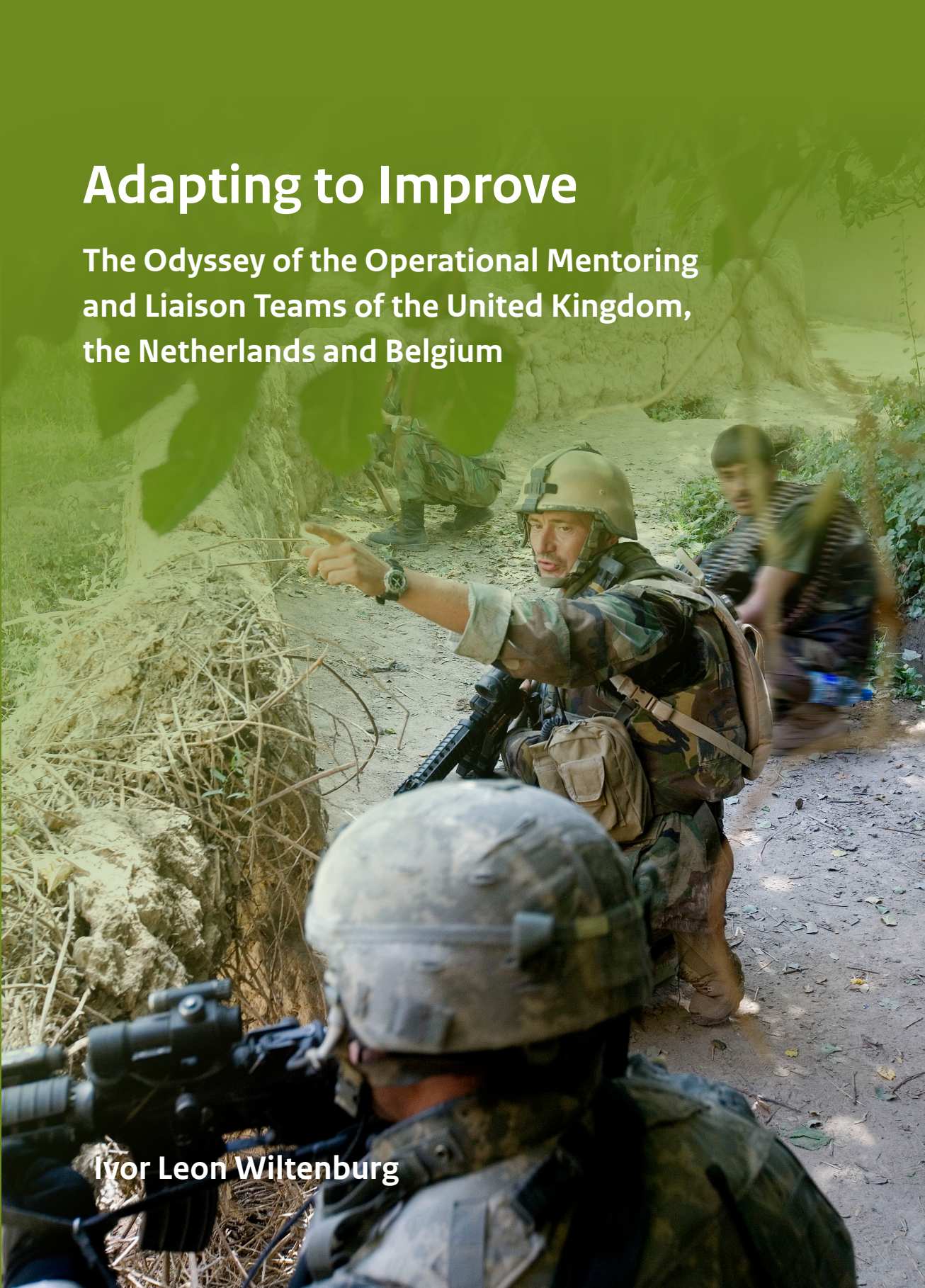
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Adapting to Improve

The Odyssey of the Operational Mentoring
and Liaison Teams of the United Kingdom,
the Netherlands and Belgium

Ivor Leon Wiltenburg



Security Force Assistance (SFA), enhancing the capability and capacity of foreign security forces, is increasingly considered a valuable tool in of Western States' international policy. To be sure, equipping, training and mentoring local troops is not a novel phenomenon. Yet, accompanying and mentoring the recipient forces in combat arguably remains one of the most challenging aspects of SFA. During the war in Afghanistan, allied Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) operated shoulder to shoulder with Afghan National Army units in austere conditions. Although enhancing Afghan security forces was regarded a central tenet in the allied campaign, the OMLTs were initially granted limited attention by the various troop contributing nations. This research examines the British, Dutch and Belgian OMLTs and their efforts to adapt to their challenging tasks. Furthermore, it sheds light on the relationship between Western troops and Afghan forces with occasional diverging professional views.

As a theoretical lens this study utilises Military Innovation theory to analyse the adaptation processes within each case study. Finally, the research breaks new empirical ground by examining a vast range of sources. The three case studies are based on archival records, official evaluations, regimental histories, surveys and over 220 semistructured interviews.

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