

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN:
AN ASSESSMENT

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

By

Keith Boyea, B.S.

Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
November 1, 2011

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN: AN ASSESSMENT

Keith Boyea, B.S.

Mentor: John Brown, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Since soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States military has been engaged in Afghanistan. In 2009, the U.S. began pursuing a strategy of counterinsurgency designed to protect the population, win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, and build a legitimate, allied government in Kabul. This effort has been characterized by push-pull operations designed to push the insurgency and the population away from each other and pull the population towards the central government.

This thesis uses the foundational documents and teachings of counterinsurgency to assess the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan. It shows that the American counterinsurgency effort is failing and, as currently practiced, is unlikely to ever succeed.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: MODELING THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT	11
CHAPTER 3: ASSESSING THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT	37
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: LIST OF SENIOR LEADERS

80

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In December of 2009, President Obama, in a speech at West Point, outlined his strategy to defeat the growing insurgency in Afghanistan. The strategy in Afghanistan was, “. . .narrowly defined as disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al Qaeda and its extremist allies, and. . .to better coordinate our military and civilian effort.”¹ In order to achieve those goals, the president laid out the broad principles of a strategy called counterinsurgency.

U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, titled “Counterinsurgency,” calls counterinsurgency “the graduate level of war.”² It is a complex strategy that “. . .is a competition with the insurgent for the right and ability to win the hearts, minds and acquiescence of the population.”³ Winning the competition for the population ends the insurgency and thus the war. This thesis

¹ Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” The White House, 1 December 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan> (accessed September 02, 2010).

² Sarah Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24 : Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-1.

³ David Kilcullen, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review*, (May 2006), [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen\(Mar06\).pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen(Mar06).pdf) (accessed July 15, 2010), 1.

will use classical⁴ and contemporary works on counterinsurgency to develop a model of the counterinsurgency models laid out in the literature. This "model of a model" is called "push-pull" and reflects U.S. operations in Afghanistan. It will then argue that the American push-pull counterinsurgency strategy cannot achieve the goals set by the president.

Prior to developing the argument, some historical context is necessary to put the American counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan in perspective. The remainder of the introduction will lay out a brief history of American efforts in Afghanistan since 9/11. Chapter two will develop the push-pull model of the model using the most prominent counterinsurgency literature. Chapter three will apply the push and pull elements respectively to the American situation in Afghanistan. Chapter four will conclude the thesis by identifying gaps in the counterinsurgency strategy.

History of the U.S. in Afghanistan Since 9/11

In the days after 9/11, it became clear that the United States intended to respond with military action. On September 21, 2001 President George W. Bush gave the leadership of Afghanistan, called the Taliban, an ultimatum. "Deliver to the United States authorities all of the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide

⁴ In this sense "classical" means the work of the French Army officer David Galula. Galula's work is discussed at length below.

in your land. . . Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so that we can make sure they are no longer operating."⁵ The Taliban rejected Bush's ultimatum the next day.⁶

Given the Taliban's reaction, the Bush administration felt it had no recourse but military action. United States Central Command (CENTCOM) was tasked with developing the Afghan war plan. CENTCOM planned the war in just 26 days—the first United States attack on Afghanistan occurred on October 7, 2001. The Afghan plan was a complex one. According to the U.S. Government's official history of the war in Afghanistan, the U.S. faced significant challenges in prosecuting a land war in Afghanistan. ". . . [The U.S.] had to accomplish a series of exceedingly difficult tasks including the mobilization of forces; the gaining of indigenous support in Afghanistan and surrounding nations, the deployment of troops, equipment, and supplies; and the preparation of the battle area for the commencement of ground operations."⁷ A key part of the plan was deploying Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-led JAWBREAKER teams that would secure

⁵ George W. Bush, "Transcript of President Bush's address," CNN.com, September 21, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> (accessed July 24, 2010).

⁶ Norman Kempster and Tyler Marshall, "Taliban Rejects Bush Ultimatum," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2001, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/sep/22/news/mn-48537> (accessed July 24, 2010).

⁷ Donald P. Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), <http://documents.nytimes.com/a-different-kind-of-war#document/p37> (accessed July 24, 2010), 59.

indigenous support for the ensuring invasion and organize the existing Northern Alliance forces against the Taliban.⁸

The CIA teams, with the massive air support provided to them by CENTCOM, were able to secure the defections of several Taliban commanders and throw the Taliban leadership into a panic.⁹ By early November, U.S. and Northern Alliance forces had reached Bagram airbase, about 40 miles north of the capital city of Kabul. The U.S. was determined to put an Afghan face on the taking of the capital, so it wanted the Northern Alliance forces in the lead. On November 13, the attack of Kabul commenced. Enemy resistance fell apart and the Northern Alliance captured Kabul the next day. The swift capture of Kabul was almost too sudden as U.S. leaders worried “. . .that the sudden conquest of the capital by the Northern Alliance would threaten Pashtun leaders and scuttle any chances to create a new, stable, multiethnic, government in Afghanistan.”¹⁰

In December of 2001, the United States had the opportunity to strike a death blow to Al-Qaeda. The United States had cornered Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, in Eastern Afghanistan, Tora Bora. Bin Laden had apparently expected to die

⁸ Ibid., 68

⁹ Gary Berntsen and Ralph Pezzullo, *Jawbreaker: the attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda : a personal account by the CIA's key field commander* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005), 169.

¹⁰ Donald P. Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), <http://documents.nytimes.com/a-different-kind-of-war#document/p37> (accessed July 24, 2010), 106

soon, as he was heard on a captured radio asking forgiveness from his men.¹¹ However, instead of flooding the area with U.S. forces, CENTCOM decided against introducing more American soldiers to the region. The strategy did not work and Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan.¹²

After the lost opportunity at Tora Bora, Afghanistan entered a period in which the U.S. conducted fewer combat actions.¹³ In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address, he said, "America and Afghanistan are now allies against terror. We will be partners in rebuilding that country."¹⁴ Even the U.S. military's official history of the Afghan War had a rosy view of what was possible in post-war Afghanistan. "In March 2002 Afghanistan appeared to be a nation ready to rise from the ashes of the Taliban rule."¹⁵ However, by the fall of 2002, the Bush Administration was pushing for a new war—this one in Iraq. On October 11, 2002, the Senate authorized the use of force against

¹¹ Berntsen and Pezzullo, *Jawbreaker*, 307.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 135.

¹⁴ George W. Bush, "Bush State of the Union address," CNN, January 29, 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/> (accessed July 24, 2010).

¹⁵ Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 189.

Iraq if Saddam Hussein failed to give up his weapons of mass destruction.¹⁶

The war in Iraq pushed Afghanistan off the front pages. The Afghan war became an "economy of force" operation, one that was under-resourced "by necessity."¹⁷ The Iraq war required the most resources and thus Afghan operations only occurred in a manner limited by resources. The Iraq war also commanded the most media attention, which took the Afghan war off the front pages.

During the economy of force period, roughly late 2002 through late 2009, the Afghan Taliban regenerated and as a result began destabilizing Afghanistan. Early on, violence remained low; however, in 2005 the United States began to see a spike in improvised explosive devices similar to the ones used in Iraq. The American-led war effort was adrift. "Today there is virtually no debate. . .that the American approach was seriously flawed for the first six or seven years."¹⁸ According to Antonio Giustozzi, an Afghan scholar, ". . .the insurgency had already started developing strong roots inside Afghanistan in 2003 and

¹⁶ "Senate approves Iraq war resolution," CNN, October 11, 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/10/11/iraq.us/> (accessed July 24, 2010).

¹⁷ Robert Burns, "Mullen: Afghanistan isn't top priority," *USA Today*, December 12, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-12-11-3963072919_x.htm (accessed July 24, 2010).

¹⁸ David E. Sanger, "Rethinking the Afghanistan War's What-Ifs," *New York Times*, July 31, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/01/weekinreview/01sanger.html> (accessed July 31, 2010).

its spread throughout the southern half the country took place step by step over four years."¹⁹

As violence increased in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration's term in office was coming to an end. The eventual winner of the 2008 election, Democrat Barack Obama, ran a hawkish campaign in regards to Afghanistan. On the stump, candidate Obama criticized the Bush Administration's Afghan war strategy and promised to refocus America's efforts on Afghanistan.²⁰

Immediately after his inauguration, President Obama acted quickly on Afghanistan. He ordered 21,000 additional troops to Afghanistan and replaced the top General there, David McKiernan, with General Stanley McChrystal. The selection of McChrystal as the top commander in Afghanistan was the first sign that President Obama intended to pursue a counterinsurgency campaign in the country.

Previously, General McChrystal had commanded the secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) from 2003 to 2008. JSOC conducts counterterrorism missions around the globe. JSOC also "...is reported to command the US military's Special Missions Units

¹⁹ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: the Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.

²⁰ Foon Rhee, "Obama: Afghanistan, Not Iraq, Should Be Focus," Boston, July 15, 2008, http://www.boston.com/news/politics/politicalintelligence/2008/07/obama_afghanist.html (accessed September 02, 2010).

(SMUs). These SMUs are tasked with conducting CT [counter-terrorism] operations, strike operations, reconnaissance in denied areas, and special intelligence missions."²¹ Units of this type play an important role in counterinsurgency operations. McChrystal took command of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan on June 10, 2010.

General McChrystal immediately began a strategic review of the situation in Afghanistan. In his review, delivered to Secretary Robert Gates on August 30, 2009, McChrystal stated that, "Success demands a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign."²² McChrystal also called for a "properly resourced" approach that "placed enough things, enough places, for enough time."²³ Though he did not state a number explicitly in his review, it was widely reported that General McChrystal had asked President Obama for as many as 50,000 additional troops.²⁴

Upon receipt of General McChrystal's assessment, President Obama's foreign policy team began its own review of the situation. Obama conducted at least eight high level meetings

²¹ Eric Schmitt, "Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)," GlobalSecurity. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/jsoc.htm> (accessed September 02, 2010).

²² Stanley A. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment." *The Washington Post*. http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf (accessed September 2, 2010), 1-1.

²³ Ibid. 2-21.

²⁴ "McChrystal Wanted 50,000 Troops," CBS News, October 7, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/07/world/main5369823.shtml> (accessed September 02, 2010).

over the 90 day review period,²⁵ and announced his decision at West Point on December 1, 2009. Obama gave McChrystal 30,000 additional troops, but also set a timeline for the transfer of responsibility to the Afghan government. According to the President, the transition would begin in July 2011.²⁶

Unfortunately for President Obama, General Stanley McChrystal and his staff made some impertinent remarks to a *Rolling Stone* reporter in the June 25, 2010 issue. The President quickly asked for and received McChrystal's resignation. Obama, now looking for his third general to lead the Afghan war, turned to the best counterinsurgency expert in the United States Army—General David Petraeus.

General Petraeus presided over the Iraqi surge, widely lauded for sharply reducing violence in Iraq. Petraeus was already the commander of Central Command, which meant taking charge in Afghanistan, was something of a demotion, if not in rank on the organizational chart. On July 5, 2010, Petraeus formally took command in Afghanistan.

²⁵ Peter Baker, "How Obama Came to Plan for 'Surge' in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, December 5, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/06/world/asia/06reconstruct.html> (accessed September 02, 2010).

²⁶ Barack H. Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," The White House, 1 December 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan> (accessed September 02, 2010).

In his new capacity, General Petraeus did not announce wholesale changes; he praised General McChrystal's work and promised to make "refinements where needed."²⁷ Because of Petraeus' background and comments, his appointment in Afghanistan did not represent a change in strategy. General Petraeus issued his own counterinsurgency guidance on August 1, 2010.

Petraeus inherited a difficult situation. His forces took more casualties in 2010 than in any other year of the war,²⁸ and support for the war was at an all-time low.²⁹ With the July 2011 deadline for the beginning of transfer of responsibility, General Petraeus had to produce results soon or risk the collapse of public support for the war effort.

²⁷ Joshua Partlow, "Petraeus Takes Command in Afghanistan, Pledging Victory," *The Washington Post*, April 7, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/04/AR2010070402479.html> (accessed September 02, 2010).

²⁸ iCasualties: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Casualties, <http://icasualties.org/oef/> (accessed September 02, 2010).

²⁹ Paul Steinhauser, "Poll: Opposition to Iraq, Afghanistan Wars Reach All Time," CNN, August 17, 2010, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/17/poll-opposition-to-iraq-afghanistan-wars-reach-all-time-high/> (accessed September 02, 2010).

CHAPTER 2 MODELING THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT

Counterinsurgency is a uniquely amorphous and adaptable strategy. It has been employed around the globe—from Vietnam to Algeria to Venezuela.¹ Because of the variety of counterinsurgency, it is necessary to first define the word so that an analytical model can be developed to examine the American effort in Afghanistan. This chapter will define counterinsurgency then develop a push-pull model of the American counterinsurgency effort. The push-pull model is based on the writings and experiences of the operators, theoreticians, and academics most influential on American counterinsurgency strategy.

The most fundamental definition of counterinsurgency comes from David Kilcullen, a former Australian army officer and leading strategist. According to Kilcullen, counterinsurgency “. . . is a competition with the insurgent for the right and ability to win the hearts, minds, and acquiescence of the population.”² According to the Army’s Counterinsurgency Field Manual, “COIN

¹ Kalev Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, May-June 2005, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/sepp.pdf> (accessed July 15, 2010), 8.

² David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (May 2006), [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen\(Mar06\).pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen(Mar06).pdf) (accessed July 15, 2010), 1.

(counterinsurgency) is a struggle for the population's support."³ Both definitions emphasize winning the population rather than killing the enemy. This is an important distinction because it necessarily rules out certain aggressive and brutal tactics such as killing natives and their domestic livestock or physically relocating large portions of the population.⁴ Such tactics would infuriate the population, a significant obstacle to winning their loyalty.

Thus the United States embarked on a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. This method, also called the indirect approach, is summarized by counterinsurgency expert John Nagl:

The indirect approach of defeating an insurgency by focusing on dividing the people from the insurgents, removing the support that they require to challenge the government effectively, is rather different from the direct approach and in the long term is usually more effective. Once the local and regular armed units are cut off from their sources of supply, personnel, and, most importantly, intelligence, they wither on the vine or are easily coerced to surrender or destroyed by the security forces with the aid of the local populace. Winning that support is the critical battle in a counterinsurgency. . . .⁵

³ Sarah Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24 : Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-28.

⁴ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 28.

⁵ Ibid.

Nagl's definition forms the foundation of the push principle in the push-pull methodology. Push operations are designed to push the insurgent from the population. This allows the counterinsurgent to control and protect the population, build relationships with the population in order to collect intelligence, and conduct offensive operations designed to degrade the insurgency. Push operations work in opposing directions—the population and insurgency are pushed away at the same time.

Pushing the population apart from the insurgents has two advantages. First, it allows the counterinsurgent to direct pull operations (discussed below) towards the people, and second, it destroys the insurgency's source of support. According to Conrad Crane, another counterinsurgency strategist, ". . .it is much easier to cut off an insurgency from its support than to kill or capture every insurgent."⁶

Another quote from Nagl underlies the pull principle. "...the counterinsurgency forces must use force in support of the government's effort to establish legitimacy at the expense of the insurgents."⁷ Pull operations "pull" the population towards the

⁶ Conrad C. Crane, "Minting Coin: Principles and Imperatives for Combating Insurgency," *Air and Space Power Journal* (Winter 2007) <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj07/win07/crane.html> (accessed July 15, 2010).

⁷ Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 30.

government by developing indigenous security forces, building legitimate governmental institutions, and communicating the message of legitimate government.

Push and pull operations are not distinctly separate. Successful counterinsurgents tend to implement these practices together, and not one of them is more important than any other.⁸ Together push-pull operations “. . . foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government,”⁹ after which the counterinsurgent turns over responsibility for security to the legitimate host nation government.

Push Operations

Push operations are directed at pushing the population and the insurgent away from one another. In counterinsurgency, the counterinsurgent competes with the insurgent for the loyalty and support of the population. Thus the two sides must be separated from each other so that the population can be protected, intelligence can be obtained, and members of the insurgency may be killed or captured. The first step in pursuit of this goal is to control the population.

By attempting to assert control over the population the counterinsurgency pursues three objectives. First, it

⁸ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 94.

⁹ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 1-21.

establishes authority over the population. Second, it physically isolates the population from the insurgents, and third, it lays the groundwork for the elimination of the insurgency.¹⁰ The counterinsurgency pursues these objectives by conducting a census and controlling the population's physical movements.

A census collects basic forms of intelligence such as family relationships, addresses, work locations, property ownership, and income levels. Through the information gleaned from the census, the counterinsurgent begins to "know" the population—this data collected establishes who has legitimate business inside and outside villages and cities, who can afford "abnormal activities," and which people would be likely targets of insurgent recruiting activities.¹¹ Each person should also be issued a national identity card.¹²

The next step for the counterinsurgent is to control the movement of people. This is usually done through vehicle and pedestrian checkpoints, curfews, and developing a pass system to limit the length of time a person may travel.¹³ The purpose of these measures, according to counterinsurgency theorist David

¹⁰ David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 81.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹² Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 5-21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5-21

Galula, “. . . is not to prevent movement—unless there is specific reasons for doing so—but to check on it. By making unchecked travel more difficult, the counterinsurgent again provides the population with a necessary alibi for not helping the insurgent.¹⁴ It is important to note that rules governing travel must be explained, instituted, and uniformly enforced in order to avoid alienating the very people the rules were designed to assist.

Population control also refers to controlling the people traveling in and out of the country. It is imperative that international border crossing be closed so that insurgents are denied sanctuary and that the host nation's sovereignty is enhanced.¹⁵ In this respect, the physical terrain of the host nation can be an ally or an enemy to the counterinsurgent. According to Galula, long maritime borders are more easily controlled than long land borders with foreign countries.¹⁶ Strategies for controlling borders include fence building, special mission raids, and maritime or aerial patrol.¹⁷

As the population comes under the counterinsurgent's control, the counterinsurgent must protect the population from insurgent coercion and ensure that innocent civilians are not

¹⁴ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency*, 83.

¹⁵ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 11.

¹⁶ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23.

¹⁷ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 11.

victims of the counterinsurgency's kinetic¹⁸ operations. Protecting the population from insurgents requires that the counterinsurgent live amongst the population and constantly patrol. This may mean however, that in order to prevent civilian casualties, the counterinsurgency limit its high risk and kinetic operations.

It is worth remembering that the insurgency is in competition with the counterinsurgency for the loyalty of the population. In order to gain that loyalty, the insurgency may resort to coercive and violent tactics such as kidnapping, killing, and intimidation.¹⁹ The counterinsurgency must protect the people from coercive insurgent tactics so that the counterinsurgency may build a case for the population's loyalty.

Protecting the population requires first and foremost living amongst the people. According to David Kilcullen, "This demands a resident approach—living in your sector, in close proximity to the population, rather than raiding into the area from remote, secure bases."²⁰ In addition to ensuring the population's physical safety, living amongst the population

¹⁸ Kinetic refers to operations that include violent tactics such as the use of small arms fire or artillery.

¹⁹ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 1-9.

²⁰ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles," 4.

allows the counterinsurgent to build relationships, mutual trust, and create a sense of shared interests in the campaign.

Additionally, when the counterinsurgency is present among the people, it is able to immediately respond to an insurgent threat. Every incident threatens the counterinsurgency's legitimacy, so it must act quickly in response to those threats. If the counterinsurgent is not present when an incident occurs, there is often little the counterinsurgent can do about it.²¹

Inherent in Kilcullen's advice is the requirement for a large number of counterinsurgents. Though each insurgency is unique, a ratio of 20 counterinsurgents, including host nation police and soldiers, per 1,000 civilians is usually sufficient.²² Stephen Goode has developed a more complex model based on violence levels and the percentage of counterinsurgents that come from local sources. In his analysis, the number of counterinsurgents required in Afghanistan per 1,000 people is between 10 and 22.²³

Living amongst the people also means maintaining a constant presence in the area around the counterinsurgency's camp. This

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 9.

²³ Steven M. Goode, "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency," *Parameters* XXXIX, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/Articles/09winter/goode.pdf>, (Accessed 27 October 2011), 46.

is usually done through patrolling. "Constant patrolling by government forces establishes official presence that enhances security and builds confidence in the government."²⁴ Kilcullen suggests that patrolling should not be designed simply as a way to provoke insurgent attacks, rather as a way deter attacks. The counterinsurgency can accomplish this by keeping the insurgent guessing by varying the time, style, and size of its patrols.²⁵

In addition to protecting the population from the insurgent, the counterinsurgent must take care to limit the amount of innocent civilians accidentally injured or killed during its kinetic operations. Killing civilians can result in creating more insurgents than existed before. "It is neither efficient nor effective to conduct a military operation, by its unintended effects, that creates more insurgents than it eliminates."²⁶ In this regard, the counterinsurgent should use only the amount of force absolutely necessary to accomplish its goals. The counterinsurgent should also resist the temptation to focus on capturing and killing the enemy and instead focus on winning the support of the population.²⁷

²⁴ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 11.

²⁵ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles," 6.

²⁶ Crane, "Minting Coin."

²⁷ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 11.

As the counterinsurgency "moves in" with the local population, it must always keep in mind the importance of intelligence. "Counterinsurgency is an intelligence-driven endeavor. The function of counterinsurgency is to facilitate understanding of the operational environment, with the emphasis on the populace, host nation and insurgents."²⁸ Intelligence operations have two elements: cultural intelligence which requires understanding the local population's culture and tactical intelligence which requires building intelligence networks to facilitate the destruction of the insurgency.

The counterinsurgency should begin building its cultural intelligence even before it deploys. It should find political and cultural advisors with a "feel" for the local environment.²⁹ The units should learn everything they can about the local environment, including but not limited to, the language, value systems, and religions.³⁰ Since the counterinsurgent will be living in close proximity to the population, it is important to understand that certain behaviors in the counterinsurgency's culture may not be acceptable to the local population. In the effort to win the population's support, every action taken by the counterinsurgency can win or lose a person's support.

²⁸ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 3-1.

²⁹ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles," 3.

³⁰ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 3-4 - 3-9.

At this point, the counterinsurgent should be living closely to the population. This proximity allows the counterinsurgency to control and protect the population, but living in the population's midst also forces the counterinsurgency to get to know the locals. Through regular patrolling, the counterinsurgent should begin to build trusted networks through its interactions with the people. Over time, these "networks of trust" displace the insurgent's networks and allow the counterinsurgent to seize the initiative.³¹

Additionally, focusing on cultural intelligence allows the counterinsurgency to understand the interests of the population. "These include physical security, basic necessities, economic well-being, political participation, and social identity."³² Meeting these interests go a long way in winning the support of the population.

Capturing this cultural information also allows for the counterinsurgency to assess its own efforts. If the markets are vibrant the counterinsurgency can be relatively certain that the population's material needs are being met. However, if during an election, there is low voter turnout, it may indicate that the

³¹ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles,": 5.

³² Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 3-1.

insurgency threatened or coerced the population into non-participation.

Once the counterinsurgency builds trusted networks, it should begin to receive intelligence. "Every counterinsurgent represents a possible intelligence collector, and every person a possible source of important information."³³ This intelligence is multifaceted and assists the counterinsurgent by identifying both the tactical and strategic issues underlying the insurgency. Tactical issues can include the location of safe havens and sources of logistical and financial support, and sources of new recruits. Strategic issues include the objectives and motivations of the insurgency and divisions between the insurgency and the population.³⁴ This intelligence allows the counterinsurgent to target and eradicate the insurgency.

Once the population begins to provide the counterinsurgent with intelligence, the counterinsurgency can conduct offensive operations designed to degrade the insurgency. Though the counterinsurgency should usually use the minimum amount of force necessary, there are times when shows of force are necessary.³⁵ The Army's Counterinsurgency manual euphemistically calls this

³³ Crane, "Minting Coin"

³⁴ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 3-13 – 3-14

³⁵ Crane, "Minting Coin"

"neutralizing bad actors."³⁶ The counterinsurgency can degrade the insurgency by killing or capturing key leaders, denying insurgents sanctuary, and denying the insurgent material and financial support.

Based on the intelligence received from the population, the counterinsurgent hopes to develop an organizational chart of the insurgency. The natures of insurgencies vary—some are more hierarchical than others.³⁷ Based on the nature of the insurgency, targeting the leadership may or may not have much effect. However, if key leaders can be identified based on the intelligence produced from counterinsurgent operations, those leaders should be targeted for removal.

The insurgency should not be allowed to maintain safe havens. Safe havens make it possible for the insurgents to obtain external support that "provide political, psychological, and material resources that might otherwise be limited or unavailable."³⁸ These safe havens might be geographically isolated from population centers, or they may be safe houses or neighborhoods in urban areas. In order to push the insurgents away from the population, these safe havens must be destroyed.

³⁶ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 4-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-19.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-16.

Safe havens have historically been thought of as physical areas, but the 21st Century has seen the rise of online, media, and financial safe havens. These virtual areas must be controlled by the counterinsurgent.³⁹

The counterinsurgent completes the isolation of the insurgency by severing its ties to financial and material support. Many insurgencies receive support from external actors and nations, and it is often a prerequisite for an insurgency's success.⁴⁰ For this reason, the counterinsurgent must cut off access to outside support.

Once the population is protected and controlled, intelligence about the insurgency received, and sources of internal and external support are cut off, the counterinsurgent should expect to see the separation of the insurgents from the population. However, push operations in themselves may not suffice; the counterinsurgent must "pull" the population towards the legitimate host nation government to deal the final death blow to the insurgency.

Pull Operations

"Success in counterinsurgency operations requires establishing a legitimate government supported by the people and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 28.

able to address the fundamental causes that insurgents use to gain support.”⁴¹ Pull operations are designed to do just that: increase the legitimacy of the host nation government, and then encourage the population to support that government over the insurgency. This has the effect of “pulling” the population towards the government and, if executed correctly, may encourage the population to move towards the government on its own accord. The pull element of counterinsurgency is pursued by developing indigenous security forces, building legitimate host nation government institutions, and operating under the principle of unity of command.

In order for a legitimate government to emerge, security is paramount. A government that cannot protect its people from violence has little chance of achieving legitimacy in the eyes of its people, but in the same way, a government that requires thousands of foreign troops to maintain security cannot be viewed as legitimate either. For those reasons, the counterinsurgent must build an indigenous force capable of maintaining security.

The counterinsurgent should keep three things in mind while building the host nation security forces. First, the host nation forces should be organized in a manner consistent with that nation’s traditions. The counterinsurgent’s tendency is to build indigenous forces in his own image. This has not been

⁴¹ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 6-1.

historically successful.⁴² Instead, indigenous forces should “move, equip, and organize like the insurgent—but with access to [counterinsurgent] support and be under the firm control of their parent societies.”⁴³

Second, the nation’s police should take the lead in creating security, with the military in a supporting role.⁴⁴ In counterinsurgency, the primary frontline force is often the police.⁴⁵ This point is consistent with the push concept protecting the population by using only the amount of force absolutely necessary. The police are where the government rubber meets the population’s road, and thus are critical in the development of the rule of law and government legitimacy.

Third, the counterinsurgent should start training indigenous security forces early in the campaign. This point allows the counterinsurgent to balance its dual constituencies. If the counterinsurgent takes sole responsibility for security by itself, it may put the host nation’s legitimacy at risk. Similarly, the counterinsurgent must train indigenous forces quickly or risk losing host nation legitimacy and domestic

⁴² Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 10.

⁴³ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles," 8.

⁴⁴ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 10.

⁴⁵ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 6-19.

support for the counterinsurgency effort. This effort must receive priority early in the campaign.⁴⁶

Major themes in the counterinsurgency literature are that the host nation's government must be legitimate in the eyes of its people and that the "...local definition of legitimacy may be far different from that of our Western liberal tradition."⁴⁷ The counterinsurgent assists in building government that is legitimate in the eyes of its people by increasing the capacity of government institutions, starting with small projects designed to deliver immediate results, and connecting the people to the government. Implicit in these actions is understanding what the local people regard as legitimate government.⁴⁸

Legitimacy, according to Cohen, Crane, Horvath, and Nagl, is the main objective and has five parts. These five parts are:

. . .free, fair, and frequent selection of leaders, a high level of popular support for the political process, a low level of corruption, a culturally acceptable rate of political, economic, and social development, and a high level of regime support from major institutions.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 6-22.

⁴⁷ Crane, "Minting Coin."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Elliot Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (March-April 2006) <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/cohen.pdf>, (accessed October 18, 2010), 49.

According to the same authors, regimes that accomplish those goals get enough popular support to maintain stability and legitimacy.⁵⁰ However, Crane, in a different piece, points out that the local populace may perceive legitimacy differently than Americans counterinsurgents:

Counterinsurgents must conduct a thorough sociocultural analysis to determine what the local people perceive as legitimate government. Counterinsurgents must understand and reconcile differing standards, a task that may present difficulties for Americans who place high importance on democratic practices and liberal values.⁵¹

While these two statements seem at odds, push operations, primarily intelligence operations, can contribute to the "sociocultural" analysis required to make judgments about local perceptions of legitimacy.

In order to support the goal of legitimacy, the counterinsurgent must build the capacity of the government so that it can establish or restore essential services.⁵² These essential services include, but are not limited to, police and fire, water, electricity, schools, transportation networks, medical services and sanitation.⁵³ In the competition for the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Crane, "Minting Coin."

⁵² Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 5-14.

⁵³ Ibid., 5-15.

loyalty of the population, the host nation government must show that it can provide services better than its insurgent competitors.

The counterinsurgent, in partnership with the host nation government, can begin to establish these services by starting with small, achievable projects. It is important to manage expectations because broken or unmet promises can degrade the host nation's legitimacy.⁵⁴ In the words of Kilcullen, "Keep programs small: this makes them cheap, sustainable, low-key and (importantly) recoverable if they fail. You [the counterinsurgent] can add new programs...as the situation allows."⁵⁵ In a sense, counterinsurgency is armed social work. Kilcullen suggests beginning with the population's most basic needs.⁵⁶

The counterinsurgent should also help build capacity at the national level. Field Manual 3-24 calls this "Support Development of Better Governance." According to the Field Manual, these operations, ". . .include regulation of public activity; taxation; maintenance of security, control, and essential services; and normalizing the means of succession of power."⁵⁷ In cases where the host nation government is weak or

⁵⁴ Ibid., 5-14.

⁵⁵ Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles," 9.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 5-15.

non-existent, the counterinsurgent may need to take the responsibility for governance. This requires that the counterinsurgent assume control over a wide range of functions, including the justice system to establishing and enforcing the rule of law.⁵⁸ Eventually these functions are transitioned to the host nation government.

At one point, the counterinsurgent needs to connect the government to the entire population. It does this by establishing control over key sectors and then slowly expanding that control over a greater and greater area. Field Manual 3-24 calls his process "Clear-Hold-Build." "Counterinsurgency efforts should begin by controlling key areas. Security and influence then spread out from secured areas."⁵⁹ As zones come under counterinsurgent control, a host nation presence is established, and eventually the zones are fully transferred to host nation control. At this stage, the counterinsurgent has succeeded in connecting the population to the legitimate government.

The final element of pull operations is to operate under the principle of unity of command. Unity of command is essential for two reasons. First, because counterinsurgents often find themselves working with disparate groups, someone must be responsible for organization and integrating the efforts of those

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 5-18

various groups. Second, unity of command allows the counterinsurgent to communicate, in one voice, to both the population and the insurgency as well as counter the insurgent's propaganda.

Counterinsurgents often find themselves working alongside an incongruent mix of multinational military and diplomatic personnel, non-governmental organizations, and private, for profit businesses. Without strong coordination at the top of the chain of command, these groups can work at redundant or even cross-purposes. "Various agencies acting to reestablish stability may differ in goals and approaches...When their actions are allowed to adversely affect each other, the population suffers..."⁶⁰ In this chaotic environment, ". . .a government needs a single, fully empowered executive to direct and coordinate counterinsurgency efforts."⁶¹ However, in practice, unity of command is not as easy to achieve as it sounds. Each participating country's diplomatic and military corps will have separate chains of command, some NGOs have resisted "overt involvement with military forces,"⁶² and the counterinsurgent may only have nominal control over the host nation's government. Only a strong, empowered leader can coordinate the effort.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2-4.

⁶¹ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 11.

⁶² Crane, "Minting Coin."

Second, the principle of unity of command allows the counterinsurgent to synchronize his messaging. The essential problem of information in an insurgency is summed up by Galula:

The insurgent, having no responsibility, is free to use every trick; if necessary he can lie, cheat, exaggerate...The counterinsurgent is tied to his responsibilities and to his past, and for him, facts speak louder than words. He is judged on what he does, not on what he says. . .For him, propaganda can be no more than a secondary weapon, valuable only if intended to inform and not to fool.⁶³

In contemporary times, propaganda is used in the pejorative, thus counterinsurgents prefer to call propaganda operations "information operations" or "strategic communication." The counterinsurgent's strategic communication is employed in three ways. First, it informs the population of the counterinsurgent's vision for the future. Second, it counters insurgent propaganda, and third, it recognizes and communicates with the global audience.

This messaging, or what I will call "strategic communication," is of the utmost importance. Galula says that every soldier should become a propagandist.⁶⁴ The Army's counterinsurgency field manual goes even further. "The information-operations logical line of operation—perhaps the

⁶³ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 62

decisive one for a counterinsurgency campaign—ties together and encapsulates all others.⁶⁵ Communication in counterinsurgency cannot be ignored.

Strategic communication helps connect the counterinsurgency efforts to the population by providing the population with basic information about the counterinsurgent. Strategic communication campaigns tell the population the purpose, method, and goals of the counterinsurgency. These campaigns “...explain to the population what they can do to help their government make them secure from terrorist insurgents; encourage participation in the political process. . . .”⁶⁶ Strategic communication gives the population the information it needs to make the decision to turn against the insurgents.

Additionally, strategic communication helps the counterinsurgent manage expectations for the campaign. Overly ambitious promises can backfire, thus the counterinsurgent “. . . must create and maintain a realistic set of expectations among the populace, the international community, and even friendly military units.”⁶⁷ In this case, the U.S. reputation for competence works against it. The population can become

⁶⁵ Crane, "Minting Coin."

⁶⁶ Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," 10.

⁶⁷ Crane, "Minting Coin."

bewildered that the same country that landed a man on the moon cannot promptly restore basic services.⁶⁸

Inevitably, the insurgency will employ a strategic communication⁶⁹ operation against the counterinsurgent. The insurgent is competing for the population's loyalty as well, so the insurgents will put out their own publications, information and even threaten and coerce the population. Oftentimes the insurgent will exaggerate his successes and downplay its failures. For example, in 2008, the Afghan Taliban claimed to have killed 5,220 foreign soldiers in that year.⁷⁰ The counterinsurgent must address such claims by being first with the truth and "matching words with deeds."⁷¹ The counterinsurgent can counter the insurgent's strategic communication by showing the population how life has improved and that the population has a stake in the government.⁷²

Contemporary counterinsurgency has the additional complexity of the modern day media. In Galula's day, insurgents

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ In the literature, the insurgent's information campaign is usually called "propaganda," while the counterinsurgent's campaign is called "information operations" or "strategic communication."

⁷⁰ Jason Strazuiso and Rahim Faiez, "Taliban's Latest Propaganda: Its Forces Killed 5,220 Foreign Troops," *Huffington Post*, January 5, 2009, accessed November 24, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/05/talibans-latest-propagand_n_155192.html. The NATO released numbers for the same period was 155 killed.

⁷¹ Crane, "Minting Coin."

⁷² Ibid.

could not access world public opinion through the internet, satellite television or social media and the counterinsurgent could more easily control the information coming from the insurgency. The contemporary global media environment is a complex amalgamation of competing global constituencies. When the insurgent engages in strategic communication, he is not only speaking to the population he is competing for, he is speaking to sympathetic parties around the world. This communication can drive volunteers, money, and moral support to his side. Additionally, the insurgency may choose to speak directly to the counterinsurgent's domestic audience in order to degrade popular support for the war.⁷³

Similarly, the counterinsurgent must court the same constituencies. World populations that may be inclined to support the insurgencies can be swayed with evidence of counterinsurgent progress. Further, the counterinsurgent must also maintain domestic political support. In both cases, any inconsistency in message and deed undermines the counterinsurgents credibility.⁷⁴

Putting Push-Pull Counterinsurgency Together

⁷³ In fact, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula began publishing a magazine titled "Inspire" to communicate with both its followers and Western audiences. It can be found at <http://publicintelligence.net/complete-inspire-al-qaeda-in-the-arabian-peninsula-magazine-issue-2-fall-2010/>.

⁷⁴ Crane, "Minting Coin."

The push-pull model of counterinsurgency requires that all its elements reinforce on another as none of the elements are useful without the others. Thus, this model of counterinsurgency must be integrated across both the push and pull lines of operation.

For example, the ability of the counterinsurgent to control the population directly contributes to the ability to protect the population. As the population feels more secure, more intelligence can be obtained. This intelligence is used to both eliminate insurgent safe havens and understand the way the population considers its government legitimate. Further, as indigenous security forces take over responsibility for security, the government becomes more legitimate, which in turn, reinforces both security and the connection of the government to the people. All of this is done while being coordinated and directed by one leader, so that counterinsurgency effort is synchronized across the various government and non-governmental groups working inside the country. Eventually, the insurgency either dies from neglect or decides to cooperate with the government.

Viewed from this standpoint, it is easy to understand why counterinsurgency is called the graduate level of warfare. The following chapter will critique the United States' performance based on push-pull method laid out in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3
ASSESSING THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT

This chapter will use the push-pull model of counterinsurgency to assess the efficacy of the model in Afghanistan. The section will cover the period of time between General Stanley McChrystal's appointment as commander of U.S. forces in June 2009 and December 31, 2010.

Assessing Push Operations

Push operations in Afghanistan consist of efforts to control and protect the population, gather cultural and operational intelligence, and eliminate insurgent safe havens. These efforts are undertaken to physically push the two sides apart so that the population can be protected, intelligence can be obtained, and the insurgency destroyed. This section will assess these efforts by examining the tactical actions taken to make the operation successful.

Population control, designed to establish authority, isolate the population from the insurgents, and lay the groundwork for the insurgency's destruction, consists of two distinct tactical actions. First, the counterinsurgent conducts a census, and second it physically

Despite the importance of conducting a census, no census has been conducted in Afghanistan since 1979, according to the

Guardian.¹ As noted by the *Guardian*, a census was planned for 2008, but cancelled and rescheduled for 2010 because of security concerns. However, the planned 2010 census was postponed for the same reason the 2008 census was postponed—security concerns.

A formal census, however, is not the only way to achieve the desired result. A census is conducted so that the counterinsurgent can collect data on the population in order to understand the most likely insurgents and likely targets of insurgent violence. The U.S. military has turned to biometric data collection as a way of gathering information on the Afghan population.² Every person detained by NATO is required to provide basic information about their identity, including name, father's name and home village. The detainee receives an iris scan, fingerprinting and is photographed from several angles.³ The military has created a database containing this biometric information that is searchable from the field allowing for the swift identification of an insurgent detained on the

¹ Pia Heikkila, "Afghan Census Cancelled Due to Security," *Guardian*, June 11, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/11/afghanistan.internationalaidanddevelopment>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

² Grant Matthes, "Biometrics: Giving Afghans an Identity," Regional Command-East, August 15, 2010, <http://www.cjtf101.com/regional-command-east-news-mainmenu-401/3150-biometrics-giving-afghans-an-identity.html>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

³ Spencer Ackerman, "U.S. Scans Afghan Inmates for Biometric Database," *Wired*, August 25, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/08/military-prison-builds-big-afghan-biometric-database/>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

battlefield.⁴ This effort functions as a reasonable facsimile to a census, and has been well received by counterinsurgency experts. David Kilcullen endorsed the project calling it "Extremely important."⁵

More recently, the Afghan government rolled out a plan to issue identification cards to every citizen.⁶ The cards will contain basic information about the citizen, including their "driver's license, vehicle registration, digital signature, and whether he or she is registered to vote."⁷ If the program succeeds, it will assist the American counterinsurgency effort by assigning an identity to every Afghan.

The second step in population control is to physically control the population. Population control efforts have been stymied by a combination of rugged geography, low levels of urbanization and a dispersal of the population, long and mostly open international borders, and too few soldiers to do the job.

Afghanistan is blessed with diverse and beautiful geography, but unfortunately for counterinsurgents, it might be

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Nathan Hodge, "Counterinsurgency Guru: Please, No More Iraqs," *Wired*, March 23, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/03/dr-book-club-th-2/>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

⁶ Ghafour, Hamida. "Smartcard Scheme Epitomises the Flawed Afghan Aid Strategy," *The National*, December 18, 2010. <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/news-comment/smartcard-scheme-epitomises-the-flawed-afghan-aid-strategy>, (Accessed January 08, 2011)

⁷ Ibid.

the best possible geography for an insurgency. Galula described the ideal geography for an insurgent as, "...a large landlocked country shape...with jungle-covered mountains along the borders and scattered swamps in the plains, in a temperate zone with a large and dispersed rural population. . ." ⁸ Galula's description of an insurgents' paradise does not fit Afghanistan exactly, but it is close.

Afghanistan is landlocked, as it is bordered to the west by Iran, to the north by Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and to the east and south by Pakistan. It also shares a short border with China in the extreme northeast. Its internal geography varies widely. Afghan historian Louis Dupree identified 11 distinct geographic zones with elevations ranging from over 4,000 meters to under 500 meters. ⁹ Galula said that insurgents may be "condemned to failure" before they start if they cannot get any help from geography. ¹⁰ If the opposite is true and counterinsurgents are condemned to failure without help from geography, the U.S. counterinsurgency effort may be doomed.

The rural nature and difficult geography of Afghanistan make it difficult to control the population. The first problem arises with the dispersal of the population. 75 percent of

⁸ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 25.

⁹ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5-8.

¹⁰ Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23.

Afghans live in rural areas.¹¹ This means that American soldiers must deploy to small villages and district centers. Often these villages are remote, far removed from major population centers and military logistics centers. Dupree said that these villages are typically "inward looking" and that "sustained relations with the outside world have seldom been pleasant, for outsiders usually come to extract from, not bring anything into, the village."¹² This skepticism of outsiders has frustrated American efforts to control the population as well as led to violence between the American counterinsurgents, insurgents, and villagers.

Second, Afghanistan's geography and demography work against the American counterinsurgency effort. Afghanistan is approximately the size of Texas at about 251,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 29 million.¹³ In 2010, the United States had approximately 100,000 soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. That ratio is about .4 soldiers per square mile and about 290 civilians per American soldier. Given that a large percentage of American soldiers focused on the urban areas that

¹¹ CIA Factbook, "CIA - The World Factbook," CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

¹² Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 249.

¹³ CIA Factbook, "CIA - The World Factbook," CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

do exist—mainly Kabul and Kandahar¹⁴—it stands to reason that large areas of the country and population are not under American control.

These factors have made implementing traditional population control measures like curfews, checkpoints, and pass systems almost impossible. This stands in sharp contrast to the American experience in Baghdad during the 2007 Iraqi surge. In Baghdad, American counterinsurgents built a 2.5 mile wall that divided the Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya.¹⁵ Ghazaliya was an insurgent stronghold and the wall funneled foot traffic to two checkpoints. The Americans also flooded the area with troops, and that effort, coupled with the wall, led to a reported 50 percent decrease in violence in the neighborhood.¹⁶

Regrettably for the American effort, an Afghan corollary to the Ghazaliya experience does not exist. Afghanistan's population distribution does not lend itself to easy control. As described earlier, is based in small, rural villages that are often skeptical of outside influence. The core population centers are not necessarily the most important areas. Barfield has described this problem by saying that Afghanistan has more

¹⁴ Greg Jaffe, "U.S. Forces Shift Focus to Afghan," CBS News, September 22, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/09/22/politics/washingtonpost/main5329199.shtml>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

¹⁵ Charles Crain, "Behind The Baghdad Wall," *Time*, May 9, 2007, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1618898,00.html>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

"margins than cores."¹⁷ As a result, there are large margins of Afghanistan that are not reachable to Americans because of either geographic inaccessibility or force shortages.

Afghanistan shares a land border with six countries. While the border with each country is unique and important, the United States has accused Iran of smuggling weapons into Afghanistan,¹⁸ the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, called the Durand Line, is the most critical to the counterinsurgency effort.¹⁹

The 1,500 mile Durand Line separating Afghanistan and Pakistan is a historical accident. It was drawn in 1893 by an English colonial secretary, but the Afghan government in Kabul never agreed to it. The line, which became the international border, divided the ethnic Pashtun tribes between Afghanistan and Pakistan.²⁰ According to the Council on Foreign Relations, "The ongoing border frictions are due in large part to tribal allegiances that have never recognized the century-old

¹⁷ Thomas J. Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 70.

¹⁸ Barbara Starr, "U.S. Official Says Intel Suggests Iran Plans to Ship Arms to Taliban," CNN, April 2, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/04/02/iran.taliban.weapons/index.html?hpt=T1>, (accessed January 09, 2011).

¹⁹ Carin Zissis and Jayshree Bajoria, "The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border," Council on Foreign Relations, March 20, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/publication/14905/troubled_afghanpakistani_border.html#p6, (accessed January 09, 2011).

²⁰ Ibid.

frontier."²¹ More importantly, at least for the American effort, to many Pashtuns the border is considered a soft border, and they move freely back and forth.²²

It should be noted that the insurgency is largely, but not exclusively, Pashtun. Over the past year, largely peaceful and non-Pashtun areas in North and Northwest Afghanistan have seen a rise in violence. However, the American effort has been focused on the Pashtun insurgency in the East and Southeast of Afghanistan, and this specifically means the geographic area encapsulating the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.²³

The U.S. recognizes the situation on the border as a significant problem, but senior military leaders have admitted that they cannot control the border in any "traditional sense."²⁴ The openness of the border is not portrayed as a temporary situation. According to Army Colonel Viet Luoung, securing the border would, ". . .take an inordinate amount of resources...It's naïve to say that we can stop forces coming through the border."²⁵

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Joshua Foust, "How We Lost Afghanistan's Once-Peaceful North," *The Atlantic*, October 12, 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/10/how-we-lost-afghanistans-once-peaceful-north/64257/>, (accessed January 09, 2011).

²⁴ Anne Flaherty, "Commander: U.S. Can't Seal Afghan-Pakistan Border," *Time*, December 29, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2039952,00.html>, (accessed January 09, 2011).

²⁵ Ibid.

The American population control efforts are mixed at best; a complete failure at worst. Two attempts at a national census have now been aborted, and biometric data can only be collected on people captured or otherwise detained. An Afghan national ID card project is probably years away, if it ever comes to fruition. Because Afghanistan's population is largely rural and disbursed, efforts to control the population's movement requires a quantity of soldiers not available. Population control measures like checkpoints and traffic control work best in heavy urban environments not found in Afghanistan. Additionally, Afghanistan's unforgiving geography make keeping far flung troops supplied impossibly difficult. Afghanistan's large land area leaves wide swaths of the country with few, if any, American counterinsurgents. Lastly, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is, by the U.S. military's own admission, wide open, and unlikely to be controlled in the immediate future. These facts make it unlikely that the American counterinsurgency effort will ever adequately control the population.

The next step for the American counterinsurgency is to protect the Afghan population. The American effort has held close to the methods of living amongst the people, constant patrol, and population protection, but unfortunately for all, the number of

civilian casualties in Afghanistan has risen over historical numbers since the counterinsurgency effort began in June 2009.²⁶

When General Petraeus took command in Afghanistan in July 2010, he issued new counterinsurgency guidance to NATO forces which stated, "Live amongst the people. We can't commute to the fight. Position joint bases and combat outposts as close to those we're seeking to secure as is feasible."²⁷ When General McChrystal issued his guidance in November 2009, he did not specifically call for living amongst the people, but the document references protecting the population and securing them from harm.²⁸ Clearly, for the last two American commanders, close contact with the local population has been a command priority.

It appears that this command guidance has been taken seriously. In 2009, the U.S. Army reported that its troops were being repositioned to "better protect the Afghan people."²⁹

²⁶ Simon Rogers, "Afghanistan Civilian Casualties: Year by Year, Month by Month," *Guardian*, August 10, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics#>, (accessed January 15, 2011).

²⁷ General David Petraeus, *COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, U.S. Department of Defense, Signed 1 August 2010, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/COMISAF-Guidance/COIN%20Guidance%2001%20Aug%2010.pdf>, (accessed January 15, 2011).

²⁸ General Stanley McChrystal and Command Sergeant Major Michael T. Hall, *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance*, U.S. Department of Defense, International Security Assistance Force, Undated, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf, (accessed January 16, 2011).

²⁹ Jim Garamone, "Troops Re-position to Better Protect Afghan People," *Army*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/10/21/29062-troops-re-position-to-better-protect-afghan-people/>, (accessed January 15, 2011).

The effort to live among the Afghan people, as well as the troop surge authorized by President Obama in December 2009, has led to a base building boom. According to Nick Turse, there are over 400 American and NATO bases, ranging from small camps and combat outposts to major bases at Kandahar and Bagram.³⁰

The way in which the American military has gone about living among the population hardly meets the normative definition of living among the population. The U.S. military usually lives on self-contained forward operating bases (FOBs) located on the outskirts of a village or town. They often commandeer a large house or abandoned school and construct large physical barriers to protect the soldiers from bomb or rocket attacks. Soldiers eat food trucked or flown in, and live segregated from their partnered Afghan Army units. Interaction between Americans and Afghans comes only during patrols or when Afghan citizens visit the FOB with grievances. A 2011 BBC documentary titled "The Battle for Bomb Alley" documented this process.³¹

It is not clear, however, that the Americans have enough soldiers in place on those bases to reach the ratio of protector to population required by counterinsurgency experts. Using the

³⁰ Nick Turse, "Tomgram: Nick Turse, The Pentagon's Planet of Bases," TomDispatch, January 9, 2011, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175338/>, (accessed January 15, 2011).

³¹ BBC. February 23, 2011. "The Battle for Bomb Alley." YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wEW5UVXemc> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOb8wybIeo8&feature=related> (accessed March 1, 2011).

previously stated ratio of 20 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 civilians, the United States would need 600,000 soldiers in Afghanistan.³² The United States has approximately 100,000 soldiers in Afghanistan and NATO has approximately 50,000 troops under its command.³³ The United States has attempted to fill the gap in coalition soldiers by expanding the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and focusing its efforts on the most troublesome regions of Afghanistan.³⁴ However, this strategy has not lead to a reduction in civilian casualties.

The most damning evidence against American efforts to protect the population is that civilian casualties have gone up since the counterinsurgency effort began in June 2009. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), civilian casualties for the first six months of 2010 were 31 percent higher than the first six months of 2009.³⁵ Additionally, according to the *Guardian*, the first six months of a 2010 saw 50

³² CIA Factbook, "CIA - The World Factbook," CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, (accessed January 08, 2011).

³³ Phil Stewart, "U.S. to Send 1,400 Marines to Afghanistan," Yahoo News, January 6, 2011, http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/us_afghanistan_usa_troops, (accessed January 15, 2011).

³⁴ As of February 2011, the authorized end strength to the ANSF is 375,000. Even if each ANSF soldier is considered an equal to a coalition troop, there would still be a 75,000 troop shortage based on 20 counterinsurgents for every 1000 people.

³⁵ UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan. 2010. *Afghanistan: Mid Year Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. Kabul, Afghanistan. i, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4529> (accessed 2 March 2011).

percent increase in civilian casualties when compared to the same period in 2008.³⁶

It is true that most of the responsibility for the violence against civilians is with the Taliban, or what the UNAMA report calls "anti-government elements (AGEs)." 76 percent of civilian deaths were at the hands of the AGEs, while the remaining deaths were attributed to either "pro-government forces" (PGFs) or undetermined. Civilian casualties coded as the responsibility of PGFs declined by 30 percent over the period.³⁷ The problem is, however, that the violence attributed to AGEs is exactly the sort of violence that the American counterinsurgency should be preventing. Additionally, the civilian population makes little distinction between who is responsible for the killings, so even though the Americans have reduced the numbers of casualties they are directly responsible for, the total number of civilian casualties increased.

Despite the increased command importance put on protecting the population, the presence of 150,000 American and NATO forces and a real effort to live amongst the local population, Afghan civilians are not more protected than they were in the previous

³⁶ Simon Rogers, "Afghanistan Civilian Casualties: Year by Year, Month by Month," *Guardian*, August 10, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics#>, (accessed January 15, 2011).

³⁷ UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan. 2010. *Afghanistan: Mid Year Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. Kabul, Afghanistan. i, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4529> (accessed 2 March 2011).

years of the war. It is hard not to consider this push element of American counterinsurgency strategy a failure.

The next step in the American counterinsurgency push effort is to gather cultural and tactical intelligence. The Americans developed the Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak) Hands and Human Terrain Team programs to achieve this goal, but the evidence of success is mixed.

General McChrystal initiated the Af/Pak Hands program after assuming command in Afghanistan. The program was designed to "...have a cadre of military and civilian experts that will rotate into key staff and leadership positions...to provide continued expertise in support of U.S. objectives in the region."³⁸ The program includes 16 weeks of language and cultural training.

Thus far, the Af/Pak hands program has gotten off to a rocky start. According to the *New York Times*, the program has too few volunteers and has been hit with the perception that it may hurt a service member's career. The military does not even expect to fill the 912 positions until the summer of 2011.³⁹

³⁸ American Forces Press Service, "First AF-PAK Hands Grads Deploy Overseas," U.S. Central Command, April 23, 2010, <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/first-af-pak-hands-grads-deploy-overseas.html>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

³⁹ Eric Schmitt, "Slow Start for Military Corps in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, January 5, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/06/world/06mullen.html?_r=1&ref=world, (accessed January 29, 2011).

The Af/Pak hands program is still relatively new, so its success or failure may be too early to judge. However, there is one part of the cultural intelligence piece that can be judged a failure and that is the ability of the Americans to speak the local languages of Afghanistan. In the Afghan counterinsurgency, the only interaction many troops have with the local population is through interpreters.⁴⁰

This dependence on interpreters causes serious problems for the American effort. The Americans have struggled to find enough qualified interpreters, and some of whom cannot understand or convey meaning in the various languages and dialects found in Afghanistan.⁴¹ This situation has led to competition amongst the various defense and intelligence agencies, civilian contractors and NGOs for the best interpreters. While qualified interpreters command salaries over \$200,000 with contractors,⁴² the U.S.

⁴⁰ Joshua Foust, "Maladies of Interpreters," *New York Times*, September 21, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/22/opinion/22foust.html?adxnml=1&pagewanted=1&adxnmlx=1296317322-pKD88FxiGtZ02/vnUslKgg>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

⁴¹ Ron Synovitz, "Mistakes By Afghan Translators Endanger Lives, Hamper Antiterrorism Effort," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 2, 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Mistakes_By_Translators_Hamper_Afghan_Antiterrorism_Campaign/1195783.html, (accessed January 29, 2011).

⁴² Kevin Sieff, "At Afghan Cup in Virginia, Recruiters Offer Big Money for Interpreters," *The Washington Post*, July 11, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/10/AR2010071002922.html>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

military struggles to hire qualified staff for interpreting services.⁴³

The Americans have had more success in gathering tactical intelligence. In 2006, the American military began setting up Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) to gather data and research the local populations in the areas in which the military was operating. These teams consist of anthropologists, language experts, and retired and civilian experts whose purpose is to gather data on the "human terrain" of a given area.⁴⁴ The "human map" they develop consists of the community's social connections, religion, and the relationship between local power brokers.⁴⁵ This assists the U.S. in developing the sort of intelligence networks needed to defeat the insurgency.

Initially tested in Iraq, the HTTs have been deployed to Afghanistan since 2007. Thus far, according to the experts, the HTTs and other intelligence gathering efforts have achieved significant intelligence gains. Andrew Exum, a fellow at the

⁴³ Matthew Mosk, Brian Ross, and Joseph Rhee, "Afghanistan: Whistleblower Claims Many US Interpreters Can't Speak Afghan Languages," ABC News, September 8, 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/afghanistan-whistleblower-claims-us-interpreters-speak-afghan-languages/story?id=11578169&page=3>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

⁴⁴ Kambiz Fattahi, "US Army Enlists Anthropologists," BBC News, October 16, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7042090.stm>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

⁴⁵ Anna Mulrine, "The Culture Warriors," *U.S. News and World Report*, November 30, 2007, <http://www.usnews.com/news/iraq/articles/2007/11/30/the-pentagon-deploys-social-scientists-to-help-understand-iraqs-human-terrain>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

Center for New American Security (CNAS) and a small wars and insurgencies expert recently wrote:

Our intelligence at the tactical level is greatly improved...This time around, when an intelligence officer began a briefing, he or she began by explaining the human geography of their area of operations and only later focused on the insurgency as being part of that geography. I am so impressed with how sophisticated the analysis provided by intelligence officers today is. . . .⁴⁶

Despite Exum's enthusiasm, one of the metrics the American military has used to measure the success of their intelligence gathering efforts is the number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) turned in by the local populace. A report co-authored by Exum in June 2009 for CNAS said:

Another indicator of cooperation is the number of roadside bombs (improvised explosive devices or IEDs) that are found and cleared versus exploded...A rise in the proportion of IEDs being found and defused (especially when discovered thanks to tips from the local population) indicates that locals have a good working relationship with local military units—a sign of progress.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, despite the HTTs and Exum's impression of the state of intelligence gathering, there is little evidence to

⁴⁶ Andrew Exum, "Afghanistan Trip Report, Part I: BLUF," Center for a New American Security, December 10, 2010, <http://cnas.org/blogs/abumuqawama/2010/12/afghanistan-trip-report-part-i-bluf.html>, (accessed January 29, 2011).

⁴⁷ Andrew M. Exum et al., *Triage: The Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, publication, June 10, 2009, Benchmarks and Metrics, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/ExumFickHumayun_TriageAfPak_June09.pdf, (accessed January 29, 2011).

support that locals are turning in IEDs at a greater rate now than in 2009. According to the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), in May 2010, the latest month in which data has been published; only 12 of 1,128 IEDs were turned in by the local population. In June 2009, the month of the CNAS report, 12 of 840 IEDs were turned in.⁴⁸ Rather than evidence of increased cooperation between the population and the military, this evidence suggests a stalemate at best, deterioration at worst.

The lack of results in gathering cultural and tactical intelligence in Afghanistan has not been from lack of effort. The Af/Pak hands program, while floundering early, may overcome its bureaucratic problems. More troops can learn the various languages of Afghanistan, and more efforts can be made to prepare soldiers for the culture they will encounter while there. Intelligence collection and the Human Terrain Teams have been a point of emphasis for the counterinsurgents. A fundamental problem remains though—these intelligence gathering efforts have not added up to the strategic gains that the American counterinsurgency needs. In short, the emphasis on intelligence gathering has not produced results.

⁴⁸ Cordesman, Anthony, Marissa Allison, Jason Lemieux. *IED Metrics for Afghanistan January 2004 – September 2010*. Center for Strategic & International Studies, November 11, 2010, http://csis.org/files/publication/101110_ied_metrics_afghanistan.pdf (accessed March 4, 2011).

While much of the American counterinsurgency push strategy puts a softer face on the war, the strategy includes kinetic operations. The American counterinsurgency strategy requires the capturing or killing of key insurgent leaders, the elimination of their physical safe havens, and the denial of insurgent material and financial support. The Americans, especially since General Petraeus took over, have refocused their efforts in this area. However, these efforts have not been decisive and new research suggests some of them may be counterproductive.

Since General Petraeus took control in June 2010, the United States has ratcheted up the focus on kinetic operations.⁴⁹ This new focus on kinetic operations ranges across the operational spectrum. According to Fred Kaplan, a military analyst, Petraeus has unleashed special operations in every part of the country.⁵⁰ Additionally, according to *Wired*, NATO planes fired weaponry on 1,000 separate missions in October 2010, a rate 50 percent higher than October 2009.⁵¹ Petraeus even authorized,

⁴⁹ Fred Kaplan, "A New Plan for Afghanistan: Less Counterinsurgency, More Killing and Capturing." *Slate Magazine*. October 13, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2270971/m>, (accessed January 30, 2011).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Noah Shachtman, "Bombs Away: Afghan Air War Peaks With 1,000 Strikes in October | Danger Room | *Wired.com*," *Wired*, November 10, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/11/bombs-away-afghan-air-war-peaks-with-1000-strikes-in-october/>, (accessed January 30, 2011).

for the first time in Afghanistan, the deployment of heavy M1 Abrams tanks.⁵²

Petraeus's escalation of violence is an attempt to kill senior and mid-level insurgent leaders. According to Petraeus, the increased level of kinetic action is an effort to destroy the Taliban's network. "Certainly you want to protect the force by killing or capturing those at the point of planting an IED, but what you really want to do is go after the network."⁵³

There is evidence that Petraeus's effort has been successful, at least in killing large numbers of insurgents. According to media reports, 2010 was the deadliest year on record for the insurgency and Petraeus has suggested that fighting will intensify in 2011.⁵⁴ However, news sources document that this increased focus on violence has not degraded the strength of the Taliban and may have a pernicious effect on the counterinsurgency effort.

⁵² Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "U.S. Deploying Heavily Armored Battle Tanks for First Time in Afghan War," *Washington Post*, November 19, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/18/AR2010111806856.html>, (accessed January 30, 2011).

⁵³ Spencer Ackerman, "Drones Surge, Special Ops Strike in Petraeus Campaign Plan," *Wired*, August 18, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/08/petraeus-campaign-plan/>, (accessed February 12, 2011).

⁵⁴ "Petraeus Predicts Intensified Fighting in 2011 - USATODAY.com," *USA Today*, February 9, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/2011-02-09-petraeus-fighting_N.htm, (accessed February 12, 2011).

On September 11, 2001, Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist, estimated that the Taliban had approximately 25,000 fighters under their control.⁵⁵ On February 9, 2011, the Afghan Defense Minister spokesman stated that the Taliban and other anti-government fighters numbered between 25,000 and 35,000.⁵⁶ There are a couple possibilities concerning these numbers, none of them positive for the counterinsurgency effort. The first and most optimistic explanation is that the estimates are incorrect or based on faulty data. This explanation means, though, that the Afghans and the Americans have little idea of the size of the force they are fighting.

The next two explanations have far worse implications. The second possible explanation is that the surge of American forces and the build-up of the Afghan National Security Forces have not diminished the insurgency's end strength. The last and worst case possibility is that the Taliban and related insurgent groups are able to replace their fighters as quickly as they are killed.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan Resistance Leader Feared Dead in Blast," *Telegraph*, September 11, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1340244/Afghanistan-resistance-leader-feared-dead-in-blast.html>, (accessed February 12, 2011).

⁵⁶ "Taliban Militants Estimated at 35,000," TOLO News, February 9, 2011, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/1817-taliban-militants-estimated-at-35000>, (accessed February 12, 2011).

⁵⁷ Joshua Foust, "The Lie of Attrition, or We Have No Idea Who's Out There," *Registan*, February 10, 2011, <http://www.registan.net/index.php/2011/02/10/the-lie-of-attrition-or-we-have-no-idea-whos-out-there/>, (accessed February 12, 2011).

The reports of the insurgency's end-strength come on the heels of a new report released by New York University's Center on International Cooperation that questions the long-term efficacy of killing senior and mid-level Taliban commanders. According to the report, entitled "Separating the Taliban from Al Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan," because of the successful efforts to kill or capture senior Taliban leaders, the Taliban leadership has seen dramatic turnover since the middle of 2009. This success has some potentially negative consequences because the replacement leadership is younger, more ideologically stubborn, and less likely to negotiate with foreign powers. According to the authors:

These newer generations are potentially a more serious threat. With little or no memory of Afghan society prior to the Soviet war in the 1980s, this new generation of commanders is more ideologically motivated and less nationalistic than previous generations and therefore less pragmatic. It is not interested in negotiations or compromise with foreigners. They have never lived in an Afghanistan that was at peace. . .they are citizens of *jihād*.⁵⁸

If after ten years of war in Afghanistan the United States cannot accurately assess the Taliban's end-strength or degrade its numbers, and the actions taken to do just that actually hurt the

⁵⁸ Strick van Linschoten, Alex and Felix Kuehn. *Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan*. Center on International Cooperation. 9-10, http://www.cic.nyu.edu/afghanistan/docs/gregg_sep_tal_alqaeda.pdf (accessed March 15, 2011).

overall effort, the counterinsurgency is in a bad position indeed.

The push counterinsurgency strategy also requires the elimination of insurgent safe havens, both in physical and virtual space. The United States has gone to great effort to this, mostly in Pakistan, but even the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen has admitted that the insurgency maintains sanctuaries in Pakistan.⁵⁹

The United States has attempted to deal with the Pakistani safe havens in two ways. First, it has pleaded and cajoled the Pakistani government to deal with them. Second, it has attempted to destroy them through the use of drone strikes. Neither strategy appears to be working.

The United States has attempted, and mostly failed, to coax the Pakistani government to take strong action against insurgent safe havens along the Afghan/Pakistan border. The Americans have attempted to change the Pakistani stance towards the region with billions of dollars in development and military aid. This aid, which some accounts put at \$18 billion since 2001,⁶⁰ has not changed the Pakistani stance towards the safe havens. According

⁵⁹ Ernesto Londono and Karin Brulliard, "Mullen: Eliminating Pakistani Safe Havens Is Key," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/17/AR2010121702155.html>, (accessed February 17, 2011).

⁶⁰ Griff Witte, "Billions of Aid Dollars Buy U.S. Little Goodwill in Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/23/AR2010082305476.html>, (accessed April 18, 2011).

to Robert Haddick, the editor of the online publication *Small Wars Journal*, "The Pakistani government refuses to close or even isolate those sanctuaries."⁶¹

Since the Pakistani government has shown little promise in closing the insurgent safe havens, the United States has turned to unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, to destroy or degrade them. According to the *Long War Journal*, the United States launched more drone attacks in 2010 on targets in Pakistan than in any other year of the Afghan war.⁶²

The efficacy of the drone campaign is widely debated. Intelligence officials claim that the campaign keeps the pressure on insurgent groups and is the most effective means of combating terrorist sanctuaries.⁶³ A recent Harvard working paper concluded that the drone strikes "reduces terrorist violence according to certain metrics but not others. . . ."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Robert Haddick, "This Week at War: Pakistan Is Winning the War in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, July 30, 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/30/this_week_at_war_pakistan_is_winning_the_war_in_afghanistan, (accessed February 18, 2011).

⁶² Bill Roggio and Alexander Mayer, "Charts on US Strikes in Pakistan," *The Long War Journal*, April 13, 2011, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes.php>, (accessed April 18, 2011).

⁶³ Ayaz Gul, "Pakistan Says Drone Strikes Have Been Effective," *Voice of America*, March 11, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/asia/south/Pakistani-Military-Drone-Strikes-Have-Been-Effective-in-Pakistan-117798048.html>, (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁶⁴ Patrick Johnson and Anoop Sarbahi, "What Is a High-Value Target Really Worth? Evidence from U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan," *Harvard - Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, December 9, 2010, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/events/5352/what_is_a_highvalue_target_really_worth_evidence_from_us_drone_strikes_in_pakistan.html, (accessed April 18, 2011).

But the evidence in support of drone strikes does not fully point to success. They are highly unpopular amongst Pakistanis,⁶⁵ and alleged Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad claims he was motivated by drone-caused civilian casualties.⁶⁶ Even Kilcullen has called for the cessation of drone strikes in Pakistan.⁶⁷

In any case, the United States has not been able to eliminate Pakistani safe havens. In fact, the U.S. military seems to recognize this as the deputy commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General David Rodriguez, said that the Pakistani safe havens were not a "mission-stopper."⁶⁸ According to the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, insurgent safe havens are not only critical because of their physical space, but also because of their ability to provide material and financial support to the insurgency.

⁶⁵ Peter Bergen, Patrick Doherty, and Ken Ballen, "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions," Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative | NewAmerica, September 28, 2010, http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/publications/policy/public_opinion_in_pakistan_s_tribal_regions, (accessed April 18, 2011).

⁶⁶ Catherine Phillip, "Drone Strikes the Most Effective Weapon against Al-Qaeda—but at What Cost?," *The Times*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article7142182.ece>, (accessed April 18, 2011).

⁶⁷ Noah Shachtman, "Call Off Drone War, Influential U.S. Adviser Says," *Wired*, February 10, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/02/kilcullen-says/>, (accessed April 18, 2011).

⁶⁸ Phil Stewart, "Pakistan Safe Havens Not a Mission-stopper for U.S.," *Reuters*, February 01, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/02/us-usa-afghanistan-safehavens-idUSTRE7110LQ20110202>, (accessed April 18, 2011).

In the area of denying insurgents financial and material support, the counterinsurgency effort has had little to no effect. Push counterinsurgency operations are designed to separate the insurgency from the greater population, and thus reducing support for the insurgency. However, there is evidence that suggests the Afghan population, in general, does not sustain or support the insurgency. In response, the insurgency has found non-indigenous sources of material and financial support.

According to a March 2010 Gallup poll, nearly 80 percent think the Taliban insurgency is a negative influence on Afghanistan. Even in the traditional Taliban areas in southern Afghanistan, 59 percent of the population holds a negative view of the Taliban.⁶⁹ Given the reported lack of support for the Taliban among Afghans, the Taliban insurgents have found other sources of support. These alternative sources of support include international donations, the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and a protection racket run on Afghanistan's highway system.

In June 2009, the *New York Times* reported that the Taliban receives millions of dollars in funding from overseas. The late Richard Holbrooke, at the time the Obama Administration's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said he believed that

⁶⁹ July Ray and Rajesh Srinivasen, "Taliban Increasingly Unpopular in Pakistan," Gallup, March 12, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/126602/Taliban-Increasingly-Unpopular-Pakistan.aspx> (accessed April 18, 2011).

overseas donations were a more important source of funding than even the opium trade.⁷⁰ Estimates for the income due to this activity have been as high as \$600 million annually,⁷¹ though the *New York Times* article pegged the number at \$300 million.⁷² Either way, if Holbrooke is right, the Taliban insurgency receives significant support from outside the country, and thus efforts to isolate the insurgents from Afghans do not impact the insurgents' financial bottom line.

A second source of support for the Taliban insurgency is the Pakistani ISI. According to a report by the London School of Economics, it was and is ISI policy to support the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. The relationship between the leadership of both organizations appears to be close, as a member of the ISI has a sitting representative on the Quetta Shura, or the Taliban's leadership board.⁷³ The report's conclusion says:

⁷⁰ Sabrina Tavernise and Salman Masood, "U.S. Plans New Hunt for Sponsors of Taliban," *New York Times*, June 5, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/asia/06pstan.html>, (accessed February 10, 2011).

⁷¹ UN Office on Drugs and Crime. September 2010. *Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2010*. http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afg_opium_survey_2010_exsum_web.pdf (accessed February 23, 2011).

⁷² Sabrina Tavernise and Salman Masood, "U.S. Plans New Hunt for Sponsors of Taliban," *New York Times*, June 5, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/asia/06pstan.html>, (accessed February 10, 2011).

⁷³ Matthew Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky: the Relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents," London School of Economics-International Development, June 1, 2010, <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/Publications/discussion/dp18.aspx>, (accessed February 15, 2011).

...the ISI may not actually control the Afghan insurgency, which implies power over all major dimensions of the movement and its campaign, and the ability to bring it to an end. However, as a provider of sanctuary, and very substantial financial, military and logistical support to the insurgency, the ISI appears to have strong strategic and operational influence—reinforced by coercion. There is thus that the ISI and elements of the military are deeply involved in the insurgent campaign. . . .⁷⁴

In addition to the financial support from the ISI, the Taliban insurgency receives funding from another surprising source—the United States. Because of Afghanistan’s landlocked geography, most of the supplies necessary to sustain the American war effort must be trucked through Pakistan or through the Central Asian Republics. According to a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs report, this effort, and the security required, has been outsourced. The report says, “This arrangement has fueled a vast protection racket run by a shadowy network of warlords, strongmen, commanders, corrupt Afghan officials, and perhaps others.”⁷⁵ The report went on to find that the Taliban regularly extorts trucks in exchange for safe passage.⁷⁶ Since the trucks are contracted by the United States, and the contracted trucks

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ U.S. Congress. House. *Warlord, Inc. Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan*. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. 111th Cong., 2nd Sess. 2010. Introduction, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/HNT_Report.pdf (accessed March 4, 2011).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 34.

pay highway bribes, U.S. money finds its way into the pockets of the insurgency. The U.S. finds itself in the absurd situation paying for both sides of the war.

Tying Push Together

When looked at as a whole, the push effort is a failure. It may be possible to overcome a weakness in one push area with strength in others. However, the U.S. has weaknesses in all push areas. Because of Afghanistan's geography, dispersed population, and open borders it cannot control the population. Efforts to protect the population have not succeeded, as more Afghan civilians died during 2010 than any other year since the 2001 invasion. The U.S. has had some success creating intelligence networks and building cultural expertise, but these efforts have not made an impact on key metrics like the numbers of IED turned in by the population. Insurgents maintain safe havens in Pakistan which the U.S. cannot reach and the Pakistani government shows little interest in closing. Lastly, the insurgency supports itself through a system of international money transfers and basic road banditry that the U.S. cannot interdict and perversely, in some cases, helps perpetuate. Put simply, the American effort to push the insurgency from the population has not been a success.

Assessing Pull Operations

Pull operations in Afghanistan consist of efforts to develop indigenous security forces, build legitimate government institutions, and to operate with a unity of command. These efforts are undertaken to pull the population towards the government and allow the counterinsurgent to turn over responsibility for the country's security to the host nation's government. This section will assess these efforts by examining the actions taken to make the operation itself successful.

Building the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) has long been an important line of operation for the United States. In March 2009, President Obama approved a plan that vastly enlarged the ANSF.⁷⁷ The Center for Strategic and International Studies called this effort "critical and urgent."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, with the exception of the raw number of recruits, virtually all the evidence says that the ANSF is plagued by chronic desertion, high illiteracy, drug use, and almost no ability to operate independently⁷⁹ of the American military.

⁷⁷ Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Obama Seeks Vastly Expanded Afghan Force to Help Stabilize the Nation," *New York Times*, June 27, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/19/us/politics/19military.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁷⁸ Cordesman, Anthony, Adam Mausner, Jeffery Carson. *Shaping Afghan National Security Forces: What it will take to implement President Obama's new strategy*. Center for Strategic & International Studies, April 20, 2010, iv, http://csis.org/files/publication/100420_Shaping_Afghan_National_Security_Forces.pdf (accessed March 4, 2011).

⁷⁹ In this context, independence means the ability to conduct military operations without American support.

First, there is positive evidence that the size of the ANSF is growing. Lieutenant General William Caldwell, the officer in charge of building and training the ANSF wrote that since President Obama authorized the surge of American troops in December 2009, ". . .the Afghan National Security Forces has grown to more than 270,000 from 191,000, a 42 percent expansion."⁸⁰ General Caldwell understands the enormity of his task, as he went on to write that ANSF training now includes basic reading classes, vocational training and he has increased the pay for new recruits.⁸¹

Unfortunately for General Caldwell, those numbers tell only part of the story. According to the *Washington Post*, the training effort will meet its goal of 305,000 soldiers by October 2011, but the Afghan National Army (ANA)⁸² loses 32 percent of its soldiers every year. In 2010, the ANSF recruited 110,000 new members, but the end strength increased by only 70,000, and worse yet, 98 percent of those leaving left from units already in the field.⁸³

⁸⁰ William B. Caldwell, IV, "The Unnoticed Surge in Afghan Security," *Chicago Tribune*, February 15, 2011, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/ct-oped-0215-afghan-20110215.0,4075776.story> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The ANSF includes the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police (ANP).

⁸³ John Wendle, "Fighting the Taliban: Afghan Army Faces Attrition Crisis," *Time*, March 2, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2056450,00.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

General Caldwell also realizes that his task is not simply one of training soldiers; it is one of providing a basic education. According to Caldwell, only 14 percent of new recruits are literate, requiring Caldwell to institute a reading program to educate every recruit to read on a basic level.⁸⁴ Basic reading and writing skills are essential for a military as orders are often given in writing and even the most basic task, such as reading a map, requires basic literacy. The enormity of Caldwell's task bears repeating and pause: *86 percent of new ANSF recruits cannot read.* Caldwell is not running a military training program; he is running an elementary school.

In addition to low literacy rates, the ANSF faces very high levels of drug abuse. According to the Special Investigator for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), 17 percent of Afghan police tested positive for drugs, and officials believed that this rate was understated.⁸⁵ The report went on to say that in extreme cases, ANSF personnel ". . . were openly using marijuana and were unwilling to conduct operations or even leave their compound."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ William B. Caldwell, IV, "The Unnoticed Surge in Afghan Security," *Chicago Tribune*, February 15, 2011, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/ct-oped-0215-afghan-20110215,0,4075776.story> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁸⁵ U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction. *Actions Needed to Improve the Reliability of Afghan Security Force Assessments*. June 2010. 20. <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR%20Audit-10-11.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2010).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20

Anecdotal reports of widespread drug use among the ANSF are legion. Neil Shea, a writer for *National Geographic*, described Afghan policemen so high on drugs that they were fighting fake battles with what American soldiers called "the Hash Monster."⁸⁷ The *Wall Street Journal* has reported on the problem,⁸⁸ as have virtually every outlet that covers the war. Recently, in response to a rash of coalition deaths at the hands of ANSF members, the U.S. has begun an initiative to more strictly vet new recruits.⁸⁹ This effort will reportedly include drug screening.

The literacy and drug abuse problems are essentially solvable with more focus on education and drug prevention and testing programs. But how capable are ANSF soldiers? Can the U.S. expect the ANSF to be capable enough to provide security in the years after the U.S. exits Afghanistan? The answer to that question is "probably not." The June 2010 SIGAR report titled, "Actions Needed to Improve the Reliability of Afghan Security Force Assessments" provides a damning critique of the effort to build the ANSF.

⁸⁷ Neil Shea, "So This Is Paktya," *The American Scholar*, June 1, 2010, <http://www.theamericanscholar.org/afghanistan-so-this-is-paktya/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁸⁸ Matthew Rosenberg, "Drug Use, Poor Discipline Afflict Afghan Army," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704684604575381092012618892.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁸⁹ Tom Vanden Brook, "Afghan Forces Undergo Stricter Vetting by NATO Commanders," *USA Today*, February 18, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/2011-02-18-afghansecurity18_ST_N.htm (accessed June 27, 2011).

The SIGAR report found the following deficiencies in the effort:

Measurements used in the assessment system have overstated operational capabilities. Top-rated ANSF units have not indicated a capability to sustain independent operations. The Capability Milestone (CM) rating system has inadvertently created disincentives for ANSF development. ANSF capability reports have included outdated assessment data.⁹⁰

The report goes on to say that police units had the most difficulty in sustaining the top-level capabilities.⁹¹

The damning SIGAR report is backed up by the anecdotal evidence. In August 2010, the Afghan National Army attempted an ambitious, self-sufficient mission in Eastern Afghanistan. According to the *New York Times*, this showcase mission designed "...to be a sign of their growing military capacity instead turned into an embarrassment."⁹² The Afghan Army attempted the mission without the support of American troops, yet the Afghans were forced to call for help almost immediately, and there is evidence that the operation was compromised before it began as the Taliban

⁹⁰ U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction. Actions Needed to Improve the Reliability of Afghan Security Force Assessments. June 2010. ii. <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR%20Audit-10-11.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2010).

⁹¹ Ibid., 5.

⁹² Rod Nordland, "Showcase Afghan Army Mission Turns Into Debacle," *New York Times*, August 12, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/13/world/asia/13afghan.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

were reportedly waiting in advance to ambush the Afghan troops.⁹³ Even Afghan President Hamid Karzai recognizes the ineffectiveness of his own troops, as he has blamed civilian casualties and night raids on the weakness of his own army.⁹⁴

In sum, the ANSF faces catastrophic attrition, is largely illiterate, high on drugs, and not capable of conducting any operation independent of American forces. Unless it improves dramatically over the next few years, it is doubtful that it will be able to assume responsibility for Afghanistan's security by the summer of 2011 or even 2014.

According to Field Manual 3-24, "Legitimacy Is the Main Objective."⁹⁵ The United States strategy in Afghanistan hinges on the ability of American forces to help build a legitimate Afghan government. Again, unfortunately for the United States, this effort has been marred by contested, messy elections, corruption and lack of capacity in the Afghan government, and an inability to connect the central government to the people.

The first and most obvious problem with the Afghan government's legitimacy is that the president of the country,

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Eltaf Najafizada, "Karzai Says Afghan Army Woes Bring NATO Raids, Civilian Deaths," *Bloomberg*, November 23, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-11-23/karzai-says-afghan-army-woes-bring-nato-raids-civilian-deaths.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁹⁵ Sewall et al., *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 1-21.

Hamid Karzai, is widely believed to have stolen his most recent election in 2009. The *New York Times* called the election "much disputed,"⁹⁶ and there was widespread violence and allegations of fraud and outright vote buying. According to *The Washington Post*, in at least 14 provinces, there were more votes counted than voters in the province.⁹⁷ Since Karzai failed to receive 50 percent of the vote in the first round, the United States pressed Karzai to hold a run-off with his chief rival for the job, Abdullah Abdullah. However, days before the run-off was to take place, Abdullah decided to quit the race. Karzai was re-elected by default. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter declared that Karzai had stolen the election.⁹⁸

The 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections, Afghanistan's parliament, were scarcely better. Originally scheduled for May 2010, they were pushed back until September because of security concerns. When the election was finally held, the Afghan election authorities threw out more than 20 percent of the votes because of allegations of fraud.⁹⁹ Fraud was not the only problem, as it

⁹⁶ Helene Cooper and Jeff Zeleny, "Obama Warns Karzai to Focus on Tackling Corruption," *New York Times*, November 2, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/03/world/asia/03afghan.html?_r=2. (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁹⁷ Aaron Glantz, "Jimmy Carter: 'Hamid Karzai Has Stolen the Election'" *Huffington Post*, September 15, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aaron-glantz/jimmy-carter-hamid-karzai_b_288012.html (accessed June 27, 2011).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Afghan Officials Cancel 1.3m Votes," Al Jazeera English, October 20, 2010, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2010/10/2010102081458138520.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

was too dangerous to even open 938 of 6,835 polling centers.¹⁰⁰

After a brief disagreement between parliamentarians and President Karzai, the new parliament was eventually inaugurated in late January 2011.¹⁰¹

In addition to the fraud and vote buying allegations, the Wolesi Jirga suffers from a latent defect that further degrades its legitimacy. The Wolesi Jirga is elected under a single nontransferable vote system. Under this system, "Each voter casts one vote for one candidate. If a province elects five seats, the five candidates with the most votes gain the seats."¹⁰² It is, admittedly, a simple system which can easily be communicated to a mostly illiterate populace. However, it often produces a wildly unrepresentative parliament filled with local leaders with no incentive to cooperate with each other. According to Barnett Rubin, an Afghanistan expert, "It places a premium on vote buying and intimidation, since swinging even a small number of votes can easily affect the outcome."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ "The Next Afghan Election," *New York Times*, September 05, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/06/opinion/06mon1.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰¹ "Karzai Agrees to Open Parliament," *Al Jazeera English*, January 23, 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2011/01/201112362755769742.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰² Barnett R. Rubin, "Afghanistan: The Wrong Voting System," *New York Times*, March 16, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/15/opinion/15iht-edrubin.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

The single nontransferable vote system produces long lists of candidates running in each province. Consequently, most votes end up being cast for losing candidates. In the 2005 parliamentary election, only 35 percent of the votes were cast for a winner. In some areas, only 19 percent of the votes went to winning candidates.¹⁰⁴ In 2010, the Kabul province ballot listed 520 candidates on nine full pages.¹⁰⁵ This is why even very small numbers of vote manipulation can swing the outcome of the election.

Though the problems with Afghanistan's election began prior to the formal beginning of counterinsurgency operations in 2009, Afghanistan's election problems are getting worse.¹⁰⁶ The "stolen" presidential election and endemic security and fraud issues, along with the single nontransferable voting style of the parliamentary elections, undermine the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

Widespread corruption also does not support the legitimacy of the Afghan government. In 2010, Transparency International

¹⁰⁴ Colin Cookman, "More on SNTV," Democracy International, <http://www.afghan2010.com/news/more-sntv> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction. *Lessons Learned in Preparing and Conducting Elections in Afghanistan*. September 2010. 9 <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR%20Audit-10-16.pdf> (accessed June 27, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Martine Van Bijlert, "2010 Elections (34): Glossing over and Moving on," The Afghanistan Analysts Network, November 26, 2010, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=1345> (accessed June 27, 2011).

ranked Afghanistan as the third most corrupt country in the world, behind only Myanmar and Somalia.¹⁰⁷ Embassy cables leaked by WikiLeaks documented the comprehensiveness of corruption in Afghanistan. The *New York Times* characterized the leaked cables as describing Afghanistan as “. . .a looking glass land where bribery, extortion and embezzlement are the norm and the honest official is a distinct outlier.”¹⁰⁸ The corruption goes to the very top, as “. . .President Karzai and his cronies are, in many cases, at the center of the corruption.”¹⁰⁹

Afghanistan's corruption problems impede almost every American capacity building initiative, from providing essential services, ranging from power generation to smaller projects like road construction. According to a paper published by *Small Wars Journal*, the United States spent \$100 million to upgrade and repair a hydroelectric power plant that services the Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Half of the energy produced by the plant has been siphoned off by insurgents and sold to the local population. Worse, the electricity is apparently used to pump water to poppy

¹⁰⁷ "Corruption Perceptions Index 2010 Results," Transparency International, 2010, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰⁸ Scott Shane, Mark Mazzetti, and Dexter Filkins, "Cables Depict Afghan Graft, Starting at Top," *New York Times*, December 2, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/world/asia/03wikileaks-corruption.html?pagewanted=1&ref=global-home> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Fred Kaplan, "What Can We Do about Corruption in Afghanistan?," *Slate Magazine*, September 15, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2267465/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

fields, which the insurgency taxes as another source of funding.¹¹⁰

Smaller projects have suffered the same fate. Road construction has long been considered a way to quickly bring security and development to an area.¹¹¹ However, such initiatives have brought neither security nor development. Insurgents have used the newly constructed roads as places to plant IEDs, attack road construction crews, and intimidate the population.¹¹²

More generally, it is not clear that the American military has the proper controls in place to assess whether small projects are effective or useful towards achieving U.S. goals. A SIGAR report found that these projects, largely funded with money used at the discretion of military commanders and called Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) funds, lack “. . . a coordinated, results-oriented approach to determine whether CERP projects have attained their goals, are being used as intended and are being

¹¹⁰ Mark Moyar, *Development in Afghanistan's Counterinsurgency: A New Guide*, Orbis Operations, March 2011, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/development-in-afghanistan-coin-moyar.pdf> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹¹ James Warden, "Road Projects Play Key Role in Battling Afghan Insurgents," *Stars and Stripes*, April 24, 2009, <http://www.stripes.com/news/road-projects-play-key-role-in-battling-afghan-insurgents-1.90690> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹² Joshua Foust, "On the Roads Again in Afghanistan," PBS: Need to Know, August 31, 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/voices/on-the-roads-again-in-afghanistan/3223/> (accessed June 27, 2011).

sustained."¹¹³ In effect, the U.S. has given local commanders a large pot of money to spend on development projects without any system to assess whether those projects are successful.

In addition to the electoral problems and the failure of development projects the Americans have had little success clearing and holding territory or building an accountable local government in any territory. According to the United Nations, there were fewer cleared or "safe" sectors in Afghanistan in October 2010 than there were in March 2010.¹¹⁴ In that period 16 districts previously considered medium risk were upgraded to high risk, while only two high risk districts received a safer rating. The Pentagon, however, has said it has applied the most forces to the most important parts of Afghanistan, and in those districts, security has improved. According to military commanders in the Helmand province, the insurgency there has been defeated.¹¹⁵ The U.S. military makes this claim despite the fact that the entire Helmand province, with the exception of small silver where the

¹¹³ U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction. *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*. January 30, 2011. Executive Summary, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Jan2011/Lowres/Jan2011.pdf> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Yaroslav Trofimov, "U.N. Maps Rate Afghanistan Less Secure," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203568004576043842922347526.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹⁵ Jim Michaels, "General: Heart of Afghanistan Insurgency Beaten," *USA Today*, February 15, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/2011-02-15-1Aafghanistan15_ST_N.htm (accessed June 27, 2011).

most U.S. forces were deployed, received a very high risk rating by the United Nations.

The holding effort, even in the areas where clearing has been successful, is, at best, a work in progress. Anthony Cordesman, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has said that even in the test areas, like Marja in the Helmand province, have not gone as well as hoped. "Military movements had their own delays, and key elements of the operational plan were too conceptual and assumed far more rapid and easy progress in the hold and build phases. . . ." ¹¹⁶ Holding territory has turned out to be far more resource intensive than previously thought.

The build phase has failed. Underlying the build strategy was the hope that the Afghan government could come in and take primary responsibility for the build phase in each cleared district. The first test case for the strategy was in a medium-sized farming community in the Helmand province called Marja. The effort began in February 2010, under the leadership of General McChrystal. McChrystal was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "We've got a government in a box, waiting to move

¹¹⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Realism in Afghanistan: Rethinking an Uncertain Case for the War," Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 16, 2010, <http://csis.org/publication/realism-afghanistan-rethinking-uncertain-case-war> (accessed June 27, 2011).

in."¹¹⁷ The quote summed up the American strategy. The Americans would move in, provide security and allow the Afghan government to build connections and legitimacy amongst the locals. Unfortunately, there was no "government in a box," and only three months after the start of the campaign, McChrystal called Marja a "bleeding ulcer."¹¹⁸ Over one year later, the "government in a box" has still failed to materialize, though since attacks are down to just 10 a day, the military has claimed security and governance are beginning to take hold in Marja.¹¹⁹

If "clear-hold-build" is a work in progress, then the unity of command pull element of counterinsurgency is simply convoluted. The United States and its international partners have failed to develop a coordinated chain of command and have consistently undermined its strategic communication efforts with tactical blunders. The incoherence of this element has led to policy drift and finger-pointing amongst the NATO leaders.

The number of senior leaders with a major stake in the Afghan counterinsurgency effort is staggering. There are at least 11 senior leaders from three countries that could plausibly

¹¹⁷ Dexter Filkins, "Afghan Offensive Is New War Model," *New York Times*, February 12, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/13/world/asia/13kabul.html> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹⁸ "McChrystal Calls Marja a Bleeding Ulcer' in Afghan Campaign," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 25, 2010, <http://www.tampabay.com/incoming/mcchrystal-calls-marja-a-bleeding-ulcer-in-afghan-campaign/1097412> (accessed June 27, 2011).

¹¹⁹ Josh Boak, "In Rural Afghan Village, Local Security Takes Root," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/01/AR2011030103947.html> (accessed August 15, 2011).

claim ownership of the counterinsurgency effort. These people are listed in chart one.

Table 1: Senior Leaders¹²⁰

Name	Position	Country
Barack Obama	President	U.S.
Hamid Karzai	President	Afghanistan
Hillary Clinton	Secretary of State	U.S.
Karl Eikenberry	U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan	U.S.
General James Mattis	Commander, U.S. Central Command	U.S.
General David Petraeus	Commander, International Security and Assistance Force	U.S.
Lt. General Bill Caldwell	Commander, Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan	U.S.
Marc Grossman	Special Envoy for Afghanistan/Pakistan	U.S.
Mark Sedwill	NATO Civilian Representative to Afghanistan	U.S.
Staffan de Mistura	Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan	Sweden

¹²⁰ As of 1 May 2011.

William Patey	British Ambassador to Afghanistan	U.K.
---------------	-----------------------------------	------

The result of this "too-many-cooks-in-the-kitchen" approach has been asynchronous efforts and open disputes among the key staff. Two examples of this bureaucratic infighting are instructive. The first is the disagreement of U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry with the counterinsurgency strategy. The second is the tension between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and top American officials.

During President Obama's strategy review in the fall of 2009, Ambassador Eikenberry wrote a long cable to the State Department from his post in Kabul. Eikenberry is a former Army lieutenant general who was once in charge of the American military effort in Afghanistan. His message expressed sharp disagreement with the proposed strategy to send more troops to Afghanistan. Sending additional troops to Afghanistan, he argued, "...will delay the day when Afghans will take over, and make it difficult, if not impossible, to bring our people home on a reasonable timeline."¹²¹

¹²¹ Karl Eikenberry, "COIN Strategy: Civilian Concerns," State Department Cable from Kabul. November 6, 2009, <http://documents.nytimes.com/eikenberry-s-memos-on-the-strategy-in-afghanistan> (accessed 23 January 2011).

Eikenberry also called into question the wisdom of embarking on a counterinsurgency effort:

The proposed counterinsurgency strategy calls for partnering in the field to quickly improve Afghan security forces. I do not question the ability of U.S. forces to effectively take on this mentoring mission...However, I am concerned that it is the U.S. and other NATO-ISAF that will continue to do most of the fighting and take the most casualties. Rather than reducing Afghan dependence, sending more troops, therefore is likely to deepen it. . . .¹²²

Eikenberry did not hold his fire there. He directly questioned the ability of Karzai to govern: "President Karzai is not an adequate strategic partner...Karzai continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden."¹²³ Amazingly, despite his very public concerns, Eikenberry kept his job and remains the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan even while the counterinsurgency campaign that he believed would create dependence continues with the strategic partner, Hamid Karzai, he considered inadequate.

It is one problem to have fundamental disagreements about strategy among the bureaucratic staff, but it is quite another thing to have the leader of the occupied country loudly call for the withdrawal of counterinsurgency troops. Karzai has routinely made statements that validate Ambassador Eikenberry's concerns about his adequacy. In a November 2010 interview with *The*

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

Washington Post, Karzai made a series of statements that seem to be, at best, incongruous with the American counterinsurgency strategy. Karzai said, "The time has come to reduce military operations."¹²⁴ The timing of this statement was odd, considering the final batch of counterinsurgency surge troops were just arriving in Afghanistan.¹²⁵ Karzai went on to question even the tactical details of the counterinsurgency effort:

. . .the majority of day-to-day activities where security is concerned is the job of the Afghan people, the Afghan government...Bursting into homes at night...this isn't any business of any foreign troops, Afghans have to do that.¹²⁶

Karzai said all this despite the fact that the counterinsurgency strategy requires a firm partnership between local and foreign forces and night raids have been a key American tactic.¹²⁷ As argued above, however, there is little evidence that Afghan troops can accomplish these missions on their own.

¹²⁴ "Excerpts from Afghan President Hamid Karzai's Interview with The Washington Post," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/14/AR2010111400002.html?sid=ST2010111305091> (accessed 12 August 2011).

¹²⁵ Fred Kaplan, "What Exactly Is Hamid Karzai Trying to Accomplish with His Latest Comments?," *Slate Magazine*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2275144/pagenum/all/> (accessed August 15, 2011).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Fred Kaplan, "What Exactly Is Hamid Karzai Trying to Accomplish with His Latest Comments?," *Slate Magazine*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2275144/pagenum/all/> (accessed August 15, 2011).

If these statements are not enough to signal disunity between the coalition and the Karzai government, his threat to join the Taliban should make the problem clear. In April 2010, Karzai purportedly said, "If you and the international community pressure me more, I swear I am going to join the Taliban."¹²⁸ Such statements call into question the dedication of the Afghan government to the counterinsurgency effort.

Unity of command has failed in Afghanistan. The key-decision staff is too large, and not all the members of the staff even agree that counterinsurgency is the most appropriate strategy. While disagreements on large staffs are to be expected, it is hard to understand how a person who disagrees with the whole strategy can effectively contribute to that strategy. Additionally, Hamid Karzai is the elected leader of Afghanistan, and he has made clear that he disagrees with the way the United States is handling the war. Military analyst Fred Kaplan calls this situation "potentially catastrophic."¹²⁹ An even simpler utilization of logic would say that if the president of Afghanistan does not want American troops in his country and

¹²⁸ Alissa J. Rubin, "The West Has Little Room to Respond to Karzai's Criticism," *New York Times*, April 4, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/world/asia/05karzai.html?_r=1 (accessed March 5, 2011).

¹²⁹ Fred Kaplan, "What Exactly Is Hamid Karzai Trying to Accomplish with His Latest Comments?," *Slate Magazine*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2275144/pagnum/all/> (accessed August 15, 2011).

threatens to join the enemy, the effort itself must be called into question.

The United States has long known that its strategic communication operations lag behind the Taliban's. In August 2009, the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, penned an article that was critical of the U.S. efforts at strategic communication in Afghanistan. According to Mullen, "Our messages lack credibility because we haven't invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven't always delivered on promises."¹³⁰ In an interview with *Joint Forces Quarterly*, a military publication, Mullen drew a direct line between American strategic communication efforts and civilian casualties. Mullen said that civilian casualties "really sets us back" and "we do need to get a better handle on it from a communications standpoint."¹³¹ Recall from the push section that more civilians died in 2010 than any other year of the war. The United States has not gotten a handle on civilian casualties and it undercuts strategic communication efforts at every pass.

Admiral Mullen is not the only one trumpeting the failure of American strategic communication efforts. In a monograph for

¹³⁰ Mike Mullen, "From the Chairman - Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," Joint Chiefs of Staff Official Web Site, August 28, 2009, <http://www.jcs.mil/newsarticle.aspx?ID=142> (accessed August 17, 2011).

¹³¹ "An Interview with Michael G. Mullen," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 3rd Quarter 2009, 12, <https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/ndupress&CISOPTR=21255&REC=7> (accessed January 25, 2011).

the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, Major Beau Hendricks found that the American strategic communications effort ". . . is not focused enough on internalization of socio-cultural norms and mores."¹³² Major Hendricks found strategic communications efforts to increase the legitimacy of the Afghan government marginally successful but also that American legitimacy was trending downwards. Additionally, Hendricks found that the U.S. had failed to reduce the Taliban's legitimacy and that Taliban popularity was increasing.¹³³

Another constituency of strategic communication is the American public. Because counterinsurgencies are often protracted wars, the counterinsurgent must maintain domestic support for the effort over a long period of time. Since the inauguration of the counterinsurgency effort in June 2009, American domestic support for the war has fallen precipitously. According to CNN, in August 2009, shortly after the counterinsurgency campaign began, 54 percent of Americans opposed the U.S. war in Afghanistan. In the latest CNN poll, conducted in December 2010, 63 percent of Americans said they were opposed

¹³² Beau A. Hendricks, "Institutions and Organizations: Exploring the Interdependencies of Legitimacy Theory and Strategic Communication in Afghanistan," 2010, iii, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA523181&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2011).

¹³³ Ibid., 42.

to the war in Afghanistan.¹³⁴ So far the lack of public support has not moved Congress to act, as the House of Representatives voted 321-93 against a resolution to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2011.¹³⁵ It is unclear, however, how long such lagging support can sustain the counterinsurgency.

Tying Pull Together

Like the push efforts, when viewed as a whole, pull efforts are a complete failure. The effort to build the ANSF has been plagued with drug use, desertion and poor performance. The legitimacy of President Karzai is questionable because he is widely believed to have stolen his election. Structural problems negatively affect the legitimacy of the Wolesi Jirga¹³⁶ because most votes end up being cast for losing candidates. Efforts to connect the Afghan people to the central government, both big and small, have mostly failed. Finally, civilian casualties have undercut strategic communication efforts in Afghanistan and American domestic support for the effort is at an all-time low.

¹³⁴ CNN Opinion Poll, Conducted 17-19 December 2010.
<http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/12/28/rel17m.pdf> (accessed 22 April 2011).

¹³⁵ Jim Malon, "Conflicting Signals Surface on US Support for Afghan" Voice of America, March 18, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Conflicting-Signals-Surface-on-US-Support-for-Afghan-War-118257169.html> (accessed March 21, 2011).

¹³⁶ Wolesi Jirga refers to the Afghan parliament.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSION

As the United States ends its tenth year of involvement in Afghanistan, it is forced to ask itself two questions. First, what went wrong? And second, what comes next? This conclusion first argues the Afghan justice system is a significant driver of the insurgency that has not been adequately addressed by counterinsurgency. Second, it will suggest that counterinsurgency is a fundamentally flawed doctrine based on a faulty reading of history and it concludes that President Obama's fall 2009 strategy review failed to assess whether the American war in Afghanistan was necessary.

According to the International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan's justice system is in a catastrophic state of disrepair."¹ Most Afghans have no access to any government sponsored justice system, and even the courts that do exist are barely operable, chronically understaffed and highly susceptible to corruption.² The situation leads the average Afghan to seek justice from a parallel system operated by the Taliban.

The Taliban has long operated a shadow government inside Afghanistan. The shadow government collects taxes, runs schools,

¹ "Reforming Afghanistan's Broken Judiciary," International Crisis Group, Asia Report N*195, November 17, 2010, i.

² Ibid.

and adjudicates civil disputes.³ The Taliban court system is harsh. According to the Afghan Analysis Network, the Taliban administers lashes and shootings as tools of justice,⁴ but it is widely considered fairer by the average Afghan citizen than the formal state justice system.⁵

This state of affairs negatively impacts the counterinsurgency effort to build legitimacy and confidence in the Afghan government. "Festering grievances at the local level are reinforced by injustice, entrenching a culture of impunity that has become a key driver of the insurgency."⁶ There appears to be growing recognition of this problem, but, ". . . resource allocation has been miserly, funding plans unrealistic and implementation weak."⁷

If tactical issues like building a justice system or protecting the population was all that was wrong with counterinsurgency, then resources and effort could be adjusted

³ C.J. Chivers, "In Eastern Afghanistan, at War With the Taliban's Shadowy Rule," *New York Times*, February 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/asia/07taliban.html?_r=2 (accessed February 15, 2011).

⁴ Nader Nadery, "Who Wants Peace, Needs to Get Serious about Justice," The Afghanistan Analysts Network, December 10, 2010, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=1223> (accessed January 10, 2011).

⁵ Qayum Baabak, "Taleban Justice "Fairer" Than State Courts," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, August 17, 2010, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/taleban-justice-%E2%80%9Cfairer%E2%80%9D-state-courts> (accessed November 12, 2010).

⁶ "Reforming Afghanistan's Broken Judiciary," International Crisis Group, Asia Report N*195, November 17, 2010, 1.

⁷ Ibid.

towards different, more appropriate tactics. However, according to Alex Marshall, a professor at the Centre for War Studies at the University of Glasgow, the validity of contemporary counterinsurgency doctrine is in serious doubt.⁸ Marshall argues that classical counterinsurgency, which the contemporary counterinsurgency doctrine is based upon, is “. . .profoundly imperial...consequently it only rarely faced the thorny issue of sovereignty and legitimacy which bedevils and may doom these same efforts today.”⁹ The imperial orientation is contrasted with what Marshall calls the “liberal peace theory” that drives today’s counterinsurgency between the two:

If ‘liberal peace theory’ is often about ‘empire in denial’, however, classical COIN policy by contract was dependent not upon measuring civil freedoms, instituting grotesquely accelerated but externally policed elections, or the privatization and commodification of essential services, but rather upon population control, coercion, and the availability of a robust set of state-controlled economic incentives. In other words, classical counterinsurgency doctrine relied in reality upon a state-centric approach to conflict settlement, one that was unapologetically imperial. . . .¹⁰

President Obama’s review never asked the most fundamental question: Does the American effort in Afghanistan make America

⁸ Alex Marshall, “Imperial nostalgia, the liberal lie, and the perils of postmodern counterinsurgency,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 21: 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

safer? Obama ran a hawkish campaign on Afghanistan and upon inauguration, he quickly installed his own general (McChrystal) in Afghanistan. However, in the aftermath of President Karzai's allegedly fraudulent reelection, and his long review of the war in the fall of 2009, Obama had a chance to radically change the course of American involvement in Afghanistan.

This opportunity should not have been missed, especially since his most hawkish counterinsurgency advisors repeatedly said that there is no military solution in Afghanistan.¹¹ If that is true, as war critic Andrew Bacevich has pointed out, "Why have a war there?"¹² It is not clear that Dr. Bacevich's question was ever seriously considered. All that mattered, evidently, is how the war should be fought. It bears repeating: There appears to be no evidence that the Obama team questioned if the war was the best way to secure America's national interest; it only considered different ways to fight.

Thus the United States enters its tenth year of war using a questionable strategy that has not yet shown any indication of efficacy in solving any of Afghanistan's many problems. President Obama will have future opportunities to adjust the U.S.

¹¹ David Petraeus, "Remarks for Panel Discussion: The Future of the Alliance and the Mission in Afghanistan," 45th Munich Security Conference, February 8, 2009, http://www.weeklystandard.com/weblogs/TWSFP/2009/02/petraeus_outlines_afghanistan.asp (accessed 17 August 2011).

¹² "Conversations with History—Andrew Bacevich," Institute of International Studies, University of California—Berkeley, September 15, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vV83TaP2geQ> (accessed 17 August 2011) 38:19.

approach in Afghanistan. Obama has promised a drawdown of forces in the summer of 2011, and if he is re-elected, NATO will formally transfer power back to the Afghan government in 2014. Americans can only hope that, President Obama, given the failure of counterinsurgency as argued in this thesis, seriously asks and answers Dr. Bacevich's question: Why have a war at all?

Bibliography

- Ackerman, Spencer. "Drones Surge, Special Ops Strike in Petraeus Campaign Plan." *Wired*. August 18, 2010.
<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/08/petraeus-campaign-plan/>. Accessed (February 12, 2011)
- Ackerman, Spencer. "U.S. Scans Afghan Inmates for Biometric." *Wired*. August 25, 2010.
<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/08/military-prison-builds-big-afghan-biometric-database/>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)
- "Actions Needed to Improve the Reliability of Afghan Security Force Assessments." Office of the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. <http://www.sigar.mil/>. (Accessed July 15, 2010)
- American Forces Press Service. "First AF-PAK Hands Grads Deploy Overseas." U.S. Central Command. April 23, 2010.
<http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/first-af-pak-hands-grads-deploy-overseas.html>. (Accessed January 29, 2011)
- "Baghdad Walls Keep Peace, But Evoke Prison." CBS News.
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/27/iraq/main4214647.shtml>. (Accessed July 12, 2010)
- Barfield, Thomas J. *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Bergen, Peter, Patrick Doherty, and Ken Ballen. "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions." Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative, New America. September 28, 2010.
http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/publications/policy/public_opinion_in_pakistan_s_tribal_regions. (Accessed April 18, 2011)
- Berntsen, Gary, and Ralph Pezzullo. *Jawbreaker: the Attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda : A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005.
- Bush, George W. "Bush State of the Union Address." January 29, 2002." CNN.
<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/>. (Accessed July 24, 2010)

----- . "Transcript of President Bush's Address - September 21, 2001." CNN. September 21, 2001.
<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>.
(Accessed July 24, 2010)

Cohen, Elliot, Conrad Crane, Jan Horvath, and John Nagl.
"Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency." Air University.
<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/cohen.pdf>.
(Accessed October 18, 2010)

Crain, Charles. "Behind The Baghdad Wall." *Time*. May 9, 2007.
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1618898,00.html>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)

Crane, Conrad C. "Minting Coin: Principles and Imperatives for Combating Insurgency." *Air and Space Power Journal*. (Winter 2007) <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/>. (Accessed July 15, 2010)

Dupree, Louis. *Afghanistan*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Exum, Andrew. "Afghanistan Trip Report, Part I: BLUF." Center for a New American Security. December 10, 2010.
<http://cnas.org/blogs/abumugawama/2010/12/afghanistan-trip-report-part-i-bluf.html>. (Accessed January 29, 2011)

Exum, Andrew, Nathaniel Fick, and David Kilcullen. *Triage: The Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Report. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009.

Factbook, CIA. "CIA - The World Factbook." Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)

Fattahi, Kambiz. "US Army Enlists Anthropologists." BBC News. October 16, 2007.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7042090.stm>. (Accessed January 29, 2011)

Flaherty, Anne. "Commander: U.S. Can't Seal Afghan-Pakistan Border." *Time*. December 29, 2010.
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2039952,00.html>. (Accessed January 09, 2011)

Foust, Joshua. "How We Lost Afghanistan's Once-Peaceful North" *The Atlantic*. October 12, 2010..
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/10/ho>

- w-we-lost-afghanistans-once-peaceful-north/64257/.
(Accessed January 09, 2011)
- Foust, Joshua. "The Lie of Attrition, or We Have No Idea Who's Out There – Registan.net." Registan. February 10, 2011. <http://www.registan.net/index.php/2011/02/10/the-lie-of-attrition-or-we-have-no-idea-whos-out-there/>. (Accessed February 12, 2011)
- Galula, David, and John A. Nagl. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006.
- Garamone, Jim. "Troops Re-position to Better Protect Afghan People." The United States Army Homepage. October 21, 2009. <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/10/21/29062-troops-re-position-to-better-protect-afghan-people/>. (Accessed January 15, 2011)
- Ghafour, Hamida. "Smartcard Scheme Epitomises the Flawed Afghan Aid Strategy." *The National*. December 18, 2010. <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/news-comment/smartcard-scheme-epitomises-the-flawed-afghan-aid-strategy>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)
- Giustozzi, Antonio. *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: the Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Gonzalez, Roberto. "American Counterinsurgency." University of Chicago Press, Books. <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/405861.ctl>. (Accessed July 15, 2010)
- Haddick, Robert. "This Week at War: Pakistan Is Winning the War in Afghanistan." *Foreign Policy*. July 30, 2010. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/30/this_week_at_war_pakistan_is_winning_the_war_in_afghanistan. (Accessed February 18, 2011)
- Hodge, Nathan. "Counterinsurgency Guru: Please, No More Iraqs." *Wired*. March 23, 2009. <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/03/dr-book-club-th-2/>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)
- "ICasualties | Operation Enduring Freedom | Afghanistan." ICasualties: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Casualties. <http://icasualties.org/oef/>. (Accessed September 02, 2010)

- Jaffee, Greg. "U.S. Forces Shift Focus to Afghan Cities." CBS News. September 22, 2009.
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/09/22/politics/washingtonpost/main5329199.shtml>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)
- Johnson, Patrick, and Anoop Sarbahi. "What Is a High-Value Target Really Worth? Evidence from U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan." Harvard - Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. December 9, 2010.
http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/events/5352/what_is_a_highvalue_target_really_worth_evidence_from_us_drone_strikes_in_pakistan.html. (Accessed April 18, 2011)
- Jones, Seth. "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study." RAND Corporation
<http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG595/>. (Accessed July 15, 2010)
- Kaplan, Fred. "A New Plan for Afghanistan: Less Counterinsurgency, More Killing and Capturing. - By Fred Kaplan." *Slate Magazine*. October 13, 2010.
<http://www.slate.com/id/2270971/>. (Accessed January 30, 2011)
- Kilcullen, David. "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency." United States Army Combined Arms Center.
[http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen\(Mar06\).pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/28_Articles_of_COIN-Kilcullen(Mar06).pdf). (Accessed July 15, 2010)
- Mackinlay, John, and Alison Al-Baddawy. *Rethinking Counterinsurgency*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand National Defense Research Institute, 2008.
- Maloney, Sean. "Afghanistan Four Years On: An Assessment." Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly. US Army War College. Autumn 2005.
<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/Articles/05autumn/maloney.htm>. (Accessed July 12, 2010)
- Marston, Daniel, and Carter Malkasian. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*. Oxford: Osprey, 2008.
- Matthes, Grant. "Biometrics: Giving Afghans an Identity." Regional Command-East. August 15, 2010.
<http://www.cjtf101.com/regional-command-east-news-mainmenu-401/3150-biometrics-giving-afghans-an-identity.html>. (Accessed January 08, 2011)

- McChrystal, Stantley A. "COMISAF's Initial Assessment." *The Washington Post*. http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf. (Accessed September 2, 2010)
- "McChrystal Wanted 50,000 Troops." CBS News. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/07/world/main5369823.shtml>. (Accessed September 02, 2010)
- Metz, Steven, and Raymond A. Millen. *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004.
- "Mid-Year Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict." United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4529>. (Accessed January 15, 2011)
- Mosk, Matthew, Brian Ross, and Joseph Rhee. "Afghanistan: Whistleblower Claims Many US Interpreters Can't Speak Afghan Languages." ABC News. September 8, 2010. <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/afghanistan-whistleblower-claims-us-interpreters-speak-afghan-languages/story?id=11578169&page=3>. (Accessed January 29, 2011)
- Mulrine, Anna. "The Culture Warriors." *U.S. News and World Report*. November 30, 2007. <http://www.usnews.com/news/iraq/articles/2007/11/30/the-pentagon-deploys-social-scientists-to-help-understand-iraqs-human-terrain>. (Accessed January 29, 2011)
- Nagl, John A. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Obama, Barack H. "Full Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Afghanistan Delivered at West Point." ABC News. December 1, 2009. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/full-transcript-president-obamas-speech-afghanistan-delivered-west/story?id=9220661&page=1>. (Accessed July 27, 2010)
- "Obama's War." In *Frontline*. PBS. October 13, 2009. October 13, 2009. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamaswar/>. (Accessed July 12, 2010)
- Packer, George. "A Reporter at Large: Knowing the Enemy." *The New Yorker*. Accessed July 12, 2010.

- http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/12/18/061218fa_fact2.
(December 18, 2006)
- Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill. *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010.
- Quraishi, Najibullah, "The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan." In *Frontline*. April 20, 2010.
- Ray, July, and Rajesh Srinivasen. "Taliban Increasingly Unpopular in Pakistan." Gallup. March 12, 2010.
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/126602/Taliban-Increasingly-Unpopular-Pakistan.aspx>. (Accessed April 18, 2011)
- Rogers, Simon. "Afghanistan Civilian Casualties: Year by Year, Month by Month. Visualized Data." *Guardian*. August 10, 2010.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/aug/10/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics#>. (Accessed January 15, 2011)
- Roggio, Bill, and Alexander Mayer. "Charts on US Strikes in Pakistan." *The Long War Journal*. April 13, 2011.
<http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes.php>.
(Accessed April 18, 2011)
- Schmitt, Eric. "Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)" *GlobalSecurity.org*.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/jsoc.htm>.
(Accessed September 02, 2010)
- Sepp, Kalev. "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency." *Military Review*. May-June 2005.
<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/sepp.pdf>.
(Accessed July 15, 2010)
- Sewall, Sarah, John Nagl, David Petraeus, and James Amos. *The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24: Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Shachtman, Noah. "Bombs Away: Afghan Air War Peaks With 1,000 Strikes in October" *Wired*. November 10, 2010.
<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/11/bombs-away-afghan-air-war-peaks-with-1000-strikes-in-october/>. (Accessed January 30, 2011)

- Shachtman, Noah. "Call Off Drone War, Influential U.S. Adviser Says" *Wired*. February 10, 2009.
<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/02/kilcullen-says/>.
(Accessed April 18, 2011)
- Shea, Neil. "So This Is Paktya" *The American Scholar*. June 2010.
<http://www.theamericanscholar.org/afghanistan-so-this-is-paktya/#hide>. (Accessed July 12, 2010)
- Starr, Barbara. "U.S. Official Says Intel Suggests Iran Plans to Ship Arms to Taliban" *CNN*., April 2, 2010.
<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/04/02/iran.taliban.weapons/index.html?hpt=T1>. (Accessed January 09, 2011)
- Steinhauser, Paul. "Opposition to Iraq, Afghanistan Wars Reach All Time High" *CNN*. August, 17, 2010.
<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2010/08/17/poll-opposition-to-iraq-afghanistan-wars-reach-all-time-high/>.
(Accessed September 02, 2010)
- Stewart, Phil. "U.S. to Send 1,400 Marines to Afghanistan" *Yahoo*. January 6, 2011.
http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/us_afghanistan_usa_troops.
(Accessed January 15, 2011)
- Strazuiso, Jason, and Rahim Faiez. "Taliban's Latest Propaganda: Its Forces Killed 5,220 Foreign Troops." *Huffington Post*. January 5, 2009.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/05/talibans-latest-propagand_n_155192.html. (Accessed November 24, 2010)
- Strick van Linschoten, Alex and Felix Kuehn. *Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan*. Center on International Cooperation. February 2011
http://www.cic.nyu.edu/afghanistan/docs/gregg_sep_tal_alqaeda.pdf (Accessed March 15, 2011)
- Synovitz, Ron. "Mistakes by Afghan Translators Endanger Lives, Hamper Antiterrorism Effort" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. September 2, 2008.
http://www.rferl.org/content/Mistakes_By_Translators_Hamper_Afghan_Antiterrorism_Campaign/1195783.html. (Accessed January 29, 2011)
- Turse, Nick. "The Pentagon's Planet of Bases." *Tom Dispatch*. January 9, 2011.
<http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175338/>. (Accessed January 15, 2011)

Waldman, Matthew. "The Sun in the Sky: the Relationship between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents." London School of Economics-International Development. June 1, 2010. Accessed <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/Publications/discussion/dpl8.aspx>. (February 15, 2011)

Wright, Donald P., James R. Bird, Steven E. Clay, Peter W. Connors, Scott C. Farquhar, Lynn C. Garcia, and Dennis Van Wey. *A Different Kind of War*. Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009.
<http://documents.nytimes.com/a-different-kind-of-war#document/p37>. (Accessed July 24, 2010)

Zissis, Carin, and Jayshree Bajoria. "The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border." Council on Foreign Relations. March 20, 2009.
http://www.cfr.org/publication/14905/troubled_afghanpakistani_border.html#p6. (Accessed January 09, 2011)