



WAR, WILL, AND WARLORDS

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND
PAKISTAN, 2001–2011

Cassidy

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Marine Corps University Press
Quantico, Virginia

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Marine Corps University Press
3078 Upshur Avenue
Quantico, Virginia 22134
www.tecom.usmc.mil/mcu/mcupress

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1st Printing, 2012
PCN 10600008200
Published by Marine Corps University Press, Quantico, VA.

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PREFACE

The first part of this book's title highlights three essential realities that help explain the environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan. First, the Afghan people have faced tumult, conflict, and *war* since July 1973, when Muhammad Daoud Khan usurped Muhammad Zahir Shah. A corollary to this is the fact that the Pakistani state has helped foment insurgent proxy *war* and terrorism in Afghanistan since 1973. In fact, fomenting insurgencies in Afghanistan by proxy is in the metaphorical DNA of the Pakistani security apparatus. Second, protracted irregular wars are a contest of *will*, as insurgents use the art of the ambush, armed propaganda in the form of spectacular violence, and cross-border sanctuaries to protract the war to erode the *will* of the counterinsurgents so they give up the fight. The insurgents can win if they can prolong the war while not exhausting their own will. In other words, as Henry Kissinger so aptly noted, "The guerrilla wins if he does not lose." The counterinsurgents lose if they do not win before their domestic political will is exhausted. Third, *warlords*, or feudal barons, run criminal patronage fiefs or insurgent-terrorist networks that operate across the borders and exist outside and inside the states as well as serve as state proxies in some cases. Patronage has long been a reality in South Asia. However, the growth and scope of warlord-led insurgent and criminal networks that began before the Soviet-Afghan War, but intensified after the Soviet-sponsored government fell in February 1992, have helped catalyze support for the insurgencies by their predatory, venal, and violent practices against the people. War, will, and warlords, therefore, are central to any understanding of what has transpired in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The second part of the title simply describes the book's scope. This book compares the catalysts and the growth of the insurgencies in the Pashtun Belt on both sides of the Durand Line over the last 10-plus years. The Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgent movements have grown in strength during this period, even though the United States and its partners have dedicated significant amounts of resources, effort, and time to pacify the region. The

analysis that follows discerns and elucidates the reasons for the resurgence of the insurgency in Afghanistan and for the emergence of one in Pakistan. This work also explores the implications of what has transpired during this long war, arriving at some general policy and strategy prescriptions for bringing durable stability to the region. It posits that explanations for the catalysts of these two insurgencies relate to a paucity of analysis and resources that exacerbated or created grievances among the local populations, excessive or inappropriate applications of lethal force, and ill-prepared approaches to information operations that failed to integrate information narratives with the use of military force.

The framework for this analysis uses a set of questions and rationale to examine and compare the insurgencies and the responses to them in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The comparison of these two cases from the perspective of each country should reap useful insights for those hoping to better understand the complex challenges engendered in South Asia. This volume also aims to explain some of the cause and effect linkages, illuminating why the prospects for durable peace and stability among the people in Afghanistan and Pakistan are still in peril. As a theoretical underpinning, this book enlists a straightforward analytical model contained in *Analyzing Insurgency* by John D. Waghelstein and Donald Chisholm to explore the catalysts associated with the resurgence of the Afghan Taliban and the emergence of the Pakistani Taliban. Specifically, elements of this model help frame questions concerning legitimacy and credibility.¹

Afghanistan and Pakistan represent the most crucial effort in this protracted war because they are where the first neo-emirate formed and they harbored and abetted al-Qaeda in devising the September 2001 attacks on the United States. Al-Qaeda and affiliated armed groups benefiting from safe haven in Afghanistan started this long war, strategically, symbolically, and philosophically. These same groups now benefit from sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. It is essential to prevail in this effort because Afghanistan and Pakistan are inexorably linked to the future stability of South Asia and to the security of the United States and its allies. The U.S. Interagency Policy Group's March 2009 white paper on Afghanistan and Pakistan

¹ John D. Waghelstein and Donald Chisholm, *Analyzing Insurgency* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2006), 6–12

stipulated that the core goal of the United States must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda; reduce its safe havens in Pakistan; and prevent its return to both Pakistan and Afghanistan.²

Methodological Framework

Purpose and Scope

Two central questions and two related questions guide and inform this study. First, after over 10 years at war in the region, did U.S. and Coalition forces in fact finally get the inputs right? Second, what are the prospects for bringing some degree of durable stability to the region? A correlative to the first question is, how have the United States and its partners done in view of the ostensibly renewed and new insurgencies? A correlative to the second question poses, what is to be done to achieve some notion of sustainable governance and security? The purpose of this book is to explore the U.S.-led Coalition and the U.S.-supported Pakistani efforts in countering the Taliban/al-Qaeda insurgencies in both of these countries to date. The corollary purpose of this study is to learn from the efforts of the last 10-plus years, to discern best practices across both counterinsurgency efforts, and to craft recommendations for more effective counterinsurgencies and strategies.

This book lies at the intersection of international security studies, military strategy, and the operational art of counterinsurgency. For conventional militaries to be successful in counterinsurgency and irregular warfare, they must adapt their means and methods to meet the exigencies of a range of lethal and nonlethal actions and activities. In addition, the methods of Coalition partners should generally be collaborative, designed to adequately implement the principles and tenets of counterinsurgency in complementary ways. This book identifies best and worst practices in both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the aim of crafting recommendations for more effective counterinsurgency. By analyzing this particularly complex challenge from both sides of the border, this work provides explanations for the ostensibly

² U.S. White House National Security Council, *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (Washington, DC: White House, March 2009), 1.

lamentable performances in Afghanistan and Pakistan up to 2009. A better understanding of the success or failure in how the United States, along with its partners, adapts to meet the exigencies of the dual Taliban insurgencies among the Pashtun populations on both sides of the Durand Line will point to recommendations for improving performance and increase our opportunities for ultimate success.

Analytical Framework

This analysis employs a comparative approach, structuring questions around three variables to frame the inquiry on these two associated counterinsurgencies. The comparison of the two approaches through the same set of analytical questions adds rigor to this study. The purpose of the questions, which are informed by the corpus of counterinsurgency literature and doctrine, is to illuminate the causes for the resurgence of the insurgency in Afghanistan and for the emergence of the full-blown insurgency in Pakistan. A parallel purpose is to amplify the catalysts for the insurgencies and to understand how to remove or mitigate these with the aim of achieving some notion of enduring peace and stability among the Afghans and Pakistanis. This study also enlists the analytical model contained in Waghelstein and Chisholm to explore the catalysts associated with the rise of the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban. Specifically, elements of this model help frame questions concerning the perceived legitimacy of the efforts; the credible use of force; and the integration of the former with information operations to shape perceptions and build legitimacy for these efforts. The security challenges endangered by the principally Pashtun Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgencies cannot be decoupled because there is some degree of symbiosis and collusion. While Afghanistan and Pakistan are distinct polities with uniquely complex challenges, each cannot ultimately succeed without mutual cooperation that leads to complementary, not contradictory, relations.³

Definition of Terms and Questions to Frame Analysis

In general terms, an *insurgency* is an armed political competition

³ Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison" in *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Paul Gordon Lauren (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 44, 49, 57, 61–62. Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methodology for Students of Political Science* (Cambridge, MA: Defense and Arms Control Studies Program MIT, 1993), 33. Waghelstein and Chisholm, *Analyzing Insurgency*, 6–12.

for the control of the population. *Counterinsurgency* is the political and military response to the insurgents' efforts to wrest control of the population. Counterinsurgency in this era must intrinsically focus on protecting the preponderance of the population and killing or capturing the small number of people who comprise the insurgent cadre and the leaders who represent the core of the insurgency. Moreover, successful insurgencies are animated by ideologies or grievances that resonate with their leadership and the relevant populace. It is not possible to beat an ideology with bullets alone. In counterinsurgency, "The only piece of key terrain to be captured is the four inches between the ears of the target audience"—that is, influence over and support from the relevant population. Those who can control the population, physically and psychologically, by best protecting it and administering services and predictable justice will in the end prevail. It is important to do these things better than the insurgent and to be perceived as doing these things better by the people. Legitimacy, the capacity to use force credibly, and efficacy in shaping the information environment are the sine qua non of success in counterinsurgency. These are not the only requisites for conducting counterinsurgency successfully, but these three variables are crucial to the efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Definitions of these terms with related focused questions appear below.⁴

Legitimacy is based on the will of the population. Governments govern via a mix of consent and coercion. Legitimate governments rule principally with the consent of the governed. Illegitimate governments tend to rely mainly or mostly on coercion. A government that derives its authority from the consent of the governed has legitimacy. It may employ coercion against criminals or foreign threats, but most of its citizens willingly accept and support it. All activities should develop or sustain the authority and acceptance of the government and its security forces by the governed. Legitimacy exists when the population perceives that the government is meeting expectations for the reasonable administration of security,

⁴ These ideas are consistent with the body of literature on counterinsurgency. See Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review* 17 (April 1965): 21–38; Peter Paret and John W. Shy, *Guerrillas in the 1960's* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1962), 31–51; and John D. Waghelstein, "Che's Bolivian Adventure," *Military Review* 59 (August 1979): 39–48. The key terrain quote is from the latter.

justice, and services. The onus is on the counterinsurgent to determine what the population defines and perceives to be effective and legitimate governance. Grievances stemming from gaps in the public's expectations for services, justice, and security undermine legitimacy. The two questions below inform the analysis of this variable:

- Are the grievances of the population the same as the insurgents' grievances?
- What have the counterinsurgents done to ameliorate or exacerbate those grievances?⁵

Capacity to use force credibly is the prudent and disciplined application of coercive force discriminately to improve security while minimizing death or damage to the civilian populace and their property. In counterinsurgency, discriminating between insurgents and civilians is more difficult because insurgents operate among the people. The protection of the civilian population outweighs the destruction of enemy forces. Credible force includes effective arrangement of command and control modalities to effectively integrate a variety of lethal and nonlethal operations to provide security in a complementary way. There are two questions that frame the analysis of this variable:

- How well are the counterinsurgents' leadership, doctrine, and organizations prepared to conduct counterinsurgency?
- How well have the counterinsurgents employed force to secure and separate the population from the insurgents (and thus avoided excessive civilian casualties)?⁶

Efficacy in shaping the information environment is the capacity to match actions and ideas effectively through all modern information means available to develop and sustain the perception of legitimacy for the counterinsurgent effort in the minds of a significant portion of the population. To address grievances and build support, the counterinsurgent must influence a realistic set of expectations

⁵ See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2009), III-11–III-12 for the definition of legitimacy. Also, see U.S. Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2008), A4; and U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army/Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2006), 1-21–1-25. See Waghelstein and Chisholm, *Analyzing Insurgency*, 6–10.

⁶ *FM 3-0*, A4, and *FM 3-24*, 1-21–1-25.

among the populace. Shaping the information environment is directly related to legitimacy and the capacity to use force credibly. All operations should be consistent with the information narrative. Perceived inconsistencies between actions and words reduce the credibility of the force and undermine the legitimacy of the effort. The following two questions direct the analysis of this variable:

- How well have the counterinsurgents integrated information operations with security operations to convince the population of the legitimacy of their enterprise and actions?
- How well have the insurgents employed action and information operations to win the support of the population and delegitimize the state?⁷

Organization of the Book

Chapter 1 provides a short historical background on the tumult and war engendered in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region from 1973 until 2001. It also offers a relevant, essential, and concise description of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Chapter 2 analyzes the efficacy and adaptability of the Coalition forces and the Afghan government and national security forces in responding appropriately to the resurgent insurgency in Afghanistan for the first eight years. This chapter focuses on three fundamentals of sound counterinsurgency: legitimacy, the credible use of force to protect the population, and the integration of action with information operations.

Chapter 3 analyzes the efficacy and adaptability of the U.S. government, the U.S. Central Command, the government of Pakistan, and Pakistani national security forces in responding appropriately to the emergent insurgency in Pakistan for the first several years. This chapter also focuses on the same three fundamentals of sound counterinsurgency discussed in chapter 2.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine efforts to adapt in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the ninth and tenth years of the war to discern if the civilian and military leadership sufficiently applied counterinsurgency methods to potentially reverse the momentum of these

⁷ FM 3-24, 1-24-1-25; Eric V. Larson and others, *Understanding Commanders' Information Needs for Influence Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2009), xiii-xv; and Waghelstein and Chisholm, 10-11.

two distinct but related insurgencies. The rationale for this temporal segmentation and distinction is the not insignificant and discernible changes in leadership and methods on both sides of the border beginning in the summer of 2009. These chapters also analyze the two efforts to counter Taliban insurgencies through the three fundamentals of counterinsurgency delineated in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 6 compares and contrasts the conclusions and inferences from the two cases examined. It then digests the observations and conclusions in the study to arrive at policy and strategy implications. This chapter recommends improvements and relevant changes for the two counterinsurgencies to make desirable outcomes more likely.

Chapter 7 is a short epilogue that explains the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command's approach to counterinsurgency at the operational level in Afghanistan, beginning from the inception of the headquarters in November 2009 until the end of 2011. Before this period, the war in Afghanistan lacked both a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign plan and an operational-level headquarters to orchestrate that campaign.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank managing editor Shawn H. Vreeland, graphic designer W. Stephen Hill, and all the staff at the Marine Corps University Press for their steadfastness and meticulousness. Thanks to Anna Hendricks at the Center for Advanced Defense Studies for her assistance with the index. Heartfelt appreciation also goes to all those scholars and experts on South Asia who were generous with their time and granted me interviews. I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife and two children for their patience with me and for their support for the time I invested in this project.

This book is dedicated to those who have served and sacrificed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our aims there are noble and the consequences of not prevailing in the long term would be grave indeed.

Pashtun Areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan





INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

To the ferocity of the Zulu are added the craft of the Redskin
and the marksmanship of the Boer.

—*Winston S. Churchill, The Story of the Malakand Field Force*

It is a costly wisdom that is bought by experience.

—*Roger Ascham*

To paraphrase the Winston Churchill quote above, the Pashtuns combine the ferocity of the Zulu, the craftsmanship of the Native American, and the marksmanship of the Boer. These comparisons evoke a vivid idea of the resilience engendered in those 40-million Pashtun tribal people who populate both sides of the Durand Line. The second quote pertains to the heavy costs that armies pay in blood and treasure when they are not prepared for the wars they undertake. The Soviet armed forces paid for their experience in blood during the nine years and 50 days they fought in Afghanistan. On Christmas Eve 1979, Soviet forces conducted a conventional assault on Kabul and other key points in Afghanistan with the dual aim of implanting a stable Soviet-friendly government and quelling an insurrection. The last Soviet forces withdrew on 15 February 1989 after suffering nearly 14,000 killed, leaving behind a precarious pro-Soviet government and an ongoing civil war. In Afghanistan, the great and powerful Soviet Union failed to win a small irregular war. The first U.S. forces entered Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, and the United States and its Coalition partners have been fighting there for over 10 years since October 2011, also paying dearly for their experience with blood and money.¹

History is an ironic and ruthless mentor. Thanksgiving Day 2010 marked the date that the duration of the U.S.-led Coalition's operations in Afghanistan surpassed the length of the Soviet occupation and the

¹ For the Soviet missteps and losses in Afghanistan, see Robert M. Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 18–20. Established in 1893 and demarcated by the British, the Durand Line is the poorly marked border between what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Soviet-Afghan War. The Coalition, comprising troops from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has been waging a counterinsurgency against the Taliban movement, another movement of radical mujahideen that includes among its ranks and file some of the same leaders and fighters who successfully fought an insurgency against the Soviets. The Soviets spent more than nine years trying to counter the mujahideen but failed. The Soviets paid punishing costs during their long and bloody effort in Afghanistan but did not absorb that experience to sufficiently adapt. The Soviets failed, not because they employed too many forces, but because they employed a combination of too few heavy mechanized forces and exceedingly brutal and inappropriate methods. The Soviets embraced the misbegotten notion that punishing the population was effective, rather than the converse and correct approach to insurgents, which is an emphasis on moral rectitude and the protection of the population. The Soviets also operated with dysfunctional command and control modalities; concentrated their forces not in the rural areas, but near the population centers; employed airpower excessively and indiscriminately; and failed to integrate the civil and military components of their “counterinsurgency” effort.

During the current war in Afghanistan, the United States and its partners have committed mistakes similar to those that the Soviets committed, though to a lesser degree. The American military began the war with a force almost exclusively focused on and prepared for large conventional wars. Moreover, the Pentagon under Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld misconstrued the Soviet experience in determining that a “light footprint” was the solution to avoid a Soviet-like defeat. Thus, too few troops; exceedingly cumbersome command and control arrangements; a reliance on airpower that resulted in civilian deaths year after year; and initial troop concentrations near population centers also plagued the American-led effort in Afghanistan until 2009. This was partly attributable to the fact that the U.S. government diverted its attention and resources to the war in Iraq instead of focusing on the war it needed to prosecute in Afghanistan.²

² For details on the real and perceived lessons from the Soviet-Afghan War, see Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 161–63; and Oleg Kulakov, *Lessons Learned from the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan: Implications for Russian Defense Reform*, Research Paper 26 (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2006), 6–7. For a distillation of these, see Robert M. Cassidy, “The Virtue of Punishment: the Enduring Salience of the Soviet War in Afghanistan,” *Defense Concepts* 4 (Fall 2009): 6–7.

Fortunately, after eight years of extreme parsimony, improvisation, and neglect, 2009–11 witnessed an unprecedented degree of emphasis, outstanding military leadership, an increase in military forces and civilian capacity, and more resources in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States and its partners now have a strategy that informs operations in Afghanistan and emphasizes more effective cooperation with Pakistan. Afghanistan is crucial in this protracted global war because it is where the first neo-emirate formed, and its Taliban government harbored and abetted al-Qaeda, allowing its members to orchestrate the September 2001 attacks on the United States, as well as other prior attacks, from Afghan soil. Nonstate armed groups with safe haven in Afghanistan started this long war—strategically, symbolically, and philosophically. These same groups now benefit from sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. It is essential to prevail in Pakistan and Afghanistan because these countries are inexorably linked to the future stability of South Asia and to the security of the United States and its allies. The body of extant American national security strategies also stresses that this war is the defining struggle of our generation, a struggle that emphasizes protracted insurgencies without spatial or temporal limits. The unclassified version of the White House’s March 2009 white paper on Afghanistan and Pakistan prescribes that the core goal of the United States must be “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.” A corollary imperative is to develop increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can sustain counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts there with reduced U.S. aid.³

The Soviets fighting in Afghanistan also proved to be miserably inept at denying insurgents external support and cross-border sanctuary in Pakistan. Since it is unlikely that a counterinsurgency campaign can succeed if the insurgents retain the benefit of sanctuary

³ On the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and its support of al-Qaeda sanctuary, see David Isby, *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires; A New History of the Borderlands* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010), 30–39 and 57–58. See Robert M. Cassidy, “The Long Small War: Indigenous Forces for Counterinsurgency,” *Parameters* 36 (Spring 2006): 47–48, for a distillation of the imperatives in the *U.S. National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terror* that stress success in the long war against terrorists and insurgents. For the direct quote from the White House’s white paper, see U.S. White House National Security Council, *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (Washington, DC: White House, March 2009), 1.

and external support, border security and sanctuary denial are imperative missions for Coalition and indigenous security forces operating there today. The combined Coalition and indigenous security forces in Afghanistan and the Pakistan security forces have yet to secure the border with Pakistan to deny the Taliban and al-Qaeda a continuous flow of fighters and supplies. In fact, it is not possible to completely seal the border. The Durand Line is over 1,500 miles (2,430 kilometers) in length and passes through some of the most rural and unforgiving terrain on the planet. Also, when the British diplomat H. Mortimer Durand helped draw the line bearing his name to mark the de facto border, he drew it right through the Pashtun Belt, bifurcating entire villages, tribes, and even some families. Moreover, the notion of redrawing borders, even very bad borders, is typically fraught with more mayhem than the option of leaving them in place. The removal or shifting of the Durand Line is not likely anyway. Barnett R. Rubin, a leading expert on Afghanistan, once remarked to me that it is “better to make the border irrelevant than to move it.” This reality points to the second conundrum engendered in the region, which is the exponentially more complex challenge of stabilizing the Pashtun tribal areas in Pakistan to eliminate their use as sanctuaries by the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda.⁴

The epicenter of global jihad has shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan since the initial successes of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 and early 2002. The reasons for this are complicated and many and will appear in a subsequent chapter on the war in Pakistan. It suffices here to stress that if a massive bomb were to detonate somewhere in America or Western Europe tomorrow, it will likely be postmarked from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). South Asia expert Shaun Gregory has gone so far as to offer

⁴ For one explanation of the Pashtuns in general and the establishment of the Durand Line in particular, see Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban*, revised edition (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009), 214–19. The idea that changing the border is a bad idea stems from a discussion with Barnett Rubin at the U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, on 3 September 2009. The Pashtun Belt comprises those areas generally, but not necessarily, populated exclusively by Pashtuns in the tribal areas along the Pakistani-Afghan border. In Pakistan, it is typically the area west of the Indus and includes Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and half of Baluchistan. In Afghanistan, it generally includes the eastern provinces along the Pakistani border and the southern provinces. For the seminal work on the Pashtuns, see Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

TATA (Taliban Administered Tribal Areas) as an alternative moniker to describe these lawless Pashtun lands just over the Durand Line inside Pakistan. What's more, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik has observed that "all roads lead to FATA" in the context of planning, training, recruiting, and orchestrating regional and global bombing attacks in the name of jihad. The tribal areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (known as the North-West Frontier Province until 2010) and Baluchistan are also Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgent sources of support and sanctuary. In fact, Pakistan has supplanted Afghanistan as a "key state for the training and indoctrination of al Qaeda recruits for operations abroad and for the training and support by al Qaeda for those indoctrinated and radicalized elsewhere."⁵

The cases of Najibullah Zazi and David C. Headley underscore the gravity of the threat that continues to germinate in Pakistan. Of Pashtun ethnicity and American citizenship, Zazi was apprehended by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in September 2009 for "conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction." He was in possession of a laptop with bomb-making instructions and was allegedly plotting an attack in New York City. A resident of Aurora, Colorado, he had reportedly traveled to Pakistan's Pashtun tribal areas several times the previous year, apparently to receive training and guidance. Also known as Daoud Gilani, David Headley is an American citizen who has been implicated as an alleged conspirator in the Mumbai terrorist attack of November 2008. Headley's connections to Pakistan run very deep. His father was a Pakistani diplomat, and his American mother once owned a bar in Philadelphia that she named the Khyber Pass. Headley grew up in Pakistan before returning to America to live upstairs from the bar. Headley anglicized his name and allegedly went undercover to spend several months in India conducting reconnaissance for the assault on that Indian resort city. He was allegedly working for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (Army of the Faithful; also known as "LeT"), a Pakistani jihadist group with links to both al-Qaeda and the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence Direc-

⁵ Bruce O. Riedel, *The Search for al Qaeda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 1–13; Shaun Gregory and James Revill, "The Role of the Pakistan Military in the Stability and Cohesion of Afghanistan," *Contemporary South Asia* 16 (March 2008): 39–61. The Rehman Malik quote is from Jones, *Graveyard of Empires*, 339. Also, see Shaun Gregory, "Al Qaeda in Pakistan," Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief Number 5, University of Bradford, UK, 1 March 2007, 4.

torate (ISI). Responsibility for the Mumbai attack lies with LeT.⁶

The tribal areas of Pakistan have become a sanctuary for violent militant groups. It is where local insurgents, global terrorism, drug smuggling, and state-sponsored instrumental perfidy converge. Al-Qaeda and the new Afghan Taliban, the most infamous and threatening of these groups, are resurgent in these areas. Other militants include the Haqqani network, which works with the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda; Lashkar i Jhangvi; Jaish-e-Mohammed; LeT; and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. This syndicate of jihadist terrorists works with al-Qaeda and at least shares a partial ideological affinity. The Pakistani Taliban also emerged here, and this mélange of jihadist militant and terrorist groups colludes and cooperates in common purpose when the opportunities arise. Indeed, one long-time South Asia intelligence expert has described the FATA as the epicenter of global jihad. There are also a host of foreign fighters from places as far ranging as Chechnya, the United States, and Africa who benefit from the sanctuary afforded by the lack of governance and security in these tribal areas. According to Steve Coll, “There is no nexus on earth more favorable to al Qaeda’s current leaders than the radicalized Pashtun militias in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, American policy in the region must take special account of this specific, daunting political-military challenge.”⁷

The militants and other actors in the border region have a long history of war, resilience, and brotherhood. The tribal areas witnessed American support for the mujahideen who fought the Soviets as well as the genesis of both al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri had a unique 30-year history of comity and collaboration with the Pashtun Islamist tribal

⁶ There are multiple open source reports of these cases. See David von Drehle and Bobby Gosh, “An Enemy within: The Making of Najibullah Zazi,” *Time*, 12 October 2009; Joe Barrett and others, “For Terror Suspect, a Life of Contradictions,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 December 2009, A6; and Pir Zubair Shah, “Drone Reportedly Killed Filipino in Pakistan,” *New York Times*, 22 January 2010, A8.

⁷ The South Asia intelligence expert is Bruce Riedel, and he explains the gravity of the threat emanating from Pakistan’s tribal areas in his *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of Global Jihad* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 92–105. Also, see Don Rassler, “Al-Qa’ida’s Pakistan Strategy” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 6 (June 2009): 1–4; and John Rollins, *Al Qaeda and Affiliates: Historical Perspective, Global Presence, and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2010), 6–10. Steve Coll’s quote is from “The Case for Humility in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy* online, 16 October 2009, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/10/16/the_case_for_humility_in_afghanistan.

networks located in Baluchistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the FATA, until bin Laden's death in May 2011. One South Asia expert and former senior White House advisor argues that the region is al-Qaeda's top priority for a host of reasons. For one, because the odds for success are better in Afghanistan than elsewhere, al-Qaeda is convinced it can replicate the Soviet defeat with the United States. Most significantly, "Afghanistan is situated next to al-Qaeda's important sanctuary, Pakistan." In spite of some limited successes, up until the end of 2011, Pakistan had failed to capture senior al-Qaeda or Taliban leaders and willingly allowed them to regenerate. Worse still, according to Bruce Riedel, "Since 2003 al-Qaeda and the Taliban have become all but inseparable."⁸

This hub of jihadists may not pose an existential threat to the United States, but it does pose what is arguably the single gravest threat of attack. Militant jihadists associated with al-Qaeda have been waging an irregular war against America since before the first World Trade Center attack in 1993. In December 1992, bombs went off outside the two most expensive hotels in Aden, Yemen, killing a tourist and a hotel worker. This attack was traced back to the Yemeni Tariq al-Fadhli's group of jihadists and appeared to be directed at the hundreds of U.S. military personnel transiting Yemen on their way to support Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. Al-Fadhli was associated with Osama bin Laden's core al-Qaeda leaders and received funding and probably some inspiration for the attack from bin Laden. Again, there is some arguable evidence that may show that Afghan Arabs associated with the al-Qaeda core leaders helped train Somali guerrillas to shoot down U.S. helicopters in 1993, using lessons gleaned from shooting down Soviet helicopters in the Soviet-Afghan War. Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists also perpetrated an attack against Americans at the Office of the Program Manager-Saudi Arabian National Guard in November 1995. Al-Qaeda operatives were also responsible for the twin bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998, as well as the USS *Cole* (DDG 67) suicide attack in October 2000. Despite these blatant acts of aggression, the United States did not acknowledge this war until al-Qaeda masterminded

⁸ Riedel, *Search for al Qaeda*, 1-13 and 122-23. The quote on Pakistan as sanctuary is from page 122, and the last quote is from page 123.

the 11 September raids in which over 3,000 people were killed.⁹

Those who persist in challenging the rationale for the war in Afghanistan tend to highlight the fact that 15 of the 19 terrorists who perpetrated the 11 September attacks were Saudi citizens. However, we should understand and remember that Osama bin Laden personally recruited the leader of the raid, Muhammad Atta, in al-Qaeda's Afghan sanctuary in early 2000. Atta, an Egyptian studying in Germany, arrived in Kandahar to join al-Qaeda and impressed bin Laden with his ruthlessness, smarts, and zeal. Bin Laden also recruited all of the so-called "muscle hijackers" himself in Afghanistan. These were the militants who gained control of the passengers during the hijackings. He selected these 15 attackers from the large pool of al-Qaeda's Saudi volunteers in the tribal areas of Afghanistan. Lastly, since 9/11 and since moving to Pakistan's tribal areas in late 2001 and early 2002, al-Qaeda and its associates have struck across the globe, "in London, Casablanca, Madrid, Algiers, Islamabad, Mombasa, Bali, Mumbai, New Delhi, Islamabad, Riyadh, Doha, Amman, Sharm al-Shaykh, Taba, Mogadishu, and a host of other places." The means and methods of this global *takfir* jihad are constrained only by imagination and not at all by any notion of the norms and codes of international conduct. Al-Qaeda's strategic aim remains the recreation of a transnational caliphate approximating the geographic scope of the Ottoman Empire at its peak. Its methods include consolidating its safe havens in the Pashtun Belt and fighting a prolonged guerrilla war to exhaust the United States and ultimately drive it from the Muslim world entirely. Elaborating on these methods, the next section explores the historical factors underlying the long war in Afghanistan and how the Pashtun Belt came to serve as a sanctuary for the insurgents waging it.¹⁰

⁹ Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda: the True Story of Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 141–42. See Rick Atkinson, "The Raid That Went Wrong," *Washington Post*, 30 January 1994, A1, for Somali militia training on lessons from Afghanistan on how to shoot down helicopters. See David H. Shinn, "Somalia's New Government and the Challenge of al-Shabab," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 3 (March 2009): 1–5, on al-Qaeda training camps in Somalia during 1993. See Mohammed M. Hafez, "Jihad after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans Phenomenon," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 4 (March 2008): 1–5, for general trends relating to the dispersion of the Afghan Arabs to Africa and to other locations across the globe after 1992. See Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 289–92, for 11 September death toll.

¹⁰ Riedel, *Search for al Qaeda*, 4–8, 10–12, and 122–25. The catalogue of locations in quotations is from Riedel, page 10. *Takfir* is used here to mean that true believers must agree with al-Qaeda's interpretive notion of Islam or die as apostates for not believing what the movement believes.

Historical Overview of a Long War

We are content with discord, we are content with alarms, we are content with blood, we will never be content with a master.

—*Attributed to an old Pashtun tribesman in Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan*

The above quote is attributed to a Pashtun tribal elder in 1809. Another Pashtun aphorism that helps amplify the paradoxical nature of the Pashtuns—and of the Afghan and Pakistani border areas—is, “The war is over, now the real fighting begins.” Even though the notion of Afghanistan as the “graveyard of empires” has appeared so often in writing that it belongs in the graveyard of clichés, there has been one persistent historical contradiction connected with the Pashtun Belt: the difficulty for foreign powers with Afghanistan, even for one as ostensibly well-intentioned as America, has never really been about how to invade, as the three Anglo-Afghan Wars in 1839–42, 1878–80, and 1919 attest. The British muddled through with an inconsistent approach to the Great Game, one in which they lost as much as they gained in the Hindu Kush and one that waxed and waned between punitive operations, payments, betrayals, and alliances with the tribes. Lord Lytton and several British governments of the Victorian-era Great Game never quite answered with a satisfactory policy the question of “what to do next with Afghanistan, which was too troublesome to be annexed but too dangerous to be ignored?” Likewise, the Soviet invasion and occupation from 1979 to 1989 saw the Soviets largely defeat themselves by using the wrong forces and the wrong methods in trying to install a government that was anathema to Afghans. The difficulty lies in securing, governing, and even helping develop Afghanistan. Misfortune seems to be the fate that awaits foreign armies who dither too long on predatory occupations in the Hindu Kush.¹¹

The Americans, however, are neither the Soviets nor the British. Nor is America really an empire (although the pundits do pontificate about this), and Afghanistan was not invaded in 2001 to colonize it. The American invasion was a just and measured response to the attacks on U.S. soil that originated from the global jihadist sanctuary in the Pashtun Belt. The American-led effort to bring sus-

¹¹ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 129–219 and 320. The Lord Lytton quote is from Tanner, 213.

tainable governance and security to the region is also not a predatory effort of an empire bent on colonial occupation. After the Taliban was defeated in 2002, most of the Afghan people harbored high expectations for security, prosperity, and just governance. What transpired between 2002 and 2009 to arrive at two full-blown insurgencies that stalemated the Coalition and government security forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan is the subject of the subsequent section. This portion of the study frames the historical context from 1973 to 2001. It begins with a short but essential explanation of Pashtunwali, the way of the Pashtun.

It is important to understand that Pashtuns were preponderant among the Taliban movement that ruled Afghanistan until the end of 2001. All Pashtuns are not necessarily Taliban, but the movement, old and new, is a Pashtun one. An explanation for the provision of sanctuary by the Pashtuns in Pakistan to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, both during the anti-Soviet jihad and during the current anti-U.S./NATO insurgency, partially lies in the Pashtun's social code. Pashtunwali is an unwritten but widely practiced code of values and precepts that seems profoundly foreign when compared to a Westerner's norms and mores. The code's core tenets include tolerance, independence, self-respect, hospitality, respect, forgiveness, justice, honor, and revenge. The code is the self-enforcing "sum total of the tribes collective expectations of their members to conform to the norms and customs that ensure the group's survival as a socio-cultural entity." For Pashtun males, personal independence is a supreme tenet of Pashtunwali.¹²

After independence, personal honor is next in importance, and it represents a male's obligation to safeguard the inviolability of his person, property, and women. A third Pashtun tenet is revenge, or *badal*, which prescribes that man must exact revenge for any violation of his honor lest he lose social status as an outcast. The fourth key precept of Pashtunwali is hospitality, which requires the

¹² Afghan hill tribes also have their own cultural code called *nang*, or the "honor code of the hill men." Pashtunwali seems to resonate more deeply among the hill tribes, who, not surprisingly, have also traditionally been more warlike. See Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire," *International Security* 32 (Spring 2008): 59–64, for insights on the Pashtun code. The direct quote is from Johnson and Mason, "No Sign," 60. Haider Mullick, *Pakistan's Security Paradox: Countering and Fomenting Insurgencies*, JSOU Report 09-9 (Hurlburt Field, FL: 2009), 40–42.

provision of refuge and protection to all those who require it. This cultural emphasis on independence, honor, revenge, and hospitality—coupled with some of the most prohibitive terrain in the world—has helped defeat most efforts to subjugate the Pashtuns. Three decades of a policy designed to engineer the Pashtun Belt in a way that supplants the traditional tribal structures and empowers radical mullahs have managed to conflate Pashtun honor precepts with the Islamist notion of jihad and create a fertile breeding ground for zealots.

There is one more unique aspect of Afghanistan that warrants clarification as a prelude to a broad historical overview of the 38 years of strife and war inflicted on the Pashtuns. The question is whether the region is “governable,” and some pundits have overstated the notion that Afghanistan is not governable by claiming that Afghanistan has never been governed or by asserting that the region has always been at war. This argument too belongs in the graveyard of poorly informed clichés. In fact, from 1880 until 1973 Afghanistan enjoyed a greater degree of generally continuous stability than many European countries did during the same period. Indeed, this was one of the most stable periods in Afghanistan’s modern history. During these years, Afghanistan saw only six rulers, all of whom (with one exception from 1928 to 1929) hailed from the same tribe. During this period, Afghanistan had but one civil war, one foreign war in 1919 against the British, and one coup d’état without casualties in 1973. Particularly notable was the relative peace and prosperity under the rule of Muhammad Zahir Shah from 1933 to 1973, which was attributable to a style of governance that carefully balanced the needs of the central government to operate the state in a way congruent with the character, desires, and expectations of the populations residing in the periphery, people who exhibited a propensity for unencumbered local rule. This was most manifest in the central government’s circumspect and limited imposition of taxes, conscription, and societal engineering.¹³

Historically, what has been true is that Afghanistan has proven

¹³ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Olivier Roy, *Afghanistan: Internal Politics and Socio-Economic Dynamics and Groupings* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, 2003), 1–2;

exceedingly hard for foreigners to rule, especially if the nature of that rule is marked by oppressive and overly centralized governments. Before 1747, Afghanistan did not exist as a state, and from 1978 to the present, state apparatuses, whether imposed externally or internally, have been strongly contested. During those periods when Afghanistan has experienced stability, it has been under a Pashtun head of state. *Afghan*, in fact, was the old Persian term for “Pashtun.” Long ago, before Afghanistan emerged as a country, the Persians had also coined another epithet for Afghanistan—Yaghestan, which roughly translates to “the land of the rebellious or the incorrigibly ungovernable.” This epithet regained relevancy with the onset of the 1970s and what has become 38 years of strife and war in the region.¹⁴

The 1970s: The Decade of Perdition

In retrospect, the decade of 1970s witnessed a range of events that augured poorly for peace and stability in the Middle East and South Asia. It began in 1971 with the insurgency and ultimate secession of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) from Pakistan, an act that occurred with Indian support. This was a national trauma for Pakistan that still resonates today. The year 1972 saw the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) attack and murder Israeli athletes in cold blood at the Munich Olympics. In 1973, Muhammad Daoud Khan deposed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan and ushered in what turned out to more than three decades of conflict and war. The Israeli Defense Forces’ victory during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 led Egypt on a path toward an ultimate peace agreement later in the decade that would take Egypt’s relatively large conventional army out of the balance in regional forces. This essentially made it almost impossible for the remaining Arabs allied against Israel to entertain the notion of defeating Israeli forces by purely conventional means. The logical result for Israel’s Arab enemies was for them to find and exploit vulnerabilities to undermine Israel’s military prowess. The retribution for the collective Arab loss of face during the 1973 war soon followed as the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) used oil instead of tanks to destabilize

¹⁴ Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 68–69.

oil markets and harm the prosperity of Israel, the United States, and the West. In April 1975, the United States ended its painfully long and unsuccessful war in Vietnam, reaching its absolute political, economic, and military nadir just in time for the bicentennial festivities of 1976. The latter 1970s witnessed still more troublesome developments before things became even worse at the end of the decade. In July 1977, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan, and in April 1978 the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew Daoud in a bloody coup. Zia's subsequent use of political Islam as an instrument to radicalize his state, combined with the inept Afghan PDPA leadership, accelerated the path to war for the Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line.¹⁵

The year 1979 was the worst—and most momentous—year of the decade in terms of catalyzing wars and planting the seeds for local and global jihad. Uncannily and auspiciously, as Peter L. Bergen has illuminated in his recent book *The Longest War*, 1979 was also the first year of a new century on the Muslim calendar. From the events of 1979, Hizballah (Party of God; Lebanese radical Shia group) and al-Qaeda ultimately emerged, along with emphases on irregular war and suicide bombing that have proven to be increasingly effective in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The first cataclysmic event was the Iranian Revolution in February, which, with the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini as the supreme ruler, made the export of radical eschatological jihad fashionable. Although the Iranian brand of jihad by proxy was Shiite, the notion of transnational jihad would ultimately resonate with radical Sunni Wahhabist-Salafists as they came to employ a similar approach in the 1990s.¹⁶

¹⁵ The author grew up during the decade of the 1970s and this is from personal experience. For detailed accounts on Pakistan, see Brian Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009), 30–49, or Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004), 90–130 and 170–73. Also, see Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 18–23, for Zia's deliberate politicization of Deobandi Sunnism.

¹⁶ See Giles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 33–34. Wahhabism, the dominant form of Islam in Saudi Arabia, aims to purify Sunni Islam of any practices that deviate from the teachings of Muhammad and his compatriots. Salafism is a Sunni Islamic movement that views the first three generations of Muslims as models for how Islam should be practiced. Salafism is also sometimes used as a synonym for Wahhabism. After this manuscript was in final editing, the author discovered the Muslim calendar fact while reading Peter Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 12.

Another important event of 1979 was the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. This was the culmination of the 1978 Camp David Accords, which, by co-opting Egypt and removing that state from the alliance of Arab states committed to the destruction of Israel, made a conventional military defeat of the Israeli Defense Forces a virtual impossibility. Thereafter, the remaining enemies of Israel were compelled by necessity to revert to irregular and unconventional methods, employing terrorism and guerrilla techniques to chip away at the Israeli military preeminence in conventional warfare for the remainder of the century.¹⁷

The next crucial event of 1979 occurred in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 20 November when homegrown terrorists seized and held the Grand Mosque in Mecca until they were dislodged by Saudi security forces with the assistance of French commandos in a very bloody fight. This ugly crisis terrified the kingdom's leaders and caused them to seek solutions to rid themselves of this indigenous and volatile menace. The next day, waves of violent student protesters also animated by Islamist ideology stormed the U.S. embassy in Islamabad and burned it to the ground. The solution for assuaging the Saudi leadership's angst about its internal militants arrived in the form of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve, after which the anti-Soviet jihad increasingly became a magnet for foreign Islamist fighters. The Saudis were anxious to divest themselves of their internal jihadist problem by readily dispatching their own mujahideen to fight alongside the indigenous Afghans who prosecuted their guerrilla war against the Soviets during the 1980s. In addition to their supply of mujahideen, the Saudis' financial support for the jihad in Afghanistan was consistent and not insignificant. Ultimately, Saudi financial support to the madrassas in Pakistan played no small part in propagating Islamist dogma and in proselytizing radical Islamist militants. Funding for the madrassas in Pakistan continues to flow from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to this day and is not at all helpful for the efforts to counter Islamist extremism and militancy in the region.¹⁸

¹⁷ Kepel, *War for Muslim Minds*, 32.

¹⁸ See Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Random House, 2007), 101–13, for insight on the consequences of this decade and of 1979. For an account of the assault on the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 21–29.

Besides the Saudis, Pakistan, and the United States, several other countries willingly and profligately funded and armed the struggle against the Soviet invaders. The Pakistanis were willing to support the anti-Soviet insurgency simply because of self interest and security concerns. The largesse of the Americans, the Saudis, and the others would strengthen General Zia's grip on the state, and support for the insurgency would help both undermine an ally of Pakistan's archnemesis India and remove the encroachment on its western flank. For President Ronald W. Reagan's government in the United States, support for the anti-Soviet jihad offered an ideal opportunity to bleed its archnemesis white at a relatively low cost and with some degree of deniability, and it would also achieve payback for the Soviets' support of the North in the Vietnam War. Others supported the jihad for a host of ideological, geopolitical, or simply pragmatic reasons; included among these nations were the Chinese, the Egyptians, the British, the Israelis, the Turks, and the Swiss. In terms of qualitative or quantitative assistance—in other words, discernibly substantive support—Pakistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and China were among the most helpful contributors to the jihad. However, the causality for the strife and conflict that precipitated the Soviet invasion can be traced back to July 1973 when Daoud took control of the Afghan state. This is explained below.¹⁹

Afghanistan Slips toward War

The date when Afghanistan began to slide down the road to war is 17 July 1973. During that month, former Prime Minister Muhammad Daoud overthrew the king, Zahir Shah, in a bloodless coup and declared Afghanistan a republic. Daoud did not kowtow to the Soviet leadership, as he proceeded to reduce the long-standing Afghan reliance on the Soviet Union, cooling relations with it. He quickly reduced the number of Soviet advisors in the Afghan army and removed Soviet-affiliated PDPA ministers. More importantly, his resumption of dictatorial methods alienated both the urban leftist intelligentsia and the Islamic faithful. He suppressed the press and responded to dissent by executing or jailing all dissidents, whether Communist, Islamic, or Pashtun. By 1975, the future guerrilla lead-

¹⁹ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 250–70.

ers Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Ahmad Shah Masood were already meeting in Peshawar to plot insurrection against the state. The Soviets, who were very dissatisfied with Daoud, reputedly persuaded the two rival PDPA factions—Khalq (the people) and Parcham (the banner)—to reunify in 1977 and pave the way for the next coup. Daoud's apparent obstreperousness also vexed the senior Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev. During a 1977 meeting, Brezhnev called Daoud on the carpet, and Daoud brazenly shouted back and banged his hands on the table. The April 1978 assassination of a leading Parcham labor activist, Mir Akbar Khyber, was the final impetus for Daoud's demise. When the fallen activist's funeral turned into a demonstration, Daoud instinctively responded by arresting Communist activists, precipitating a military coup involving several armor brigades (this coup is known as the Sawr [April] Revolution because it occurred in the Afghan lunar month of Sawr). By the morning of 28 April 1978, Daoud was dead.²⁰

The Marxist military leaders promptly handed power over to the leader of Khalq, Nur Muhammad Taraki, who proclaimed the beginning of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). Babrak Karmal, the leader of the Parcham PDPA faction, assumed the position of deputy premier. Though the Soviet Union quickly resumed relations with the new regime, the culminating success of the Sawr Revolution marked the end of intra-PDPA comity. Taraki promptly removed Parcham elements from government and conveniently dispatched Karmal to Czechoslovakia as Afghanistan's ambassador. Hafizullah Amin, another Khalq leader became Taraki's deputy. Taraki publicly announced total Khalqi control over the state apparatus and that the Parcham bloc ceased to exist. Early on the new regime declared that its policies would be consistent with the principles of democracy, freedom, Islam, and the inviolability of the person. However, by October 1978 the government replaced the traditional green flag with a red Communist flag and announced a radical reform agenda that was divorced from reality and the expectations of a large portion of the populace. Amin played a principal role in promulgating a social program that included land

²⁰ Robert S. Littwak, "The USSR in Afghanistan," in *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict Intervention*, ed. Ariel L. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson, and Larry Berman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 70–73; and Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 230–34.

redistribution, the banning of certain religious practices, and equal rights for women. This agenda caused deep resentment across all walks of Afghan life, from the cities to the tribal areas. Pashtun mountain tribesman in the east grabbed their rifles, and revolts broke out all over the country. The government impulsively responded with executions and mass arrests. The regular units of the Afghan army began to melt away, and by the end of 1978, the guerrillas had established safe havens for supply and training in Pakistan across the Durand Line. In February 1979, KGB-advised Afghan troops botched an assault to rescue the U.S. ambassador from criminals holding him hostage, and he was killed in the fray. In April, the 17th Afghan Army Division mutinied in Herat and joined rioters and rebels for three days of plundering and killing, during which they killed 100 Soviet advisors and their families. The rebels even paraded the city with Soviet heads impaled on their staffs. By September, when a Soviet-backed plot to oust Amin instead resulted in Amin murdering and replacing Taraki, the Soviet leadership faced the hard decision of reducing or increasing its commitment to the PDPA regime. For his part, Amin refused to moderate his socialist domestic agenda, continuing to fuel the insurgency. By November, the Soviets had decided to increase the ante with an outright invasion.²¹

The Radicalization of Pakistan

During the latter half of the 1970s, concurrent developments on the other side of the Durand Line, manifested by changing Pakistani policies toward political Islam, were to reap consequences for the anti-Soviet insurgency, as well as for both the Afghan and Pakistani insurgencies of the twenty-first century. The reign of General Zia lasted from July 1977 to August 1988. His use of religion for politics has had a deep and lasting influence on Islam and Islamist dogma in Pakistan. General Zia's conflation of puritanical Islam and politics represents the singular most discernible reason why the FATA and the Pashtun areas both became and remain incubators for local and global jihad. The ISI's guerrilla training program integrated the teaching of a radical version of Sunni Islam

²¹ Littwak, "USSR in Afghanistan," 71–72, and Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 231–34.

(Deobandism²²) that Zia espoused and that he, by deliberate design, promoted by using the Pakistani state to proselytize through laws, public school curricula, and the proliferation of madrassas (religious seminaries). According to Zahid Hussain, the Afghan jihad directly influenced over 100,000 foreign Islamist radicals. Even before the Soviet tanks rolled across the Amu Darya, Zia began to use Islam to legitimize his military rule and to turn Pakistan into an ideological Islamist bulwark. His program for Islami-cization in Pakistan became “the most important feature of his eleven-year rule” and its *raison d’être*. Zia empowered the clergy when he introduced a rigid interpretation of sharia (Islamic law based on the Koran), and he found willing allies among the religious parties, some of whom had close links to the military. He supported Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the “Society for Islam,” and strengthened its virulently anti-American student arm. The JI student arm was responsible for attacking the U.S. embassy in November 1979. Moreover, when the embassy attack occurred, most of the security forces had been outside of Islamabad, protecting Zia while he was proselytizing Islam himself. General Zia also co-opted the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), or the “Society for the Community of Islam,” as well as other Islamic groups by bringing in Islamists to occupy important government posts.²³

In fact, the Zia regime opened up thousands of Islamic religious schools throughout the country. The government began to disperse a disproportionate amount of the monies raised from the compulsory Islamic charity tax (*zakat*)—taxes that Zia had instituted—to fund these new madrassas. The Pakistani state also began to recognize the “degrees” conferred by these seminaries as the equivalents of college degrees. It also considered the young male holders of these certificates as qualified to preside over sharia courts. The problem was that the “education” received at most of these semi-

²² Deobandism originated in British India at a madrassa in Deoband, near Delhi. The Deobandis established madrassas throughout northwestern India and the area that would become Pakistan, and they trained *ulema* (Islamic religious scholars) to conservatively interpret Islamic doctrine and enforce societal adherence to this interpretation.

²³ Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 16–20. See Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 26–36, for insights on Zia, the JI, and the U.S. embassy attack in 1979.

naries was more of a religious indoctrination than an objective education. In many cases, these were centers employed to inculcate the dogma of a very interpretive and skewed version of Deobandi Islam, one that most closely approximated the Saudi version of Wahhabist Islam that al-Qaeda espouses. Before Zia, only a small minority of Pakistanis subscribed to this reactionary and purist school; a greater majority adhered to the more inclusive Sufi traditions of Barlewi Islam. The process of Islamicization under Zia therefore required the parallel conversion of moderate Muslims to puritanical Muslims. Pakistan's embrace and support of political Islam and a growing network of madrassas helped convert the tribal areas into nurseries and then into assembly lines that would "churn out tens of thousands of radicalized young men" who would fight against the Soviets or who would later form the core of the Taliban. A young Mullah Muhammad Omar would subsequently graduate from one of these religious schools, fight with the mujahideen against the Soviets, and bring about what would have seemed to be the apotheosis of Zia's experiment in political Islam—the Taliban-ruled Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.²⁴

Beating the Bear: The Anti-Soviet Jihad

It can also be persuasively argued that the Soviets defeated themselves in Afghanistan. The Soviet forces that invaded Afghanistan were structured and trained for full-scale conventional warfare. Moreover, the Soviet military doctrine at the time envisaged the employment of forces on flat or undulating terrain, such as the plains of central Europe. This big war approach was characterized by "heavy tank and mechanized formations, massed and echeloned to conduct breaches of dense defenses, followed by rapid advance into the enemy rear to encircle and destroy him." These offensives were to be supported by air-ground attack, long-range artillery, and airmobile assaults throughout the depth of the enemy's defense. The Soviet doctrine sought quick and decisive victory. Afghanistan confirmed what was already suspected about the general fighting capacity of the Soviet Army—it relied more on

²⁴ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 103–4 and 107–8.

a concentrated quantity of forces and artillery preparation than on flexibility and maneuver. However, there is a more disturbing contradiction—Soviet experts in the armed forces knew what to do to win in Afghanistan but did not do it because of the military's cultural reluctance. In other words, the institution was resistant to change. There was no desire to change the doctrine, training, and organization of an army that was well adapted for a European war against its principal adversary, the United States.²⁵

The foremost theme of the Soviet strategy beginning in December 1979 was its determination to limit the level of its military commitment. Unfortunately, the Rumsfeld Pentagon subsequently misconstrued the lessons of the Soviet-Afghan War when it was conceiving the 2001 invasion and opted for a small force that was able, with its Northern Alliance indigenous paramilitary forces and overwhelming airpower, to topple the Taliban regime rather swiftly. However, the lean quantity of forces in Afghanistan during the early years was grossly inadequate for restoring security across Afghanistan and from preventing the Taliban's and al-Qaeda's flight into Pakistan. Similarly, in view of the size force it was willing to commit, a plan of conquest and occupation was not feasible for the Soviets, nor was it ever considered. From the beginning, the Soviet strategy was based on the rejuvenation and the employment of the DRA's army. It seemed that the Soviets initially believed that they confronted a limited insurgency in Afghanistan. Yet, they eventually realized that the support of the population for the resistance was so strong that it exceeded the puppet DRA forces' capacity to counter it effectively.²⁶

In fact, Soviet operations in the war did not aim so much at defeating the mujahideen as they aimed to intimidate and terrorize the population into abandoning areas of intense resistance and withdrawing support for the insurgents. The methods and weapons

²⁵ Scott R. McMichael, "The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War," *Parameters* 19 (December 1989): 21–22. Olivier Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, Adelphi Paper 259 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 51–52, cited in Robert M. Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 11–12.

²⁶ Robert F. Baumann, *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan*, Leavenworth Paper Number 20 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1993), 135.

employed—deliberate destruction of villages, high-altitude carpet bombing, napalm, fragmentation bombs, and the use of booby-trapped toys—testified to the intent of the Soviet military's effort to terrorize the Afghan civilian population. These methods, together with a scorched-earth policy and the heavy mining of key highways and the perimeters of towns, also resulted in the destruction of a large part of agricultural lands. Moreover, according to a 1984 report by French doctors working in the resistance-controlled areas, more than 80% of the casualties inflicted by the Soviet military were civilian.²⁷

The Soviet war in Afghanistan was a limited one because the Soviets fought for limited aims while the mujahideen fought an unlimited war in which they saw only two options: death or victory. Moscow intentionally limited both the scope of its operations and the amount of forces it committed. On the other hand, for the Afghans it was a total war—a war for the survival and the future of their country. To be sure, the Soviet military did not lose the fight in Afghanistan, it simply failed to win—it did not achieve its goals. Moreover, the army that returned from Afghanistan was battered, physically and psychologically. On the other hand, the mujahideen were not victorious but remained unvanquished nonetheless: “The guerrillas quickly established that they would not attain a resounding victory, but could sap the invaders’ will to fight on.” Essentially, the Afghan guerrillas proved Henry A. Kissinger’s maxim: “the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win.” The Afghan resistance fighters effectively countered the Soviet strategy of annihilation by conducting a protracted war of attrition.²⁸

The vast space of Afghanistan and the limited quantity of friendly troops practically guaranteed an irresolvable temporal and spatial dilemma for the Soviets. For most of the war in Afghanistan, Soviet troop strength was between 80,000 and 115,000, but at least 30–35% of that was dedicated to securing lines of communications

²⁷ Alex Alexiev, *The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1984), 2–3.

²⁸ The first quotation is from Scott E. McIntosh, “Leading with the Chin: Using Svechin to Analyze the Soviet Incursion into Afghanistan,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 8 (June 1995): 429; Stephen J. Blank, *Afghanistan and Beyond: Reflections on the Future of Warfare* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1993), 1. The second quotation is from Henry Kissinger, “The Vietnam Negotiations,” *Foreign Affairs* 47 (January 1969): 214.

and bases. For example, the defense of convoy units against ambush, “the most venerated tactic in the guerrilla repertoire,” posed an enormous security problem. Even still, the lack of good highways and the frequency of mujahideen ambushes had already congested the transportation network in Afghanistan. The Soviets’ principal priority was the control of their lines of communications back across the Amu Darya to Soviet territory and freedom of movement along Highway 1, the Ring Road. Their second priority was the disruption of the mujahideen’s logistics. As a result, the contradiction of concentration and dispersion, which stems from unfavorable time and space factors, was clearly manifest in Afghanistan: the majority of Soviet forces were concentrated on their bases and their lines of communications, and the rest of their forces were inevitably over dispersed in the valleys and the mountains, hunting guerrillas.²⁹

The Soviets brought their entire panoply of a superpower’s military technological tools to bear against the mujahideen and the Afghan people. However, the Russians failed to recognize that technology is no substitute for strategy and will. In fact, maximizing technology by using force indiscriminately, coupled with the absence of anything approximating a campaign to protect and secure the noncombatant population, helped undermine the Soviets’ efforts in Afghanistan by alienating that population. For instance, the Soviets introduced and tested several new technologies during the Soviet-Afghan War. The most notable of their new weapons were the BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle, the BTR-80 armored personnel carrier, the 82mm automatic mortar, the self-propelled mortar, the AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher, the BM-22 multiple rocket launcher system, the Mi-8T helicopter, the SU-25 ground-support aircraft, and the ASU-74 assault rifle. In addition, the Soviets introduced several models of the Mi-24 attack helicopter during the war. However, despite all this technology, Afghanistan was a war for the light infantry, and the Soviets did not have sufficient numbers of light infantry formations—airborne, air assault, reconnaissance, or special forces (Spetsnaz)—

²⁹ Baumann, 149–50, and 164. The direct quotation is from Baumann, 164. Milan Hauner, *The Soviet War in Afghanistan: Patterns of Russian Imperialism* (Philadelphia: University Press of America, 1991), 92–93.

to conduct complementary counterinsurgency throughout the countryside.³⁰

Thus, the Soviet strategy in Afghanistan essentially focused on the use of high technology and tactical mobility, mainly provided by helicopters, as a means to inflict casualties on the Afghans while at the same time holding Soviet casualties to a minimum. In fact, the Soviets used their technology to conduct a combination of the scorched earth method and “migratory genocide.” There were numerous reports that showed that Soviet forces, especially attack helicopters, were used to destroy villages and burn crops to force the population—the main source of support for the mujahideen—to leave the country. Other reports implied that the Soviets were declaring zones for using all sorts of firepower free from constraints in areas where there was strong resistance. According to one expert on the Soviets, “The Soviet monopoly on high technology [in Afghanistan] magnified the destructive aspects of their behavior.” The average quantity of “high technology” airborne platforms in Afghanistan was around 240 attack helicopters, 400 other helicopters, several squadrons of MiG-21 and MiG-23 jet fighters, and at least one squadron of SU-25 ground attack aircraft. Afghanistan also saw the first operational deployment of the SU-25.³¹

In the end, “The Kremlin’s leadership simply was unwilling to make a larger troop commitment when the numbers that might be necessary for victory were unclear in the first place, and the political and economic costs of such escalation would be too high.” As a result, the Soviets chose to conduct the war with a heavy reliance on bombing and airpower—an approach that surely kept the mujahideen from achieving quick victory but which, by itself, could not destroy the resistance. As long as the mujahideen were willing to suffer the punishment required to sustain and to protract their struggle for national survival, and as long as neighboring states provided sanctuary and external support, the inevitable outcome was a stalemate. The Afghan resistance to the Soviets also highlighted the salience of deeply rooted political and cultural values

³⁰ Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1996), 205.

³¹ Joseph W. Collins, “The Soviet-Afghan War: The First Four Years,” *Parameters* 14 (Summer 1984): 50–51.

for sustaining the will to persevere. The resilience of the guerrillas in the face of the Soviets' vastly superior resources is partly attributable to the Pashtuns' innate and enduring propensity to resist "authority in defense of tribal autonomy and individualism." In view of the Soviets' indiscriminate and brutal use of lethal force against the Afghan population, the Pashtun code's emphasis on revenge certainly contributed to an increase in the people's support for the insurgents. Ingrained Islamist precepts and values, such as the emphases on holy war against nonbelievers and martyrdom, also reinforced the tribal code. Finally, real and perceived grievances towards the Russians bolstered a deep animus. For example, these grievances stemmed from the brutal and indiscriminate use of lethal force against population centers, which resulted in significant civilian casualties; the general mistreatment and dehumanization of the civilian population; and the imposition of a Soviet-style social engineering program through the proxy government in Kabul. These are above and beyond the simple reality that the Afghan population loathed being occupied by the Soviets.³²

Wars among Warlords and the Rise of the Taliban

The Pashtun is never at peace, except when he is at war.

—*Pashtun proverb*

When the Soviets left Afghanistan on 15 February 1989, they continued to support the PDPA-DRA government they had installed under President Muhammad Najibullah with funds and materiel until the Soviet Union itself expired on 25 December 1991. The mujahideen were only able to topple the Soviet-backed government three years later in 1992. In essence there were three reasons for the unexpected endurance of the Najibullah regime. First, although very unpopular, the PDPA regime was better organized and had the support of the Afghan army formations as they existed. Second, much of the initial fighting after the Soviet departure witnessed overconfident commanders who were inept and untrained in conventional war (but skilled in guerrilla warfare), such as Gulbuddin

³² The direct quote is from Douglas A. Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 234–35; and Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 85.

Hekmatyar's attempt to assault Afghan army positions directly, with strong encouragement from their Pakistani advisors. The battles for Jalalabad were an example of this. These types of ill-advised operations caused the Afghan commanders to defeat themselves. Lastly, although traditionally Afghan warlords and mujahideen do loosely unite to repel foreign invasions with guerrilla techniques, they have also typically exhibited a tendency toward great disunity and factional conflict when the foreign threat departs or dissipates. The period between 1989 and the emergence of the Taliban in 1994 was no exception. The mujahideen gradually extended their influence and control over a larger portion of the country during Najibullah's three-year reign after the Soviet withdrawal. They tried to work toward some agreement as to who would be the leader of Afghanistan after the PDPA fell. The result was the 1992 Pakistan Agreement, which the Pakistani government brokered among the mujahideen. It called for a revolving presidency to be shared between former resistance leaders. It also provided that the thousands of rank-and-file fighters would join the Afghan police force or demobilize. On paper, the agreement provided for a peaceful transfer. Instead, the "Yaghestan complex" recurred. When Burhanuddin Rabbani tried to assume power, civil war broke out between his forces, which were allied with Ahmad Shah Masood's forces, and the ISI-backed forces of Hekmatyar. Rabbani and Masood's government forces won the first of many battles for Kabul, and Rabbani assumed duties as prime minister. Their forces then captured Najibullah at the Kabul airport as he was trying to flee and they detained him inside the United Nations compound until the Taliban seized Kabul in September 1996 and murdered him.³³

The Taliban movement emerged in 1994 in response to the poor security situation resulting from local warlord infighting and the poor governance of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in Kabul, a fractious and tenuous coalition of former anti-Soviet resistance commanders. The long-suffering Afghan people had become amenable to a movement that pledged it would establish security

³³ See Richard H. Shultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 179–81. The idea to note Pakistani encouragement of Hekmatyar's wasteful attack is from Tim Hoyt, comment on manuscript draft, 26 February 2010. See Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 271–73, on Afghan Interim Government and Hekmatyar attacks on Jalalabad.

and justice under the rule of strict sharia law. After the abdication of Muhammad Najibullah on 28 April 1992, Afghanistan experienced a spate of factional infighting that brought about more destruction, a collapse of order, and extensive atrocities, all of which alienated a population in search of peace after a decade and a half of war. The Taliban emerged from “a generation of leaders who had received their education in Pakistan’s border madaris [madrassas] in NWFP [North-West Frontier Province; now known as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province] and Baluchistan.” Its leaders comprised a group of Pashtuns who embraced the puritanical Islam propagated by the network of religious schools in Pakistan’s Pashtun areas. They aimed to take control of the Afghan state and cleanse it of its “impurities.” The slowly emerging support by the Pakistani ISI and other militant groups, such as JUI, partially explained their ultimate, if fleeting, good fortune. From the worldview that held sway in Islamabad, the Taliban represented the ideal instrument through which to sustain its policy of strategic depth across the northwestern frontier. The core Taliban leadership’s leadership council (*rahbari shura*) comprised former mujahideen commanders who stopped fighting after the abdication of the Soviet-sponsored Najibullah government in 1992 to return to their Islamic studies. The members of the leadership council were former brothers-in-arms or personal friends of Mullah Omar, the movement’s leader, or emir.³⁴

The movement initially began as the immediate response to the depravities of a local warlord who had raped several girls during the summer of 1994 in Kandahar. Local people asked Omar for help and he called on his brother-in-arms to exact justice on the perpetrator and to dissuade his followers. They subsequently responded to other calls for assistance to beat back the predatory militias in Kandahar. As more of the population began to support the actions of the inchoate Taliban, the momentum gave them countrywide aspirations. They recruited their fighters from the madrassas in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban movement grew in strength and expanded its territorial control by battles or by payments and

³⁴ Thomas Ruttig, *The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors, and Approaches to Talks* AAN Thematic Report 1 (Berlin: Afghan Analysts Network, 2009), 5–6; and Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004), 190 and 218.

persuasion of local leaders. In September 1996, the Taliban ultimately took Kabul, torturing and murdering Najibullah in the process. They hung his mutilated body for public display in the city. Earlier that year, the Taliban leadership allowed Osama bin Laden and his coterie to take sanctuary in eastern Afghanistan. In 1997, the Taliban proclaimed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and by 1998 the movement essentially controlled all of Afghanistan except the Panjshir Valley, Badakhshan, and portions of Takhar. After the Taliban refused to give up Osama bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks, the United States and its Coalition partners began Operation Enduring Freedom on 7 October 2001, and the Taliban regime collapsed in Kandahar that December. Defeated but not destroyed, the key leadership fled to Pakistan and the foot soldiers returned to their villages. Before moving to the next chapter, which begins with the fall and flight of the Taliban from Afghanistan to Pakistan, the short aside below illumines some unorthodox insights on the Taliban and al-Qaeda.³⁵

Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Quo Vadis?

What are the Taliban and what is al-Qaeda? What is the Taliban movement's worldview? How do they fight? How do the Taliban compare and relate to al-Qaeda? To begin with a bit of hyperbolic metaphor, the Taliban don't surf. Nor do they generally read Clausewitz, and they do not typically wear wristwatches. The principally Pashtun Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan and Pakistan abominate foreign occupation, or any central government's exertion of too much control over their tribal homes and lands. With the license of a small bit more of overstatement, the mountain tribes who inhabit the austere region along the Afghanistan and Pakistan border hail from a different world. They live in mud huts, eat from packed mud floors, and are innate and consummate guerrilla fighters. In temporal terms, some of these Pashtun tribes have considered themselves Pakistanis for a mere 60 years or so, Muslims for about 1,400 years, and Pashtuns for well over 2,000 years. Indeed, one might presume that it would seem exceedingly obvious to any amateur or neophyte anthropologist which one of the aforementioned

³⁵ Ruttig, *The Other Side*, 5–6.

identities would be most deeply ingrained among the Pashtuns. They live in landlocked poverty and blissful ignorance. The notion of surfing is as outrageous in their context as is the notion of Western liberal democracy. “Victory or death” is more than just a typical guerrilla cliché fit for a bumper sticker: it is a reality in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is particularly true when the Pashtun code; militant Salafism; and perceived injustices from non-Pashtun Afghans, non-Pashtun Pakistanis, or worse still, foreigners, combine. For the radical core among the Islamist Taliban insurgents and their al-Qaeda associates, the mantra is “Islam or death.” The Taliban do have more time. The core leaders will not quit until we take away both their capacity and their will, to convince them of their defeat. September 11th resulted from *takfir* terrorists imagining the unimaginable in the most diabolical and destructive way.³⁶

The Taliban do not pontificate on the typology of war through the careful review of PowerPoint slideshows, either. They are adaptive and resilient, really practicing one kind of warfare continuously—that is, tribal war, guerrilla war. The mountain Pashtuns have been practicing guerrilla warfare for centuries, and their irregular methods have been the bane of most powers who have attempted to subjugate them. *Taliban* is translated as “students, or seekers of the truth.” However, the truth they seek, and propagate, is a highly distorted and interpretive vision of Islam that brokers no contrary or alternative views. Those who may object to the Taliban’s extremist and reactionary notion of Islam are considered apostates, outside the realm of Islamist true believers, and subject to all sorts of heinous atrocities. Essentially it is either subscribe to their extreme version of Islam and imposition of Sharia or die the death of the “nonbelievers.” In this, the Taliban proselytize a Manichean view of religious ideology that is to a degree similar to the ideology espoused by their allies in al-Qaeda. The Taliban don’t surf now and never have. But, if we try to imagine the currently unimaginable in an optimistic and constructive way, in 50 years,

³⁶ See Johnson, “On the Edge of the Big Muddy,” 118. The “Taliban don’t surf” is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek paraphrase of “Charlie don’t surf,” the outrageous observation by the character LtCol Bill Kilgore in the movie *Apocalypse Now*. Kilgore was urging his men to surf under enemy fire soon after his cavalry squadron’s attack helicopters vehicles had obliterated a beachside Viet Cong-controlled village. Charlie did not surf, but he never relented, either.

with a prudent commitment to enduring stability along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Pashtuns might snowboard in the Hindu Kush.³⁷

Al-Qaeda translates as “the base,” and its principal Arab architects, Abdullah Azzam and bin Laden, originally formed it as a physical, material, and spiritual base in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region to support the Arab mujahideen during the latter half of the anti-Soviet jihad during the 1980s. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and for mainly specious reasons, al-Qaeda went global during the 1990s, declaring jihad against America, Israel, and all the putatively apostate Arab regimes allied with the West in the greater Middle East. The common clarion call of the Taliban and al-Qaeda was jihad to restore a theocratic Islamist caliphate, a throwback to the heyday and high-water mark of Islam from centuries past. Essentially, before 2001, the difference in their aims was that the Taliban’s aims were regional and al-Qaeda’s were global. The Taliban voluntarily hosted al-Qaeda between 1996 and 2001, and it benefited from bin Laden’s largesse and from help fighting against the Northern Alliance from the 055 Brigade, which comprised mainly al-Qaeda foreign fighters. The Taliban, who then controlled most of Afghanistan, advertently, or inadvertently, provided Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda ilk sanctuary from which to plan and orchestrate the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, the USS *Cole* attack, and the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.³⁸

³⁷ For detailed accounts on the Taliban, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) and *Descent into Chaos* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

³⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “A Genealogy of Radical Islam,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 84–87; Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 139–64 and 263–68.



2

AFGHANISTAN TO 2009: THE END OF THE BEGINNING?

The war is over, now the real fighting begins.

—*an anonymous Pashtun*

In retrospect it seems clear that defeating the Taliban in late 2001 and early 2002 was the easy part. When the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan refused to relinquish Osama bin Laden and his other al-Qaeda lieutenants, vengeance was swift, if not massive. When Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) began on 7 October 2001, the U.S.-led Coalition initially relied on limited special operations and airpower. Special operations forces conducted helicopter-borne and airborne raids against one of Mullah Omar's compounds and an airfield on 19 October. The air campaign focused on the destruction of air defense, infrastructure, command and control, and political targets. The effects of the air campaign were limited, and in some instances, harmful to the civilian population as they did not compel the Taliban to capitulate and they generated unwanted civilian casualties. For example, U.S. aircraft mistakenly hit a United Nations (UN) facility, a Red Cross food distribution center, and a Red Cross food convoy. The second phase was more effective as it combined small teams of U.S. special operations and paramilitary advisors with Northern Alliance indigenous forces and airpower to bring the fight directly to the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies. About two months after the Twin Towers collapsed, U.S. advisors marched into Kabul with Northern Alliance forces on 13 November 2001.¹

The Coalition used strategic airpower against tactical Taliban and 055 Brigade (al-Qaeda Arabs) formations to exact a severe lashing in terms of casualties. The Taliban broke on 7 December 2001 and abandoned Kandahar, its birthplace and stronghold. On 22 December 2001, an indigenous Afghan *jirga* (decision-making assembly)

¹ See Shultz and Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias*, 183–86; and Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 295–310, for a distilled account of OEF.

inaugurated Hamid Karzai as the interim leader of Afghanistan. That same day, in a tragic mistake, U.S. Air Force and Navy fighter bombers, along with a Lockheed AC-130 gunship, attacked a convoy of tribal elders driving to witness the inauguration. A week later, a U.S. air attack destroyed a village in Paktia Province near the border because it had ostensibly contained a Taliban weapons cache. Seventeen women and 25 children were casualties of that attack. That same week the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld decided to rely on surrogate tribal militias to do the heavy fighting in and around the Tora Bora cave complex, where bin Laden and his followers were believed to be hiding. The American leadership was surprised and even ecstatic about the apparently rapid defeat of the Taliban and the success of what it viewed as a revolutionary employment of air, special operations, and indigenous forces. What the Rumsfeld Pentagon and the U.S. government were not ecstatic about was the prospect of committing to rebuild Afghanistan. Nor did they intend to do so. This chapter examines the consequences of the poorly informed and overly economical approach to Afghanistan between late 2001 and early 2009.²

Legitimacy

I am giving up warlordism, I am going to Kabul to be a minister.

—former Kandahar and current Nangarhar Provincial Governor Gul Agha Shirzai in Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*

The competition is for legitimacy, not lethality.

—Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker, *War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age*

Both of the above quotes are relevant to this section because both the overreliance on the warlords and on Coalition airpower in the early years of the war in Afghanistan influenced the Afghan people's perception of the Coalition and the legitimacy of the Afghan government's efforts. This section analyzes the grievances of the population and the insurgents in terms of unrealized goals and expectations. It will ascertain, to the extent possible from open source documents, how congruent the grievances of the general populace were to those of the insurgents. This part also examines

² See Jones, *Graveyard of Empires*, 116–92.

what the Coalition and its indigenous partners did to ameliorate or exacerbate those grievances. When combined forces defeated the Taliban in the winter of 2001, the Afghans had reason to expect some benefit in administration, development, and security from the richest countries in the world. By 2001, many Afghans were beaten down by decades of war and years of the Taliban's draconian punishments. Moreover, the people of Kabul had never really accepted the severe theocracy of the Taliban regime, which with its extremely interpretive imposition of sharia law, proscribed and prescribed all aspects of life, from its ban on kites to punishments of decapitation and stoning. The native population was thus hopeful for a better future after the Taliban's defeat. According to one expert on Afghanistan, America and its partners had two years to show tangible improvements for the people. Special operations, airpower, and militias were sufficient to chase out the Taliban, but they were not the preferred instruments to repair Afghanistan's battered infrastructure.³

After over two decades of uninterrupted civil war, all of Afghan society was "suffering from collective PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder]." What Afghans wanted from their government—order, justice, public accountability, roads, schools for their children, and qualified doctors—was no different from what most people want. Because no one completely thought through what would happen after the defeat of the Taliban, there was no real strategy for stabilizing the country, for building institutions for security and development. Nor was there sufficient infrastructure (unified civil-military command modalities) or clear guidance from Washington about what the end aim in Afghanistan was, beyond crushing al-Qaeda. Into this vacuum flowed the venal side of Afghanistan's nature—warlords and militias, who were partially assisted by earnest, but unwitting, U.S. special forces and infantry commanders who were mopping up the countryside. Sarah Chayes has noted that during the tumultuous post-Taliban period, it was the U.S. and Coalition military forces who decided which villages to search and which strongmen to partner. Midgrade Army commanders made decisions based on short-term tactical necessity, not

³ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 302–3, 308–9, and 323–26.

necessarily with the long view of what consequences the empowered warlords would bring to the people. The people's fear of a return of the "mujahideen nights," the warlord predations during the years before the Taliban, was tragically realized as many of these same loathsome characters returned to exploit, extort, and disaffect the population. As a result, the Afghan people would blame Karzai and the Americans for legitimizing these "gun-rulers."⁴

Twenty of the first group of 32 provincial governors who received appointments in 2002 had been militia commanders, strongmen, or warlords. Lower militia commanders also occupied the ranks of the district governors. Tribal leaders and militia commanders who had enamored themselves of Karzai or the Americans assumed positions of power and responsibility in most districts. For many of these positions, any basis of popular support was tenuous at best, and absent at worst. This practice often negatively affected the administrative structures in the provinces because these strongmen were compelled to reward their followers with jobs to consolidate their leadership. Warlord governors and chiefs of police possessed the legal authority to appoint personnel for positions within the organizations they oversaw. Soon, close associates of the warlords populated the department head positions of the provincial administrations, and similar practices held sway in the defense and interior ministries as well. In addition to undermining the perception of legitimacy toward the government, this warlord nepotism was also detrimental to the actual functionality of these institutions. For instance, the Afghan National Police (ANP), who fall under the Ministry of the Interior, were an especially conspicuous example of ineptitude, corruption, and venality for several years despite efforts to reform the organization. The ANP received considerably fewer resources, less emphasis, and less oversight early on because the focus was on building an army. Initially, the Germans had the task of training the police, but their program was not aligned with the realities on the ground in Afghanistan. They took too long to train too few police officers. Moreover, in late 2003 the United States hired private security contractors to produce police. The contractors

⁴ Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 148, 151, and 193. Afghans are very familiar with warlords, and in the local language the term is *topak salaran* or "gun-ruler." The direct quote is from Chayes, 148.

(DynCorp) proved to be inept, pushing too many police through programs lacking substance and quality. This approach also failed to identify and develop leadership, which is key to the effectiveness of any such organization. In addition, many police units came to comprise former members of militias. As a consequence, for several years the Afghan police themselves were a catalyst for insurgent support.⁵

There are some notable exceptions to this lack of popular support, however. For example, although Gul Agha Shirzai's predatory practices helped to alienate the people and catalyze the insurgency in Kandahar, the people generally tend to support him as the current Nangarhar governor because he provides for them. Atta Muhammad Noor, the Balkh provincial governor, is another exception. He is corrupt and imperfect, but he runs his province in a way that garners much of the population's support. Nevertheless, even if some warlords had the skills to effectively administer their provinces, the frequent failure of the Kabul government to provide ample discretionary funds for community outreach with tribal elders and clergy undermined their efforts. In this manner, poor provincial administration delegitimized the government and helped create more fertile ground for an incipient insurgency to spread.⁶

The ethnic composition of the Afghan government was a potential source of grievance shared between the populace in the south and east and the core Taliban. Pashtuns comprise 42 percent of the population, which approximates 31 million in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns preponderate in the south and east. As previously mentioned, the Taliban are a Pashtun movement. It is almost inconceivable among the Pashtuns that a non-Pashtun would be the leader of Afghanistan. For all of its recorded history, except for two short periods of non-Pashtun rule in 1928–29 and 1992–93, when it briefly resembled Yaghestan again, Afghanistan has had a Pashtun ruler. The country's name even derives from the ancient Persian term *Afghan*, which translates to "Pashtun." Hamid Karzai is a

⁵ For insights on the missteps and problems with the creation of the ANP, see Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 191–211.

⁶ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 16–18.

Durrani Pashtun from the Popalzai tribe, the same tribe from which the founder of the Afghan state hailed. However, given the Northern Alliance's crucial role in defeating the Taliban, a higher number of positions in the interim government went to the non-Pashtun Tajiks and Uzbeks. Furthermore, although the people of Kabul never really accepted the extreme theocratic program of the reactionary and simplistic Taliban regime, many Pashtuns did not initially view the advent of the Taliban as unambiguously bad or evil. As cruel and as extreme as the Taliban were, they did impose some timely, if severe, form of justice and created some order in place of the disorder of the warlord years. Likewise, although many Pashtuns may have not have supported or embraced the ideology of the Taliban, most would have recognized the significance of a Pashtun-dominated government in Kabul. The advent of Karzai's Interim Authority, with underrepresentation among Pashtuns, signaled the loss of Pashtun political influence. Many Pashtuns viewed Karzai as a figurehead surrounded by non-Pashtuns and foreigners. They tended to impugn him for enabling the ascent of the non-Pashtuns in the government. Karzai's alleged flaws notwithstanding, he was in a tenuous position in 2001–3, with non-Pashtuns blaming him for being soft on the Taliban and Pashtuns blaming him for pandering to the Tajiks of the United Front.⁷

The composition and activities of irregular military units associated with Karzai's interim government also likely aggravated Pashtuns inside and outside of the Taliban. The Northern Alliance's insistence on keeping its units in Kabul and the U.S. policy of employing irregular militias against Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants robbed the Pashtuns of their historical sense of entitlement as the principal source of Afghan troops. What emerged as the Afghan Military Forces comprised principally non-Pashtuns as they engaged in battles with the Taliban and their Pashtun sympathizers. To remedy this reliance on irregulars, the Afghan National Army (ANA) would ultimately absorb these forces. But between the commencement of ANA recruitment in 2002 and 2004, an imbalance in ethnic representation within the ANA leadership reinforced the Pashtun perception of being marginalized. This was not necessarily a delib-

⁷ Amin Tarzi, "The Neo-Taliban," in *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, ed. Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 284–89.

erate policy on the part of the Coalition or the inchoate Afghan state but a result of who was allied with whom in terms of informal alliances and the initial use of Afghan Military Forces. The latter were essentially ethnically based. The other factor is that there remained underlying perceptions among the southern and eastern Pashtuns toward the northern ethnic groups. These stemmed from historical identity issues, the post-Najibullah internecine warlord years, and the fact that the Northern Alliance helped the Coalition defeat the Taliban. Although the Pashtuns represented 42 percent of the population and 50 percent of ANA troop strength, only 32 percent of ANA officers and 36 percent of the noncommissioned officers were Pashtuns. In contrast, the Tajiks, who represented 25 percent of the population and 37 percent of ANA troop strength, comprised 56 percent of ANA officers and 53 percent of ANA noncommissioned officers. The reasons for this imbalance are likely twofold. One possible reason is the rather ad hoc way in which the Afghan security forces initially formed, which was co-optation of extant armed groups. The other plausible explanation is that the Taliban was, and still is, a Pashtun movement particularly popular among the southern and eastern Pashtuns. As early as 2002, many Pashtuns, and Karzai himself, recognized that “without the support of the majority of the Pashtuns, governing Afghanistan could only be done by reliance on foreign force.” A government that potentially lacks legitimacy among 42 percent of the population is not sustainable in the long-term.⁸

In September 2002, insurgents began rocket, mortar, and improvised explosive device attacks, first directed at U.S. forces but subsequently directed at the Afghan government and its supporters. The ranks of the emerging insurgency included former Taliban as well as other rebellious Pashtun elements, such as the Hezb-i-Islami (Party of Islam) of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani’s tribal network in eastern Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The goals of these different factions ranged from ejecting the Americans from Afghanistan to waging global jihad in league with al-Qaeda. The new Taliban, or neo-Taliban, insurgents drew support from Pashtun resentment and griev-

⁸ Ibid.

ances toward the Tajiks of the United Front, some of whom had murdered, raped, and pillaged among Pashtun communities in 2001–2 in retribution for past Taliban transgressions. The neo-Taliban also appealed to the populace's desire for security, order, and justice in response to inept, corrupt, or exploitative provincial governments. Many of these factors persuaded local leaders and tribal elders to side with the insurgents for the time being. At first Karzai did not seem to take the threat seriously, understating the number of insurgents at 150 or so. Locally, the warlord militias and the police forces exhibited neither the capability nor the willingness to stop the insurgency from spreading, and with far too few Coalition and ANA forces on the ground, the insurgency slowly spread into the villages, killing or threatening government supporters to establish shadow governments.⁹

Notwithstanding the grievances that the former Taliban and general Pashtun population shared, it is unlikely the Taliban would have quit fighting, even if the Interim Authority had not marginalized them, because of their extreme ideological bent. Any secular democratic government would have been an anathema to the Taliban's radically circumscribed and puritanical worldview. They saw it as their duty as faithful and committed jihadists to fight on and not accept defeat. The lull in 2002 that followed the Taliban collapse was likely necessary for them to regroup physically and to recover psychologically from the shock of the rapid Coalition victory.

The original Taliban's ideology is a blend of Deobandi doctrine with the most conservative rural village codes of behavior. This version of the Taliban reduced penal and criminal laws to a very narrow interpretation of sharia, and their marginalization of educated women and their rigid application of sharia made contact with the West, whose culture they rejected, difficult. The neo-Taliban's ideology, while fundamentally similar to the original Taliban's, differs in that it seems to converge more with the narrative of global jihad espoused by al-Qaeda. Beginning in 2002 and accelerating in 2003, the neo-Taliban rhetoric began to highlight notions of the global war against the "Christian crusaders" and emphasized comity with other jihad movements around the world as part of a

⁹ Moyer, *A Question of Command*, 197–98 and 209–11.

common struggle. The invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq helped galvanize Islamist sentiments against America and the West throughout the Muslim world. This increased the perception of legitimacy for jihadist causes in Afghanistan and Iraq, resulting in greater support for the neo-Taliban insurgency. Deobandi madrassa students in what is now the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly the North-West Frontier Province), Pashtun village mullahs who were indoctrinated there, and villagers unhappy with the government believed in the neo-Taliban cause and began to align with the incipient insurgency.¹⁰

To increase the legitimacy of the insurgency and undermine the Karzai government, Mullah Omar issued a fatwa (decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader) in February 2003 announcing that 1,600 Muslim scholars throughout Afghanistan had agreed that it was every Muslim's duty to wage jihad because the United States had violated Islam's boundaries and was oppressing the people of Afghanistan. This fatwa also warned that anyone who collaborated with the Coalition or the Afghan administration would be considered a Christian infidel and subjected to punishment according to Omar's harsh interpretation of Islam. The statement also urged the Muslims of Afghanistan to wage jihad against the foreign forces or to separate themselves from those forces. After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Omar issued a second fatwa on 1 April 2003 that repeated calls for Afghans to wage jihad against America, decried the invasion of Iraq, and ordered the murder of anyone cooperating with the Americans. These fatwas were followed up in 2003 with an armed propaganda campaign targeting collaborators to root out the government presence in Pashtun areas of the south and east. The neo-Taliban began to combine the ideas engendered in these statements with the propaganda benefit of increasingly violent acts to undermine the legitimacy and presence of government workers. This campaign started with threats aimed at officials and teachers, with the Taliban delivering "night letters" (*shabnamah*) to the core of the Afghan administration system in the south in late 2003. The years 2004–6 saw a revival and resurgence of the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan, with a commensurate and steady increase in

¹⁰ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 11–15.

Taliban violent and coercive actions inside Afghanistan, such as these threats. It is no coincidence that then-Lieutenant General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani was the Director of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate from 2004 to 2007. The education system was an important target because it was generally the only service that the Afghan state was providing at the village level in the south. Threats to teachers and attacks on schools thus signaled the arrival of the Taliban. From March 2006 to March 2007, the Taliban killed 85 teachers and students and attacked 187 schools. The next section examines how the Coalition and Afghan National Security Forces responded to these acts of violence.¹¹

Force

They didn't want to fight a guerrilla war—after Vietnam it had ceased to be an option. In planning for the wrong adversary, they failed to follow the ancient military dictum to know your enemy. It was another failure of imagination.

—George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*

Wooden-headedness, the source of self-deception, is a factor that plays a remarkably large role in government. It consists in assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs.

—Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*

The two quotes above capture the essence of challenge the U.S. confronted when al-Qaeda attacked the United States on 11 September 2001. First, the American military was almost exclusively prepared for mid- to high-intensity conventional war on the plains of central Europe or the deserts of Iraq. Its leadership, organization, and doctrine were optimized for maneuver by firepower for battles with similarly organized adversaries. No matter how much it reorganizes or bends, a conventional military force “is still one hell of a poor instrument with which to engage insurgents,” a perceptive Rand study noted near the end of the Vietnam War. The second quote relates to the hubris of ignorance associated with poorly informed senior leaders who fail to anticipate the types of wars they face, or create, by sending such forces into cultural settings where the only likely re-

¹¹ Tarzi, “The Neo-Taliban,” 296–300; and Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 102–5. Also see Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 80–85, for the revival of the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan.

sponse to Western tanks and bombs is jihad. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. government and its partners helped catalyze the insurgencies by the means they employed while they were encumbered with the results of their partially successful offensives, which made it necessary to conduct third-party counterinsurgencies without standing host-nation institutions and security forces. This section explores how well U.S. leadership, doctrine, and organization were prepared to conduct a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. It also examines the employment of forces to secure and separate the populace from the insurgents in order to avoid excessive civilian casualties.¹²

For all intents and purposes, the American military, in concert with its Northern Alliance allies, was responsible for providing security after the Taliban's defeat. Notwithstanding the paramilitary militias of the Northern Alliance, this victory left Afghanistan essentially bereft of regular security institutions, and the American military, along with its allied partners, was simultaneously compelled to adapt to an emergent insurgency and to raise indigenous security institutions to combat this insurgency. This is the hardest type of counterinsurgency to wage, particularly when most of the third-party military is unfamiliar with counterinsurgency doctrine and methods. Optimism is not a method and hopeful enthusiasm does not equate to capacity. A military with a big-war focused culture, organization, and doctrine is not the ideal instrument to counter insurgents. The Soviets and the American people have seen these scenarios before—in Afghanistan and in Vietnam, respectively. They both ended very badly. Ironically, the American military institutional and cultural response to the outcome of Vietnam guaranteed that it would be neither intellectually nor organizationally prepared for the world and the wars it faced as this century began. As a result, some of its initial actions compounded the complexity of meeting an insurgency in the Hindu Kush, one of the most optimal places in the world for guerrillas in terms of terrain and traditions to wage their kind of warfare. Still, the American military was the best military in the world for the wars it prepared for, and during the first half of the first decade of this century, the U.S. military adapted to become much better at fighting insurgents.

¹² The direct quote is from Brian M. Jenkins, *The Unchangeable War*, RM-6278-2-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1970), 6.

A Tangential but Essential Précis: The Roots of American Challenges in Afghanistan

The scope and length of this study allows for only an abridged overview of why the American armed forces were not optimized for fighting insurgents, before the study turns to the performance of U.S. and Afghan security forces. For most of the twentieth century, the U.S. military generally embraced the big, conventional war paradigm and fundamentally eschewed small wars and insurgencies. Thus, instead of learning from its many experiences in Vietnam, the Philippines, the Banana Wars, and campaigns against the Native Americans—for most of the last 150 years before 2001—the U.S. Army viewed these experiences as ephemeral anomalies and aberrations, distractions from preparing to win big wars against other big powers. The marginalization of counterinsurgencies and small wars before 2004–5 impeded the U.S. military from fully studying, distilling, and indoctrinating the extensive lessons that small wars and insurgencies have provided to better face current and emerging insurgencies. The U.S. military’s cultural inability to attain a consensus on what went wrong in Vietnam created an aversion to remembering Vietnam’s lessons, and essentially erased most lessons from the experiences predating Vietnam. Military culture is a set of beliefs, attitudes, and values within the military establishment that shape shared preferences of how and when military means should be used to accomplish strategic aims. It develops from the aggregation of historical experience, geography, and political culture. Core leaders perpetuate and inculcate it.¹³

The contradiction stemming from the U.S. military’s unsuccessful struggle in the jungles and paddies of Vietnam was that the experience was perceived as anathema to the core elites of the American military and hard lessons learned there about fighting guerrillas were neither embedded nor preserved in the U.S. Army’s institutional memory. The American military culture’s efforts to exorcise the specter of Vietnam, engendered in the shibboleth, “No More Vietnams,” also prevented the U.S. Army as an institution

¹³ See Robert M. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss: British and American Peacekeeping Doctrine and Practice after the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 6–7, 231–35, and 238–50 for an in-depth analysis of American military culture in the twentieth century.

from really learning from those lessons. In fact, the institution even rejected the term *counterinsurgency* and came up with the more bureaucratic, if less clear, term *foreign internal defense* (FID). Even though many lessons existed in the U.S. military's historical experience with small wars, the lessons from the Vietnam War were the most voluminous. Yet these lessons were most likely the least read since the U.S. Army's intellectual rebirth after Vietnam focused almost exclusively on a big and preferred conventional war in Europe. Despite the fact that the Army essentially conducted peace operations for a decade after the end of the Cold War, the first Persian Gulf War had so reinforced the culturally preferred, technologically enabled, decisive conventional war paradigm within the U.S. military, that by 11 September 2001, the U.S. military still predominantly viewed its core and essential roles to be grounded in conventional war. Even as late as March 2002, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California—the U.S. Army's premier desert collective training opportunity—still focused exclusively on conventional battles with linear boundaries and phase lines. What's more, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had decided to close the U.S. Army Peacekeeping Institute in May 2002. In fact, the entirety of extant current doctrine pertinent to counterinsurgency when this long war in Afghanistan began was eight pages!¹⁴

Likewise, in 2001 the division combined arms team still remained the centerpiece of the U.S. Army's war-fighting structure and doctrine. Even the Army's Force XXI experiments at the beginning of the decade, intended as forward-looking efforts to fundamentally redesign the Army for information-age warfare, retained the idea of the division as a basic building block. When OEF began, the country's biggest land-oriented service was organized around brigades, divisions, and corps, the same organizations with which it had fought and won World War II. What's more, the U.S. military had to rely on the same organizations, optimized for linear conventional battles, to command and control what was an exceedingly complex insurgency. It was the Army the U.S. government

¹⁴ Robert M. Cassidy, "Back to the Street without Joy," *Parameters* 34 (Summer 2004): 73–75. Fortunately, U.S. Acting Secretary of the Army reversed the Peacekeeping Institute decision and ordered the Army War College Commandant to keep the institute open. See R.L. Brownlee, Memorandum to the Army War College Commandant, 9 July 2003.

had at the time, and it was one that, unfortunately, had absorbed almost nothing from what the military should have learned about command and control of counterinsurgencies in Vietnam.¹⁵

In fact, the U.S. Army Center for Military History produced a comprehensive study, titled *Vietnam Studies: Command and Control 1950–1969*, on the command and control lessons from that war. In applying lessons learned in Vietnam to a similar future conflict, this study makes two assumptions: the commitment of substantial contingents of U.S., allied, and indigenous forces for an extended period of time; and that U.S. objectives would include an early conclusion of the war on terms favorable to the host government and the successful strengthening of indigenous forces, “thus enabling them to assume responsibility for internal security.” It would be imperative for the command and control structure to be capable of close cooperation and support of indigenous and allied military forces, paramilitary organizations, and other agencies of the host country. The study describes unity of command as a prerequisite to ensure both positive control by the U.S. political leadership of the overall U.S. effort and the effectiveness of military operations and advisory activities. Such a command structure should encourage improvements in the operational capabilities of the indigenous forces and promote cooperation with them. Most interesting, in view of how the quality of command and control arrangements have ebbed and flowed in Afghanistan over the last decade, are the recommendations for what “the optimum command and control structure would include.”¹⁶

This report recommends the establishment of a unified theater command directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff that would exercise operational control over host-nation forces. The overarching headquarters should also have operational control over the military forces of participating allied partners as well as a combined planning group, with an officer of the host-nation as lead, and comprising representatives of the militaries providing forces in the theater

¹⁵ Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 124–25.

¹⁶ For the institutional lessons on command and control in Vietnam, see MajGen George S. Eckhardt, *Vietnam Studies: Command and Control 1950–1969* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1974), Chapter V.

to bring the effort together. Subordinate headquarters for areas where both indigenous and allied forces operated should also be modified to function as combined staffs. *Command and Control 1950–1969* urges the establishment of an organization similar to the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) in Vietnam, as soon as possible. This CORDS-like architecture should directly control all civilian advisory efforts, especially those of the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Without such control, the study emphasizes, “Civil Affairs and counterinsurgency and pacification operations cannot be adequately coordinated.” The functions of such an organization would be most effective with an arrangement similar to Military Assistance Advisory Groups. Last, the report advises the theater headquarters should exercise command and operational control over the Military Assistance Advisory Group assigned to the theater. Significantly, the U.S. military that went into Afghanistan and Iraq had no on-the-shelf organization, capability, or corps of advisors who were ready to train and equip indigenous armies on a massive scale. The U.S. military was compelled to extemporize with the relatively few special forces groups who did train for FID advisory roles but who did not include much more than a dozen Pashto speakers at the time.¹⁷

As of early 2009, when the author provided the aforementioned Army study on command and control to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) two-star chief of operations, there still was no CORDS-like organization nested under ISAF. At that time, the structures for both the combined coordinating group and intermediate joint headquarters were in their embryonic stages. The unity of command and effort for all actions and activities is absolutely crucial in determining how effectively counterinsurgents employ nonlethal and lethal methods to achieve sustainable security. In another seminal study on the interagency effort in Vietnam, the former head of CORDS noted that bureaucratic inertia and institutional cultures (the tendency for various U.S. agencies to do their own thing) impeded the successful unification and integration of effort in Vietnam. Although CORDS was not a panacea, it did bring some

¹⁷ Ibid.

innovative improvements to unify the command and effort with a single senior civilian manager working directly under the military commander to better integrate interagency and military advisory pacification efforts.¹⁸

American Challenges in Afghanistan

The challenges in Afghanistan for unity of command are even more complex than in Vietnam as there are many more partners, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the UN, and a plethora of nongovernmental organizations. Moreover, after the Taliban regime collapsed, the U.S. command structure varied between two-star division and three-star corps commands until the establishment of Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan in 2003. Command of ISAF rotated between European lead country commands every six months or so until a U.S. general assumed command in 2007. Getting a host of U.S. departments, multiple international organizations, diverse U.S. and NATO conventional and special operations formations, and fledgling Afghan security forces to unify their efforts was, up until late 2009, one of the more serious challenges in Afghanistan. How those forces acquitted themselves in the employment of lethal and nonlethal force vis-à-vis the relevant populations was the second biggest challenge.¹⁹

Success in counterinsurgency depends on building and selecting the right people for key leadership positions, from the tactical level to the strategic level. Recent scholarship identifies 10 critical characteristics of effective counterinsurgency leaders: initiative, flexibility, creativity, judgment, sociability, charisma, empathy, dedication, integrity, and organization. Brevity dictates that this study amplify the three most salient of these attributes—creativity, judgment, and dedication. *Creativity* varies from the tactical to the strategic level, but creative thinkers are essential because creative thinkers improvise innovative solutions to complex problems. *Judgment* is the use

¹⁸ See R. W. Komer, *The Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972), executive summary, for the failure to integrate the U.S. bureaucracy for unity of effort in Vietnam. See page ix for insights on agencies doing their own thing.

¹⁹ For insights on unity of command and the integration of forces in Afghanistan, see Christopher J. Lamb and Martin Cinnamond, “Unified Effort: Key to Special Operations and Irregular Warfare in Afghanistan,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 56 (January 2010): 41–43.

of logic and intuition to evaluate problems and make sound decisions. It allows commanders to discern which actions and methods may work against the insurgents. *Dedication*, or resilience, is crucial because counterinsurgency creates a grueling and dangerous rhythm. Excellent performance requires superiority in a substantial number, but not all, of the listed attributes. Some leaders can improve these traits through self-development, but many leaders are partly a product of the culture in which they have been immersed. Military culture shapes leaders because the military is a closed system whose members serve for long periods. If a military culture eschews counterinsurgency as a core role, as the U.S. Army did for the last 25 years of the last century, this can preclude the development of good counterinsurgency-capable leaders.²⁰

The U.S. leaders who commanded in Afghanistan during the first years of the resurgent insurgency generally deployed with little knowledge of counterinsurgency. They were compelled to adapt in contact because the U.S. military had theretofore almost exclusively focused on its preferred paradigm of war—a big, conventional one. To compound this, many regular Army leaders lacked creativity, judgment, and the other identified attributes that are more important for counterinsurgency leaders than for conventional ones. The contrast between special forces officers, who often exhibited those attributes, and the regular Army officers, who often did not possess them, was discernible. Special forces leaders worked closely and constantly with their indigenous Afghan partners, and they thrived on decentralized and dispersed operations. Early in the war, too many commanders tended to operate from a few large bases from which their forces would conduct sorties—large sweeping and raiding operations—only to fly back to base a week or two later. The raids inflicted losses on the Taliban and, in some instances, on the civilian populace, but they failed to stop the insurgents from recruiting among the population. However, those “commanders with creativity, flexibility, judgment, and initiative figured out quickly how to swim in the unfamiliar waters into which they had been thrown.” For example, when Lieutenant General David W. Barno

²⁰ Moyer, *A Question of Command*, 2–13. See Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror*, 99–126, for an analysis of American military culture in the context of counterinsurgency.

became the Coalition commander in Afghanistan in 2003, he shifted the focus of the effort toward the tenets of counterinsurgency and tried to focus on population protection. He assigned American commanders ownership of geographic areas and directed them to send small units into the Afghan villages to patrol relentlessly and to persist among the people.²¹

The problem was that there were never nearly enough troops to persist among 31 million people in a rugged country about the size of Texas. The Rumsfeld Pentagon opted for a very small force because it misconstrued the lessons from the Soviet war in Afghanistan, thinking the Soviets lost because they had too many forces. In fact, the Soviets lost because they had not only too few but also the wrong kind of forces—mechanized forces optimized for the big war in Europe—and these forces employed entirely inappropriate scorched-earth methods. Also problematic for the Rumsfeld Pentagon, there was no apparent U.S. plan for what to do after the Taliban was defeated. The quick defeat of the Taliban in 2001 had persuaded the American prophets of a revolution in military affairs that new technologies would allow the U.S. military to destroy the Taliban from the air, making large ground forces unnecessary. This overreliance on airpower ended up inflicting civilian casualties on too many occasions, such as the mistaken killings of civilians in November and December of 2001, the wrongful bombing of an eastern Afghanistan wedding party in July 2002, and the civilian casualties caused by an AC-130 gunship in Shin-dand in August 2008.²²

To rebuild the country and provide security against the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, Rumsfeld and Karzai had mistakenly relied on Afghan warlords for these tasks. Many of these warlords were venal and vicious men, men “who put personal gain before the good of the country, committed atrocities, engaged in mobster activities, and showed an inability to cooperate with others.” The Coalition funded the expansion of these warlord militias to the detriment of the Afghan people, and to the detriment of the overall endeavor. The corruption and abuse of the warlords alienated the

²¹Moyar, *A Question of Command*, 194–211. The direct quote is from page 198 of this study.

²²For an analysis of the Soviet lessons in Afghanistan, see Jones, *Graveyard of Empires*, 161–63; and Kulakov, *Lessons Learned*, 6–7.

people in many instances. This behavior was widespread in the south and the east, and it was manifest in the marginalization of other tribal groups, the exaction of fees on the people for rendering what should have been delivered basic services, and the worse practices of physically brutalizing ordinary Afghans. As stated before, although justice is hugely important in most places, it deeply resonates in the Pashtun culture. Moreover, the perception of injustice extends beyond civilian casualties. If people in power abuse that power through greed and graft, if they charge ordinary Afghans for services the state should provide, the Afghans also perceive this as unjust and will likely be aggrieved by these abuses.²³

The overreliance on airpower that attended the decisions to deploy a small force and to employ special operations forces in concert with Afghan militias in the early years of the war also resulted in an inordinate and counterproductive number of civilian casualties. For the first several years of the war, the number of conventional forces hovered around 10,000, far too few to implement a comprehensive counterinsurgency, especially considering that force numbers in Iraq—a country of 26 million people, a smaller population than Afghanistan—surpassed 160,000 during the height of counterinsurgency operations there. Compounding the relative dearth of boots on the ground was a general unfamiliarity with the fundamentals of counterinsurgency and an emphasis on searches and raids to “kill or capture the enemy.” In fact, the reality that sound counterinsurgency was founded on “clearing, holding, and building” the populated areas did not emerge from the dustbin of expurgated lessons to enter U.S. Department of Defense discourse and doctrine until 2005 and 2006. The reliance on airpower was particularly acute in 2006 when the U.S. Air Force carried out more than 2,000 air strikes in Afghanistan between June and November, a figure which signified a notable increase compared to previous years. It increased further in 2007. The reliance on air strikes inevitably led to significant numbers of unwanted casualties among the civilian population and to allegations of excessive force, “particularly when 2,000-pound bombs were extensively used to deal with small groups of insurgents.” Local Afghans often asserted that Coalition

²³ Moyar, *A Question of Command*, 193–96. The direct quote is from page 194 of this book.

air strikes mistakenly targeted civilians, not Taliban, in these air attacks. Notwithstanding the actual number of civilian casualties, Taliban propaganda aimed at inflating the number of civilian casualties was difficult to refute persuasively, especially given that the Taliban were increasingly more adept at media operations. One other unintended consequence of the dependency on airpower was a potential perception among the Pashtuns that American forces lacked conviction except when supported by substantial airpower. This may have encouraged the resistance with the notion that the United States did not have the forbearance for the long fight in Afghanistan.²⁴

The first years in Afghanistan served as an experiment for a “new way in war,” one in which technology, special operations, and airpower were intended to defeat the Taliban, hunt down al-Qaeda core leadership, and somehow pacify the historically resilient and warlike Pashtuns in eastern and southern Afghanistan. To do this much, with so little expenditure in resources, troops, and analysis and without a campaign plan or strategy, was tantamount to hallucination, which one sage Australian trooper defined as “vision without resources or analysis.” From the rearming of warlord militias to the use of airpower, to the use of the military for the disbursement of development aid, the United States was relying on militarized solutions to Afghan problems. This experimental design for stabilizing Afghanistan sought to rely on the least expensive investments that its senior leaders could conceive of, ones which principally focused on the military instrument and punitive displays of lethal force. This approach animated a host of adversaries and created conditions that helped catalyze the neo-Taliban, but it did not produce stability.

To be sure, there were some success stories, though mixed. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) represented a creative initiative that General Barno inherited and fully endorsed. The PRTs were designed to ameliorate the poor governance and prevalent unemployment that helped push the population away from the Afghan government and towards the Taliban. They comprised a blend of Coalition military and interagency members who were re-

²⁴ See Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 202–3, for insights on airpower and civilian casualties. The numbers on air strikes are from page 202.

sponsible for all kinds of nonmilitary counterinsurgency actions, from diplomacy to development. These teams worked on building relationships with local Afghan leaders toward the goals of better administration and development. Their principal shortcoming stemmed from the absence of unity of effort and command across Afghanistan because they were subject to national direction and because a CORDS-like architecture did not exist. In 2003 and 2004, U.S. military advisors also helped reduce many of the problems with the fledgling ANA, and that army today is one of the most respected state institutions. In 2008, with the assistance of U.S. and other foreign advisors, the Afghan Ministry of the Interior pursued a Focused District Development program that was aimed at overhauling the ANP, which theretofore had been a de facto recruiting tool for insurgents due to its corruption, ineptitude, and predatory abuse of the populace. This program vetted and trained entire district police forces and removed bad leaders, and although imperfect, was a step in the right direction, having an impact on how the people view the police in redeveloped districts.²⁵

Information Operations

We are an empire now and when we act, we create our own reality.

— attributed to a George W. Bush advisor
in *Ahmed Rashid*, *Descent into Chaos*

The foreigners must like the *topak salaran* [gun-rulers, warlords].

— attributed to a Pashtun tribal elder
in *Sarah Chayes*, *The Punishment of Virtue*

How the population perceives the legitimacy and rectitude of the government and its partners in providing apt administration, security, and development is the essence of counterinsurgency. Perception creates reality and that perception stems from consistency in deed and message. This section compares and contrasts how well the insurgents and counterinsurgents in Afghanistan integrated information operations and security operations to persuade the population of the legitimacy of their enterprises and actions.

²⁵ Atiq Sarwari and Robert D. Crews, "Epilogue: Afghanistan and the Pax Americana," in Crews and Tarzi, *Taliban and the Crisis*, 316–18; and Moyar, *A Question of Command*, 200 and 206–7.

It is typically more difficult and costly for the counterinsurgent to maintain legitimacy and order than it is for insurgent to undermine order and legitimacy. This difficulty increases in magnitude for a third-country military force trying to sustain a good public image when prosecuting counterinsurgency operations among the indigenous population. The reality is that insurgents often find it easier to appear successful in the information environment, simply by blowing up people and things. Contrariwise, counterinsurgents face the far more difficult task of building governments and institutions. Destruction has an immediate informational effect, whereas construction projects are slow to achieve effects. Successful counterinsurgency, in other words, “is much less attention-grabbing and much more resource-consuming than effective insurgency.” Recent research posits that the advent of both modern information technology and the resurgence of insurgencies have broken the military’s and the media’s shared monopoly on information and elevated the salience of public perception in the recent and current counterinsurgencies (irregular wars) in Afghanistan and elsewhere.²⁶

One of the Taliban’s principal intended indigenous targets for their influence operations are illiterate farmers and villagers, a not inconsiderable and unimportant portion of the population. To appeal to this group, the Taliban messages portray the Coalition as infidel foreign invaders who aim to impose their Christian democratic ways on the Afghan populace. The Taliban somewhat masterfully conflate Afghan nationalism, Pashtun norms, and their extreme but still resonant version of Islam to propagate against the “Western infidel foreign occupation.” (Indeed, the withdrawal of all foreign forces has been one of the Quetta Shura Taliban’s enduring preconditions for a political settlement.) When Coalition security forces initiate lethal operations that inadvertently result in alleged civilian casualties, the Taliban are often quicker to initiate preemptive propaganda that either exaggerates or distorts the actual consequences. Unlike their predecessors, the newly resurgent Taliban swiftly adapted and embraced media and information operations after 2002. The old Taliban banned most media, but the revived Taliban

²⁶ Rid and Hecker, *War 2.0*, 2–4. The direct quote is from page 3.

now recognizes the importance of news media in determining the outcome of an irregular war of ideas. Learning from al-Qaeda's successes with information warfare, the neo-Taliban now relies on media as a powerful instrument in waging psychological warfare. The Taliban's global media campaign has two audiences: their supporters and potential guerrilla recruits, and the populations of their enemies. The number of Coalition-induced "civilian casualties" has become an important focus of the Taliban's information operations. In some instances, Taliban spokespersons have called the international media in Kabul within minutes of a NATO airstrike, thus getting their message on civilian casualties out before the official Coalition statement and shaping the information environment to fit the Taliban narrative. Whether the Taliban messages are inaccurate or exaggerated, the fact that the Coalition has accidentally hit civilian targets previously lends a degree of advanced credibility to their propaganda.²⁷

Coalition media statements continuously downplay the sophistication and correctness of Taliban media operations that focus on civilian casualties. They highlight the falseness of the Taliban reports and note the Taliban tactics of intentionally causing civilians to be in the lines of fire to produce casualties. Although Coalition media press releases persist in insisting that the Taliban's swiftly crafted reports on civilian casualties are factually wrong, it does not matter. In Afghanistan, the first messages—whether correct or incorrect and regardless of the means of transmission—tend to stick and create a perception of reality. For example, there were several instances in 2008 when cell phone calls placed directly to the presidential palace would plant erroneous and exaggerated first reports of civilian injuries in the minds of senior Afghan leaders. Disabusing the senior Afghan leaders of these false reports with facts was an uphill and time-intensive endeavor. Unencumbered by twentieth-century hierarchical bureaucracies with Cold War penchants for overclassifying almost everything, the Taliban's civilian-casualty propaganda operations exhibit far greater celerity than the NATO/Coalition media operations. There are also reports of the Taliban text messaging reporters in Kabul after every incident when

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170–73 and 178–82.

U.S. forces called in close air support, thereby conveying the Taliban version of the damage and typically claiming civilian casualties. Not unlike the Chechens of the anti-Soviet mujahideen, the Taliban would often attack Coalition forces from populated areas to purposefully bait Coalition air strikes that would inevitably kill civilians. They did this so effectively near Shindand in August 2008 that the fallout from both the contrived and real casualty figures induced the Afghan president to repeat his hallmark performance of histrionics over civilian casualties with senior U.S. civilian and military leaders well into 2009.²⁸

The Taliban's focus on civilian casualties in their media operations has brought them four readily discernible advantages: a decrease in both the popular support for the government and its perceived government legitimacy, an increase in guerrilla recruits, impediments to freedom of Coalition action when real or contrived civilian casualty incidents precipitate operational pauses (this means operations are interrupted in a given area or areas), and an increase in negative pressure on the public of NATO allies. In addition to using media to impugn the Coalition for alleged civilian casualties, the Taliban have proven increasingly adept at blending their information operations with their lethal operations. One credible study identified the key strength of the Taliban leadership to be its ability to integrate guerrilla tactics with assassinations and suicide bombing to support its overarching political strategy to force the Coalition/Afghan government to quit. In this way, the Taliban's chief strength lined up against the Coalition's chief vulnerability to integrate actions and ideas within an influence campaign. This study indicated that "the enemy appeared to be succeeding in their information operations primarily because they made propaganda their main effort, while coalition forces tended instead to treat information as a supporting activity" and did not recognize armed propaganda in their information operations doctrine. The Taliban have skillfully used rumors and verbal persuasion and coercion to make local officials and farmers do what they want. The use of night letters to intimidate the people into compliance with the Taliban's will is another effective use of propaganda. They have as-

²⁸ Ibid.

sassinated many local government officials, schoolteachers, and tribal leaders for not complying with these nighttime threats. In many cases, there were few to no Afghan Security Forces or Coalition forces present to protect the population from either the threats or the consequences of noncompliance. Thus, the people supported the Taliban's wishes.²⁹

Antonio Giustozzi has described the Taliban's armed propaganda as "a strategy of demoralization," which included displaying the bodies of executed "collaborationists," mutilating the bodies of interpreters working for the Coalition, and beheading prisoners, all for the psychological propaganda effect. Suicide attacks were another key and powerful component of the strategy to erode the will of the enemy. These were unprecedented in Afghanistan during the Soviet war and generally anathema to Pashtun cultural norms. The Taliban apparently adopted these heinous methods in May 2003 with al-Qaeda's encouragement, and they started to implement these slowly due to the challenge of finding a sufficient number of local Pashtuns who were willing to blow themselves up. In Afghanistan, the Taliban launched six suicide attacks in 2004 and 21 in 2005. In 2006 and 2007, however, they mounted between 135 and 145 suicide attacks that in aggregate inflicted almost 3,000 casualties. Ahmed Rashid has reported that many of the early suicide bombers were deranged teenagers and orphans from asylums and orphanages in Pakistan. The propaganda of the early attacks stimulated recruiting among a wave of foreign fighters who were flowing back to Pakistan in response to al-Qaeda's call to help the Taliban. The mujahideen glorified suicide attacks, referring to them as the "missiles of Mullah Omar." By 2006 they were mounting suicide attacks in the middle of Kandahar or outside the American embassy in Kabul. The large number of foreign Arab volunteers helped to expand the scope and number of suicide attacks after 2006 because they helped train the next generation of Taliban militants in skills such as bomb making and fund-raising.³⁰

There are two other aspects of the Taliban's evolving ideology and information operations that warrant explanation. First, the neo-

²⁹ Ibid., 180; and David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49–50 and 58–59. The direct quote is from page 58.

³⁰ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 108–9; and Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 366–67.

Taliban's ideological rhetoric ultimately expanded their scope of jihad from their local one to one that increasingly embraced global militant Islamism, particularly since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Taliban's association with other insurgent and terrorist groups broadened the movement's outlook by connecting it to a network of similarly disposed groups. By fall 2006, foreign fighters and insurgents in Iraq also began to shift their attention toward Afghanistan, an important symbol of jihad and home of an increasingly lethal insurgency that offered militants an opportunity to fight the West. Unlike the Taliban at its inception in 1994 as a homogeneous Pashtun group, the new Taliban has expanded its affiliations with a wider array of foreign and indigenous jihadist movements who reside in Pakistan's tribal areas. By 2007, the Taliban were linked to a loose coalition of former anti-Soviet mujahideen, Pashtun tribesman, Pashtun clerics, Punjabi militants, Arab and Pakistani Islamists, and officials in the Pakistani government. The suicide bombers comprised a mix of Afghan Pashtun refugees and foreign fighters trained in Pakistan. The Taliban's association with this international jihadist network changed its narrative to become more closely aligned with the universal aspirations of global jihad. The Taliban leadership is now as inclined as any other Islamist militant group to raise concerns for the plight of insurgents in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, or Uzbekistan. Another telling change reflected by the Taliban's adaptive approach to information operations was when Mullah Omar issued a 30-point book of rules to his subordinate commanders to improve their behavior and governance. The neo-Taliban still burned down government schools and imposed harsh sharia justice, but the intention was to treat the population better to earn its support.³¹

Information operations and strategic communications were not the strong suits of the U.S. government or the U.S. military when this long war in Afghanistan began. There has been much effort and money invested in making the U.S. bureaucracy better at this, and there have been discernible improvements that vary across agencies and organizations. However, by early 2009, the Taliban was still more effective and agile than the Coalition in its information operations.

³¹ Robert L. Canfield, "Fraternity, Power, and Time in Central Asia," in Tarzi and Crews, *Taliban and the Crisis*, 232-35; and Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 362-63.

Even though he was supposedly oblivious to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, former U.S. Secretary Rumsfeld did acknowledge that “our enemies have skillfully adapted to fighting wars in today’s media age, but for the most part, our country, our government has not.” The impediments for the U.S. Army in conducting information operations for irregular warfare, given its big conventional war genetics, were manifold: it saw itself as a stand-alone army focused on military but not political transformation; it focused on similarly organized enemies; it emphasized secrecy in psychological operations and control of hidden information operations; and it looked for quantitative measures of effectiveness and rational interests, not for comprehension of cultural perceptions. Moreover, such an army viewed emerging information technology in the context of improving its own internal command and control, not to project ideas and messages intended to influence alien populations. Reconciling the need for bottom-up, creative approaches to influence the populace, one valley at a time, with the Defense Department’s proclivities for risk aversion and excessive control remains a challenge. In Afghanistan, there have been examples of best practices by brigade and battalion commanders who have learned how to match actions with ideas to convince the people of their legitimacy and rectitude. However, before 2009 there really was not a large degree of operational coherence or a way to capture, distill, analyze, and broadly disseminate these observed practices, either within theater or from one region to another, or back to institutional training bases of the troop-contributing countries within the alliance. Likewise, there was not a great deal of migration of practices from Iraq to Afghanistan, or vice versa. This does not mean there was none of this, but only that there was too little of it and it was not organized.³²

Postscript

By early 2009 in Afghanistan, the linkages among insurgents, terrorists, narcotics traffickers, and warlords were growing and becoming increasingly more complementary. Up until the late 2010/early 2011 reversals, the resurgent Afghan Taliban was prosecuting

³² Rid and Hecker, *War 2.0*, 68–69, 35–36, 42–43, and 50. See Kilcullen, *Accidental Guerrilla*, 69–70, for best practice information operations in Afghanistan. The direct quote is from page 68 in *War 2.0*.

an increasingly potent insurgency in the south and east of Afghanistan. The principal sources of the resurgent insurgency include corruption, oppression, poverty, bad governance, and Islamist movements that are metastasizing throughout Afghanistan and neighboring countries. The Karzai government has found it exceedingly difficult to extend its mandate and control outside the capital of Kabul and into Afghanistan's vast and austere hinterlands. The most pernicious aspect, and a crucial cause for the steady regeneration and growth in insurgent capacity, is that most of the senior al-Qaeda leadership, and a preponderance of the Taliban senior cadre have been afforded relatively unimpeded sanctuary in and around the FATA across the border in Pakistan. In part, this grave situation evolved as a result of the U.S. government's decision in mid-November 2001 (during the early stages of OEF) to allow the Pakistani Air Force to transport hundreds of Pakistanis from the then-encircled northern city of Kunduz to Peshawar. This evacuation "turned into a mass extraction of senior Taliban and al Qaeda personnel, dubbed 'Operation Evil Airlift' by appalled Special Forces soldiers on the scene."³³

Worse still, there was apparently no joint U.S.-Pakistani accountability for determining who was who among this *mélange* of Inter-Services Intelligence, Taliban, and al-Qaeda fighters at their disembarkation point in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (now named the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province). The following month the United States then failed to commit American ground forces to block the escape route of al-Qaeda from Tora Bora, allowing Osama bin Laden and several dozen of his senior leaders to escape a potential encirclement to flee into Pakistan, where a number of key leaders remained as of this printing. The corpus of counterinsurgency doctrine and experience from the last 60 years and before points to one enduring truism about counterinsurgency, one with huge implications for the long war in Afghanistan and Pakistan: counterinsurgents cannot be successful without denying the insurgents sanctuary and external support. Experience across coun-

³³ See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 91–92, for insight on the Kunduz airlift. See Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Terrorism, Insurgency, and Afghanistan," in *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century*, vol. 2, ed. James J. F. Forest (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 453–78, for analysis of the insurgent and terrorist safe haven in the FATA.

terinsurgencies has shown that very few counterinsurgencies have ever succeeded by affording the insurgents cross-border sanctuary. The sanctuary in the wild and unregulated tribal areas on Pakistan's northern border remains an increasingly grave impediment to any chance of success in Afghanistan. This is as true of the FATA on Afghanistan's border as it was true of the Ho Chi Minh Trail on Vietnam's border. A major objective for the counterinsurgent, beyond isolating the insurgents from the population, must be to deny the insurgency access to external support, without which insurgencies have seldom achieved their full potential. The prospect of successfully reducing the sanctuary in Pakistan is the subject of the next chapter.³⁴

³⁴ See Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942–1976* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2006); Peter Paret and John W. Shy, *Guerrillas in the 60's*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1962); and *FM 3-24* for body of doctrine.



3

PAKISTAN TO 2009: WITH US OR AGAINST US?

We can love our enemies but only after we have defeated them.

—Taliban leader quoted in Ahmed Rashid, Taliban

Pakistan is exponentially more complex than Afghanistan. If Afghanistan is a challenging conundrum, Pakistan is the puzzle nested within the enigma that relates directly and inexorably to security and stability in Afghanistan. It seems that part of the problem in Pakistan stems from an inherent propensity for intransigence and duplicity. Another part of the challenge in working with Pakistan is that the history of the United States and Pakistan is stained by the Americans' calculated Cold War geopolitical maneuvering, which many Pakistanis rightfully perceive as less than steadfast and consistent support. The contradictions within Pakistan, in its political and military cultures, also contributed to a relationship that ebbed and waned commensurate with Pakistan's fear and loathing of its archnemesis, India. The paradox of Pakistan's internal and foreign policy machinations were exceedingly manifest on 11 and 12 September 2001 when al-Qaeda terrorists struck key targets on the U.S. eastern seaboard and the U.S. delivered the ultimatum to Pakistan to be "with us or against us." Before 11 September 2001, from General Zia's era through the General Pervez Musharraf era, Pakistan had served as a sanctuary for the physical, philosophical, and materiel support for radical Islamist militant groups operating against India, in Kashmir, and in Afghanistan. The legacy of Zia's infusion of puritanical and political Islam among the Pashtuns seemed to be informed by the assumption that Pakistan would be able to control Islamist militancy in Afghanistan.¹

That assumption turned out to be a false one. The government of Pakistan and its agents in the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) supported the rise of the Taliban, and Pakistan was one of only three states to officially recognize the Taliban regime in 1996. Pakistan also

¹ See Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 80–81.

continued to support the Taliban with advisors and subsidies until September 2001. During this period, the Taliban regime, in return, afforded sanctuary for ISI-supported militant groups to train and equip insurgents and terrorists to attack Pakistan's perceived external and internal enemies. The long-embraced Pakistani security concept of strategic depth that underpinned this support turned out to be spurious. During the triumphant but ephemeral rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the border essentially vanished, with Pashtun tribes on both sides steadily slipping toward Islamist militancy and criminality. As early as 1997, Olivier Roy presciently observed that the Pakistani support of the Taliban amounted to "the de facto absorption of Afghanistan," which "will accentuate centrifugal tendencies in Pakistan." After 12 September 2001, when Pakistan officially decided to fight alongside the United States in the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, it rhetorically cut all ties to the Taliban and began to prosecute security operations in the tribal areas, with greatly varying degrees of efficacy. These reputed changes to what was theretofore a pro-Taliban policy catalyzed a backlash among radicalized tribal militants of various flavors who began to target the Pakistani state with increasingly violent effect from 2003 to early 2009. Instead of the Taliban providing strategic depth for Pakistan, the converse is now apparently the case, and discerning friend from foe in Pakistan has become difficult. This chapter examines the effectiveness of the Pakistani security forces' counterinsurgency operations in the tribal areas until the spring of 2009.²

Legitimacy

A deep-seated popular belief exists that combating terrorism serves U.S. interests and not those of Pakistan.

—*Marvin G. Weinbaum*, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan's North-West Frontier"

Pakistan was the hub of a radiating network of Islamist groups and organizations that by 2000 were asserting a pro-Pakistani agenda across the region.

—*Shaun Gregory*, "The ISI and the War on Terrorism"

The notion of legitimacy is more complex in Pakistan, again, because of the dichotomous and duplicitous nature of that state's in-

² These insights are attributed to Olivier Roy and Ahmed Rashid in Rashid, *Taliban*, 186–87. The direct quotation is attributed to Roy on page 187 of *Taliban*.

ternal and external security policies. The fusion of politics with virulent Islam, which first occurred in the religious schools under Zia's deliberate Islamicization program, is now ingrained in most of the country's public school curricula. Reinforced over decades by schools that inculcated an ideology of Islamic superiority, much of the Pakistani public at large was generally amenable to the government's support for the Taliban in the second half of the 1990s. As far as the (Pashtun) people in the tribal areas were concerned, many of them did ultimately embody the radical Islamist apotheosis of Zia's experiments with religious engineering. Many of them also surely supported their Pashtun Taliban brethren; some were linked by the mercenary necessities of smuggling opium and other illicit items, and more than a few may have been sufficiently radicalized to support al-Qaeda's narrative of global jihad. To be certain, most of the people did deeply favor Pakistan's deliberate policy of supporting Islamist guerrillas in Afghanistan, Kashmir, and elsewhere. And while one can now easily make a cogent argument against the long-term soundness of Pakistan serving as a hub for transnational militants, Pakistan's senior leadership, including the director of the ISI, had in fact embraced the promotion of militant proxies, viewing them as serving Pakistan's regional security policy until 11 September 2001 and beyond. Thus, when General Musharraf pledged that Pakistan was "with" the United States in its war on terror, and therefore against its former proxies, he did indeed nominally implement a huge reversal in security policy, which some in his government and many among the populace perceived as inimical to Pakistan's security.³

By September 2008, Musharraf was gone, and Pakistan, the tribal areas, and Afghanistan were far less secure, with full-blown insurgencies and spates of suicide attacks occurring more frequently against all types of targets. Events would seem to have validated the "deep-seated" belief against supporting the U.S. in the war on terror. That is, if the perception that Pakistan unambiguously worked to combat terrorism were indeed a true one. Pakistan's action or inaction has done far more to enable the Afghan

³ For insight on Islamist dogma in the public schools curricula, see Shaun Gregory and Simone Valentine, *Pakistan: The Situation of Religious Minorities* (United Kingdom: Writenet, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report, 2009), ii.

Taliban than to disable them. The Pakistani ISI and security forces have produced very few empirical or helpful results in the context of fighting the Afghan Taliban. The worst case is that actors in the employ of Pakistan have deliberately supplied, trained, or protected the Afghan Taliban to retain them as an instrument in pursuit of the Pakistanis' security imperative of strategic depth. (A full analysis of Pakistan's relationship with the Quetta Shura Taliban is beyond the scope of this study; the term "Quetta Shura" stems from Mullah Omar's relocation of the Taliban to Quetta, Pakistan, in winter 2002).

This section explores the grievances of both the Pakistani population and the Pakistani Taliban that helped undermine their belief in the legitimacy of the Pakistani government. These grievances helped catalyze an insurgency inside Pakistan. Until 2009, both the general public and the insurgents, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP; also referred to as the "Pakistani Taliban") and the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), seemed to share a common resentment of the government's security policy and its increasingly diminished capacity to govern competently and justly. Where the public and the Pakistani Taliban diverged was on the radical ideology of Islamist jihad. In general, the Pakistani citizenry of the Punjab and the Sindh do not necessarily or fully embrace the radical proclivities of Wahabbist or Deobandi Islamism that al-Qaeda, TTP, and TNSM espouse. The public in the core of Pakistan and the non-Taliban Pashtuns on the periphery do empathize with the plight of Muslims whom they perceive as victims of the United States and the Western war against them. A short review of some of the pre-existing context that potentially shaped the Pakistanis perceptions follows.⁴

The history of Pakistan's on-and-off partnership with the United States over the past six decades had led most Pakistanis to perceive American influence as a principal determinant of their country's fate and as a "heavy hand behind the actions of their leaders." Pakistanis have always been critical of this partnership: left-of-center

⁴ For a concise distillation of the TTP and TNSM, see Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 1–4. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan translates as the "Taliban Movement of Pakistan," and TNSM as the "Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia."

Pakistanis have decried American “imperialism” whereas Islamists, especially after the Iranian Revolution and the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, have pursued anti-Western agendas to varying degrees. In the 1990s, Washington’s stiff-armed response to Pakistan’s nuclear aspirations strengthened the mistrust of the United States in the Pakistani public’s perception, and even right-of-center nationalists began to question America’s reliability as a partner. The fact that, after the Soviet Union expired, U.S. attention quickly shifted away from South Asia—and the mujahideen mess it helped to create there—compounded these doubts. Thus, any decisions or actions that saw Pakistan’s cooperation with the United States before or after 11 September 2001 must be examined within the general context of prevalent Pakistani anti-Americanism. Lastly, any study of the Pakistani government’s legitimacy during the period from the fall of 2001 to the spring of 2009 is largely linked to the Musharraf era.⁵

When Musharraf became the head of the Pakistani state in 1999, he inherited a harvest of Islamist tendencies that were significantly more acute than those of the leaders who had preceded him. By 2001, Pakistan was the home to a potpourri of more than 24 armed jihadist militias and 58 religious political parties. By the late 1990s, the jihadist groups had grown into large armies of devoted men who were intrepid and quite willing to give their lives in pursuit of their goals and the honor of their “struggle.” Above all, these militias were galvanized by their unwavering commitment to free Kashmir from India’s tyranny. However, they were equally dedicated in their opposition to America and Israel, whom they perceived as the same in their threats to Islam. Their core formed around battle-seasoned veterans of jihad who had cut their teeth in the struggles of the mujahideen against the Soviets and of the Taliban against the venal warlords. The seminal work on this topic, Hassan Abbas’s *Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism*, explains that the militants and militias hailed from all social classes in Pakistan and from all areas of the country, including from the traditionally nonweapon bearing areas of Sindh and Punjab Provinces, thus showing that much of the country had been sufficiently radicalized as a result of both the

⁵ Daniel Markey, *Pakistani Partnerships with the United States: An Assessment* (Seattle, WA: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009), 5–6. Direct quote is from page 5.

Soviet-Afghan War and the subsequent Taliban era. Abbas, an expert on Pakistan who served in the Pakistani government under the second Bhutto regime and during the early Musharraf years, has noted that the militias also provided an ideology, an occupation, and a new family for the unemployed youth of Pakistan in which they discovered brotherhood and bonding. They considered themselves the elite vanguard of Allah's cause as they developed a contagious pride that would ultimately inspire thousands of other like-minded radicals to follow them. There were many of these militant groups that either emerged from the Soviet-Afghan War or in the 1990s as autonomous groups, or as Pakistani proxies for employment as irregulars in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Among these many jihadist groups were the TNSM, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI).⁶

The "Paranoidistan" syndrome, while curious, also cannot be discounted. It is manifest in a heightened propensity of the people in Pakistan to construe conspiracies and cabals in the absence of facts or evidence. This inclination toward conspiracy theories was also to influence the Pakistani public's perceptions of both Pakistan's and America's responses to 11 September. As people began to discuss the events of 9/11 in Pakistan, they became afflicted by a self-imposed rash of skepticism and doubt about the veracity of the attacks. The Pakistani public considered it peculiar that the majority of the U.S. news media could so confidently identify Osama bin Laden as the perpetrator of the plot while the smoke of the World Trade Center was still rising. They questioned how half-trained pilots could maneuver such large jet planes through the obstacles of skyscrapers to direct them onto their designated targets. The public in Pakistan was also perplexed by the notion that bin Laden, hunkered down in a remote cave in Afghanistan and with-

⁶ Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism*, 201–2. Punjab has historically been a big contributor to the Pakistani army. However, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the tribal areas are generally the places with traditional gun-bearing folk. For more information on these Pakistani based militant groups, see Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," 1–4, and "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 4 (April 2009): 1–4; and Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, "The Taliban Organization in Pakistan," *RUSI Journal* 154 (October 2009): 40–47. See note 4 for translation of TNSM. LeT stands for the "Army of the Faithful," HuM for "Movement of Holy Warriors," and HuJI for "Islamic Movement Struggle."

out any means of communication except human messengers, could coordinate such a complex operation. For instance, Abbas notes that no less than a senior Pakistani intelligence officer incredulously posited to him “that this operation needed a gestation time of at least two years in which the don’ts seemed to be of far greater importance than the dos.” This same intelligence officer also argued that the perpetrators who had prepared the attack had to know what all the major European and American intelligence agencies were then routinely monitoring. He also questioned who in an organization such as al-Qaeda would have been in possession of such detailed knowledge. A large number among Pakistan’s population concluded that such a complex operation was far beyond the capabilities of al-Qaeda. Others actually imagined that Israeli Mossad agents must have infiltrated al-Qaeda, one of whom had to have ultimately assumed control of the cell that eventually conducted the attack on the orders of Mossad, “while his subordinates joyfully carried out his order in the belief that they were carrying out Osama’s instructions.”⁷

Stranger still were the extant perceptions of the populations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) adjacent to Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (since renamed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province), people who had always viewed the government in Islamabad to be equally as alien as its British Raj predecessors had been to them. The inhabitants of this area are mostly illiterate and as completely ignorant of the outside world as it is of them. The FATA is one of the poorest regions in Pakistan with poor infrastructure, high poverty, and little employment. Its economy depends on the smuggling of weapons and drugs to and from Afghanistan. Being Pashtuns, its residents do not differ greatly from their tribal brethren on the other side of the Durand Line: they are devoutly pious; intensely loyal to their own tribe; bound by the Pashtun way (Pashtunwali); and obdurately resistant to any developments imposed from the outside that might change how they live. Since the nineteenth century these tribes have been very loosely governed by the antiquated Frontier Crimes Regulations, which call for collective punishment of tribes and villages when the

⁷ Abbas, *Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism*, 223. The direct quote is from the same page.

tribes fail to administer sufficient punishment against crimes. Since the inception of Pakistan as a state in 1947, and before it under British rule, no outsiders have really governed the FATA. Any efforts to exert a degree of control in the FATA have relied on the time-tested British methods of subsidies (bribes), personal contacts between the government's political agents and the tribal *maliks* (chieftains), tribal customs for dispute resolution, acceptance of Islam as an ethical fundament, and the threat of severe punishment. In fact, so alien was the FATA to Pakistan proper that, until 2001–2, there were four large areas in the agencies along the border with Afghanistan that had never witnessed a Pakistani military presence. The Pashtuns in these tribal lands have never welcomed the presence of either the Pakistani military or ordinary Pakistani citizens, neither before nor after September 2001.⁸

A comprehensive analysis of the myriad real and perceived grievances that helped catalyze such a diverse array of groups and people is beyond the scope of this study. But the most important points of grievance among both the population and the future insurgents in Pakistan were the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan's abandonment of the Taliban and embrace of the United States in the war on terror, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Corollary and intervening factors that helped catalyze the insurgency were the exodus of al-Qaeda and former Taliban from Afghanistan to Pakistan's tribal areas after their defeat and the jury-rigged victory of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the major Islamic political party in Pakistan, in the October 2002 parliamentary elections. These two factors stimulated popular support for the Islamist insurgencies in mutually reinforcing ways. For the tribal areas particularly, both the unprecedented appearance of Pakistani army forces and the Pashtuns' continued exclusion from the mainstream political system were sources of resentment and unrest. Both the Pakistani army's heavy-handed methods of employing force in the tribal areas and the U.S. reliance on drone strikes further aggrieved segments of the local populace and stimulated more recruits and support for insurgency. The ultimate spark that ignited full-blown

⁸ Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror*, 123 and 186; International Crisis Group, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, Asia Report Number 125 (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2006), i.

TTP and TNSM insurgencies aimed at the Pakistani state was the government's assault on the Red Mosque (Lal Masjid) in July 2007. After amplifying the principal grievances, the next section examines the use of force in Pakistan's war against militants.⁹

By the fall of 2001, Pakistan's polity and public were anti-American as a result of both general American policy omissions after the Soviet-Afghan War and specific Pakistani xenophobic perspectives inculcated as part of its educational curricula. Its military and security forces had a deeply Islamic prejudice and were closely tied to both the Taliban regime and a host of other jihadist proxies. In many instances, ISI and army advisors were embedded with the Taliban and included among them Islamist ideologues, which were products of Zia's Islamic program. Moreover, the most fertile ground for vehement anti-Americanism and radical Islamist militancy was in the Pashtun tribal areas, where political Islam overlaid a deeply entrenched tribal code. The Pashtun tribesman have fiercely resisted outside encroachment for millennia. The arrival in the tribal areas of Afghan Arabs and Taliban seeking refuge from the U.S. invasion likely reinforced both their shared social conventions and their hatred of America. There are insights from the Pashtuns in the tribal belt after the Taliban exodus from Pakistan revealing their empathy for their oppressed brothers who shared their worldview and took up arms against the Western invaders. The perception that the government sold them out was a strong one. It is not so surprising that when America induced Pakistan to flip all of these activities and proclivities essentially upside down that the public and the more radical groups were opposed in varying extremes.¹⁰

Musharraf's 12 January 2002 speech to the nation was the real break from the past and a declaration of support for America's war on terror. It was also a catalyst for resentment among both the general public and the Islamist militias who considered the speech to be an explicit betrayal of their Muslim brothers in Afghanistan. Even before the American-led campaign began in Afghanistan and before Musharraf's public pledge of support, Pakistani Islamists

⁹ On the consequences of the MMA victory, see Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 240–50. For a detailed account of the Red Mosque assault, see Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror*, 191–93.

¹⁰ Canfield, "Fraternity, Power, and Time in Central Asia," 229–30.

were speaking out in support of the Taliban in mass meetings. Pakistani Mufti Shamzai, a former advisor to both Zia and Mullah Omar, and a member of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), issued a fatwa in September 2001 that called on all Muslims to wage jihad against the United States if its military forces attacked Afghanistan. The fatwa also declared that citizens of Muslim countries that supported the United States would no longer be obliged to obey their governments. Following the announcement of the U.S. campaign, many of the Islamist groups joined the Pak-Afghan Defense Council, which was founded in December 2000 to protest previous United Nations (UN) sanctions against the Taliban. During a wave of anti-American public demonstrations in the autumn of 2001, these protests against the U.S. campaign also began to assume a strictly Pashtun face. For example, in Karachi, 80 percent of the demonstrators were Pashtuns. Most of the Pakistani volunteers captured in Afghanistan in late 2001 were also Pashtuns. Just before Musharraf's address, there was a mass meeting in Akora Khattak, which congregated the entire array of Pakistani armed and unarmed Islamist groups (a veritable potpourri of *Harakats*, *Jami'ats*, and *Sipahs*) to protest the UN Security Council Resolution that authorized the invasion. After the 12 January speech, several of these militant groups, including those returning from the fight in Afghanistan, coalesced to decide what manner of violence they would cause to express their disillusionment with the government's decision. As a consequence, the first half of 2002 witnessed a spate of gruesome attacks against Westerners and religious minorities, which included the kidnapping and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl.¹¹

To compound the challenges in the Pashtun areas, the parliamentary elections of 10 October 2002 saw the MMA—a coalition of six Islamic parties—come to power in the North-West Frontier Province and as part of a coalition government in Baluchistan's provincial government. JUI leaders in both provinces openly declared that they supported the Taliban. A member of parliament from Kohat helped secure the release of hundreds of Taliban and

¹¹ Zahab and Roy, *Islamist Networks*, 60–65 and 79–81. *Harakat* is “movement,” *Jami'at* means “society,” and *Sipah* generally translates as “friends.”

al-Qaeda fighters detained by authorities. Not surprisingly, an increase in attacks against U.S. and Coalition forces operating in the adjacent Pashtun provinces in Afghanistan followed this development in the spring of 2003.¹²

It was during the period between late 2002 and 2007 that the blend of empowered Pashtun Islamic parties, increasingly militant Islamist groups, al-Qaeda foreign fighters, and Afghan Taliban co-existed in the tribal areas under favorable conditions for regeneration and cooperation. Mullah Omar had instructed the Taliban to keep in touch after they fled Afghanistan and to wait for instructions. During this period, Taliban commanders were taking stock of their losses, excavated caches of weapons, and fulfilling fundraising requirements. In his analysis of the Taliban's resurgence, Robert L. Canfield found that funds for the Taliban flowed in "from businessmen in Karachi, goldsmiths in Peshawar, wealthy Saudis and Kuwaitis," and even from "sympathetic officers" in the Pakistani army and ISI. Pashtuns who resented the harsh treatment of Afghan civilians at the hands of the Coalition forces and a host of new recruits were assembling in the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province. In the Baluchi capital of Quetta, the JUI essentially handed over the suburb of Pashtunabad to the Afghan Taliban. It was during this time that Mullah Omar also regenerated his Taliban *shura* (Arabic for "council") in Quetta.¹³

By 2003, a loose coalition of personally linked and tribally affiliated Islamist militias had begun to operate under the TTP label. In addition to local grievances, they resented the Coalition presence in Afghanistan, and they were determined to implement a strict Islamic agenda. The Pakistani Taliban also connected to emerging networks of like-minded groups who included the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda leaders, and other Islamist organizations. The insurgency in Pakistan gathered strength beginning in 2004 when, under pressure from Washington, the government deployed tens of thousands of troops to North and South Waziristan to seal off infiltration routes into Afghanistan. The presence and actions of these forces helped generate more recruits and support for the Taliban. Over the next several

¹² See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 249, on the JUI support of the Afghan Taliban. Zahab and Roy, 77.

¹³ See Canfield, 229, for the direct quotations on funding sources.

years, the TTP gathered strength in the remaining tribal agencies and then in adjoining districts of the province then known as the North-West Frontier Province. In the process, they killed off or scared away hundreds of traditional tribal leaders to establish local control.¹⁴

The legitimacy of the TTP cause relied on the support of those local populations in the tribal agencies whose expectations for infrastructure and economic improvements remained unfulfilled. In the districts of the North-West Frontier Province, locals resented both the incompetence and the corruption of provincial officials and local police. An Islamic judicial system that pledged to mete out swifter justice than the Pakistani courts also drew local support for the TTP. For its part, the Pakistani government was unwilling to see the TTP threat to state as a full-blown insurgency within its borders. Since Islamabad did not traditionally view the tribal areas as part of Pakistan proper, it saw the TTP as a threat to contain or deflect toward Afghanistan but not one it necessarily needed to defeat. The government's operations against these militants were usually inconclusive and incomplete. This discernible absence of any steadfastness in the government's policies also brought into question its legitimacy in the minds of the insurgent leadership.¹⁵

Since 2004, Pakistan has experienced the emergence of a collection of jihadist groups whose operators describe themselves as the Pakistani Taliban and who have established a network of mini-emirates wielding local sharia justice within large areas of the Pashtun Belt, including the FATA and the region now known as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. While a range of commanders in the Pakistani Taliban have conducted operations in several different agencies, in late 2007 several of those insurgent leaders loosely unified under the banner of the TTP. They conducted operations under the professed leadership of Baitullah Mehsud who was based out of South Waziristan in the FATA. Notwithstanding, there was no concrete proof that this TTP cluster in fact operated under the positive command and control of Mehsud.¹⁶

¹⁴ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan's North-West Frontier," *Journal of International Affairs* 63 (Fall/Winter 2009): 75–76.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ C. Christine Fair, "Pakistan's Own War on Terror: What the Pakistani Public Thinks," *Journal of International Affairs* 63 (Fall/Winter 2009): 41–42.

The TNSM is the other discernibly significant component of Pakistan's internal insurgent threat that became increasingly more active in and around Swat after 2002. Islamist militancy in general, and from the TNSM in particular, is not a new phenomenon in Swat. Since 1995, the TNSM, led by Sufi Muhammad Khan, has confronted the Pakistani government, sometimes violently, over this militant group's endeavors to impose extreme Islamic reforms in the district. The Pakistani government detained Sufi Muhammad in 2002 because his efforts to recruit large numbers of young Pakistanis to cross into Afghanistan to fight on the side of the Taliban in its last days of power stirred tremendous controversy. Beginning in the summer of 2007, Pakistani security forces were fighting insurgent groups affiliated with the TNSM, a group that subsequently seized the Swat Valley in late October 2007 and that was allied with and ultimately subsumed under the TTP.¹⁷

The accelerant for this simmering fire in Pakistan's Pashtun Belt was the Red Mosque assault by the elite Special Services Group beginning on 10 July 2007. For several months the Islamist militants who controlled this mosque in the heart of Islamabad had been taunting the government with increasingly bold challenges to its legitimacy. The brothers who ran the Red Mosque, Mullah Abdul Rashid Ghazi and Maulana Abdul Aziz, also commanded a veritable army of religious zealots, both male and female, who were eager to earn martyrdom. What's more, fatwas emanating from the mosque had called for the overthrow and death of Musharraf. When the militants began kidnapping Chinese nationals and setting alight government buildings, the government was compelled to take control of the situation. The Special Services Group assault was inevitably a violent affair as it faced heavily armed and fanatically devoted resistance. The ensuing battles incurred the deaths of at least a dozen soldiers and a hundred jihadists. The Red Mosque was also a turning point that changed everything as the militant groups operating in the tribal areas and elsewhere concluded from it that the state was their enemy. It was a propaganda windfall as well, and one day after the siege al-Qaeda issued a video indicting Musharraf as the stooge of the Crusaders and Zionists. This prop-

¹⁷ Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 78.

aganda entreated militants throughout Pakistan to exact revenge. Still, years of the state's pusillanimous accommodation and support of Islamist groups did not prepare either the public or the militants for the shock attendant to such a violent assault. It precipitated a huge backlash. Over the next several months Pakistan confronted its most serious insurgent threat since the Bengali secessionist insurgency of 1971.¹⁸

In April 2008, the government released Sufi Muhammad, hoping he would provide a moderating influence on the more militant local Islamist franchises that Maulana Fazlullah, his son-in-law, directed. The Taliban operating in Swat had embarked on organized armed resistance to the local official administrators and had also attacked the landed middle classes and others who had refused to submit to Fazlullah's edicts. The Taliban in Swat had readily repulsed all previous attempts by the Frontier Corps (FC), with regular army officers in command, to reimpose state control. Most of the local police had in fact deserted their posts in fear of the Taliban's wrath. The Pakistani army and other paramilitary government forces were prepared to make a peace deal if it meant a cessation of the attacks against its troops and if it brought an end to humiliating defeats at the hands of the TTP. Notwithstanding the string of earlier futile and disappointing peace deals with militants elsewhere, public and media support for finding a political resolution in Swat then existed. National and provincial leaders of the recently elected Awami National Party saw Sufi Muhammad's demands to impose a sharia law system in the district as acceptable if the accommodation brought peace to the area. The government and Sufi Muhammad agreed to a cease-fire in February 2009. Chapter 5 of this study addresses the consequences of that arrangement.¹⁹

Up until May 2009, the Pakistani army's typically preferred method of exerting influence across the tribal belt was to leverage personal and tribal rivalries to divide the militants. The army did employ the old British-style punitive raids to punish insurgents in

¹⁸ See Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 7–10; and Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror*, 190–92, for detailed accounts of the Red Mosque attack.

¹⁹ Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 78.

response to attacks or ambushes against army posts and convoys, but these were generally short-lived. These forays normally ended with cease-fire agreements that ceded something to the militants in return for pledges on the latter's part to refrain from attacking army units and from proselytizing their cause among the more populated districts. It seemed that the Pakistani government and security forces never provided any means of enforcing these agreements. They also conveniently accepted pledges by the insurgents to curtail support to the Afghan Taliban at face value. This approach of pursuing a policy of appeasement after marginally useful punitive offensives, which the Pakistanis pursued in the tribal areas for several years, was fundamentally flawed and ineffective. Worst still, it was counterproductive in sustaining the legitimacy of the government in the perception of the population. Because the Pakistani security forces typically reached these peace agreements with Pashtun militants from a position of weakness, in the minds of the Pashtuns, the legitimacy was conferred upon the militant tribal groups, not the government. By late 2007, polls of the Pakistani public showed its traditionally favorable perception of the Pakistani army in decline, its concern about Islamist militant groups on the rise, and little and falling support for military operations in the tribal areas. Popular support for Pakistan's alliance with the United States in the war on terror was at 15 percent.²⁰

Although Pakistan continues to view some insurgent and terrorist groups as convenient proxies to help pursue its foreign policy toward Afghanistan and India (through the Afghan Taliban and the LeT, for example), the government has embarked on a low intensity conflict (LIC) against several elements of the TTP, employing units of both the regular army and the paramilitary FC, with largely varying degrees of success and commitment. Pakistan's security forces have suffered numerous defeats and have codified these losses on the ground in several controversial peace agreements with the jihadists, all of which have been on terms advantageous to the militants, and most of which were ignored by the TTP and TNSM before the ink was dry. While the Pakistani army's lack of capacity

²⁰ Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 76. The Washington based International Republican Institute November 2007 polling data was cited in Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror*, 193-94.

for genuine counterinsurgency among the Pashtuns has undoubtedly influenced its lack of stomach for such operations, another important variable was that the Pakistani public did not wholly support these types of operations until early 2009. Until May 2009—after peace deals over Swat were broken and subsequent insurgent advances were made into Buner—the Pakistani public did not recognize or perceive the existential threat engendered in the collusive aspirations of TTP and TNSM militants. Without popular support, at least from the Pakistani heartland, Pakistan’s military leadership did not consider full-measure military operations to pacify the Pashtun Belt possible. It is also possible that the Pakistani army may not have viewed the use of force there as a sensible use of resources. The Pakistani army is intimately interwoven with the Pakistani state, for good or ill, and the institution has traditionally benefited from the perceived adulation of Pakistan’s populace. For this reason, the Pakistani army’s sensitivities to conducting operations in the tribal areas that were unpopular in Pakistan hampered it from doing so to any effect.²¹

Force

The Taliban should not be allowed to impose their way of life on the civil society of Pakistan.

— attributed to Pakistani army Chief of Staff General Ashfaq Kayani in Marvin Weinbaum’s *“Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan’s North-West Frontier”*

Without popular support, military action, long-term holding operations, and dedication of national resources are unlikely to be enough to defeat the Pakistan Taliban and other militants groups.

—C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, *“Pakistan’s War Within”*

In September 2001, Pakistan did not face a burgeoning internal insurgency. But, after the government’s assault on the Red Mosque in July 2007, already percolating insurgencies emanating from the North-West Frontier Province proper and the FATA began to expand in size and scope, projecting increasingly violent attacks into Pakistani urban areas outside the tribal belt. Success in countering in-

²¹ Fair, “Pakistan’s Own War on Terror,” 42.

surgeons in the twenty-first century relies on a host of skills and capabilities, but the most fundamental requirement is to win and sustain popular support for military and civil actions. Both good administration and the credible use of legitimate force designed to serve and protect the relevant populations generally tend to garner some notion of popular support. Between 2002 and 2009 the Taliban in Pakistan, in collusion with al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups, slowly began to impose their extreme Islamist way of life on the people in the tribal areas. Among the reasons for this were the lack of governance, resources for development, services, and any notion of credible government-provided security and justice in these areas. Not only did military actions lack popular support because of the factors associated with legitimacy illuminated in the previous section, but the way in which the Pakistani security forces operated in the tribal areas further undermined their efforts in achieving the public support and concomitant legitimacy required to sustain those actions. The reasons for the latter pertain directly to the Pakistani military's organization and methods for conducting counterinsurgency. This section explores both the will and the skill of Pakistan to counter insurgents.

In some respects, the explanation for the Pakistani army's unsuitability for counterinsurgency in 2001 is strangely similar to the rationale for the U.S. military's previous resistance to adapting for counterinsurgency. The main Pakistani army almost exclusively focused on preparing for and fighting conventional wars with India for the five and half decades it existed before beginning forays into the FATA in 2002. The Pakistani army has also been more inexorably wedded to both India and the existential threat perceived in India because it has often justified its several military coups based on the rationale associated with securing the Pakistani state against India. In fact, the literature on Pakistan is replete with the idea that most states have armies, but Pakistan's army has a state. That army and the country's leadership, both civilian and military, have consistently viewed the significantly larger, more resource rich, and populous India as an invidious threat to their existence since the bloody partition of 1947.

Pakistan has never won any of the wars with India, and the government, the military, and the public manifest a fear of the Indian

military and India's intentions that approximates paranoia. Moreover, in general terms, even when the will and the intent exist to affect military cultural change, it takes some time, typically from 5 to 10 years. More than a dozen years elapsed between the time of the demise of America's conventional Soviet nemesis and the time the U.S. military was finally compelled to adapt to counterinsurgency during the crucible of Iraq. Thus, U.S. expectations that the Pakistanis were willing and capable of readily changing their leadership, organization, and doctrine from focusing on the real and continuous conventional threat embodied by India to the threat stemming from the insurgents in the tribal areas, which the Pakistanis did not yet view as an existential threat, were likely overstated. At the beginning of this century, the United States unequivocally possessed the premier military in the world in terms of leadership, equipment, organization, and doctrine for conventional war. Pakistan is a weaker state than the U.S. in every way, and its conventional military also reflects this relative weakness. To be candid, Pakistan has a relatively mediocre military that lost all four wars it fought with India (some would characterize Pakistan's 1999 Kargil War with India atop the ridges along the line of control in the disputed Kashmir region as half of a war, but the troops fighting there clearly might not).²²

Daniel Byman's excellent analysis on the counterinsurgency capabilities of poorer countries generally suggests that less-developed countries such as Pakistan pose a host of obstacles when relied on to be U.S. allies in counterinsurgency. Such allies are often less than ideal counterinsurgents because of both political and military flaws. The military cultures of these countries frequently exhibit a dearth of initiative; poor unity of and integration of command across forces; soldiers who are unwilling to fight; challenges with learning, creativity, and training; bad officers and noncommissioned officers; and poor intelligence. The political effects of the structural weaknesses inherent in a state like Pakistan can fuel the insurgency by impeding development and aid, alienating the military in the mind of the population, promoting endemic corruption, and presenting opportunities for the insurgents to penetrate the military. The cor-

²² Examples of this literature include Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*; Cloughley, *War, Coups, and Terror*; and Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism*.

ruption and discrimination associated with weak states are sometimes related to the causes of the insurgencies to begin with, and also shape how such allies counter them. The implications of such weaknesses extend beyond the battlefield to impact the very relationship between the indigenous regime and the United States. In other words, a state like Pakistan cannot successfully prosecute counterinsurgency without first instituting both political reforms and military reforms but is also likely to resist or subvert any reforms that threaten the extant power structure. In Pakistan, that power structure has always been closely related to the Pakistani army's perception of itself as the guardian of the state and its perception by the public. Ultimately, the U.S. must be realistic about how far it expects the Pakistani military to go to adapt and about how well that military will counter insurgents.²³

Even for the best military, counterinsurgency is indeed very difficult. It requires both political adroitness and superb military skill. It requires leadership, a high degree of initiative, creativity, motivated soldiers, and unity of command across forces. But military leadership in a place like Pakistan is generally quite poor compared to the United States. Effective counterinsurgency requires small unit initiative to operate with uncertainty in and among the population. This is often absent in the militaries of struggling countries. What's more, many developing world militaries have a garrison mindset where they fight from 0900 to 1700 and then return to their garrisons for the night. Successfully defeating insurgents also demands creative leaders and institutions that are willing to learn. There is no evidence to suggest that the Pakistani army has an objective and deliberate process for learning or gleaning lessons from previous experiences in successfully or unsuccessfully fighting against irregulars and militants. This is, in part, attributable to a weaker professional military education system where institutions tend to perpetuate existing doctrine rather than changing that doctrine to correct for mistakes. Counterinsurgency also requires motivated soldiers who have faith in their leaders and government, and who are more likely to brave the perils of fighting "among the people." If command unity and the integration

²³ Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31 (Fall 2006): 81–83.

of forces and agencies into one coherently holistic counterinsurgency campaign is a challenge for the U.S., it is an even bigger problem in a place such as Pakistan, where coordination and information collaboration are generally poor. In this context, commanders of different forces often do not communicate with one another either. In terms of Pakistan's coordination of its military operations with the Afghan side of the Durand Line, this was an abysmal shortcoming up until at least 2009.²⁴

Furthermore, a military fighting an insurgency is more likely to gain the support of the population if it is not perceived as corrupt or engaged in illegal functions. A relatively low level of corruption transmits the message that the military is doing the right thing, operating in the interests and service of the country. Corruption within Pakistan, and within the Pakistani military, goes beyond the pale of any relative expectation for corruption. In fact, Pakistan is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world. A military dictatorship, such as Musharraf's regime, compounded this problem because "an illegitimate and repressive regime has several pernicious effects on the tactical and organizational aspects of counterinsurgency." Politics that are autocratic and dictatorial tend to limit the flow of information, particularly if that information is unfavorable to the regime. Such regimes also tend to deliberately compartmentalize information and to neither identify nor critically examine mistakes. Absent civilian oversight, the military organizations serving under military dictators also experience less pressure to adapt their methods and doctrines. These military institutions are not necessarily accountable to the general public or elected leaders and are less apt to fix mistakes or to undertake unwanted organizational changes. Military regimes also tend to exacerbate existing levels of corruption, as senior military figures use their positions to gain personal wealth at the public's expense, even if this impairs overall military efficacy. This was certainly true of Pakistan's military dictators. The "coup-proofing" associated with military regimes also impedes the open flow of information, but it has a pernicious influence on the military as well. Coup-proofing values loyalty over quality, and it sees senior officers in

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 90–95. C. Christine Fair asserted that the Pakistanis did not have any way of capturing lessons for operations in the FATA. C. Christine Fair, telephone interview, 21 January 2010.

their positions because of their loyalty to the regime, not necessarily because of their competence. In such regimes, leadership, creativity, initiative, and charisma are in short supply, and sometimes these are even viewed as a threat. Lastly, a military dictatorship's inherent lack of regime legitimacy makes it very difficult for its military to be perceived as legitimate. This is compounded when the regime closely cooperates with an unpopular foreign power.²⁵

The Pakistani army was woefully prepared for conducting what it saw as LIC operations in the tribal northwest when this war began. To adapt to counterinsurgency and irregular warfare would require a sea change in Pakistan's strategic perspective, one that continues to regard India as the country's principal national security threat. Adaptation would also necessitate a change in deployment patterns, organization, equipment, doctrine, and the curricula at Pakistani professional military education institutions. This is simply because, not unlike the U.S. military's preferred war on the plains of Germany, the Pakistani army is almost exclusively prepared for a ground war with India on the plains of the Punjab. In its efforts to counter an internal, tribally based insurgency in the Pashtun northwest, it has over time proven to be marginally capable of clearing an area but "reluctant to remain and provide continuing security or address the complaints that left the area vulnerable to insurgent penetration in the first place." Moreover, the Pashtuns' acute sensitivity to, and resentment of, deploying predominately Punjab regular army units in their tribal areas has compelled Pakistan's generals to depend more heavily on the less motivated, less capable, less equipped, and locally recruited FC units for operations there.²⁶

The Pakistani armed forces have fought several campaigns in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and the FATA since 2004, losing about 2,000 soldiers killed and over 3,500 wounded as a result. In each instance, the Pakistani forces have fought using the high-intensity conventional doctrine for which they were trained, organized, and equipped. Characteristically, this approach witnessed heavy fire-

²⁵ Byman, "Friends Like These," 95-107. The direct quote is from page 103.

²⁶ Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 77.

power, destruction, and displacement of the civilian population. To quote the popular adage, if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. As previously expounded upon, the Pakistanis followed up most of these campaigns by arranging cease-fires and peace deals with the jihadists. U.S. leaders and other analysts have strongly criticized this modus operandi for the Pakistani military's failure to adapt to counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, the Pakistani military has met pressure from senior U.S. diplomats and military leaders to retrain and reorganize for counterinsurgency with staunch resistance because the Pakistani leadership still sees its principal threat as coming from an Indian onslaught across its eastern borders and onto the plains of the Punjab, the heartland of Pakistan. Pakistan's lack of political will—which stems from its deeply ingrained strategic calculus to deter and counter India with nuclear, conventional, and proxy irregular capabilities, combined with a military culture and doctrine built to stop a conventional invasion by the Indian army—constitute the principal impediments to the Pakistani army's adaptation to traditional counterinsurgency.²⁷

One of the obstacles that hinders the Pakistanis' ability to effectively prosecute counterinsurgency is doctrinal. The Pakistani army does not even purport to conduct traditional and comprehensive counterinsurgency focused on protecting the population. It prefers to describe its operations in the tribal areas with the LIC lexicon as a hedge against being compelled to truly adapt itself from a conventionally oriented institution focused against India. This distinction between counterinsurgency and LIC has important operational implications because it provides the Pakistani army with the doctrinal rationale not to adopt a counterinsurgency orientation as it views its operations against insurgents as lying at the low end of a conventional-conflict continuum. Several other factors help explain the very mixed results of Pakistan's efforts to counter the Taliban.²⁸

First, Pakistani security forces lack the capacity to clear and

²⁷ Sameer Lalwani, *Pakistani Capabilities for a Counterinsurgency Campaign: A Net Assessment* (Washington, DC: New America Foundation, 2009), 4–6. For an in-depth explanation of Pakistan's nuclear capability and its army's relationship to the state, India, and irregulars, see Jones, *Pakistan: The Eye of the Storm*, 203–25, and 257–90.

²⁸ C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan's War Within," *Survival* 51, no. 6 (December 2009–January 2010): 162.

hold areas while winning the support of the local population. (Current counterinsurgency doctrine and practice generally prescribe four essential components to drive insurgent influence and control out of key areas: shape, clear, hold, and build.) This lack of capacity to carry out all four components is related directly to Islamabad's reluctance to espouse counterinsurgency, both operationally and doctrinally. As a result, their operations have precipitated the serious displacement and destruction of local populations and property. For example, in May 2009 the Pakistani security forces launched Operation Rah-e-Rast (also known as the Second Battle of Swat) to clear areas of Swat, and their destructive methods precipitated a swell of internally displaced persons, estimated to be over three million people. Likewise, when the Pakistani army launched Operation Sher Dil (Lionheart) into the Bajaur Agency of the FATA in August 2008, it flattened entire villages with artillery, bombings, and bulldozers, causing 400,000 people to flee Bajaur. Second, while the security forces have been increasingly more willing to prosecute operations against militant groups they view as a threat to Pakistan, they are unwilling to conduct operations against groups they see as pursuing Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan and India. Notably, both of the aforementioned operations specifically targeted the Pakistani Taliban, and not the Afghan Taliban, because the Pakistanis see the Afghan Taliban as helping pursue their strategy of strategic depth in Afghanistan. This deliberate policy of supporting the ostensibly "good" mujahideen has stressed Pakistan's social foundation and imperiled the state when wayward surrogates have turned against it. Third, domestic political considerations have shaped the Pakistani army's decisions as it moderates its actions in view of retaining popularity. Polls of the Pakistani public have revealed that a large number of citizens have been leery of operations targeting fellow citizens. Some Pakistanis have impugned the government for attacking fellow Pakistanis on behalf of Washington. Fourth, military and civilian institutions in Pakistan have proven to be lamentably unable to integrate political, economic, and social factors with their military operations. The Pakistanis have thus far been unable to hold and build after they have cleared areas because they

have no civil-military plans and no civil-military capacity for implementing plans if they had them.²⁹

Pakistan has used a variety of forces to conduct its “low-intensity” campaigns, including the army, the FC, the Frontier Constabulary, and the Frontier Police. In addition to its Army Strategic Forces Command, the Pakistani army comprises 9 corps; 550,000 active-duty troops; and 500,000 reservists. General Ashfaq Kayani, the chief of army staff, has often stipulated that the bulk of the army will remain disposed along the Indian border, not conducting counterinsurgency. The FC, a paramilitary formation that is part of the Pakistan Ministry of Interior, is under the operational control of the military. It comprises 80,000 troops that are separated into the two subordinate commands of the FC North-West Frontier Province and FC Baluchistan. The FC North-West Frontier Province is almost homogeneously constituted of ethnic Pashtuns, whereas the FC Baluchistan does not exclusively comprise ethnic Baluchis. Both the population of the tribal areas and the army have been averse to operations in the North-West Frontier Province and the FATA because of the perception that the army is dominated by ethnic Punjabis.³⁰

In terms of determining the types and composition of security forces that would be most apt for countering the militants and insurgents in the settled and unsettled tribal areas, some have asserted that the FC North-West Frontier Province should be the preferred force for operations in the tribal areas because its locally recruited personnel have the language skills and knowledge of the local terrain, both human and physical. Two factors argue against this, though: there have been reports of FC complicity with the Taliban, and the FC lacks the leadership, training, and equipment to prosecute genuine populace-oriented counterinsurgency. U.S. Army Special Forces have been engaged in training the FC in counterinsurgency over the last couple of years. The Frontier Constabulary is a police force designed to provide order in the settled areas out-

²⁹ Fair and Jones, “Pakistan’s War Within,” 162–63 and 176–77. For analysis on displaced persons in the Baujur Agency of the FATA and the Pakistani security forces’ inability to hold and build, see Ahmed Rashid, “Pakistan’s Continued Failure to Adopt a Counterinsurgency Strategy,” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 3 (March 2009): 7–9.

³⁰ Fair and Jones, “Pakistan’s War Within,” 163–64.

side the FATA and to provide border security. It has confronted the brunt of the violence in the settled Pashtun areas. This force is ill-suited for countering insurgents as it is poorly equipped and poorly trained, with antiquated arms and almost no personal protection. The Frontier Police of the North-West Frontier Province generally have had low morale, bad equipment, and poor training. Insurgents have often targeted them for violent attacks, which have unsurprisingly led to capitulation and high rates of desertion.³¹

Pakistan's military operations in North and South Waziristan from 2004 until early 2009 miserably failed to deny the Taliban and al-Qaeda sanctuary and to arrest cross-border movement due to an approach that wavered between excessive punitive operations and appeasement. The International Crisis Group has found that poorly planned and badly executed Pakistani military operations "are also responsible for the rise of militancy in the tribal belt, where the loss of lives and property and displacement of thousands of civilians have alienated the population." Pakistan's unwillingness and inability to provide good governance to the populations in the FATA has also helped empower the militants who impose their own version of administration and harsh justice. What's more, the typically minimalist governance in the FATA was a deliberate policy of Pakistan, which viewed the region as outside of Pakistan proper and as a useful buffer for its strategic depth concept. The antiquated and repressive Frontier Crimes Regulations, coupled with exclusion from the political mainstream, have also generated grievances in the FATA that help fuel support for the jihadists. The Musharraf regime, to deflect pressure from Washington to mitigate radical militancy in the FATA, talked but never acted on political reforms for the region. One sustainable way of addressing the extremism is through the extension of civil and political rights as well as the rule of law, all reconciled with local norms and sensitivities. Instead, the Pakistani government has followed up bludgeoning yet blundering punitive raids with appeasement disguised as peace deals in which the Pakistani security forces released insurgents, returned their weapons, abandoned security checkpoints, and allowed foreign jihadists to stay if they renounced violence. This was followed

³¹ *Ibid.*, 164–65.

by the army's return to barracks, which facilitated the growth of the insurgency; the establishment of parallel Taliban hierarchies in the FATA, which spread to the North-West Frontier Province; and freedom of action to recruit, train, and arm both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.³²

The Musharraf regime's policy of supporting the "good" jihadists warrants some explanation since it contributed to the resurgence of the Afghan Taliban and ultimately backfired in a perfect symbiosis of Afghan Taliban, Pakistani Taliban, and al-Qaeda, all safely nested in their tribal area havens, orchestrating attacks outward in every direction. Ahmed Rashid best described the duplicity epitomized in Pakistan's policy: "with one hand Musharraf played at helping the war against terrorism, while with the other he continued to deal with the Taliban." The ISI was the vehicle for Pakistan's perfidy. In a report to Musharraf in fall 2001, it predicted that America's reluctance to commit ground troops would deny it a quick victory and that the Taliban, supported by thousands of Pakistani and al-Qaeda militants, would be able to conduct a guerrilla campaign from the mountains. Musharraf consequently allowed the ISI to continue its supply of fuel, ammunition, and arms to the Taliban in contravention of his pledges to the United States and a UN Security Council resolution. ISI supply trucks and fuel tankers continued to roll through the Khyber Pass in the north and Chaman in the south even after September 2001. The Pakistani army-owned National Logistics Cell, an organization established during the Soviet war with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funding to run guns to the Afghan mujahideen, managed the transport. So, even as some ISI officers were helping America nominate Taliban targets for U.S. bombers, other ISI operatives were refreshing the same Taliban's arms and ammunition. The rationale for this duplicity, from the perspective of the ISI, was its fear of a post-Taliban Northern Alliance government in Kabul that would be an Indian proxy. The ISI did not want to fully abandon its only proxy in Afghanistan, and it was concerned that the U.S. would again abandon the region after Kabul fell.³³

In the winter of 2002, after the JUI Party became part of the

³² International Crisis Group, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas*, i.

³³ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 76–79. The direct quote is from page 78.

coalition provincial government in Baluchistan, the ISI helped accommodate Mullah Omar in Quetta with the use of JUI-run safe houses. Mullah Omar consequently reconstituted his shura there and designated four senior commanders to organize the insurgency in Afghanistan's southeast provinces of Zabul, Uruzgan, Helmand, and Kandahar. All four of these commanders—Mullah Baradar Akhund, Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Akhtar Usmani, and Mullah Abdul Razzaq—were linked to Osama bin Laden and were diehard believers of global jihad. The Haqqanis organized the new insurgency against the Coalition in Afghanistan's eastern provinces. Jalaluddin, the senior Haqqani, had been a fierce and effective mujahideen commander against the Soviets with the support of the ISI and CIA. A long-standing protégé of the ISI, al-Qaeda ally, and former Taliban minister, Jalaluddin and his son Sirajuddin helped reconstitute the neo-Taliban from their sanctuary in Miranshah, North Waziristan, in the FATA. This network helped fleeing Taliban with money and accommodations. Every time the United States has tried to target Haqqani, someone seems to tip him off well in advance. The Haqqanis remain protected proxies of Pakistan to this day. The ISI also supported the shiftiest of the former and present insurgent leaders when the Iranians let Gulbuddin Hekmatyar go free. Hekmatyar was the favorite of the ISI during the Soviet-Afghan War, and this allowed him to set up in the Shamshatoo refugee camp outside Peshawar where many of his former mujahideen lived. His group has cooperated with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. After Operation Enduring Freedom began, the tribal areas became safe havens where the Taliban and al-Qaeda escaped because the Pakistani army did not deploy forces on the Afghan border of North and South Waziristan. Haqqani organized this escape by hiring young Mehsud and Wazir tribesmen to provide safe passage as guides for those fleeing Tora Bora. Some of these same guides got rich in the process and later emerged as commanders of the Pakistani Taliban. For two years, until the spring of 2004, Pakistan's military did nothing to stop the militants from consolidating in the Waziristans, perhaps believing that a Talibanized belt in the FATA would put pressure on Kabul and not threaten Islamabad.³⁴

³⁴ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 242–44 and 268–70.

To be fair, Pakistan's challenging geography compels its military to defend almost every piece of its territory, but its worries about the Punjab are well founded as that region's major cities, industrial centers, and communication lines are all located relatively close to a border that poses few geostrategic obstacles to an Indian tank invasion across its plains and deserts. In the event of an attack, Pakistani military planning assumes that even a compact and agile force would be unable to defend this border and that the military would have no time to raise new formations or to shift large numbers of troops from the north because Pakistan's rail and road networks are so poor.

Perhaps even more significantly, because a static linear defense would likely set the stage for a deep Indian penetration of Pakistan while simultaneously limiting Pakistani freedom of maneuver, Pakistan developed its Riposte Doctrine, named after the fencing term for a counterattack, to attenuate this dilemma. Riposte is an offensive-defensive doctrine, and it envisions a limited but rapid advance by Pakistani forces to seize Indian terrain, which could then be traded for any Pakistani territory occupied by India after the war. Riposte nominally requires six Pakistani corps. Even when Pakistan does deploy more forces to meet the insurgencies in the tribal areas, its perception of India as the main threat will remain. Any efforts to reorganize and retrain the Pakistani military forces for comprehensive counterinsurgency would necessarily have to exclude the minimum heavy forces required to defend its eastern border.³⁵

Not to exonerate Pakistan for its lack of will and capacity to help fight the Taliban but to illuminate its perspective on India, some 80 percent of Pakistan's military assets are typically disposed to counter the Indian threat. This was the case even in April 2009, when the Taliban had de facto control over 11 percent of Pakistan's territory. The reason for this is every time the Pakistani army looks at its rival army it sees its large inventory of battle tanks as a threat. The Pakistan army sees the Indian army's three strike corps and notes their purpose. The Pakistani army looks at the Indian army and notices that the weapons of several Indian corps are pointing at Pakistan. The Pakistani army looks at the Taliban out in the tribal

³⁵ Lalwani, *Pakistani Capabilities*, 42.

areas and sees no main battle tanks, no armored fighting vehicles, no ballistic missiles, and no ground attack aircraft. The United States would like the Pakistan army to help eliminate what it sees as threats to the homeland, but the Pakistani army still has to defend the border against India. This conventional requirement and fixation on India partly explains why the Pakistani army, on a recurring basis, has demonstrated its inability to counter insurgents without punishing costs in lives lost, the wholesale destruction of property, and significant displacements of civilian populations. Heavy-handed military operations among civilians over a sustained period of time alienate the people and create fertile ground for recruiting new insurgents. Also, for the Pakistani security forces to endure the risks and costs of a deliberate campaign against the militant groups in the northwest border regions would require some notion of support by the local population, as well as the general Pakistani public. Until early 2009 in Swat, when the insurgency spread to the heavily populated Malakand Division of the since-renamed North-West Frontier Province, this public support for full-measure military action against the Taliban was discernibly absent.³⁶

Information Operations

If Pukhtoon [Pashtun] nationalism and Islamic radicalism ever mutate into one movement, it will first happen in the tribal areas.

—*Owen Bennett Jones, Pakistan: Eye of the Storm*

It is education of which the mullahs are fearful. Widespread literacy would erode their powers.

—*Brian Cloughley, War, Coups, and Terror*

Education and knowledge are indeed inimical to the dogma and ignorance that generally characterize the creed the Islamists embrace. Yet the tribal areas have witnessed an increasing convergence of Islamist militancy and Pashtun nationalism as a result of the propagation of simplistic and distorted interpretations of Islam. The dogma that animates the TTP is not dissimilar to the contorted

³⁶ Lalwani, *Pakistani Capabilities*, 52–53. Weinbaum, “Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency,” 77–78.

puritanism that stimulates the Afghan Taliban. The Pakistani insurgents espouse a similar interpretive blend of Deobandi and Wahhabi Islamism as the Afghan Taliban. It is a creed of death and destruction, prescribing what to believe about which god and condemning those who do not believe it. It relies on illiteracy, tribal mores, and misogyny to construct its myopic narrative. What's more, the six-decade-long relationship between the United States and Pakistan helped create this situation. Short-term, ill-informed policy choices have ultimately compounded the challenges in the Pashtun Belt, rather than having resolved them for the long-term. The radical Islamist narrative may have its roots in the Deobandi school of Sunni Islam and in Wahhabi Sunni doctrine, but those roots were well watered by highly injudicious U.S. policy decisions. To name just two examples, allying with despots and supporting the unrequited proliferation of Islamist ideology and jihadists against the Soviets were exceptionally ill conceived. The United States had established a pattern of supporting dictators in Pakistan in the early years, beginning with General Ayub Khan from 1958 to 1969 and ending with Musharraf from 1999 to 2008. Moreover, America's relentless support in the 1980s of General Zia, who was both a dictator and an Islamist zealot, in waging the anti-Soviet jihad, wrought the singularly most harmful effects in terms of the proliferation of Islamist extremists and the persecution of non-Islamic and minority groups in Pakistan.

How the information domain and information operations shaped the population's perception of the Pakistani government's capacity to provide administration, security, and development is one focus of this section. A deep and wide anti-Americanism, predating September 2001, influenced the public's receptivity to both Pakistan's and America's efforts to influence it by words and actions. One portion of the population already either passively or actively supported the Islamists' agenda, as attested to by the MMA victory in October 2002. The perception that created this reality was twofold: the view that U.S. policy in the region had been inconsistent in deed and message for many years, and the fact that both Pakistani Pashtuns and Muslims empathized with their coreligionist and co-ethnic brethren who were standing up to, but getting crushed by the "Western infidel bullies" who invaded Afghanistan. This section also explores how well

the government and the insurgents integrated information operations with lethal operations. The disadvantages from the combined effects of these two factors in terms of information operations and Pakistani popular perceptions accrued against the United States.³⁷

The history of U.S.-Pakistan relations is fundamental to the Pakistani public's perspective. In every respect, this relationship has been one of convenience, not conviction. Historically, Pakistan has proved willing to alter its priorities to fall within the established parameters of America's aspirations. Pakistan's aim in this, however, has been to guarantee the continued stream of American economic and military aid that Pakistan deemed essential for its existential rivalry with India. For its part, the Pakistani military has espoused a threefold approach to security that focused on Islam as a unifying element, competition with India as the principal objective of its foreign policy, and friendship with America as a way to underwrite the costs of its large military expenditures associated with the latter. Paradoxically, this approach has resulted in an aggregation of historically imprudent steps that culminated in extreme Islamist militancy in the tribal areas, one which poses a grave threat to both Pakistan and its benefactor. As early as 1951, the U.S. State Department identified the potential for Islamist politics in Pakistan as a problem: "the other main threat to American interests in Pakistan was from reactionary groups of landholders and uneducated religious leaders who were opposed to the present Western-minded government and favor a return to primitive Islamic principles." However, during the ensuing five decades, American policy did little to dissuade Pakistan from embracing purist Islam as its state ideology. As a consequence, the Pakistani Islamist leaders' support grew beyond their receptive local populaces to include civilian bureaucrats and military intelligence officers. In sum, the contradiction lies in the fact that the U.S. quid pro quo approach to its relations with Pakistan in fact contributed to the creation of an information environment (pro-Islamist and anti-America) inimical to U.S. interests.³⁸

Nor has the U.S. government excelled in information operations in Pakistan since September 2001. According to one long-serving

³⁷ Rid and Hecker, *War 2.0*, 2-4.

³⁸ Hussain Haqqani, "The Role of Islam in Pakistan's Future," *Washington Quarterly* 28 (Winter 2004-2005): 93-94.

U.S. expert on Pakistan, “American public diplomacy has not distinguished itself in Pakistan in recent years.” The U.S. has significantly circumscribed the number of personnel dedicated to Pakistan and likewise has essentially eliminated its cultural programs because of the deteriorating security there. The U.S. government has never dedicated public diplomacy programs to the FATA and terminated its programs in the North-West Frontier Province over a decade ago. It often seems that Washington’s notion of strategic communications entails frequent high-level official visits combined with public statements to sustain support for the Pakistani government. Similar to its challenges with aid and development programs, the United States has often been more perplexed by the perception it was trying to create with its public statements and programs than it was concerned with understanding how most Pakistanis perceived them. Another South Asia expert has noted that “it would be wise for the U.S. and Pakistani governments to better understand how people across Pakistan variously understand the problems” confronting them. In other words, in conceiving information policies aimed at gaining the support of the Pakistani public for both Pakistan’s and America’s efforts to disrupt and defeat Islamist insurgents, both governments need to better understand how that public views the state’s efforts.³⁹

Winning a war of ideologies will depend as much on influencing the Pakistani population as it will on the resilience and effectiveness of the Pakistani security forces. An increase in Pakistani support for military operations against the Taliban does not necessarily equate to support for the war against al-Qaeda. Moreover, a rejection of the Taliban by Pakistanis does not translate to repudiation of the extreme Islamist ideas that underpin the agenda of al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Likewise, a Pakistani eschewal of the Taliban’s agenda and worldview does not equate to its embracing the West or abandoning the sharia’s tenets. The public in Pakistan is highly suspect of U.S. activities in the country. Approximately one quarter of the population believed that America’s only interest in Pakistan was to locate and capture Osama bin Laden, with little concern for the costs it

³⁹ Weinbaum, “Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency,” 85–86. Fair, “Pakistan’s Own War on Terror,” 52. The first direct quote is from Weinbaum, page 85, and the second direct quote is from Fair, page 52.

would incur in terms of Pakistani lives lost in the process.⁴⁰

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 increased the Pakistani people's mistrust of the United States because as long as they view the war on terror as an American war, the possibility of it becoming popular with the ordinary Pakistanis is indeed a remote one. By 2004 the war in Iraq began to get very negative press within the Muslim world. After the debacle at Abu Ghraib prison, an information operations failure of colossal magnitude, Islamic groups all over the world increasingly perceived the Sunni insurgency in Iraq as a legitimate one. The year 2004 also saw credible international Islamic scholars subsume the second Palestinian intifada against Israel with the Iraqi insurgency under one umbrella and argue the Islamist "logic" in favor of targeting civilians. In September 2004, an Islamic scholar of ostensibly moderate views, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, stamped his authoritative imprimatur on the Iraqi insurgency and helped galvanize the roughly one billion Sunni Muslims worldwide. Iraq was an information operations failure in Pakistan as well because it resonated with both would-be Taliban and ordinary citizens. Many militant organizations in Pakistan that had been in close contact with al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan's training camps before September 2001 were contemptuous of Pakistan's about-face against the Afghan Taliban, and cadres from organizations like TNSM provided the support from which the Taliban could recruit. The invasion of Iraq, along with the U.S. Global War on Terrorism narrative in general, exacerbated perceptions in the region that America was at war with Islam, helping to fuel this propaganda. Moreover, al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups in Pakistan took advantage of this, propagating to shape popular perceptions against the United States and other "apostate governments." As late as 2010, a survey of residents in the FATA showed that 80 percent of the people polled believed that the purpose of the U.S. war on terrorism was to "weaken and divide the Islamic world."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ayesha Siddiqi, "Jihadism in Pakistan: The Expanding Frontier," *Journal of International Affairs* 63 (Fall/Winter 2009): 57–59.

⁴¹ Gilles Kepel, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 38–39. See Zaidi, "The Taliban Organization in Pakistan," 46, on militant groups in Pakistan propagating against the U.S. war. See also Sherifa Zuhur, *A Hundred Osamas: Islamist Threats and the Future of Counterinsurgency* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 33. For the FATA survey results, see Peter Bergen, Patrick Doherty, and Ken Ballen, *Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions* (Washington, DC: New America Foundation, 2010), 1 and 3.

Effectively influencing the perception of the Pakistani populace also relies on consistency in word and deed in improving the lives of the Pashtuns in the tribal areas. The efficacy of aid and development programs is thus inextricably linked to influence, and the American aid program in Pakistan has been relatively exorbitant in costs and underwhelming in results. Policy here has been confused and unable to agree on priorities, levels of funding, or the best ways to flow funds. As has been the case in Afghanistan as well, coordination and collaboration between other donors and the U.S. Agency for International Development have been poor. U.S. development assistance, particularly in the FATA, must surmount deep-seated suspicions that its efforts are self-serving and callous regarding indigenous life and death. This, in turn, would require a huge change in the public's perception of why America is involved in Pakistan and the FATA in the first place. The promotion of development activities that are integrated with political and social reforms would be a step to improve positive influence. On the other hand, while America's drone program has arguably been effective in eliminating and disrupting Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, it has not been an effective tool for improving U.S. and Pakistani influence over the tribal populations. The reason for this is twofold. First, a number of innocent civilian deaths collateral to the drone strikes has made them deeply unpopular and serves as evidence of U.S. disregard for Pakistani lives. Two, the United States and Pakistan have been impeded by U.S. legal code to not acknowledge these attacks, which might otherwise be used to influence the public mind and the enemy psyche.⁴²

Pakistan's schools, both secular and sectarian, have also served to bend the conceptions of generations of Pakistanis and Pashtuns toward the superiority of conservative Sunni Islam over all other religions. Working with the Pakistani government both to objectify its public schools' curricula and to arrest the proliferation of madrassas whose principal aims are the mass production of Islamist proselytes would be a huge step along the way to part of a long-term solution. Pakistan dedicates around 2 percent of its gross domestic product to education, and more than 75 percent to its de-

⁴² Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 85. Fair, telephone interview.

fense budget and debt repayment. As a result, illiteracy rates hover around 60 percent. Worse still, with a school age-population that the government estimates to be around 50 million, 30 percent have no schooling while about 50 percent of those children who do attend school drop out in the first three years. Moreover, children in Pakistan who do receive educations usually receive them from a range of both government and private sources.⁴³

There are now approximately 13,000 madrassas in Pakistan that provide “education” for an estimated one-and-a-half million students. This figure is likely understated since the madrassas in the tribal areas are not all transparent to the government. This contrasts with around 187,000 government schools with around 25 million students. The madrassas reflect the teaching of their religious tradition, as well as the preferences of their typically foreign external sponsors, who are principally from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and Iran, and who provide considerable funds for the support of the schools. It is these funds, together with those from local benefactors and landowners, which enable madrassas to offer education and usually food, texts, and even stipends on occasion. Individuals or small groups typically own the schools, and their control of them provides significant local political, social, and economic gravitas. The years since September 2001 have experienced a notable rise in the number of madrassas within Pakistan: in 1988 there were 3,000 madrassas; in 2000 there were around 7,000; and by 2003 there were approximately 11,000. In her fairly rigorous research, South Asia expert C. Christine Fair found that 13 percent of the potential suicide bombers (*shaheed*, “martyrs”) were recruited from madrassas proselytizing radical Islamist curricula. Her findings suggest that mosques and *tabligh* (small itinerate proselytizing groups) as well as friends or families accounted for a much larger percentage of those recruited to be jihadists or militants than public schools, which accounted for 13 percent, and madrassas, which also accounted for 13 percent. Nonetheless, Fair also notes that there is strong evidence that many of Pakistan’s religious militants and suicide attackers do come through madrassas. Moreover, many suicide bombers operating in Afghanistan, but recruited in

⁴³ Shaun Gregory, telephone interview, 23 January 2010.

Pakistan, appear to be recruited from madrassas as well.⁴⁴

Under U.S. and Western pressure in the aftermath of 9/11, Musharraf did take a series of highly visibly steps to place the madrassas under closer government scrutiny and control. Pakistan promulgated an amended ordinance for madrassas to register with the government, and it sought to compel the madrassas to modernize their curricula by excising extremely Islamist ideology. In other instances, Pakistan security forces executed raids against some of the more rabidly Islamist madrassas, and the government undertook some measures to expel foreign students or preclude their enrollment. Pakistan also arrested some of the reputedly high-profile “terrorists.” However, these efforts apparently had little impact since the number of madrassas continued to rise and because the Islamic parties, upon whom Musharraf then still relied for political support, effectively resisted the modernization of the madrassas’ curricula based on the argument that such reforms were an antireligious and anti-Islamic intrusion by the state. In addition, the Pakistani government has proven unable to exert influence over either the flow of foreign funds to the madrassas or over the movement of non-Pakistani jihadists within Pakistan. Equally important, more than one third or more of the madrassas failed to comply with even the minimal registration requirements prescribed by the government.⁴⁵

The madrassas consequently blossomed under the tenure of the Musharraf regime and its U.S. benefactors during the first eight years of the war. The proliferation of madrassas, and the attendant increase in proselytes, brought about grave implications for the war on terror and for the wars on both sides of the Durand Line. For one, this growth correlated to the return of the Taliban to the tribal areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Second, the madrassas’ graduates have helped promote Islamism, radicalization, and sectarianism within mainstream Pakistani society. Third, the continuation of insurgent and terrorist training within some madrassas, particularly those in the Pashtun areas, allowed the Islamist militants to regain and sustain ideological momentum as Islamists ac-

⁴⁴ Ibid.; C. Christine Fair, “Who Are Pakistan’s Militants and Their Families,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2008): 58–59.

⁴⁵ Gregory telephone interview.

crued power in Pakistan, all while the government repeatedly withdrew from the tribal regions. The last consequence of the prosperity of madrassas under the Musharraf regime was the fact that the schools allowed local and foreign militants to forge closer ties while undergoing indoctrination within them.⁴⁶

An emphasis on the madrassas alone, however, overlooks the broader problems with Pakistan's educational curricula. The counterargument to the assertion that the madrassas are sources of both Islamist ideology and recruits would posit that the madrassas have had either very little or no impact on the major international terrorist events linked in various ways to Pakistan. Although the madrassas are an important piece of the problem in that they play a role in the inculcation of student radicals with the Islamist virtues that animate their violent actions, most madrassas indeed seem to provide very little pragmatic value to international terrorists for whom expert knowledge of modern technology and science are essential. The weakness of the Pakistani education system as a whole—its failure to deliver basic education for the majority of young people, and in the substantive portions of that education for those who do receive it—is arguably more pernicious as an incubator for terrorism. Long-standing government revisions to textbooks under General Zia in the 1970s and 1980s have also been responsible for encouraging jihad in the defense of politicized Islam to which Pakistan seemed to have wedded itself since then. For example, by the late 1990s, Pakistan's National Bureau of Curriculum and Textbooks still officially espoused a fourfold charter for children graduating from primary school to be proficient in the following areas: acknowledging and identifying the forces which may be working against Pakistan; making speeches on holy war and martyrdom; understanding Muslim-Hindu differences and their attendant requirement for Pakistan to defend Islam; and describing the "diabolical" designs that the Indians harbored over Pakistan.⁴⁷

Thus, Pakistan's public education system is a major source of radicalization and Islamist convention because it has over the last several decades inculcated such ideas through the educational curricula of approximately thirtyfold more students than those who

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

graduate from the madrassas. In fact, in view of the emergence of an indigenous al-Qaeda in Pakistan and the wider war on terrorism, Pakistan's public education system may have been more significant than the madrassas as a source of militants. The Pakistan of Musharraf did attempt to mitigate this more prevalent problem by revising textbooks in government schools to be more moderate, but the dearth of actual resources devoted to education, and the glacial pace of implementation, translates to years of inertia and an incremental effort to replace Zia's legacy. The subjective xenophobia and Islamicization of Pakistan's public education policy presents wider challenges for information operations in the context of current security challenges, likely surpassing those programs embodied in the madrassas.

Education is a crucial instrument in the war against extremism and Islamist militancy in Pakistan, and future policy will need to emphasize moderating, modernizing, and secularizing educational curricula to create more objectivity and balance. Madrassas represent a smaller, but still critical piece, in the promotion of Islamist militancy. After 11 September 2001, strangely enough, the madrasa enterprise has flourished, and Pakistan's efforts to reform it have generally failed. It will remain exceedingly difficult to influence the Pakistani population considering the wide infusion of xenophobia, strict Islamist doctrine, and anti-Americanism across generations of Pakistani youth who have been subjected to it in both public and private schools. The Pakistani Taliban, in contrast, would consider objective and genuine education as an insidious threat to their agenda. Pakistani newspapers often include reports of Taliban attacking and destroying schools in the tribal region. Real education and knowledge are the enemies of the Taliban and their erstwhile global jihadist partners. Some of the reasons for this deep-seated loathing are further illumined below.⁴⁸

While not entirely dissimilar to the Afghan Taliban's ideological narrative, the Pakistani Taliban's armed propaganda and information narrative is more severe, lying somewhere closer to the medieval-like program that the original Taliban movement embraced and im-

⁴⁸ Ibid. On Taliban views of education, see Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Pakistan—The Threat from Within*, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief Number 13 (Bradford, United Kingdom: University of Bradford, 2007), 3.

posed. The Pakistani Taliban's influence campaign builds on an odd blend of Pashtun tribal values and Islamist creed. They have declared polio vaccinations to be forbidden by Islamic law (*haram*) on the grounds that they would render the new generation impotent. They have targeted health workers for assassination and killed a doctor from the Frontier Medical College in March 2007 for administering polio shots to children. This slaying precipitated the resignation of 70 female health care providers who had been working in the FATA. As a result, over 4,000 parents refused to vaccinate their children and the government essentially abandoned polio vaccinations altogether.

The Pakistani Taliban's Islamist agenda is also highly misogynistic and targets women for separation in word and deed. It seeks to reduce the space for women in public and calls for the total separation of the sexes. There are two genuinely tragic examples that reveal the consequences of such a draconian agenda. During the October 2005 earthquake in the northern tribal belt, local religious elders refused to let male medical rescue workers dig out injured female students who were buried in the rubble under their collapsed school. In April 2006 locals prevented male rescue workers from moving female victims who had been injured in a stampede that ensued during a weekly congregation at a local madrasa.⁴⁹

The Pakistani Taliban has also employed cultural symbols to mobilize the Pashtuns. As a result of decades-long Islamist leaning policies, there has been a reconceptualization of what it means to be a Pashtun, and a nationalistic religiosity in the form of political Islam has supplanted Pashtun nationalism as the ideology informing action. The Pakistani Taliban see their role fighting the Pakistani security forces as one that makes them both better Pashtuns and better Muslims. To rationalize their holy war against fellow Muslims they impugn Pakistani soldiers as proxies whom Americans use against their brothers. In terms of influence and narrative, they had also accused the Musharraf regime of being allied to infidels, which also allows the Taliban to propagate their roles in violent antigovernment attacks as the defense of the Islamic community against apostates. In a similar vein, they have not viewed peace

⁴⁹ Hoodboy, *Pakistan—The Threat from Within*, 3–4 and 10–11 for this and previous paragraph.

deals with the security forces as really binding them in any way to turn over foreign Islamist militants to the government. To them, the foreigners are Muslim brothers within the community of Islam, and the security forces are apostates allied with infidels. To be certain, the deeply embedded Pashtun tenets of hospitality and freedom also underlay their persistent refusals to give up Arab guests. To deny hospitality under alien pressure would be an impingement of their code and their fierce independence. Harboring like-minded foreign fighters makes the mujahideen of Pakistani Taliban both better Pashtuns and better Muslims.⁵⁰

Notwithstanding the explanations of the TTP and TNSM in the section on legitimacy, it will be helpful to elucidate several other facts about the Pakistani Taliban before exploring the impact of armed propaganda and lethal attacks on the insurgency. The TTP is one of the larger groups and represents the purist form of Taliban-inspired militancy. The organization emerged as a result of the large exodus of foreign militants to the FATA after the fall of the Taliban regime. For one, a necessary caveat is that the mix of insurgents and terrorists are in nearly constant flux and adaptation, evolving and coalescing or dispersing as they adjust to the ever changing operational environment. Newly forming groups typically remain *de facto* protégés of more established parent organizations until they attain a level of proficiency that supports independent action. Additionally, there is some ebb and flow of partnering and outsourcing stemming from the opportunistic targeting of mutually beneficial targets. The LeT's Mumbai attack of November 2008, for example, represents an instance where the planning and execution allegedly included LeT members with ISI collusion, and the effects benefited an even greater number of groups operating in the tribal areas. For one, LeT cannot survive in a vacuum, and these groups opportunistically cooperate and outsource to help one another survive and prosecute operations from and in the tribal areas and beyond. Additionally, the Mumbai attack precipitated beneficial and collateral effects for all the extremist groups operating in the tribal areas simply because the Pakistani security forces reaction to India's reaction to the inci-

⁵⁰ Shuja Nawaz, *FATA—A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 27–28.

dent diverted attention and resources toward India and the East, away from the tribal area safe havens along Pakistan's western border. In other words, Mumbai heightened the India-Pakistan security dilemma and thus pulled Pakistan's focus away from its security operations against militants in the sanctuaries.⁵¹

In Waziristan, the likes of TNSM and Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan militants were drawn toward the band of tribal warriors associated with the late Baitullah Mehsud, whose group became increasingly radical as result of this influx of foreign elements. These international connections also allegedly brought Mehsud into close contact with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. After their humiliating defeat in 2001, the TNSM rolled itself under the umbrella of Mehsud's growing Pakistani Taliban in the hope of stimulating a comeback. The TTP are in general a part of the greater Taliban organization embodied in the Quetta Shura and the Afghan Taliban. Jalaluddin Haqqani's militant organization (often referred to as the "Haqqani network"), which intersects with the Taliban on both sides of the Durand Line, serves as a meta-node in this network, which seems to variously link every Islamist actor in the FATA, including al-Qaeda. His son Sirajuddin, also known as Khalifa, has surpassed even his father in his reputation as a fierce mujahideen commander and is purportedly in command of actual operations against Coalition forces in Afghanistan. The Haqqanis maintain substantial influence on both sides of the border and serve as a conduit from the Afghan Taliban to the Pakistani Taliban and foreign fighters associated with al-Qaeda. American officials even suspect the Haqqanis of the manifest flow of foreign fighters into Afghanistan from the Middle East, Turkey, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan.⁵²

Like the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban's program also includes the aggressive use of armed propaganda to coerce the less amenable among the people and to undermine the government's credibility and legitimacy. The notion that information operations are easier for the insurgents because all they have to do is destroy people and things remains true in Pakistan also. Death and destruc-

⁵¹ Zaidi, "The Taliban Organization in Pakistan," 44–45. For a cogent and distilled explanation of LeT and the November 2008 Mumbai attack, see Farhana Ali and Muhammad Shehzad, "Lashkar-e Tayyiba Remains Committed to Jihad," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 3 (March 2009): 13–16.

⁵² Zaidi, "The Taliban Organization in Pakistan," 45–46.

tion have immediate effects in an information-age media landscape. Developing, administering, and protecting are slow and difficult in Pakistan even in the absence of an insurgency. Armed propaganda, or propaganda of the deed, is the incitement of an animated audience through violent acts rather than words. In an information-rich environment, a “continuous stream of news images and stories” can help reinforce the insurgent narrative and revive opposition to the government. With most insurgencies, neither absolute victory nor absolute defeat is likely. Instead, there is the contested area of insecurity wherein notions of success or failure reside in the perceptions of the people living there. The key task for both counterinsurgent and insurgent is to manipulate these perceptions. In *The Insurgent Archipelago*, John Mackinlay identifies three approaches for propagating through violence: the deliberate approach, the own-goal approach, and by a continuous stream of random news.⁵³

For the deliberate approach, militants attack a venue that draws attention in the international media in order to guarantee that the images of the deed are transmitted to every news channel in as many languages as possible. The own-goal approach does not necessarily require any particular organization by the militants but only a malleable public audience for counterproductive counterinsurgent actions, which the insurgents quickly capitalize to good effect via the news media. The third approach is particularly easy for Islamic insurgents fighting Western forces in Islamic heartlands, for it simply relies on the continuous flow of news stories that resonate unfavorably with the public audience. For an example of the latter, although television news teams in Pakistan and Afghanistan may simply intend to report as objectively as they can about ongoing operations, the recurring images of Western soldiers and combat vehicles maneuvering through the streets of Muslim villages represent an illegal occupation of the *ummah* by infidels to radicalized audiences in Muslim countries. Likewise, repeated images of uniformed Western troops and Muslim casualties animate opposition, if not hatred, for such endeavors. Examples of the deliberate approach have included the bombing of the Islamabad Marriot in September 2008 and the Haqqani-sponsored attack on the Afghanistan

⁵³ Rid and Hecker, *War 2.0*, 2–4; and John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 124, 129–30, and 134. The direct quote is from Mackinlay, 129.

National Day parade in April of the same year. As a popular international hotel in the heart of Pakistan's capital, the Marriot presented a venue where a massive attack would generate instant attention across all media. The suicide blast killed 40, wounded 100, and created a 20-foot crater in front of the destroyed facade. The attack on Karzai's parade in Kabul was even more sensational, where photographic images focused on "the sense of pantomime, the rout of be-medaled parade soldiers scampering across the parade square before Taliban fire."⁵⁴

Finally, lethal operations in the tribal areas have not been consistent with information operations aimed at winning the support of the population. In fact, the endless stream of drone attacks, coupled with the Pakistani army's sledgehammer approach to pacification, would seem to play into the second two approaches available to the insurgent for propaganda of the deed. Drone attacks, in particular, while effective in expunging Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, also provide a relatively steady stream of "own-goal" media images of Coalition actions that can be counterproductive in a war of ideas. Punitive raids, collective punishment, and the devastation of villages may have served the British and the Malakand Field Force well in 1897, but it is not the way to influence public perception in the favor of the counterinsurgent during the twenty-first-century information age. One glaring example of such unwanted and counterproductive consequences in the information sphere was the heavy-handed attacks on the Pashtun village of Damadola in the Bajaur Agency of the FATA.⁵⁵

In January 2006, a General Atomics MQ-1 Predator drone ostensibly targeting bin Laden's number two attacked Damadola and destroyed a house, killing 18 people attending a dinner celebration of Eid ul-Adha, one of the two holiest festivals of the Sunnis. The attack incited widespread and violent demonstrations throughout Pakistan. Several months later, in October 2006, the Pakistani army, supported by Predators, attacked and destroyed a madrassa outside Damadola. The second strike killed 85 people, most of whom the Pakistani government alleged to be militants, although no targets

⁵⁴ Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 141–42 and 133–34. The direct quote is from page 133.

⁵⁵ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 229–31.

of high value were present during the attack. However, some residents and opposition politicians claimed that children had been in the school. In May 2008, yet another Predator strike on Damadola, which targeted a known al-Qaeda explosives expert, killed 16 people, among them women, children, and the targeted individual.

It is already extraordinarily difficult for any Western partnered effort, not matter how benign, to succeed with information operations among populations whose cultures we do not truly understand (and who do not truly understand our culture). It will be impossible to do if the United States and its partners cannot sort out who to protect and who to punish. Moral rectitude is absolutely essential because the killing mathematics and calculus in the Pashtun lands help create exponentially more insurgent recruits for every wrongful death. It is naiveté of the highest order to imagine that U.S. technology, hollow “hearts-and-minds” actions, large-scale military interventions, or wastefully shortsighted development projects can successfully integrate the Pashtuns “without some major political and cultural transformation.”⁵⁶

Postscript

The FATA represents a crucial locale in the war, and Pakistan has committed over 100,000 troops to the region since the war began. The war there until 2009 was bloody, and the Pakistani military exhibited a reluctance to fight those who it perceived to be coreligionists. There were several attempts to craft a peace agreement with the militants fighting in the tribal areas. All these agreements have failed. Many now sense that the FATA is beyond the control of the Pakistan government even if there was an earnest push to gain control in the more restive agencies. As stated previously, Shaun Gregory has suggested that “the very notion of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas may now be a misnomer, a more apt description being the Taliban Administered Tribal Areas, or TATA.” The situation in Baluchistan, which comprises about 50 percent Baluchis and 50 percent Pashtuns, similarly engenders disharmony between the people, the central government, and expectations about control over resources. In Baluchistan, the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

people live in the most abject poverty out of all of the provinces, yet it is resource rich. The Pakistani regime's obdurately oppressive and covetous approach to Baluchi resources, manifested in the Pakistani military's air strike and killing of the elderly Baluchi nationalist leader Akbar Khan Bugti in 2006, also precluded helpful dialogue with the indigenous population. There was also some proof to imply that the ISI employed its traditional strategy of using religious radicals as instruments of perfidy. The government's security forces remained detached from the proliferation of the Taliban across Baluchistan, particularly since 2005, when the Taliban ostensibly converted Baluchistan into an operational sanctuary.⁵⁷

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province has also seen a surge in violence since this war began, a surge which some suggest is the result of increasing resentment towards the central government and one animated by an ideological world view that stems from Pashtun nationalism conflated with Islamist militancy. The American-led "war on terror" has exacerbated this resentment and the militants' responses have become increasingly violent. As a consequence, this war of attrition by suicide bombings in the Pashtun Belt witnessed an estimated 163 people killed in 2006, while those killed in the first half of 2007 had already climbed close to that level of violence. While the U.S. drone war in Pakistan, as well as Pakistan's combat operations against fellow Pashtuns in Afghanistan, have not helped attenuate these grievances, the Pakistani government also bears some responsibility for this surge in violence because it heretofore failed to engage with leadership in the province. The oligarchy in Islamabad makes all the decisions about the war on terror, and the people in the tribal areas, who live and die every day with these decisions, do not even get a vote.⁵⁸

The implications of Pakistan's approach to Islamist extremism are more difficult to discern and distinguish from the effects in general that the U.S. war on terror has had upon the perceptions and grievances of the global Muslim community. Many Muslims have construed the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as attacks on Islam, and this has spurred both moderates and radicals to op-

⁵⁷ Gregory and Revill, "The Role of the Pakistan Military," 46-48.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-51.

pose Pakistan's support for the America and its war on terror. Even though the majority of Pakistan's public may not support Islamist militants, they also do not support Pakistan's alliance with the United States. The results of Pakistan's efforts to help the United States counter religious extremism are ambiguously marginal at best and duplicitously complicit at worst. Some lowlights from the first years after September 2001 include Musharraf's inadvertent contribution to the rise of the MMA; his unwillingness to go after the Afghan Taliban; the storming of the Red Mosque; and the unabated propagation of Islamist dogma in the madrassas and public school curricula. Given that prior to September 2001, Pakistan was a full-fledged supporter of the Taliban and other surrogate Islamist militant groups, there is a very thin silver lining to otherwise nebulous performance of Pakistan in the war on terror.⁵⁹

After 2001, Musharraf did declare a reversal of policy, under the pressure of a U.S. ultimatum. Musharraf's "Hobson's choice" was to become a frontline state and ally of America in the war on terror at an ultimately expensive price tag in terms of domestic support for his military regime. However, the results of Pakistan's efforts in the war on terror have been mixed. Pakistan does continue to provide access through its ports and overland routes for logistical support to U.S. forces in Afghanistan. It has also helped capture a few high-value al-Qaeda operatives, including Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Shaykh Muhammad. Moreover, Pakistan in some instances deployed its own security forces to interdict suspected al-Qaeda positions. The government has also made some modest attempts to arrest the growth and curricula of radical madrassas, which are arguably germinating at least a portion of the jihadists fighting in Afghanistan. Finally, under American pressure, Pervez Musharraf did in some measure expunge the military and the ISI of Islamist-leaning members who were openly or passively supportive of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The most significant of these was the 2001 removal of General Mahmood Ahmed, the director general of the ISI. These measures have not been popular in Pakistan and, as pointed out above, contributed to instability in Pakistan. Still, Pakistan's full and genuine commitment to com-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 50–52.

bating al-Qaeda, and particularly the Afghan Taliban, is suspect. There is open-source reporting that continues to link the ISI and other official operators to the Afghan Taliban, LeT, and other shadowy jihadist groups. To be sure, the ISI has been interwoven with Islamist groups for over three decades, a state that will likely continue indefinitely.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ibid.



4

THE PASHTUN BELT IN AFGHANISTAN, 2009–2011: HARD BUT HOPEFUL?

Six years after the War on Terrorism began Pakistan has emerged as the new Afghanistan.

—Shaun Gregory, *“The ISI and the War on Terrorism”*

Afghanistan today is in danger of capsizing in a perfect storm of insurgency, terrorism, narcotics, and warlords.

—Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, *“Terrorism, Insurgency, and Afghanistan”*

The previous two chapters analyzed how well the U.S.-led Coalition countered the Taliban in Afghanistan and how well the Pakistanis countered the insurgents in Pakistan for generally the first eight years of the war. The insurgent movements on both sides of the border generally comprise Pashtuns who largely, but not exclusively, conduct attacks in and around the Pashtun areas. As of the spring of 2009, the Afghan and Pakistani insurgencies along the Pashtun Belt showed no signs of relenting. In fact, the converse was closer to the truth. The insurgencies were metastasizing, and in some instances coalescing, at least for temporary reasons of opportunity. The Afghan Taliban at that time had de facto control of large portions of southern and eastern Afghanistan. There was also evidence that the Taliban had established parallel hierarchies, or shadow governments, in most of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, though the strength of those hierarchies ebbed in provinces further away from the Pashtun Belt. Earlier in 2009, the U.S. general who then commanded the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) considered the counterinsurgents and insurgents to be at a stalemate. Likewise, in Pakistan internal mujahideen expanded their control of terrain and increased their attacks against the property and persons of the security forces, government workers, and civilians. Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) guerrillas had made advances in the district of Buner that brought the threat to within 60 miles of Islamabad, the capital city, and nearer to the country’s heartland, by April 2009. Dur-

ing the same period, Baitullah Mehsud's Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan [TTP]) irregulars held sway over large portions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and continued to perpetrate attacks against the state of Pakistan and its security forces.¹

Three significant and discernible changes have come about since the spring of 2009 that distinguish 2009–11 from the previous eight years in Afghanistan and Pakistan. One is that the U.S. leadership has recognized that Afghanistan and Pakistan are wars that must be won because of the grave threat to the United States and its allies engendered by al-Qaeda operating from sanctuaries in the Pashtun tribal areas. A corollary to this is the understanding that the key to stabilizing Afghanistan and Pakistan are counterinsurgency campaigns that build security, governance, and relative prosperity in the tribal areas. When judiciously employed, limited direct action strikes against precise terrorist targets can complement the counterinsurgency efforts. Second, it seems that the perception of the Pakistani leadership and population has shifted to see the Pakistani Taliban as a genuinely serious threat to the state and its citizens. As a result, there has been more willingness to go after the TTP and TNSM, as both militant groups are now viewed as posing a threat to Pakistan. There is yet little empirical evidence that the Pakistanis are willing to help defeat the Afghan Taliban, although the winter of 2010 witnessed Pakistan arresting an unprecedented number of senior Afghan Taliban in Pakistan. Third, the U.S. leadership has finally acknowledged that the efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be complementary, and that the essence, the hub of the threat, emanates from Pakistan's border areas.²

Afghanistan

The Americans may have all the nice wristwatches, but we have all the time.

—*an anonymous Taliban insurgent*

Protracted wars are difficult and exhausting, especially for Amer-

¹ See Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, "Introduction," 57, and Canfield, "Fraternity, Power, and Time," 230–7, in Crews and Tarzi, *Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*; and Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 81–97, for insights on the resurgence of the Taliban. See Siddiqi, "Jihadism in Pakistan" 57–69; and Zaidi, "The Taliban Organization in Pakistan," 40–7, for an explanation of the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP.

² See Fair, "Pakistan's Own War on Terror," 39–53, for insights on the shift in the Pakistani perception of the threat.

icans, whose impatience and fickleness make it hard to sustain support for a long war. Insurgents do in fact usually have all the time, when compared to those who oppose them. When counterinsurgents are stalemated with insurgents, this is generally not good because counterinsurgents are losing if they are not winning. On the other hand, not losing is often enough for the insurgent to see that he is winning. In Afghanistan during 2009–11, the U.S. senior leadership assessed the situation to be deteriorating but reversible. It was deteriorating because the resurgent Taliban considered itself to be winning, as it had gained control of the population and significant pieces of territory in southern and eastern Afghanistan. To quote the sage words of the great philosopher Baruch Spinoza, nature abhors a vacuum. The Taliban expanded its control of the Pashtun areas in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2009 because there were an insufficient number of Coalition forces in the country to conduct a full-measure counterinsurgency. During 2009–11, there have been discernible indications that warrant guarded optimism that the Coalition and its Afghan partners can reverse the security situation in their favor. The good news is that U.S. civilian and military senior leaders now have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and how to do it. The supremely important caveat emptor for the next 2 years is whether the U.S.-led Coalition will be able to accomplish its campaign with the resources it has within a timeframe that the U.S. polity will support. The following portion of this chapter assesses the variables of legitimacy, force, and influence in the context of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan from the summer of 2009 through the end of 2011.

Legitimacy

This is all a war of perceptions. . . . This is all in the minds of the participants.

—*Army General Stanley A. McChrystal, 2010*

The then-commander of the ISAF articulated this percipient insight during a February 2010 press conference in Istanbul. Perceptions are the essence of the struggle for legitimacy among the people living in the border tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Reality is what the relevant populations believe and perceive. If the

majority of the populace is convinced that the government, security forces, and Coalition partners are committed to bringing sustainable improvements in terms of administration, services, and security, then it will likely confer its support for the government. If the converse is true, either due to the absence of governance and security or because of corrupt government officials who abuse their responsibilities, then significant portions of the population will support the insurgents, who seem to offer a better alternative. In places where government security force control is tenuous but the population is still inclined to support the government, the Taliban have used more coercive measures, including night letters and assassinations, to compel support from the population. As recently as December 2009, the Afghan ambassador to the United States acknowledged that his country's challenges included tenuous governance and nonexistent governance. By itself, the effort to build government and security institutions from an abjectly poor and largely illiterate population, devastated by more than 30 years of tumult and war, is a Herculean one. However, some colossally bad U.S. strategic decisions and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) half measures during the first eight years of the war helped compound this challenge. Unbelievably, the Coalition set the initial ceiling for the Afghan National Army (ANA) at 35,000. This was for a country that is bigger and more populous than Iraq, with a history, geography, and populace notorious for successful guerrilla wars.³

While improving how it governs is the responsibility of the indigenous government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the U.S. leadership did not initially do the development of governance justice when it decided to maintain an economical presence focused almost exclusively on direct and lethal actions against terrorists. Moreover, the subsequent and extremely misguided decision to invade Iraq led to a near debacle when most of the U.S. government and U.S. military were compelled to focus on that war. This same decision precipitated a handover of Afghanistan to the NATO-led ISAF, which embodied its own set of imperfections and disadvantages when it comes to counterinsurgency. Initially, hostile

³ Said Tayeb Jawad, Afghan ambassador to the United States (speech at Paul Nitze School for Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, 4 December 2009).

warlords and criminal militias alienated the people. The Afghan Military Forces (comprising warlord militias such as Masood's and Gul Agha Shirzai's) are now gone, and there has been some progress in curbing, but not eliminating, warlords in positions of power. The grievances of much of the population now relate to an expectation gap between what they expect from the government and the security forces, and what they experience and perceive as corrupt governance, insecurity, spotty services, and continued poverty. The general population is also not enamored of the Taliban's extremism or its ideology, although the Pashtun and Islamic portions of the Taliban's narrative do resonate. The Afghans are likewise not enthralled by an overly centralized and controlling government in Kabul. They prefer local governance and local security with some enablers and resources from the central government. The Afghans want fundamental services such as education and roads. There is good news in efforts to build and sustain legitimacy because after years of parsimoniousness in knowledge, resources, and leadership, the years 2009–11 saw big increases in all three, manifested in some closing of the expectation gap. This section explains the problems associated with legitimacy and security, and then reviews any positive changes to shape perceptions of legitimacy among the people.⁴

Although ISAF had an initial mandate to provide security only in the environs of Kabul, by October 2003 the United Nations Security Council had authorized ISAF to expand its purview and control to all of Afghanistan. By October the following year, ISAF had expanded its operations to the northern provinces, but it was yet another two years after that before ISAF ostensibly assumed full responsibility for the entire country. During this same period, a relatively small array of U.S. (Operation Enduring Freedom [OEF]) forces conducted operations mainly in the east and mostly, but not exclusively, focused on manhunts. ISAF did not assume responsi-

⁴ There is no intention here to impugn the hard work done by a host of dedicated professionals between 2002 and 2009. The efforts then were ad hoc and on a shoestring in terms of people and resources. Between late 2003 and early 2005, for example, the military and civilian team of LtGen Barno, USA, and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad unified their efforts, instituted best-practice counterinsurgency tenets, and embraced the Provincial Reconstruction Team concept. However, they never had the resources to implement a full counterinsurgency campaign. See Lamb and Cinnamond, "Unified Effort," 43–44, on unified civil-military action.

bility for military operations in the southern provinces until July 2006. This is not to imply that ISAF formations were even close to being in control of all the provinces in Afghanistan. This shift to NATO/ISAF equated to responsibility without control, and without anywhere close to the necessary resources. Until 2009, in fact, there were still some provinces without an ISAF, ANA, or OEF security presence. One report analyzing this time period noted that the civilian, economic, and military “resources available were far too limited to create the tolerable environment that would have prevented the resurgence of the Taliban and other insurgent groups.” Not only did NATO have difficulty in marshalling sufficient troops and resources in a reasonable amount of time, but it also had huge difficulties in coordinating the civil and military actions of those forces into one unified effort. The host of national caveats tied to the use of force and the roles of the Provincial Reconstruction Team presented huge, but not insurmountable, obstacles to unity of command and effort. The unity of command in ISAF also suffered from the use of partly ad hoc NATO core headquarters that rotated in and out on a six-month basis to constitute ISAF. NATO also impaired its own efficacy with its internally perceived institutional contradictions pertaining to its role in the world. Indeed, NATO’s inability to design or implement an effective counterinsurgency campaign stemmed from its very nature as an institution of cooperative sovereign states.⁵

It was during the years of the Taliban’s resurgence that the lack of effective security capacity and the absence of ISAF in the south and southeast also precluded effective governance and government presence. Because of the security vacuum in places such as Helmand, Kandahar, and Zabul, the neo-Taliban were able to carry out their armed propaganda and assassination campaigns against local government officials, including schoolteachers. For an insurgency like the one in southern and eastern Afghanistan, security and governance must be implemented in tandem. If there is no credible security presence, there is no perception of confidence in the government’s capacity to administer and protect. When the Taliban

⁵ Jens Ringsmose and Peter Thruelsen, *NATO’s Counterinsurgency Campaign in Afghanistan: Are Classical Doctrines Suitable for Alliances?* UNISCI Discussion Paper Number 22 (Zurich: UNISCI, January 2010), 62–66. The direct quote is from page 63 of this report.

increasingly began to perform this role by administering justice, security, and control, it became the de facto “legitimate government” in the absence of one. By 2008, the Afghans in the south, southeast, and Kabul/central regions were reporting a degraded security situation. Increased criminality, high-profile attacks, and attacks against poorly protected Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) outposts “contributed to decreased confidence in the government.” However, very few Afghans want to see the Taliban return to power, and most support the current form of government. Indeed, a majority of Afghans continue to support the overall effort of the government and also support the necessity of a strong international military presence, at least for the moment.⁶

Karzai’s government has struggled with perceived legitimacy because of endemic corruption; alleged family associations with opium traffickers; on-and-off alliances with warlords; ostensibly fraudulent August 2009 presidential election; and Karzai’s association with the non-Muslim, Western-dominated Coalition forces. The August 2009 ISAF commander’s assessment noted that the Afghan government had made some progress, but that serious obstacles remained. The cause of the population’s lack of trust in its government is twofold. For one, some government officials have abused their power and given special treatment to certain tribes or individuals. Secondly, the Afghan government has not been capable of providing sufficient services, justice, or security to the population. Even though the number of competent officials and capable institutions has grown, it had not grown or improved by August 2009 to sufficiently counter the problems that continued to undermine its legitimacy. The above problems explain the inability of the government to win the support of the population. The assessment also recorded that in rural areas there was little connection between the local population and the central government because the top-down method of building government capacity had not succeeded in providing services that reached local communities. General McChrystal observed that the Afghan government had not supported or integrated “traditional community governance structures,” which have been an impor-

⁶ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *Afghanistan Report 2009* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 2009), 5, 17–19. The direct quote is from page 17.

tant historic component of Afghan society. The latter impaired cohesion and increased instability at the community level, which made communities more susceptible to insurgent machinations.⁷

Compared to no government or a Taliban government, Karzai's government is the best form of government that the Afghans now have. Senior U.S. civilian and military leaders, such as former Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard C. Holbrooke and former ISAF Commander McChrystal, demonstrated in their assessments and public speeches that they understood the challenges they faced in time and space, and they garnered popular support. The people represent the object in counterinsurgency. In other words, a principal objective in counterinsurgency is the "four inches between the ears" of the populace. In Afghanistan, the people exercise the rational person phenomenon: weigh and decide on the risks and benefits; and support the government when they have confidence in its capacity to deliver security, justice, the most basic services, and representation in the form of councils or *shuras*. Our efforts in Afghanistan in the end will not meet with success if the people do not believe in their government but instead support the Taliban cause. The 2010 *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy* issued by the State Department aimed to improve government and security in concert, particularly at the provincial, district, and local levels, "where most Afghans encounter their government." The U.S. government, in order to partner with the Afghans to build better governance, has increased the number of civilian technical advisers in key ministries and in both provincial capitals and district centers. The increase in civilian presence generally saw the number of inter-agency experts triple from just over 300 in 2009 to over 1,000 in 2010–11. This strategy also calls for a reinvigoration of resources and vigilance on anticorruption that has witnessed the creation of an Anti-Corruption Task Force. This task force initially included among its members Sarah Chayes, an American expatriate from Kandahar who has a deep understanding of Afghan civil society and governance in Afghanistan. These increases in rep-

⁷ Gen Stanley A. McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment* (Kabul: NATO ISAF and USFOR-A, 30 August 2009), 2-8–2-9.

representatives from agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Federal Bureau of Investigation supported the combined introduction of security forces and governance into the populated Pashtun areas to create secured areas not amenable to Taliban control.⁸

In a February 2010 press conference, then-Special Representative Holbrooke captured the scope and magnitude of the changes in the U.S./Coalition approach to building legitimacy and security in Afghanistan that began in 2009. His remarks at the time noted that during 2009 in Afghanistan, the United States decided to change ambassadors, reorganize the American embassy, change military commanders, reassess its military strategy, and institute two major force increases. The buildup that President Obama announced during his West Point speech in December 2009 added another 30,000 troops in Afghanistan. The year 2009 also witnessed significant increases in civilian efforts and some significant changes in U.S. strategy and operations. The United States, in collaboration with NATO, established a new command structure for training ANSF and began a whole series of other programs that had been put in abeyance because of the Afghan presidential election. That election was not optimal in terms of legitimacy, but it was a process that was within the general parameters of the laws and constitution of Afghanistan. President Karzai won the election and is now the officially elected leader of Afghanistan. Moreover, the American buildup in civilian capacity continued on course, with a total civilian surge strength of over 1,000 that peaked in 2010. What's more, three other discernibly positive trends for improving the reality and perception of legitimacy are slowly bearing fruit in the promulgation of best-practice counterinsurgency directives; the National Solidarity Program (NSP), the genesis of which predates 2009; and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program, which was formerly framed as the

⁸ Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2010), ii–iii. The direct quote is from page ii. Sarah Chayes, author of *The Punishment of Virtue*, has lived in Kandahar and Kabul since early 2002 and is a member of the Anti-Corruption Task Force.

Local Defense Initiative (LDI) and initially began as the Community Defense Initiative.⁹

From the moment the then-new command team assumed command of ISAF in June 2009, it began to direct changes in how Coalition forces operated, issuing directives that clearly revealed a deep understanding of the fundamentals of counterinsurgency, including the centrality of the indigenous population for success. Initial guidance directed ISAF forces to protect and partner with the Afghan people because ISAF was fighting for, and not against, the population. This guidance emphasized the belief that success ultimately depends on effective partnering with the Afghan government to establish good governance as well as unity of purpose and credibility of information. Four months later, and after they provided a detailed assessment of the situation in Afghanistan to the senior U.S. civilian leadership, the senior ISAF commander presented an address in London in which he acknowledged a crisis in the confidence of the Afghan populace because of unmet expectations between 2001 and 2009. The speech explicitly noted the “mismatch between what they had hoped for and what they experienced.” He emphasized the necessity of protecting more than killing because “counterinsurgency mathematics” in a place like the Pashtun Belt means every wrongful killing could in fact generate 10 more insurgents. In this speech he described the absolute necessity of winning the war of perceptions among the villagers. He also acknowledged that the Coalition forces and their Afghan partners had exacerbated the security problems with underresourced, undercoordinated, and underperformed operations. Lastly, the ISAF commander articulated the key steps toward reversing the perceived momentum of the insurgents would be to promptly increase the ANSF, closely partner with Afghans, improve governance capacity with a focus on rule of law, fix the problem of predatory corruption, and focus operations on those populated areas of the Pashtun Belt that were most threatened.¹⁰

⁹ See Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, “Readout on the January 28 London Conference on Afghanistan,” (briefing at Foreign Press Center, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, 3 February 2010).

¹⁰ Gen Stanley A. McChrystal, “Commander’s Initial Guidance,” (Kabul: ISAF Headquarters, 13 June 2009) and “Special Address,” (address at International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, England, 1 October 2009).

The NSP provides another good practice for building the legitimacy of the Afghan government in the minds of the rural population. The NSP facilitates elections to establish Community Development Councils (CDCs) and builds the capacities of CDC and community members (both men and women). The councils identify priority subprojects, prepare Community Development Plans (CDPs), and implement approved subprojects. The program links the CDC to government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and donors to improve access to services and resources. The NSP also builds capacity at the community level to enhance the competence of CDC male and female members in terms of financial management, procurement, technical skills, and transparency. Once the CDC has been elected, an inclusive and innovative inductive model is followed to develop a CDP. Moreover, designing a CDP is an exercise that allows the CDC to map out its development requirements and to prioritize them as well. Subproject proposals are then developed to apply for funding. The NSP provides direct block grant transfers to a bank account established by the CDC to support rehabilitation and development activities, which these councils plan and implement. The funding for these activities comes in the form of block grants that generally amount to \$200 (U.S. dollars [USD]) per family, with average grants of \$33,000 (USD) and maximum grants of \$60,000 (USD) per community.¹¹

A third initiative that has already discernibly increased both legitimacy and security in Afghanistan's rural areas is the ALP. The Afghan government approved the program in August 2010, and the Coalition Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) has masterfully overseen and orchestrated the effort. The ALP has flourished, increasing from about 10 locations in early fall 2010 to over 50 validated sites and almost 8,000 local policemen by the end of 2011. Where the biggest problems are in terms of control, influence, and confidence of the people in the government near and in the southern and eastern Pashtun Belt, legitimacy is something the people seek, but they also want some

¹¹ Blair Glencorse, telephone interview, 13 January 2010. Glencorse is a development expert with the Institute for State Effectiveness in Washington, DC. He emphasized that the NSP was a success story.

ownership. In fact, in most instances, the people would prefer local services, security, and governance. The U.S.-Coalition effort for the first eight years engendered a centralized and top-down approach. However, since June 2009, and with increasing emphasis and momentum since 2010, ISAF has focused more on empowering local legitimacy through local security and local governance since “local defense is what the people want.” The ALP has garnered the support of the people. As originally envisioned by then-Minister of the Interior Muhammad Hanif Atmar and then-Minister Jelani Popal (Independent Directorate for Local Governance), the LDI evolved from the two similar previous initiatives, the Community Defense Initiative and the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3). Unlike the Community Defense Initiative, but similar to the AP3, personnel serving as security forces in the ALP receive pay for service via the Afghan government’s Ministry of the Interior (MOI). Village *shuras* select the security personnel, and district police chiefs help train and equip them, with the support of the CFSOCC-A. Similar to but much better thought out than its precursor programs, the ALP envisions that participating villages will receive economic development and other assistance, partly as incentives for participation in the program. In aggregate, the funds dedicated to both salaries and development over time, in the context of ALP programs, are not at all insignificant in the context of rural Afghanistan, depending on how many villages join the program.¹²

The ALP is an integral part of the overall Village Stability Operations (VSO) effort. Special forces teams conducting VSOs support local government efforts under the direction and administration of the MOI. As a sanctioned program, the local *shura* must vet ALP members, who are then enrolled biometrically, trained, equipped, and responsible to the District Chief of Police. The vetting process incorporates the village elder/*shura* process as the first step in identifying suitable local police. Village elders recommend these guardians, and in turn these guardians have a vested interest in protecting the village to which they belong. The special forces teams provide training focused on the Afghan constitution/rule of

¹² Direct quote is from Seth Jones, telephone interview, 11 January 2010. Jon Klug, email interview, 10 February 2010. Maj Klug was at the time the executive officer of Army LtGen William B. Caldwell’s initiatives group in Afghanistan.

law, policing ethics/morals, basic rifle marksmanship, and first aid. What is also salient is the recognized and acknowledged MOI-sponsored equipping and facilitating role for the ALP. This provides credible and discernible evidence of the Afghan government's interest in the well being of its local populations. The Coalition special forces and Afghan commandos also remain responsive to emerging security threats that might outmatch these local defense programs.¹³

However, VSOs precede, assess, and create conditions where ALP can work. ALP is one of several priority efforts that CFSOCC-A elements undertake in rural village areas across Afghanistan, in support of the comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign. As a bottom-up effort to connect the people to security and acceptable local governance, special forces teams conduct VSOs in strategically important rural areas; in village communities and village clusters; and along the lines of security, governance, and development to undermine insurgent influence and control. VSOs are specifically oriented toward insurgent-controlled or contested rural areas where there exists limited or no military or police elements of the ANSF. The VSO program helps with local security, reestablishes traditional local governance mechanisms that are representative of the population in the form of *shuras* and councils, and promotes local development to improve quality of life within village communities and districts. VSO and ALP efforts connect village clusters upward to local district centers while national level governance efforts connect downward to provincial centers and then to district-level centers. As the insurgency in Afghanistan is principally rural, the VSO program aims to project security and stability to insurgent-contested rural areas by focusing on security, voice, and minimum essentials for the local population. The VSOs are creating isolating and delegitimizing effects to undermine insurgent influence in the eyes of the population while simultaneously improving perceptions by the people of the Afghan government's legitimacy.¹⁴

With the new vim, vigor, intellect, leadership, and resources infused in both the civilian and military components of the ISAF

¹³ Ty Connett and Bob Cassidy, "VSO: More than Village Defense," *Special Warfare* (July–September 2011): 22–27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

counterinsurgency campaign, it is quite likely that establishing partnered security and civil administration in previously uncovered locations in the southern provinces will convince the people that the Afghan government can legitimately and credibly administrate and secure them. Peter Bergen has previously expressed optimism about the changes he noted in Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2009 and 2010. The main concern for many Afghans, he posited, is security, and the troop surge will improve security. At least half of the Afghan population also shows support for the increase in forces and resources. Moreover, if the Coalition forces can simply secure the ring road, this will be a favorable indicator of security. America turned the war in Afghanistan off between 2002 and 2008, but it has now turned this war back on, and Bergen noted that this is good. But Bergen did provide his own caveat: “if we cannot discern favorable progress toward ring road security within 18 months, then we should start pulling out.” Counterinsurgency operations (Operation Moshtarak [Together]) to regain Afghan government control over the town of Marjah in southern Helmand Province began during the second half of February 2010. This operation aimed to build the population’s confidence in the government’s capacity to serve its people. Over time, Operation Moshtarak provided examples of both good and bad practices from which to glean lessons that were then incorporated into the planning and execution of Operation Hamkari (Cooperation), the theater’s main effort to win the population and to arrest and reverse the Taliban momentum in the vicinity of Kandahar in 2010 and 2011. Operation Hamkari began in earnest during September 2010. In turn, the lessons and best practices captured from these two operations are serving to inform counterinsurgency operations in the Upper Helmand River Valley and in the other regional commands’ operational environments during 2010–11.¹⁵

The purpose of Operation Moshtarak was as much about shaping the perceptions of the people as it was about militarily defeating the Taliban in what essentially was an internal safe haven in central

¹⁵ Peter Bergen, telephone interview, 14 January 2010. The author served in ISAF Joint Command from June 2010 until July 2011 as a special assistant to the commander, ISAF Joint Command, and was very familiar with the planning, execution, and outcome of Operation Hamkari, as well as the progress achieved in Marjah and the Central Helmand River Valley in the second half of 2010.

Helmand. Before the operation began, U.S. officials took some polls aimed at gaining an understanding of what the local populace wanted, how they saw local security conditions, what they perceived about Americans and the Taliban, and what would build their confidence in the Kabul government. The answers helped inform the planning and execution of the operation. As it turned out, people living near the Marjah area still held some positive perceptions about Americans, even recollecting how U.S. engineers built dams in the region in the 1950s. All of those characteristics are explained by the psychological goal of this campaign, which was to bring about a shift of perceptions among the fence-sitters and the fearful among the Afghan people. Marjah also saw an off-the-shelf, but imperfect, civil administration component, comprising economic development and political advisers who were standing by in order to move in behind the fighting formations, along with about 2,000 Afghan police paramilitaries, to hold and build governance. The composition and scope of this operation was without precedent in Afghanistan, even though talented commanders had previously tried to implement such proven practices in other areas in the east. In early 2010, Marjah represented a principal safe haven for the Taliban in the central Helmand river valley, a place where tribal politics, insurgents, and narcotics trafficking converged. As of 2011, Coalition forces and the ANSF had exerted control and influence in Marjah, reversing the Taliban's momentum and pushing them out of the populated areas. Partnered ANSF are providing increasing security, and the population is increasingly able to go about its routine daily activities uninterrupted by insurgent attack. Initially, there were problems in coordinating the development of legitimate governance there, and in mismanaging expectations about how long it would actually take to wrest Marjah away from the enemy. The Taliban was deeply rooted in the area, and progress proceeded slower than promised. However, as of this writing, Marjah is in good shape and security is holding. The following section examines this in more depth to discern practices and adaptations in leadership, organization, doctrine, and execution of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan.¹⁶

¹⁶ On Operation Mosharak, see Thom Shanker, "Afghan Push Went beyond Traditional Goals," *New York Times*, 20 February 2010, A6.

Force

Afghan lives are hard and short. They accept hardship, even death, but what they won't tolerate is injustice.

—Army Brigadier General John W. Nicholson Jr.,
Deputy Commander for Stability Operations

Then-U.S. Army Brigadier General John “Mick” Nicholson, the officer who offered the above insight in early 2009, has served two long tours in and around the Pashtun Belt in Afghanistan and in 2011 again served in Afghanistan as the ISAF chief operations officer. He is a seasoned counterinsurgent and a student of the Pashtun tribes. Yet, the conversation from which this quote is derived was in the context of mitigating the consequences of inadvertent civilian casualties. The reality is that large parts of the U.S. military, its leaders, its organizations, and its doctrine had largely adapted to practice counterinsurgency by the winter of 2008–9. Many, like General Nicholson, had served two or more tours in Afghanistan or Iraq and had learned counterinsurgency in contact with the enemy. In parallel, professional study and doctrine had changed to reflect greater emphasis on counterinsurgency. However, the problem in Afghanistan in the early summer of 2009, which saw a resurgent Taliban convinced that it was winning, was still one, at least in part, attributable to a dearth of security forces and cumbersome command and control. This manifested itself in undesirable civilian casualties in several provinces, where too few forces, operating without the requisite integration and cooperation that would have come with effective command and control, were conducting direct action decoupled from what could be considered a half-measured counterinsurgency. Special operations forces were “hammering nails,” sometimes killing the wrong people, because they lacked the nuance and local knowledge that would have been gleaned from the persistent presence of Coalition forces conducting full-measure counterinsurgency, working in combination with ANSF. On the other hand, those attempting counterinsurgency were too few to clear, hold, and build, especially in the south. Fully comprehensive counterinsurgency inside Afghanistan required unity of command and control for the whole panoply of direct, indirect, special, general, and civil actions. This section examines adaptations

to counterinsurgency in leadership, doctrine, forces, and operations since June 2009.

U.S. military doctrine now equally weighs operations such as irregular warfare and stability operations that focus on the population with those related to offensive and defensive operations. This parity reflects a significant paradigm change: it recognizes that twenty-first-century conflict constitutes more than just regular combat between armed opponents. Even though current doctrine still charges land forces to defeat enemies with offensive and defensive operations, U.S. conventional and special forces will have to simultaneously shape the broader situation through nonlethal actions to restore security and normalcy for the local population. Forces will operate among the populace and not adjacent to them. Military forces will often confront the enemy among noncombatants, with little to distinguish one from the other, until fighting erupts. Winning battles will still remain important but it alone is not sufficient. Winning the support of the indigenous population is just as important for success. Informing and influencing the populace is crucial to successful mission accomplishment. Finally, within the context of the current global security environment, the current U.S. doctrine professes that irregular warfare and stability operations are equally as important as conventional regular combat operations. This certainly was not always the case.¹⁷

The equal emphasis on irregular warfare and stability operations that is currently manifest within the U.S. government and the U.S. military stemmed from policy and strategy changes between 2005 and 2007. One of these documents merits some amplification. The 28 November 2005 Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations*, mandated stability operations as a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense would prepare to conduct and support. It prescribed that stability operations would be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly integrated across all activities to include doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning. The directive also mandated the

¹⁷ U.S. Army, *FM 3-0*, vii.

incorporation of stability operations knowledge skills, such as foreign language capabilities, regional area expertise, and experience with foreign governments and international organizations, into professional military education at all levels. The document essentially dictated that the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Army emphasize stability operations and counterinsurgency doctrine, education, and training, at levels commensurate with conventional combat operations.¹⁸

Theretofore, U.S. military culture placed an almost exclusive emphasis on doctrine, training, and education for regular wars. As late as 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who was leery of stability operations and counterinsurgency, was about to close down the U.S. Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) at Carlisle Barracks because he did not see the utility of this institute. However, the expanding insurgency in Iraq during late 2003 provided the impetus to compel the U.S. military to take irregular warfare more seriously. DODD 3000.05 was the official catalyst for an increase in intellectual energy and focus on those operations that the U.S. Army previously labeled, with an intention to diminish them it then seemed, low-intensity conflict. The proximate intellectual genesis of the DODD 3000.05 document ostensibly was two conferences in 2003 and 2004.¹⁹

In the middle of December 2003, the Operation Iraqi Freedom Lesson Learned Conference at Fort Leavenworth convened a Stability Operations Working Group. All the other working groups at the conference had as their foci the conventional operations during the initial invasion of Iraq, before events deteriorated into a festering insurgency. The findings of the Stability Operations Working Group argued for the institutional need to embrace stability operations and counterinsurgency equally as much as the preferred conventional model. These findings, almost to the word, ultimately migrated to DODD 3000.05. This directive essentially stipulated that the U.S. military must change its culture and embrace stability operations and counterinsurgency as central and valued missions, to

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, DODD 3000.05. *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 1-4.

¹⁹ See Robert M. Cassidy, "Counterinsurgency and Military Culture: State Regulars versus Non-State Irregulars." *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 10 (August 2008): 56-58.

be reflected in a balance of regular and irregular doctrine, training, and education. The other conference was the fifteenth annual Army War College Strategy conference convened between 13 and 15 April 2004, titled “Winning the War by Winning the Peace.” There, Panel VI, “Implications for Military Capabilities and Force Structure,” again underscored the imperative to emphasize counterinsurgency in professional military education, beginning with precommissioning curricula through war college–level curricula. The reasons why the U.S. Department of Defense found it necessary to mandate the changes were unambiguous: the two burgeoning insurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In the intellectual realm, Fort Leavenworth’s Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate issued interim counterinsurgency doctrine in 2004 and then issued the final manual, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, in December 2006. Decades had elapsed since the U.S. Army had issued a counterinsurgency manual. Also, the *Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations*, ultimately appeared in October 2009. Both manuals emphasize the objective to protect the population, the requirement to build indigenous capacity, the need to sustain legitimacy, and the importance to establish unity of command.²⁰

Insofar as leadership is of crucial importance in counterinsurgency, there were discernible contrasts between the senior leadership in Afghanistan in 2008–9 and 2009–11. The senior leaders, both civilian and military, in 2008–9 were consummate professionals and genuinely talented leaders, but they were not steeply versed and knowledgeable about counterinsurgency. They were very smart and were catching up from years of exclusive immersion in conventional warfare at the National Training Center and the Combined Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany. In 2008–9, with the exceptions of Brigadier Generals John Nicholson (U.S. Army) and Lawrence D. Nicholson (U.S. Marine Corps) in southern Afghanistan, the core U.S. general officer leadership team that surrounded General David D. McKiernan in 2008–9 comprised almost all protégés from previous tours in heavy mechanized formations in Germany and the United States. The wars they had devoted most of their careers preparing for were wars against the Soviet military,

²⁰ Lloyd J. Matthews, *Winning the War by Winning the Peace*, conference report (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 48–50.

or for the maneuvers in the Kuwaiti desert of 1991 and the conventional march up to Baghdad in 2003. General McKiernan was the commander of the conventional phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and shortly after the fall of Baghdad, before the insurgency emerged, he returned home. One of his staff general officers, after years of preparing for conventional war in Europe, had spent a few months on the ground in Iraq as a brigade commander before the insurgency emerged in earnest. Moreover, the ISAF commander and the U.S. ambassador in 2008–9 had a far from close relationship for coordination. They seldom spent time in the same room and typically sent their subalterns to brief one another in their places.²¹

In contrast, in 2009–11 most of the general officers, as well as Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry (who is a former Army lieutenant general), hailed from light infantry and special operations backgrounds. During the decades in which the mainstream military eschewed counterinsurgency, the only formations that typically received decent exposure to guerrilla warfare were airborne, light, and special operations forces. These types of units usually exercised at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana, which included a guerrilla phase. Moreover, General McChrystal had been a voracious reader of counterinsurgency warfare ever since his father served in Vietnam when McChrystal was in his youth. In fact, most of the general officer leaders that served on McChrystal's team during his year in command had served multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan, with years of experience countering both insurgents and terrorists. When Army General David H. Petraeus replaced McChrystal in June 2010, Petraeus had already served three long tours prosecuting counterinsurgency in Iraq, culminating in his successful command of the "surge" by 2008. Earlier in his career, Petraeus had also completed his doctoral dissertation at Princeton on the lessons of the unsuccessful American counterinsurgency in Vietnam. The ISAF Joint Command (IJC) Commander, Army Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez, pulled four long tours leading counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell IV, commander of the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM-A) and the Combined Security Transi-

²¹ The author served at ISAF in the winter of 2008–9 and had entrée to the senior civilian and military leaders.

tion Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) (the organizations responsible for training and equipping the ANSF), had counterinsurgency experience in Iraq and was formerly the commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, the U.S. Army’s proponent for counterinsurgency doctrine. Most, if not all of the one-star general officers and brigade and battalion commanders in 2009–11 were also seasoned counterinsurgents, with multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan. Extremely smart leaders steeped in the study of, and experienced in the practice of, counterinsurgency tend to be more creative and judicious than smart leaders steeped in orthodoxy.

As an example, even though General McKiernan’s team was not unfamiliar with the basic requirements for a counterinsurgency campaign, his staff comprised mostly tankers with conventional backgrounds who were learning counterinsurgency for the first time. The campaign they espoused was fundamentally sound, as it did seek to establish a secure environment, improve governance, promote development, and defeat the insurgency. Its three lines of operations, if limited, were also sound: security, governance, and development. In addition, the ISAF planning factors during McKiernan’s time as the ISAF commander included shape, clear, and hold, to build Afghan capacity and credibility. ISAF also initiated a best practice experiment in the form of the AP3, which called for U.S. special forces elements to raise, equip, and train village forces for local security augmentation under the auspices of the MOI. It is also true that too few forces and too few civilian experts put McKiernan’s team at a significant handicap. However, it seemed to me, that the ISAF leadership then exhibited a superficial, but growing, grasp of the requirements for comprehensive counterinsurgency, which tolerated disjointed and spotty execution across Afghanistan. An approach that weaved lethal and nonlethal information operations was absent because the senior leadership at that time allowed itself to remain encumbered by poor command and control arrangements that saw poor, to zero, civil-military integration and uncoordinated actions across general, special, and indigenous forces. Although as the ISAF Commander, McKiernan did repeatedly emphasize the importance of partnering with ANSF, there were very few operational areas where Coalition forces were genuinely partnering. In 2008–9,

Kunar Province was one shining exception where interagency personnel, the Afghan government, the ANSF, Coalition conventional forces, and all types of special operations forces were fully integrated. The ideas in 2008–9 were generally correct but the execution lacked integration and vigor.²²

Contrariwise, the ISAF leadership's approach in Afghanistan during 2009–11 has exhibited some significant improvements in terms of the enduring tenets of counterinsurgency. To be certain, the near tripling of civilian and military personnel was very helpful, as were the increases in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance resources as they continued to shift from Iraq. However, a survey of successful counterinsurgencies will show that what is more important is the logic underpinning the campaign, the unity of command, and how well the range of actors and forces work together toward common aims. The latter, more than the former, are what really distinguish late 2009 and 2010–11 from early 2009 and before. For the ISAF campaign assessment of the insurgency in Afghanistan during the summer of 2009, the Coalition acknowledged that the principles for how organizations effectively counter insurgents were not new, but that the recommended approach would provide renewed vigor "to pursuing the basic tenet of protecting the population" and that it would be "nested within an integrated and properly resourced civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy." This same assessment correctly recognized the imperative for matching ideas and deeds because the war in Afghanistan is a war of perceptions and ideas where perceptions stem from conditions, such as the presence or absence of security, economic opportunity, and governance. Changing perceptions requires changing how the Coalition forces understand and operate in that environment. The assessment also identified the population as the objective without which ISAF cannot succeed. The ISAF senior leadership also directed Coalition leaders at all levels to renew their efforts to comprehend Afghanistan's political and social fabric in order to better meet the needs and expectations of the people.²³

²² Personal insights derived from observing ISAF command during the winter of 2008–9.

²³ For one survey of several cases, see Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror*, 127–63. McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment*, 2-2–2-5. The direct quotes are from page 2-2.

Well-informed, intent-driven command and execution also characterized the positive developments in how civilians and military personnel began to cooperate in Afghanistan. The ISAF commanders from summer 2009 until 2011 had, to a much greater degree than anyone who preceded them, issued cogent, thorough, and straightforward guidance that cascaded to leaders at all levels. The ISAF guidance on counterinsurgency issued during both the summers of 2009 and 2010 prescribed that subordinate leaders must think and operate very differently if the effort is going to succeed. The guidance identified the will of the people as the objective and described an effective offensive counterinsurgency operation as one that wrests from the Taliban that which they cannot afford to lose—the control of the people. It emphasized the need to earn the support and confidence of the people while simultaneously precluding the influence of the insurgents. The ISAF command in 2009–11 also encouraged leaders to contemplate counterinsurgency as an argument to build the support of the population and charged them to win the argument by leveraging local development and economic support to marshal the local people and leaders to help create their own success. The approach in Afghanistan since the summer 2009 has also redoubled efforts to build relationships with community, tribal, and religious leaders to better communicate, cooperate, and collaborate, and to better understand and address what local problems and grievances catalyze instability and unrest. Lastly, partnering with indigenous security forces, though still imperfect, has improved significantly, indeed exponentially during 2010 and 2011, after the ISAF leadership directed its commanders to live, train, plan, and operate together within integrated command and control arrangements. For example, initial operations in Marjah in early 2010 saw about five Coalition soldiers to every Afghan, but now this area sees one-to-one partnering ratios. For Operation Hamkari in Kandahar and its environs, the aggregate of ANSF exceeds the aggregate of Coalition force strengths, and the ratios approach 1 Coalition soldier to about 1.2 Afghan soldiers.²⁴

Success in counterinsurgency relies on full partnering and ultimately transferring security requirements to indigenous security

²⁴ Gen Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, “ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” (Kabul, ISAF Headquarters, 25 August 2009), 3–4.

forces. It is one of the crucial lines of effort, a sine qua non for the ultimate departure of the third-party counterinsurgents. Likewise, the ISAF command renewed the effort with NTMA/CSTC-A and raised the rank of its commander to lieutenant general, filling the position with two of the most capable three-star generals in the U.S. Army (Lieutenant Generals Caldwell and Daniel P. Bolger). To be certain, this is a huge challenge and the effort has seen several missteps along the way, as the United States and its NATO partners re-discovered how to train, equip, and mentor indigenous forces in a poorly developed country. Efforts to build a credible and effective ANA have far surpassed attempts to do the same with the Afghan National Police (ANP). Although former Minister of the Interior Atmar did endeavor to make the police more effective and less corrupt, improvements in police units varied greatly across the country. Until recently, many ANP were so venal and exploitative that what they did with most efficiency was stimulate insurgent recruitment. In fact, one analysis described the ANP as a “black hole for Western money and training programs.” After the Germans failed to promptly build a sufficient police capacity, the United States, by outsourcing police training to wasteful and inept private contractors, essentially guaranteed the police would evade the enemy and exploit the people. The ANA, on the other hand, is a much more effective and credible force that enjoys a strong majority of public support. Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak’s commitment to improve the army’s leadership and the ethnic diversification have also reduced previous sources for Pashtun alienation and drawn military-age Pashtun males to serve under the Afghan flag instead of the Taliban’s.²⁵

The objective for the ANA is to be able to conduct joint operations with Coalition forces and to increase its capacity to conduct autonomous operations. Afghanistan’s national military objectives are to secure its territorial integrity, defeat the insurgency, contribute to a stable environment, and contribute to regional stability. Moreover, to assist the Afghan government in building indigenous security capacity, NTM/CSTC-A identifies its priorities as develop-

²⁵ Moyar, *A Question of Command*, 209–10. The direct quote is from page 209. Goals and composition of standing ANA units reflect ethnic representation proportional to the country’s demography. For example, the goal for Pashtun representation is 42 percent.

ing and building leaders for today and tomorrow; generating competent, professional, and tactically proficient ANSF; accelerating the growth of trained ANA to 134,000 by October 2010; increasing reformed ANP to 109,000 by October 2010; developing the institutional training and educational base to generate and sustain ANSF; and providing resources to operational forces. For standing ANSF strength as of January 2011, NTM-A/CSTC-A reported 152,034 serving in the ANA and 116,856 in the ANP. Moreover, there is anecdotal evidence of the ANA generally being operationally proficient, although exceptions also exist of poor ANA performance. Attaining the end-strength of 171,600 trained ANA and 134,000 reformed and trained ANP by October 2011 was a significant accomplishment, and the final decision on end-strength numbers, probably around 350,000 for both ANA and ANP, is achievable. In 2010, the IJC also implemented the Commanders Unit Assessment Tool (CUAT) to assess the capabilities of the ANSF. The CUAT represents a significant improvement compared to the Capability Milestone (CM) system that it replaced. The previous system was too narrowly focused on quantitative measures and too rigid, as it assessed only a handful of relatively meaningless measures and ignored the qualitative aspects of unit performance, such as leadership and effectiveness in the conduct of operations. The CM system “overstated ANSF capabilities, yet it was often used uncritically as an indicator for ANSF progress by policymakers and analysts.”²⁶

Insights from the NTM-A/CSTC-A also revealed that ANA forces have proven themselves capable in prosecuting the clear phase of counterinsurgency, but that they may lack the strength and propensity to adequately participate in the hold phase. It seems that the Afghan army units prefer offensive operations to the defensive operations required for the hold phase. In many instances, Coalition military forces and Afghan army units will execute the clear phase but not follow through with the persistent security presence to hold an area, leaving the task of protecting the population to the ANP.

²⁶ Obaid Younossai, Peter Thruelsen, Jonathan Vaccaro, Jerry Sollinger, and Brian Grady, *The Long March: Building an Afghan National Army* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2009), 6–7, 48. Klug, email interview, 10 February 2010. See Adam Mausner, *Reforming ANSF Metrics: Improving the CUAT System* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010), 1, for an assessment of the CUAT system.

However, ANP units do not currently have the capacity or the equipment to assume full responsibility for defense against a potential Taliban counterattack during the transition from the clear to hold phase. The training and equipment of ANP units also does not really give them sufficient capacity to assume sole responsibility for area defensive operations in the hold phase either. Yet, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) rank among the best-trained and best-equipped police paramilitary forces, and they have been integrated into decisive operations in Helmand and Kandahar. ANCOP formations currently support the hold phase to good effect. However, because there are still too few of them, the four ANCOP brigades that do currently exist are being used too much, and their high operational tempo in combat operations is leading to some attrition and retention challenges. The ANA is the most effective and credible Afghan security institution, and it has performed well, if imperfectly, in combat for crucial operations in Helmand and Kandahar. Relentless partnering, leadership, training, and equipment have been the keys to its effectiveness. Ninety-five percent of the ANA battalions (*kandaks*) are currently partnered with Coalition forces. The ANP is generally not as effective or credible as the ANA, but 2010 and 2011 called for a redoubling of effort to partner with and improve the ANP. Eighty-seven percent of the police units are now partnered for day-to-day operations in key terrain.²⁷

Up until the end of 2011, Operation Moshtarak in Marjah and Operation Hamkari in Kandahar offered the most significant examples of the ISAF shift to traditional counterinsurgency focused on protecting the preponderance of the population and killing or capturing the core insurgent leadership infrastructure. Not surprisingly, then, it also represented the most aggressive attempt at combined action among U.S., NATO, ANSF, and interagency personnel to clear and hold yet witnessed in Afghanistan. For too many of the previous eight years, NATO forces had mounted other large military operations to clear southern towns and cities of Taliban insurgents. But instead of holding and building the NATO forces, almost with-

²⁷ Klug, email interview, 10 February 2010. Also attributed to author's personal experience reviewing and distilling assessments on the effectiveness of the ANSF in Afghanistan generally, and for decisive operations in Regional Command South and Regional Command Southwest, specifically.

out exception, they would depart because they never had enough soldiers, police officers, or civil administrators to remain behind and hold the place on their own. Almost always after they left, the Taliban returned to fill the vacuum until the Coalition forces would return in time to clear the place all over again. Officers familiar with this somewhat Sisyphean and highly ineffective approach to security sardonically describe this as “mowing the lawn.” For Operation Moshtarak in Marjah, the largest Taliban stronghold, and Operation Hamkari in Kandahar’s environs, the physical and philosophical epicenter of the Taliban, American and Afghan commanders were determined that this time they would do something that they had never done before. They had Afghan government officials and police forces assembled to move in behind them to build and hold after clearing. The Coalition forces and the ANSF also remained to support and protect the populations in places like Nade Ali and Zharey. The decisive operations in Regional Command Southwest and South also witnessed combined action formations that comprised a much larger number of Afghan security forces than previous operations. This combination made these unprecedented operations genuinely partnered ones. The Coalition force ratios vis-à-vis the ANSF in Helmand are generally one-to-one, and in Kandahar these ratios are better than one-to-one.²⁸

This was the first time that NATO and Afghan officials marshaled a large team of Afghan administrators and an Afghan governor who moved into Marjah when the highly lethal clearing operations culminated. The aim was for the Afghan government to carry out programs in education, health, and employment as soon as the area was secured. Almost 2,000 police officers were standing by to help provide security and rule of law while civilians established a government from the ground up in that impoverished place, not an insignificant endeavor. In 2010–11, the U.S.-led Coalition and its Afghan partners maneuvered to secure a horseshoe-shaped web of cities that ran for more than 200 miles along the Helmand River, through Kandahar, and then on to the Pakistan border. The horseshoe contains 85 percent of the population in Kandahar and Helmand Provinces, the Taliban’s symbolic and

²⁸ Dexter Filkins, “Afghan Offensive is New War Model,” *New York Times*, 12 February 2010, A1.

physical base of support. Over the summer and fall of 2010, the ISAF Coalition forces and their Afghan partners moved thousands more troops into the area, in a push to “take away any hope of victory” from the Taliban, according to ISAF headquarters. The campaign had the corollary purposes of persuading the American public that a new direction had arrived in the more than eight-year-long war and convincing the Afghan population that U.S. forces and the Afghan government would protect them from the Taliban. It also allowed the ISAF command, which in 2009 had reported conditions in the country as “grave and deteriorating,” to turn a new chapter, breaking cleanly from the failed methods of the previous eight years.²⁹

Another notable improvement in Afghanistan in 2009–11 included the establishment of the three-star IJC to command and control at the operational level, allowing the ISAF commander to shape the strategic level. ISAF also established Task Force 435 under a three-star admiral to institute rule of law reforms and improvements at national level. The focus for operations during 2009–11 shifted to more legitimate, credible, and discriminate uses of force. The ALP program is now being implemented in earnest, and it benefits from the knowledge about human terrain, physical terrain, and tribal dynamics that the special forces community gleans from its Village Stability Operations (VSO). VSO and ALP are important innovations with inherent potential for increasing local security capacity as special forces A-teams work with indigenous elements to help protect local populations. ALP essentially equates to community watch security with special forces-trained commando *kandaks* serving as local strike forces from nearby firebases. Efforts are under way to close more of the firebases and have the commandos operate in and among the population to support the local forces. This effort resembles Vietnam-era strike forces operating from firebases among the mountain tribes, and the ALP roughly approximates the regional and popular forces that met with some success in Vietnam when they were led and equipped properly.³⁰

²⁹ Filkins, “Afghan Offensive is New War Model”; Shanker, “Afghan Push Went beyond Traditional Military Goals,” A6; Greg Jaffe and Craig Whitlock, “Battle for Marja Not Only Militarily Significant,” *Washington Post*, 22 February 2010, A9.

³⁰ Central Command Commander’s Initiatives Group, conversation, U.S. Central Command Headquarters, Tampa, FL, 16 December 2009; and Carlos Perez, interview, U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters, Tampa, FL, 17 December 2009.

The “Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan” of August 2009 had as its purpose the improvement of command, control, and coordination among all civil and military elements operating at the regional, subregional, provincial, and district levels. To this end, the U.S. government, along with indigenous and Coalition partners, established an Executive Working Group for deputy-level, civilian-military senior policy and decision making; a Provincial Integrated Team to integrate and coordinate the collective international provincial-level leaders; and District Support Teams, which combine civilian and military planning and activities in the assigned district. The aim of this document was an ambitious and noble one: “that all civilian-military elements that conduct operations or activities in the same district or province coordinate and develop plans, assessments, and coordination mechanisms that synchronize the full spectrum of U.S. Government organizations, military forces, and international partner efforts as well as non-governmental organizations, UN, and the whole range of Afghan partners operating in the area.” This would be of great help indeed, but it is not clear that the interagency and civil-military effort will ever achieve this degree of integration evenly across even the crucial Pashtun provinces in the south and east. Unity of effort requires the integration of lethal and nonlethal actions from the top level (ambassador/theater commander) all the way down to the district or local level. This is of particular importance for information operations, which make it essential to match ideas and implementation to win the war for perceptions. In addition, the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan published its *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy* in February 2010. Two of the several key initiatives prescribed in this document were to significantly increase the number of civilian technical advisors in key central government ministries and in the provinces and district centers, and to expand the capacity for building subnational governance, “focused mainly in key population centers in the East and the South.” However, based on the theretofore underwhelming commitment of civilian capacity to help develop subnational governance, it is not certain whether the civilian side of the effort will ever close the gap and catch up with the security line of operation. The next section revisits the integration

of information operations in Afghanistan for counterinsurgent and insurgent operations in 2009–11.³¹

Information Operations

The conflict will be won by persuading the population, not by destroying the enemy.

—*Michael Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul Batchelor, Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*

Both the insurgents and counterinsurgents have learned and adapted their approaches to information operations from the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq in the last half decade. It still remains easier for the Taliban to influence perceptions through destruction than it is for the Coalition to influence perceptions through construction. The purpose in this section is to briefly assess how well ISAF and the Taliban integrate information with action to convince the relevant Afghan populations to support their efforts. To be certain, the Coalition and its Afghan partners still have much to improve. However, it is also evident that the ISAF leadership's knowledge and understanding about the information environment has increased exponentially. This is manifest in the quote above, which is attributed to the ISAF leadership during 2009–11, and it is apparent in almost every medium of communication emanating from ISAF headquarters, in interviews, speeches, directives, and guidance. The military has also shown improvement in how it supports the influence narrative to protect, rather than harm, the people by being more circumspect and circumscribed in its employment of lethal force. ISAF or special operations forces have committed some tragic mistakes over the past 10 years, ones that resulted in civilian casualties. In the Afghan operational environment, where actions communicate louder than words, killing the wrong people risks undermining the entire endeavor. The United States and its Coalition partners must convince the Afghan people they are there to protect them. Taliban actions and media operations try to persuade the population that the obverse is true.

³¹ Karl W. Eikenberry and Stanley A. McChrystal, *United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan*, (Kabul: U.S. Embassy-Kabul and ISAF, 13 August 2009), 28–30. See Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy*, vi.

The current ISAF and IJC team are convinced that forces in Afghanistan have changed the way they operate and that they are becoming more effective at persuading the Afghan people that ISAF is there to protect them. Since the summer of 2009, the senior leaders in Afghanistan have conveyed the importance of matching action with influence from the moment they hit the ground by stressing the need to communicate intentions and actions accurately to all audiences. In the initial and subsequent ISAF guidance on counterinsurgency issued in August 2009 and 2010, respectively, the emphasis on the imperative to gain and sustain the support of the Afghan populations was unambiguous. This is because, in the end, the people will determine who succeeds in Afghanistan. This guidance underscored the requirement to understand the expectations, fears, and frustrations of the Afghans in order to protect them in ways that do not disrespect their religion and culture. Coalition actions communicate an argument for the future of Afghanistan and its people, as do the actions of the Taliban. The people will ultimately decide which argument is more persuasive and attractive. The guidance perspicaciously observes that the ISAF will not defeat the principally Pashtun insurgency through attrition because the mathematics of attrition in the Pashtun Belt, with around just 12 million Pashtuns on the Afghan side of the Durand Line, means that more killing will generate more insurgents, ad infinitum. ISAF will not win by killing insurgents alone, and an emphasis on lethal operations during the first eight years of the war, the August 2009 document notes, resulted in more violence.³²

In this vein, the ISAF counterinsurgency guidance has cautioned against potentially self-defeating actions associated with large-scale conventional military operations designed to capture or kill insurgents because of the risk of causing collateral damage or civilian casualties. “If civilians die in a firefight, it does not matter who shot them—we still failed to protect them from harm.” Killing the wrong people creates more insurgents and undermines the very purpose of ISAF. The documents also note that “mowing-the-lawn type” missions—the sporadic and temporary area search-and-depart opera-

³² Quoted by Alex Spillius in “Afghanistan: General Stanley A. McChrystal Says Troops Surge is Starting to Work,” *Telegraph* (United Kingdom), 12 January 2010; McChrystal, “Commander’s Initial Guidance.”

tions—are counterproductive. During his December 2009 speech in London, General McChrystal, the ISAF commander at the time, also demonstrated that he comprehended the centrality of information operations when he emphasized the importance of shaping the perceptions of the villagers who, in the end, will decide whom they support based on a rational calculation about who can protect them and meet their expectations. Moreover, both the counterinsurgency guidance and the London speech revealed a very clear understanding of the Taliban and their narrative. The substance of the guidance and communications emanating from the ISAF leadership in 2009 and 2010 recognized that the Taliban are unpopular and lack a compelling context but do have proximity to the populace in many places in the south, which affords them the capacity to coerce, administer, and adjudicate Islamic justice based on the sharia. The Taliban influence the people by both coercion and the narrative by which they propagate their claim to protect Afghan religion and culture against the infidel occupiers. They enlist the disenfranchised and pay young men to fight for them. The counterinsurgency guidance also recognized that the Taliban also “exploit ISAF mistakes and inappropriate actions to reinforce their argument.” This philosophical and doctrinal approach to the fundamentals of counterinsurgency has persisted since the change in ISAF commanders in June 2010 and July 2011.³³

As for influence and perceptions, the Taliban themselves believed that they were winning up until the beginning of 2010. The Afghan people are still uncertain of who will prevail, and unless convinced otherwise, some portions of the Pashtun population are hedging their bets, since they have much more to lose if the Coalition departs before success is achieved. The Taliban also typically incorporate their temporal advantage over democracies in a protracted war into their propaganda. They are convinced that they have the moral high ground because they embody a form of traditional resistance to foreign invaders. One of the Taliban’s strengths is the perception that a Taliban victory is ultimately inevitable because the foreigners will tire of the cost and effort, and depart. According to the ISAF director of intelligence during 2009–10, other

³³ McChrystal, “ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” 2–3, and “Special Address.” Direct quotations are from page 3 of the counterinsurgency guidance.

Taliban strengths included an improving and expanding organizational capacity and geographic reach; a strengthening capacity in their shadow governments; an increasing quantity and quality of improvised explosive device attacks; and most salient, the continuing celerity and efficacy of their information operations, which is their main effort. The Taliban influence narrative exploits the implied legitimacy of Islam by employing the theological lexicon of sharia. This approach helps them frame their propaganda around the struggle of good and evil. The Taliban language resonates more strongly in terms of perceived legitimacy because of its Islamic language. The recurring core messages within this propaganda are that the Taliban can restore order and security, the Afghan government is corrupt, and ISAF forces are malign foreign intruders. Moreover, emphasizing the foreignness of their opponents, the Taliban also tap into deep-seated xenophobic sentiments associated with the Pashtuns.³⁴

Furthermore, the Taliban did support its propaganda with action by establishing relatively strong and effective shadow governments, particularly in the southern provinces. These parallel hierarchies provided security, levied taxes, and administered their own brand of harsh sharia justice. The Taliban courts also hear civil disputes and complaints, meting out more prompt settlements than feeble or nonexistent government judiciaries. The taxes they levy help pay their fighters to provide security in areas under Taliban control. The Taliban also exert energy on eliminating corruption, which supports their influence narrative. The fact that the Taliban maintained freedom of action and movement over largely uncontested swathes of southern Afghanistan reinforced the perception of strength, control, and inevitable victory. Taliban commanders and mullahs often meet with village elders in these areas to propagate the message that NATO may come and go, but the Taliban will be in Afghanistan forever. However, there are some discernible disconnects that exist in the Taliban's extreme Salafi-Deobandi Islamist doctrine because their ideological dogma undermines the Pashtun code (Pashtunwali)

³⁴ Gen Barry McCaffrey, USA (ret), "Afghanistan Visit After Action Report," West Point, NY, 5 December 2009, 5; MajGen Michael Flynn, "State of the Insurgency" (unclassified briefing, ISAF Headquarters, Kabul, 22 December 2009), slides 14 and 17. For insights on the Taliban narrative, see Dean Case and Rob Pawlak, "Winning the Battle of the Narratives in Afghanistan" (unpublished paper, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2009), 14–16.

and culture in three ways. First, the Taliban shadow courts supplant the traditional *jirga* and undermine the power and influence of local tribal leaders. Second, when Taliban leaders issue harsh edicts or orders to compel people to comply with them, this is anathema to the Pashtun values of independence and tolerance. Moreover, there are differences between the hill Pashtuns like the Ghilzai and the lowland Pashtuns like the Durrani. The latter tend to be more hierarchical and became the dynastic families of the Afghan state. Conversely, the Ghilzai Pashtuns, who have historically been the warfighting Pashtuns, have a more egalitarian social order to which hierarchical rule imposed from the centralized state has been anathema. In the West, government and governance are generally congruous, but among the Pashtuns and other ethnic groups in Afghanistan this is not necessarily so. To them, governance is the way communities rule themselves to preserve their social order, whereas government is the action of ruling. In rural Afghanistan, where the majority of the population resides, local populations expect to govern themselves. Both the Soviets and the Taliban failed because once they gained power they attempted to impose a new social design from the center. Lastly, the Taliban's extreme justice and harsh punishments provoke indignation even among some Pashtuns. There was nothing like living under the cruel and extreme theocracy of the Taliban for several years to convince the Afghans that they do not want them back.³⁵

However, what most reinforces the Taliban's antifoigner narrative, and what galvanizes both Islamist and Pashtun alike against the Coalition, are air strikes that kill civilians. For the Taliban, an actual or perceived instance of Coalition forces inflicting civilian casualties is doubly helpful because it undermines the legitimacy of ISAF and the Afghan government without damaging the Taliban's image. As was the case in many of the insurgencies in the last several decades, the optimality of real or perceived civilian casualties for the promotion of the insurgents' narrative has led the

³⁵ Case and Pawlak, "Winning the Battle of the Narratives in Afghanistan," 16–18, 20. On Pashtunwali and the fault line between the Durrani and Ghilzais, see Johnson and Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire," 58–64. See Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi, "Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability," *Middle East Policy* (Winter 2010): 40–52, for insights on the failures of overzealous regimes that have tried to impose a new order on the rural periphery from the center.

Taliban on more than one occasion to trick the Coalition into killing innocents for propaganda value. Because perceived perceptions of injustice resonate so strongly among the Pashtuns, the Taliban continue to improve their information operations with a view to exploiting or creating Coalition civilian casualty events. Of the 2,000 civilians who died in Afghanistan in 2009, either Coalition or Afghan forces were responsible for mistakenly killing one-third of them. The 2009 ISAF command tactical directive and counterinsurgency guidance were clearly designed to reduce civilian casualties. Indeed, the second six months of 2009 did see less reliance on airpower or heavy firepower. Moreover, in an interview with *Spiegel*, the ISAF commander in 2009 stated that his goal for civilian casualties was zero. This laudable but impossible goal did not change under either General Petraeus or his replacement, Marine General John R. Allen.³⁶

Notwithstanding, there is still a long way to go, as evidenced by two air strikes in September 2009 and February 2010 that inflicted significant civilian casualties. Although minor in comparison to the suffering caused by these events, one positive note to both tragedies was the more effective and more prompt employment of media and information operations to mitigate their consequences. The ISAF commander himself was quick to communicate to the key audiences after each mishap. After that second incident, he appeared on national television on 22 February 2010 to apologize for the deadly NATO air strike in Uruzgan that killed 20 to 25 civilians on 21 February, which was the deadliest attack against civilians since the September 2009 strike in Kunduz. He then pledged to redouble ISAF efforts to regain the trust of the Afghan public and to build a better future for all Afghans. That TV broadcast was another sign of the Coalition's renewed effort to sustain popular support for the 2010–11 offensives, with the guidance that required taking all possible precautions to protect civilians. The ISAF Commander made a similar apology in September 2009, during the first year of the new strategy, when U.S. pilots bombed two hijacked fuel tankers near the northern town of Kunduz. As many as 130 people were estimated to have died or been injured in this attack. ISAF has lim-

³⁶ Rid and Hecker, *War 2.0*, 214–15. Gen Stanley A. McChrystal, interview, *Spiegel*, 11 January 2010.

ited the use of airpower and made stricter rules of engagement on the battlefield to try to protect the Afghan people and win their loyalty from the Taliban. The August 2009 ISAF Commander's counterinsurgency guidance directed forces in Afghanistan to be more circumspect about how and when they employed lethal force from the air or on the ground. This was in response to a series of civilian casualty incidents like the one in February 2009. This later one at the end of September 2009 prompted the relief of one officer and a reemphasis on ensuring the widest dissemination of the guidance. Although ISAF is working hard to reduce civilian casualties, it must be acknowledged that completely eliminating them is difficult, if not impossible, in any war.³⁷

The February 2010 Uruzgan incident also underscored the risks associated with the increased employment of special operations forces, the forces that called in the Uruzgan strike, in targeting Taliban leaders in lethal raids. Special operations direct-action missions emphasize the use of lethal and swift force, and Coalition officials say they have led to a series of recently successful missions against key insurgent leaders. But a significant proportion of the thousands of civilians who died at the hands of Coalition forces since 2001 have been the result of wayward air strikes. Public ire over such unjust killing is deep-seated. Afghans can frequently recollect the deadliest mistakes, and these incidents have helped reinforce Taliban propaganda victories. The theater employs special operations forces to target the middle and senior ranks of the Taliban to disrupt command and control. According to the more stringent rules for airpower in ISAF since 2009, troops should only use airpower as a last resort when they cannot disengage a deadly threat. Units who call in an air strike on a threat that is not imminent and grave must have supplementary confirmation that the target is in fact a hostile one. While it is true that special operations missions have recently led to the death or capture of a number of mid- and senior-level Taliban commanders, NATO officers also report that a number of recent inadvertent civilian deaths have been the result of special operations raids. What's more, Afghan officials

³⁷ Deb Riechmann and Heidi Vogt, "NATO Commander Makes Televised Apology to Afghans," Associated Press, 23 February 2010; McChrystal, "ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance," 1-2.

complain that special operations units are arresting or killing too many civilians during night raids on homes.³⁸

Second to airpower as a catalyst for alienating the Afghan population, night raids against illegitimate targets, or even raids against legitimate targets that the Taliban convince people to perceive as illegitimate, have been controversial. In one respect, this persistent source of tension between the Karzai government and ISAF stems from long-standing Pashtun customs and mores about protecting the home and family from intruders. The reality in this action-perception tension is twofold. First, there are sometimes some genuinely key Taliban commanders hiding in huts that represent a credible threat, and these the ISAF forces should target. But, second, it is exceedingly imprudent, given our goal of winning the war of perceptions, to attack the wrong houses and families, since this has the same effect as mistaken air strikes do on both attrition math and Taliban recruitment. (*Attrition math* is when a mission aimed at killing two Taliban leaders mistakenly kills two civilian noncombatants. Instead of removing two insurgents from the fight, this can catalyze another dozen or more Afghan kin of the deceased to join the insurgency. Attrition math is killing the wrong Pashtuns and creating more Taliban recruits. This is no way to win a counterinsurgency among the Pashtun populations.) Put another way, the tension between direct targeting and population protection stems from different organizational specialties and preference on using force. Both persistent security and engagement among the population and direct actions by special operations units are necessary, but unless they are integrated, collaborative efforts within one comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign unified under one command pursuing a unified purpose, these activities tend to undermine each other. This type of unified effort would best be achieved by improvements in command arrangements that see all theater special operations under a single three-star ISAF deputy for special operations in order to protect the many good people and kill the few bad people, not the converse.³⁹

³⁸ Matthew Rosenberg, "U.S. Special Operations Ordered Deadly Afghan Strike," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 February 2010.

³⁹ For an explanation of attrition math, see McChrystal, "ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance," 2–3. For insight on the unity of command for all types of special operations forces, see Lamb and Cinnamon, "Unified Effort" 43–49.

There are also two innovations that have emerged within the U.S. embassy, ISAF, and the Afghan government that exhibit the potential to make the Coalition better and faster at positively influencing perceptions. One is the Government Media and Information Center, which increases the Afghan public's access to timely and accurate information. It is an Afghan-led and U.S. embassy/ISAF-supported center for collaborative strategic communications. The center also provides facilities for media roundtables and media training on current issues, all aimed at improving the quality and accuracy of reporting in Afghanistan. The center serves as both a clearinghouse to vet information for correctness as well as a vehicle to better connect the government to the people. One beneficial outcome is that the independent media can now obtain better information from the government more promptly, which helps attenuate some of the Taliban's media advantages. The other initiative was the establishment of the operational-level IJC Information Dominance Center and information centers at the regional command level that combine multinational, interagency, civilian, and military specialists with ISAF personnel and support. The information centers serve as the regional hubs for clearing all relevant open source information and knowledge about local conditions, expectations, and grievances. For the first time, there was and is a single node for obtaining relevant information. Improvements in the handling and vetting of information has helped the Coalition better understand and influence the population.⁴⁰

In a war for perception, the objectives are the minds of the people. In the Pashtun Belt, being Westerners and non-Muslims makes this no easy feat for U.S. and Coalition forces. However, it is clear that Operation Moshtarak did indeed help to prove or disprove which practices work, and which do not, so that the best serve as benchmarks for subsequent operations in a reinvigorated and well-informed campaign of counterinsurgency that includes an emphasis on combined and integrated action to protect, administer, and influence the population's will to rebuild its state. Moreover, Op-

⁴⁰ USAID/Afghanistan, "Program Highlights: September 16–October 15 2009," (Kabul: USAID, October 2009), 3; and Michael Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010), 5 and 19.

eration Hamkari, which began in earnest during September 2010 and continued to hold and build key population areas through 2011, was the real test of principles for the effort to drive out the Taliban, win the perceptions and confidence of the populace, and connect the people to the government, as it is set in the environs around Kandahar—the physical, spiritual, and philosophical hub of the Taliban movement. Chapter 7 will explain how well the Coalition and Afghan forces prosecuted this campaign to wrest Taliban influence and control from the population in key areas, and to reverse the momentum in Afghanistan.



5

THE PASHTUN BELT IN PAKISTAN, 2009–2011: HARD AND NOT HOPEFUL

Americans are less popular in Pakistan right now than the Indians.

— *Stephen P. Cohen*

Hard, not hopeful, but not impossible, is an apt way to characterize this study's assessment of Pakistan's prospects of doing what needs to be done. Most of the Pakistani public view America as the enemy, and some still support the effort of the Taliban in Afghanistan. A very small proportion of Pakistanis actually perceive the United States as a genuine partner. Moreover, any success in Afghanistan will be qualified and partial unless the Pakistani government and its security forces can likewise secure, stabilize, and establish some degree of governance in the tribal areas. Few counterinsurgencies succeed when their insurgent opponents benefit from sanctuary and support in territories across a de facto but contested border that is impossible to seal. The Pakistani polity and its army remain unconvinced and unwilling to attack or disrupt the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani and the Hekmatyar networks that provide support to the Afghan Taliban, and other associated Islamist militants. Ostensibly, it is not even the case that the Pakistanis are committed to simply not supporting and abetting the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other affiliated Islamist militant groups. After 11 September 2001, the United States issued Pakistan an ultimatum that essentially compelled Musharraf to be on America's side against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, or to be on the enemy's side. In addition, Pakistan calculated that if it did not pledge support to the war on terror, then the United States would likely seek a closer alliance with India. Musharraf and the Pakistani government essentially *said* what they had to in terms of pledging support, but *did* what they needed to in terms of pursuing their security interests and preserving strategic depth. This duplicitous role was manifest in Pakistan's assistance in capturing several high-value al-Qaeda

leaders on the one hand, while on the other hand, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) and others actively or passively supported the regeneration of the Afghan Taliban in Quetta and elsewhere. Similarly, the Pakistani army remains obdurately unwilling to genuinely adapt its organization, doctrine, and leadership to what is required for best-practice counterinsurgency fundamentals. The Indian bogeyman is sometimes more an instrumental threat than a real one that provides the senior Pakistani military leaders with their rationale for retaining a largely conventional orientation.

Nevertheless, there have been some otherwise positive developments during the period between the spring of 2009 and the end of 2011. Pakistan now has civilian leadership that is capable of exerting a limited measure of renewed control over its polity and its armed forces. Also, portions of the Pakistani public and security forces now recognize the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) as grave and potentially existential threats to the state. Consequently, the Pakistani security forces have proven more willing and capable of prosecuting military operations against these groups in relative terms. The Pakistanis' military operations still exhibit conventionality, but the heretofore punitive character of their operations is now to lesser degrees. During the first six months of 2010, Pakistan did indeed help capture or arrest an unprecedented number of senior Taliban leaders, including Mullah Baradar. But how have legitimacy, the capacity to use credible force, and information operations changed since late spring 2009?¹

Pakistan *Legitimacy*

As a practical reality, however, there remains a significant gap between popular public sentiment and actual policy outcomes in Pakistan.

—*Daniel Markey*, *Pakistani Partnerships with the United States: An Assessment*

The notion of building and sustaining legitimacy remains a chal-

¹ For more insight on Pakistani duplicity, see Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, 60–85; Steve Coll, “Don’t Look Back,” *New Yorker*, 1 March 2010, 21–22; and Selig S. Harrison, “Pakistan divides U.S. and India,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 November 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/08/opinion/la-oe-harrison-indopak-20101108>.

lenge in Pakistan because of weak and corrupt governance; the complex mosaic of ethnic and religious politics; and the still large gap between the public's expectations for good governance and the government's actual performance. This section examines the Pakistani population's perception of legitimacy in the Pakistani government, the Pakistani armed forces, and the war against militancy. For the latter, trust in the U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship is salient. The section also explores what needs, if fulfilled, would better close these expectation gaps. The situation is less dim than it was under the Musharraf regime after the Red Mosque attack, but it is still a somber one. Most of the population supports and respects the Pakistan Army as a credible and steadfast institution. However, a large majority of Pakistani youths view Pakistan as heading in the wrong direction, and few have trust in their government. They despair from the abysmal conditions of their lives and do not have confidence that the government will help. Much of the melancholy stems from a broken education system, which manifests itself in low enrollment, high illiteracy, few skills, and even fewer jobs. This does not bode well for a populous country with a relatively significant youth bulge. More potentially troubling is the fact that both the army and religious educational institutions garner the highest public support, while the government of Pakistan is the lowest ranked state institution in terms of popularity. The good news is that the chief of army staff, General Ashfaq Kayani, is at least for the moment resolved in his support to sustain a degree of civilian rule, although his scheduled retirement for November 2010 was postponed and waived for another several years.²

The America-Pakistan relationship, because it fluctuates between relative harmony and stinging acrimony at the senior level, still compounds the challenges Pakistan faces in earning the support of its citizens. Stephen Cohen's quote at the beginning of this section pithily amplifies America's image problem. Even senior leaders in Pakistan who support the U.S. partnership frequently defend the relationship to the public as a necessary evil, rather than a positive good. It is an easier argument to make publicly. Many see the United States as imposing unrealistic demands of Pakistan's

² Brian Cloughley, *Insurrection, Terrorism, and the Pakistan Army*, Pakistan Security Research Unit Brief Number 53, (United Kingdom: University of Bradford, 2009).

army and government while simultaneously imposing excessive hardship and disruption on Pakistan's civilian population as a result of the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some even see America as being responsible and accountable for the increased militancy in Pakistan because of the Afghanistan invasion, collateral damage from Predator attacks, and past policies that are perceived to have unfairly targeted Muslims. This often seems an easier assertion than it would be to impugn the indigenous militants themselves. Also, because of the duplicitous and perfidious character of most narratives in Pakistan, discerning who genuinely supports which groups or institutions requires inferences and reconciliations of seemingly incongruous public attitudes. Most Pakistanis would prefer not to live in an extreme Islamist state. The Pakistani public also widely deplored the extreme but temporary period of Taliban rule in Swat, which helped shift support against the militants. And very few Pakistanis support the perpetration of terrorist violence against U.S. citizens. Not surprisingly though, most of the population would prefer not to live in a place encumbered and implicated with ongoing U.S. lethal strikes and intelligence gathering.³

If Pakistan and its partners do not urgently address the flaws in the government's unreformed civil service bureaucracy, it will be unlikely to increase the public's confidence. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which runs the current coalition government at the center, and the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), which remains its principal opposition party, have an interest in investing the resources, time, and political capital required to improve the civil bureaucracy's capacity both to meet the population's needs and to effectively implement government policy. Notwithstanding General Kayani's commitment to civilian rule, if the government's failure to deliver basic services and administration persists, this would again provide an opportunity for a different, future military leadership to intervene for the ostensible purpose of restoring good government. There are ample precedents in Pakistan's spotty history. The International Crisis Group in a 2010 report urged both the PPP and PML-N "to resist the temptation to again use the bureaucracy for short-term political ends," which would continue to un-

³ Markey, *Pakistani Partnerships with the United States*, 6.

dermine its efficacy. The same report argued for the United States and other international donors to assist in this reform by tying more stringent conditions of transparency and accountability on future aid. Otherwise, if the financial aid engendered in the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, more commonly referred to as “Kerry-Lugar-Berman,” flows directly to unaccountable institutions without levying reforms, more waste and inefficiency will only continue to undermine popular support for the Pakistan government.⁴

What’s more, since a state manifests its power by legitimately monopolizing coercive force by performing a host of critical administrative and judicial functions, such as taxation and conscription, then the Pakistani Taliban not only challenged the state, they had usurped it in the tribal areas. By 2009, the TTP had begun to establish parallel hierarchies of authority and justice by performing police functions, eliminating rival militias, levying military service on one male per household, taxing the populace, and meting out sharia justice. In essence, these are most of the functions typically ascribed to sovereign states. Even if the Pakistani Taliban did not have direct aims of overrunning the government, its alternative governance, supported by a wing infused with extreme Islamist ideology, might have achieved its goal of a theocratic microstate. Taliban control and reach far surpassed any previous semiautonomous tribal fiefs that Pakistan tolerated during its first six decades as a state. The very existence of such an entity was an affront that undermined existing perceptions about the legitimacy and credibility of the central government.⁵

One solution for the Pakistani government that would help reverse the lack of perceived legitimacy in the minds of the population in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) would be to normalize the FATA in terms of making it either a province itself, or subsuming it within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Provincial status would give the population a sense of ownership, but the political agents and tribal *maliks* oppose provincial status because such a change would greatly reduce their power and influence. Presently, the population of the FATA perceives that the Pakistani government

⁴ International Crisis Group, *Reforming Pakistan’s Civil Service*, Asia Report Number 185 (Washington, DC: International Crisis Group, 2010), i–ii.

⁵ Lalwani, *Pakistan Capabilities for a Counterinsurgency Campaign*, 21.

is treating them “like Indians on a reservation” in America. Economic development and political inclusion would help stabilize the FATA. The population in FATA comprises 300,000 males aged between 16 and 25 out of a total population of 3.5 million. It is extremely important for the Pakistani government to keep its promises about normalizing the FATA as a legitimate and genuine province. However, another recognized South Asia expert believes there are solutions, but that Pakistan will not implement solutions to long-term problems. There is not enough realism about facts on the ground, and there is so much to do given the low level of everything— health, literacy, and development. The Pakistani military has willfully tolerated a relative degree of instability in the tribal areas over the decades because it has served its purpose and because Pakistan does not view those areas as genuine parts of Pakistan proper. For example, Islamabad could not have cared less about the tribes in Baluchistan until it found hydrocarbon resources there and until it began constructing its Gwadar Port project. The Baluchis need a better deal, a quid pro quo, in view of the Punjabi elites’ covetous approach. The people in the tribal areas of the FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would likely want to see similar opportunities.⁶

Some have also asserted that excluding the FATA from political participation as a province or as part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province has to stop. The people in the FATA want the areas to be a province. A range of Pakistani public and private representatives did make some progress toward understanding perceptions and expectation in the Mainstreaming FATA project. Between August and November 2008, the Benazir Democracy Institute arranged three roundtable workshops, each one comprising representation from FATA regions in the north, center, and south. The workshops assembled a broad mix of FATA residents, tribal leaders, academics, journalists, parliamentarians, lawyers, and current and former civil and military officials. The workshops engaged in dialogue and consultations on what the people in the FATA want and about the need for comprehensive reform. The unanimously overriding concern among the participants was the need for security and peace in the

⁶ Shuja Nawaz, telephone interviews, 14 and 21 January 2010. The direct quote is from the 14 January 2010 interview. The last part of the paragraph that amplifies pessimism about Pakistan implementing solutions is from Shaun Gregory, telephone interview, 23 January 2010.

tribal areas as the sine qua non for development. Participants blamed both the Taliban and the government for the then-deteriorating security conditions and emphasized that thousands of innocent tribal people had been brutally killed or injured, with hundreds of thousands displaced. The attendees called for the government to exercise the writ of the state to establish peace and stability through dialogue that involved all stakeholders at the local, national, and international level. The participants asked the government to use force only as a last resort and for the security forces to get better at discriminating between hostile militants and innocent civilians to avoid civilian casualties. The participants also expressed the desire to bring the FATA into the mainstream polity of Pakistan while also “safeguarding their centuries-old traditions, culture, and customs.” In other words, there was consensus among FATA tribal leaders that they wanted to be a normal part of the Pakistani state, with its attendant state civil institutions.⁷

Specifically, the FATA representatives unanimously declared that they wanted normalization, democracy, and peace. The participants arrived at several concluding recommendations, which included among them the extension of the Pakistani constitution’s jurisdiction to the FATA. They asked that the fundamental freedoms (justice, life, representation) codified in that constitution, and in the corpus of existing international human rights conventions, also be extended to the FATA. In addition, the groups asked that the Frontier Crimes Regulations be rescinded, replaced, or significantly amended to make it consistent with the state’s constitution. The FATA’s representatives in this project also recommended that the jurisdiction of the Peshawar High Court and the Supreme Court of Pakistan be extended to the tribal areas and that FATA courts be established to serve as the courts for settling civil disputes and to serve as appellate courts for *jirga* decisions. The findings also implored the Pakistani government to respect, revive, and strengthen the traditional institution of the *jirga* with codified legal protections. Pending the final determination of their provincial status, the FATA spokespeople asked for representation in the provincial assembly

⁷ Gregory, telephone interview, 23 January 2010. See Benazir Democracy Institute, *Mainstreaming FATA*, summary report (Peshawar: Shaheed Bhutto Foundation, 2009), 4–5. The direct quote is from page 5.

of then-North-West Frontier Province. The workshops' recommendations also stressed the guarantee of political representation for women and minorities. Furthermore, consensus prevailed for significantly curtailing the powers of the political agents, who administer the tribal agencies in the FATA. Lastly, it was clear that the people want better education at all levels in the tribal areas.⁸

The Pakistani government needs to improve its administration and services to the people of FATA. A slow and deliberate approach to integration is one part of the solution. The United States never really put the pressure on Pakistan to create solutions for enduring stability in the tribal areas. If and when political party membership rights are extended to the FATA, there will still be very few seats on the national assembly. Moreover, the United States must determine more effective ways of persuading Pakistan to provide genuine governance to the FATA. There is some reason for optimism about the stability of the Pakistani state, although others are less sanguine about the government of Pakistan. Components of the solution include efforts to normalize the FATA politically and to adapt the Pakistani army to best-practice counterinsurgency to meet grievances of the population. The crux of the challenge is that the U.S. has no leverage over Pakistani policy and strategy. The government of Pakistan talks but does not deliver on reforms. More still, Pakistan has not allowed any transparency on its operations in the FATA, and the Pakistani government is the most intransigent, intractable, and dangerous piece of the problem. Pakistan's approach to the FATA has also been anemic and underwhelming.⁹

The crisis of legitimacy in the FATA also relates to the lack of local indigenous leaders who are not Taliban. The Taliban in the Waziri lands have killed off many tribal leaders to consolidate their control, which leaves a dearth of legitimate local leaders. Also, killing off a large number of tribal leaders did not even precipitate a Pakistani army response because the capacity and credibility of the Pakistani security forces were very low in the FATA from 2005 to 2007. What's more, the army did not want to get involved. On-the-ground observations between 2005 and 2007 revealed that pop-

⁸ *Mainstreaming FATA*, 6–8.

⁹ Joshua T. White, telephone interview, 23 January 2010; and Fair, telephone interview, 21 January 2010.

ular support for the Taliban spiked, generally because of American support for Musharraf, whom the populace increasingly viewed as a corrupt tyrant. The Red Mosque incident and the Musharraf regime's machinations against Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry (the most glaring example of which was Musharraf declaring a fabricated state of emergency) converged to heighten anti-Musharraf sentiment, which exacerbated anti-U.S. sentiments among the Pakistani public.¹⁰

The effectiveness and popularity of drone strikes in the tribal areas have also provoked much debate and controversy. Experts report that over half of the FATA population supports drone strikes, although they are opposed to punitive operations by the Pakistani army because the latter are more destructive. Drone strikes are effective in disrupting al-Qaeda and TTP leaders, but the insurgents do capitalize on the civilian casualties with their media operations when they occur. Some indigenous tribes particularly support drone killings of foreigners and Arabs. Moreover, American special operations "boots-on-the-ground" raids seem to have a more discernibly negative impact on the Pakistani state and Pakistan's core public than they have had on the tribal areas, as the May 2011 bin Laden raid showed. There is some Pashtun support for Pakistani army operations in the tribal areas, but the Pakistani government claims that any expansion of drone strikes or special operations missions into Baluchistan would exacerbate the indigenous populace's anti-U.S. and antigovernment sentiments. It would seem that the Pakistani army does not want to expand the drone fight into Baluchistan because it does not want the U.S. to apply more pressure on the Afghan Taliban. The Pakistani army and government also lever the perceived Indian threat as a way to push back and manipulate the United States when it applies too much pressure for more action. Finally, the public support for fighting the TTP does not translate into any increase in support for the U.S. Over the last several years, a majority of Pakistanis still considered the United States as the enemy, while generally about 10 percent viewed the U.S. as a partner.¹¹

Notwithstanding, the Pakistani public's support for Pakistani se-

¹⁰ Nick Schmidle, interview, Washington, DC, 3 December 2009.

¹¹ Gregory, telephone interviews, 23 January and 9 February 2010. Pew Research Center, Support for Campaign against Extremism Wanes, 21 June 2011 (Pew Global Attitudes Project online).

curity force operations exhibited a favorable shift in the spring of 2009. Two thousand and nine was a watershed year for the Pakistani public's perception of the TTP. Before the Pakistani Taliban offensives in Swat and Buner in the spring of 2009, the Pakistani people were not willing to support military actions against their indigenous Taliban. Since then, there has generally been a greater willingness among the Pakistani public and in the Pakistani armed forces to fight against the TTP in defense of the Pakistani state. According to Steve Coll, the period from Benazir Bhutto's assassination up until the time when the TTP overran Buner District in May 2009 was horrifying for the Pakistani public. There is now more will and determination in the Pakistani army to fight against the TTP in defense of the Pakistani state. Public opinion during the spring and summer 2009 shifted to support Pakistan security forces' operations against the Pakistani Taliban because the population sees the TTP as an existential threat. There is a momentum in favor of increasing the perceived legitimacy of the Pakistan government in the eyes of its population, although Pakistanis are still viscerally anti-American. There is also still an appetite for civil rule of the military, and the United States needs to encourage, support, and enforce this, if necessary.¹²

According to some experts, the operations in South Waziristan in 2009–11 demonstrated that Pakistan's armed forces are now more serious about fighting militants and the Pakistani army is now actually better, even if only relatively or marginally so. Before 2009, any notion of hammer-and-anvil operations to dislodge and drive out the Taliban from the tribal area safe havens was an illusory game of "smoke and mirrors." With the Pakistani security forces' operations in 2009–11, some have perceived more of a genuine hammer and anvil, though imperfect. Echoing a phrase from Voltaire, Peter Bergen has aptly commented that the "enemy of the perfect is not the reasonably okay." No one really complains about drone strikes either, he commented. As for trust and confidence as indicators of the Pakistani leaders support for their bilateral relationship with America, Bergen believed U.S.-Pakistan relations were better than any time since 1979. Moreover, if not probable, it

¹² Steve Coll, interview, 3 December 2009.

would not be impossible, and would be exceedingly helpful, if the Pakistanis would ultimately relent in their passive, active, and perfidious protection and support of the Haqqani network. On the other hand, the Afghan government in Kabul now receives about \$1.2 billion per annum in Indian support, which Pakistan perceives as a harbinger for future Indian sway over Karzai's government, and with that, the growing threat engendered in this Indian encroachment on Pakistan's western flank. In the mid to longer term, if Pakistan can be convinced that the Kabul government is friendly and relatively malleable, it is possible that Pakistan might be induced to give up Haqqani. The other option for a legitimate political solution, as distasteful as it seems, may in the end also require and see some form of reconciliation with the Haqqani network, if in the process the Pakistanis can move it away from its violent and extremist agenda.¹³

Scholarly analyses also recognized a shift in public support for Pakistani military operations against the TTP and TNSM. One essay posited that "developments in Swat during the early spring brought a dramatic reversal of attitudes across Pakistan toward the militants." After Pakistan had repeated its traditional pattern of cease-fire agreements to appease the militants in February 2009, by spring of that year it became evident in a similar cease-fire with Sufi Muhammad of the TNSM that this insurgent group was committed to undermining and eliminating all traces of state authority. The Taliban's harsh policies, including forced land redistribution and puritanical sharia justice, began to horrify and alienate the people. Two particular events stood out as catalyzing the population to oppose the Taliban's rule in Swat, and elsewhere, and to support Pakistani army actions against them. The first event was the widely disseminated video of Taliban militants flogging a young woman. The other one was an April 2009 speech by Sufi Muhammad that rather brazenly attacked and questioned the very notion of the Pakistani state. The final impetus for the shift in support was the advance of TNSM militants beyond Swat to the Buner and Lower Dir Districts, bringing the Islamist radical threat within 60 miles of Islamabad. At that time, it became unambiguously clear to Pakistan's

¹³ Peter Bergen, telephone interview, 14 January 2010.

public that the Taliban aspired to impose their extreme doctrine on the entire country. Previous support for peace deals may have stemmed from the general perception that the tribal areas were not part of core Pakistan and that the Taliban would confine their activities to the Pashtun Belt. The Taliban advance into Buner most likely persuaded Pakistanis to support military action because the militants threatened to encroach on the heartland, drastically raising the costs of future failed peace deals. Specifically, the disturbing video of the girl's beating, combined with the Taliban attack beyond the Indus, served to jolt the traditionally liberal populace of the Punjab out of its complacency.¹⁴

One other notably positive development in the tribal areas for building some popular support is the Pakistan branch of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), which is a best practice for building a political and development foothold that merits consideration for benchmarking in other areas in Pakistan, and even in Afghanistan. In November 2007, OTI launched a program in the FATA as an initial step in support of the Pakistan's renewed efforts to better deliver services to communities in the region. These efforts were also meant to facilitate the integration of the FATA populace into Pakistan's political and economic mainstream through small community-enhancement projects that will improve the economic and social environment in the region. OTI also supports the government's efforts to increase public access to information about its social, economic, and political activities and policies in FATA. In Pakistan, OTI has been working to build confidence and trust between the government and the FATA tribal communities through a consultative approach that identifies and implements small community-improvement projects. The program includes media and communication outreach activities and quick, visible, small-scale community projects. The program was undertaken from fall 2007 to fall 2010, in accordance with the government of Pakistan's plans.¹⁵

Given the desires and recommendations reported in the Mainstreaming FATA enterprise, OTI is one good program for economic

¹⁴ Weinbaum, "Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency," 79–80; Fair, "Pakistan's Own War on Terror," 44–48. The direct quote is from Weinbaum, 79.

¹⁵ USAID Office of Transition Initiatives, "Pakistan Fact Sheet," January 2010.

development and civilian governance that exhibits potential for gaining popular support by addressing the people's grievances. Here is a model for U.S. development assistance that has succeeded under the hardest of all possible circumstances in Pakistan, in its remote and dangerous FATA. Under OTI, small teams of U.S. nationals working with hundreds of Pakistani colleagues have succeeded precisely by departing from the USAID's traditional development playbook. OTI employs Pakistanis and buys its materials from local sources. It creates democratic mechanisms for local ownership of all its assistance programs. And it rigorously measures success in terms of outcomes, not outputs, using multiple means of accountability. Former Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke was reputedly so enamored of the OTI during an early visit to Pakistan that he expressed surprise that its budget was not much larger than its current size. This initiative is a good one and suggests duplication elsewhere in the FATA to stimulate development and meet the expectations of the population. On a somewhat different note, the next section explores to what degree the Pakistani military has changed its approach in terms of providing security and avoiding civilian casualties.¹⁶

Force

It will do what it must on the Indian border and what it can on its Afghan one.

—*Sameer Lalwani*, *Pakistan Capabilities for a Counterinsurgency Campaign*

In 2007, when the U.S. still viewed the war in Afghanistan as a backwater economy of effort, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commented to the effect that the United States will do what it must in Iraq and do what it can in Afghanistan. The inference was more of the same level of economy in Afghanistan given the then-ongoing American surge of troops for a revived counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq. The U.S. has since resolved the dilemma it faced when fighting two difficult wars simultaneously and from 2009–11 refocused on its war of necessity in Afghanistan. However, Pakistani civilian and military leaders still

¹⁶ Christian Brose and Daniel Twining, "Our Pakistan Problem," *Weekly Standard*, 14 September 2009, 5.

confront the very real dilemma of needing to be prepared to defend against their existential nemesis, India, and of preparing for and prosecuting operations against militants in the tribal areas. The Pakistani security forces have in fact shown some discernible improvement in how they conduct operations against insurgents. However, experts' views on the degree of adaptation vary from pessimistic to almost Pollyannaish. This section relies on a number of interviews and current scholarship to examine and reconcile some reasonable generalizations about Pakistan's willingness and effectiveness in fighting insurgents. To achieve some sort of logical flow, it begins with the skeptical perspectives and ends with the more optimistic analyses. This study does not explore published doctrine because Pakistani military doctrine is classified.¹⁷

To briefly recapitulate, the catalysts and evolution of the Taliban insurgency in Pakistan emerged in three waves. First, there was a regroup and resurge phase when Taliban and foreign fighters fled across the border seeking sanctuary in Pakistan. In this phase, from late 2001 until 2003, they benefited from the help of the Haqqani network and loosely coalesced or cooperated with al-Qaeda. Second, there was a reconstitute and regenerate phase beginning in 2003, after which the U.S. invasion of Iraq provided further impetus for resurgence and regeneration of Taliban insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan until 2007. The last phase began with the Special Services Group assault on the Red Mosque, which generated an anti-Musharraf and antigovernment narrative. This narrative catalyzed an expansion of the TTP, more coalescence among Taliban and foreign fighters, and opportunistic cooperation between the TTP and the TNSM in FATA and what was then known as the North-West Frontier Province. To be brutally candid here, the Frontier Corps (FC) and the Pakistani army's responses to these metastasizing and increasingly colluding insurgencies during those same years manifested a generally half-measured use of too few forces lacking sufficient leadership, training, and doctrine to seriously counter the militants. When they did act, Pakistani security forces compounded the above by using punitive operations that over relied on firepower and destruction. Pakistan's policy pattern of fol-

¹⁷ Lalwani, *Pakistan Capabilities for a Counterinsurgency Campaign*, 56.

lowing up operations of this nature with peace deals they were unwilling and unable to enforce only emboldened the Taliban. Instead of countering the budding internal insurgency, Pakistani military action between 2003 and 2008 essentially helped catalyze it.¹⁸

The FC, which conducted operations against the militants in the FATA during this period, had lost its proficiency since the years when it had served in Kashmir (Kargil). Another example of lapsed proficiency was the degradation in the capabilities of the Pakistani army's Northern Light Infantry (NLI), which had been a part of the FC until after the Kargil campaign of 1999. Before being subsumed within the Pakistani army after Kargil, the NLI theretofore attracted young aggressive leaders in search of tough and rewarding duty in Kashmir. Over time the NLI stopped attracting top quality volunteers, and the Pakistani army was compelled to "volunteer" candidates for this regimental-sized formation. Moreover, the FC that deployed into the FATA during 2004–6 was a weak shadow of its former self. Its Kashmir regiments were no longer commanded by lieutenant colonels; by that time, majors commanded regiments.¹⁹

The Pakistani army also missed an excellent opportunity when it first deployed troops into the FATA to use those regiments that were composed half of Pashtuns and half of Punjabis. Junior officers and noncommissioned officers who spoke Pashto would have been much more effective. Instead, the Pakistani army forces that deployed to the FATA looked and spoke like an alien force because they were dressed in uniforms that were similar to U.S. Army uniforms and they did not speak the local language. Their presence and appearance alienated the Pashtun population from the outset, and this was exacerbated by their heavy-handed methods. Pakistan never corrected this misstep, and it employed 11th Corps in the FATA, a corps which had been based in Peshawar and had previously focused its training and preparation on Kashmir.²⁰

Given that the U.S. Central Command (Centcom) and the Office of the Defense Representative–Pakistan have only really provided several years worth of genuine, if parsimonious, effort to train and equip the Pakistani FC forces, a sustained persistent effort may bear

¹⁸ Coll, interview, 3 December 2009.

¹⁹ Nawaz, telephone interview, 14 January 2010.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

fruit. Before that, according to U.S. Army Special Forces accounts, the consequences of Pressler Amendment proscriptions in previous years contributed to having to train and equip anew after years of no training or military-to-military relations. The FC, with sufficient training, leadership, and equipment, can potentially become the force of choice for the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and for stabilizing the tribal areas. On the ground in Pakistan, the U.S. Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) train-and-equip effort for the Pakistani military was disjointed for the first five years. SOCCENT Forward (Pakistan) in 2010 was dedicating approximately 140 personnel to the effort, which is called the Security Development Program. The Security Development Program comprises three lines of operations: military-security, state-governance, and the USAID OTI-Pakistan. U.S. SOCCENT personnel have also observed and perceived more than a few instances when the Pakistanis would work to undermine the U.S. efforts to improve the FC.²¹

It is not likely that the United States will see much more improvement of the Pakistani army in terms of what the American military views as best-practice counterinsurgency fundamentals. It is unlikely that the Pakistani military will adopt this term or adapt much more to what it continues to call “low-intensity conflict operations.” The civilian-military gulf is a huge problem, which precludes the civil-military integration required for holding and building after clearing. There is also a sense of a sentiment in Pakistan that embracing “counterinsurgency” is an embarrassment because it reveals that the government has acknowledged a state of insurrection where Pashtuns are insurgents, not simply criminals or terrorists. The Pakistani army still has a long way to go in holding and building areas after it clears them; it continues to stay on roads and to destroy too many buildings and too much infrastructure. The Pakistani government and military forces should help build and develop infrastructure instead of being an instrument of destruction. Nevertheless, there is some cause for optimism, albeit

²¹ Timothy Hoyt, conversation, 26 February 2010, Newport, RI. LtCol Chuck Miller, interview, SOCCENT Headquarters, Tampa, FL, 16 December 2009. The Pressler Amendment, once invoked, generally proscribed the U.S. military from performing International Military Education and Training with the Pakistani military. Proscriptions were in place up until September 2001 for Pakistan’s nuclear transgressions.

qualified, since there were some notable improvements in how the FC and the Pakistani army performed during 2009 and 2010 in their conduct of operations in South Waziristan, Swat, and Bajaur, where they were more effective than in previous operations with similar aims.²²

However, the ISI is still colluding with militant groups. In one estimate, during the latest Pakistani army offensive into South Waziristan, most of the TTP fled from South Waziristan to Baluchistan. According to this perspective, the Pakistani army will not fight the Taliban in Baluchistan or North Waziristan because of the Afghan Taliban presence in the south and because of their proxy Haqqani's fiefdom in North Waziristan. Haqqani remains a useful instrument and hedge for Pakistan's doubts over the current and future Afghan regime. In the duplicitous context of Pakistan security policy and behavior, it is in the interests of the ISI to support Haqqani, Hekmatyar, and the Afghan Taliban because the ISI does not perceive them as posing direct threats to Islamabad. In addition, the Pakistani army exhibits an anti-U.S. sentiment and does not prefer to fight co-religionists. The other narrative the Pakistanis employ is that they are unable, not unwilling, to operate in these areas because they are stretched too thin and such an operation is too complex and too unpopular in Pakistan and in the army. The Pakistani army leadership has an eloquent and rehearsed narrative about how its forces are doing as much as they can; about the losses they have suffered, which have not been insignificant; and about how the army is not ready to go into North Waziristan because it will be a tough fight against a resilient enemy. There are two other corollaries to this narrative. One argument is that such an operation would trigger a backlash in popular opinion because they would be fighting fellow Muslims. The other one is that the Pakistan army, and thus the state, might implode if pushed too far in the fight against the Islamists. There are two more genuine reasons for this resistance: the Pakistani army leadership is very concerned about its stature and credibility in the eyes of the public and will not undertake operations that may jeopardize this; and the Pakistani state has useful proxies such as the Haqqanis and the Afghan

²² White, telephone interview, 23 January 2010; and Seth Jones, telephone interview, 21 January 2010.

Taliban (Quetta Shura) that help Pakistan pursue its interests.²³

A fairly balanced assessment would acknowledge that, although the Pakistani army has effected some discernable improvements, its preference and focus remains on India rather than internal militants. The Pakistani state and its army did prove during 2009 that they were increasingly willing and capable of fighting militants who challenged the authority of the state. Although previous Pakistani army operations in the tribal areas “revealed serious deficiencies” in their conduct of operations, both army forces and FC units demonstrated improvements in clearing territory and integrating their operations with local tribes in Bajaur and Swat during 2009. However, Islamabad continues to use the tribal areas for training surrogate groups for operations in India and Afghanistan, making a distinction between these units and those such as the TTP and TNSM that it has come to view as a threat. But the Pakistan military’s cultural preference and fixation on both a conventional war model and conventional equipment—most appropriate for war with India on the Punjab plain—have poorly prepared Pakistan’s forces for dealing with this internal threat. Additionally, U.S. funding has disproportionately favored the FC and the army while insufficiently providing assistance to police and civil functions. Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments have also not provided sufficient aid either to the thousands of persons displaced by clearing operations or toward development in the areas of conflict. Clearing without having the capacity to hold and build is not consistent with counterinsurgency fundamentals.²⁴

For example, when the Pakistani armed forces launched Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Path to Deliverance) beginning in October 2009 against the Taliban in South Waziristan after four months of preparation, this represented their largest military operation to date in either FATA or then-North-West Frontier Province. The Pakistani army’s stipulated mission was to clear the area of militants and to stabilize the area because Islamabad had then considered South

²³ The first sentence on the ISI is attributable to Jones, telephone interview, 21 January 2010. The remainder of the paragraph is from Gregory, telephone interview, 23 January 2010. For excellent insights on how the Pakistanis negotiate and employ their narrative, see Howard B. Schaffer and Terisita C. Schaffer, *How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States: Riding the Roller Coaster* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011), 51–76 and 163–78.

²⁴ Fair and Jones, “Pakistan’s War Within” 181–82. The direct quote is from page 181 of this article.

Waziristan as the principal source of militant violence against the state, attributing 80 percent of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan to the TTP. By mid-November 2009, the Pakistani forces had occupied almost all of their objectives, and the military announced the end of the first phase of its operations. Although the army reported that it had met stiff resistance by indigenous and foreign fighters, there were no arrests, and there were no enemy dead bodies to show the media to back up this report. In fact, there was scant evidence that serious fighting occurred at all during the operation because most of the insurgents fled in advance of the government offensive. Because of the lack of transparency for operations in the FATA, it was not possible for outside media to confirm either the TTP or the Pakistani army's claims of casualties. The army claimed that it killed over 500 militants and lost over 70 soldiers in the fighting, but a TTP spokesman refuted those claims, instead explaining that the militants had carried out a planned withdrawal from their South Waziristan strongholds with their forces remaining generally intact and prepared to fight another day. There were also reports that the army confined its operations to major roads and towns while the insurgents dominated the forests and mountains. Overall, the Pakistani security forces did not arrest or kill any senior Taliban leaders, a fact that calls the effectiveness of the operation into question.²⁵

The flight of large numbers of insurgents and insurgent leaders in the face of Pakistani army onslaughts was not without precedent. The Bajaur campaign in 2008–9 also saw insurgents escape to other agencies in response to an army push there. In fact, there is a similar pattern that has become clear from all of the previous Pakistani security forces' operations in the tribal areas: one in which they fail to capture or kill a significant number of leaders or fighters because of a lack of timely intelligence. The South Waziristan operation also did not have the advantage of surprise because its lengthy preparations and the oncoming winter weather made it evident to everyone that the Pakistani army would have to begin the operation before winter arrived in order to consolidate any gains before snowfall. As a result of the security forces' telegraphed intentions, the

²⁵ Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Assessing the Progress of Pakistan's South Waziristan Offensive," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 12 (December 2009): 8–10.

insurgents were able to flee that tribal agency before the offensive began to proceed in full measure. When the first snow fell in the first half of December 2009, inclement conditions began to make the movement of forces increasingly cumbersome. Since the Pakistani forces had considerable advantages in numbers and guns, the TTP emulated the methods used by the Afghan Taliban, and by other guerrillas in similar situations, and employed hit-and-run guerrilla methods to harass the advancing Pakistani forces and attack isolated outposts, while retreating in the face of strength.²⁶

Moreover, the Pakistani Taliban did in fact retaliate for the army's offensive into South Waziristan with attacks and suicide bombings in Pakistan's urban areas. The TTP also ordered other franchise groups in the northern agencies inside the FATA to renew attacks against the Pakistani security forces wherever possible to influence public opinion and put pressure on the government. Sustained guerrilla hit-and-run attacks against the Pakistani military units in South Waziristan also occur on an intermittent basis. Although the government's overarching strategy for South Waziristan is not clear, the military intends to hold the areas it cleared there until it can diminish the threat posed by the TTP. Pakistan framed the second phase of the operation as one to clear and consolidate their efforts thus far, with plans to provide the political leadership and civil administration that has been absent for years. This remains to be seen since the civilian component of what should be an integrated approach has been noticeably absent in Pakistan to date. Nonetheless, the political administrator for South Waziristan has claimed that development and reconstruction work would begin once the security forces restored peace. The operation in South Waziristan, though a small step in the right direction, accomplished far less than eliminating the insurgent threat, as the TTP has demonstrated a relentless commitment and capacity to carry out brutal armed propaganda attacks against urban targets in Pakistan. What's more, the TTP's continued success in employing complex suicide attacks against hard military targets testifies to the threat it still poses, in spite of the fact that it lost some ground to the Pakistani military in South Waziristan. The hardest part of pacification—holding, build-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

ing, and protecting the population—has barely begun in this agency. Big offensive sweeps with modern equipment and technology, without holding and administering in durable ways, is not counterinsurgency.²⁷

On the other hand, some Pakistani analysts are more confident about improvements in the Pakistanis' capabilities for this kind of fighting. Notably, toward the end of the last decade, the FC did make some effort to improve its performance. By this account, the low troop morale attending heavy losses incurred while fighting the militants, as well as an institutional response to the then-flagging Pakistani army's public approval ratings of 10 percent, helped bring about changes in the Pakistani army's perception of what it needed to do. The promotion of General Kayani to chief of army staff also had a positive impact because Kayani saw improving the army's performance as a measure to improve its morale and its credibility in the eyes of the public. There was also a generational gap between strategists and analysts in the Pakistani army that was manifested in military and FC operations in 2008, one that contributed to a low point in institutional cohesion. The Pakistani army is moving away from coercive punitive operations such as these toward a relatively less punitive approach, one that also attempts to emphasize the promotion of development. On an interesting side-note, the victorious Pakistani cricket team captain's public declaration in 2009 that he wanted to beat the Taliban may have favorably influenced the public and the military perspective in Pakistan as his statement spoke to the necessity of prosecuting a war against Taliban militancy.²⁸

In another study published under the aegis of the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), Haider Mullick asserted that Pakistani security force operations in Swat during the spring and summer of 2009 marked a distinct shift toward counterinsurgency-like operations. According to this JSOU study, "Junior officers were tired of applying counterproductive brute force tactics for six years, pinning hopes on swift delivery of high technology U.S. gadgets and frustrated by U.S. failure to control Afghanistan." Animated by the

²⁷ Ibid., 11–12.

²⁸ Haider Mullick, telephone interview, 25 January 2010.

renewed public support for countering militancy, and determined by the recognition that the Taliban posed a grave threat, a number of field-grade and company-grade officers effected a change in the military mindset and methods from the bottom up. This adaptation was fourfold. Relying on what they viewed as successful practices in Bajaur during 2008–9, both the Pakistani army and the FC deviated from their previous firepower-intensive, hammer-sans-anvil operations and adopted operations that saw them contain and squeeze insurgent concentrations. Second, for the first time since the war began, the military began to implement a presence-oriented model that called for establishing small bases inside populated areas after clearing them to aid in administration and enforce curfews. Third, Pakistani operations seem to have improved their precision targeting due to better human intelligence and the relocation of civilians before attacks. Fourth, Pakistani junior officers have learned that the enemy’s explosive experts, information officers, snipers, and commanders were principally foreign fighters with whom indigenous Pashtun Taliban leaders were often collocated. The Pakistani intelligence officers exploited anti-Taliban and antiforeigner sentiments within the local population to better target and kill the enemy.²⁹

West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center journal, *CTC Sentinel*, has also published an equally sanguine analysis of Pakistani adaptability that contends that Pakistani military operations in Bajaur, Swat, and South Waziristan have demonstrated “a diligent institutional learning process that has produced significant tactical adaptations yielding increasing tactical success.” This study characterized the Pakistani military’s adaptation process as a cumulative one that sees the military adapting as a result of learning from operations against militants. The process is an incremental one that will gradually change over time and not witness any dramatic and wholesale embrace of best-practice counterinsurgency as currently envisioned by the United States. According to this assessment, Operation Sher Dil (Lionheart) in Bajaur during 2008–9 represented a change from a heavily punitive approach to a more patient one that used discernibly different tactics and human intel-

²⁹ Mullick, *Pakistan’s Security Paradox*, 54–57.

ligence techniques to methodically clear the Taliban. The FC, this report posited, also evolved into a more useful and competent local force that helped erode insurgent influence by improving security along the many routes in the agency over several months. Another marked improvement noted during subsequent operations in Swat from April to June 2009 was the deliberate displacement of the population before the assault. The purpose of this relocation was to mitigate collateral damage and to make targeting more precise. However, the assertion that the two-month blockade that the Pakistani military had established before the operation to cut off insurgent movement marked a positive change in Pakistani performance during the South Waziristan operation of 2009–10 is not entirely tenable. Many of the Taliban most probably fled because it was not likely that the Pakistani army was able to genuinely seal this remote and mountainous area.³⁰

There are, however, some other insights that do merit some contemplation as positive, though they still represent incremental changes to Pakistan's will and skill in fighting militants. One is that General Kayani is committed to improving the army's leadership, performance, and morale and that he is better able to focus his energy on these tasks because he is unencumbered with the responsibilities of ruling the state. Still, there will be no changes in army force structure and procurement toward a counterinsurgency model because Kayani will not accept changes of this sort outside the FC. Also, the Pakistani leadership now recognizes that it may not be wise to differentiate too greatly between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban because it acknowledges that current and future collusion among the two will not augur well for the Pakistani state down the road. Another grounded insight is that all changes toward what we view as counterinsurgency will be tactical and temporary. The army is willing to look at new ways of doing things because it would rather not be ineffective in the end. Last, another gaping shortcoming remains for counterinsurgents trying to build public support. This is the lack of any serious civilian capacity to integrate with the military for building and administering after clearing and holding. Such a gap is partly the result of an ingrained intransigence on the

³⁰ Sameer Lalwani, "The Pakistan Military's Adaptation to Counterinsurgency in 2009," *CTC Sentinel* 3, no. 1 (January 2010): 10–13. The direct quote is from page 10 of this article.

part of the military to cooperate with civilian institutions.³¹

Moreover, the Pakistani army's preponderance of Punjabis is a limiting factor in its ability to conduct holding and building in the Pashtun Belt. Another 2010 report, titled *Prospects for Pakistan*, offered an interesting explanation for the Pakistani army's concern over potential U.S. drone strikes and special operations raids inside Baluchistan in the future. According to this report, the concern is that the Pakistani army believes its Pashtun support in Baluchistan would evaporate as a consequence of any U.S. targeting of ethnic Pashtun Afghan Taliban in Quetta or elsewhere in the province. This same study also sees the army's operations in South Waziristan and Swat as evidence that the army can successfully carry out forceful containment. But the Pakistani government continues to fall very short in anything approximating the civilian side of development and reconstruction. It is quite possible that the Taliban are using the typical guerrilla techniques of dispersion and concentration, in that they disperse and flee when the Pakistani army approaches but concentrate and fight in areas where army presence is tenuous. A protracted war of attrition almost always favors the insurgent. There is also some anecdotal evidence that suggests junior officers and soldiers are increasingly opposed to lethal campaigns against the Taliban. The Taliban, again, have been able to alter the narrative on Pashtun identity, focusing less on traditional Pashtun tribal grievances, such as provincial autonomy, and more on factors associated with extreme Islamist religiosity.³²

Ultimately, it will be important to keep any approach to stabilize the Pashtun Belt as simple as possible. This means denying the Taliban from achieving their aspirations to control the people and the territory. Such a goal is potentially more achievable on the Afghan side of the Durand Line than it is on the Pakistani side. Some degree of stability is possible for Afghanistan in three to five years. Pakistan, on the other hand, will require five to eight years to achieve a similar level of stability in the tribal areas. If the NATO Coalition and its Afghan partners continue to reverse the momentum in their favor, particularly in the east, it could augur well for Pakistan to

³¹ Sameer Lalwani, telephone interview, 19 February 2009. The last sentence is an observation by Tim Hoyt, comments on draft manuscript, 11 March 2010.

³² Jonathan Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan* (London, Legatum Institute, 2010), 7–8.

genuinely and completely act as a partner to help stabilize the tribal areas on both sides of the Durand Line. However, the fundamental Pakistani challenge for the war against the Taliban in the tribal areas is “not Pakistan’s national character or even the character of its generals.” Instead, the problem is associated with Pakistanis’ perceived interests.³³

The Pakistani security apparatus has discovered over several decades how to best leverage its bad decisions, dysfunctions, grievances, and perceived existential and perpetual threats to extract from the United States the military and financial assistance that it thinks it needs to prepare for its wars against India. During the very time when they benefited from this support, Pakistan’s generals have resented their reliance on the United States’ largesse. For the ISI to renounce its Afghan Taliban proxies completely, its leaders “would have to imagine a new way of living in the world—to write a new definition of Pakistan’s national security, one that emphasizes politics and economics over clandestine war.” For the time being, notwithstanding the inferences and implications derived from the Pakistani arrests of some senior Taliban commanders in February 2010, there are still many generals in Pakistan who consider themselves masters of their old perfidious game, “to be not so sweet that they will be eaten whole by the United States, but not so bitter that they will be spat out.” It is to the perceptions of the Pakistani leadership and public that this study turns next.³⁴

Information Operations

The best chance to end Pakistani support for terrorism in Afghanistan and India is to demonstrate in a visceral way that its allies are losing and that if Pakistan does not stop backing them it will end up with little influence in Afghanistan and less security.

—*Christian Brose and Daniel Twining, “Our Pakistan Problem”*

In Chapter 3, this book analyzed in detail the U.S.-Pakistan historical context, the enduring effects of political Islam, and the influence of skewed educational curricula on the sentiments of the

³³ Coll, interview, 3 December 2009, and “Don’t Look Back,” 21–22. The direct quote is from the article.

³⁴ Coll, “Don’t Look Back,” 21–22. The direct quotes are from this article.

Pakistani population. In addition to winning the war for the Pakistani public's perceptions, information operations in the context of Pakistan also include how well American actions support its messages to influence Pakistan's ruling civilian and military elites to act in concert toward common interests in the region. As one example, since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, there has been a persistent perception in the minds of Pakistan's ruling oligarchy that America's traditional strategic attention-deficit disorder will precipitate an ill-advised and premature withdrawal from Afghanistan, leaving Pakistan to resolve the imbroglio again.

This belief, in turn, informs the Pakistanis' strategic depth rationale, what one can rightly perceive as the Pakistani security elites' propensity to hedge their bets by supporting the Afghan Taliban. It does seem that determined actions and words in Afghanistan might potentially help achieve a shift in Pakistani perceptions and convince their leaders that the United States is committed to a long-term solution to stability in South Asia. Both the counterinsurgency push in Afghanistan and the increasingly effective drone strikes in the tribal areas might help convince the Pakistani leadership that the United States is serious about persevering in the Pashtun Belt until ultimately successful. As of 2011, some guarded optimism existed at the operational level in terms of the possibilities that the U.S. and its allies really can change the perceptions and the behavior of Pakistan's leaders. This does not suggest that success in Afghanistan will alter Pakistan's enduring strategic rationale vis-à-vis India or its strategic depth corollary that requires a benign and malleable regime in Afghanistan. This type of change would require a tectonic shift in the realities and perceptions of the South Asian security dilemma. However, in late 2010 and 2011, the Coalition achieved discernible momentum against the Taliban inside Afghanistan, and it was clear that the insurgency was reeling and fractured in terms of the insurgent leaders that the Coalition removed and the caches and safe havens its campaign took away. The operational commander and his senior leaders did espouse the notion that unambiguous and irreversible operational success against the insurgency inside Afghanistan could undermine Pakistan's strategic depth approach and precipitate adjustments to its support of the Afghan Taliban. This last section explores any

changes in the integration of action with information operations to shape perceptions, by either the Pakistani government or the insurgents.³⁵

First and foremost, the Pakistani army will be better able to favorably alter the perceptions of the population in the tribal areas by operating in ways that help protect and better serve the nonmilitant portions of those populations. Heavy-handed punitive operations are not the solution because they tend to inflict civilian casualties and destroy what little infrastructure exists in the tribal areas. Less destructive and more constructive approaches to security operations in the FATA will improve how those populations perceive the army and the government. In this respect, the changes that the army effected in how it operated in Swat and South Waziristan during 2009–11, though marginal and incremental, also improved the government's positive influence over the population. In a war of perceptions, the Pakistani army and the FC will be able to more effectively win the public if they adopt more traditional approaches to countering the militants by helping govern and administer the tribal areas and by finding innovative ways to assist in developing infrastructure, in concert with a much improved civilian capacity to deliver and administer services and the rule of law. Notwithstanding the myriad impediments to the Pakistani military's capacity to adapt to counterinsurgency, the dearth of CORDS-like civilian capacity poses a much bigger challenge to its efforts. Without better governance, administration, and services, it will be very difficult to persuade the population in the tribal areas that the Pakistani government is one they can trust. However, the people are not endeared to the Taliban, particularly when the Taliban perpetrate acts of violence that harm innocent women and children and

³⁵ The least plausible inference to be drawn from Pakistan's serial capture of an unprecedented number of senior Quetta Shura commanders in February 2010, however, is that this manifested their willingness to go after the Afghan Taliban in the form of the Quetta Shura. The most convincing information I have from operating in Afghanistan in 2010–11 is that the Pakistanis arrested these leaders in February 2010 to exert more positive control and influence over the Afghan Taliban leadership. The author served with the operational commanders and discussed the effects of operational success in Afghanistan on the Pakistanis calculus. For more on the logic of pursuing operational success to influence Pakistan's strategic depth approach, see Ashley J. Tellis, *Creating New Facts on the Ground: Why the Diplomatic Surge Cannot Yet Produce a Regional Solution in Afghanistan*, Policy Brief 91 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 1–11.

destroy schools and facilities that benefit the people.

In addition to propagating the consistency of Pakistani army action and rectitude, information operations must effectively amplify the heinous acts that the Taliban have committed against their fellow Pashtuns. Although the government and the military have much to improve in the conduct of information operations, the Pakistani forces did implement some improvements in the conduct of their operations in 2009–11. For example, during operations in Swat during the spring of 2009, a discernible and apparently favorable innovation was evident in the deliberate mass displacement of the civilian population before the offensive to reduce civilian casualties and better target the militants. Moreover, after clearing the area of insurgents, Pakistani military forces cooperated with civilian officials to resettle internally displaced persons in order to reestablish some notion of civilian administration and attempt some rebuilding of the local economy. The long-term benefit of this effort remains to be seen. During the Pakistani army's operations in South Waziristan in 2009–11, the Pakistani army also "experimented with psychological operations, distributing leaflets supposedly from religious authorities and local tribes that warned the youth of false jihad and blamed foreign militants for ushering destruction into the tribal areas."³⁶

The Pakistani military has also better employed psychological operations (PSYOPs) to counter the Taliban propaganda in South Waziristan by air dropping leaflets in the areas (Miran Shah and Mir Ali) with large concentrations of insurgents. The leaflets did purport to emanate from the religious authorities, even citing the Saudi Mufti-e-Azam Shaykh Abdul Aziz in its admonition to eschew faux jihad. Other leaflets targeted foreign fighters and impugned them for spreading unrest and inviting attack and destruction. However, the effectiveness of these propaganda efforts was questionable because the leaflets were printed in Urdu, which neither the Arabs nor the Pashtuns in the tribal areas were likely to read in large numbers. One can also infer from the low literacy level in the FATA that this effort at influencing perceptions likely failed to resonate widely and deeply. Subsequently, the Pakistanis

³⁶ Lalwani, "The Pakistan Military's Adaptation," 11–12. The direct quotation is from page 12 of this article.

did put to the test more sophisticated efforts at integrating ground operations with PSYOPs, but the results remain unknown. This account also offers the debatable assertion that the negative publicity attending the U.S. drone strikes, ones associated by perception with the Pakistani army, has provided the Taliban with an “unquantifiable” but “massive” propaganda dividend. However, as discussed below, another analysis of popular perceptions concerning drone strikes does not necessarily support this argument.³⁷

Research published in the last couple of years suggests that the “Pakistanis are far from unified in their opposition to drone strikes.” According to this analysis, there is growing evidence that seems to demonstrate that many Pakistanis, particularly those in close proximity to the Taliban, do not oppose the U.S. drone war. Many in the West perceive that the drone war in the tribal areas is exacerbating anti-Americanism in Pakistan. To be sure, the strikes seem to be generally unpopular with Pakistanis. The Pakistani media regularly condemns the drone strikes, and even Pakistani senior leaders decry these strikes in public. However, even though there are some who are prone to anti-Americanism, who likewise are inclined to opine against the strikes, the people in the FATA do not necessarily perceive the strikes as violations of their sovereignty. According to recent analysis, evidence from polling suggests that the tribesmen are inclined to tolerate drone strikes that target foreign terrorists and Taliban leaders, such as the Mehsuds. In fact, the public celebrated when a drone strike killed Baitullah Mehsud. This analysis asserts that the people in the FATA—who have witnessed the Taliban murdering their leaders by the hundreds, destroying their schools, and flogging their women—favor drone strikes.³⁸

Moreover, most of the experts interviewed for this book—experts such as C. Christine Fair, Peter Bergen, and Shaun Gregory, among others—also support drone strikes but have varying views on how they shape perceptions. Some consider drone strikes to be effective in lethal effects but suggest that Title 50 of the U.S. Code precludes

³⁷ Cloughley, *Insurrection, Terrorism, and the Pakistani Army*, 20–21. The directly quoted words are from page 21 of this report.

³⁸ See Brian G. Williams, “Pakistani Responses to the CIA’s Predator Drone Campaign against the Taliban and al Qaeda,” *Terrorism Monitor* 7 (February 2010): 3–5. The direct quote is from page 5.

the United States from otherwise amplifying the information to influence the populations in FATA and Pakistan. As noted above, the population in the FATA does favor drone strikes against foreign elements, with some caveats. On the other hand, although the unmanned aerial platform strikes may produce good effects in disrupting Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership, they could have long-term unfavorable effects on information operations. Likewise, drone strikes may indeed be effective in disrupting al-Qaeda and TTP leaders, but the insurgents do capitalize on the civilian casualties with their media operations when drones strikes occur, which may mitigate their overall effectiveness.³⁹

On the whole, the Coalition and the Afghan National Security Forces in Afghanistan are more willing to allow journalists in war areas. This is not the case in the FATA/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, however. Access to journalists combined with some credible openness on the use of lethal force would help with drones and ground operations. Drone strikes have pernicious effects that exacerbate anti-Americanism within Pakistan's educated elite. According to a report in the *CTC Sentinel*, "The paucity of contradictory information flowing into the FATA as well as the complete dominance of the Taliban's message means that the Taliban's twisted version of events is often the only one heard." The Pakistani Taliban, like their Afghan brethren, understand that the real war unfolds in the media. However, the Pakistani government and its security forces seem unable to either effectively counter the Taliban media operations or physically shut down the Taliban's principal media studio, Amat. Amat propagates a continuous stream of pro-Taliban and anti-Pakistani military propaganda to shape the perceptions of the Pashtun population and the security forces. For instance, one video labeled the Pakistani army as a box of soap and purported that the army was cleansing Muslim brothers, a simple but significant accusation in a Muslim state.⁴⁰

The TTP has also employed persuasion, coercion, and armed propaganda to good effect in the tribal areas. One video put forward

³⁹ Fair, telephone interview, 21 January 2010. Bergen, telephone interview, 14 January 2010. Nawaz, telephone interview, 21 January 2010. Gregory, telephone interview, 23 January 2010.

⁴⁰ Schmidle, interview, 3 December 2009. See Arthur Keller, "Propaganda and Peace Deals: The Taliban's Information War in Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 8 (July 2008): 15–17. The direct quote is from Keller, 16.

a detailed argument on the duty of Pashtuns to follow their Pash-tunwali code and to continue to provide hospitality to the Arab al-Qaeda guests. Other propaganda has emphasized the villainy of the United States by amplifying the destruction of houses and the increase in orphans resulting from lethal strikes. The Pakistani Taliban have also attacked newsstands and assassinated journalists for writing articles expressing unfavorable views about their movement. They have likewise prosecuted an armed propaganda campaign using coercion against Pashtun tribal leaders (*maliks*) and ordinary Pashtun tribesmen. They have killed hundreds of Pashtun *maliks* and tribal elders in the last several years, and they also employ night letters to intimidate tribal leaders who might be inclined to support the Pakistani government against the Taliban. In their regular killing of ordinary tribesmen, the TTP's motives may have been crime or revenge, but for armed propaganda purposes, they pin the label of "American spy" on the corpses. Though these victims seldom have any link to the American government, the corpses are useful for psychological warfare purposes. No amount of bombs or bullets will overcome the kind of influence engendered in this Taliban propaganda war of guilt and fear. In other words, marksmanship training and Kevlar vests will not alter the reality in tribal areas "or the near total information dominance of the Taliban."⁴¹

The societal tensions associated with decades of political religiosity stemming from deliberate policies begun under General Zia also continue to influence context and perceptions in Pakistan. Religious parties will continue to operate in the political space through coalitions of convenience, to apply pressure on what is a relatively liberal tradition, to further marginalize minorities such as Christians and Ahmedis, to implement harsher tenets of sharia and more public displays of piety, and to denounce Pakistan's alliance with the United States. Moreover, even if the public increasingly comes to perceive the TTP as a threat and the Pakistani army gets better at countering that threat, the Punjabi militants in Pakistan's heartland represent as much, or more, of an existential threat to the state because the Punjab is also now a main area for recruiting army officers and soldiers. The madrassa networks, along with such

⁴¹ Keller, "Propaganda and Peace Deals," 16–17. The direct quote is from page 17.

ostensibly nonpolitical groups as Tablighi Jamaat, as well as the Islamic welfare organizations funded from the Arabian Peninsula, will continue to influence the perceptions and opinions of the rural and urban working masses. In this light, the continued and widespread Islamicization in Pakistan is a more serious problem than the notion of Talibanization.⁴²

Other scholarship published in the last couple of years supports the view that Pakistan's war of perceptions against extreme Islamist militancy goes well beyond the Taliban threat. In an article from 2009, Ayesha Siddiqa asserted that Pakistan's and America's failure to perceive the extremist threat beyond the Taliban precludes a holistic effective approach to the war on terror. In her view, if Pakistan defeated the Pashtun Taliban insurgency tomorrow, it would not stop the growth of Islamist militancy in Pakistan. Al-Qaeda is now purported to be in the Punjab districts that border the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, and the Punjab has been the home to terrorist groups since the 1980s. What's more, the surge in drone attacks against al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders in the tribal areas has likely pushed them and their allies away from their FATA sanctuaries to urban centers deep inside the Punjab or Sindh Provinces. Although the public now identifies the militants in the Punjab as Punjabi Taliban, these insurgents espouse the same Salafist ideology as al-Qaeda, one that aspires to a return to the halcyon days of puritanical Islam and the hegemony of the trans-regional caliphate. In fact, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba espouses doctrine and aims that are no less Islamist and global than al-Qaeda's. In her piece, Siddiqa also identified another layer to the war of perceptions about the TTP—that the public loss of support for the TTP has exacerbated tensions between the Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns in Pakistan, amplifying a long-standing perception of the Pashtun tribes as the “perpetrators of violence.” She also admonished against misinterpreting the loss of sympathy for the TTP as signifying any change in public attitudes about support for the war in general. It has not.⁴³

⁴² Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan*, 6–7. Direct quotation is from page 7. The term “Talibanization” is from page 17 but appears in a host of works. Tablighi Jamaat translates to the “Society for Spreading Faith.” This report also states that Tablighi Jamaat has allowed other violent militant groups to actively recruit at its meetings.

⁴³ Siddiqa, “Jihadism in Pakistan,” 58 and 60–61. The direct quote is from page 58.

Influencing perceptions among the Pashtuns in the tribal belt is also about officials who involve themselves in illicit and corrupt activities for personal economic gain, and it is also about justice. According to one knowledgeable expert, “There is a powerful perception of the Taliban as a draconian but predictable enforcer of justice.” The Pakistani Taliban’s narrative describes the government as corrupt and venal. They also propagate the notion that their justice is better than the government courts because the Taliban exact swift and impartial justice. In fact, when the population buys into the Taliban program, they do see results, as extreme and imperfect as they are. On the other hand, when they support the Pakistani government, they see no results. This has an impact on influencing whom the people support because it undermines their perceptions about the legitimacy of the Pakistani state.⁴⁴

It may also be the case that the Pakistani Taliban directly supports the Afghan Taliban. TTP insurgents can and do volunteer for operations inside Afghanistan. The Quetta Shura effectively transferred guidance and control to internal Afghan and Pakistani mujahideen commanders during 2003–4. Between 2006 and 2007, after Nek Mohammed was killed, the TTP became stronger and distanced itself from the Quetta Shura, which then began to be seen as a revered but only titular overarching command element. However, the more territory that the Pakistan Taliban loses, the less capacity it will have to conduct successful training and recruitment.⁴⁵

What has not been evident in any way thus far is any deliberate effort by the government of Pakistan to overhaul the still heavily xenophobic public educational curricula. This continues to play no small role in influencing the public’s perception of Pakistan and Islam, as well as how it views enemies, neighbors and nominal “partners.” Likewise, it will be equally important for the government to aggressively regulate and curb the propagation of dogma by the numerous Deobandi madrassas operating throughout the tribal areas. A large part of a carefully considered, long-term solution would require more governance in the tribal areas and more central government transparency and oversight for which madras-

⁴⁴ Coll, interview, 3 December 2009.

⁴⁵ Mullick, telephone interview, 25 January 2010.

sas continue to employ radical Islamist dogma to shape the minds of future jihadists. Another key factor that enables this widespread proselytizing is the continuing stream of Saudi and Gulf state funds. During 2009–11, Gulf funds were beginning to flow away from al-Qaeda and toward the Quetta Shura. According to a Pakistan security expert, funding now flows from the Gulf states principally to the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani madrassas. Including and influencing the Saudis will be a crucial component in stemming the flow of these funds and to any ultimate negotiated settlement.⁴⁶

U.S.-Pakistani relations have consistently been characterized by divergent aims. Pakistan has always persisted in getting something that it needs, such as International Military Education and Training stipends or supplementary funds, for cooperating with the United States. One possibility for the U.S. to gain influence with the Pakistani polity would be to confer some qualified acknowledgement of Pakistan's nuclear status vis-à-vis India because it would potentially take the relationship to a new, higher level and because International Atomic Energy Agency protocols would actually create more transparency and potential U.S. control over Pakistan's extant nuclear programs. Another step that would improve U.S.-Pakistan relations would be to change the Coalition Support Fund to a mutual security agreement. Also, until the continuous tension between India and Pakistan is resolved, the Pakistani military will never fully and genuinely adapt to counterinsurgency. It will not fight the Afghan Taliban or the Haqqani network in earnest while the Indian threat still looms or is perceived through Pakistani military cultural filters to be still looming. Even if India's hostile intent toward Pakistan subsides, a full nine Indian corps are still poised and oriented toward India's western border with Pakistan, with 35 of 38 strike airfields located along that same border.⁴⁷

The Durand Line is not capable of being sealed as a de facto border, and the Taliban will continue to use it to flee into Pakistan for sanctuary. Recognizing the line as the legitimate border would influence stability and some notion of normalcy in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to Marty Stanton, a Pakistan expert at the Centcom Pakistan-Afghanistan Center of Excellence, a rapproche-

⁴⁶ Gregory, telephone interviews, 23 January and 9 February 2010.

⁴⁷ Nawaz, telephone interview, 21 January 2010.

ment between the governments in Kabul and Islamabad is an important part of stabilizing both countries. Both governments should formally accept the Durand Line as the official border. In this view, Afghanistan should formulate and sign a nonaggression treaty with Pakistan and formally pledge to limit Indian activities in Afghanistan. Inside Afghanistan, the government should allow the people in the provinces to elect their own provincial governors in order to allow the Pashtun populations to genuinely govern themselves to some degree. Afghanistan should return to the pre-1973 model and methods that worked, with an emphasis on local governance rather than the emphasis on an overly centralized and presidentially empowered government it has pursued since this form of government was codified by the Bonn Process between 2001 and 2004.⁴⁸

Changing Pakistani strategic and military culture will take time, especially considering that India still poses a discernible threat. America, on the other hand, never rates more than 20 percent favorable support among the Pakistani population in most polls. In information operations, the United States and Pakistan need to get much better at trumpeting the successful actions of Coalition forces, U.S. forces, and the Pakistani government. One message that would resonate with Pakistani public perceptions would be to spotlight and amplify when the Taliban have or are preparing to attack schools and other soft targets where civilians, women, and children are likely to congregate. As lamentable as the Pakistani educational system is, Pakistanis still value education for their children very much. Both the Pakistani and the Afghan Taliban's armed propaganda attacks have targeted schools for destruction and singled out teachers for death. When the Taliban on either side of the Durand Line perpetrate atrocities that result in the arbitrary and unjust killings of innocent women and children, this presents a vulnerability that both Pakistan and its U.S. benefactors should, but have yet to, fully exploit in the information war. As other examples of violations of acceptable norms of conduct and war, in 2011 some Taliban-linked militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan began to either kidnap or recruit children suicide bombers as young as 10 years

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Martin Stanton, interview, U.S. Centcom Headquarters, Tampa, FL, 16 December 2009. Retired U.S. Army Colonel Stanton is a Pakistan specialist with years of experience in the region. He is currently the deputy of the Centcom Pakistan-Afghanistan Center of Excellence.

old, and in Afghanistan, the insurgents also began to target and shoot at medical evacuation helicopters.⁴⁹

In terms of public diplomacy, the U.S. government tends to focus too much on trying to directly reduce anti-American perceptions. Instead, America would better help influence perceptions in Pakistan if it focused its public diplomacy on encouraging Pakistanis to “see cooperation against militancy and extremism as being in their own interest.” This would require American politicians as well as diplomats to “avoid framing the neo-Taliban insurgency in religious terms”; to adopt a narrative of common threats and common interests; and to amplify the draconian and drab realities of life under Taliban rule, in both the tribal areas and the settled areas. The U.S., according to one assessment, should also seek out opportunities to promote more dialogue with religious leaders to amplify the role of American aid and assistance in cultivating political and social stability. In this vein, instead of seeking out the typical Muslim leader whom the United States perceives to be moderate according to its standards of liberalism, America must find Muslim interlocutors who are both influential and moderate within “their own contexts.” The U.S. government could also better help Pakistan help its people in the tribal areas and influence perceptions by leading an expanded consortium of Pakistan’s partners and friends to optimize the development effort in the FATA. This consortium might help Pakistan integrate the civilian side of its government to better administer reform and development.⁵⁰

The challenge lies in the reality that the United States perceives itself to have too little leverage over Pakistani policy and behavior. This is a result of a failure in imagination and of buying in to Pakistan’s eloquent, persistent, and dishonest narrative refrain. This is, indeed, untrue because the U.S. government actually has more latent leverage over Pakistan than the converse. However, when America applies pressure, Pakistan typically applies counterpressure to hold America and its Coalition partners hostage over flight permissions, intelligence cooperation, nuclear issues, and logistical routes through Pakistan. Another narrative is for the Pakistanis to threaten the United States

⁴⁹ Bergen, telephone interview, 14 January 2010.

⁵⁰ Joshua T. White, *Pakistan’s Islamist Frontier* (Arlington, VA: Center on Faith and International Affairs, 2008), 7–8. The direct quotations are from page 7.

about pushing them too hard because if the U.S. now believes that the Pakistanis are untrustworthy allies, just imagine what it would be like if they were our declared enemies, working deliberately against U.S. interests. Senior Pakistani military leaders have been observed openly mocking how well they duped the U.S. government during the Musharraf/Bush years. Essentially, the Pakistanis seem to do what they want and say what they need to. Pakistan will not or cannot do what is required in reeling in the madrassa problem. De-radicalizing the madrassas and providing better, and more objective, public education options would be a big step in the right direction. In pushing Pakistan to stabilize the border tribal areas, however, the U.S. should not push Pakistan over the precipice of failure and instability. The Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation is but one instrument for the United States to apply leverage with the object of modifying Pakistan's behavior. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Pakistanis genuinely loathe the implications of this legislation because it aims to circumscribe their duplicitous machinations by imposing conditions on the flow of aid dollars and arms transfer and support funds. Kerry-Lugar-Berman, codified as U.S. law, prescribes the following conditions for arms transfers for years 2010 through 2014, upon certification by the Secretary of State. Pakistan must:

- 1) Demonstrate a sustained commitment to and make significant efforts towards combating terrorist groups;
- 2) Cease support, including by any elements within the Pakistan military or its intelligence agency, to extremist and terrorist groups;
- 3) Prevent al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed from operating in the territory of Pakistan;
- 4) Close terrorist camps in the FATA; and
- 5) Dismantle terrorist bases of operations in other parts of the country.⁵¹

For India and Pakistan, only a strategic breakthrough of the

⁵¹ Gregory, telephone interviews, 23 January and 9 February 2010. For more insight on U.S. conditions, Pakistani noncompliance, and U.S. legislation, see C. Christine Fair, *Obama's New Af-Pak Strategy: Can "Clear, Hold, Build, Transfer" Work?* Afghanistan Papers No. 6. (Waterloo, Canada: Center for International Governance Innovation [CIGI], 2010), 17–19.

greatest magnitude will normalize relations. The United States must work in earnest through diplomacy and influence the regional actors to convince the Pakistani army that its corporate identity is not wedded exclusively to preparing for war with India or with fomenting insurgency and terrorism against Indian interests in the region. Pakistan's economic growth is in essence linked to India's rapid growth, whether the Pakistani elite is willing to recognize this or not. Pakistan cannot sustain military modernization without that economic growth. Moreover, increases in economic cooperation will increase shared economic interests while at the same time they will bring more prosperity to both Pakistan and India. There is an unhelpful paradox that characterizes the typically stalled negotiations between Pakistan and India: Pakistan withholds political concessions because it feels vulnerable, and India withholds economic concessions because Pakistan wants them. Normalizing relations with Iran would also be hugely helpful. Also helpful would be to enlist China to continue to engage more economically and diplomatically because Eurasian and South Asian long-term security and stability are in China's interests as well.⁵²

It should be exceedingly evident to both the U.S. and Pakistani leadership that the relationship needs to move beyond one of sporadic and short-term expediency and duplicity and to move forward toward something like an enduring strategic partnership, which is more permanent and steadfast in galvanizing trust on both sides. More than just consulting Pakistan on its grand strategic decisions, America should include Pakistan as a player in any regional arrangements for stabilizing South Asia. Pakistan, instead of waiting it out and hedging about the U.S. commitment in Afghanistan, would stand itself in better stead by actively engaging with NATO and the other essential regional players to forge a lasting strategic solution. One possible point of departure is to consider whether the ISI can play a useful and helpful role in bringing about a political settlement in Afghanistan. The crux of Pakistan's paranoia, though, compels it to see its immediate security interests served by expanding the influence and power of its Afghan Taliban proxies. The key in influencing and modifying Pakistan's behavior to be-

⁵² Coll, interview, 3 December 2009.

come more convergent with U.S. strategic imperatives in the region is to figure out what Pakistani desires and what it expects from the relationship in the long term. If the United States, India, and Afghanistan were to reconcile their expectations and address each other's grievances, might this not present some possibility of shaping and modifying the Pakistanis' perceptions and security calculations to a degree that they would willingly serve as a bridge for a peaceful solution between U.S./NATO and the Pashtuns?⁵³

Postscript

Ultimately, the U.S.-led Coalition and its Afghan partners cannot succeed against the Afghan Taliban insurgency without the willing and capable support of the Pakistani government, army, and public. This chapter and the previous one examined the efforts to counter insurgents and militants on both sides of the Durand Line during 2009–11. There is some good news in that both counterinsurgencies showed some discernible, though limited, improvements in building legitimacy, credibly employing force to protect the populations, and influencing perceptions to support their secular governments on the one hand and to oppose Islamist militancy on the other. Furthermore, operational momentum in the Afghanistan campaign by 2011 supported a more positive outlook for the prospects of stability and peace among the Pashtuns. In Afghanistan, Operation Together seemed to be a well-informed, well-planned, and well-executed test for counterinsurgency practices that the Coalition can hone and use as a benchmark for future operations in the Afghan Taliban heartland. Operation Moshtarak continues to secure and build security and governance along the Helmand River Valley at the time of this writing. Moreover, decisive operations in Regional Command South under the auspices of Operation Hamkari began in earnest during September 2010 and continued through 2011 to secure and build key areas in city of Kandahar and its environs. Partnered Afghan and Coalition security operations have wrested safe havens away from the Taliban in the districts of Zharey and Panjwa'i, which outlay Kandahar proper. In both central Helmand and the environs of Kandahar, combined forces have arrested and are increasingly re-

⁵³ Paris, *Prospects for Pakistan*, 9–10.

versing the momentum in favor of the Afghan government and the Coalition. These gains are still reversible, and although the results of the holding and building phases of Operation Hamkari await the 2012 fighting season to confirm their permanency, the final outcome of Operation Hamkari will be telling in that Kandahar and its environs represent the spiritual, philosophical, and physical epicenter of the principally Pashtun Taliban movement. Additionally, the fact that Pakistani authorities captured several senior Afghan Taliban commanders during early 2010 provided some degree of benefit in disrupting the Taliban's capacity to command and control, Pakistan's dubious intentions notwithstanding.

The stark reality is that the challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan are distinct but linked. If one fails, both may fail. Only successful and sustainable stability and security within the Pashtun Belt, on both sides of the Durand Line, can undermine the aims of the Taliban. What's more, it is imperative that the indigenous civilian and military leadership at all levels in both Pakistan and Afghanistan exhibit the will and develop the capacity to provide better and relatively less-corrupt administration to address the grievances and meet the expectations of their populations. The United States and its Western partners' capacity to leverage conditions to compel host-nation improvements are also circumscribed in both cases. In comparison, despite Karzai's obduracy, the United States has more leverage to influence the Afghan government, given the leaders, resources, and forces it has invested there after more than 10 years of war. Pakistan is the epicenter of local and global Islamist militancy and is the exponentially more complex part of the strategic problem. The progress in Pakistan has been more limited, and its arsenal of nuclear weapons combine with metastasizing and coalescing Islamist militant groups to augur worst-case outcomes of nightmarish magnitude for regional and transregional security. The limited number of U.S. troops in Pakistan and the U.S. perception that Pakistan has more leverage in the transactional bilateral relationship between the two states constrains America's ability to influence Pakistan's will and skill to counter its militants, as well as its capacity to act against the Afghan insurgents who benefit from sanctuary there. However flawed, in 2010–11, before the bin Laden raid in May 2011, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was

at one of the highest historical points in trust, cooperation, and comity since the war on terrorism began, one not likely to be manifested in the near future.

The fact is the “United States went into Afghanistan without a comprehensive plan for winning the war beyond the military ouster of the Taliban, or for the socio-economic rehabilitation of the country after decades of war.” Also, for the first several years, the U.S. was apparently uninformed and inattentive about what it needed to do to help Pakistan adapt itself to defeat its own blossoming insurgency. As a result, most of the Pakistanis’ operations and actions until 2009 took the form of half-measured punitive raids and unenforceable peace deals that helped stimulate an expansion of insurgency and terrorism in and around the tribal areas and the settled areas. Notwithstanding the historical truism that few counterinsurgencies succeed by tolerating massive insurgent external support and sanctuary, at one point Pakistan was transshipping 80 percent of the cargo and 40 percent of the fuel to be consumed by Coalition forces in Afghanistan, in addition to being a Taliban sanctuary. This fact imposed severe limitations on U.S. freedom of action for special operations forces inside Pakistan and presented a big point of counterleverage for the government of Pakistan vis-à-vis American demands to do more. A successful approach to pacifying the tribal areas will ultimately require much better joint cooperation between the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to move toward countering the Taliban, while also garnering the support of significant portions of those populations. The next chapter of this study will draw conclusions from these two distinct but linked wars and proffer policy implications that should be topical, and hopefully helpful, in thinking about future prospects and solutions in South Asia, and for the military in general.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Nawaz, *FATA—A Most Dangerous Place*, 10–11. Direct quote is from page 10.



6

THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE: ANARCHISTAN OR PERFIDISTAN?

The irony of history is inexorable.

—*Barbara W. Tuchman, The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*

The most remote place on earth has become the most dangerous.

—*Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “No Sign until the Burst of Fire”*

Ironically, the Soviet government ordered its armed forces to invade Afghanistan, but the Soviets, with a military culture that almost exclusively espoused orthodoxy and conventionality in their way of war, did not have the appropriate mindset or adaptability for success in counterinsurgency. Both the mountainous terrain and the enemy in Afghanistan were ideally suited for guerrilla warfare. There were no conventional “fronts” or “rears” to penetrate with massed advances of heavy armor forces. The Soviets faced an unorthodox, tenacious, and agile enemy. The insurgents were able to use guerrilla hit-and-run tactics to mitigate the Soviet forces’ superiority in combat systems. The contradiction of will and resilience, and the tolerance of pain, that inheres in the logic of irregular wars and counterinsurgency was also a determining factor in the Soviet failure in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union was willing to accept far fewer casualties than the mujahideen were willing to accept. In a counterinsurgency, the weaker side has two options—victory or death. The great power’s options, on the other hand, are victory or going home. Consequently, the goal of a quick and decisive victory for the Soviets quickly became unrealistic because the Afghan mujahideen fought a guerrilla war against the Soviets to protract the war and exhaust their will.¹

The U.S. war in Afghanistan differs from the Soviet war there because America is fighting against an enemy who attacked its homeland and who continues to threaten its citizens and its soil. However, one can surmise from the spotty efforts to counter militants on both

¹ Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya*, 33.

sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border until 2009, that these kinds of irregular wars against tribal warrior cultures are very difficult for militaries with deep-seated propensities toward high-intensity conventional wars. This factor was particularly salient in both cases. For most of the previous century, the U.S. military preferred the conventional paradigm and marginalized the unconventional model. The U.S. military's interpretation of its Vietnam War experience strengthened an enduring aversion to counterinsurgency and caused it to redouble its conventional efforts. The Gulf War perpetuated this miscomprehension about the kind of wars the United States would face and caused it to congratulate itself for "validating" the lessons of Vietnam. Even the debacle in Somalia could not shock the Pentagon out of its orthodoxy. For the decade between the Gulf War and the U.S. war in Afghanistan, the American defense establishment infatuated itself with a perceived technologically enabled revolution in military affairs for which America, because of its technological prowess, would be the principal beneficiary.

When this war began the Pakistani army was likewise almost exclusively trained, equipped, and organized to fight a high-intensity conventional war with India. In fact, the Pakistani army perceives its *raison d'être* and credibility as being inextricably wedded to defending the state of Pakistan against an invasion by its existential enemy, India. On numerous occasions, the Pakistani army has usurped what in a democracy should be the civilian supremacy of its state and rhetorically justified these usurpations with the rationale that only the army could run the state with sufficient efficacy to defend Pakistan from India. Pakistan has a large conventional army, but it is still a weak and less-developed country. Both the American military and the Pakistani military began the war with embedded institutional and structural propensities for conventional war. The United States retained these preferences for over a decade after its great Soviet nemesis collapsed, but Pakistan's existential and traditional nemesis still exists, in both capacity and intent. The Pakistani forces did adapt, but much less so and more inadequately than American forces did, because Pakistan has a weaker military in every way and because it is still predominantly focused on the Indian armed forces. The other irony is that Pakistan has still exhibited only a marginal capacity to counter militants in the tribal areas, while Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate

(ISI) and other elements, have historically proven adept at fomenting insurgency and terrorism in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Pakistan continues to play this double game, and the duplicity and perfidy engendered in its support of proxies have earned Pakistan the epithet *Perfidistan* from this author. It is a fair one, even if overstated.

Anarchistan is hyperbolic, but it is a more accurate moniker than *Perfidistan*. It is also a more justifiable appellation than *Yaghestan*, because the latter implies that Afghanistan is not governable while the former more correctly implies that Afghanistan has been without legitimate rulers during periods of its history. Afghanistan is governable in ways consistent with the Afghan people's expectations and societal norms. The near century of relatively continuous and stable rule that preceded the beginning of unrest attending Zahir Shah's overthrow in 1973 testifies to the fact that it is not impossible to govern Afghanistan. It is also true that the Pashtun tribal areas that abut and overlap the Durand Line represent remote, austere, and inhospitable areas; these regions also currently pose the biggest danger to stability in South Asia and to the security of Europe and the United States. This is because it is in these sanctuaries that al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, the Haqqani network, and other Islamists cooperate, coalesce, recruit, train, plan, equip, and rest for insurgent and terrorist actions against Afghans, Pakistanis, Indians, Coalition forces, and citizens in Europe and America. Fully countering the insurgencies on both sides of the border will reduce and deny the areas as sanctuary to these groups. To do that, Pakistani and Afghan civilian agencies and security forces need to improve legitimate governance and protect the populations to win the war of influence and perceptions. The next sections distill the previous analyses expounded in this book.

The Pursuit of Evil: 2001–2009

Evil can only triumph when good men remain silent.²

—Edmund Burke

Al-Qaeda embodies an evil that is not banal but is innovative and ruthless, absent any compunctions or constraints in terms of

² This was originally an Edmund Burke quote that has been paraphrased and distilled over time. Burke originally conveyed this idea in a speech to Parliament titled "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontent," on 23 April 1770. The original wording is, "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle."

killing, even massacring, innocent civilians. In terms of prosecuting violent attacks against civilians, al-Qaeda proved on 11 September 2001 that its designs had no limits because its leaders and plotters were capable of imagining the unimaginable in horrific terms. The U.S. response was to pursue this organization and its associated malefactors with the help of Pakistan and other partners. The desire to exact vengeance was the catalyst for action against al-Qaeda's core leaders and their Taliban hosts, but the consequences and responsibilities of that action were not thought through within any grand strategic context or in view of long-term ends for either Afghanistan or Pakistan. The consequences of this hubris were actions and methods that also engendered the killing—inadvertent or not—of innocent men, women, and children as a result of an over-reliance on airpower and firepower in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While all accidents are not avoidable, killing too many innocents while pursuing the enemy nonetheless creates perceptions among the Pashtun population of unjust and malign intentions on the part of America and its Pakistani partners. A misunderstanding of the Pashtun tribal areas; a lack of leadership and doctrine for counterinsurgency; a tendency to focus on hunting and killing terrorists on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border; too few forces equipped for full-measure counterinsurgency; and a reliance on firepower platforms designed for war on the plains of Germany and in the Indus Valley of the Punjab, all of these contributed to civilian casualties that either catalyzed or revived the support for and participation in the metastasizing Islamist insurgencies in Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2004 to 2007.

Legitimacy

This section recapitulates those grievances of the Afghan and Pakistani people that helped catalyze the insurgencies from 2002 forward. It also reviews what the Afghan government and security forces did or did not do to ameliorate or exacerbate those grievances. From the government and the Coalition, the Afghan people expected security, justice, public accountability, and schools for their children. However, there was no strategy for stabilizing the country after the fall of the Taliban. Out of expediency, the U.S.-

led Coalition employed warlords and militias to compensate for a failure in strategy and a dearth of resources. Warlord predations resumed anew, as many of these characters began again to exploit and disaffect the people. Close associates of these warlords began appearing in the provincial administrations. Alliances with warlords undermined the perception of legitimacy and impaired the functionality of government institutions. The composition and activities of the Afghan Military Forces, which were principally non-Pashtun and led by warlords, also aggravated Pashtuns inside and outside of the Taliban. The neo-Taliban drew support from these Pashtun grievances. They also appealed to the populace's desire for security, order, and justice in response to inept, corrupt, or exploitative provincial governments. Many of these factors persuaded local leaders and tribal elders to side with the insurgents for the time being. This increased the perception of legitimacy for the jihad causes in Afghanistan and Iraq, resulting in greater support for the insurgency. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq also added impetus for Afghans to wage jihad against America.

In Pakistan, the most important points of grievance among the population and the insurgents were the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan; Pakistan's abandonment of the Taliban and embrace of the United States in the war on terror; and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Other factors that helped catalyze the insurgency were the exodus of al-Qaeda and former Taliban from Afghanistan to Pakistan's tribal areas after their defeat, and the victory of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal in the Pakistani parliamentary elections during 2002. These two factors stimulated popular support for the Islamist insurgencies in mutually reinforcing ways. In the tribal areas of Pakistan specifically, the unprecedented appearance of Pakistani army forces and the continued exclusion of Pashtuns from the mainstream political system were key grievances. Moreover, the Pakistani army's heavy-handed employment of its forces in the tribal areas, and the U.S. reliance on drone strikes there, also exacerbated the people's grievances and stimulated more support for the insurgents and militants in some instances.

The final catalyst for an insurgency aimed at the Pakistani state was the government's assault on the Red Mosque in July 2007. It is also important to note that by 2001 radical Islam was deeply in-

terwoven into most of Pakistan's public and private school curricula as a result of former Pakistani general-cum-dictator Zia's Islamist politics, as well as by his successors' continuance of his policies. This influence made the Pakistani public more amenable to support the Taliban. So, when Pakistan pledged that it was siding with the United States in the war in Afghanistan, this represented a security policy that some among its government elites, and among the Pakistani population, viewed as inimical to Pakistan's security interests. Last, Pakistan's cooperation with the United States must be examined within the context of deep-seated anti-Americanism. By the fall of 2001, Pakistan's polity and public were anti-American as a result of both general American policy omissions after the Soviet-Afghan War and specific Pakistani xenophobic perspectives inculcated from its educational curricula.

Force

This portion reviews the leadership, doctrine, and organization for countering insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also distills how efforts proceeded in both cases. In 2001, the American military's leadership, organization, and doctrine were prepared for conventional war against similarly organized adversaries. In Afghanistan, the U.S. government and military, along with their partners, helped catalyze the insurgency by employing too few of the wrong kinds of forces encumbered by unwieldy and disjointed command arrangements. An overreliance on airpower and direct-action lethal raids both derived from and compounded the fact that there were too few of the wrong kind of forces because the killing of the wrong Afghans—civilians and women, for example—tended to generate more recruits for the reviving insurgency. It was a military that had absorbed almost none of the lessons it should have learned from countering insurgencies in Vietnam and earlier conflicts. From Vietnam and other counterinsurgency experiences, the U.S. military should have learned the imperative in counterinsurgency for a command and control structure that was capable of unifying and integrating indigenous and allied military forces, paramilitary organizations, and other agencies. Lessons from Vietnam pointed to the necessity of establishing unity of command to ensure

the effectiveness of military operations and advisory activities.

That experience also suggested that an organization similar to the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) would have been the best way to organize advisors and reconstruction. The U.S. government and military that went into Afghanistan also had no on-the-shelf organization, capability, or corps of advisors who were ready to train and equip indigenous armies on a massive scale. Likewise, the U.S. leaders who commanded in Afghanistan during the first years of the resurgent insurgency generally deployed with little knowledge of counterinsurgency. They were compelled to adapt in contact with the insurgents because the reality that sound counterinsurgency was founded on clearing, holding, and building the populated areas did not emerge from the dustbin of expurgated lessons in U.S. Department of Defense doctrine until 2005 and 2006. This extemporaneous approach for stabilizing Afghanistan sought to rely on the least expensive investments that its senior leaders could conceive of, ones that principally focused on the military instrument and punitive displays of lethal force. This approach animated a host of adversaries and created conditions that helped catalyze the neo-Taliban. What it did not do very well was produce stability.

Between 2002 and 2009, the Taliban in Pakistan, in collusion with al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups, slowly began to impose their extreme Islamist way of life on the people in the tribal areas. Among the reasons for this were the lack of governance, a paucity of resources for development and services, and no notion of credible government-provided security and justice. The way in which the Pakistani security forces operated in the tribal areas further undermined their efforts in achieving the public support and legitimacy required to sustain those actions. The reasons for this were fourfold. First, the Pakistani security forces lacked the capacity to clear and hold areas while winning the support of the local population. This is related directly to Islamabad's reluctance to espouse counterinsurgency, both operationally and doctrinally. As a result, the Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas precipitated the serious displacement and destruction of local populations and property. Second, while the Pakistani army has been increasingly more willing to prosecute operations against militant groups it views as

a threat to Pakistan, the army has been reluctant until now to carry out operations against the Afghan Taliban. This deliberate policy of supporting the ostensibly “good” militants has stressed Pakistan’s society and military and endangered the state because its surrogates have turned against it on occasion. Third, domestic political considerations shaped army decisions because the army continued to moderate its actions in view of retaining its traditional popularity. Until 2009, a large number of Pakistan citizens were leery of operations targeting fellow citizens. Some Pakistanis even impugned the government for attacking fellow Pakistanis on behalf of Washington. Fourth, during 2001–9, military and civilian institutions in Pakistan proved unable to integrate political, economic, and social development and improvements with their military operations. Until the spring of 2009, the Pakistanis were unwilling or unable to hold areas after they cleared them because they had no civil-military plans and no civil-military capacity for implementing any plans.

Information Operations

This section reviews how well the insurgents and counterinsurgents in both cases integrated information operations and security operations up until 2009 to persuade the relevant populations of the legitimacy of their enterprises and actions. The truth is that it is more difficult and costly for the counterinsurgent to maintain legitimacy and order than it is for insurgents to undermine order and legitimacy. From the outset, the Taliban messages portrayed the Coalition as infidel foreign invaders trying to impose their Christian democratic ways. When Western security forces initiated lethal operations that inadvertently result in alleged civilian casualties, the Taliban were often quicker to initiate media messages that distorted the actual consequences. The neo-Taliban adapted and embraced media and information operations much more so than the original movement. Emulating al-Qaeda’s successes with information warfare, the Taliban began to heavily rely on media as a powerful instrument in waging armed propaganda. The number of Coalition-induced “civilian casualties” became an important target for the Taliban’s information operations. The Taliban also began to

attack Coalition forces from populated areas to bait them into conducting air strikes, which would inevitably kill civilians.

The Taliban's focus on civilian casualties in their media operations has brought them four readily discernible advantages: a decrease in popular support and perceived government legitimacy; an increase in guerrilla recruits; impediments to Coalition lethal military action when excessive civilian casualties, or a series of civilian casualty incidents, have precipitated operational pauses because of angry reactions by the Afghan government or ordinary Afghans; and an increase in negative pressure on the public in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. The Afghan Taliban have also proven ruthlessly adept at using armed propaganda for psychological effect, among which suicide attacks have become a key and powerful component of their strategy to erode the Coalition's will. Suicide bombings were unprecedented in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War but have been trending upward ever since their introduction in 2003. The Afghan Taliban has also expanded their affiliations with a wider array of foreign and indigenous jihad movements who reside in Pakistan's tribal areas. They are now as inclined as other Muslim militants to raise their concerns for the plight of other jihads worldwide. In contrast, information operations and strategic communication were not the strong suits of the U.S. government and the U.S. military when this war began. For all his flaws, the former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld even recognized during the first five years of the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan that the enemies of the United States were better at influence and media operations than the U.S. government was.

The Islamist doctrine that animates the Pakistani Taliban relies on a fertile field of deep-seated Islamist xenophobia and illiteracy. The six-decade-long imperfect and inconsistent relationship between the United States and Pakistan has contributed to the current situation. The U.S. deliberately pursued a policy of allying with despots and supporting the unrequited proliferation of Islamist ideology to animate a holy war against the Soviets. As alluded to earlier in this book, General Zia al-Haq had the full support of the United States in fomenting jihad against the Soviet occupation, and his zeal, Islamist leanings, and instrumental conflation of politics

with Islam have had the most lasting and pernicious effects on the proliferation of Islamist militancy in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Central Intelligence Agency Director William J. Casey and Texas Congressman Charles N. “Charlie” Wilson knowingly supported the Afghan mujahideen’s holy war against the Soviets, but they did not foresee the long-term consequences of that rather shortsighted approach. Over three decades later, the Coalition has been fighting for over 10 years in an effort to reverse this conspicuous display of an American strategic attention deficit in terms of South Asia and Pakistan. This was exceptionally ill-conceived, and the consequences are manifest in the Pashtun Belt where a deep and wide anti-Americanism, predating September 2001, influenced the public’s receptivity to both Pakistan’s and America’s efforts to influence it by words and actions. The U.S. government also did not excel in information operations because it did not dedicate any persistent public diplomacy programs to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The public in Pakistan is always highly suspect of U.S. activities in the country, and actions such as the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 served to increase the Pakistani public’s mistrust of the United States. Likewise, while America’s drone program has been effective in disrupting Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, it has not been an effective tool for improving U.S. and Pakistani influence over the tribal populations because a number of innocent civilian deaths collateral to the drone strikes have made their popularity questionable and exploitable by anti-U.S. factions in the media.

The Pakistani army’s sledgehammer approach to pacification was also counterproductive in a war to influence perceptions. Pakistan’s schools, both secular and sectarian, have also served to bend the conceptions of generations of Pakistanis and Pashtuns toward the superiority of conservative Sunni Islam over all other sects and religions. The Deobandi madrassas proselytize puritanical Salafist Islamist doctrine and receive funding principally from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and other Sunni contributors. Three distinct but similar strands of Islamist creed converge and create relatively complementary ideological effects in Pakistan’s and Afghanistan’s border areas. These are the Wahhabist propensities, which stem from longstanding Saudi influence and funding; the Deobandist influence

that emerged in nineteenth-century India but is somewhat similar to the Wahhabist doctrine and has tangential links to the Arabian Peninsula; and the Salafist, or purist, approach to the fundamentals of early Islam that connects both. Pakistan's public education may have been more significant than the madrassas as a source of militants. The subjective chauvinism and Islamicization of Pakistan's public education policy present wider challenges for information operations in the context of current security challenges. Lastly, the Pakistani Taliban's armed propaganda and information narrative is more extreme still than their Afghan brothers' armed violence and intimidation. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP; also referred to as the Pakistani Taliban) and the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) have targeted health workers for assassination, and their Islamist agenda is also misogynistic, targeting women for separation in word and deed. In other words, the Draconian and cruel worldview imposed by the Taliban discriminates against women and greatly curtails their individual rights. This agenda prescribes how women dress, proscribes work for them, and proscribes their going to school in the worst instances. The Taliban's media narrative also frequently impugned the Islamabad regime for being allied to "infidels," which allowed the Taliban to justify to their roles in violent attacks against civilian officials.

The Pursuit of Peace: 2009–2011

The new administration in Washington would do well to remember who its true enemies are, while not trying to wage war against an entire people who over 2,500 years of recorded history have always defied conquest.

—*Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan*

There is reason for qualified optimism about operations in the Pashtun Belt as of the end of 2011. It seems that civilian and military leaders on both sides of the problem recognize the salience of the above quote. The effort will not succeed as a result of killing too many of the wrong Pashtuns because according to the logic of counterinsurgency arithmetic in the Pashtun Belt, this produces an exponential increase in insurgent recruits. The true enemies are the absence of an education that is not distorted by Islamist dogma and the fickle nature of South Asian political and security machinations.

The Indian and Pakistani security dilemma and Kashmir are the real impediments to stability. However, three significant improvements occurred that make the 2009–11 time period stand out from the first eight or so years in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The first one is twofold: the U.S. leadership has recognized that the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be won because of the grave threat engendered by al-Qaeda, and that the best way to go about this is a complementary approach to counterinsurgency that protects the population, improves administration, and wins the perception of the people. Second, it seems possible, but not certain, that portions of the Pakistani leadership and population have experienced a shift in perception, seeing the Pakistani Taliban as a more genuine threat to the state and its citizens. As a consequence, 2009–11 witnessed more willingness in Pakistan to go after the TTP and TNSM, as both militant groups are now viewed as posing more of a threat to Pakistan itself. There is little empirical evidence yet that the Pakistanis are willing to help defeat the Afghan Taliban, although February of 2010 saw Pakistanis arrest senior Afghan Taliban in a number unprecedented since the beginning of the war. Third, the U.S. leadership has finally acknowledged that the efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be complementary and that the essence, the hub of the threat, emanates from Pakistan's border areas.

Legitimacy

The grievances of much of the Afghan population now relate to a gap between what people expect from the government and the security forces and what they experience and perceive as corrupt governance, insecurity, and continued poverty. The general population is also not enamored of the Taliban's extreme rule or its ideology. Efforts to build and sustain legitimacy now manifest discernible, if incomplete, improvements after years of parsimony on the part of the U.S. government in terms of emphasis, resources, and forces. Karzai's government has struggled with perceived legitimacy because of the endemic corruption, his associations with warlords, and the ostensibly fraudulent August 2009 presidential election. His association with the non-Muslim, Western-dominated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is also an exploitable vulnerability in terms of legitimacy.

The difference in 2009–11 is that the senior U.S. civilian and military leaders understood that efforts in Afghanistan will not meet with success in the end if the Afghan people do not believe in their government. The current campaign plan is fully partnered with Afghans and civilian agencies. Its logic focuses on mobilizing the Afghans against the Taliban by providing security, justice, and some acceptable notion of representation at the local level. ISAF, ISAF Joint Command, the embassies, and the international community are working better together to address Afghan grievances that may contribute to support for the insurgents and to manage Afghan expectations in terms of balancing local governance and requirements with national governance requirements. The following programs are but a few of the many efforts to mobilize the population to push out Taliban control and influence. From late 2009 through 2011, U.S. civilian and military organizations in Afghanistan underwent a change of ambassadors, a reorganization of the American embassy, three changes in military commanders, a reassessment of military strategy, and two major force increases as directed by the president. Of these, first General McChrystal's—then General Petraeus's and General Allen's—effective leadership, the National Solidarity Program (NSP), and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) are three things that positively influence legitimacy and work to undermine the Taliban, and they will be discussed below.

From the moment the new leadership team arrived at ISAF headquarters in June 2009, it began to make changes in how Coalition forces operated. The newly issued commander's intent and subsequently issued counterinsurgency guidance and tactical directives revealed a better understanding of the best-practice counterinsurgency fundamentals and the centrality of the indigenous population to success. This initial guidance in the summer of 2009 directed ISAF forces to protect and partner with the Afghan people because ISAF was fighting for, and not against, the population. The guidance also emphasized the belief that success would ultimately depend on the effective partnering with the Afghan government and its security forces to help build good governance as well as unity of purpose in the conduct of both lethal and nonlethal operations. Likewise, subsequent strategic communication emanating from the ISAF leadership explicitly noted the mismatch between expecta-

tions and experience. The first tranche of tactical directives, guidance, and orders all emphasized the imperative to protect the population, build credible and capable governance, and support international and Afghan development efforts. General Petraeus's 1 August 2010 counterinsurgency guidance and subsequent campaign adjustments also emphasized population protection and security as essential components.

The NSP provides another good practice for building the legitimacy of the Afghan government in the minds of the rural population. The NSP facilitates elections to establish community development councils and builds the capacities of these councils and community members (both men and women). The councils identify priority subprojects, prepare community development plans, and implement approved subprojects.

The third enterprise that will potentially increase both legitimacy and security in rural area is the ALP initiative, which the Afghan government fully endorsed in August 2010. This program emerged earlier under the monikers of the Afghan Public Protection Program and the Local Defense Initiative. The ALP holds more promise as the Coalition Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) has designed a broader, deeper, and more aggressive plan to implement this initiative. Operation Moshtarak (Together)—although somewhat imperfect in concept and slow because it focused on a determined enemy deeply ensconced in its Central Helmand River Valley safe havens—has and will continue to ultimately prove and disprove principles and practices for future counterinsurgency efforts in the Pashtun Belt for 2012 and beyond. In fact, the planning, preparation, and execution of Operation Hamkari (Cooperation) for Kandahar has benefited from the lessons derived from Moshtarak. The purpose of Operation Moshtarak was as much about shaping the perceptions of the people as it was about militarily defeating the Taliban. Before the operation began, U.S. officials even took some polls aimed at gaining an understanding of what the local populace wanted; how they saw local security conditions; how they perceived Americans and the Taliban; and what measures would build their confidence in the Kabul government. The answers helped inform the planning and execution of the operation.

It is also true that Americans are now less popular in Pakistan than the Indians. This alone highlights how difficult it remains to mollify grievances and build support in Pakistan for its government and military forces to better counter their insurgents. The good news is most of the population supports and respects the army as a credible institution. Nevertheless, a large number of Pakistani youths do not have confidence in their government. Many of their grievances stem from a broken education system and few jobs. This does not augur favorably for a populous country with a youth bulge. More disquieting, religious educational institutions garner the second highest scores for public support while the Pakistani government ranks the lowest. The U.S.-Pakistan relationship compounds the challenges Islamabad faces in earning the support of its citizens. Many view America as forcing unrealistic requirements on Pakistan. In addition, the Pakistani civil service bureaucracy must radically reform or it will not possibly earn the public's confidence. By the beginning of 2009, the TTP had begun to establish parallel hierarchies of authority and justice by performing administrative and police functions in the tribal areas. There now also seems to be an emerging consensus among the South Asia experts and the populations of the FATA that the government might help reverse the lack of perceived legitimacy by making the FATA a province. The people in the FATA want to be part of the political mainstream. The crisis of legitimacy in the FATA is also associated with the dearth of local tribal leaders because the TTP has deliberately killed off hundreds of them.³

The effectiveness and popularity of unmanned aerial platform strikes in the tribal areas have also provoked much debate and controversy. However, sources previously cited in this book have explained that over half of the FATA population supports these strikes, although they oppose punitive operations by the Pakistani army because the latter are more destructive. The exceptions would of course include the population of Damodola, which has been the recipient of excessive punitive assaults backed by attack helicopter gunships as well as repeated drone attacks. Since May 2009, there

³ See Benazir Democracy Institute, *Mainstreaming FATA*, 4-5, for the results of the summer and fall 2008 conferences with tribal elders and leaders from the FATA who declared they want the region to be normalized.

has also been a shift in public support for Pakistani military operations against the TTP because the Taliban's harsh policies began to alienate the people. One particularly disturbing event, the TTP's flogging of a young woman in 2009, catalyzed the people to oppose the Taliban's rule and to support army actions against them. Public support for fighting the TTP, however, does not translate into any increase in support for the United States. During the 2009–11 time period, most Pakistanis still considered the U.S. as the enemy while only a small percentage viewed the America as a partner. However, one positive development in the tribal areas for building some popular support is the Office of Transition Initiatives, clearly a best practice for building a political and development foothold. This program merits consideration for benchmarking in other areas in Pakistan, and even in Afghanistan, where it is also ongoing.

Force

The reality is that large parts of the U.S. military—leaders, organizations, and doctrine—had adapted in large measure to best practice counterinsurgency by the winter of 2008–9. In parallel, professional study and doctrine changed to reflect a greater emphasis on counterinsurgency. The problem in Afghanistan in the winter of 2008–9 still stemmed from a dearth of resources like Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; cumbersome command and control; and the absence of a coherent operational campaign that resourced, prioritized, and sequenced the above in the right time and space. Special operations forces were still “hammering nails,” sometimes killing the wrong people because the few forces attempting counterinsurgency were too few to clear, to hold, or to persist. What's more, U.S. military doctrine now equally weighs counterinsurgency equally with conventional operations. Most of the general officers serving on ISAF and ISAF Joint Command staff from mid-2009 through 2011, including the senior commanders, had served multiple tours in Iraq or Afghanistan, and had years of experience countering both insurgents and terrorists. Most, if not all, of the one-star general officers and brigade and battalion commanders in 2009–11 were also seasoned in this type of war. Smart leaders, with years of study and experience in counterinsurgency, tend to be better than those schooled and experienced only or almost exclusively

in conventional warfare. The new approach manifest in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2011, to be certain, exhibited many positive improvements in implementing the enduring tenets of counterinsurgency. The significant increases in civilian and military personnel were very helpful in reversing momentum at the operational level in Afghanistan. What was as important up until the end of 2011 was the rationale underpinning the campaign and unity of command.

The logic and intent behind the counterinsurgency, and how forces pursued it, were what really distinguished late 2009 through 2011 from early 2009 and before. The U.S. embassy and the ISAF Coalition correctly emphasized integrating civilian and military actions to protect the population to win the war of perceptions. Leaders at all levels understood that changing perceptions required changing how the Coalition forces operated. Well-grounded and intent-driven command and execution also characterized the positive developments in how civilians and military personnel cooperated in Afghanistan. The ISAF command team's written and verbal intent continued to stress full partnering with indigenous security forces. Efforts to build a credible and effective Afghan National Army far surpassed attempts to do the same with the Afghan National Police. The objectives for the Afghan army were to be able to conduct joint operations with Coalition forces and to increase its capacity to conduct effective counterinsurgent operations with little to no Coalition assistance.

The decisive operations for 2010 and 2011—Operations Moshtarak in Marjah and Operation Hamkari for Kandahar—represented the most significant examples of the shift to traditional counterinsurgency as part of the new strategy. They also represent the most aggressive attempts at combined action among U.S., NATO, Afghan National Security Force, and interagency personnel to clear and hold witnessed in Afghanistan since the war began on 7 October 2001. Other notable improvements in Afghanistan from mid-2009 through 2011 included the establishment of the three-star ISAF Joint Command to command and control at the operational level, allowing the ISAF commander to shape the strategic level while leaving day-to-day operations to the three-star joint commander. To this end, the U.S. government, along with indigenous and Coalition partners, established an executive working group for

deputy-level, civilian-military senior policy and decision making; a provincial integrated team to integrate and coordinate the international provincial-level leaders; and district support teams, which combined civilian and military planning and activities in the assigned district.

The Pakistani forces have in fact shown some improvements, however limited, in how they conduct operations against insurgents. Pakistani civilian and military leaders still confront the very real dilemma of needing to be prepared to defend against their existential nemesis, India, and preparing for other operations against militants in the tribal areas. The security development program has essentially provided relatively few years of genuine effort to train and equip the Pakistani Frontier Corps forces so far. Plus, the ire and acrimony engendered in the Pakistan senior leaders in 2011, from the bin Laden raid in May and from the border incident that killed about 24 Pakistanis at the end of November, bode poorly for this effort. It is unlikely that the Pakistani military will adopt the term “counterinsurgency” or adapt much more to what it insists on calling “low-intensity conflict operations.” During the fall 2009 Pakistani offensive into South Waziristan, most of the TTP fled from South Waziristan south to Baluchistan, and the Pakistani army will not likely fight the Taliban in Baluchistan because of the Afghan Taliban presence there. Nor is it probable that the Pakistani army will venture into North Waziristan because of Haqqani’s influence there. Haqqani remains a useful instrument and hedge for assuaging Pakistan’s doubts over the current and future character of the Afghan regime. In the duplicitous context of Pakistan security policy and behavior, it is in the interests of the ISI to support Haqqani, Hekmatyar, and the Afghan Taliban because the Pakistan security practitioners do not perceive these elements as posing direct threats to Islamabad.

Though the Pakistani army has made some changes, its preference and focus remains the conventional fight against India rather than the one against internal militants. Pakistan and its army did prove during 2009–11 that they were more willing and able to fight militants who challenged the authority of the state. During the Pakistani army’s conduct of operations in Bajaur and Swat during 2009, both army forces and Frontier Corps units demonstrated improve-

ments in clearing territory and integrating their operations with local tribes. When the Pakistani army advanced against the Taliban in South Waziristan in October 2009, this operation represented its largest military operation ever in either the FATA or what was then known as the North-West Frontier Province. But because of the lack of transparency for operations in the FATA, it was not possible for outside sources to confirm the actual outcome. Both the army and the TTP seemed to overstate their achievements. The army did telegraph the operation for months, and since there was little empirical proof of much combat, it is likely that most of the TTP slipped away to fight another day. The military is holding those areas it cleared in South Waziristan though.

For the Pakistani forces, there will be no dramatic and genuinely full-measure embrace of counterinsurgency, at least as currently conceived by the U.S. military. Despite this, the Frontier Corps has become a more competent local force, and it remains the best choice for building a genuine, but limited, capacity for counterinsurgency. It is also a good sign that General Kayani is, for now, committed to improving the army's subordination and servitude to the civilian leadership of the government, notwithstanding all the imperfections of President Asif Zardari's regime. It is also possible, but not verifiable, that the Pakistani leadership may now recognize that it may not be prudent to make too much distinction between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban because there has been some collusion among them in ways that are inimical to Pakistan. The unvarnished truth about Pakistan, though, is that its national security apparatchiks have discovered over many decades how to best leverage their bad decisions, dysfunctions, grievances, and perceived existential threats to extract from the U.S. government the military and financial assistance that they think they need to prepare for war against India. In this vein, Islamabad also continues to use the tribal areas for training surrogate groups for operations in India and Afghanistan. The ISI, to be sure, still conspires with militant groups who are linked to the Taliban and the Haqqani network.

Information Operations

This last section reviews the capacity to integrate action with ideas in both Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2009 through 2011.

In Afghanistan, it has become clear that the senior Coalition and American leadership understood that persuading the people, and not killing them indiscriminately, will decide the outcome. It is also clear that even though trends are positive in the war of perceptions, there is still considerable room for improvement. It is evident that the ISAF leadership's knowledge and understanding about the information environment has increased manifold from previous years. Forces in Afghanistan have changed the way they operate and gotten better at persuading the Afghan people that the ISAF is there to protect them. The senior Coalition commanders have cautioned their forces against potentially self-defeating actions associated with large-scale conventional military operations designed to capture or kill insurgents because of the heightened risk of causing collateral damage or civilian casualties. For their part, the Afghan Taliban continues to use propaganda messages to emphasize their temporal advantage over the troop-contributing Western polities in a protracted war. The Taliban are convinced that they have the moral high ground as they are resisting foreign invaders. One of their strengths is the perception that a Taliban victory is inevitable because the foreigners will tire of the cost and effort, and ultimately depart. Moreover, the Taliban has supported its propaganda with action by establishing relatively effective shadow governments, particularly in the southern provinces. The fact that the Taliban had, before 2010, previously maintained freedom of action and movement over largely uncontested swathes of southern Afghanistan also reinforced the perception of strength, control, and inevitable victory.

But the actions that most reinforce the Taliban's antifoigner narrative, and the ones that galvanize both Islamist and Pashtun alike against the Coalition, are air strikes that kill civilians. For the Taliban, an actual or perceived instance of Coalition forces inflicting civilian casualties is doubly helpful because it undermines the legitimacy of the ISAF effort and the Afghan government without damaging the Taliban's image. The ISAF command's series of tactical directives, as well as the counterinsurgency guidance issued in August 2009 and August 2010, were clearly designed to widely propagate and inculcate an intent and mindset focused on protecting the population and reducing civilian casualties. Indeed, the sec-

ond six months of 2009 through 2011 did witness less reliance on airpower or heavy firepower. Second to airpower as catalysts for alienating the population were night raids against illegitimate targets, or even raids against legitimate targets that the Taliban influenced the people to perceive as illegitimate. However, during 2010 the ISAF leadership went a step further, issuing a directive to circumscribe night raids for these very reasons. The period from 2009 through 2011 also witnessed a markedly improved capacity in Afghan partner forces to assume the lead on many night raids. In 2009–11 there were two potential best practice innovations. One was the Government Media and Information Center (GMIC), which increases the Afghan public's access to timely, accurate, and credible information. The other initiative was the establishment of the ISAF Joint Command Information Dominance Center and the Regional Commands' similar but variegated centers that manage the collection and use of unclassified and classified information to better prosecute the war. These centers include civilian experts from the interagency and Coalition experts that collect, study, analyze, and store open source and classified information on a host of critical subjects germane to mobilizing the population against the insurgents. The areas that these centers analyze range from the insurgent network, criminal patronage networks, good and bad government influences, and the effects of development spending. These information centers are the regional hubs for clearing and maintaining all relevant open source information and knowledge about local conditions, expectations, and grievances, among other things. The GMIC and the Presidential Information Center that emerged concurrently with the former were partly in response to the requirement to manage the informational effects of night raids and consequence management.

In addition to winning the war for the Pakistani public's perceptions, information operations in Pakistan also include how well America's actions support its messages to influence the ruling civilian and military elites to act in concert toward common interests in the region. There has been a persistent perception in the minds of Pakistan's ruling oligarchy that America's traditional strategic attention deficit disorder will precipitate an ill-advised, premature withdrawal from Afghanistan, leaving Pakistan to resolve the im-

broglio again. For the Pashtun people in the tribal areas, the Pakistani armed forces will be better able to favorably influence people's perceptions by operating in ways that help protect and better serve the nonmilitant portions of those populations. In addition to operating and propagating a consistent Pakistani military display of moral rectitude, information operations must effectively spotlight and amplify the dreadful and evil acts that the Taliban inflict on their fellow Pashtuns. The Pakistani army did, however, implement some improvements (if imperfect) in how it operated and treated civilian noncombatants during their 2009–11 operations in FATA.

For example, during operations in Swat during the spring of 2009, a favorable innovation was the deliberate mass displacement of the civilian population before the offensive to reduce civilian casualties and better target the militants. Moreover, after clearing the area of insurgents, the Pakistani military cooperated with civilian officials to resettle the internally displaced persons, to reestablish some notion of civilian administration, and to attempt some rebuilding of the local economy. The Pakistani armed forces did also attempt psychological operations to counter Taliban propaganda in South Waziristan. But the effectiveness of this, with leaflets printed in Urdu instead of Pashto or Waziri, was doubtful. There is now some growing anecdotal evidence that demonstrates that some Pakistanis in the more central provinces, Punjab for example, at least rhetorically oppose the U.S. drone war. The Pakistani elite media in Islamabad and other urban areas regularly condemn the drone strikes, and even Pakistani leaders vociferously decry the strikes in public. However, this may be attributable to anti-Americanism among the Pakistani elite and media, who are inclined to opine against the strikes. It is not at all clear or certain that most people residing in the FATA necessarily see or perceive the drone strikes as violations of their sovereignty, or as actions that are unambiguously inimical or anathema to their long-term stability and security. In fact, when the drones kill foreign Arab fighters or tyrannical local Taliban who are imposing an unwanted way of life by force, then there is reason to believe the people in those locales see the lethal strikes favorably. However, local support for drone strikes and general anti-American attitudes are not mutually exclusive.

What is not evident thus far is any deliberate effort by the gov-

ernment of Pakistan to overhaul the still heavily xenophobic public educational curricula. This continues to play no small role in influencing the public's perception of Pakistan and Islam, as well as how it views enemies, neighbors and nominal "partners." Similarly, it will be equally important for the government to aggressively regulate and curb the propagation of dogma by the numerous Deobandi madrassas operating throughout the tribal areas. The Taliban has also employed persuasion, coercion, and armed propaganda more effectively than the government in the tribal areas. Their propaganda has emphasized the villainy of the United States in the perpetration of drone strikes. The Taliban in Pakistan have also attacked newsstands and assassinated journalists for writing articles expressing unfavorable views about their movement. They have likewise prosecuted an armed propaganda and coercion campaign focused on intimidating or eliminating Pashtun tribal leaders and ordinary Pashtun tribesmen. Aside from the Taliban propaganda and violence, there is one other crucial caveat. There are many more dangerous Islamist groups in Pakistan, both with and without state support, that have had a lasting influence on security and ideology. If the TTP insurgency were to wither away next week, radical Islamist dogma and militancy would continue to metastasize unless good education and relatively good governance emerge for the Pakistani people. The Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), for example, espouses an ideology and aspirations no less Islamist and violent than those espoused by al-Qaeda.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Learning from experience is a faculty almost never practiced.

—*Barbara Tuchman, The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*

Efforts to build and sustain legitimacy have witnessed a marked improvement in Afghanistan and a marginal improvement in Pakistan since 2009. The new civilian and military leaders in Afghanistan in 2009–11 have demonstrated in their policy, strategy, and operations that they understand that meeting the expectations of the population will be essential in garnering and sustaining support against the Taliban. The U.S. embassy and the ISAF Coalition have redoubled their efforts to provide governance and security in areas of southern

Afghanistan that had heretofore been forfeited to the Taliban insurgents and their shadow governments. The caveat emptor is that President Karzai displays a tolerance for a relatively unacceptable level of corruption in his government. Karzai has not proven malleable to U.S. and Coalition advice and pressure to reduce corruption and increase transparency. Moreover, including a reputed thug such as Muhammad Fahim in the executive branch of government as his deputy sends the signal that Karzai is still associating with questionable people. ISAF must leverage the gravitas embodied by the unprecedented Coalition leadership, resources, and momentum to compel Karzai to comply with conditions to reduce corruption and gradually wean out the more disreputable members of his administration to make room for an up and coming professional class.

Pakistan is equally corrupt. Moreover, a huge expectation gap exists in the minds of the population in the FATA because they want the good governance, security, schools, and services that Pakistan has heretofore been unwilling and unable to provide. All empirical evidence, such as the Benazir Democracy Institute's *Mainstreaming FATA* study, suggests that making the FATA a province or subsuming it within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (with the concomitant rights and privileges associated with mainstream political normalcy) would be one small step toward meeting some of the expectations of the Pashtun population there. Corollary to this would be a deliberate move on the part of the Pakistani government to rescind the Frontier Crimes Regulations. However, in order to do this, Pakistan must expand its civil administration capacity and reform its civil service bureaucracy to make it relatively less corrupt and relatively more effective at providing administration. Bringing a venal and inept administration to the FATA would only exacerbate the extant grievances among the populations that now exist. But Pakistan has proven reluctant to do this even though the conference on mainstreaming the FATA with the tribal leaders in 2008 showed this is what the people there wanted. The United States and its partners must get smarter and tougher in using incentives and disincentives to persuade Pakistan to improve and expand how it governs. The government, at some point in the future, must also make the effort to reform public and private education and curricula. To be sure, this book has amplified that fixing the massive education problems carry exceedingly im-

portant implications for influencing perceptions in directions favorable to the state.

The most discernible improvements in both Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2009–11 were manifest in the leadership and the conduct of operations against insurgents and militants. Here also, positive changes in Afghanistan seemed to surpass those in Pakistan. Compared to the previous eight years of neglect and muddling through, ISAF exhibited a sea change in leadership, perspective, and execution of that complex counterinsurgency endeavor. The ISAF command team in 2009–11 comprised the first string of general officer counterinsurgency practitioners, with years of experience and study of this kind of war. These officers have exhibited an appreciation for the challenges associated with pacifying the Pashtuns in southern and eastern Afghanistan. What's more, the ISAF leadership has provided a strategic vision and commander's intent that were disseminated at every level to the forces arrayed in theater; both of these stress the imperative to prosecute the fundamentals of best-practice counterinsurgency by protecting and administering the population in ways that help close the expectation gaps between what the people want and need and what the host-nation government and security forces deliver. Moreover, the U.S. embassy and ISAF have issued strategic assessments that stipulate the necessities and modalities for unity of command and integration of the civilian and military components of the effort. The executive working group is an improvement, but less-than-optimal civilian-military integration still precludes unity of effort across provinces and districts. Benchmarking the lessons of CORDS to establish a three-star equivalent civilian deputy to the ISAF commander would help improve unity of purpose, aims, and actions; moreover, it would better prepare the whole enterprise in Afghanistan for transition to an ultimate U.S. embassy lead, with a remaining formidable advisory element. The Taliban sanctuary across the Durand Line still engenders a significant obstacle to successful counterinsurgency, and this problem still heavily relies on Pakistan for a solution.

Very few counterinsurgencies throughout history have met with success when the insurgents have benefited from unimpeded sanctuary and external support. From 2001–11, the FATA, parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (or North-West Frontier Province, as it was known until 2010), and parts of Baluchistan have continued to

serve as havens for the succor, reconstitution, regeneration, and coalescence of the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, al-Qaeda, foreign fighters, and other Islamist militant groups. Many of these groups operated and colluded under the aegis and support of the ISI because Pakistan's military dictatorship and security oligarchy continued to perform in ways inimical to the interests of their nominal U.S. partners. However, as this present study has revealed, there is some reason for being more sanguine, albeit in a qualified way, given the apparently possible shift in Pakistan's willingness to counter the Pakistani Taliban since May 2009 and because of its unprecedented, and still inexplicable, arrest of several Afghan Taliban senior leaders in Pakistan beginning in February 2010. The Pakistani armed forces have not recognized or adapted to traditional counterinsurgency, but they have shown some marginal improvements in conducting low-intensity conflict in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and in South Waziristan during 2009–11. During operations in Swat, the Pakistani army experimented with evacuating civilians in ways that minimized civilian casualties. In South Waziristan, it was holding areas it cleared in the winter even if its capacity to build still fell short because of a dearth of civilian capacity. Pakistan's arrest of senior Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives may have represented a net good in disrupting enemy infrastructure even if the likely intentions that underpinned those arrests may have been duplicitous in nature. While it does seem that the Pakistani leaders' and public's perceptions of the TTP have shifted, it is not likely that Pakistan will exhibit the genuine will and skill to stabilize the tribal areas until it perceives the mix of Islamist groups in the FATA to be a greater threat than India. Short of that, the United States needs to get increasingly smarter and tougher in how it leverages aid to Pakistan to compel improvements to the Frontier Corps via the Security Development Program. The following paragraphs address the influencing of perceptions among the populations in Afghanistan and Pakistan in directions favorable to the efforts of the United States and its Coalition partners.

The period from summer 2009 to early 2011 also witnessed progress in the war of perceptions. Though there remain considerable areas for improvement, the approach by ISAF in Afghanistan since 2009 has been to more aptly integrate actions with ideas to influence the perceptions of the Pashtuns and to convince them that the Afghan

government and the Coalition are pursuing goals that align with the best interests of the people. Ever since the war in Afghanistan began, airpower-inflicted civilian casualties and special operations night raids have had a significantly deleterious influence on the population's perception. Years of internecine warfare and death, coupled with Pashtun sensitivities about justice and honor, have meant that unjust killings have created support for the Taliban insurgency. From 2009 to 2011, counterinsurgency guidance, tactical directives, and intent unambiguously conveyed to all forces operating in Afghanistan that being more judicious about limiting air strikes was an absolute imperative in the war of perceptions. In addition, in early 2010, ISAF established more stringent rules that circumscribed the widely abhorred practice of night raids into Pashtun homes. While many of the precisely planned and well-informed raids did effectively disrupt Taliban leadership, the few that went awry due to friction or faulty intelligence greatly aggravated Pashtun perceptions of honor, justice, and the sanctity of home. Circumscribing air strikes and night raids, long in coming, is already reaping discernible benefits in influencing the population. Moreover, the innovative GMIC and Regional Stability Operations Information Centers now exist to improve the accuracy and speed of media messages. This will now allow the Coalition and the Afghan government to better amplify the misdeeds of the Taliban and to expend less effort apologizing for raids gone wrong. Likewise, General Petraeus's August 2010 guidance for counterinsurgency continued with an emphasis on protecting the population and rooting out poor governance and practices as they have been identified as catalysts for the insurgency.

The Pakistani population's perception of the Pakistani military and its efforts to counter the Pakistani Taliban in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and in South Waziristan improved beginning in late spring 2009. Conversely, popular sympathy for the Pakistani Taliban (TTP and TNSM) militants diminished significantly in spring 2009. The Pakistani Taliban's flogging of a young woman and their advance to within 60 miles of Islamabad, along with the recognition of those groups as expansionist threats to the state, precipitated a shift in public support for army operations against those insurgents. However, the United States is not favorably perceived within Pakistan. Very few Pakistanis see America as a genuine part-

ner, and, more problematically, many perceive America as an enemy. The fact that America is less popular in Pakistan than India is an achievement of extraordinary magnitude. Part of the explanation is found in the fact that six decades of real and perceived short-sighted unreliability on the part of the U.S. have contributed to Pakistani anti-Americanism. This may also partially account for why Pakistan's leaders have hedged their bets against a premature U.S. departure by supporting the Quetta Shura, the Haqqani network, and other armed groups.⁴

Notwithstanding the above, popular anti-Americanism also stems from the scope to which Islamist radicalism and xenophobic notions imbue the population as a result of both public education curricula and madrassa curricula tainted with a radical Islamist bent. The other massively important perception that the United States and regional players must learn how to better influence is Pakistan's perception of India as its gravest existential threat. A solution for Kashmir, which is the sine qua non for any enduring rapprochement between India and Pakistan, is beyond the scope of this work, but it is something astute regional experts must study for the long view. To be sure, the key regional players—Pakistan, India, China, Russia, and others—have interests and roles that play a huge part in any long view, and in any ultimate solution. America must also start taking a long-view to its relationship with Pakistan and break from its past pattern of short-sighted expedients, which heretofore witnessed the backing of despots and the unrequited support of the mujahideen. The latter ultimately metamorphosed into the Islamist militants the United States is fighting today, partly as a result of ill-conceived and inconsistent U.S. policies in the past. The abysmal “education” system in Pakistan must ultimately become an enemy of militancy rather than a source of it. Resolving that huge problem is beyond the scope of this study, but persistent and measured U.S. support of civilian control of the Pakistani military, as well as efforts to help its armed forces in improving their effectiveness in countering militants, can only help create more stability over time. Once the Pakistani state is out of imminent danger, perhaps the U.S. government and other partners can find some long-

⁴ The TNSM predated the TTP but from about 2008 onward was subsumed under the TTP umbrella. The TNSM name still exists but is more typically referred to as the TTP or Swat Taliban by geographical purview.

term approaches—ones that make sense in Pakistan—to help reduce the Islamist dogma and xenophobia that currently plague its schools and madrassas. Last, although it is not possible to interpret the Pakistani rationale for its arrests of some key Afghan Taliban leaders in Pakistan during the winter of 2009–10, it is possible that the Pakistani leaders' perceptions of the American commitment to Afghanistan was changing, ever so incrementally. They may have begun to perceive that America and its partners intend to stay and succeed.

In another vein, this study strongly recommends that America and its partners try to discern, benchmark, replication, and preserve best practices discovered in Afghanistan and Pakistan for dissemination in both countries, as well as for potential use in other current and future contingencies that require the effective development of security institutions, administration, reconstruction, and information operations. This conclusion does not argue for more wars like Iraq and Afghanistan. It simply implores U.S. military institutions to better study and better absorb the knowledge and experiences gained in these wars, much of which was regained by discovery because of the military's propensity to forget or expunge lessons of other foregone counterinsurgencies. Until now, the U.S. government and its military have proven lamentably unable to understand or retain the lessons from previous counterinsurgencies, those from Vietnam and before. The military can adopt these best practices to improve the effectiveness of current operations and to implement the indirect approach to countering insurgency and terrorist militancy, which the United States will increasingly be required to carry out in places like Africa. Furthermore, until summer 2009, there were too many instances where leaders and forces in different parts of Afghanistan and Iraq were successfully experimenting with better counterinsurgency practices, yet no one was identifying these practices for emulation in other provinces or theaters. It is much wiser to learn from the experiences of others than to discover how to do counterinsurgency by filling body bags. The latter is a sign of colossal incompetence.

For building legitimacy, the NSP and the Office of Transition Initiatives have demonstrated the potential for replication elsewhere. Likewise, with a few caveats, the Village Stability Operations (VSO) and ALP initiatives are unambiguous best practices in the employ-

ment of indigenous elements for community defense. Although General Petraeus has referred to ALP as a “game changer,” this may be overstated. As its resources and finite number of A Teams allow, CFSOCC-A is undertaking VSO and ALP and replicating this fruitful effort across parts Afghanistan where it makes sense. ALP is a powerfully helpful variable and corollary in the overarching counterinsurgency campaign, but it is not a “game changer” in and of itself. The cessation of Pakistani sanctuary and support for the Afghan Taliban would be a game changer. Nonetheless, VSO and ALP certainly warrant consideration for parts of Pakistan’s tribal areas.

Also, although it is not an ideal counterinsurgency practice, the Pakistani army’s experiments with displacing large numbers of civilians before it advanced into Swat and South Waziristan might again be put to good use there and elsewhere. Given that winning the war of perceptions is essential to success, and considering how poorly the United States and the Coalition were at information operations when the war began, it is important to take note of the GMIC as a practice worthy of studying and adopting in other similar circumstances. Moreover, building indigenous military and police capacity is paramount in bringing counterinsurgencies to successful conclusions and ultimately to seeing the United States exit the region, with only advisory groups remaining in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In fact, there was a conspicuous and problematic dearth of knowledge, expertise, and organization for advisors and advising units in the U.S. military when this war began. The initial efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq witnessed serious missteps and restarts for several years. Since then, the former Multi-National Security and Training Command–Iraq and the Combined Security and Training Command–Afghanistan did undergo significant improvements in how they are organized and how they approach the recruitment, training, education, and advising of indigenous leaders, soldiers, and police. It is imperative to glean and retain these practices and organizational structures, to replicate and scale them for other train-and-equip requirements. Given the world we have, it would be a prudent idea to create scalable on-the-shelf regional security and training commands for the other geographic combatant command regions and subregions. Somalia is as complex as Pakistan’s tribal areas are in its insurgency, terrorism, and governance

challenges. It would seem that some of the best practices noted here might be put to good use there.

As the leaders of the U.S. military, the officer corps must do more thinking and innovating when it comes to the future of war, and it must overcome its general apathy toward history, various foreign cultures, and scholarly study as well as erudition. Thinking informed by a deep appreciation of military history and innovation must become the reality and not just the bumper sticker of the day. Until 2004, American military culture exhibited an unambiguous preference for conventional warfare—combined arms maneuvers, mobile armor and airmobile formations, and massing “effects” while relying on technological superiority. What’s more, most of the potential or real adversaries of the United States also knew this as a possible weak spot, as evidenced as early as the debacle in Somalia during October 1993. It is also the rationale for how al-Qaeda envisioned it would fight this global war against the U.S. and how the terrorists would lure the United States into a protracted war of attrition and exhaustion by inducing an overreaction—a Soviet-like invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. (A corollary purpose of the attack on the World Trade Center was to draw America into a protracted guerrilla war in Asia, in Afghanistan.) Notwithstanding that the initial invasion and success in toppling the Taliban and forcing the flight of al-Qaeda was not the outcome that bin Laden had sought, the U.S. invasion of Iraq—and the several subsequent years of exhausting counterinsurgency in Iraq, with an unfinished and temporarily forgotten war in Afghanistan—must have appeared quite fortuitous to the likes of al-Qaeda. It also explains why Saddam Hussein established an effort to train his intelligence and Special Republican Guard cadre in guerrilla techniques in late 2002, in anticipation of the then-imminent U.S. invasion. Industrial and preindustrial tribal and warrior cultures who are resilient and cunning will continue to fight U.S. forces by employing irregular and unorthodox methods while exploiting complex terrain to undercut any American technological superiority. Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan have not convinced our current and future enemies otherwise.⁵

⁵ See Bergen, *The Longest War*; Riedel, *The Search for al Qaeda*; and many others for al-Qaeda’s intended modus operandi to weaken and exhaust America.



7

OPERATIONAL COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN UNTIL 2011

I reject the myth that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires,
. . . Afghans have never seen you as occupiers.

—*Afghan Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Wardak*

We are not asking for victory by December or July 2011. What
we are asking is that by December, we have enough evidence to
demonstrate that our approach is headed in the right direction.

—*American Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates*

The two quotes above capture two realities of the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan. On the one hand, within the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command (IJC), the notion that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires is wholly rejected. The U.S. and Coalition forces are not the Soviets or the Victorian British, and the Afghans do not perceive their effort in that light. On the other hand, however, the second quote unambiguously conveys the reality that time is ticking away. November 2010, the day after Thanksgiving to be precise, marked when the duration of the current war in Afghanistan exceeded the duration of the Soviet-Afghan War, which lasted nine years and 50 days. Those now serving in IJC specifically, and those serving in Afghanistan generally, do face pressing constraints in terms of finite time, finite political will, and finite resources. The impetus is building to accelerate the pace and rate.¹

Not coincidentally, the impetus to accelerate Coalition efforts to help Afghans stabilize and secure their country converges with an unprecedented degree of progress in a more coherent operational plan, better leadership, improved command and control structures, the most seasoned counterinsurgency forces in remembered his-

The reflections contained in this chapter stem from the author's service with and for the commander of the ISAF Joint Command, Army LtGen David M. Rodriguez, and his senior staff. These insights derive from collaborations and briefings conducted with and for LtGen Rodriguez; LtCol Edward Ledford, USA; and the senior staff at ISAF Joint Command.

¹ Peter Bergen, "Winning the Good War," *Washington Monthly*, July/August 2009, 50.

tory, and a capacity to contest the Taliban in its historical areas of strength in order to reverse the war's momentum. The reality on the ground is that the United States and its allies have redoubled and accelerated their efforts to neutralize the Taliban leadership and capacity inside Afghanistan in the key areas where the Coalition did concentrate its forces and resources in undertaking a comprehensive counterinsurgency. These efforts are building security through partnered Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) operations, helping improve sufficient governance, and creating development opportunities.

In 2011 the Coalition and its Afghan partners were implementing the most coherent approach that the war in Afghanistan had seen since 7 October 2001. The creation of IJC itself has improved command and control, unity of effort, and integrated civilian-military actions and activities to an extraordinary degree. There is now one coherent counterinsurgency campaign to protect the many and to kill or capture core enemy leaders. This should not be misconstrued as nation building, but it does signify a concerted effort that sees counterinsurgency focused on a circumscribed number of key population areas, complemented by precise, direct lethal action to rupture the Taliban leadership and its support infrastructure.

One War—Comprehensive Counterinsurgency

Importantly, there is finally one war that fully combines counterinsurgency to protect the preponderance of the people coupled with special operations to counter terrorists and Taliban leadership infrastructure by killing or capturing the few hard-core militants who will never give up. For the decisive operation of 2011, focused on Kandahar and Helmand in the south, Coalition forces discernibly shifted the momentum and were on the verge of putting the enemy between the horns of a dilemma. Soon, the Taliban will face two choices: either be killed or reintegrate into society with the government and people of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, however, Taliban insurgents do still have a third option. They can still opt to flee to Pakistan and wait there, gathering strength and resources to fight another day in the future. This is partly attributable to the fact that Pakistan is not as committed as the United States is to bringing enduring stability and security in Afghanistan because

the Pakistanis do not necessarily share U.S. interests and goals in the region. The sanctuary and support from which the Afghan Taliban benefit in Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas do indeed help fuel the insurgency in Afghanistan in terms of succor, safe haven, arms, and materiel. The cross-border sanctuary poses one of the single biggest strategic risks to the efforts of Afghan forces and the NATO Coalition to create durable security and stability. The capacity for insurgents to regenerate across the border in Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas presents a grave impediment to making Afghanistan stable enough to secure itself and to preclude the return of al-Qaeda to use parts of Afghanistan as sanctuary in the future. State and nonstate passive and active support to the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan is prolonging this war, making it one of attrition and erosion. Conversely, convincing or compelling the Pakistanis to do more to help reduce sanctuaries there would accelerate the prospects for success and truncate the war.

In addition to the Taliban and their supporters, there are three other enemies of the Afghans that constitute sources of grievances that drive wedges between the Afghan government and the people to catalyze support for the insurgency. First, a number of venal and corrupt leaders in official Afghan government positions erode the people's trust and alienate the population through their improper practices. Second, criminal patronage networks (power brokers) operating inside, outside, or between official government channels and Afghan society have thrived on the unevenly managed influx of aid money and the previously imbalanced approach to help establish security, governance, and development. This past lack of balance engendered by the international community's efforts has fueled criminal patronage networks. Last, bad past international community practices have compounded or created grievances that have alienated the populace in two ways. First of all, the U.S. and Coalition security efforts for the first several years were inadequately thought through and exceedingly parsimonious in terms of forces. The consequences of this stinginess and blitheness saw too few forces relying on airpower and warlords, which caused excessive civilian casualties and alienated the population. In addition, international donors did not fully understand the economic conditions on the ground; did not meter the influx of aid dollars, fair

prices, or fair salaries at the local level; and inadvertently undermined traditional tribal leaders. These factors also helped alienate the populace and, to be certain, contributed to the growth of criminal patronage groups.

Marginalizing or removing enemies of the Afghan people such as these patronage groups will remove grievances that catalyze the insurgency and help better shape Afghan governance from the district-level on up; it will also promote building Afghan security force capacity to accelerate momentum toward the ultimate and shared goal—a durably independent and stable Afghanistan. This will create conditions for thinning and ultimately withdrawing portions of U.S. and NATO combat forces over time. To help make Afghanistan stable enough to withstand present and future challenges, IJC planning and operations have focused on protecting and securing the Afghans from all enemies that aggrieve them. Through lethal and nonlethal operations in 2011, for example, the operational command has emphasized best-practice counterinsurgency fundamentals to improve human security and protect the people's freedom to pursue routine daily activities without intimidation or disruption by the Taliban. In 2011, the campaign also combined direct lethal operations to take insurgent leaders out of the fight as an integral corollary to a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign designed to turn the people against the Taliban. The IJC and the Regional Commands are also pursuing governance development adapted within the Afghan context to connect the people to more benign and credible governance from the bottom up, district by district and province by province. The Coalition does this by cultivating and partnering closely with better leaders and tailoring the approach to governance development to address the grievances and meet the needs of the people. The current plan focuses on steadily building capacity over time to change the people's perception of their government from one of fear and uncertainty to one of trust and confidence. Last, the Coalition is implementing counterinsurgency contracting guidelines and collaborating with both the international community and a myriad of anticorruption task forces to marginalize criminal patronage groups and to bring prices and salaries under control, that is, adapted to local conditions. All of these efforts together, in the end, will connect the Afghans with

their government and their security forces to make their country stable enough, relative to its Central and South Asian neighbors. Most important, a stable Afghanistan will pose an enduringly inhospitable place for the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the future.

The Role of the ISAF Joint Command and the Afghanistan Campaign

The years 2009–11 witnessed innovation, progress, and challenges, but mostly positive momentum for the IJC. The headquarters assumed command and control as the operational-level command for the effort in Afghanistan in late 2009. As a result of a recommendation by Joint Forces Command–Brunssum, members of the troop-contributing countries fully activated the IJC on 12 November 2009. The IJC combined joint headquarters is located on the north side of the Kabul International Airport and comprises more than 1,100 personnel.

IJC headquarters exercises command and control over six individual Regional Commands, more than 350 forward operating bases, and four major medical centers within the Combined Joint Operations Area in Afghanistan. The IJC terms of reference has it overseeing the day-to-day operations of most of the Coalition forces in Afghanistan. The command's responsibility for the operational-level roles and functions in theater affords the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander, a U.S. Army four-star general, the opportunity to focus his command staff at the strategic and regional level in Afghanistan and South Asia.

Providing operational coherence between ISAF at the strategic level and the Regional Commands at the tactical levels, IJC orchestrates focused comprehensive counterinsurgency operations, helps build the capacity and professionalism of the ANSF through embedded partnering, and supports the training and expansion of better governance and economic development opportunities to connect governance and security to the needs of Afghans down to the district level.

The Coalition effort has made big strides in partnering with the ANSF and other organizations to prosecute complementary counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, the ANSF are achieving noticeable gains in capacity and professionalism and are increasingly

assuming the lead for mission planning and for executing operations throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area in Afghanistan. The capacity of IJC to add operational-level logic through more coherent planning, sequencing, and prioritizing of forces and resources has contributed to the reality that the tactical formations in the key regions have gained momentum in contesting areas formerly ceded to the Taliban while at the same time these forces have arrested the Taliban momentum in many key areas in the Pashtun Belt. The effort in Afghanistan is, in fact, seeing discernible signs of steady progress.

The security in key areas of Afghanistan has been a top priority for the ISAF/IJC campaign and has been the focus of Coalition forces operating under the command of IJC for the past two years. In Kabul, with the establishment of 25 Afghan National Police checkpoints, highly visible and legitimate security measures are evident throughout the city. In Helmand Province, Coalition forces, the Afghan National Army, and the Afghan National Police worked together to remove improvised explosive devices from Helmand's second largest town, Gereshk. This successful operation, dubbed Operation Omid Sey (Hope Three), essentially cleared improvised explosives devices at a rate of one per hour. The increased security evident in key terrain districts such as Kabul and Helmand has allowed the people of Afghanistan to participate in activities that many people around the world take for granted, from development projects to government elections.

In September 2010, due to the capabilities of the ANSF, the people of Afghanistan participated in secure provincial elections and cast more than 4.3 million ballots. Of particular note, Marjah saw more than 400 locals casting ballots in six separate stations. This was significant because until the beginning of 2010, the Taliban dominated Marjah and the Central Helmand River Valley, which was essentially an insurgent safe haven where Taliban intimidation and opium driven criminality converged. In 2009, for example, it was not possible for any Afghans to cast votes in Marjah because the Taliban were deeply ensconced there. In addition to asserting their freedom to vote during the September 2010 parliamentary elections, local Afghans in the Central Helmand River Valley area were increasingly demonstrating their confidence in government-

provided security, and exercising their freedom to pursue routine daily activities, by attending the bazaars and attending schools. The people are beginning to turn away from the Taliban and are frequently making clear their willingness to support the Afghan government in promoting stability and security in Helmand and elsewhere around the country.

As the Afghan security forces continue to build capacity to provide durable security to the people of the Afghanistan, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will increasingly build on engineering and agricultural projects that will improve services and economic opportunities for the people and contribute to long-term stability. During 2010, the Musa Qal'ah District in Helmand Province saw its bazaar reopen after five years, and it now serves more than 500 shop owners. Other locations, Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province for instance, see Afghan women asserting their freedom, confidence, and initiative by performing acts such as reconstructing a nursing hostel. Another example of successful development is evident in the northern province of Balkh, where there is a \$165-million project to construct a 75-kilometer (46.6-mile) railroad line between Hairatan on the Uzbek border and the provincial capital of Mazar-e-Sharif. This project, pressing forward under the aegis of the Afghan Ministry of Public Works, will have a huge economic impact as almost half of Afghanistan's imports pass through Hairatan.

In essence, the IJC operational plan focuses on increasing the credibility and capacity of the Afghan government to sufficiently meet the expectations of the Afghan people in providing security, delivering essential services, supplying access to either traditional or informal—but predictable—justice, and nurturing development as a stimulus for economic livelihood. Through security initiatives, development projects, and the installation of more capable and benign government officials at the local level, the IJC combined team continues to help its Afghan partners. As the Afghan government and ISAF continuously assess the provinces where the transition to an Afghan lead might be ready to start next, based on bottom-up conditions from district to district and province to province, the IJC will plan and prepare to shift from a military-based stabilization effort to a predominately civilian-led effort capable of sustain-

ing long-term economic development across Afghanistan.

Every day, the IJC commander and staff continue to orchestrate the operational effort toward the aims of creating sufficiently durable and sustainable stability and security in Afghanistan, assisting the country to better govern and secure itself as a long-term strategic partner, and preventing al-Qaeda and its militant ilk from returning and from benefiting from sanctuary in the region. Coalition forces continue to engage in an extremely tough fight with a resilient enemy. However, thanks to the hard work and resolve of the men and women of the IJC and of all of their contributing partner civilian and military forces, Afghanistan will ultimately emerge from over three decades of war and turmoil as an independent and stable place.

A Grave Threat but Not a Graveyard

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the Pashtun Belt on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan genuinely constitute the epicenter for global jihad. If a huge bomb detonates in the United States tomorrow, it will likely have a postmark tracing it back to the Pashtun Belt astride the FATA. Thus, the most remote place on earth has indeed become the most dangerous. The Taliban Administered Tribal Areas is a more accurate epithet to describe these tribal areas. Most threat streams and strings lead back to the FATA in the context of Coalition enemies coordinating regional and global attacks. The reality is that Pakistan's tribal areas have supplanted Afghanistan as the essential place to inculcate al-Qaeda recruits for operations abroad and for support to al-Qaeda by those radicalized elsewhere. The tribal areas have become a safe harbor for local insurgents, global terrorists, drug smugglers, and perfidious state and nonstate actors to converge and collude. A host of foreign fighters also benefit from sanctuary afforded by the paucity of governance and security there. There is no location currently more favorable to al-Qaeda's leaders than this Pashtun populated border region. In fact, the area hosted the formation of both al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Osama bin Laden and his deputies have a unique 30-year history of collaboration with the Pashtun Islamist tribal networks located in the Pashtun Belt. The region is al-Qaeda's top sanctuary because the odds for success are better there than anywhere else.

More disquieting still, al-Qaeda and the Taliban have cooperated more closely since 2003. The menace emanating from the area requires an enduring strategic commitment to undermine it.²

Indeed, the terrorist and insurgent nexus in this sanctuary poses the single gravest threat of attack on the United States. Osama bin Laden himself recruited the leader of the 9/11 raid and all the muscle terrorists in Afghanistan. Since 9/11, when the group was displaced to Pakistan's tribal areas, al-Qaeda or its associates have struck across the globe—from London to Madrid, and from Algiers to Amman. The cases of Najibullah Zazi, David Headley, and Faisal Shahzad underscore the gravity of the threats radiating from Pakistan. Zazi, a Pashtun-American citizen, was apprehended by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in September 2009 for conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction because he was allegedly plotting an attack on the New York City subway system. In 2008, he had traveled to the Pashtun tribal areas inside Pakistan to receive weapons and explosives training. Headley, an American citizen whose father was a Pakistani, has been implicated as an alleged conspirator in the Mumbai terrorist attack of November 2008. He grew up in Pakistan but later anglicized his name and went undercover to spend several months in India, where he carried out reconnaissance for the subsequent assault perpetrated by Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. Moreover, U.S. authorities arrested Shahzad, an ethnic Pashtun, for the failed 1 May 2010 car-bombing attempt in Times Square. Authorities also suspected Shahzad of colluding with militants in the tribal areas.³

Analogies associated with the graveyard of empires, the Soviets in Afghanistan, and the Vietnam War are also specious. The Americans are neither the Soviets nor the British of the Victorian era. The Soviets defeated themselves by employing too few heavy mechanized forces fighting with methods suited for a large conventional war. The British muddled through with an incoherent approach to the Great Game. There are a host of reasons why Afghanistan is not Vietnam. The top three are these: the Viet Cong did not fly suicide

² Riedel, *The Search for al Qaeda*, 1–13, 122–23; Gregory and Revill, “The Role of the Pakistan Military,” 39–61; Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 339; Gregory, “Al Qaeda in Pakistan”; and Coll, “The Case for Humility in Afghanistan.”

³ Riedel, *The Search for al Qaeda*, 4–8, 10–12, and 122–25. See von Drehle and Gosh, “An Enemy within”; and Barrett and others, “For Terror Suspect, a Life of Contradictions.”

projectiles onto American soil and kill over 3,000 people; the United States has now foregone conscription and has a seasoned, all-volunteer counterinsurgency-capable force; and there are no North Vietnamese Army regiments poised to invade from across the Durand Line to fight with the Taliban against the Coalition in Afghanistan.

Nor do the Afghans perceive the American-led NATO effort as a predatory colonial occupation. After the Taliban's bloody flight from Afghanistan in 2001–2, most Afghans held high expectations for improved security and prosperity because the United States and its allies were the wealthiest countries in the world. The international community's collective shortcomings in foresight, imagination, planning, and resources led to a slow but colossal mismanagement of those people's expectations. A misread of the lessons from the Soviet-Afghan War also saw the United States opt for a small force that overrelied on airpower and warlord militias, while the effort was encumbered by convoluted chains of command and control. After almost eight years of muddling through, the Coalition in Afghanistan now has an unprecedented degree of superior leadership, forces, resources, and strategic insight. What it does not have is much time to show a reversal in momentum. Yet, despite these gains, al-Qaeda still benefits from sanctuary in the FATA, and regenerated insurgencies persistently contest lethality and legitimacy on both sides of the border.⁴

Final Thoughts

We're not going to suddenly leave, turn off the lights, and go home on that date [July 2011]. What will happen is, as we are training up more and more Afghan security forces, they're becoming more effective. We will transition so that they are starting to take over more responsibility for security, and slowly, the United States troop presence, as well as coalition troop presence, will diminish.

—U.S. President Barack Obama, *interview with BBC Persian TV*,
24 September 2010

During his December 2009 West Point speech, President Obama

⁴ For details on the real and perceived lessons from the Soviet-Afghan War, see Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya*, 18–20; Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 161–63; and Kulakov, "Lessons Learned from the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," 6–7.

explained what he wanted done in Afghanistan. As a result of a lengthy and deliberate strategy review, the president reiterated that the overarching goal was “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.” He then stipulated three corollary objectives to pursue that overarching goal in Afghanistan: to deny al-Qaeda safe haven; to reverse the Taliban’s momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government; and to strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan’s security forces and government so they can take the lead responsibility for Afghanistan’s future. The IJC leadership has been pursuing these objectives in earnest since the headquarters stood up in late 2009, and Afghanistan finally had the inputs, in terms of forces and resources, right in the fall of 2010. There is some reason to be sanguine, but not Pollyannaish, since the effort is beginning to see outputs in terms of arresting the Taliban’s momentum and reversing the momentum in key areas where Coalition forces were focusing their unprecedented strengths in command and troop strength to overmatch the enemy.⁵

By the late fall of 2010 and during 2011, there were notable signs of progress in a number of areas in the Central Helmand River Valley. For example, Nawah-ye Barakzai used to be a place deserted of ordinary Afghans, a place where drug traffickers and the Taliban were invested and where poppy was grown. That was until more than 1,000 Marines arrived in the area, disarmed improvised explosive devises, and killed or captured hardcore Taliban leaders. The Marines then began patrolling with their Afghan partners and putting counterinsurgency fundamentals into practice. Nawah is now an example of what best-practice counterinsurgency looks like in Afghanistan—a place with integrated security, governance, and development. Today, the indigenous tribal leaders are connected to the district and provincial government. Instead of 1,000 Marines, there are only 100 Marines near the city, and Afghan security forces—some locally recruited and trained—patrol the streets of Nawah.

⁵ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (speech, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, 1 December 2009), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

Likewise, since September 2010 the city of Kandahar and its environs have seen combined Afghan and Coalition security forces check the Taliban's momentum, beginning with the tactical Operation Dragon Strike, a component of the IJC's main effort (Operation Hamkari), which concentrated combined forces and resources to take away the Taliban's spiritual, physical, and historical epicenter inside Afghanistan. Operation Dragon Strike was the first major attempt since 2001 to regain control of a city that is the Taliban's spiritual center. The Coalition has learned and adapted from the strategic and information operations lessons from Marjah, where the initial hyperbole over Operation Moshtarak created the perception that the Marines overpromised and underdelivered. Influence and intelligence-driven shaping operations preceded Operation Hamkari for Kandahar, with all-out intelligence and engagement shaping operations beginning in the summer before the fighting for Panjwa'i and Zharey began in earnest. Lethal action also began in Arghandab District before the heavier actions for Panjwa'i and Zharey commenced in late September 2010. While positive signs of progress are manifest, no one will be certain that the operation has unambiguously reversed the Taliban momentum until 2012 when the fighting season returns and when IJC begins to shift the decisive operation from Regional Command South to Regional Command East. How well these gains hold in and around Kandahar will reveal the real conclusion there.

Operational-level planning, sequencing, and resourcing at IJC emphasizes connecting security and better governance to the Afghans from the bottom up, district by district and province by province, to the national government. The campaign concentrates on partnering relentlessly to improve Afghan security forces, putting them in the lead for planning and conducting security operations as soon as they are ready. The effort is focused on mobilizing the people to support the government and to eschew the Taliban's radical and merciless agenda by meeting the people's expectations and reversing the Taliban's momentum in actions and perceptions. In the end, the IJC operational approach aims to make Afghanistan stable enough to withstand challenges, preclude a Taliban takeover, and deny the country to al-Qaeda by neutralizing the insurgency and undermining the other enemies of the Afghan people who catalyze grievances that fuel the enemy.

Afghanistan is a complex and heterogeneous mélange of ethnic groups, tribal confederations, and geography. History reveals that Afghanistan is much easier to invade than it is to govern and secure. But, history also shows that Afghanistan can be governed and stably secured if it has governance and security that are adapted to its character. The IJC leadership, with its Afghan and Coalition partners, is prudently and resolutely trying to help the Afghans build durable security and stability for the long view, in order to preclude grave threats from striking the homelands of the United States and its partners ever again.

KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Afghan Local Police program, formerly the Local Defense Initiative (LDI)
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
CDC	Community Development Council
CDP	Community Development Plan
Centcom	U.S. Central Command
CFSOCC-A	Coalition Forces Special Operations Component Command–Afghanistan
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CORDS	Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (Vietnam)
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
fatwa	a decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader
FC	Frontier Corps
GMIC	Government Media and Information Center
Hezb-i-Islami	“Party of Islam”
Hizballah	“Party of God”; Lebanese radical Shia group
HuJI	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Islamic Movement Struggle)
HuM	Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (Movement of Holy Warriors)
IJC	International Security Assistance Force Joint Command
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (Pakistan)

JI	Jamaat-e-Islami (Society for Islam)
<i>jirga</i>	Afghan decision-making assembly
JUI	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Society for the Community of Islam)
LeT	Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (Army of the Faithful)
LIC	low intensity conflict
<i>malik</i>	Pashtun tribal leader
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (United Action Front), a conglomeration of six religious parties in Pakistan
MOI	Afghan Ministry of the Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSP	National Solidarity Program
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OPEC	Oil Producing and Exporting Countries
Pashtunwali	unwritten but widely practiced Pashtun code of values and precepts
PDPA	People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz
PPP	Pakistan People’s Party
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSYOPs	psychological operations
sharia	Islamic law based on the Koran
<i>shura</i>	Arabic for “council”
SOCCENT	U.S. Special Operations Command Central
TNSM	Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Sharia)
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan; also referred to as the “Pakistani Taliban”
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VSO	Village Stability Operations
<i>zakat</i>	Islamic charity tax

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PHOTO CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

Front Cover: Soldiers from Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, conduct an air assault into a village inside Jowlzak Valley, Parwan Province, Afghanistan, on 11 February 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Spec Scott Davis)

Chapter 1: U.S. Army soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team wait as bundles of fuel are dropped from a C-17 Globemaster III to Forward Operating Base Waza K'wah in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, on 30 January 2011. (U.S. Army photo)

Chapter 2: Spec Jeremy Burton, a U.S. Army armored crewman assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, keeps watch over the Arghandab River Valley, Afghanistan, on 31 January 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Spec Breanne Pye)

Chapter 3: In the city of Marjah, Afghanistan, U.S. Marines and Afghan National Army soldiers with Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, take cover behind a berm after receiving small arms fire on 13 February 2010. Marines were inserted into the city at night by helicopters as part of a large-scale offensive aimed at driving the Taliban from their last-known stronghold in Helmand Province. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

Chapter 4: A Lithuanian Provincial Reconstruction Team soldier patrols in Pasaband District in Afghanistan's Ghor Province on 5 February 2011. (U.S. Army photo)

Chapter 5: U.S. Marine LtCol Michael Geffroy observes as explosive ordnance disposal team members place unexploded ordnance in line to be destroyed at Cigini, Afghanistan, on 10 December 2010. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl Megan Sindelar)

Chapter 6: Afghan National Army SgtMaj Akhtar Muhammad takes questions from new recruits during Basic Warrior Training at Forward Operating Base Thunder, Afghanistan, on 22 January 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Capt Kenneth A. Stewart)

Chapter 7: U.S. Army Maj Trevor Nehls from Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul receives a turban from Barat Khan, the Shinkay District governor, in Shinkay District, Zabul Province, Afghanistan, on 6 January 2011. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSgt Brian Ferguson)

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W*ar, Will, and Warlords: Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001–2011* compares the reasons for and the responses to the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan since October 2001. Taliban insurgencies in both countries have grown in strength during this period, though the United States and its partners have dedicated significant amounts of time and effort to stabilize the region. Pakistan and Afghanistan represent the epicenter in this long war because machinations in these two countries led to the emergence of the first Taliban neo-emirate with Pakistan's support. The Taliban consequently harbored al-Qaeda before and during the September 2001 attacks on the United States. Al-Qaeda and affiliated armed groups now benefit from sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. The border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan—known as the Pashtun Belt—are inexorably linked to the future stability of South Asia and to the security of the United States. This book lies at the intersection of international security studies, military strategy, and the operational art of counterinsurgency and offers general policy and strategy prescriptions for bringing durable stability to this vital region.

“This work provides a clear, concise, and well-documented analysis of the complex cross-border counterinsurgency that is at the center of U.S. military operations in South-Central Asia. It provides a careful and insightful evaluation of U.S. and Pakistan counterinsurgency operations and recommendations about how to apply methods that have proven successful. Colonel Cassidy is a soldier-scholar whose keen strategic leader perspectives make this book essential reading for anyone interested in better understanding the challenges and opportunities that characterize the current and future struggle.”

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