

PART IV

U.S. RESPONSES TO THE GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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CHAPTER 24

TERRORISM, INSURGENCY, AND AFGHANISTAN

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Over the last decade, Afghanistan and terrorism have become synonymous in the eyes of many analysts and policymakers.¹ Afghanistan, of course, was the first campaign stop—Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)—of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and has since been viewed as a hotbed for global terrorists and *ihadists*. Strictly speaking, however, regional conditions—including bad governance, poverty, oppression, corruption, and radical Islamist movements—throughout Afghanistan and its neighbors are the primary source of terrorism in this country. This is not meant to suggest that Afghan groups, such as the Taliban, are not directly responsible for terrorism in Afghanistan. Rather, it is to suggest that the Taliban are encouraged, enabled, funded, and driven by foreign sources and interests and are outsourcing their logistics and suicide missions via regional networks. To view them merely as an indigenous Afghan movement is to ignore critical aspects of their organization, support, behavior, and actions—and the aforementioned conditions in South Asia.

Today, after 27 years of continuous war, Afghanistan is struggling. President Karzai's post-Taliban government is finding it extremely difficult to extend its control and mandate outside the capital of Kabul and into the country's vast impoverished hinterland. Several forces are undermining Karzai's efforts to build a truly national government with national control, including a rising tide of narcotics production now responsible for approximately 60 percent of the country's economy, and a resurgent Taliban—backed by al Qaeda—who are mounting an increasingly virulent insurgency in the east and south of the country. Although Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reported in May 2003 that the war on

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terror in Afghanistan was in a “cleanup” or “mop up” phase,² today—almost 5 years into American military engagement in Afghanistan—the United States is mired in an insurgency of escalating violence and lethality which has already claimed thousands of lives. The twin insurgent movements of the revitalized Taliban and the *Hizb-i-Islami* party of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (HiG) are growing steadily in strength and influence, while Kabul’s control over a broad swath of the country is rapidly diminishing. As demonstrated by the widespread anti-American riots in Kabul in May 2006, political volatility is even starting to reach urban areas. Three fundamental problems in Afghanistan have allowed for the emergence of the insurgencies:

The inability of the national government since 2001 to establish a politically significant presence throughout the country,

The failure of the international community to create a secure rural environment in the south conducive to development and reconstruction, and

The virtually complete lack of meaningful improvement in the lives of the great majority of the people in the southern half of the country.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the insurgencies in Afghanistan and the foreign political and international terrorist elements that aid and abet them. The first section of the chapter will discuss the makeup and character of the Afghan insurgencies, examining the historical foundations of the Taliban and HiG. The second half of the chapter will provide a critical assessment of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts, and explore what lessons can be drawn which could inform U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and tactics.

THE AFGHAN INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM

On October 7, 2001, the U.S.-led coalition began its initial air campaign against al Qaeda and Taliban forces in Afghanistan—forces deemed responsible for the September 11 attacks on the United States. According to the U.S. Defense Department, the initial U.S. air campaign “eviscerated” the Taliban’s military capability within two weeks.³ On October 18, the U.S. “official” ground campaign began when U.S. Special Forces entered northern Afghanistan and teamed up with the Northern Alliance—a loose confederation of veteran mujahideen and warlords from non-Pashtun ethnic blocs who represented the Taliban’s primary resistance. By November 10, the strategic northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the Northern Alliance. In the following days, large swaths of the north were captured by the Northern Alliance, to include Kabul, which it occupied in defiance of international pressure not to enter the city. On December 6, the Taliban evacuated the southern city of Kandahar, turning over its last sanctuary to

opposition forces. Four days later, after only 62 days of conflict, the United States declared victory in Afghanistan.

However, the success of the campaign was marred by two serious mistakes, one diplomatic and one military, which would prove to be major strategic blunders in the War on Terrorism. In mid-November 2001, the Bush Administration permitted the Pakistani Air Force to fly out hundreds of Pakistanis encircled in the northern city of Konduz, an evacuation which turned into a mass extraction of senior Taliban and al Qaeda personnel, dubbed "Operation Evil Airlift" by appalled U.S. Special Forces personnel on the scene. Then, the following month, the failure to commit U.S. ground forces to block their escape route at Tora Bora permitted Osama bin Laden and several dozen of his best men to also escape encirclement near the border and flee into Pakistan.⁴ The opportunity to complete the decisive destruction of the Taliban and al Qaeda before Christmas 2001 was lost.

After the withdrawal of the Taliban regime, an interim administration was quickly installed in Kabul under the terms of the UN-brokered Bonn Agreement. The temporary government was headed by an ethnic Pashtun and CIA contact, Hamid Karzai. Meanwhile, bin Laden and most of the senior al Qaeda leadership, as well as Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and the great majority of the senior Taliban cadre, are believed to have taken up residence either in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or Baluchistan Province, where they began to regroup and rearm.

While scattered attacks occurred in Afghanistan during 2002, the security situation started to deteriorate significantly in 2003 in the volatile south and east of the country. With U.S. forces now bogged down and overstretched by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the added strain of a continuing low-intensity war in Afghanistan became evident. Many key intelligence, Special Forces, and aviation assets were withdrawn from Afghanistan and sent to Iraq. Moreover, during this same period, many Pashtuns became disenchanted with Karzai's Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), which was widely viewed as being controlled by the Pan-shiri Tajik faction that held the government's key ministries of defense, interior, and foreign affairs.⁵ (The situation has now significantly reversed, as many Tajik leaders have been gradually sidelined.) Pashtun suspicions and mistrust of the government were further heightened by the ATA's inability to protect Pashtuns from the wave of human rights abuses perpetrated by insurgents and warlords since the fall of the Taliban. Finally, a considerable source of discontent and fuel for the insurgency involved what were widely seen as the heavy-handed tactics of U.S. military operations in Pashtun areas of the country.

Despite warnings from the State Department, such "hard-knock" operations continued to be standard procedure for several years, alienating

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much of the populace. The Pentagon continued to view the situation as one of counterterrorism, not counterinsurgency, and conducted operations in the rural areas accordingly. As one U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) commander commented, "Black Ops [Special Operations counterterrorism forces] do more damage in my province in one night than I can undo in six months." Particularly problematic was the careless use of U.S. air power, which killed scores of civilians, and the apparent lack of sensitivity by U.S. troops to local perceptions, laws, and customs. According to reports in the Afghan press, "U.S. Special Forces, during routine sweeps of Afghan villages searching for weapons and members of resistance groups, have physically abused villagers, damaged personal property, and subjected women to body searches, a major affront on a family's honor."⁶ UN officials have commented that "This doesn't help us at all . . . the people are basically pro-America. They want U.S. forces to be here. But American soldiers are not very culturally sensitive. It's hardly surprising that Afghans get angry when the Americans turn up and kick their doors in."⁷

By mid-2003, a reemergent Taliban had begun cross-border operations from Pakistan, posing a growing security threat to eastern and southern Afghanistan, with the insurgents gradually gaining political control of significant portions of the Afghan provinces of Zabol, Kandahar, Helmand, and Oruzgan. Several NGO workers were murdered by Taliban guerillas. In November 2003, 2 years after the Taliban retreat from Kabul, the United Nations started pulling staff from large areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan and closed refugee reception centers in four provinces.⁸ Unable to provide a reasonable level of security for their personnel, most NGO's, including *Medicines Sans Frontiers* (Doctors without Borders), CARE, and Mercy Corps followed suit. An insurgency that the United States did not expect and did not understand was now in full swing.

A DETERIORATING SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Nearly 300 American Soldiers and Marines have been killed in action in Afghanistan since October 2001. While the overall level of violence in Afghanistan does not yet approach that experienced in Iraq, Afghanistan is actually the more dangerous place to be deployed in terms of fatalities per soldier-day in the combat zone. Furthermore, while the rate of U.S. casualties has stabilized somewhat in Iraq, it has increased steadily in Afghanistan since 2002 (see Table 24.1).

Most troubling of all, the last 12 months have provided ample evidence of increasingly sophisticated insurgent tactics being imported from Iraq and grafted onto classic mujahideen-style guerilla warfare. In the first 5 months of 2006, there was a 200 percent increase in insurgent attacks, compared to the first 5 months of 2005. Indeed, late May 2006 saw the

Table 24.1 U.S. and Coalition Military Fatalities in Afghanistan By Year

Period	U.S. Fatalities	Other OEF Coalition Fatalities	Total Fatalities
2006 ⁴⁸	64	30	94
2005	99	30	129
2004	52	6	58
2003	48	9	57
2002	48	20	68
2001	12	0	12
Total	323	95	418

deadliest week in the country in 5 years. During the first 5 months of 2006, Afghanistan has witnessed numerous attacks consisting of over 50 insurgents, as compared to just one such attack during the same time period of 2005.⁹ Reports of insurgents massing in battalion-sized formations of 300–400 fighters are no longer rare. Lutfullah Mashal, the former Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman, has recently suggested that: “Taliban fighters no longer rely solely on hit-and-run tactics by small groups of guerrillas. Instead, the Taliban have been concentrating into groups of more than 100 fighters to carry out frontal assaults on government security posts.”¹⁰ Some analysts believe that the Taliban have at least 12,000 fighters controlling areas in the provinces of Oruzgan, Helmand, Zabol and Kandahar.¹¹

Extremely troubling indicators—such as the relatively free movement of insurgent groups—reveal that increasingly large areas of the east and south of the country are falling under the political control of the Taliban. Said Jawad, Afghanistan’s ambassador to the United States, recently stated, “We have lost a lot of the ground that we may have gained in the country, especially in the South... The fact that U.S. military resources have been ‘diverted’ to the war in Iraq is of course hurting Afghanistan.”¹²

Taliban insurgents and their al Qaeda allies are undoubtedly gaining strength. There have been numerous attacks in recent months in areas other than the south and east, suggesting that the Taliban has expanded the scope of its operations and has begun to “take the war to the North.” Cross-border operations from Pakistan are commonplace. The implications of the escalating violence in Afghanistan are now compounded by the fact that the United States, which has been responsible for the bulk of counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan since the beginning of OEF, is in the process of ceding operational control of the war to NATO forces.¹³

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THE BORDER PROBLEM

For decades, nearly all of Afghanistan's neighboring states have produced disenchanted groups of Uyghurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and other Islamists who have used Afghanistan for guerrilla training and an area from which to pursue their violent agendas. While such groups have played a role in Afghanistan, the most important foreign actors in Afghanistan's affairs have come from Pakistan's western border provinces, Northwest Frontier (NWFP) and Baluchistan, and especially the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Pakistan today has become an attractive base for terrorists and extremists. The government of Pakistan, for its part, has long sought to exert influence in Afghanistan, because of its desire for "strategic depth" on its northern border in the event of any conflict with India. Successive Pakistani governments have promoted Islamic radicalism to subvert Pashtun and Baluch nationalist movements and to further their ambitions in Afghanistan and Kashmir, through groups such as Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam's Fazlur Rehman faction (JUI-F), Khuddam ul-Islam (KUI), and Jamaat ul-Furqan (JUF). Jihad, drugs, and gunrunning have long been the main sources of livelihood for many of the Pashtuns living near the ill-defined border. Afghan refugee camps and thousands of Islamist madrasas opened by the JUI provide a steady flow of recruits for the Taliban and other radical groups.

The minimal U.S. troop presence in the south has ensured that the rugged and porous 2,450 kilometer border between Pakistan and Afghanistan does not even constitute a speed bump to extremist groups such as the Taliban and al Qaeda seeking to expand their networks of support and increase their influence among the Pashtun tribesmen in Afghanistan. By mid-2005, in the strategically vital border province of Paktika, for example—which has a population of some 600,000 people and shares a 400 km border with Pakistan—the United States had only two companies of light infantry, and no engineers or aviation assets. Special Forces teams were drawn down. And in the summer of 2005, the fledgling Provincial Reconstruction Team (or PRT) in Paktika was dismembered due to personnel shortages, and its minimal Civil Affairs remnant (the Civil-Military Operations Center, or CMOC) was colocated with a maneuver company, a devolution that has been repeated at seven other U.S.-led PRTs, once hailed as the cornerstone of reconstruction and security.

Afghanistan's President Karzai and his new foreign minister, Rangin Dadfar Spanta, have recently blamed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID) for Taliban attacks in Afghanistan. Kabul rightly claims that Pakistani security forces chase al Qaeda terrorists within Pakistan but do not make any significant effort to arrest Taliban fighters or stop them from crossing the border into Afghanistan.¹⁴ Indeed, the coalition of

Islamist political parties, which completely dominates the border region and represents it in Parliament, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (or MMA—dubbed by wags in Islamabad as the “Mullah-Musharraf Alliance”) is openly pro-Taliban. This lack of cooperation by Pakistan and the open defiance of the MMA have been extremely frustrating for the United States. As Henry A. Crumpton, the American coordinator for counterterrorism, asserts:

...the Americans are finding the Pakistanis much more reluctant to face down the Taliban—who are brethren from the Pashtun ethnic group that dominates in Afghanistan—than they have been to confront al Qaida, who are largely outsiders. “Has Pakistan done enough? I think the answer is no....Not only al Qaida, but Taliban leadership are primarily in Pakistan, and the Pakistanis know that.”¹⁵

In 2004, after negotiating with the Pashtun tribal Maliks (essentially spokesmen, as the Pashtun recognize no chieftains), Pakistan responded to U.S. pressure with an unprecedented deployment of a reported 70,000 troops to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area. In Baluchistan, this force was led by the Pakistani paramilitary Frontier Corps and regular army elements from the Pakistan’s 12th Corps. The Pakistani campaign in the FATA, especially in the North and South Waziristan Agencies, is being conducted by a battalion-plus Special Operations Task Force (SOTF), along with elements of the Pakistani Army’s 11th Corps, aided by the indigenous local Scouts units of the Frontier Corps. While such Pakistani troop levels greatly exceed the total number of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, the actual relationship between the Pakistani campaign and the U.S. GWOT is controversial and unclear, as suggested by Pakistan’s Gen Tariq Majid, the Pakistani army’s chief of general staff:

We are not fighting America’s war in the FATA. It is in our own interest. We’re fighting this war because, unfortunately, there have been fallout effects in Pakistan from the instability in Afghanistan.¹⁶

Indeed, the Pakistani military activity has been aimed, for domestic political reasons, almost entirely at “foreign elements,” meaning primarily former mujahideen from Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries who settled in northern Pakistan after the Soviet-Afghan War—not the Taliban or its network of supporters in the MMA.

While the perceived threat from India and fear of a two-front war has shaped Pakistan’s relationship with Afghanistan, the desire for “strategic depth” is not the only driver of Pakistan’s foreign policy toward Afghanistan. Afghanistan has also been influenced by Pakistan’s strategy toward India-controlled Kashmir. One veteran Pakistani observer

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suggests that: “the Kashmir issue became the prime mover behind Pakistan’s Afghan policy and its support to the Taliban.”¹⁷ Camps in Afghanistan created for training Afghan Arabs during the anti-Soviet jihad have been recycled to train guerrilla forces for fighting in Kashmir. Pakistan has used these jihadi forces as a bargaining chip with India in an attempt to gain more autonomy and even independence from India for Kashmir.

IRAQ AND JIHADI NETWORKS

A new source of concern is the fact that recent insurgent attacks—including the introduction of suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)—have demonstrated an unusual level of internal coordination and a growing technological sophistication in the Afghan insurgency imported from outside the Pashtun belt. Since the summer of 2004, a variety of guerilla tactics (including assassinations and kidnappings) in Afghanistan¹⁸ and numerous reports of knowledge transfer indicate that the insurgents are importing tactics and lethal technology from Iraq.¹⁹ In the first 6 months of 2006, Afghan insurgents set off 32 suicide bombs, six more than in all of 2005.²⁰ As Griff Whitte wrote in the *Washington Post*, “despite a quarter-century of war, [suicide attacks] in Afghanistan have historically been relatively rare because of a cultural aversion to suicide.”²¹ According to international security analysis Esther Pan, “Suicide is not a characteristic tactic of the Afghan people . . . they have a cultural aversion to it.”²² Only five suicide attacks—none of which targeted civilians—were reported during the first 3½ years after the Taliban were driven from power. The great majority of the suicide attacks carried out during the last 1½ years appear to have been “outsourced” to non-Afghans, most often to Punjabis from the south of Pakistan and young foreign Islamists recruited from radical groups in the Middle East.

In summary, the wild and largely unregulated tribal areas on Pakistan’s northern border play an extremely important role in the Afghan insurgency, as well as in the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir and the rising internal unrest that challenges both Pakistani security forces and governmental authority all along the frontier. They provide a steady source of recruits, a safe haven for senior leadership, and a base of operations and training for the Taliban, its al Qaeda affiliates, and (to a lesser degree) the Hekmatyar faction of *Hizb-i-Islami* (HiG).²³ Nonindigenous tactics and imported technologies indicate both al Qaeda facilitation of Jihadi networks for information-sharing and growing insurgent use of the Internet as a means of distributing lethal knowledge. The next section of this chapter will assess the Taliban and HiG insurgent groups in greater detail.

THE ORIGINS OF THE TALIBAN

"A host of wandering Talib-ul-ilums, who correspond with the theological students in Turkey and live free at the expense of the people..."

—Winston Churchill, 1898²⁴

Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Afghanistan deteriorated into a brutal civil war between rival mujahideen groups positioning for power.²⁵ This civil war claimed thousands of lives and decimated what remained of the country's infrastructure. The civil war intensified after one of the mujahideen groups took Kabul on April 25, 1992. Shortly afterward, Beirut-style street fighting erupted in the city, especially between the Pashtun Hizb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Tajik Jamaat-i-Islam of Barhannudin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud. This civil war, fought with the vast surpluses of ordnance left over from the covert anti-Soviet military aid program and huge stockpiles of heavy weapons abandoned by the retreating Russians, eventually wreaked as much—if not more—havoc and destruction on the country as had the Soviet invasion and occupation. Kabul, which had remained virtually untouched during the war, was savagely bombarded with rockets, mortars, and artillery by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In Kandahar, fighting between Islamists—led by HiG—and traditionalist mujahideen parties resulted in the destruction of much of the traditional Kandahari societal power structures. In the rural areas, warlords, drug lords, and bandits ran amok in a state of anarchy accelerated by the unraveling of the traditional tribal leadership system.

As the mujahideen factions and warlords were fighting amongst themselves for power in Afghanistan, Pakistan's leading Islamist party, the JUI, built a network of religious boarding schools throughout northern Pakistan to extend the influence of the indigenous Deobandi School of Islamic thought, an investment that itself provides an insight into their temporal horizons. These madrasas were soon providing an important educational alternative for the numerous displaced refugees from the anti-Soviet jihad and the Afghan civil war, as well as for poor families along the frontier unable to afford the costs and fees of the secular schools. (Today there are some 5,900 madrasas in operation in NWFP and the FATA alone, with an estimated 600,000 students studying curricula neither approved nor observed by educational authorities in Pakistan.)

With the oversight of the ISID, who had grown weary of their favorite Afghan mujahideen leader—Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—the Taliban emerged from Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province and FATA madrasas and the kinship networks inside the remaining Afghan refugee camps. The Taliban arrived on the Afghan scene in 1994 with little warning, and vowed to install a traditional Islamic government in Afghanistan and end the carnage of the fighting among the warlords. With massive

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covert assistance from the Pakistani ISID, Army, and Air Force, the Taliban overthrew the largely Tajik (and northern) mujahideen regime in Kabul, capturing the capital in September 1996. The country the Taliban captured soon became a training ground for Islamic activists and other radicals from the Middle East and around Asia.

The war-weary Afghans initially welcomed the Taliban, because they believed that they would bring peace and stability to their ravaged country. The Taliban promoted itself as a new force for honesty and unity, and many Afghans—particularly fellow Pashtuns—supported the Taliban in hopes of respite from years of war, anarchy, and corruption. The Taliban went after the warlords responsible for the anarchy, and Afghans initially flocked to their movement. Soon after gaining control of Kabul, however, the Taliban instituted and employed a religious police force, the *Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai An Munkir* (Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice) to brutally uphold their extreme and often bizarre interpretations of Islam (which were not previously known in Afghanistan). The Taliban philosophy, Ahmed Rashid notes,

fitted nowhere in the Islamic spectrum of ideas and movements that had emerged in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1994....The Taliban represented nobody but themselves and they recognized no Islam except their own....Before the Taliban, Islamic extremism had never flourished in Afghanistan.²⁶

The initial optimism of the Afghan people soon turned to fear, as the Taliban introduced a draconian interpretation of sharia law, banned women from work, and introduced sadistic punishments that included amputations and death by stoning.

Tajik resistance to the Taliban in the form of the Northern Alliance held out throughout the Taliban period and retained Afghanistan's seat in the United Nations, but were steadily pushed back by a series of military defeats into the extreme northeast province of Badakshan. Just as the Taliban assassinated Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud and were poised to wipe out them out completely, however, the tragic events of September 11, 2001 unfolded in the United States. These events, of course, led to U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and the initiation of OEF on October 7, 2001.²⁷

THE TRIBAL BASIS OF THE TALIBAN

Western military analysts have consistently misinterpreted the Taliban as everything from a simple fundamentalist Islamic movement to a criminal gang. In reality, the Taliban is a social phenomenon with a tribal chassis. Its religious dimension—an extreme interpretation of Deobandi

Table 24.2 Senior Taliban Leaders

Name	Position	Tribal Affiliation
Mullah Muhammad Omar	Movement Leader	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Mullah Berader	Deputy Movement Leader	<i>Ghilzai</i>
Mullah Dadullah Kakar	Senior Military Commander	<i>Kakar Ghurgusht</i>
Mullah Mohammad Hassan	Foreign Minister after 1997	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Nuruddin Turabi	Minister of Justice	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Alla Dad Akhund	Minister of Communications	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Mohamed Essa	Minister of Water and Power	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Wakil Ahmed	Personal Secretary to Mullah Omar	<i>Kakar Ghurgusht</i>
Sadeq Akhond	Minister of Commerce	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>
Mohammed Rabbani	Chairman of Kabul Shura	<i>Kakar Ghurgusht</i>
Mullah Obaidullah	Minister of Defense	<i>Hotaki Ghilzai</i>

thought—is just the steering wheel. The Taliban consists entirely of rural Pashtuns, the great majority of them from the Ghilzai tribal group, with some support from the Kakar tribe of the Ghurgusht nation. More specifically, however, although the Taliban eventually coopted other Pashtun leaders, Mullah Omar, and most of the senior members of the Taliban from 1996–2001 were from the Hotaki tribe of the Ghilzais, as shown in Table 24.2.

The strength of the Ghilzais today is a direct result of the Soviet-Afghan War, during which they led three of the seven officially recognized Mujahideen groups who received massive covert military and financial support. This assistance fundamentally altered the balance of Pashtun power between the Ghilzais and their sworn enemies, the Durrani, who led none of the seven and who were deliberately sidelined by the CIA and ISID. This tribal “genetic meddling” quickly came home to roost in Afghanistan in the form of the Ghilzai Taliban.

The Taliban is, at its heart, all about tribal politics. It represents a tribal power grab by Ghilzais, made possible by an order of magnitude jump in military power during the Soviet-Afghan War. The Ghilzais have historically been in conflict with the Durrani confederation of tribes, who have held political power in Kabul for most of the last 300 years (President Karzai and King Zahir Shah are Durrani.) Kandahar and Helmand provinces are Durrani lands, while the Ghilzai are concentrated in Oruzgan, Zabol, Dai Kundi, and Gardez provinces and the Katawaz region of Paktika province. In keeping with their extreme Deobandi philosophy, the Taliban are vehemently opposed to any hierarchical structure within

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Islamic society, which dovetails neatly into their hatred of the Durrani, who have always provided Afghanistan's kings. Thus, the first instinct of the Taliban today, as in 1994, is not to drive directly on Kabul, but rather to subjugate and coopt the Durrani, which explains why most Taliban military activity today is in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, not further north and east toward Kabul. Only when the tribal grievances have been settled and their tribal flanks are secure will the Taliban move toward the capital, as they did in 1996. It also explains why, in 1996, when the Ghilzai Taliban came to power in Kabul, they did not invite the Durrani Pashtun King, Zahir Shah, back to Afghanistan, which was one of the first orders of business of the Bonn Agreement.

The importance of the Ghilzai to the Taliban insurgency is illustrated by Figure 24.1. The shaded sections of the map of Afghanistan in Figure 24.1 represent those areas politically controlled by the Taliban as of this writing in May 2006 (with many other areas significantly contested). These areas include the northern districts of Kandahar Province, the northeastern districts of Helmand Province, most of Oruzgan and Zabol Provinces, and districts in Paktika, Ghazni, Wardak, and Logar Provinces. The inset map in Figure 24.1 represents a rough sketch of the tribal areas of the Durrani, Ghilzai, Ghurgusht, Karlanri, and Sarbani—the five large tribal confederations of Pashtuns. If one compares the inset of the tribal areas in Afghanistan with the large swath of Taliban political control, it is evident that the most intense area of the insurgency today is the area dominated by the various Ghilzai tribes.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE TALIBAN

While the tribal politics are important, however, they do not explain how the Taliban was able to mobilize socially so effectively, even with massive Pakistani support. To do this, it drew unconsciously on a universally understood cultural phenomenon among the frontier Pashtun, one which the British and later the Pakistani governments encountered over and over again: the charismatic Mullah movement. Mullah Mohammed Omar Akhund is the archetype of this charismatic Mullah phenomenon, a cyclical pattern of insurrection that manifests itself about every 30 years in the Pashtun belt. Indeed, such leaders have often gained powers on the frontier during times of social distress.²⁸ These charismatic uprisings were so common, in fact, the British dubbed them "Mad Mullah movements."

There have been many. A similar figure to Mullah Omar, Mirza Ali Khan—a Tori Khel Waziri who was known to the West as the Fakir of Ipi—led first British and then Pakistani security forces on a frustrating chase around the frontier for 30 years.²⁹ Protected by his Pashtun tribal supporters in the hills, much as Mullah Omar is today, he was never caught. The Mullah of Hadda, as noted by David Edwards in "Heroes of the Age,"

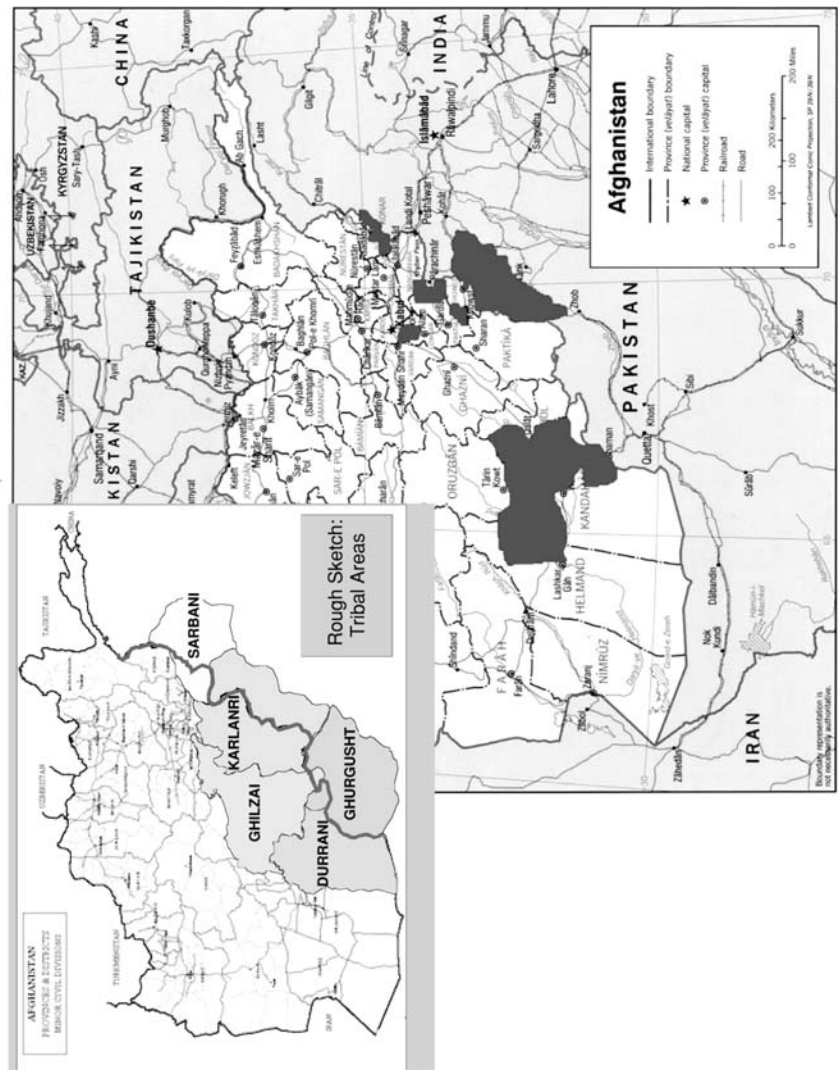


Figure 24.1 Pashtun tribal areas and key insurgent strongholds, 2006

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provoked the Great Pashtun Revolt of 1897 through mysticism, parlor tricks, and promises to turn British bullets to water.³⁰ In “Resistance and Control in Pakistan,” Akbar Ahmed focuses on the emergence of a charismatic Mullah in Waziristan who, like Mullah Omar, challenged state legitimacy.³¹ Ahmed argues that the Mullah of Waziristan also used mysticism to gain legitimacy, much like Mullah Omar did 30 years later, and challenged Pakistan’s attempt to modernize FATA.

Omar joined this rogues gallery of politicized insurgent Mullahs by means of a politico-religious stunt that is of enormous importance to the Taliban movement but that is considered insignificant by most Western analysts, if they are aware of it at all. In so doing, he became the epitome of the charismatic leader as described by Max Weber, who he defined as having:

...a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, super-human, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader...³²

The event in question was Omar’s removal in 1994 of a sacred garment—believed by many Afghans to be the original cloak worn by the Prophet Mohammed—from its sanctuary in Kandahar, and actually wearing it while standing atop a mosque in the city. Whereas Omar had been a nonentity before this piece of religious theatre, the audacious stunt catapulted him to a level of mystical power (at least among the 90 percent of Pashtuns who are illiterate) in a manner that is almost impossible for Westerners to understand, and it resulted in his being proclaimed locally the *Amir-ul Momineen*, the Leader of the Faithful—not just of the Afghans but of all Muslims.³³

What is known of the Taliban subsequent to this event conforms exactly to the pattern of social mobilization observed and documented as the insurgent “Mad Mullah” phenomenon. Furthermore, once in power, Ahmed Rashid notes that Taliban power was (and is) concentrated exclusively in the person of Mullah Omar, another characteristic of the phenomenon—and contrary to traditional Pashtun shura (consensus) politics. As Rashid has observed, Omar ultimately made all the decisions within the Taliban, and no one dared act without his orders.³⁴ Today, Mullah Omar issues statements of encouragement to his field commanders, rather than operational orders, exactly as did the Mullah of Hadda as described by David Edwards.³⁵ Thus, unlike most insurgencies, which are not centered in the personality of a single leader, the Taliban’s center of gravity, in Clausewitzian terms, is not Taliban foot soldiers or field

commanders or even the senior clerics around Omar. It is Omar himself. Because it is, socially, a charismatic movement, if Mullah Omar dies, the Taliban, at least in its current incarnation, will wither and die, because he alone is the Leader of the Faithful. It is not a question of political or military succession: The mystical charismatic power in Islam that came from wearing the Cloak of the Prophet is not something transferable to a second in command. Unfortunately, because this entire phenomenon is so alien to Western thinking, U.S. observers and analysts have tended almost universally instead to interpret the Taliban in terms more compatible with Western logic and thought.

It is thus a strategic error, we believe, to label the Taliban as an “Islamist fundamentalist movement,” or a drug gang, or any of the other revolving door euphemisms applied to it, such as “Anti-Government Militia.” Understanding the Taliban enemy more precisely could enable better information and psychological operations, for example, or a more nuanced understanding of the human terrain by U.S. and NATO forces, and would suggest a realignment of reconstruction priorities based on historical models to isolate the movement and prevent its further mobilization.

HEKMATYAR AND HIZB-i-ISLAMI (HiG)

On February 19, 2003, the United States designated Gulbuddin Hekmatyar a “specially designated global terrorist.”³⁶ Hekmatyar is a prominent member of the American “most wanted terrorist list,” behind only bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and (until his death in 2006) Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Hekmatyar is a seasoned veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war and has been described as “comparably wealthy, ruthless, arrogant, inflexible, [and] a stern disciplinarian.”³⁷

Hekmatyar’s mujahideen faction, the Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, was one of the major resistance groups fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The HiG received the largest share of the arms and funds that came into Afghanistan from Arab and Western countries to fight the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It was the favorite party of Pakistan’s ISID during and immediately after the Soviet-Afghan war—and, as noted earlier, was responsible for much of the death and destruction that followed the collapse of communist rule in 1992. Hekmatyar has repeatedly called for a jihad³⁸ against the coalition forces in Afghanistan and those who cooperate with them—including the current Karzai government. Although his wanton destruction of much of Kabul by indiscriminate shelling of the city cost him any support he might still have had within Afghanistan, his call for the establishment of a pure Islamic state in Afghanistan and his condemnation of what he views as the corrupting influence of the West retains some residual appeal in northwest Pakistan. And he still has powerful friends within the ISID.

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Hekmatyar is a Ghilzai Pashtun of the Kharoti tribe. His family, however, was one of thousands of Pashtun families who were forcefully relocated to northern Afghanistan as part of “detrribalization” efforts early in the twentieth century, and he is thus less able to draw on traditional kinship networks within the Kharotis of the south today. During the late 1960s, while Hekmatyar was studying at the Faculty of Engineering at Kabul University, he was introduced to radical politics. After a brief period of involvement with Afghan communists, he became a disciple of Sayyid Qutb and the *Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen* (Muslim Brotherhood) movement. Ever since, he has been one of the most outspoken and extreme of all Afghan leaders. He was known, for example, to patrol the bazaars of Kabul with vials of acid, which he would throw in the face of any woman who dared to walk outdoors without a full burka covering her face. His insurgency movement is built on the *Ikhwan* model of Islamic revolution, which stresses the establishment of a pure Islamic state and utilizes a highly disciplined organizational structure built around a small cadre of educated elites over which Hekmatyar retains strict control. It is thus closer to the *foco* model of Marxist revolution than the charismatic and purely rural Taliban movement, but both are essentially insurgencies built on the personalities of their leaders rather than on sustainable mass popular support.

In 1994, with support of the ISID, Hekmatyar started training foreign volunteers to support Pakistan’s new covert jihad in Indian-held Kashmir.³⁹ Pakistan decided to “out-source” the jihad in Kashmir; as a result, Hekmatyar became a major focus of this effort. In a move to increase its base of support, the Rabbani government in Kabul invited Hekmatyar to join the government, an offer that he accepted, briefly, twice. However, his overwhelming unpopularity backfired on Rabbani, whose government lost large tracts of popular support as a result of its association with the Butcher of Kabul, rather than gaining in strength. When it later became clear that not only was Hekmatyar not achieving Pakistan’s goals in Jammu and Kashmir, but also that his lack of popular support in Afghanistan ensured that he would remain a marginalized loser in any future Afghan state, the new Pakistani government of Benazir Bhutto switched its support and helped to organize the Taliban movement. Despite having similar goals in the establishment of a pure Islamic state in Afghanistan and a common Ghilzai ethnicity, Hekmatyar was a bitter enemy during the Taliban’s initial reigning years. In his educated, elitist urban worldview, the illiterate rural Mullahs of the Taliban are hillbilly bumpkins, and he regards them with a thinly veiled contempt for their lack of learning and sophistication. There are also important differences between his vision of an Islamic state and the grotesquely distorted travesty of Deobandi thought of Mullah Omar. Hekmatyar’s forces fought the Taliban until they ousted him from his power base around Jalalabad, after

which he fled to Iran for a period before returning to Afghanistan in early 2002. Despite residual animosities, however, on the principle that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”—at least temporarily—he has recently negotiated a truce with the Taliban and an agreement on limited cooperation in destroying the government of Hamid Karzai. It may not be too great of a stretch to imagine the hidden hand of the ISID behind this *détente*.

His forces today operate in Konduz, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces, and he has been linked to numerous attacks on U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) personnel, as well as to many other attacks against Afghan government and security elements.⁴⁰ The few brief contacts that U.S. forces have had with the remote tribal groups of Nuristan since 2001 have provided strong evidence that HiG is using the virtually inaccessible valleys of that isolated region for training and logistics basing. The Nuristanis, for their part, want nothing to do with Hekmatyar’s Ghilzais, and have requested a U.S. PRT be established in Nuristan province, a request that U.S. authorities have declined for reasons unknown. HiG remains a dangerous and sometimes deadly guerilla opponent in the southeast, which has impeded both Afghan government efforts to consolidate control in the region, and international efforts to rebuild and develop it, but his personal inability to inspire and mobilize mass popular support suggest his insurgency will be unable to generate critical mass. As with the Taliban, if the leader of HiG were to be liquidated, his movement, based as it is on the iron will of one man to gain power, would quickly wither and die with him, as did, for example, the *Sendero Luminoso* movement in Peru after the capture of Abimael Guzman in 1992.⁴¹

POSTCONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND THE RISE OF THE TALIBAN PHOENIX⁴²

Afghanistan today is in danger of capsizing in a perfect storm of insurgency, terrorism, narcotics,⁴³ and warlords. The nexus between them is growing and self-reinforcing. Five years of benign neglect by the United States after the installation of Hamid Karzai as President have brought Afghanistan back to the brink of state failure. Since 2001, Washington has badly shortchanged Afghanistan in men and resources. The deployment of U.S. and ISAF forces⁴⁴ to the stabilization of the countryside represented the lowest *per capita* commitment of peacekeeping personnel to any postconflict environment since the end of World War II. The ratios of peacekeepers to citizens in the missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, for example, were 1:48 and 1:58 respectively. For the first 3 years in Afghanistan, the comparable figure hovered near 1:2,000. Today, with an increase in U.S. force levels and a major reinforcement of the NATO ISAF mission, it is roughly one peacekeeper to every 1,000 Afghans (1: 1000).

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The number of security force personnel deployed after Bonn was completely inadequate to fill the security vacuum left by the retreating Taliban, a void that was quickly filled by warlords and drug lords, many of whom have since donned national police uniforms to facilitate narcotics trafficking.⁴⁵ As bad as they are, however, the numbers alone do not tell the whole story. As noted previously, the bulk of the Special Forces soldiers who best understand counterinsurgency, for example, were soon pulled out of Afghanistan to serve in Iraq and elsewhere. Aviation assets have also been drawn down to minimal levels. Because of the lack of helicopter assets, "Quick Reaction Forces" throughout much of the south are forced to respond to the scene of minor Taliban attacks in Humvees. With an average overland speed of 5–10 miles an hour (over rocky trails that have not improved), Taliban guerillas are usually long gone from their "roadblock and run" attacks before U.S. forces arrive, which emboldens the insurgents, demonstrates our inability to protect the locals, and demoralizes the police, few of whom are willing to try to hold off hardened and heavily armed Taliban veterans for several hours with poor quality weapons and the standard 30-rounds of issued ammunition.

Even more damaging to the effort to stabilize Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban was the shockingly low level of funding committed to rebuild a country laid waste by 25 years of war. Astonishingly, President Karzai was in office nearly 3 years before total U.S. reconstruction spending in Afghanistan reached \$1 billion. During the same period, the cost of military operations in Afghanistan was approximately \$36 billion, perhaps one of history's most glaring illustrations of being "penny wise and pound foolish." Not counting the repaving of the Kabul-Kandahar highway, U.S. aid to Afghanistan over the last 5 years has averaged just \$13 per Afghan per year. Nor, despite clear and disturbing evidence that the lack of reconstruction funds is largely responsible for the rapid spread of Taliban influence in the south since 2002, has the level of this aid to Afghanistan increased; in fact, it has decreased since 2004. The total U.S.-aid budget for the entire country in fiscal year 2006 is roughly \$700 million, equal to the cost of operating the war in Iraq for only 36 hours. Total U.S. spending since 9/11 to rebuild an entire nation almost exactly the size of Texas amounts to less than half the cost of rebuilding just the levees in New Orleans damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

On the ground, frequent turnovers of personnel, lack of local funds, a cumbersome, Bagram-driven approval process for projects, the absence of eyes-on construction oversight and quality control, inadequate vetting of contractors, and endemic corruption of Afghan officials has combined to waste much of what was spent. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) effort has provided an interesting laboratory for U.S. Army Civil Affairs experimentation, but their numbers are absurdly inadequate. With an approximate overall troop-to-task ratio of one PRT (in Pashtun areas) for

every one million Pashtuns, the strategic impact of their presence is negligible. In lawless Paktika Province in 2005, for example, where no NGOs or IOs will operate, a total of eight American civil affairs enlisted reservists and two inexperienced mid-career transfer civil affairs officers were responsible for all rural development and reconstruction projects in an area the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined, with a population of 600,000 people, where living conditions are largely unchanged since biblical times.

With a miniscule Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) budget, what any ten soldiers can accomplish in this environment amounts at best to a few grains of sand on the beach. In 2005, the entire province of Paktika had only a handful of buildings not made of adobe, fewer than a dozen high school graduates, and no telephones or paved roads anywhere within its borders. There were two antiquated clinics (charitably called "hospitals") and two doctors. Officially, the province has 352 elementary schools for boys, but only 40 actual school buildings. The remainder of the "schools" are simply patches of open ground in the village where the 6th-graders teach what they know to the 1st graders. Few, if any, girls attend school at all. How ten civil affairs personnel with three Humvees and a few hundred thousand dollars are supposed to change this is unclear. In fact, in the first 4 years of the Karzai government, the U.S. government had not built a single school or clinic anywhere in Paktika Province. To make matters worse, as noted previously, due to manpower shortages, the PRTs in Paktika and seven other locations have now been effectively disbanded, with their support elements redeployed to other duties. Further, the handful of Civil Affairs soldiers of the Civil Military Operations Centers (the CMOCs) have been rolled together with combat maneuver elements onto shared firebases, where they are generally the lowest priority for missions and assets. In these cases, the PRTs—originally designed as independent, freestanding civil-military affairs institutions—no longer exist as such. The stated mission of the PRT, to "extend the reach of the Afghan national government to the rural areas" is itself a gem of Kafkaesque spin, because as of 2005 there were no Afghans at all on any PRT. While there is coordination with the Afghan government at the provincial planning level, when PRTs go "outside the wire," they almost always do so alone. Hence, at the district or village level, their presence lacks any Afghan government component that might extend its reach. The failure of the minimalist peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts to ensure rural security and effect any meaningful improvement in the lives of the people in the rural south has created an angry environment of unfulfilled expectations. As much as (or more than) the Karzai government's inability to extend its authority beyond Kabul, this gap between expectation and reality is what has opened the door to the resurgence of the Taliban.

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ASSESSING THE AFGHAN INSURGENCY AND COALITION COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS

The Taliban intuitively understood that the center of gravity was the satisfaction of the rural Pashtun with the results of the new government in Kabul. They knew there was a window of opportunity for Karzai to gain rural Pashtun support, and they were quick to capitalize on the failure of the Department of Defense to understand this paradigm. Indeed, the DOD saw the aftermath of the Taliban's withdrawal south of the border as a simple matter of subtractive math: "Kill the existing terrorists until the number reaches zero and the war is over." For the first 2 years of the insurgency, the DOD maintained a paradigm of "mopping up" and "hunting down" the "remaining bitter-enders."

For its part, the Taliban today is conducting a clever defensive insurgency at the operational level of war. They have deployed a sufficient number of low-level fighters to intimidate the NGOs and IGOs—who would normally carry out most of the reconstruction—into withdrawing all of their personnel from the south. By night, Taliban Mullahs travel in the rural areas, speaking to village elders. They are fond of saying, "the Americans have the wristwatches, but we have the time." The simple message they deliver in person or by "night letter" is one of intimidation: "The Americans may stay for five years, they may stay for ten, but eventually they will leave, and when they do, we will come back to this village and kill every family that has collaborated with the Americans or the Karzai government." Such a message is devastatingly effective in these areas, where transgenerational feuds and revenge are part of the fabric of society.

The combination of the lack of local protection from the Taliban's nightly visits and the absence of any tangible reason to support either the Americans or Karzai are reason enough for the villagers to either remain neutral or provide assistance to the guerillas. But as noted previously, American forces have often accelerated the alienation through culturally obtuse behavior, unnecessarily invasive and violent tactics, and a series of tragic incidents of "collateral damage," which are inevitable in wartime. U.S. forces deploying to Afghanistan still receive only minimal "cultural awareness" briefings, if any, and this training is usually the lowest priority on the checklist of requirements to be crossed off before deployment, sandwiched between the night navigation course and the grenade range. Few, if any, can speak a word of the Pashto language, and thus rely on primarily young, trilingual Tajik interpreters to communicate with Pashtun elders, itself often a source of friction.

At the strategic level of war, the Taliban is fighting a classic "war of the flea," largely (and unsurprisingly) along much the same lines used by the mujahideen 20 years ago against the Soviets, including fighting

in villages to deliberately provoke airstrikes and collateral damage.⁴⁶ In the latest in a long series of such incidents, in May 2006, U.S. airstrikes killed as many as 40 civilians in Panjway District of Kandahar Province. The United States views this as the tragic but bearable cost of a successful operation against the insurgents, without understanding that the Taliban has deliberately traded the lives of a few dozen guerilla fighters in order to cost the American forces the permanent loyalty of that village, under a code of Pashtun social behavior called *Pashtunwali* and its obligation for revenge (*Badal*), which the Army does not even begin to understand or take seriously.

Indeed, the United States continues to fight the war largely according to the Taliban “game plan.” The priority of American effort is still what the Taliban wants it to be, the so-called “kill/capture mission,” and the U.S. Army spends much of its time on battalion-sized or larger sweep operations. In June, 2006, the United States led approximately 10,000 coalition forces in yet another large-scale sweep operation, dubbed “Operation Mountain Thrust,” in another massive demonstration of failed Vietnam-era counterinsurgency tactics designed to “flush out” Taliban guerillas, most of whom simply hide until the sweep has passed by and coalition forces have left the area before resuming their activities. This plays right into the Taliban’s operational goal, which is to get American forces to do exactly what they are doing: alienating rural villages with invasive tactics, and pouring the manpower, equipment, and fiscal resources—which should be focused on improving people’s lives instead—into chasing illiterate and expendable teenage boys with guns around the countryside like the proverbial dog chasing its tail and gnawing at individual flea bites.

Although few (if any) insurgencies have ever been won by killing insurgents, this still remains the primary strategy in Afghanistan. News reports of fighting in southern Afghanistan are increasingly dominated by Taliban body counts eerily reminiscent of Vietnam-era reporting. And ironically, Afghanistan is probably the country where this failed strategy of focusing on the “kill/capture mission” is least likely to work. The Taliban has a virtually infinite number of guerilla recruits growing up in the Pashtun-Afghan refugee camps in northern Pakistan and pouring out of the Deobandi madrasas along the border, and could sustain casualties of 10,000 or more guerillas a year for 20 years without any operational impact. Indeed, the Pashtun, who make up 100 percent of the Taliban, have a saying: “Kill one enemy, make ten.” Thus, the death in battle of a Pashtun guerilla invokes an obligation of revenge among all his male relatives, making the killing of a Taliban guerilla an act of insurgent *multiplication*, not subtraction. The Soviets learned this lesson the hard way. They killed nearly a million Pashtuns, and the effect this level of genocide had on the number of Pashtun guerillas in the field was that it increased it.

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Indeed, as an understanding of the true nature of the Taliban as a charismatic religious cult movement typical in Frontier history suggests, the Taliban center of gravity is Mullah Omar, the charismatic cult leader, not teenage boys or mid-level commanders, and no amount of killing them will shut the insurgency down. In the meantime, the United States is losing the war in Afghanistan one Pashtun village at a time, failing to rebuild the countryside, bursting into schoolyards full of children with guns bristling, kicking in village doors, searching women, driving like NASCAR racers on city streets, and putting out cross-cultural gibberish in ineffectual Information and Psyops campaigns.

CONCLUSION

The picture we paint in this chapter is not pretty. However, without a major change in counterinsurgency strategy and significant increase in manpower, equipment (particularly aviation assets), and especially reconstruction funding, the United States may lose this war. Today, the momentum—particularly in the counterinsurgency and the counternarcotics efforts—is running the wrong way. It is still possible to win—to create a slowly developing but stable, conservative Islamic democracy in Afghanistan generally free of terrorism—but not with the current resource *status quo*, and not with the current tactics. The Taliban today has numerous advantages, including comprehensive knowledge of the local culture, language, and tribal hierarchies of which U.S. forces are completely ignorant, a virtually inexhaustible supply of recruits and money, mountainous terrain that dramatically favors the insurgent, centuries of successful experience in guerilla warfare against Western powers, patience, domination to the point of supremacy in Information Warfare, and perhaps most importantly, ready sanctuary in much of northern Pakistan.

Major changes in the way the United States is doing business are needed immediately, but even with them, the United States cannot do it alone. It needs not just the energetic support of NATO but a robust and sustained commitment from NATO to the brutal, hard, and often bloody business of counterinsurgency, a type of warfare for which NATO has had little training and almost no experience. The United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and the donor nations must do more as well. And Afghanistan's northern and Western neighbors must continue to avoid the urge to excessively meddle in Afghan affairs—and, in the case of Uzbekistan, play a more positive role in supporting U.S. efforts, or risk a future of Islamic terrorism exported from Afghanistan.

But the key to success or failure in Afghanistan lies below its southern border, in northern Pakistan. As long as insurgents are virtually free to cross the border at will, and Frontier Corps elements aid and abet their movements, the insurgency cannot be shut down in Afghanistan. As the

Soviets learned between 1979 and 1989, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot be closed from the north. President Musharraf must stop the two-faced game of appearing to be the ally of the United States in the war on terrorism, while seeking to curry political favor with its worst proponents in NWFP, Baluchistan, and the FATA. Thanks to ill-conceived policies of encouragement and appeasement, the monster of Islamic fundamentalism in the north may now be too powerful to stop, but it's not too late to try. President Musharraf must assert national control in the north and act boldly to shut down the major insurgent movements across the border before the situation there spirals completely out of his control.

For its part, the United States must begin to fight smarter and stop following the Taliban playbook. A complete change in counterinsurgency strategy is required, and all U.S. soldiers must become cultural and language warriors with months, not minutes, of training in both language and culture before deployment. Quantum improvement is required in this area; Human Rights Watch has already released a scathing report on the conduct of American military personnel and the Afghan National Police,⁴⁷ which are an almost unmitigated disaster of corruption, warlord cronyism, and incompetence.

Despite extreme poverty, a landmine-littered landscape, massive corruption, a fledgling government whose authority outside of Kabul is very limited, an ongoing insurgency, a shattered economy, booming opium production and a host of other daunting problems, Afghanistan remains geostrategically vital. The United States cannot repeat its post-Soviet invasion abandonment of the country or fob the mission off on NATO, or the results will be disastrous once again. By abandoning Afghanistan once, the United States allowed the country to become a refuge for terrorist groups to recruit, train, and wage war against the West. The effect on Afghanistan, the region, and the rest of the world was dramatic and terrifying. This time, if we leave—or lose—the results will be even worse.

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NOTES

1. An expanded and revised version of this chapter has been published in a journal article by the same authors, as "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis*, 5(1) (Winter 2007).

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4. See, Philip Smucker, *Al Qaeda's Great Escape: The Military and the Media on Terror's Trail*, Washington, DC: Brassey, 2004).
5. See Thomas H. Johnson, "Democratic Nation Building in the Arc of Crisis: The Case of the Presidential Election in Afghanistan," in *Critical Issues Facing the Middle East Security: Security, Politics, and Economics*, ed. James Russell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
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9. Interview with Senior U.S. Government military analyst. For a similar assessment see: Walter Pincus, "Growing Threat Seen In Afghan Insurgency: DIA Chief Cites Surging Violence in Homeland," *Washington Post* (March 1, 2006): A08.
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11. Center for International Issues Research, *Daily Arabic Media Report* (May 25, 2006).
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15. Eric Schmitt, "Springtime Killing in Afghanistan," *The New York Times* (May 28, 2006).
16. Rober Karniol, "Plugging the Gaps" *Jane's Defense Weekly* (March 22 2006): 29.
17. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) 186.
18. For a chronology of suicide bombings in Afghanistan, compiled by Radio Liberty see <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/9ac36a59-d683-4189-a2b9-94fe5fbf32ad.html>
19. Griff Witte, "Afghans Confront Surge in Violence: Foreign Support Seen Behind Attacks that Mimic Those in Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor* (November 28, 2005): 1.
20. Eric Schmitt, "Springtime Killing in Afghanistan," *The New York Times* (May 28, 2006).
21. Griff Witte, "Suicide Bombers Kill Dozens in Afghanistan, Violence in South Is Seen as Message to NATO," *Washington Post Foreign Service* (January 17, 2006): A11.

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22. Esther Pan, "Afghanistan's New Security Threat," Council on Foreign Affairs Background (February 14, 2006) available at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9851>.

23. On February 19, 2003, the U.S. government formally designated Hekmatyar as a "specially designated global terrorist." Under this named designation, terrorists and terrorist-related institutions are subjected to financial and other U.S. sanctions. See: Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress* (December 28, 2004). As of this writing, he is still at large.

24. Sir Winston S. Churchill, *The Story Of The Malakand Field Force: An Episode Of Frontier War* (London: Green and Longmans, 1898), reprinted at <http://arthursclassiconovels.com/arthurs/churchill/mkdff10.html>.

25. Even during the height of the anti-Soviet *ji*had, various *mujahideen* factions spent much of their time and energy fighting each other.

26. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) 85, 93.

27. See The 9-11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2004).

28. For a seminal treatment of the subject of charismatic leadership and political organizations, see: Alfred de Grazia, *Political Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1965). Also published at <http://www.grazian-archive.com/politics/PolBehavior/tabcon.htm>.

29. Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 480, 487, 491-492.

30. David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1996).

31. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 1991). Also see Akbar S. Ahmed, *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: Order and Conflict in Pakistan* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

32. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947) 358-359, 362.

33. His title, "Commander of the Faithful," had not been adopted by any Muslim anywhere for nearly 1,000 years. The cloak of the Prophet Mohammed, which had been folded and padlocked in a series of chests in a crypt in the royal mausoleum at Kandahar; "myth had it that the padlocks to the crypt could be opened only when touched by a true *Amir-ul Momineen*, a king of the Muslims." See: Joseph A. Raelin, "The Myth of Charismatic Leaders," March 2003, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0MNT/is_3_57/ai_98901483.

34. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

35. David Edwards, "Heroes of the Age." Edwards notes that the position of the Mullah in society does not enable him to issue orders, *per se*, but rather this type of "public service announcement."

36. See the U.S. Department of State Web site, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/17799.htm> (accessed September 4, 2004).

37. John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002) 47.

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38. For example see: Statement of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of April 25, 2003, posted on the Commonwealth Institute Web site, <http://www.comw.org/warreport/fulltext/0304hekmatyar.pdf>.

39. Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004) 292.

40. Carlotta Gall, "11 Chinese Workers Killed in Rebel Attack in Afghanistan," *The New York Times* (June 10, 2004).

41. For more on this, please see the chapter by David Scott Palmer in this volume.

42. Much of the analysis presented here is based on the authors' observations while in Afghanistan during periods in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005. During 2005, Chris Mason served as the Political Officer for the PRT in Paktika.

43. The United Nations estimates the annual income of Afghanistan's opium industry at U.S.\$2.5 billion. The opium industry represents the largest source of income in Afghanistan. And the country produces 85-90 percent of the world's heroin. Quite simply Afghanistan is a Narco-State. See, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Government of Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Directorate, "Afghanistan Opium Survey, 2005," November 2005. For more on these issues, please see the chapter by Byrom and Walker in volume 2 of this publication.

44. ISAF was one of the results of the Bonn Agreement. ISAF's mission is to provide a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and reconstruction. See United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), 1386, 1413, 1444, and 1510.

45. In November 2005, CBS news quoted a "senior U.S. drug enforcement official" at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul as saying that he believed "90 percent of the district police chiefs in Afghanistan are either involved in the production of opium or protecting the trade in some way."

46. As Marshall Sokolov, the Commander-in-Chief of Soviet force in Afghanistan noted in 1986, "the enemy is primarily fighting in villages to provoke our air attacks and alienate the populations against us."

47. See "Enduring Freedom Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan," *Human Rights Watch* 16, no. 3 (March 2004), online at <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/afghanistan0304>.

48. Data through July 30, 2006. Data includes both killed-in-action and nonhostile casualties. Source, <http://icasualties.org/oef>.