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THESIS

ROLE OF AIRPOWER FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND FATA (FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS)

by

Irfan Ahmad

June 2009

Thesis Advisor:	Zachary Davis
Thesis Co-Advisor:	Feroz H. Khan

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This thesis examines the role of airpower in Counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The direct use of airpower is kinetic application to physically destroy the insurgents; indirect use involves support roles such as transportation, logistics, surveillance and reconnaissance. The former requires near-perfect intelligence and precision strikes to minimize unintended damage; the latter complements information warfare and supports ground mobility. This thesis focuses on how the direct application of airpower affects COIN in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Excessive use of sophisticated U.S. airpower and predator strikes has produced undesirable collateral damage, forcing exodus into FATA and complicating the regional situation. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) operates under operational, technological and cultural constraints. The use of drones in FATA by U.S. drones, conducted without adequate coordination, planning and political sensitivity, added to the trust deficit between crucial allies, making the use of airpower controversial and counterproductive. This thesis concludes that air power produced tactical gains but was strategically costly; it destroyed enemies, but also lost friends in the process.

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Irfan Ahmad
Wing Commander, Pakistan Air Force
B.S., Karachi University, Pakistan, 2001

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2009**

Author: Irfan Ahmad

Approved by: Zachary Davis
                Thesis Co-Advisor

                Feroz H. Khan
                Thesis Co-Advisor

                Harold A. Trinkunas, PhD
                Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of airpower in Counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The direct use of airpower is kinetic application to physically destroy the insurgents; indirect use involves support roles such as transportation, logistics, surveillance and reconnaissance. The former requires near-perfect intelligence and precision strikes to minimize unintended damage; the latter complements information warfare and supports ground mobility. This thesis focuses on how the direct application of airpower affects COIN in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Excessive use of sophisticated U.S. airpower and predator strikes has produced undesirable collateral damage, forcing exodus into FATA and complicating the regional situation. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) operates under operational, technological and cultural constraints. The use of drones in FATA by U.S. drones, conducted without adequate coordination, planning and political sensitivity, added to the trust deficit between crucial allies, making the use of airpower controversial and counterproductive. This thesis concludes that air power produced tactical gains but was strategically costly; it destroyed enemies, but also lost friends in the process.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The U.S.-led coalition invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. Airpower played a key role in overthrowing the Taliban regime. The people of Afghanistan, especially in major cities such as Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat, welcomed the change from the Taliban's repressive rule. Many Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters were killed. Some fled to mountainous regions in the east, some escaped to neighboring Pakistani Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and many Taliban were allowed to go home and resume normal life after surrendering their weapons to the newly installed government. Many operations were launched in the following months to kill Al-Qaeda fighters and Taliban who escaped. By 2003, the security situation was considered to be under control.[1]

The security environment in Afghanistan worsened in 2006[2] and has escalated into an insurgency. Increased numbers of U.S. and coalition troop causalities led to a debate among intellectuals and security experts about the causes of the deteriorating security situation. While generally blaming bad governance, unsatisfactory law and order situation, weak reconstruction and development efforts,[3] and the availability of safe havens for insurgents in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), some authors consider the excessive use of airpower and resulting collateral damage as an important factor in the escalation. For instance, Thomas Johnson, an expert on Afghanistan, while pointing out that the collateral damage has adversely affected the counterinsurgency (COIN) effort, argues that "particularly problematic has been the careless use of U.S. air power."[4] Another author observes that "the ill-considered air

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[1] Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly,* Vol. 5 (2007): 93.

[2] Mohammad Mosoom Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach Towards Peace and Reconciliation*,*" United States Institute of Peace*,* Special Report 212 (2008): 2.

[3] Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after Taliban* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007). See William Maley, "Stabilizing Afghanistan: Threats and Challenges," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2008); available from www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22337&prog=zgp&proj=zsa. See also Thomas Johnson, 104.

[4] Johnson, "On the Edge," 123.

strike raids by American and other NATO forces, which have killed and wounded countless innocent civilians, have been exploited for political gains by the Taliban."[5] Similarly, it appears that the U.S. controlled drone attacks on the terrorist networks in FATA, providing support to the insurgents in Afghanistan, have claimed some military gains albeit at a significant political cost due to a high ratio of civilian casualties during the attacks.

Insurgency in Afghanistan and rising militancy in Pakistan's FATA are connected yet distinct. They are connected because the insurgency in Afghanistan is the cause of militancy in FATA; and the militancy in FATA supports the insurgency in Afghanistan. There was no militancy in FATA before the U.S. led coalition invaded Afghanistan. For ethnic, cultural and geographic reasons the Afghan insurgents find refuge in FATA, return to fight foreign forces in Afghanistan and also find it easy to recruit new members to sustain their effort. The Afghan insurgency and the militancy in FATA are distinct because the insurgents face two different opposition forces. In Afghanistan, insurgents fight the U.S. led coalition forces, while FATA confronts Pakistan's security forces. The insurgents in both areas enjoy fair support from the local people, but for different reasons. In Afghanistan, public support is primarily due to bad governance and probably resentment against the foreign presence. Support for FATA is due to ethnic and cultural factors.

The counterinsurgent and counter-militant forces have a common interest in fighting rising radicalization in their societies, but they have different sensitivities and stakes that translate into different approaches to the application of kinetic force. The U.S. led coalition is fighting a "distant war," with almost no fear of immediate backlash against their domestic populations. Pakistan's security forces, on the other hand, are fighting a "local war," with a fear of serious backlash against the local population. [6] The

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[5] Noureddine Jebnoun, "The Denial of Failure in Afghanistan," *Small Wars Journal* (October 2008); available from http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/10/the-denial-of-failure-in.php.

[6] Feroz Khan, a regional expert and professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, used the terms "distant war" and "local war" during a class for the course NS4663 at NPS.

U.S. led coalition forces are superior in almost every regard, especially in terms of airpower assets. This translates to a vastly superior fighting capability compared with Pakistan's security forces.

Politically, the application of kinetic force (especially airpower) in an insurgency or against militancy has always been a difficult task. Complex local dynamics make it even more demanding. This thesis analyzes the role of airpower for the operations against Afghan and FATA insurgents. Understanding why and how airpower has been employed in these conflicts helps show some of the mistakes made in the past, as well as suitable solutions.

A.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive literature is available on COIN, and most authors agree on the major issues in the field. This is not the case for use of airpower in COIN. The shorter history of airpower is probably one reason that the literature is limited, although the use of airpower in Afghanistan dates back to 1919, and much literature is available on airpower in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S.-led coalition operations.

A consensus seems to exist that "the population" is the common center of gravity for insurgents, as well as counterinsurgents. Analysts see insurgency and the COIN as a competition between insurgents and counterinsurgents to win the support of people.[7] Whoever wins the population, wins the conflict. According to Robert Jones, the job of the government is more difficult. The insurgents can be successful with verbal promises to the people. The government, however, must deliver on its promises to win the support of the people.[8] A few authors have argued that good governance prevents insurgents from growing roots among the population. The legitimacy of the government increases if people see the insurgents as "bad guys." People will support the COIN only if they are

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[7] Alan J. Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Mission* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2006), 9. See also Major Lee K. Grubbs et al., "Is There a Deep Fight in a Counterinsurgency?" *Military Review* (July 2005).

[8] Robert Jones, "Winning the Ideological Battle for the Support of the Populace," *Small Wars Journal* (October 2008); available from http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/04/small-wars-journal-magazine-tw-1/.

convinced that the counterinsurgents have the determination, the means and the will to eliminate the insurgents. Therefore, protecting people from insurgents may offer more dividends.[9]

According to James S. Corum, "[T]he counterinsurgency effort should be geared to driving a wedge between population and the rebels."[10] Most writers seem to agree that a carefully planned comprehensive COIN strategy is required to separate the population from the rebels. A complete unity of effort must exist between the military and the state organs responsible for economic, social and political projects. A heavy-handed approach focused solely on the application of military force might prove counterproductive, especially if it results in significant collateral damage.[11]

Most authors consider intelligence critically important for the planning and execution of COIN operations. Electronic intelligence may allow easy detection of the enemy in a conventional war. In an insurgency, however, finding the enemy is a serious issue, and electronic intelligence acquisition may not suffice. Highlighting the importance of human intelligence (HUMINT), Craig Coppock suggests that an effort should be made to catch insurgents alive instead of killing them in the operation. Eliot Cohen and Jonathan Morgenstein emphasize the need for knowledge about the culture, customs and tradition of the insurgents in order to correctly interpret the intelligence acquired.[12]

Educating the masses as well as the armed forces also plays a significant role in the conduct of COIN. Effective psychological operations can convince the population that they will be better off helping the government. In conventional wars, hatred of the

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[9] Eliot Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperative, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (March 2006).

[10] James S. Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy* (Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2007), 27.

[11] Cohen et al., "Principles," 3; Vick et al., *Air Power*, 30. Jonathan Morgenstein and Eric Vickland, "The Global Counter Insurgency: America's New National Security and Foreign Policy Paradigm," *Small Wars Journal* (October 2008); available from smallwarsjournal.com/mag/docs-temp/2-morgenstein-vickland.pdf.

[12] Ibid.

enemy may arouse courage among the troops. In contrast, in COIN operations, sympathy and kindness towards the population may help drive a wedge between the insurgents and the population.[13]

Traditional air power theory suggests that airpower is not the ideal tool for COIN. The prominent theorists of pre-and post-World War II eras, Giulio Douhet, Hugh Trenchard and Billy Mitchel, hardly dealt with COIN. These authors advocated massive airpower employment against population centers to break the will of the people. Some preferred targeting industrial infrastructure, but did not pay attention to collateral damage. According to Sir John Cotesworth Slessor, Marshal of the British Royal Air Force and WWII strategist, a laborer killed in a factory can be as important as a soldier killed fighting on the front.[14] These early theorists identified a few important characteristics of the airpower that can be useful for employment in COIN. For instance, Douhet, an Italian airpower theorist of the post WWI era, highlighted that airpower operates in the third dimension, "unhampered by the geographic barriers." Trenchard, known as the father of the Royal Air Force, argued that "nothing can be more annoying than to be attacked by a weapon which you have no means of hitting back at."[15]

After the Vietnam War, theorists wrote that airpower is not the ideal weapon for COIN, as it is difficult to completely avoid collateral damage that leads to serious political repercussions.[16]

Beside these early thoughts, no real efforts were made to relate COIN to airpower until the 1980s. During next the two decades, authors such as Deryck Eller, Rod Paschall, Thomas Hammes, William Olson, Larry Cable and Dennis M. Drew studied the application of airpower to COIN. Most found airpower useful in supporting roles such as

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[13] Morgenstein and Vickland, "The Global Counter Insurgency."

[14] Phillip S. Meilinger, "Trenchard, Slessor, and Royal Air Force Doctrine before World War II," in *The Path of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory,* edited by Phillip S. Meilinger (Alabama: Air University Press, 2001), 41-78.

[15] Phillip S. Meilinger, "Giulio Douhet and the Origins of Airpower Theory," in *The Path of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory,* edited by Phillip S. Meilinger (Alabama: Air University Press, 2001), 1-40; and "Trenchard, Slessor, and Royal Air Force Doctrine Before World War II."

[16] James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 270.

reconnaissance, transportation and logistic support. Highlighting the importance of secondary roles, Drew argues that these roles are "so important that to call them supporting is difficult." In regards to airpower's strike role, most authors agree on the importance of limiting collateral damage to a bare minimum.[17]

Airmen of the 1980s and early 1990s thought that the COIN operations did not require sophisticated high tech aircraft. High speed supersonic jets, flying at high altitudes, were considered unsuitable. Helicopters flying below 2000 feet were the preferred option, because they offered better observation of the scenario, more accurate weapons delivery and the flexibility to land in a variety of places. Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs), however, altered the situation, especially during Soviet operations in Afghanistan.[18] The SAMs improved accuracy and mobility allowed engagement of low flying aircraft with a reasonably high degree of success, forcing the aircraft to fly at high altitudes outside the SAMs' range. The decreased accuracy of air launched weapons thus led to increased collateral damage, raising questions about the relevance of airpower for COIN.

Technological advancements in airpower in the last couple of decades significantly impacts airpower utilization. Improved accuracy of guidance systems, increased endurance of the delivery platforms and reduced reaction times, along with improvements in command and control infrastructure, have increased the range of employment options for airpower. Recently, Richard Andre argues that with more accurate delivery, aircraft can fly at high altitudes and still deploy weapons accurately, thus reducing collateral damage. For this reason, Andre declares airpower is relevant for COIN. [19]

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[17] Dennis M. Drew, "Air Theory, Air Force, and Low Intensity Conflict: A Short Journey to Confusion," in *The Path of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory,* edited by Phillip S. Meilinger (Alabama: Air University Press, 2001), 321-56.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Richard Andres, "The New Role of Air Strike in Small Wars," *Small Wars Journal* (July, 2008); available from http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/07/the-new-role-of-air-strike-in/.

Afghanistan occupies an important location in Asia. Allama Iqbal, the famous Muslim poet of British India, called it "the heart of Asia;" Lord Curzon, a British Viceroy of India, called it "the cockpit of Asia."[20] Afghanistan has attracted many invaders. The British invaded frequently in the 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily to insure a favorable regime in Kabul and to extend trade towards west into Turkistan. The Soviets competed with the British to extend their influence in Afghanistan. In 1979, at the height of the Cold War, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, primarily to install a favorable regime. A U.S. led coalition invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to destroy Al-Qaida and oust the Taliban regime.

Afghanistan has a strong tribal culture. The state influence extends to peripheral areas through tribal leaders (maliks) or local warlords. The tribes have a history of changing allegiances based on material and political benefits.[21] Mountstuart Elphinstone wrote in 1809,

> [T]he utmost disorders of the royal government never derange its operations, nor disturb the lives of the people. A number of organized and high spirited republics are ready to defend their rugged country against a tyrant and are able to defy the feeble efforts of a party in a civil war.[22]

Due to the unique state-society relationship, most invaders faced little difficulty in reaching Kabul and installing puppet regimes; but almost all faced huge challenges from subsequent insurgencies waged by the tribes.[23]

The history of airpower in Afghanistan by various invaders is relatively short. The British were the first to use airpower in the 1919 third Anglo-Afghan War. According to O'Ballance, "[The] RAF instilled fear into both the Afghan Army and the tribesmen and

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[20] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 7.

[21] Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons of Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 2006), 26; Rashid, 12; Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10. According to Edgar O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars: Battles into a Hostile Land 1839 to the Present* (London: Brassy's, 2002), one reason for first Afghan war was the decline in British subsidies to Afghan tribes controlling the important trade routes from Peshawar to Kabul.

[22] Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 76.

[23] O'Ballance;*Afghan Wars.* See also Andrew Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic: Afghan Responses to Foreign Intervention* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Center, 2006).

above all into Amir."[24] During the Soviet invasion of 1979-1989, airpower was employed in a support role during the early stages of the war. Mountainous terrain and the Mujahedeen's guerilla tactics forced the Soviets to use airpower in combat roles as well. It proved effective until the Mujahedeen received Stinger SAMs from the U.S.[25]

Airpower was used extensively in the U.S. led coalition invasion, and played a decisive role until Taliban regime was ousted. In follow-up operations against Al-Qaeda, the mountainous regions in eastern Afghanistan and intelligence gathering difficulties posed serious challenges to airpower.[26] Various authors have criticized the use of airpower in subsequent COIN operations, however. According to Cordesman and Wenger, airpower is proving counterproductive due to collateral damage.[27] However, Cordesman considers technological developments and is optimistic about the future role of airpower for COIN in Afghanistan.

B.   ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The thesis is organized in six chapters including the introduction, conclusion and an annex. Chapter II is dedicated to understanding the theory of COIN and airpower. The chapter argues that airpower, if appropriately employed, can play a positive role in COIN. The chapter explains the theory of insurgency and airpower, discussing also how airpower should be employed for COIN and what mistakes in the employment of airpower can prove counterproductive for COIN operations.

There is a perception that the U.S. counterterrorism mindset is responsible for inappropriate employment of airpower in Afghanistan and FATA. Chapter III demonstrates that these perceptions are not completely correct. The entire hierarchy of the U.S. led coalition force had adequate theoretical knowledge about COIN and the importance of winning the support of the people. The chapter analyzes why the coalition's direct use of airpower proved counterproductive for COIN in Afghanistan.

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[24] O'Ballance, 71.

[25] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 387-9; O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 162.

[26] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Washington D.C.: Rand Corporation, 2005).

[27] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*.

The important finding of the chapter is that the evolution of direct use of airpower in Afghanistan, which is reactive rather than proactive, has been influenced by misperceptions of the capacity of airpower.

Chapter IV analyzes the use of airpower in FATA. The direct use of airpower has been witnessed in FATA by local as well as external forces. Drone attacks, part of a dubious arrangement involving the U.S., have caused significant controversy between Pakistan and the U.S. Pakistan's security forces have made extensive use of airpower. The aim of the chapter is to analyze the complete spectrum of air operations in the area and reveal how the U.S. employment of drone attacks has affected the Pakistan's effort against militancy. Insufficient information about Pakistan's operations makes a comprehensive examination of the use of airpower by the Pakistan's security forces difficult. In addition to available open source material, the author's personal knowledge and observation is used to analyze the Pakistan's use of airpower in FATA.

Chapter V summarizes the important findings and offers recommendations for the application of airpower for COIN in Afghanistan and FATA.

Afghanistan has experienced insurgency for significant part of its history, and the use of airpower is not new to the Afghani insurgents. Over the last two and a half centuries, the evolution of insurgency in Afghanistan has been affected by tribal, cultural and religious factors, external interferences and the internal dynamics of the state-society relationship. Why have tribal power struggles been transformed into "Islamic radicalism" in recent times? What is the role of external players? It may not be possible to draw accurate lessons from Afghanistan without considering the context of the current insurgency. Therefore, an annex to the thesis is dedicated to describing the evolution of insurgency in Afghanistan.

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II.   THE ROLE OF AIRPOWER IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

A.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals briefly with the theory of insurgency and the theory of airpower. Effort is made to explain various level of insurgency, the key sensitivities of the belligerents involved, and the role that airpower can potentially play in a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign.

Recent experiences have raised questions about the role of airpower for COIN. How should airpower be employed for COIN, and what mistakes are counterproductive for COIN operations? In an insurgency the insurgent and the counterinsurgent compete for control of the population. People's support is decisive for a victory. The insurgents and the counterinsurgents compete at two levels: political and military. At the political level, various methods are employed to win the support of the people. At the military level, kinetic energy, i.e. ground and airpower, is discreetly applied to eliminate or coerce the insurgents to give up their demands. Because the insurgents often take refuge in the population, an excessive or inappropriate application of kinetic energy can cause losses to the population. The consequent political loss to the counterinsurgent can be decisive in the conflict. Therefore, the kinetic application, especially the airpower must be very careful in a COIN.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part briefly covers the theory of insurgency and airpower. The second part covers the role of airpower by examining counterinsurgency operations in Malaysia, Greece, Philippine and Vietnam. The last part briefly analyzes the methods used to separate the population from insurgents and the role of airpower in each of the four cases, followed by a conclusion.

B.   INSURGENCY

The U.S. Joint Doctrine defines insurgency as "an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power or other political authority while increasing insurgent

control."[28] Counterinsurgency is explained as "actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency."[29] Insurgency and COIN are included in a broad category of conflict called "irregular warfare." The definitions, while fairly comprehensive, do not clearly identify the government that is the target of insurgency.[30] Some authors have also termed such warfare as "small war."[31] Small war is an exact translation of the Spanish word *guerrilla*, which originated with the Spanish resistance to Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Spain in 1807.[32] Wray Johnson notes that most people use the term "guerrilla" to describe not a characteristic of war, but rather the type of tactics that employ small scale surprise engagements targeted at enemy's vulnerable areas.[33] According to the U.S. Marine Corps Manual, the small war as applied to the U.S. is defined as

> Operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.[34]

This definition does not cover the entire spectrum of measures taken to fight the insurgents, but rather illustrates the anomaly highlighted earlier. For the purpose of this thesis, the terms "insurgency" and "counterinsurgency" are used in the context of small wars in which the insurgents widely employ "guerrilla" tactics.

Usually an insurgency is characterized by a violent political challenge to the writ of the state. The government reacts with a heavy hand to crush the challenge. As the competition advances, external actors may get involved on either side to advance their

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[28] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24* (Washington, DC: 2006), 1-1.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 7.

[32] Wray R. Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine for Small Wars* (Bangkok: White Lotus Co. Ltd, 2001), 13.

[33] Ibid.

[34] U.S. Department of Defense, *Small War Manual: United States Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1940); available from http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/swm/full.pdf.

own interests and provide financial, material, human, political and moral support to insurgents or the counterinsurgents. According to Wray Johnson, the insurgency literature offers three models of insurgency, the Leninist, Maoist, and Guevarist.

The Leninist model explains an insurgency as a vanguard group of revolutionaries motivating the people to rise against a weak government that has lost its coercive power. The Maoist model describes people's war as involving three phases. The first phase is the insurgent's strategic defensive against the counterinsurgent's strategic offensive. The insurgents develop their administrative infrastructure and "shadow government" by challenging the government's authority through propaganda and terrorism. The main objective at this stage is to establish secure bases that can later be used to expand the insurgency. In the second phase of Mao's people's war, the insurgents launch counteroffensives to expand their activities and influence by directly challenging the government forces. In the third phase, the insurgents launch strategic offensives against counterinsurgents. During this phase, large scale conventional attacks are undertaken for a decisive victory. The third model, the Guevarist model, differs from the Leninist model in suggesting that a determined insurgent force with strong popular support can defeat the government forces even if the latter has superior coercion power.[35]

Insurgents rarely have the strength to defeat the government forces in a conventional fight, especially during the early stages of the insurgency. Therefore, they resort to guerrilla tactics.[36] Robert Taber offers an interesting comparison of guerrilla warfare to a flea in the following passage.

> The guerrilla fights the war of the flea. The flea bites, hops, and bites again, nimbly avoiding the foot that would crush him. He does not seek to kill his enemy at a blow, but to bleed him and feed on him, to plague and bedevil him, to keep him from resting and to destroy his nerve and his morale. All of this requires time. Still more time is required to breed more

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[35] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 28–30.

[36] James S. Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy* (Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2007), 13.

fleas. What starts the local infestation must become an epidemic, as one by one the areas of resistance link up, like spreading ink spots on a blotter.[37]

Support of the people is the key to winning an insurgency. Considering the importance of popular support, most COIN theorists term the population as a common "center of gravity" for both insurgents and counterinsurgents.[38] The foremost effort on the counterinsurgent's part, therefore, should be to detach the people from the insurgents and attach them to counterinsurgent efforts. This key insight was proposed by Ralph Sanders in a three stage COIN plan for South Vietnam in 1962. The plan recommends that in the first stage, the people should be physically detached from the insurgents by transferring them to fortified villages. By providing good governance in the form of justice, job opportunities and improved social conditions the people should become attached to the government. During the second stage, the guerrillas should be targeted militarily and as many as possible killed or captured. During the third stage, an attempt should be made to convert the captured guerrillas into useful citizens.[39] Most contemporary scholars and COIN experts seem to maintain similar ideas.

In an insurgency, insurgents and counterinsurgents compete at two levels, military and political. Militarily, both attempt to undermine each other's war making potential. Politically, they compete for legitimacy to win public support. According to Dennis M. Drew, for victory the counterinsurgents need to win both competitions, whereas the insurgents just need to win one.[40] Militarily the counterinsurgents are invariably superior to insurgents, especially during the initial stages of the insurgency. Often the counterinsurgents attempt to militarily crush the insurgency through brute application of military force. Misdirected application of force due to inadequate knowledge, inappropriate interpretation of knowledge, or to salvage a bad situation for friendly forces

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[37] Robert Taber, *Ear of the Flea: the Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (U.S.: Brassey's Inc., 2002), 49-50.

[38] United States Air Force, *Irregular Warfare: Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3*, (Washington D.C.: 2007), 10. Also see Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 27; and James S. Corum, "Airpower Thought in Continental Europe between the Wars," in *The Path of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory,* edited by Phillip S. Meilinger (Alabama: Air University Press, 2001), 173.

[39] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 36-7.

[40] Drew, "Air Theory," 324.

can lead to collateral damage. Killing populations in and around the area of conflict can result in political backlash against the counterinsurgents. In this way, tactical victory at the military level can result in a strategic loss at the political level. Most theorists, therefore, agree that in COIN with the primary purpose of depriving insurgents from popular support, political competition should take precedence over military competition. Application of political, economic and social measures through good governance, backed by discreet application of military power, has often proved effective in separating the people from insurgents. An indiscriminate use of kinetic energy (K.E.)[41] resulting in collateral damage can prove counterproductive to the COIN cause.[42]

Another concern for the political dimension of the insurgency is the direct involvement of external forces. A society may accept foreigners as guests, but resist if the latter attempt to impose their own rules, customs or objectives. Local people may perceive foreigners as corrupting or disrespecting their way of life and often rebel against foreign influences. Local people's tolerance varies according to the perceived actions of the internal and external counterinsurgents. Conversely, counterinsurgents often enjoy a greater margin of error as compared to foreign forces due to linguistic, ethnic or cultural ties. Anti-outsider sentiments are often used by insurgent leaders to organize rebellions against foreign elements or puppet regimes that are perceived as controlled by external actors.[43] Most theorists agree that for effective COIN operations, domestic troops should take a lead role, and if foreigners are involved, they should be limited to planning, training and supervising operations.

C.   AIRPOWER

For the purpose of this thesis, airpower is defined as all forms of aviation that can be used for COIN. It includes all the aircraft, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and the various kinds of loads that they can carry for different roles in COIN. Airpower can be employed in a COIN in two ways: indirect and direct. The indirect employment supports

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[41] K.E. here means fire power, whether from ground or air.

[42] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 27-8.

[43] William R. Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism and Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), xiii-xiv.

other elements to fight the insurgents or win over the population. Reconnaissance and surveillance can offer useful information about the location and movement of insurgents. In transport, airpower affords quick reaction to the ground forces against emerging threats from insurgents. Air logistics can support ground forces to sustain operations in isolated areas for extended period; it can also support the population and other agencies in execution of economic development. Psychological operations can be targeted on insurgents to generate divisions in their ranks. In a direct role, airpower is used to apply kinetic energy through close air support or independent air strikes against the insurgents. Enhanced range, endurance and accuracy resulting from technological advancements in the last two decades have substantially increased the lethality of airpower.

Airpower has the unique ability to operate in a third dimension, which allows quick concentration of force at the most important place and appropriate time without confronting most of the adversary's ground defenses. Early airpower theorists identified this ability of airpower to strike directly at the adversary's centre of gravity (COG), and therefore advocated massive, decisive and independent employment of airpower. Giulio Douhet, for instance, recommends "neutralizing an enemy's strategic 'vital centre.'"[44] Hugh Trechard argues that airpower can "shatter the will of an enemy country" without destroying an entire generation.[45] Similarly, William Mitchell says that attacking an enemy's war-making capability and will to fight "would yield a victory that was quicker and cheaper than one obtained by surface forces."[46] It is interesting to note that these claims were made before the Second World War, when the inaccurate targeting due to technological constraints allowed only 20 percent of weapons to be within 1000 feet of the target.[47]

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[44] Meilinger, "Giulio Douhet," 1.

[45] Meilinger, "Trenchard, Slessor, and Royal Air Force Doctrine," 41.

[46] Mark A. Goldfelter, ed., "Molding Airpower Convictions: Development and Legacy of William Mitchell's Strategic Thought," in *The Path of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory,* edited by Phillip S. Meilinger (Alabama: Air University Press, 2001), 78.

[47] Craig D. Wills, *The Cadre Papers: Airpower, Afghanistan, and the Future of Warfare* (Alabama: Air University Press, 2006), 9.

Airpower technology has made significant progress during the last six decades. The accuracy has improved exponentially. The GPS guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) used in recent conflicts such as Afghanistan and Iraq are accurate within 10 to 15 feet even under complete overcast conditions or at night.[48] The accuracy and high reliability of modern weapon systems allow discreet engagement of targets with a high degree of success provided the target can be correctly identified. Many have criticized airpower for lack of persistence. Low fuel consumption due to improved engine technology, air to air refueling and UAVs now allow significantly increased range and endurance. Increased endurance coupled with reliable and highly mobile communications provide a greater sense of security to the ground component of a counterinsurgency effort. Ground troops chasing insurgents into populated areas are increasingly inclined to go an extra mile for a hard-kill because they can rely on airpower if trapped in a dangerous situation. Technologically, airpower has the potential to salvage a variety of situations, but it often comes with a political cost due to associated collateral damage. Thus, some of the effects of technological progress on COIN, such as precision targeting and rapid response, cannot escape the serious limitations inherent in the political nature of COIN. [49]

The lethality of airpower has often forced insurgents to hide in populated areas.[50] It has drastically reduced the chances of military defeat for counterinsurgents because the insurgents are unable to concentrate and launch a decisive "strategic offensive"—Mao's third phase. Such revolutionary tactics require the concentration of insurgent forces to win and hold ground, exposing them to direct application of airpower that may cause debilitating casualties. However, political gains may be nullified if airpower is identified as foreign or seen to represent external players. In this case, even a population that has been physically and ideologically separated from the insurgents may retain sympathy for indigenous rebels if victimized by of a foreign air assault. Recent airpower theorists,

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[48] Wills, *The Cadre Papers*, 10.

[49] Steven Metz, "Small Wars: From Low Intensity Conflict to Irregular Challenges," in *Rethinking the Principles of War,* edited by Anthony D. McIvor (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 280.

[50] Adam J. Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era* (Arlington: Rand Corporation, 2006), 113.

therefore, consider indirect use of airpower such as transport, reconnaissance and surveillance more important and effective for COIN, especially when the insurgents are not physically separated from the population. In conventional warfare, direct use of airpower becomes more effective and the political consequences of collateral damage less damaging when battle lines and allegiances are clearly delineated.[51]

D. THEORETICAL MODEL: APPLICATION OF AIRPOWER FOR COIN

Based on theories of insurgency, COIN and airpower, this thesis proposes the following three step scheme for the effective application of airpower in COIN.
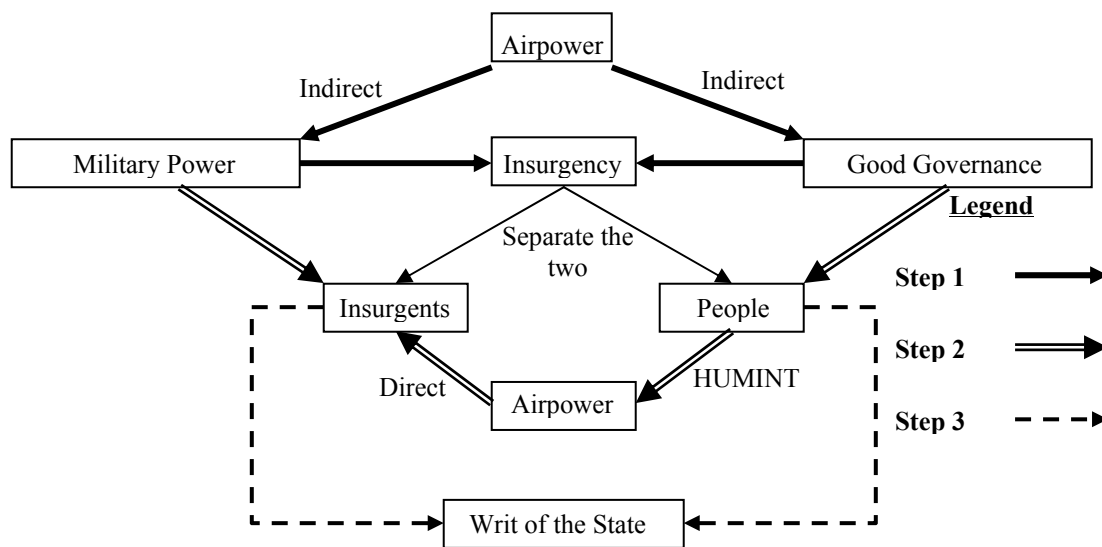
Figure 1.   Application of Airpower for COIN

1.   Step 1: Separate Insurgents from Local Population

Military power to coerce insurgents and good governance in the form of social reforms and economic development must be applied almost simultaneously. Indirect use of airpower for missions such as transportation, reconnaissance, surveillance, logistics and aerial drops can support the application of military power as well as the execution of projects for economic development. The primary aim at this stage is to separate the people from insurgents. Airpower in a direct role should be applied only if the

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[51] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 427.

opportunity arises and with extreme caution against collateral damage. Insurgents are notoriously good at exploiting collateral damage to discredit and sabotage economic and social developments. Therefore, the military component of COIN, including all law enforcement aspects, must provide adequate protection to the civilian component.

2.   Step 2: Directed Application of Force

This phase starts after the people have been successfully separated from the insurgents. The separation can be of two types, soft separation and hard separation. In soft separation, people are not afraid to work against the insurgent army, and may show increased willingness to spy on the insurgents. Increased Human Intelligence (HUMINT) can translate into improved effectiveness of K.E., especially airpower. Hard separation occurs when the insurgents decide to move away from the people physically, allowing more liberal application of K.E. options. Airpower can be useful in many ways in this stage. It can provide support for economic development through indirect uses such as transportation and logistics, and can be used directly to provide security against insurgents' activities. Airpower can be called to respond to the HUMINT provided by soft separation, and it can play a decisive role by reacting strongly to hard separation.

An important question is, what cautions in the application of airpower must be exercised at this stage? Hard separation offers greater freedom, and airpower can be applied with minimal political cost. Its effects on soft separation, however, can be risky. Political costs can be prohibitive if the wrong target is engaged. Before striking, all intelligence must be verified through multiple sources. The weapons used must correspond to the size, strength and importance of the target. The political cost-benefit analysis must be done before deciding to engage the target.

3.   Step 3: Sticks and Carrots for the Insurgents

Increased military pressure, along with political measures such as dialog and amnesty offers, will encourage the insurgents to accept the writ of the state, which also has positive effects on the people.

E. SEPARATING THE PEOPLE FROM INSURGENCY: ALLOW APPLICATION OF K.E.

Separating the population from insurgents is the key to successful COIN. Prospects for the application of K.E., especially through airpower have a direct relationship to the type and level of separation between the insurgents and the population. Three different levels of separation are discussed in the following paragraphs to explain the prospects for application of airpower.

A scenario where the insurgents are physically separated from the population offers greater prospects for the application of K.E. It is easier for counterinsurgents to separate the population from insurgents socially in this situation primarily because the benefits of economic development can be directed towards the population and it is difficult for the insurgents to coerce the population. Social separation squeezes the insurgents for logistics such as food, shelter, weapons, fresh recruitments and information. Airpower can play a lead role in applying K.E. in such cases because there is no fear of collateral damage. Airpower can operate independently to kill insurgents and destroy their support infrastructure. Application of K.E. can force the insurgents to move into areas favorable for the operation of counterinsurgent ground forces. If the terrain or weather conditions are not conducive to application of airpower, the indirect application of airpower for transportation, logistics, reconnaissance and surveillance allows ground forces to operate in far flung areas for extended periods.

In another scenario, insurgents are physically co-located with the population but do not command the support of the people. In this situation, insurgents may coerce the population for food, shelter, resources to sustain the insurgency and fresh recruits. Opportunities may arise to apply K.E. due to increased availability of accurate human intelligence. A careful approach, however, is necessary to avoid collateral damage that might lead to popular support for the insurgents. Ground forces should play a lead role in this situation. For independent application of K.E. by airpower, the people and insurgents should be physically separated, either by forcing the insurgents to move away from the population or by relocating the population. If physical separation is not possible, the direct application of air power will have to be coordinated and restricted.

The most demanding scenario from the counterinsurgent's perspective is when the insurgents are neither physically nor socially separated from the population. This scenario offers the fewest prospects for the application of K.E. Until social separation is achieved, the role of airpower is best kept indirect. Application of K.E. without social separation will be counterproductive and self defeating.

The following sections examine four case studies of COIN that highlight different types of separations between local populations and insurgents and their implications for the use of K.E. The cases are selected to explain different population-insurgent relationships. In the Malaysian insurgency, for instance, the people were physically separated from the insurgents. By contrast, in the Greek civil war, insurgents were physically located among the people but had little social support. In the Philippines, the insurgents were physically located within the population and also had significant social support. And the case of Vietnam demonstrates the dangers associated with the application of K.E. without social separation and highlights the critical role of the central government receiving foreign support for counterinsurgency.

1.   Physically Separated Insurgents: The British in Malaya

The Malayan insurgency (1948–1960) offers a good example of an insurgent movement in which the people were physically separated from the insurgents. In Malaya, the insurgents chose to base themselves away from the main population centers. Despite support from a significant portion of the local Chinese community, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) retreated into the jungles once the British reestablished their authority in late 1945. The MCP resurfaced in 1948, after the majority of population, including Malayans, rejected British rule.[52] Operating from deep thick jungles, insurgents relied heavily on the support of populations at the fringes of the jungles.

In order to physically separate the insurgents, the counterinsurgents relocated the populations. Subsequent social work, issuing of identification cards, and food rationing

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[52] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 187.

helped to separate the insurgents socially from the population. Making the villagers responsible for the internal security of their villages through home guards programs helped generate a sense of participation and importance among the people.[53]

The British strategy extended the insurgent's supply lines. The insurgents' physical and social isolation from the population increased their vulnerability, which created opportunities for indirect and direct application of airpower. The insurgents had to travel long distances from their hideouts to get food from population, which made them vulnerable to security forces; it also offered greater opportunities to collect intelligence. With the help of transportation (para-drops) and logistics provided by airpower, the ground forces could patrol for insurgents deep in the jungles for extended periods, sometimes as much as 30 days. Food shortages forced the insurgents to clear forest land and cultivate food for survival. Aircraft were used to spray crop-killing chemicals to destroy the food grown by insurgents. Extensive air strikes were also carried out, probably because there was no fear of collateral damage.[54] Despite reduced effectiveness due to thick jungle, airpower played a key role in breaking the will of the insurgents because they were effectively separated from the population.

2.   Socially Separated Insurgents: The Greek Civil War

Another scenario is that the insurgents lack popular support and must rely on coercion for food and recruits, as was the case in the 1947–49 Greek civil war. The communist insurgents in Greece managed to organize as a result of the Italian and German invasions in World War II. They received external support from neighboring communist countries as well as Great Britain.[55] After the German and Italian withdrawal, British and later U.S. forces moved in to defeat the communist insurgency.

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[53] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 45.

[54] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 194-8.

[55] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 96.

Despite their physical control of significant area of the countryside, the insurgents lost the support of the masses after the German and Italian withdrawal. One reason they lost support was that people had become "tired, hungry, and desperate for peace."[56] Many Greek ex-soldiers who joined the insurgents left to resume normal life.[57] In order to isolate the insurgents physically from the population, the Greek government, under American guidance, introduced a "strategy of staggered expansion of control."[58] Unnecessary patrols to eliminate insurgents were discontinued. Government forces would select an appropriate area and push the insurgents out of that area, securing the population against coercion. Airpower during this phase was mostly employed in indirect roles, including tactical reconnaissance, air observation, artillery spotting, aerial supplies and psychological operations.[59]

In the meanwhile, the external support to insurgents also faded. In December 1948, the insurgents made a wrong decision based on internal differences of opinion on strategy, progressing prematurely to the third stage of the Maoist model. The next phase, conventional fighting, was ideally suited for the direct application of airpower. Employed in roles such as close air support, armed reconnaissance and independent strikes, airpower accounted for more than half of the insurgents' causalities, and played an important role in the final victory of the COIN.[60]

There are differences of opinion on the importance of external support to the Greek civil war. According to Wray Johnson, the termination of external support to the insurgents was a "decisive factor" in the final outcome of conflict.[61] Polk, however, considers the external support to insurgents as important, but not decisive.[62] This author believes that eliminating external support to the insurgency is an important consideration

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[56] Polk, *Violent Politics*, 103.

[57] Andre Gerolymatos, *Democracies and Small Wars* (England: Frank Cass and Co., 2003), 134.

[58] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 103.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 107-10.

[61] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 38.

[62] Polk, *Violent Politics*, 105.

for COIN, but not the most important consideration. External support may not be significant if the population is effectively separated from the insurgents through good governance and the intelligent use of force.

3.   Well-supported Insurgents: The Philippine Insurgency

A third case is when the insurgents have support of the population, socially as well as physically, as in Philippine insurgency of 1946 to 1956. Unnecessary use of military force in such a situation is counterproductive. A more effective strategy would first separate the insurgents from the people through good governance, and then apply military force with care. The example of the Philippine insurgency illustrates limited opportunities for direct application of airpower.

The Philippine insurgency, referred to as a "communist rebellion"[63] by some authors, began with socioeconomic grievances of peasants (*taus*) against their landlords (*datus*).[64] The guerrillas' caring attitude toward the *taus* allowed them to win support and operate within populated areas.[65] The insurgents' popularity was increased by the government's initial heavy-handed approach, the poor state of its military forces, its bad treatment of the people and corruption in government institutions (especially the judiciary).[66]

In 1950, "longstanding and legitimate grievances" were clearly identified as the root cause of insurgency by U.S. advisors, especially Air Force Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Edward Lansdale. Lansdale and Ramon Magsaysay, the Philippines' Secretary of Defense and later the President, devised a strategy to separate the people from insurgents. Use of military force was drastically reduced. Reforms were undertaken to improve the military's skills and motivation, reduce corruption among government officials and provide better economic opportunities to the people.[67] Magsaysay's style of

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[63] Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 24.

[64] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 112-4.

[65] Polk, *Violent Politics*, 47.

[66] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 116-7.

[67] Ibid., 119-120.

leadership and simple personality also played an important role. Despite threats, he would frequently travel to the countryside to motivate the government machinery and establish close contact with the people. An amnesty program offered by the government encouraged over 9,000 guerrillas out of 25,000 to surrender.[68]

Meanwhile, from a sense of military superiority and probably also the pressure of declining popularity, the insurgents decided to progress to the third stage of Maoist model. The government made another smart move by switching from large formations of ground forces to small unit operations. Public support for the insurgency, already eroded by the government's good social work, swung in favor of the government after the people saw improved military performance by the government forces. As Corum and Johnson observe,

> ...noting how army units were besting the Huks at their own game and
> behaving themselves at the same time, Filipino peasants began to support
> the army and began to provide valuable intelligence on Huk whereabouts
> and movement.[69]

The role of airpower in this case was mostly restricted to indirect applications such as transport, reconnaissance, psychological operations and aerial supplies to ground forces. Technological limitations and the small size of the Philippine Air Force are among the reasons for limited direct application if airpower, but the nature of COIN demanded indirect use of airpower in any event.

4.   Importance of Effective Government: The Case of Vietnam

The role of the host government in separating the people from insurgents is critically important. Problems arise for external players in a COIN compound if the sovereign government fails to provide good governance. The application of airpower without a focused and coordinated effort to separate the people from insurgents is likely to prove counterproductive, as was the case in Vietnam.

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[68] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 43.

[69] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 125.

General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow, designated by President Kennedy to evaluate the insurgency, called the South Vietnam government "corrupt and disintegrating."[70] Sensing the U.S. desire to replace him, Ngo Dinh Diem, the President of South Vietnam, cleverly eliminated the alternative candidates, and the U.S. was forced to support Diem. Polk considers the repressive rule by Diem a "virtual factory" for the insurgents.[71] The self-defeating nature of Diem's brutal rule is amply illustrated by the killing of about 50,000 people, most of them honest and competent officers, whose relatives and friends then became his enemies.

Many attempts were made to apply important COIN lessons learned in Greece and Malaya, but all failed. The idea of "strategic hamlets" was attempted to physically separate the people from insurgents.[72] From 1957 to 1961, over 200,000 people were relocated. According to Polk, the exercise failed for cultural reasons.[73] Another opinion about the failure of this strategy is that the local governments did not understand the concept or display sufficient commitment to it. The village sites were not carefully selected. No efforts, like issuing identity cards and security checks, were adopted to restrict the movement of insurgents in and out of villages. In 1967, the CIA launched the "Phoenix Program" to target the insurgents' key leadership. The program led to the death, imprisonment or torture of thousands of people. It failed primarily due to corrupt administration, as the insurgents often managed to bribe jail officials.[74] In late 1968, an attempt was made to replace the "large unit sweeps" with "small unit operations" with the help of local security forces. This also did not work, because by then the insurgents had progressed to the third stage of insurgency.[75]

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[70] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 68.

[71] Polk, *Violent Politics*, 171.

[72] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1966), 142.

[73] Polk, *Violent Politics*, 172.

[74] Ibid., 179.

[75] Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine*, 72.

Significant airpower assets were deployed in Vietnam, but the lack of coordination among the various security agencies involved in the COIN effort did not create appropriate opportunities for the application of airpower. According to General Andre Beaufre, who served in Vietnam from 1947 to 1954, because the Viet Cong did not present lucrative targets in the South, "it became necessary to take the air war to North Vietnam," which led to unnecessary escalation of the insurgency and retaliatory reaction from the North Vietnam.[76] Corum and Johnson note serious differences between the United States' Air Force and Army on the use of airpower. At one stage the two services engaged in unhealthy competition. In late 1963 and early 1964, the Air Force began pursuing independent goals rather than supporting the ground forces.[77] Due to trust deficits between the American airmen and their hosts, the Americans took a more active role, exceeding their initial mandate to train and support the ground forces. The excessive use of direct airpower caused enormous loss to the COIN cause.

5. Comparative Analysis of the Case Studies

The general population is widely regarded as a common center of gravity for insurgents and counterinsurgents.[78] When the insurgents sense that they are losing popular support, they tend to make mistakes that create opportunities for the direct use of airpower and increased kinetic energy from the ground forces, as seen in the cases of Greece and Malaya. Similarly, when the counterinsurgents cannot separate the people from the insurgents, this often leads to disagreements within the ranks of the counterinsurgents that can be exploited by insurgents, as happened in Vietnam. Winning the population, therefore, becomes doubly important. It forces mistakes on the adversary, and also helps increase their susceptibility to error. Therefore, in a COIN, the political competition with insurgents to win people's hearts and minds and effectively separate them from the insurgents must have priority over the military competition.

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[76] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 268.

[77] Ibid, 268-72.

[78] United States Air Force, *Irregular Warfare: Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3* (2007), 10. See also Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror*, 27 and Corum, "Airpower Thought," 173.

Insurgents often use ideology or religion to win over the population. Popular support for insurgents or counterinsurgents, however, often depends on socioeconomic factors, as demonstrated by the cases of Greece and the Philippines. The use of ideological rhetoric by the government makes it difficult to trace the actual reasons for insurgency, as in the Philippines. It may even lead to wrong strategy, making it difficult to win the support of the people. The government should therefore focus on practical measure for socioeconomic development and delivering good governance, rather than competing with insurgents in propaganda.

Insurgents with reasonable levels of popular support may not offer lucrative targets. A weak COIN strategy—one designed without understanding the true causes of insurgency or a poorly coordinated execution—will not generate opportunities for direct use of airpower. Frustration and poor coordination due to organizational competition among fractured COIN operations, as witnessed in Vietnam, may lead to inappropriate or excessive use of airpower causing collateral damage that is totally counterproductive to COIN effort.

Notwithstanding the importance of good governance and socioeconomic measures by the government, a few military victories over insurgents can play a vital role in attaching the people to COIN forces and the government, as in the Philippines. Military victories convey the important message that the government has the capacity and the will to protect the people from insurgents' coercion. Therefore, opportunities to apply kinetic energy and win few tactical victories should not be wasted by adopting an overly careful and cautious approach.

High-tech airpower, having demonstrated its potential in the last two decades, tends to generate a false sense of capability. However, airpower provides no shortcuts for COIN, even with improved accuracy. Recruiting may not pose a problem for insurgents after a few fighters are lost to air strikes, especially if the strikes produce collateral damage. A loss of key leaders, however, may prove a serious blow to insurgency. Targeting strategy in COIN should be designed for political benefits at the strategic level, rather than for tactical victories. Attacking people who are suspected of being ordinary

insurgents based in populated areas can prove self-defeating.[79] The advantage gained from an aerial strike should be greater than the political loss to the host government and overall COIN effort.

Intelligence is essential for all aspects of COIN operations. It is just as important for waging the political battle as it is for military operations. Success in political competition with insurgents aimed at driving a wedge of separation between them and the population also produces improvements in the quality and quantity of intelligence required for military competition. Careful use of airpower can support intelligence gathering, whereas indiscriminate use of K.E. can undermine the ability to collect vital information. Counterinsurgency, therefore, should keep in mind the tradeoffs between the short-term tactical benefits of airpower that may interfere with intelligence collection, and the careful strategic use of airpower that promotes intelligence gathering beneficial for both military and political objectives.

F.   CONCLUSION

Airpower in a COIN is a double edged sword. Enhanced endurance, increased payloads and pin-point delivery accuracy give significant military advantage to the counterinsurgents over the insurgents. Inappropriate direct use of airpower resulting in civilian casualties, whether from bad intelligence or poor tactical decision making, can incur a high political cost.

The theory of insurgency argues that in a COIN, the political competition with the insurgents must be given priority over military competition. Indirect employment of airpower should be preferred until the insurgents are physically separated from the population. Once the insurgents are forced to move away from the population (Step 2 in the model described in this chapter), direct employment of airpower can be a strong weapon. Extreme restraint and patience must be exercised during Step 1 of the model. Impatience or frustration resulting in premature direct employment of airpower and collateral damage can lead to undesirable consequences for the counterinsurgents.

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[79] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 262.

Good intelligence based on multiple sources of information can create opportunities for direct application during Step 1. If such an opportunity arises, the counterinsurgents should not shy away from direct use of airpower, because tactical military victories over insurgents help win popular support. However, the chances of civilian casualties must first be ruled out due to their high political cost.

III.   AIRPOWER FOR COIN IN AFGHANISTAN

A.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes why airpower in Afghanistan was employed as it was by the U.S.-led coalition forces. Coalition air operations in Afghanistan were similar to other recent U.S. operations, including the first Gulf war and Kosovo operations. In Afghanistan, although the Taliban air defense assets were meager, the initial thrust of coalition efforts focused on winning air supremacy. Ground operations by the Northern Alliance forces were preceded by the use of airpower to prepare the battlefield for ground forces, making it easy to defeat the Taliban.[80] By 2003, it seemed that airpower was the coalition's key to winning the war.

In mid 2006, when the insurgency in Afghanistan started to gain momentum, airpower was probably considered a potent option to suppress the insurgents. It was used extensively for both indirect employment and close air support, with mixed results. In direct employment at the tactical level it often rescued the ground forces from difficult situations. The civilian casualties, however, caused negative effects at the strategic level by pushing popular support toward the insurgents, proving counterproductive for COIN. This chapter attempts to demonstrate that the use of airpower was intentionally or unintentionally influenced by false perceptions about its capabilities. Because of constraints posed by the tactical compulsions and strategic losses, coupled with serious criticisms of collateral damage, the operations evolved into a reactive rather than proactive application of direct airpower.

This chapter begins with a brief history of air operations employed by external forces against Afghanis, which clarifies why the insurgents in Afghanistan are proving resilient against the coalition air operations during the COIN stage of the conflict. The chapter reviews the coalition's air operations in Afghanistan, which started with a conventional mindset focused on dislodging the Taliban from Kabul. The evolution of air

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[80] The Northern Alliance is an Afghan opposition group consisting of non-Pashtun ethnic factions such as Tajiks and Uzbeks.

operations for COIN in Afghanistan is discussed next. The model presented in Chapter II is used to validate the COIN effort in Afghanistan. The last part of the chapter discusses some reasons air operations evolved as they have in Afghanistan.

B.   THE FIRST EXPERIENCE: 1919 WAR AGAINST BRITISH INDIA

Afghans experienced the wrath of airpower for the first time in the 1919 war against British India. The Afghan army was reasonably strong thanks to Amir Abdur Rehman, known as "Iron Erim" for his heavy handed policies towards the Afghan tribes in the late 19th century. Taking advantage of the depleted military strength of the British Indian army because of World War I, Amir Amanullah declared independence[81] on March 3, 1919. Encouraged by the weak British response, the amir developed the notion of extending Afghanistan's frontiers southward to the port of Karachi and eastward to Peshawar and as far as the Indus River. Supported by local tribes in places such as Waziristan, he opened multiple fronts and posed a significant challenge to the British forces.

After few months of fighting, the amir was overwhelmed and forced to sign an armistice in August 1919. Airpower played a significant role in curbing his expansionist ambitions. Afghans were unnerved by the British bomber aircraft that mainly targeted Afghan military camps. According to Edgar O'Ballance, "[T]he RAF [Royal Air Force] instilled fear into both the Afghan Army and the tribesmen, and above all into the Amir."[82] Afghans quickly gave up their expansionist ideas. However, the British ceded control of Afghan foreign policy, the main bone of contention, primarily because of weaknesses incurred by World War I.

C.   AIRPOWER REVISITS AFGHANS: SOVIET INVASION 1979-1989

Afghans experienced airpower again during the Soviet invasion. The Soviets met a resilient and resolute adversary that displayed a positive learning curve as the operation progressed. The Soviets planned to occupy major bases, garrisons and population centers

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[81] "Independence" here means an independent internal and external policy which historically was strongly influenced by Great Britain and Russia.

[82] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 71.

in Afghanistan, using airpower, artillery and armor to keep communications lines open. Their tactics quickly evolved to include use of helicopters for quick reaction to insurgent operations, deployment of assault troops on short notice, flank protection for the movement of their own forces and attacks on retreating Mujahidin fighters.[83] The Soviets deployed over 150 modern fighter-bomber aircraft to Afghanistan, along with numerous types of helicopter and transport aircraft,[84] but they lacked precision guided munitions (PGMs) and relied on relatively inaccurate conventional guns and general purpose bombs.

The Mujahidin lacked the ability to engage the Soviet aircraft in the air early on. However, they undertook ground assaults using rocket launchers on Soviet air bases with reasonable success. Sporadic use of SAM-7s, a heat-seeking surface-to-air missile of Russian origin, met little success because Soviet aircraft were equipped with flares to counter heat-seeking missiles.[85] The provision of Stingers[86] in 1986 made a decisive difference. The high kill probability of Stingers forced the Soviet fighter-bombers to operate from high altitudes, further degrading their targeting accuracy. Additionally, the use of Stinger missiles inflicted a loss of almost one Soviet aircraft per day on average.[87]

During the early 1980s, the Soviets employed large scale air assault operations but failed to destroy Mujahidin strongholds, primarily due to rugged terrain. Bogged down in prolonged conflict, the frustrated Soviets resorted to a "ruthless program of bombing the rebels into submission." Despite inflicting tens of thousands of casualties, they failed to shake the morale of the Mujahidin.[88]

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[83] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 97, 119.

[84] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 391.

[85] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 97, 128; Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 395.

[86] The Stinger is a heat-seeking surface-to-air missile of U.S. origin. The flares on Soviet aircraft could not counter Stinger missiles.

[87] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 155.

[88] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 396.

With experience, the Mujahidin learned the skills to counter helicopters. They learned to identify Soviet helicopter landing sites in an operation and positioned well-camouflaged fighters with machine guns and rocket launchers to target the helicopters during critical stages of landing and takeoff. They also learned to hide their logistic trails from airpower, and developed intricate systems to provide logistical support on mule back. By 1985, the Soviets determined that the war was unwinnable.[89] Analysts believe that increasing loss of aircraft was a major factor in their decision to begin withdrawal in 1987.[90]

By the time the Soviets withdrew, the Afghans had destroyed the myth of airpower's invincibility. The Afghans take pride in defeating a superpower with modern airpower that could not overcome local insurgents familiar with hostile terrain. The legendary skills of the Afghan insurgents continue to confound current COIN operations.

D.   THE U.S. APPLICATION OF AIRPOWER IN AFGHANISTAN

1.   Conventional Use

The coalitions' initial preparations to invade Afghanistan, which began within few hours after the 9/11 attacks, relied heavily on the use of airpower. Twenty-seven countries were persuaded to allow over flight or landing rights for the U.S. air campaign. Permission to use Central Air Operation Command (CAOS), a key facility required to direct the air operations, was secured from Saudi Arabia and CAOS was on a war footing within a week. U.S. Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) were activated on September 14, and U.S. tankers were ordered to fill fuel storage tanks at Diego Garcia and Spain for sustained air operations. Arrangements were made to enhance ammunition reserves, especially the air-to-ground precision guided munitions (PGMs). In addition to about 175 aircraft already present in the region, approximately 100 aircraft, including fighters, bombers, tankers, *Airborne Warning and Control System* (AWACS*)*, *Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar Systems* (JSTARs) and other reconnaissance platforms were

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[89] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 397.

[90] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars.* 162.

deployed. Two additional U.S. Navy aircraft carriers joined the two already in the area for potential air operations. Significant efforts were made to insure deployment of Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopters in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.[91]

The operation into Afghanistan began with the indirect use of airpower in transport role, when the first U.S. team was airlifted to Afghanistan on a MI-17 helicopter from Pakistan. The mission of the team of CIA officials was to arrange for the insertion of Special Operation Force (SOF) teams that could direct air operations to support regular ground forces and to gather intelligence for subsequent air operations.[92]

The kinetic application of airpower had a conventional focus at first, probably based on the 1991 Gulf War model. Complete control of the air was achieved on the first night by 275 sorties that hit 31 targets. The Taliban's meager air assets included approximately 50 fighter aircraft, most not airworthy for technical reasons, three SA-3[93] batteries probably nonoperational due to lack of technical expertise, an integrated air defense system (IADS),[94] an unknown quantity of SA-7s,[95] and 300 to 500 anti-aircraft artillery guns (AAA).[96] The SA-7s and AAAs were neutralized simply by restricting the minimum altitude to 15,000 feet for all coalition aircraft operating in Afghan air space. With meticulous battle damage assessments (BDA), and revisits over some targets, the Americans won air supremacy over Afghanistan within a few hours.

The air effort was reduced by almost half on the second night, primarily due to non-availability of targets. The targets engaged included the Taliban headquarters facilities, troop concentration areas, Al-Qaeda training facilities and cave complexes, and

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[91] Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror*, 60-72.

[92] Ibid., 62.

[93] SA-3 is a radar guided surface-to-air missile system.

[94] IADS is an integrated network of radars that can provide early warning of incoming air strikes.

[95] SA-7 is a heat seeking surface-to-air missile system.

[96] Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror*, 76-7.

other sites with war making potential. The insertion of SOF teams[97] after about two weeks of operations allowed engagement with Taliban forces deployed along the front line and other targets of opportunity. Within ten days of the air campaign, the Taliban foreign minister, Mullah Abdul Wakil Muttawakil, requested a pause in operations to persuade Mullah Omer to surrender Osama bin Laden.[98] Any Taliban resistance to the Northern Alliance ground forces was significantly mitigated by coalition airpower as the later advanced to Mazar-i-Sharif and later to Kabul. However, the feeling among Air Force leaders was different; they were of the view that the effort exceeded the requirement.[99]

By late December, the U.S. Air Force had dropped over 12,000 bombs—mostly PGMs.[100] Most of the Al-Qaeda fighters and hardcore Taliban element were pushed out of major population centers into the eastern mountains or adjacent Pakistani areas. Some Taliban were pardoned by Hamid Karzai's forces in the south and melted into the local population after being disarmed. Despite extensive use of PGMs, significant collateral damage was observed, a fact that the Taliban learned to exploit for military advantage early in the campaign. During the third week of the campaign, Pakistan's President Pervaiz Musharraf cautioned U.S. forces commander General Tommy Frank against mounting civilian causalities from aerial bombing.[101] Similarly, there are indications that coalition ground forces were insensitive to some atrocities committed by the Northern Alliance forces early in the campaign.[102] This suggests that at the tactical level, ground forces might have called for close air support without due consideration to civilian casualties.

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[97] Equipped with communication equipment, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and LASER designators, the SOF teams could direct the aircraft to appropriate targets. The aircraft used on-board systems or the LASER designators with the SOF teams to employ PGMs with great effectiveness. Targets within few hundred yards from friendly troops were engaged successfully.

[98] Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror*, 91.

[99] Ibid., 97.

[100] Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 325.

[101] Lambeth, *Air Power against Terror*, 100.

[102] Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 326-7.

2. The Insurgency and the Use of Airpower for COIN

Primarily due to a repressive rule, people of Afghanistan were happy to see the back of Taliban.[103] Fed up of prolonged fighting and destruction, the people, unlike past, reconciled with the presence of foreign forces in the country.[104] Despite early chaos and looting in some of the bigger cities, the people had high hopes. They wanted security, justice, job opportunities, and return to normal life. Occasional insurgent activity and sporadic tribal feuds continued, and by the end of 2003 it appeared that the insurgency had died down. The expectations of the people, however, could not be met because of various reasons. Some of the reasons and their effects are discussed in the following paragraphs:

Good governance is the key to counterinsurgency (COIN), and Karzai administration failed to provide good governance in Afghanistan. President Karzai was unable to curb local strongmen maintaining their own militias normally referred as "warlords." In fact in some provinces he was blackmailed to handover the power to the warlords.[105] According to a recently published CRS report Karzai has himself blamed the warlords as "…a major threat to Afghan stability".[106] Some of the warlords nominated as the governors of their province collect taxes and instead of depositing those to central government use the same money to raise personal militias.[107] Their extra favors to their own tribe upset other regional tribes, which often leads to local feuds. Sometimes the warlords even misguide the security forces to attack opposing tribes, labeling them as

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[103] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 64.

[104] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 242.

[105] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 76-9.

[106] Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance and U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress*, Order Code RL 30588 (2008), 12.

[107] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 62-3.

Taliban or Al-Qaeda.[108] In some areas the warlords were helped by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).[109] In southern and eastern areas even U.S. co-opted warlords to pursue counterterrorism goals.[110]

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
◆ Growth Rtae	29.4	15.1	8	13.8	7	13.5

Average Growth Rate 14.4%
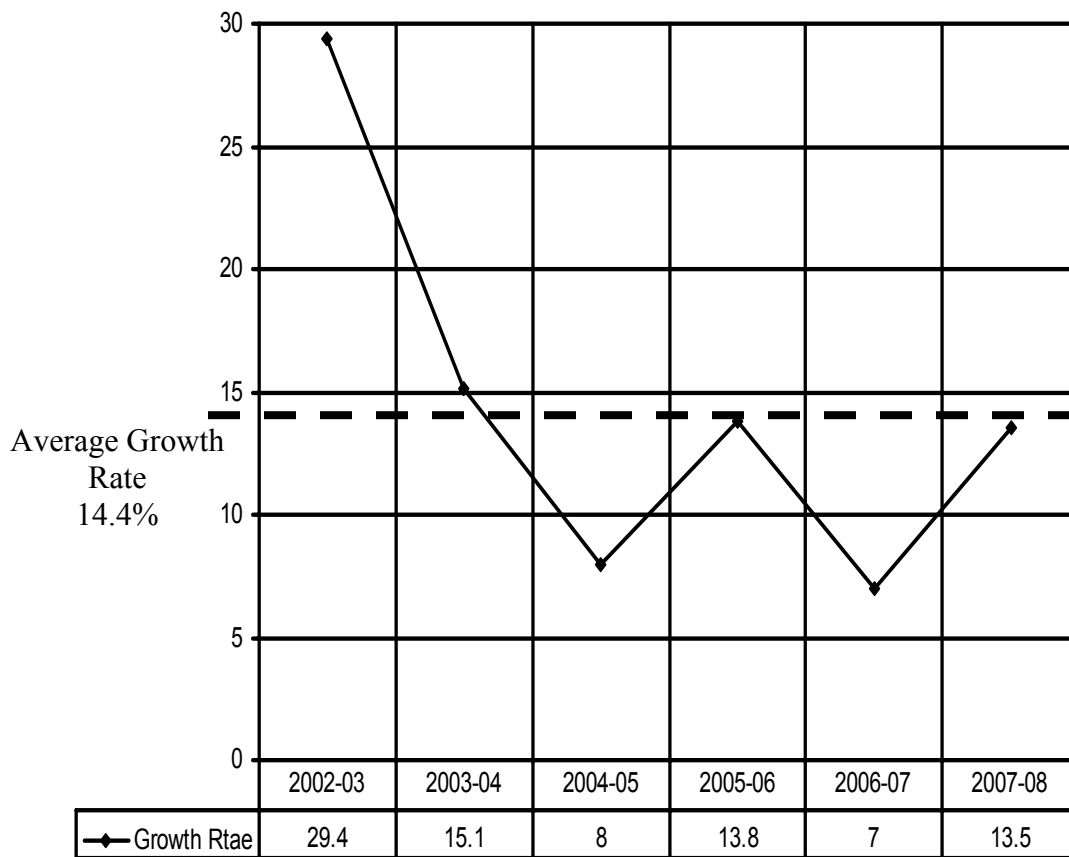
Figure 2.   Economic Growth Rate in Afghanistan

Significant reconstruction work was initiated after December 2001. From 2002 to 2008, the country registered an average economic growth rate of 14.4 percent (Figure 2).[111]

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[108] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 175-83.

[109] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 244.

[110] Samina Ahmed, ed., "Are We Learning? Military Engagement: The Taliban, Past and Present," in *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead,* edited by Cheryl Benard et al., (Washington, D.C.: Rand Corporation, 2008), 55-61.

[111] Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency," 7.

Due to mounting corruption in the Karzai administration, the benefits of increased economic activity failed to reach the poor people. Injustice and corruption in the Afghan National Police caused popular unrest. External agencies and especially the U.S. led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) pursued heavy-handed counterterrorism, often violating Afghan customs and traditions. Public resentment allowed the Pashtun-dominated Taliban to begin their insurgency, resulting in increasing numbers of violent incidents as shown in the Figure 3.[112]

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
■ Secuirty Incidents per Month	44	90	143	423	562	573
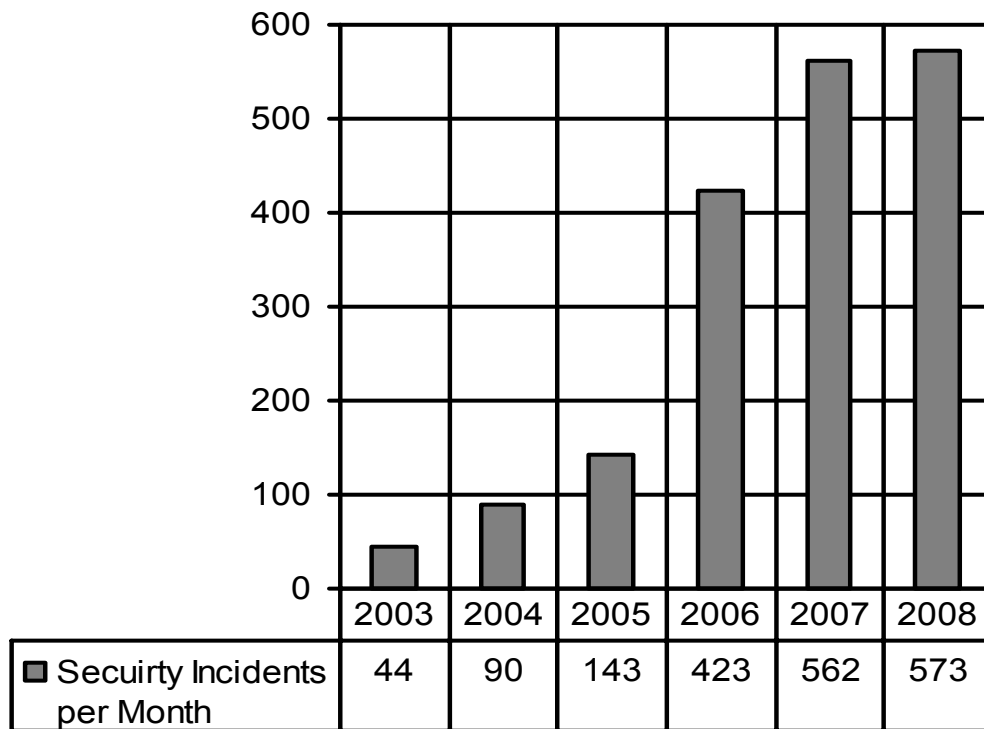
Figure 3.   Security Situation in Afghanistan

An upsurge in mid 2006 swiftly became an organized insurgency, mainly in Pashtun areas in the south and southeast, strongholds of the Taliban.[113] Besides Al-Qaeda's foreign fighters, the Taliban have the support of the Haqqani network and Gulbadin Hikmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami.

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[112] Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency," 7.

[113] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 21.

Inadequate resources to provide security for the people and state machinery and the ongoing reconstruction works were other factors that allowed resurgence of the Taliban. The initial mandate of NATO led ISAF forces was limited to Kabul. The U.S. was always reluctant to commit ground forces in Afghanistan. The Iraq war in 2003 also took significant resources away from Afghanistan. Ground troops on routine counterterrorism patrols or providing security for ongoing reconstruction work often had to call airpower to meet the challenge posed by the insurgents. As a result, direct application of airpower increased rapidly, as shown in Figure 4.[114]

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
■ Sorties	6495	7421	10519	13965	19603
▣ Bombs Dropped	86	176	1770	3572	3369
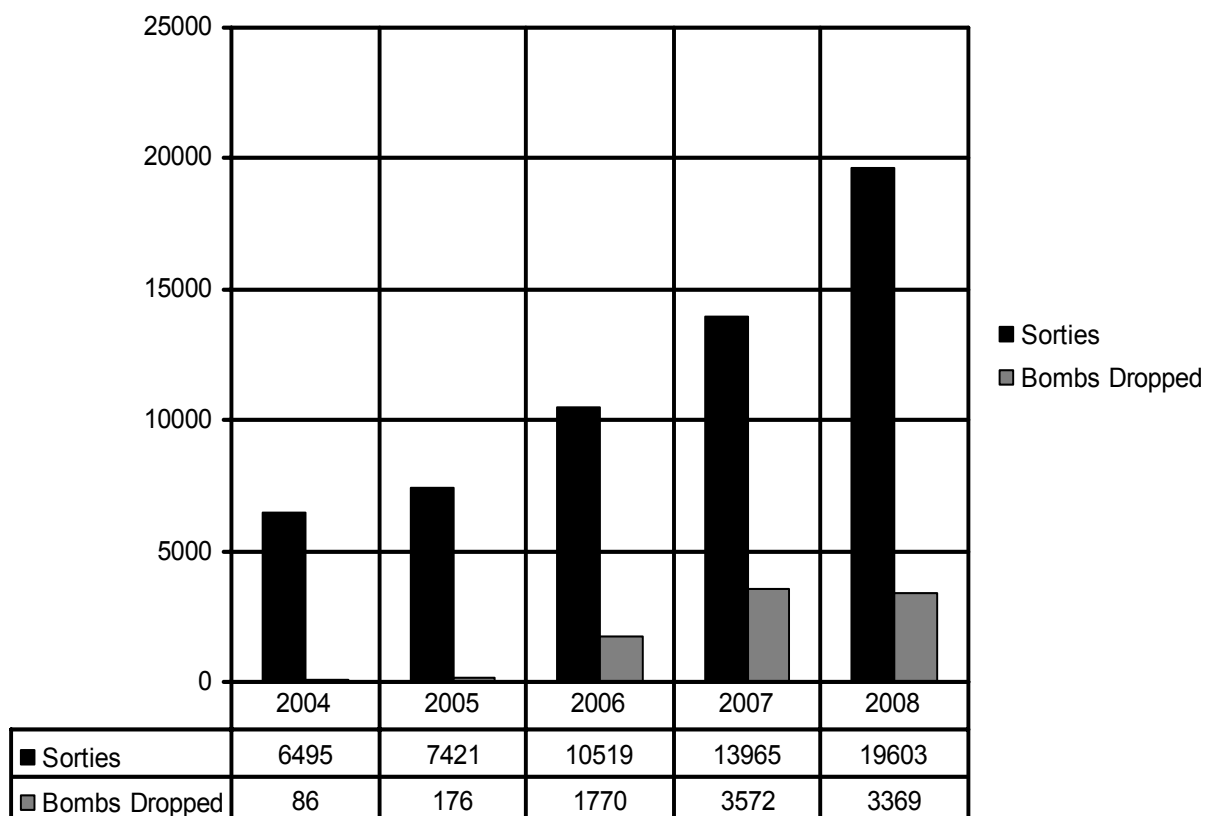
Figure 4.   Direct Application of Airpower in Afghanistan

The sorties shown are only fixed wing Close Air Support (CAS). Almost 247 sorties per day in 2005 indicate a high reliance on airpower to provide security for ground forces. The number of sorties almost doubled within two years. In the same period, the number of bomb drops increased exponentially, from fewer than six to 119 bombs per day. The number of civilian casualties from air strikes also increased. During 2006, for instance, 116 civilians were killed in 13 airstrikes. Civilian casualties nearly tripled in 2007, with 321 killed in 22 airstrikes. In late 2007, strategy shifted, minimizing airpower use and break contact with insurgents if airpower use seems likely to cause civilian casualties. Nonetheless, 119 civilians were killed in 12 airstrikes during the first half of 2008.[115]

3.   Effects of Airpower on COIN

Regardless of the number of casualties, the use of airpower is traumatic[116] and might have significantly stronger psychological impacts than other forms of fire power. Figure 5 below shows results of an aerial bombing on an Afghan village.

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[115] Michael Shaikh, "Troops in Contact," Human Rights Watch, September 8, 2008; available from http://www.hrw.org/en/node/75157/section/3.

[116] Chayes, The Punishment of Virtue, 13.

Figure 5.   Aerial Bombing on an Afghan Village

As a result, 44 percent of people in the south and south-east, areas more frequently targeted by airpower, believe that attacks against the coalition forces are justified, compared with only 15 percent in areas of low airpower activity. Afghan public opinion regarding the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and the operations targeting Taliban is declining, as shown in the graphs in Figure 6. [117]

[117] Gary Langer, "Public Opinion Trends in Afghanistan," *ABC News*, February 11, 2009.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Positive	87	88	76	69
Negative	9	11	20	24

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Favorable	83	74	65	47
Unfavorable	14	25	32	52
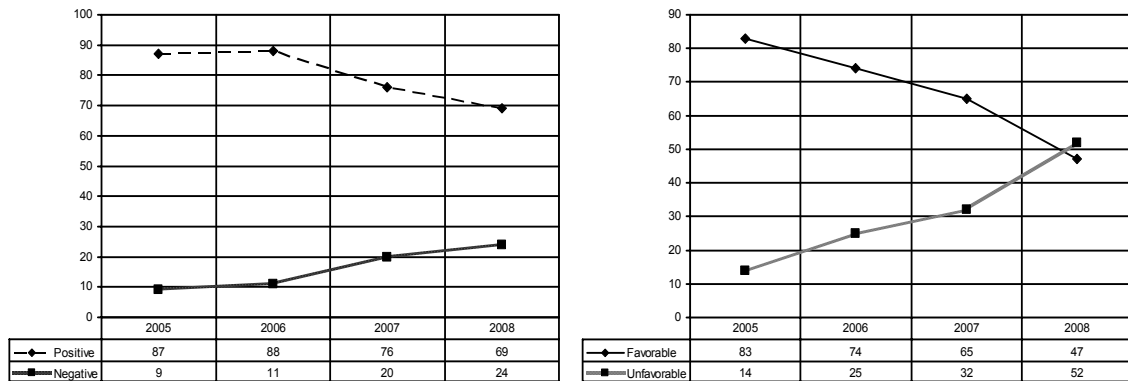
Afghan's View of the U.S. Presence in Afghanistan   Afghan's Opinion on COIN Operations in Afghanistan

Figure 6.   Afghan Views and Opinions on U.S. Presence and COIN Operations in Afghanistan

The popularity of COIN forces has declined. The insurgents, however, have not gained much. Considering the momentum the insurgency gained in the last few months, it appears that increasing number of people are willing to help the Taliban directly or indirectly by joining the armed struggle against foreigners and the government security forces or providing critically-needed food, shelter and information to insurgents.

4.   Applying the COIN Model on Afghanistan

Figure 7 depicts the COIN model explained in the previous chapter.   The appropriate objective at step 1 of any COIN effort is to separate the people from insurgents and attach them to the government. Good governance and the measured and well-directed application of military power is important at this stage.
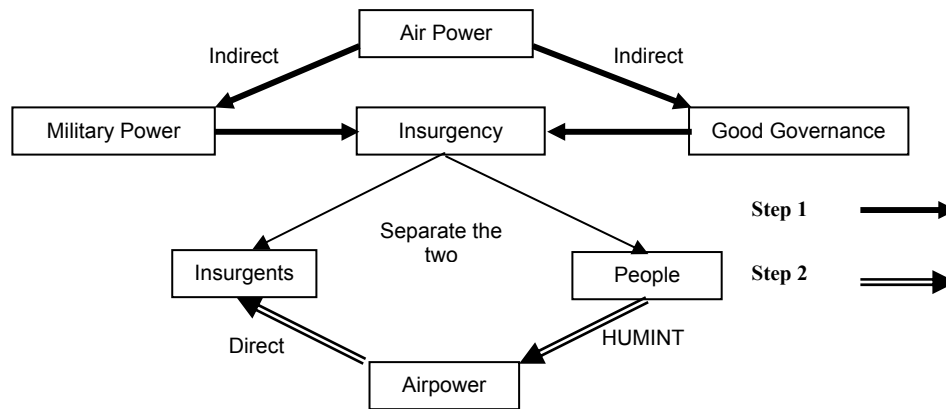
Figure 7.   COIN Model

If the government fails to deliver good governance or mishandles the military, the people start to develop sympathy for the insurgents. There is strong evidence that widespread use airpower pushed the Afghans who were on the fence, as many as 70 percent according to one estimate,[118] towards insurgents, offering greater recruitment opportunities. For instance, Haji Khudai Nazar, a 33 year-old man who lost four family members and his shop to coalition bombing, stated, "By God, I will do nothing but to [sic]fight the government and foreign forces. Did we mandate [that] Karzai to [sic] give a free hand to foreign troops to bomb our houses and kill us?"[119] Similarly, an Afghan farmer told Human Rights Watch that "People hoped the U.S. would come and release them from the violence of the Taliban but all the U.S. does is attack us."[120] The sentiments of Afghans in Southern Kandahar are reflected in the comment by Ghulab Shah, who lost nine neighbors to an airstrike, that "if this is all they are going to do for us, is kill us, they should get out."[121] Popular frustration can be gauged by the views of

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[118] David Rohde and Taimoor Shah, "Strike Killed 31 Afghans, NATO finds," *New York Times,* November 14, 2006, http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/11/14/news/attack.php.

[119] Akram Nurzai, "Civilian Casualties Trigger Anti-Government Sentiment," *Pajhwok,* August 22, 2006.

[120] Shaikh, "Troops in Contact."

[121] Kathy Gannon, "Taliban Comeback Traced to Corruption," Associated Press*,* November 24, 2006, http://afghandevnews.wordpress.com/2006/11/24/taliban-comeback-traced-to-corruption/.

Kandahar governor, who was expected to rally mass support for the counterinsurgents. He said that it is possible to replace the houses destroyed in air raids, but "who do we build a house for if they are all dead?"[122]

Weak governance and widespread use of airpower resulting in civilian casualties are not the only factors pushing the people towards the insurgents. A major factor is that coalition ground forces are spread too thin to protect the people against the insurgents. Taliban roaming around unchallenged led to the popular perception that they could emerge as winners or at least force a favorable compromise; this discourages people from openly opposing the insurgents.[123]

The application of the COIN model to Afghanistan is depicted in Figure 7. In December 2001, the people rejected the Taliban and were willing to accept the presence of foreign troops.
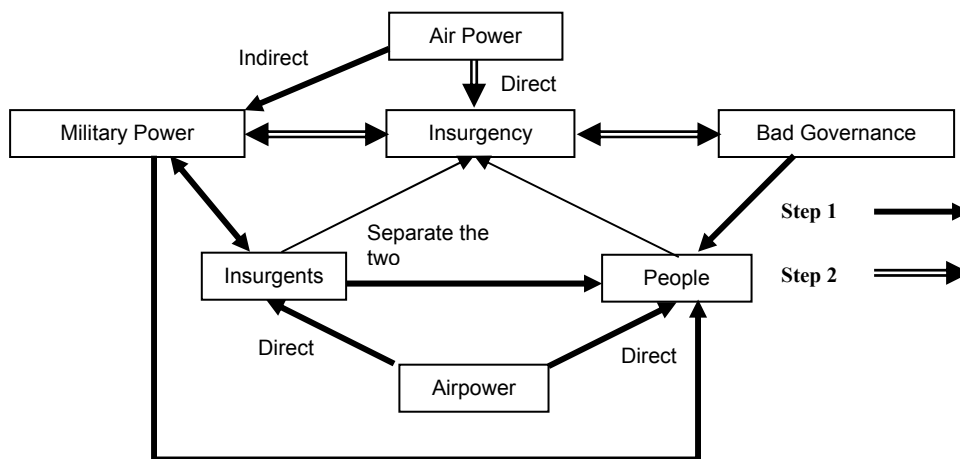
Figure 7: COIN Model Applied on Afghanistan

Desperate for peace, security, and job opportunities, they got bad governance by corrupt and repressive warlords. Application of military power did not respect local customs and cultural sensitivities. Direct application of airpower was ill-directed and

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[122] Gannon, "Taliban Comeback."

[123] Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 70.

often used to salvage a bad situation for ground forces rather than for planned operations against the insurgents. People were coerced by the insurgents, and the government failed to protect them. As a result, significant numbers were detached from the government and cooperated with the insurgents. Airpower made a bad situation worse, and could not compensate for the other failures.

5. Awareness of the Importance of Separating Insurgents from Local Populations

There is evidence that the rift between the people and the insurgents was recognized at almost all levels of the COIN forces. The plan for coalition forces to operate in the Helmand river valley, one of the most restive areas in mid 2006, was to "work on winning the support of the people, bring in better governance and development and then spread out from there."[124] Similar understandings prevailed in almost all the coalition units. According to one report, British company commanders are authorized $5,000 for civilian victims and $10,000 for community assistance programs in order to gain popular support.[125] The concern to win over the population is reflected in a NATO military official's comments that "we know we can beat the Taliban on the ground" but "the issue is the population."[126] The commander of international forces in southern Afghanistan from July 2006 to February 2007, Lt. Gen. David Richards, demonstrated a strong commitment to "win support among Afghan civilians by focusing primarily on economic development and avoiding combat."[127]

A similar mindset prevailed among U.S. forces responsible for most air operations. According to Col. Harry A. Foster, chief of the strategy division of the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia (the command headquarters for the air war over Afghanistan), "To win the insurgency, we're not going

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[124] Alastair Leithead, "Can change in Afghan tactics bring peace?" *BBC News*, October 17, 2008, http://news.bb.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6060384.stm.

[125] Carlotta Gall, "British Criticize Air Attacks in Afghan Region," *New York Times,* August 9, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/09/world/asia/09casualties.html?fta=y.

[126] Ibid.

[127] David S. Cloud, "U.S. airstrikes climb sharply in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, November 17, 2006, http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/11/17/asia/web.1117bomber.php.

to bomb our way out of this."[128] Vice Adm. William E. Gortney, commander of the U.S. naval forces in the region, maintained that "We don't drop when we're unsure."[129] Notwithstanding this awareness, increasing civilian casualties from airstrikes adversely affected the coalition COIN effort. Mounting political pressure forced President Karzai to demand from coalition forces "more measured use of airpower to reduce civilian casualties from bomb and missile attacks."[130] To address the problem, Gen. David D. McKiernan, commander of ISAF and the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, issued a "revised tactical order" on September 2, 2008 addressing civilian casualties.[131] U.S Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates ordered a permanent joint investigation group to efficiently investigate civilian casualties in Afghanistan. He also committed to apologize and compensate survivors even before the facts are established.[132] Despite such across the board awareness, there was inappropriate and widespread use of airpower in Afghanistan for reasons discussed below.

6.   **Exaggerated Sense of Confidence in the Effectiveness of Airpower: Explaining the Strategic Disconnect**

Within the first few weeks of coalition operations in Afghanistan, exaggerated claims about the capabilities of airpower that neglected to consider its effectiveness in urban COIN created significant misperceptions about airpower among ground forces. More accurate and high quantity precision guided munitions helped make the war, in the words of Central Command head General Tommy Franks, "the most accurate war ever fought in this nation's history."[133] The successful use of 15,000 pound Daisy Cutters,

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[128] Elisabeth Bumiller, "From a Carrier, Another View of America's Air War in Afghanistan," *New York Times,* February 23, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/world/asia/24carrier.html?hp.

[129] Ibid.

[130] John F. Burns, "Karzai Offers Safe Passage to Taliban Leader if He Agrees to Talks," *New York Times,* November 16, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/17/world/asia/17afghan.html.

[131] Thom Shanker, "NATO Tries to Reduce Afghan Casualties," *New York Times,* September 16, 2008, http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/09/17/asia/17gates.php.

[132] Thom Shanker, "Gates tries to Ease Tension in Afghan Civilian Deaths," *New York Times,* September 17, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/18/world/asia/18gates.html?ref=world.

[133] Eric Schmitt and James Dao, "A Nation Challenged: The Air Campaign; Use of Pinpoint Air Power Comes of Age in New War," *New York Times,* December 24, 2001, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9802E7DC1431F937A15751C1A9679C8B63.

used for the first time in Afghanistan, was highlighted. It was reported that targets hidden among schools, hospitals and the civilian population could be engaged with minimal risk. The Pentagon claimed to have the images showing bomb impacts circling mosques and houses.[134] It was reported in late November 2001 that of almost 4,000 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) employed, only three went off the target. The report that might be accurate statistically but can be misleading for the ground troops at tactical level without a technical understanding of airpower's targeting methods.[135] The potential of airpower to play a greater role in COIN was emphasized with claims about reaction times[136] as low as 19 minutes, endurance of the platforms as high as 15 hours, the flexibility to change targets at any time and invent tactics on the job, and downplaying the need for planning and training.[137] The few civilian casualties until late 2001, even fewer casualties among friendly troops and airpower's ability to attack from safe distances were emphasized despite awareness that future tasks might become more complicated.[138] The claim by a U.S. aircraft carrier senior officer that "we always had a precise aim point" in late December 2001[139] may have been accurate then, but certainly does not reflect the complexity and importance of establishing an accurate aim point for the useful employment of airpower.

One reason for such reporting of airpower's capability is organizational bias. In order to get more credit for their success, airpower's advocates may have highlighted only its positive aspects. Given the strong impact made by airpower during the 1991 Gulf War and 1999 Kosovo operations, they probably could sell their argument. Some reports suggest that shaping opinion for the subsequent invasion of Iraq might also be a reason for the one dimensional interpretation of airpower in Afghanistan. Probably perceiving

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[134] Schmitt and Dao, "A Nation Challenged."

[135] James Dao, "A Nation Challenged: The Air War; The New Air War: Fewer Pilots, More Hits and Scarcer Targets," *New York Times,* November 29, 2001, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9503E5DB143DF93AA15752C1A9679C8B63.

[136] Reaction time is defined as the time from the request for air power support to the actual impact of the bomb at the given target.

[137] Schmitt and Dao, "A Nation Challenged."

[138] Dao, "A Nation Challenged: The Air War."

[139] Schmitt and Dao, "A Nation Challenged."

the Iraqi's military capability as stronger than the Taliban's, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated in late December 2001 that "they are so significantly different that you can't take the Afghan model and apply it to Iraq."[140]

The early misperceptions and consequent exaggerated sense of confidence in the effectiveness of airpower led to serious malpractice in its application for COIN in Afghanistan. The coalition's attempt to employ the so-called "ink-spot strategy"[141] displayed fatal flaws from the beginning. Availability of ground troops has been a serious constraint since 2001. With the coalition partners' reluctance to commit troops, the numbers built gradually, to about 60,000 in late 2008. Altogether about 200,000 troops were available at the end of 2008, a number considered insufficient by most experts, especially when compared to the 700,000 needed in Iraq, a country smaller in size and population.[142] Due to a false sense of the security and strength offered by airpower, coalition forces thinned out the ground forces prematurely rather than create secure zones first and then spread out.[143] The ground patrols sent to secure the population often lacked numerical strength, armor and artillery, and had to call airpower to make up for insufficient firepower.[144]

Reports suggest serious misperceptions about the capability of airpower exist among ground troops at tactical level. Illustrating an extreme misunderstanding of airpower capability, an American soldier called up a B-1 bomber aircraft to scan the area

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[140] Schmitt and Dao, "A Nation Challenged."

[141] The ink-spot strategy begins with seizure of a major population center through application of military force to create a secure zone. The security zone gradually expands through development works. The British employed the strategy in the Malayan insurgency with great success. Many authors believe that the coalition attempted to apply the ink-spot strategy in Afghanistan. See Greg Mills, "Calibrating Ink Spots: Filling Afghanistan's Ungoverned Spaces," *Royal United Institute Services Journal,* Vol. 151, No. 4; available from www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/16-25_mills.pdf; Rachel Morarjee, "Taliban hinder NATO 'ink-spot' strategy," *Christian Science Monitor,* August 4, 2006; available from http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0804/p07s02-wosc.html; Hugh Graham, "Afghan tactics turns to whack-a-mole futility," *World Affairs Board: A Geopolitical Discussion Forum,* November 22, 2006; available from http://www.worldaffairsboard.com/showthread.php?t=26765.

[142] Michael O'Hanlon, "How to Win in Afghanistan: A mini surge in not enough. We need more Afghan security forces," *Wall Street Journal,* November 14, 2008, 17.

[143] Carlotta Gall and David E. Sanger, "Civilian Deaths Undermine Allies' War on Taliban," *New York Times,* May 13, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/13/world/asia/13AFGHAN.html.

[144] Cloud, "U.S. airstrikes."

for "military aged males with weapons," a task completely beyond the capability of any aircraft.[145] The need to plan an airstrike on ground was also not emphasized. Such misperceptions, coupled with the counterterrorism mindset and the comfort of having airpower in the vicinity, made ground troops on patrol unwilling to take unnecessary risks, especially during 2006 and 2007. As a result, airpower has been often called to rescue ground troops unable to break the contact in a battle. Unplanned, hurried use of airpower to extract ground troops from the combat zone has led to collateral damage on numerous occasions.[146]

In summary, air operations in Afghanistan were begun to first win air supremacy and then prepare the battlefield for ground forces. As the operations progressed to the COIN mode, there were misperceptions that originated in Iraq almost a decade earlier and were reinforced in the initial conventional phase in Afghanistan. In nearly seven years, air operations have evolved under dual constraints: first, the military need to salvage adverse situations for ground forces that could lead to significant friendly casualties if airpower proved inadequate; and second, the political demand to avoid collateral damage and civilian casualties.

E.   EVOLUTION OF AIRPOWER APPLICATION FOR COIN IN AFGHANISTAN

The coalition's indirect application of airpower in Afghanistan can be divided into two broad categories: support operations that include aerial logistics, transport and air-to-air refueling, and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) operations. Aerial logistics and transports are more expensive than ground or sea modes. They generally comprise a small portion of the overall effort, but provide significant advantage in hilly or mountainous terrain with limited infrastructure. As most strike aircraft operate from distant locations requiring several hours of transit time to target areas, the air-to-air refueling component is also vital to the high intensity of operations. Both fixed-wing and rotary-wing platforms have been used for support operations in Afghanistan.

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[145] Cloud, "U.S. airstrikes."

[146] Gall and Sanger, "Civilian Deaths."

Because COIN is intelligence intensive, ISR operations play an important role. These operations in Afghanistan use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), manned aircraft and space based systems. The data gathered by the sensors is used at various levels of operations. With data links, the data can be transmitted to remote command centers for operational planning. It can also be communicated among various aircraft and ground operators for tactical use. In the surveillance role, the Predator UAVs have reasonable success detecting insurgents planting (Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Sometimes the Predator can engage the insurgents with Hellfire missiles if cleared by the ground operator in the area.[147]

The direct application of airpower in Afghanistan has been dominated by close air support (CAS), defined as "air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets that are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces."[148] In Afghanistan, coalition CAS is employed for various purposes. Analysis of daily airpower summaries for the past few months indicates that 40 to 60 CAS sorties are scheduled daily for aerial watch of route patrols and reconstruction works. The objective of these missions is to deter or disrupt hostile activity against reconstruction works; route patrols are flown along the ring road[149] to discourage insurgent activities such as establishing illegal check posts and planting IEDs. Another frequently flown CAS mission provides cover for ground patrols in hostile areas. Ground patrols are equipped with communication systems to help the CAS aircraft engage the insurgents, sometimes also employing kinetic force. In emergencies, the aircraft on route patrols are diverted in support of ground patrols. To avoid collateral damage, kinetic force is exercised only when it becomes difficult or risky for the ground troops to break contact. On rare occasions, preplanned strikes are undertaken against fixed targets like insurgent compounds.

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[147] For example, see "Airpower Summary for January 22," U.S. Air Force Central, http://www.afcent.af.mil/news/pressreleases/story.asp?id=123132450.

[148] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Close Air Support, Joint Publication 3-90.3*, 2003, ix, www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_**pub**s/jp3_09_3.pdf.

[149] The ring road is the main highway that connects major population centers in Afghanistan.

1.   Show of Force

Frequently, CAS is employed as show of force (SoF) under circumstances that risk high collateral damage risk due to civilians' close vicinity to the intended target. Show of force is also used as a tool to disperse crowds seen as a threat to security forces. To carry out SoF, the CAS aircraft are called to fly over the target area at low altitude, becoming visible to the naked eye. Sometimes they also dispense flares with dual purpose: first, to become more prominent; and second, to encourage obedience to security forces on ground by implying the use of kinetic force. Airpower summaries for recent months show that the frequency of SoF is significantly higher than the application of kinetic force.[150]

Show of force is a soft measure to address the issue of civilian casualties. Probably no effort has been made to understand the psychological effects of SoF on the people of Afghanistan. Conventional wisdom suggests that the effects of SoF can be interpreted in two different ways. The critics of collateral damage with a "human rights" mindset and limited knowledge of Afghan culture may consider SoF useful because it helps reduce civilian casualties. However, given typical Pashtun personality traits, it can be argued that the effects of SoF are counterproductive. It is a fact that a Pashtun does not like anybody making a hostile gesture to him. *Badal,* a pillar of the Pashtun code of conduct (*pashtunwali*) that incites revenge*,* may inspire him to make a similar gesture. If made to feel helpless, an ordinary Pashtun is likely to revolt and may resort to violence. It is certainly unpleasant to see aircraft hovering overhead that might at any time devastate any local house. The incremental fear and frustration this generates might push people toward the insurgents, which is counterproductive to COIN.

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[150] See daily Airpower Summaries for December 2008, January and February 2009 issued by the U.S. Air Forces Central, http://www.afcent.af.mil/news/pressreleases/9. The summaries indicate that SOF sorties are approximately six to seven times greater than the live CAS that drop actual weapons.

2. Unplanned Employment of CAS

Airpower summaries suggest that most of the time the employment of CAS is unplanned.[151] Considering that the aircraft have limited variety of weapons on board already fused to generate certain effects, it can be assumed that often the weapons delivered might not suit the requirement of the target. Additionally, because the CAS is often employed when ground forces end up in a difficult situation, the tactical operators invariably overreact and put in more than the required weapon loads. Many reports strongly associate collateral damage with unplanned employment of airpower. [152] One account suggests that "collateral damage has been almost exclusively the result of unplanned CAS."[153] Considering the way employment of airpower has evolved in Afghanistan, it seems logical that the unplanned CAS is an unintended consequence of the misperceptions generated during early weeks of the campaign.

F. CONCLUSION

The employment of airpower in Afghanistan evolved out of operating conditions and the implicit limitations of the force composition rather than a well conceived and planned strategy. It appears that the perceptions created about the effectiveness of airpower during the decade prior to 2001 significantly influenced the employment of airpower in Afghanistan. During the 1991 Gulf War, airpower emerged as a strong military tool to single-handedly overwhelm the adversary. An impression was generated that the technology not only allows winning the war quickly, with minimum casualties to friendly ground forces, but also limits civilian casualties. A similar though controversial notion was propagated after the 1999 Kosovo operations. There may be some truth in the perceptions generated with regards to conventional war. Almost no effort, however, was made to relate the technological progress of airpower to irregular warfare and small wars.

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[151] See daily Airpower Summaries issued by the U.S. Air Forces Central, available from http://www.afcent.af.mil/news/pressreleases/.

[152] Shaikh, "Troops in Contact." See also Lara M. Dadkhah, "Close Air Support and Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan," *Small Wars Journal* (December, 2008); available from http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/12/close-air-support-and-civilian.php.

[153] Dadkhah, "Close Air Support."

For reasons directly and indirectly related to the conflict, similar misperceptions were created in the early weeks of coalition operations in Afghanistan. A comfortable victory in Afghanistan was assumed in 2003. The importance of state-building was probably underestimated; an inadequate number of ground troops were committed for the challenging task of state-building. Misperceptions about the difficulty of the task, an exaggerated sense of security provided by airpower and ambitious plans led to thin deployment of ground troops. During 2004 and 2005, when relative peace prevailed and environment appeared suitable for state-building, the use of airpower did not progress from conventional to COIN employment. Continued emphasis on counterterrorism interfered with state-building, as collateral damage often annoyed the public. Unable to take out their anger against airpower, they had no option but to target state-building activities. The strategy of using airpower rather than progressing to COIN in a controlled fashion evolved in a reactive manner. It appears that the mistake was realized early enough, but commitment of significant resources to the Iraq war removed the option of applying corrective measures in Afghanistan.

Most analysts consider the application of airpower and consequent civilian casualties responsible for the failure of COIN in Afghanistan, and recommend ceasing or radically reducing the kinetic use of airpower. It is probably not recognized that the kinetic use of airpower in Afghanistan is reactive rather than proactive due to an insufficient number of ground troops. A one-dimensional approach, in the opinion of this author, is not advisable, and might lead to military disaster if used without eliminating the causes that force the counterproductive application of airpower in Afghanistan.

One way to change the reactive use of airpower into a proactive use is to improve the density of ground troops in Afghanistan. An increase of a few thousand would certainly provide respite, although it may not bring a paradigm shift in the employment of airpower. Considering the number of troops that were deployed to Iraq, and the size, terrain and sentiment of the people in Afghanistan, it appears that the level of increase will have to be in the hundreds of thousands to create conditions on the ground that would permit the proactive use of airpower. If that many ground troops are not available,

another option is to apply the ink-spot strategy by negotiating peace at selective locations and concentrating elsewhere on achieving the density of ground troops necessary to pacify the area and then expand.

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IV. THE USE OF AIRPOWER FOR COIN IN FATA

A. INTRODUCTION

The coalition operations in Afghanistan during late 2001 and early 2002 forced Al-Qaeda and their hosts, the extremist elements of Taliban, to take refuge in the eastern and southeastern mountainous region. The persistent application of airpower using 15,000 pound daisy-cutter bombs pushed some into neighboring FATA in Pakistan. The militants easily found safe havens in FATA, having grown roots there during the war against the Soviet occupation. The militants adapted quickly to the area and contributed to the insurgency in Afghanistan. This led to a growing militancy in FATA and adjacent areas of Pakistan's North West Frontier province (NWFP). The militants reacted strongly to the government's efforts to stop their activities across the Durand line in Afghanistan resulting in a near-insurgency in FATA.

Pakistan's armed forces moved into FATA in December 2001, and began military operations in early 2004 under intense U.S. pressure. Significant use of airpower was observed in direct and indirect roles. Pakistan's operations in FATA have mixed results for reasons that include difficult operating conditions on the ground, national political and economic issues, and technical and operational constraints on the military tools available to the Pakistani forces. The U.S. pressure to "do more" has continued to mount, and the will of the Pakistani government to deal with the militancy is questioned in some quarters. Probably because of dissatisfaction with Pakistan's efforts in FATA, in January 2006 the U.S. began using Predator drones carrying Hellfire surface-to-air missiles. Over time, the gap widened between the U.S. demand to "do more" and Pakistan's ability to deal with militancy in FATA. The use of drones escalated significantly in 2008 and continues to increase. This raises questions about constraints on Pakistan's ability to deal with militancy in FATA and how kinetic application of airpower in FATA through U.S. drone attacks affects Pakistan's COIN efforts.

This chapter analyzes the impact of military operations, especially air operations, in FATA and their implications for the COIN strategy in the region. A brief introduction outlines the demography and governance of FATA. The effects of Soviet and coalition invasions of Afghanistan on FATA are discussed. Pakistan's military operations, including some constraints Pakistan faces in the fight against rising militancy, are discussed, as is the application of airpower and U.S. drone operations in FATA. The counterinsurgency model presented in Chapter II is applied to the FATA operation. The chapter concludes with the argument that intense U.S. pressure on Pakistan through various means, including drone attacks, impedes Pakistan's ability to deal with militancy in FATA.

B.   BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO FATA

Figure 8.   FATA and North West Frontier Province of Pakistan

The FATA is a narrow tract of land, 600 kilometers long and 130 kilometers at the widest, northwest of NWFP and east of Afghanistan. It is situated on the apex of three

of the world's highest mountain ranges. The FATA region is mostly semi-arid and mountainous, interspersed with a network of river valleys. Administratively, FATA is divided into seven political agencies and four tribal areas.[154]

Pashtuns are the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan (and in the world). Of 40 million Pashtuns, approximately 62.5 percent live in Pakistan, including eight percent in FATA. The remainder live in Afghanistan, mostly in areas adjacent to Pakistan.[155] Ethnic, tribal, social and cultural relations between the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan mean that political disturbances in the former ripple across to Pakistan. In Pakistan, most Pashtuns are in NWFP, Baluchistan and FATA. Significant numbers have migrated to other provinces, mainly for economic reasons. About three million Pashtuns work in Karachi, the economic hub and the most populated city in Pakistan. Almost half of the 3.2 million FATA Pashtun are migrant laborers elsewhere in Pakistan.[156] Any political disturbance in FATA is therefore bound to adversely affect wide areas and populations in Pakistan.

1. Governance

The FATA is loosely governed by the Pakistan federal government based on an agreement between Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah and FATA tribal elders in a governance model similar to British rule. The British treated FATA as a "buffer within the buffer,"[157] controlling it through designated political agents and tribal elders. Since independence, Pakistan's law enforcement agencies' jurisdiction is limited to the main arteries in the area. The administrative and judicial system in FATA hinges on the troika

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[154] Pakistan government web site, Article 246 of the Constitution of Pakistan, http://www.vakilno1.com/saarclaw/pakistan/Consitution/part_12_chap3.htm.

[155] Shuja Nawaz, "FATA - A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenges of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan," *Centre for Strategic International Studies* (January, 2009). Also see the United States Central Investigation Agency, *The World Factbook on Pakistan*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/pk.html.

[156] Ibid.

[157] The British and Russians agreed to treat Afghanistan as a buffer state between two empires. The semiautonomous status given to FATA by the British, especially after 1893 agreement on the Durand line, is considered a "buffer within the buffer" by many authors.

of *jirga*, political agents and Frontier Crime Regulations (FCR).[158] The FATA has never been treated by the government on a par with other areas of Pakistan, which has led to political and economic deprivation.[159]

The people of FATA have limited participation in the national political process. There are 12 FATA members in the National Assembly and eight in the Senate. These members were elected by the tribal *maliks* until 1997, when universal franchise was introduced in FATA. Under the Pakistan Political Act, the Pakistan political parties are not allowed to operate in FATA.[160] This allows religious extremist elements to grow roots in the area, especially in the last three decades. As a result of limited political stakes and the volatile law and order situation, economic activity in FATA is weak, as evidenced by the social indicators in Table 1.[161]

Indicator	Pakistan	NWFP	FATA
Literacy (both sexes, %)	43.92	35.41	17.42
Male literacy (%)	54.81	51.39	29.51
Female literacy (%)	32.02	18.82	3.00
Population per doctor	1,226	4,916	7,670
Population per bed in health institutions	1,341	1,594	2,179
Roads (per sq km)	0.26	0.13	0.17

Table 1.   Comparative Social Indicators

2.   Effects of the Soviet Invasion on FATA

The FATA gained international attention with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Western nations, the Muslim world and Pakistan collaborated to generate resistance to the Soviet invasion, and FATA provided an ideal launching pad for the Afghan *jihad*.

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[158] The FCR is a set of laws based on tribal customs (*riwaj*). It was promulgated by the British in 1872, revised in 1887 and again in 1901.

[159] Pakistan government web site on FATA, http://www.fata.gov.pk/index.php.

[160] Nawaz, "FATA - A Most Dangerous Place."

[161] Pakistan government web site on FATA.

Jihadi organizations came from all over the Muslim world.[162] The number of *madaris*[163] in Pakistan skyrocketed,[164] many of them in FATA, primarily to recruit, indoctrinate, train and launch the Mujahidin for *jihad* against the Soviet invaders.

The combined effort led to the disintegration of Soviet Union and significant changes for the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan, the mass migration of Afghan refugees to FATA and the NWFP, and intermarriages among refugees and locals has changed the social structure and raised an ethno-nationalist sentiment among Pashtuns. External threats, coupled with Wahabi and Deobandi *madaris* that subscribe to stronger interpretations of Islam, led to religious radicalization. The requirements of fighting against the Soviet threat allowed the free flow of weapons and opium across porous borders. As in Afghanistan, the tribal structure in FATA shifted away from *maliks* in favor of religious elements.[165] The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 but changes in the social structure continue. Events in Afghanistan during the 1990s, including fights between Mujahidin groups and the Taliban takeover of Kabul, still affect the people in FATA because of the *jihadi* infrastructure, the presence of Afghan refugees and the Pashtun ethno-nationalist sentiment.

3. Effects of U.S. Led Coalition Operations on FATA

The Northern Alliance ground offensive spearheaded by U.S. airpower overwhelmed the Taliban and supporting Al-Qaeda elements shortly after the 9/11 attacks. While some moderate Taliban elements in the south integrated into local populations after surrendering their weapons, the extremist elements took refuge in the mountains. Air power was used extensively for counterterrorism missions, including

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[162] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 80-118.

[163] *Madaris* is the plural of the Urdu word *madrassah*, meaning religious school.

[164] Tariq Mahmood Ashraf, "Pakistan's Frontier Corps and the War against Terrorism," *Jamestown Foundation*, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5113&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=167&no_cache=1.

[165] Rashid Ahmed Khan, "FATA After Independence: 1947-2001," in *Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan*, ed. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005), 43.

daisy-cutters. Difficult terrain, the porous border, insufficient ground troops and inadequate planning by the coalition and Northern Alliance allowed many extremists to flee into the FATA and other border areas of Pakistan. The Pakistan Army's inability to check cross border movements was exacerbated when Pakistan redeployed significant numbers of troops to its eastern borders with India in the aftermath of the December 13, 2001 attacks on the Indian parliament.

The Afghan people were fed up with Taliban rule in 2001; this was not the case in FATA. The Pashtun adherence to the tradition of *mailmestia*[166] offered refuge to the fleeing extremists, who brought with them intense anti-American sentiment. Geographically, culturally and politically, FATA provided a hospitable environment for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda to train and operate against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Since then, the spread of terrorism has affected Afghanistan and Pakistan equally. From January 2004 through September 2008, there were 14,353 victims of terrorist incidents in Afghanistan and nearly as many—13,434—in Pakistan.[167] The U.S. has also paid a high human, economic, and political cost in Afghanistan operations. The newly elected Obama administration seems determined to achieve its objectives in Afghanistan.[168]

Many experts consider Pakistan's support vital for achieving U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. According to political analyst Shuja Nawaz, "The United States cannot win the war in Afghanistan without the full and willing participation and support of Pakistan, its Army, and the general population."[169] Similarly, Daniel Markey, former U.S. State

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[166] The Pashto word *mailmestia* is a principle of the Pashtunwali code that requires high levels of hospitality for guests.

[167] Victims include those killed, injured and taken hostage. See the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, *Worldwide Incidents Tracking System*, http://wits.nctc.gov/RunSearchCountry.do?countryId=16&confirmed=true for Afghanistan and http://wits.nctc.gov/RunSearchCountry.do?countryId=23&confirmed=true for Pakistan.

[168] Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, "Obama Plan Would Narrow War Goals in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, March 27, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/28/us/politics/28prexy.html?ref=world.

[169] Nawaz, "FATA - A Most Dangerous Place."

Department policy planning staff member, considers Pakistan "an essential—perhaps even irreplaceable—link in the massive logistics chain for U.S. and NATO forces operations in Afghanistan."[170]

The U.S. and Pakistan have a shared interest in the fight against terrorism. The U.S. has emphasized coercive means rather than building confidence, cooperation and support. The Musharraf regime and the current regime in Islamabad provided complete support to coalition operations in Afghanistan, at a high political price. The masses increasingly criticize government policies, primarily due to continuing U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan, Pakistan's military operations in FATA and the country's deteriorating security situation. In recent months especially, Pakistani intellectuals, politicians and media have demanded that the right of coalition forces to convey logistics supplies through Pakistan should be used as leverage to force a stop to drone attacks.

The U.S. has frequently violated Pakistan's sovereignty to target terrorist networks in FATA, resulting in over 600 civilian casualties.[171] In the U.S., there is a rising demand to attach economic support for Pakistan with progress in the war on terror. Peace deals between Pakistan and local tribes have come under strong criticism in Washington.[172] Emphasizing the need to stabilize the democratic regime in Islamabad, U.S. officials have nonetheless made destabilizing statements, including Senator Dianne Feinstein's claim that U.S. drones operate from Pakistani bases[173] and the exaggerated assertion by David Kilcullen, General Petraeus's top advisor, that two-thirds of Pakistan is under terrorist control.[174]

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[170] Daniel Markey, "Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt," *Council on Foreign Relations* (August, 2008), www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Pakistan_CSR36.pdf.

[171] Colin Cookman, "Interactive Map: U.S. Airstrikes in Pakistan on the Rise," *Center for American Progress*, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/03/pakistan_map.html.

[172] Ann Scott Tyson, "Border Complicates War in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/03/AR2008040304029.html.

[173] Greg Millar, "Feinstein comment on U.S. drones likely to embarrass Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 2009; available from http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-uspakistan13-2009feb13,0,4776260.story.

[174] Carlos Lozada, "A Conversation with David Kilcullen," *Washington Post*, March 22, 2009; available from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/19/AR2009031903038.html.

C.   PAKISTAN'S MILITARY OPERATION IN FATA

Pakistan's military operations in FATA commenced in December 2001, when the Frontier Corps (FC)[175] was deployed in the Khyber, Kurram and South Waziristan Agencies based on information that Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements had sought refuge with local tribes. Local tribes were motivated by greed, fear and religious sympathies. By May 2002, it appeared that the paramilitary force was unable to check the inflow of Afghan militants. The Pakistan government deployed regular Pakistan Army troops into FATA for the first time in the nation's history.[176] Operation *Al-Mizan*[177] aimed to prevent Al-Qaeda and Taliban infiltration, to open up the no-go areas in FATA and establish the writ of the government, to preclude U.S. forces from entering Pakistani territory on the pretext of hot pursuit operations, and to establish complete writ of the state in FATA and absorb it into Pakistan's settled areas.[178] The tribal people offered their complete support to the Pakistan Army and agreed to participate in operations against the foreign elements. However, they advanced three demands. First, they insisted that foreigners not be allowed to enter their areas, consistent with their history and culture. Second, they demanded that government forces not use aerial bombing, indicating the high value placed on airpower deterrence, perhaps in response to recent heavy use of direct airpower in eastern Afghanistan by the U.S. Finally, the tribes demanded that government forces not remain permanently in FATA, which appears to contradict one of the objectives of the operation.[179]

A brief review of the initial operation carried out by the Pakistan Army suggests that all major tenets of COIN theory were given due importance. For instance, efforts were made to seek consensus with tribal elders through political work. Emphasis was put on socioeconomic projects to earn popular support, along with respect for local customs

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[175] Frontier Corps is a paramilitary force under the Federal Interior Minister with recruits mostly from the tribal areas. Its officers are attached from the Pakistan Army.

[176] Ashraf, "Pakistan's Frontier Corps."

[177] *Al-Mizan* in Urdu means "to keep balance."

[178] Brigadier General (Ret.) Feroz Khan, professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, reporting on a speech by Lieutenant General Tariq Wasim, Commandant, National Defense College Pakistan at NPS on September 4, 2004.

[179] Ashraf, "Pakistan's Frontier Corps."

and *riwaj*. As promised, no kinetic application of airpower was witnessed during this period. On the rugged, undeveloped terrain, Pakistan Army helicopters were used extensively in indirect roles such as transportation and logistics.[180] For the first two years, operations were remarkably peaceful. It is claimed that the Pakistan Army established the writ of government in most FATA areas "without firing a single shot."[181]

By late 2003, it was clear that the local tribes could not keep militants out of their area and check their activities across the Durand line against the coalition forces. In early 2004, Pakistan security forces started military operations in the southern FATA, employing heavy kinetic options, including airpower and artillery. In order to root out militants, especially the foreigners, the FC overstretched its reach into the rugged terrain of Kalosha in South Waziristan. This gave insurgents opportunities to ambush military convoys and trap military elements in the difficult hilly terrain. As in Afghanistan, direct application of airpower was used rescue ground forces. Tactically, the situation was salvaged, but at a significant strategic cost. Collateral damage, violation of promises and political backlash against a heavy handed operation escalated the security situation in FATA and adjacent areas. Numerous military operations by the FC, backed by the regular Pakistan Army, have been conducted in the area ever since. Poor communications infrastructure requires extensive use of indirect airpower for transportation and logistic support. Sporadic use of direct airpower with increasing intensity has also occurred. In the last half of 2008, military operations began against increasing militant activities in Bajaur, FATA's northernmost agency.

The direct use of airpower has expanded due to the deteriorating security situation and increased militancy. However, use of airpower is handicapped by high sensitivity to collateral damage, as well as technical and operational limits on the platforms available for the task. The Pakistan Army's AH-1S Cobra gunship helicopters provide close air support on most occasions. The Army's few helicopters are spread thinly over a vast area of operation. The helicopters' slow speed and limited endurance means a long reaction

[180] Ashraf, "Pakistan's Frontier Corps."

[181] Shaukat Sultan Khan, "Government's Initiatives in FATA Before and After 9/11," in *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Response,* (Islamabad: Policy Research Institute, 2005), ed. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheeman and Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, 167.

time, precluding efficient employment of a platform at distant geographic locations. Reduced engine performance due to high elevation and fear of ground fire from militants on the peaks with medium to heavy caliber weapons limit employment options for the helicopters.[182] The Army's Cobra helicopters carry rockets and guns only for their assigned roles; they are effective only against soft targets such as personnel in open areas. Limited quantities of on-board ammunition also limit employment options.

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) participates in the operations mostly in direct applications such as close air support and planned interdiction strikes using PGMs and general purpose weapons against militant hideouts. Open source data suggests a reasonably high degree of commitment by the PAF to operations against militants in the FATA. According to one observer, the PAF played a central role in the Bajaur operation.[183] In 2007 and 2008, the Pakistan Air Force conducted 38 surgical strikes.[184] In August 2008 alone, the PAF F-16s flew 93 sorties in operations against the Taliban.[185] Pakistan faces multiple constraints on employing PAF assets for counterterrorism. These constraints are discussed in the following sections.

1.   Strategic Security Constraint

The foremost constraint faced by Pakistan is a significant threat from India. Pakistan and India have a history of hostilities, having fought three wars since 1947. Indian intervention into East Pakistan in 1971 led to the breakup of Pakistan; this is a fresh memory for a considerable number of Pakistanis. The two nations have also engaged in several low intensity conflicts over the years. Especially since 9/11, the security situation has been prone to escalation. The Pakistan Air Force, although vastly

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[182] Thomas Houlahan, "Pakistan: Separating the Facts from the Myths," *Middle East Times*, October 16, 2008; available from http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/10/16/pakistan_separating_the_facts_from_the_myths/6329/.

[183] Syed Saleem Shehzad, "Taliban Win a Fight – and Settle Scores," *Asia Times*, August 14, 2008; available from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JH14Df01.html.

[184] Faryal Leghari, "Dealing with FATA: Strategic Shortfalls and Recommendations," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. II, No. 10 (July, 2008); available from http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php?option=com_rokzine&view=article&id=61.

[185] "F-16 Acquisition - Peace Drive," GlobalSecurity.org forum; available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/f-16.htm.

inferior to the Indian Air Force numerically as well as technologically, is Pakistan's first line of defense. It is responsible to counter any impending aerial threat from India, like the Indian violations of Pakistan airspace in December 2008.[186] A handful of F-16s with PGM capability are the only potent option for close air support to the Pakistan security forces operations in FATA. These F-16s also provide a major share of the air defense efforts all over the country against threats from the east. Resource constraint PAF has a very limited trans-frontier radar coverage, which means limited early warning of emerging threats. It requires a high state of operational readiness for air defense duties, tying down significant assets to protect Pakistan's strategic targets against threats from the east.

2.   Tactical Constraints Due to Lack of Technology

Although used extensively,[187] the aircrafts' technical limitations require cautious employment of the aging F-16 fleet to support the Pakistan Army's operations against militancy. Planning and execution of PAF operations are significantly handicapped by a lack of real time electronic intelligence and inferior technical means for command, control and communications. All close air support sorties must be pre-planned, with limited room for adjustment to the changing ground scenario after launch. This compromises the optimal employment of force. Inadequate communications and limited coordination with the friendly ground forces restricts ground force movement during air activity in order to prevent fratricide. Unlike coalition forces, the PAF has only LASER guided PGMs whose operation is frequently limited by clouds and reduced visibility from fog or dust in suspension. The targeting pods used by the PAF to deliver these PGMs lack night capability.[188] The airpower tools available to Pakistan for kinetic applications have a fair capability to target militants trapped in known locations, but are significantly

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[186] John Pike, "Pakistan lodges protest over Indian airspace violation," *Islamic Republic News Agency,* December 18, 2008, http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/pakistan/2008/pakistan-081218-irna01.htm.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Donald Camp, "Defeating al-Qaeda's Air Force: Pakistan's F-16 Program in the Fight against Terrorism (edited)," Statement before the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C., September 16, 2008; available from http://www.defense-aerospace.com/article-view/verbatim/97943/state-dept.-details-pakistani-f_16-program.html.

constrained by time and weather conditions. These limitations are well understood and often exploited by the militants. Therefore, airpower lacks the tactical deterrence to impede the militants' freedom of movement. Provision of GPS guided JDAMs that can be employed around the clock in all weather conditions, along with better command, control and communication means for better coordination with friendly ground forces, would help address some of these problems.

3.   Trust Deficit

Notwithstanding the troubled history of U.S.-Pakistan relations,[189] the PAF has always relied heavily on the U.S. to meet its high-tech weapons requirements including platforms and precision guided munitions. Despite sanctions and cancelled deals in the past, Pakistan signed another deal with the U.S. in June 2005 for procurement of more F-16s and associated weapons. The post Cold War scenario in South Asia has caused a significant shift of U.S. policy in favor of India. Many U.S. analysts and think tanks support stronger U.S. relations with India as compared to Pakistan. Christine Fair, a RAND political analyst, refers to Pakistan as "an uncertain partner in the fight against terrorism," while calling India "a long-term partner in counterterrorism."[190] There are fears that the weapons procured by Pakistan from the U.S. will be used against India, raising questions about the future of the deal. These perceptions have two important implications for Pakistan's COIN effort in FATA and the employment of airpower in this effort. First, anticipating problems with the delivery of weapons in the 2005 deal, the PAF might conserve the use of high-tech weapons in order to maintain a reasonable degree of viability against India, adversely affecting counterterrorism operations. Second, such perceptions lead to the notion that the U.S. wants Pakistan to be subservient to India, which the people of Pakistan may find unacceptable at any cost. Diminishing public

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[189] David O. Smith, "Facing Up to the Trust Deficit: The Key to an Enhanced U.S.-Pakistan Defense Relationship," *Strategic Insights,* Vol. VI, No. 4*,* (June, 2007); available from http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Jun/smithJun07.asp.

[190] Christine Fair, "The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India," RAND Corporation (2004); available from http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG141.pdf.

support due to the perception that the war on terrorism is a U.S.-Indian conspiracy against Pakistan and the Muslim world makes it difficult for Pakistan's government to aggressively target the growing militancy in FATA.

There is a significant trust deficit regarding Pakistan's sincere allegiance to the war on terrorism. It is believed in Washington that elements in Pakistan's intelligence agencies maintain links with Al-Qaeda and Taliban first established during the Soviet invasion. The U.S. senior military leadership recently criticized Pakistan, demanding an end to such ties.[191] Some people argue that the Pakistan security agencies tip off the militants with vital information, adversely affecting operations. Such perceptions have tactical as well as strategic effects for COIN in FATA. At tactical levels, mistrust limits the exchange of intelligence information and coordination between the two forces. At the strategic level, mistrust makes it more difficult for the Pakistan government to separate the people from insurgents.

It appears that Pakistan military operations have caused serious damage to the organizational structure of Al-Qaeda.[192] While far from being destroyed, Al-Qaeda can no longer operate freely in FATA. Taliban elements also received significant punishment. However, they managed a resurgence primarily due to a military operation in 2007 against militants in Lal Masjid.[193] The militants in FATA strongly opposed the operation and vowed revenge.[194] Other reasons for the Taliban's resurgence include the weakness of President Musharraf's government, growing anti-American sentiment throughout Pakistan and the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the country. A significant portion of the Pakistani public believe that Musharraf adopted a heavy handed application of force on American dictates in order to secure his rule, compromising the internal security. The U.S. drone attacks in FATA, especially in 2008, played an important role in developing such perceptions.

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[191] "ISI still linked to militants: Mullen, Petraeus," *The Nation*, March 28, 2009; available from http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Politics/28-Mar-2009/ISI-still-linked-to-militants-Mullen-Petraeus.

[192] Cheema, *Federally Administered.*

[193] *Lal Masjid* in Urdu means Red Mosque; it is a mosque in Islamabad.

[194] Cheema, *Federally Administered*.

D. THE U.S. DRONE OPERATIONS IN FATA

The first U.S. attack in FATA was carried out on January 13, 2006, in Bajaur. It killed 18 people. Ayman-al-Zawahiri, a senior Al-Qaeda leader, was reportedly the target;[195] however, he left the target site shortly before the attack. Al-Qaeda leader Abdur Rehman Al-Maghribi, a Moroccan said to be the Chief of Al-Qaeda operations in Pakistan, was purportedly killed.[196] In addition to targeting Ayman-al-Zawahiri and other senior Al-Qaeda leadership, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan during 2005 is a possible reason for the attack. See Figure 9.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008(Jan-Sep)
Afghanistan	149	484	1264	1167	831
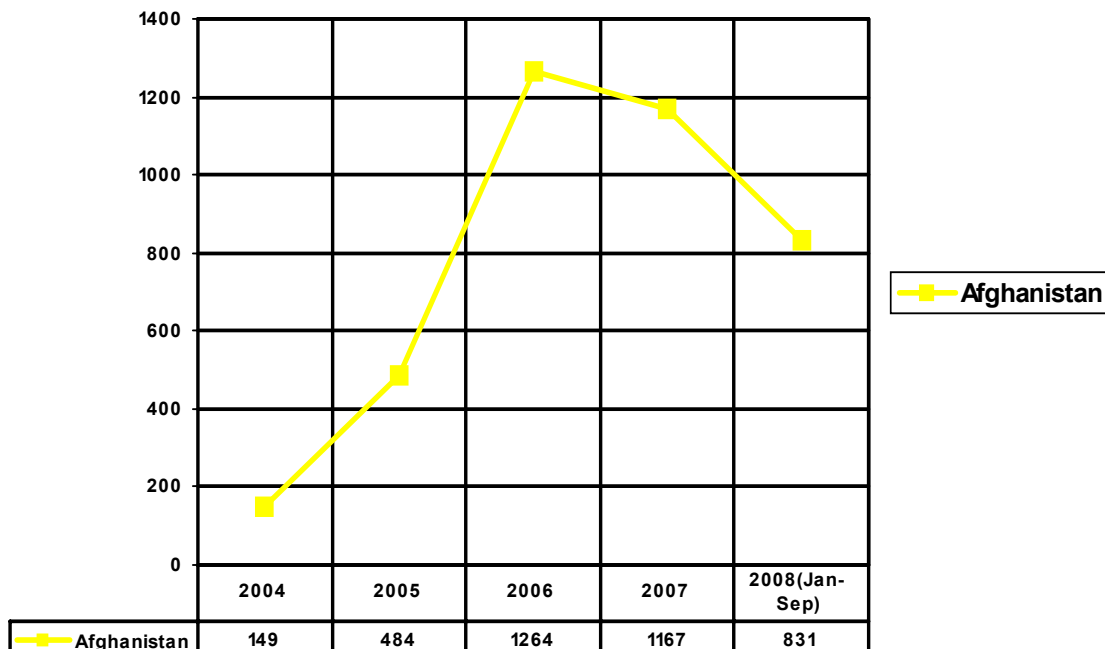
Figure 9.   Security incidents in Afghanistan[197]

Additionally, it appeared that Al-Qaeda was re-establishing its Soviet-era foothold in FATA. An air attack was probably preferred over a ground operation for a variety of reasons: the difficult terrain, the inhospitable environment and Pakistan's political sensitivities. In addition, Predator UAV and Hellfire air-to-surface missiles have long

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[195] Cookman, "Interactive Map."

[196] Ibid.

[197] U.S. National Counterterrorism Center. See also Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency."

endurance and pose no risk to their operators' lives.[198] It is also believed that intelligence sharing between Pakistan and the U.S. led to this attack, and the attack was officially owned by the Musharraf government.[199]

The next drone attacks were in April and June 2007 in North Waziristan. The reported targets included senior Al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership and their joint training infrastructure. The attacks killed between 35 and 49 people, mostly innocent civilians, and no high value targets (HVT).[200] In 2008 drone attacks escalated. Twelve attacks in the first eight months killed 155 people, among them only two HVTs. The vast majority of those killed were again civilians, including women and children.[201] In the last four months of 2008, after Musharraf was forced to resign, the number of attacks increased rapidly. Twenty-five attacks were carried out. One in the settled area of Bannu killed 282 people, mostly innocent civilians, including women and children. In the first quarter of 2009, 12 more attacks killed more than 145 people, including two HVTs. Recent reports quote Obama administration officials suggesting that the U.S. plans talks with the Taliban. But to negotiate from a position of strength, the U.S. will probably increase the level of attacks first. According to a Western diplomat, "There will be talks but the Taliban are going to experience a lot of pain first, on both sides of the border."[202]

1.   Pakistan's Official Response to Drone Attacks

Pakistan's official response is ambiguous about its consent for the drone attacks. It is believed that for the first attack in January 2006, there was some intelligence sharing between Pakistan and the U.S., and the attack was officially owned by the Musharraf

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[198] Cookman, "Interactive Map."

[199] Hassan Abbass, "President Obama's Policy Options in Pakistan Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)," Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, January 26, 2009; available from http://www.ispu.org/files/PDFs/fata_report.pdf, accessed March 30, 2009.

[200] Cookman, "Interactive Map."

[201] Ibid.

[202] "US likely to step up FATA drone attacks," *Daily Times*, March 10, 2009; available from http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C03%5C10%5Cstory_10-3-2009_pg7_20.

government in Pakistan.[203] The response of Musharraf regime to subsequent attacks in 2007 and especially the first eight months of 2008 was generally muted, probably due to increasing domestic political pressure.

The current regime in Islamabad is more vocal in opposing the drone attacks, and frequently protesting the civilian casualties. The issue, however, continues to be confusing for public perceptions. Some reports in late 2008 suggested that there was a secret deal between the government of Pakistan and the U.S. to allow the September drone attacks in FATA. Pakistan's foreign office spokesman strongly denied the report.[204] Pakistan President Asif Zardari also disapproved of the attack; however, he appeared willing to give American forces the benefit of doubt in light of the ill-defined border.[205] This is a questionable stance because a significant number of missile strikes were fairly deep inside Pakistani territory.[206] Many analysts view the Pakistan government's stance on the drone attacks with great suspicion. For instance, Riffat Hussain, head of the Strategic Studies Department at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, thinks, "Pakistan government's stated opposition to drone attacks is only rhetorical and it does not mean much in practical terms."[207]

2.   The Public Perceptions of Drone Attacks

The drone attacks cause significant anti-American sentiment in Pakistan. Especially in FATA, it appears that the drone attacks have added a new dimension to the militancy. Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Taliban, said in an interview, "I spent three months trying to recruit and only got 10-15 persons. One U.S. attack and I got 150 volunteers."[208] The statement indicates that Mehsud had a cause

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[203] Abbass, "President Obama's Policy Options."

[204] "U.S. drone attacks have Pakistan's approval: *Washington Post*," *Islamic Republic News Agency*, November 18, 2008, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2008/11/mil-081118-irna02.htm, accessed April 1, 2009.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Cookman, "Interactive Map."

[207] Riffat Hussain, e-mail message to the author, April 3, 2009. Dr. Hussain is the head of the Strategic Studies department at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, and a renowned analyst of defense and strategic issues in Pakistan.

[208] Nawaz, "FATA - A Most Dangerous Place."

even prior to the beginning of the drone attacks, but probably was struggling with the recruitments. Claiming responsibility for the March 30, 2009 terrorist attack on a police training center in Lahore, Mehsud says, "[T]he attack was in retaliation for the U.S. drone strikes in the tribal areas."[209] The statement clearly indicates that Mehsud is trying to ride the wave of local public sentiment to generate more recruitment for militancy and to gain popular support in FATA as well as Pakistan.

An alternate view is that Pakistan's Taliban have limited support in FATA, but could effectively coerce the people into submission due to the government of Pakistan's limited writ in FATA. There are reports from affected areas that drone attacks are welcomed by segments of population who do not want to live under Taliban rule. According to journalists who interviewed local people in drone affected areas, before the increased frequency of drone attacks, Taliban militants used to force the locals to give them shelter. Now they have stopped harassing people for fear that their presence might be disclosed. According to Riffat Hussain, "Drones are the most dreaded thing in FATA as there is no escape from them."[210]

According to polls conducted in October 2008, 32 percent of people in Pakistan think that the Pakistan's cooperation with the U.S. in the war on terrorism has mostly benefitted the U.S., as against only two percent who thinks that it has favored Pakistan. From June to October 2008, those who think that cooperation has benefitted neither the U.S. nor Pakistan has doubled from 10 percent to 20 percent.[211] According to Gallup polls in Pakistan during the same time frame, almost half of the Pakistani population sees the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan as a threat to Pakistan.[212] Along with declining public support for the U.S.-Pakistan coalition, the government faces intense criticism by all segments of society, especially in recent months. Strong criticism has raised the

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[209] Nirupama Subramanian, "Taliban claims responsibility," *Hindu*, April 1, 2009, http://www.hindu.com/2009/04/01/stories/2009040153301500.htm.

[210] Hussain, e-mail message.

[211] Julie Ray, "Opinion Briefing: U.S.-Pakistan Policy," Gallup Survey (December 29, 2008); available from http://www.gallup.com/poll/113584/Opinion-Briefing-USPakistan-Policy.aspx.

[212] Hassan Abbas. "How Pakistanis View US Presence in the Region," *Watandost: Inside News About Pakistan and Its Neighborhood*, October 5, 2008, http://watandost.blogspot.com/2008/10/how-pakistanis-view-us-presence-in.html.

political cost of government collaboration with the U.S. For instance, defense analyst Shireen Mazari maintains that "When the Pakistani state allows its territory to be used for drones that kill Pakistanis –and it is irrelevant whether they are killed deliberately or as 'collateral damage'–more space is created for future recruits who want to fight the U.S. and its collaborators."[213] Similarly, most political leaders advocate that the government abandon "the U.S. policy for the 'so-called' war on terror and devise its own."[214]

3. Analysis of the U.S. Drone Attacks

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (Jan - Sep)
Pakistan	1213	984	1272	3956	5516
Afghanistan	652	155	3565	4598	3917
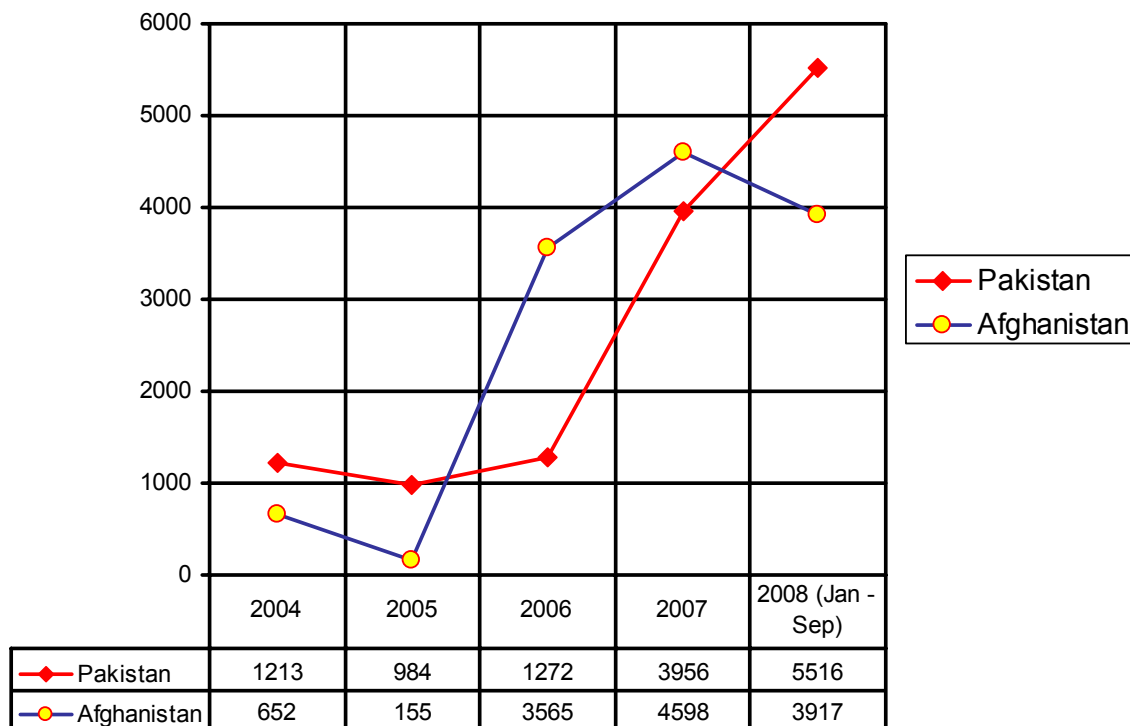
Figure 10.　　　Victims of Security Incidents in Pakistan and Afghanistan
Victims = Killed + Wounded + Hostages

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[213] Shireen Mazari, "A Pakistani-centric understanding of militancy," *News*, April 1, 2009; available from http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=170132.

[214] Nadeem Malik, "Islamabad Tonight: Imran Khan with Nadeem Malik," April 1, 2009, press conference at *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* web site; available from http://www.insaf.pk/Media/Videos/tabid/62/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2084/Islamabad-Tonight-Imran-Khan-with-Nadeem-Malik-April-1-2009.aspx.

Since the insurgency in Afghanistan picked up its pace in mid 2006, the security situation in Pakistan has deteriorated significantly, as shown in Figure 10.[215] Senior leadership in Washington regularly point out the "safe havens" in FATA, fuelling the insurgency in Afghanistan. Political leadership in Pakistan, in contrast, sees the security situation and the U.S. presence in Afghanistan as the cause of increasing radicalization and the continually deteriorating security situation.[216]

Statistically, Pakistan has suffered more than Afghanistan, especially in recent months.[217] Besides civilian casualties, the armed forces of Pakistan lost more troops to terrorism than the coalition forces in Afghanistan. The political leadership in Pakistan emphasizes that for the situation to normalize in FATA and Pakistan, there must be a reasonable level of peace in Afghanistan. Notwithstanding conflicting regional interests, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the U.S. and other coalition partners in Afghanistan have a common interest in fighting terrorism. Conflicting regional interests among coalition partners seem to outweigh common interests. Criticism of Pakistan's COIN effort and security forces by senior military and civilian leadership and officials in Washington directly and indirectly benefits the insurgents. Directly, such criticism generates hope among insurgents and allows them to convince the local population that they are winning the war and will force the government forces to leave the area soon. Indirectly, it increases anti-U.S. sentiment in settled areas, as people swing support away from the COIN and, in limited cases, in favor of the insurgents.

The statistics shown in the Figure 11 indicate a link between drone attacks and the security situation in Pakistan. With the increase in drone attacks, the number of security incidents also increases, especially in for the first nine months of 2008.[218]

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[215] U.S. National Counterterrorism Center.

[216] Awais Ahmed Ghani, Governor of the NWFP, interview with Talat Hussain on *Live with Talat* on Aaj TV Network, Pakistan on April 1, 2009 and Amer Haider Khan Hoti, Chief Minister NWFP, interview with Talat Hussain on *Live with Talat* on Aaj TV Network, Pakistan on March 26, 2009; available from http://www.pakistanherald.com/programs.asp?p=lwt&page=2&order=prog%5Fid.

[217] U.S. National Counterterrorism Center.

[218] Cookman, "Interactive Map." The number of security incidents for 2008 includes only the first nine months due to non-availability of data.
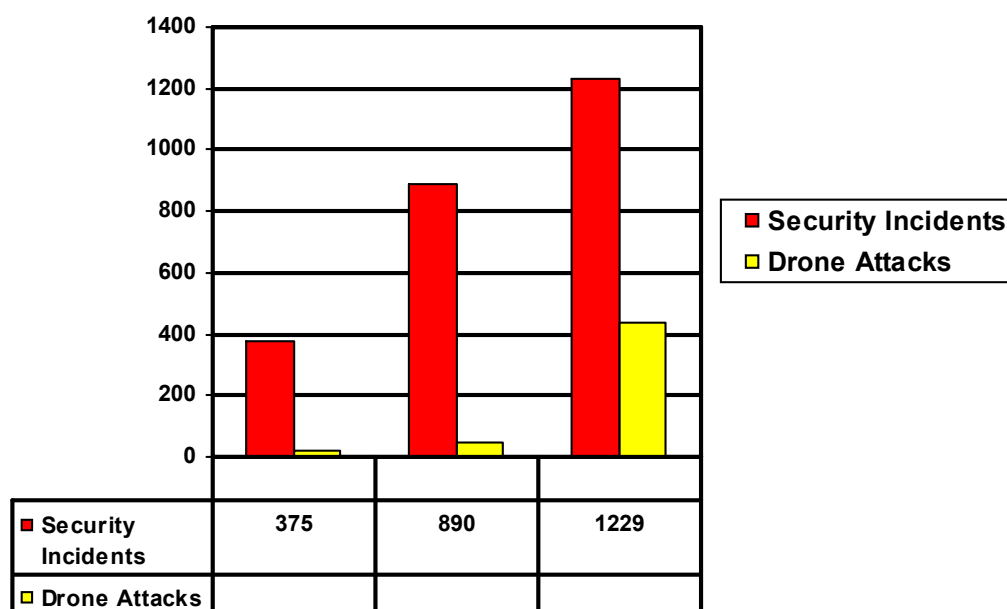
Figure 11.   Number of victims of drone attacks and security incidents in Pakistan

Despite favorable sentiment by part of the FATA population, it appears that the gains made by the drone attacks are outweighed by the cost. So far the 55 attacks that have killed about 650 people have only claimed 11 HVTs.[219] It is claimed that numerous Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants have been killed; but replacements for these militants are readily available. It is claimed that the attacks seriously degrade Al-Qaeda's ability to plan and undertake major operations against the U.S. and the West. This might be true of Al-Qaeda's capacity to undertake such attacks. However, increasing radicalization, in terms of numbers as well as intensity, is evident from the rise of security incidents in the region. It appears that the drone attacks have increased militants' motivation for terrorist activity. Public opinion in settled areas of Pakistan does not ideologically favor the insurgents; growing anti-American sentiment, however, seems to be a dominant factor.

E.   APPLYING THE COIN MODEL TO FATA

Popular support is critical for the insurgents. Therefore the government must detach the people from the insurgents and attach them to the government, which requires

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[219] Cookman, "Interactive Map."

good governance, economic development and a very well directed and calibrated application of military power. The model as applied to the COIN effort in FATA is depicted in Figure 12.
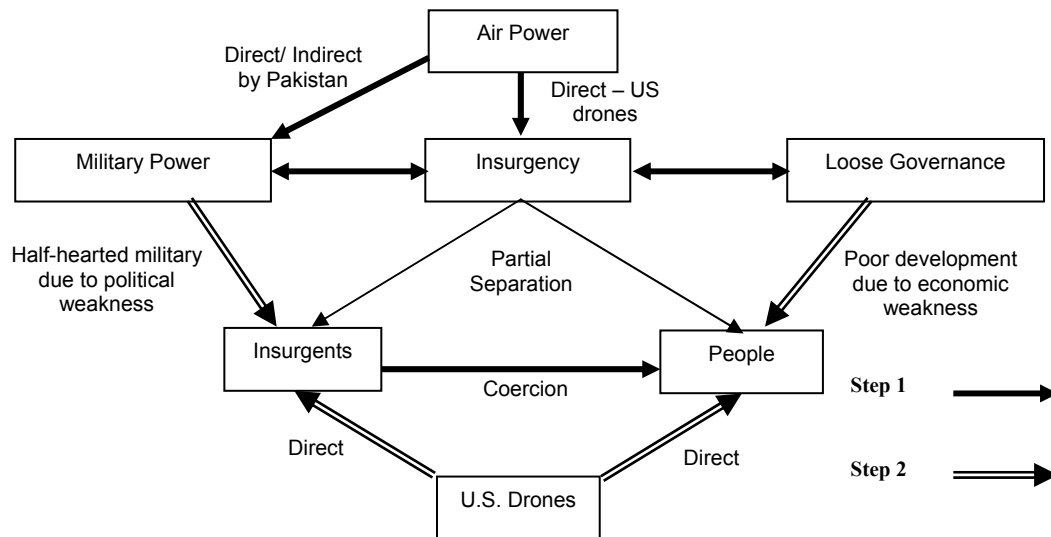
Figure 12.   COIN Effort in FATA

Unlike in Afghanistan, at first the insurgents enjoyed fair support in FATA for historic, religious and cultural reasons. However, the Pakistani security forces' peaceful presence in the area for the first few years and support from local tribes against foreign elements suggest that the population was divided over the issue. Government promises made to local people had to be broken in order to root out militants from the difficult mountainous terrain. Kinetic application of airpower was resorted to, with mixed results. Serious damage has been done to the Al-Qaeda network, but it is far from being completely destroyed. Although the Taliban managed a resurgence in Pakistan, they do not enjoy widespread popular support. Overall, it appears that the sentiment of the people in FATA and in Afghanistan is somewhat similar. Neither favor the insurgents, who are coercive and advocate an unpopular interpretation of Islam. Nor do they favor the counterinsurgents, because of broken promises, poor socioeconomic conditions and anti-American sentiment.

Despite limited local support for the insurgents, Pakistan's COIN has been unable to deliver a decisive blow. Part of the problem is that Pakistan does not have the economic strength to back up military operations with rapid economic development. This is evident in Bajaur agency, where the Pakistani forces gained a significant military victory, but development works are off mark due to nationwide economic difficulties.[220] Also, Pakistan security forces are not adequately equipped and trained for the task at hand. Technological inadequacies impose serious constraints for the direct application of airpower. Fearing political backlash from collateral damage, the government of Pakistan has probably been cautious in applying military power, and especially airpower. Increasing drone attacks by the U.S. have been partially successful in counterterrorism, but as a major cause of growing anti-American sentiment, the attacks impede Pakistani forces' ability to deal with the militancy.

F.   CONCLUSION

According to the theory of insurgency described in Chapter II, for a successful COIN the political competition with insurgents must take precedence over military competition. Pakistan's security forces did a poor job by initiating direct use of airpower, contrary to earlier promises, and not confiding in the local people. This was a reactionary move rather than a well thought out plan. Nevertheless, as suggested by the theory, it proved counterproductive and increased militancy in FATA. Because of cultural and ethnic links all over Pakistan and especially across the Durand line and in adjacent areas of NWFP, the phenomena expanded in both the directions. The security situation over most of Pakistan deteriorated, apparently linked to the level of violence in FATA.

Increased militancy has progressed to a near insurgency in FATA. Notwithstanding the deteriorating security conditions due to military operations, there has been some positive development. Notable scholars in Pakistan have identified growing

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[220] Major General Tariq Khan, Inspector General, Frontier Corps, Pakistan, interview with Talat Hussain on *Live with Talat* on Aaj TV Network, Pakistan, on April 17, 2009; available from http://www.pakistanherald.com/programs.asp?p=lwt&page=2&order=prog%5Fid.

tensions among insurgents and the people of FATA.[221] To some it might suggest a greater emphasis on military competition. With support from the PAF, the army has made significant gains in northern areas of FATA. Considering recent political unrest, the weak economy, poor law enforcement and the fear of backlash in settled areas like Swat and Buner, the government of Pakistan has exercised restraint. The military's technological limitations and resource constraints may contribute to their reluctance to step up kinetic applications.

The U.S. drones are a potent counterterrorism tool. On-board reconnaissance sensors, long endurance and all-weather day and night PGMs delivery capability has the potential to make up for some of the deficiencies of Pakistan's airpower. The use of drones has mixed effects on public sentiment. The FATA population who are unhappy with the Taliban interpretation of Islam and lifestyle favor the attacks. Drone attacks also make it difficult for the Taliban to coerce the local population. On the other hand, anti-U.S. sentiment in FATA is growing as a result of Pashtun nationalism. For different reasons, similar sentiments prevail in the settled areas in Pakistan. In addition to opposing civilian casualties in FATA, people in settled areas see drone attacks as a violation of Pakistan sovereignty. Some consider the attacks directly responsible for the deteriorating security situation; some argue that it sets a bad precedent in the region. Increasing numbers strongly criticize the government for not doing enough to stop the drone attacks.

In sum, at present the political cost of the U.S. controlled drone attacks exceeds the military benefits to Pakistan's efforts against militancy. Increasing pressure from the U.S. that does not acknowledge constraints on Pakistan's fight against militancy makes it difficult for the government of Pakistan to rally popular support against militants.

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[221] Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Challenges Facing a Counter-Militant Campaign in Pakistan's FATA" (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008): 26; available from http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=98c92218-6c51-4c80-9489-72d9e134d29a. Riffat Hussain has a similar opinion.

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V. CONCLUSION

Theoretically, COIN is characterized by prolonged, low to medium scale conflict in which political competition between rivals takes precedence over military competition. A balanced application of kinetic power is critical for COIN. Counterinsurgents must demonstrate military superiority over insurgents by winning battles to earn the support of the people, who are considered the common center of gravity in the conflict. An unnecessarily cautious approach that wastes opportunities to inflict damage on the insurgents may send a negative message to the people, while overemphasis on the military conflict may lead to collateral damage with potentially serious political repercussions.

Airpower has strong relevance for COIN. The indirect use of airpower for transportation, logistics, surveillance and reconnaissance can be a force multiplier for the ground forces and optimize the use of the military against the insurgents. In its direct application, airpower can accurately deliver considerable firepower on short notice, inflicting serious damage. However, if firepower is not well directed due to inadequate intelligence or poor decisions, it may cause collateral damage, resulting in substantial political losses. The psychological effects of aerial bombing add value to the insurgents' propaganda.

In places like Afghanistan and FATA, cultural factors can make the political backlash even more severe. Collateral damage from the inappropriate application of direct airpower might swing popular support towards the insurgents, not for ideological reasons, but because of *badal*, the desire for revenge.

The U.S.-led coalition operations in Afghanistan and FATA have entered their eighth year. The indirect use of airpower, especially for transportation and logistics, has played an important role in sustaining the effort. The direct use of airpower in early stages was greatly influenced by the experience of the U.S. in other conflicts where direct use of airpower suited the conventional phases of the conflict. When the nature of conflict changed from conventional to asymmetric in 2004 and 2005, the COIN failed to

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adapt the direct use of airpower. The direct use in Afghanistan escalated in 2006 with the increased tempo of the insurgency, declining security conditions and mounting military pressures on the ground forces. In FATA, sporadic and increasing application of direct airpower by Pakistan's security forces has been observed since 2004 and especially since 2008. The frequency of U.S. drone attacks has also increased since 2008. Generally speaking, the direct use of airpower has been valuable at the tactical level, but with a high cost at the strategic level, partially due to civilian casualties from ill-directed kinetic applications.

At the start of the conflict, the Afghan people had strong sentiments against the insurgents and in favor of the counterinsurgents. Public opinion now opposes both the insurgents and the counterinsurgents, primarily due to bad governance and the heavy-handed application of military power, especially airpower. In contrast, in FATA, the initial sentiments of the local population can be categorized as marginally pro-insurgent, with less opposition to the counterinsurgents. These sentiments have now become marginally anti-insurgent and anti-counterinsurgent. It appears that insurgents lost popular support because of their coercive attitudes, extreme interpretation of Islam and disregard for local customs and traditions. In FATA, a major reason for anti-COIN sentiment is the external use of airpower, which generates the perception that COIN by local forces is being waged on behalf of external forces.

In Afghanistan, airpower has been often called to salvage bad situations faced by ground forces. Poor employment of close air support frequently resulted in collateral damage, generating anti-U.S. sentiment among local populations. Notwithstanding these adverse effects, it appears that tactically, sustaining COIN operations without airpower support has been prohibitively expensive for ground forces. Similarly, in FATA the use of airpower by Pakistan and the U.S. has caused significant damage to the insurgents' safe havens and degraded their ability to coerce the local population. At the political level, however, increased drone attacks are a major cause of increased anti-U.S. sentiment among Pakistan's general population, which makes it politically difficult for local forces to generate a sustained COIN effort.

Primarily due to collateral damage and its psychological effects, the direct use of airpower is increasingly condemned as contributing to deteriorating security in Afghanistan, FATA and elsewhere in Pakistan. Some suggest that the use of airpower is an important reason the insurgency has escalated. This implies that the use of airpower might be reduced if not eliminated completely. Considering modern airpower's capability for firepower, accuracy, endurance and the ability to react quickly, it may be unwise to stop using it. Efforts should be made to balance its use as a military instrument with concern for political support in order to retain the tactical benefits of the direct use of airpower and its non-lethal use for transportation, logistics and reconnaissance while reducing its political cost.

Applying the frequently discussed "hammer and anvil"[222] approach to a COIN setting, airpower is ideally suited to play the role of hammer in support of ground forces as long as the ground forces are strong enough to effectively play the role of anvil. If the ground forces lack the strength to set up the adversary so airpower can deliver a decisive blow, they are likely to get bogged down in a prolonged engagement. Sometimes, as in Afghanistan, ground forces will be unable to break contact and have to call on airpower for support in a defensive role. Kinetic application by airpower in such situations is likely to be counterproductive due to the high chance of collateral damage and consequent political backlash. In the last two decades, airpower's improved firepower has prepared the battlefield for ground forces in conventional conflicts by softening the adversary defenses. In a COIN setting it appears that a role reversal for the two forces has the potential to produce better results. Ground forces should be employed to herd the insurgents away from the population. This requires support of the local population, sound knowledge of local customs and culture, and increased military strength. In a worst case scenario, the ground forces should always be in a position to break contact on their own. Once the insurgents are physically isolated, airpower's precision and firepower might provide an efficient kill. Such an approach would allow pre-planned application of airpower rather than its use to salvage the situation for the ground forces.

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[222] James Jay Carafans, "Petraeus Hearing Should Focus on Three Fronts, One Long War," Heritage Foundation, April 30, 2008, http://www.heritage.org/research/HomelandSecurity/wm1908.cfm.

The recent technological advancements have added weapons' delivery accuracy to the airpower. The COIN setting often requires controlled destruction without disturbing the surroundings. Because aerial platforms can only carry so many weapons, the payloads available on a given platform frequently exceed the requirements of the target. The platform does not have time to return and re-equip with the weapons best suited for the target. As a result, airmen frequently put more than the required payloads onto a target, resulting in collateral damage. A technological solution to the problem would be to divide the warhead of the aerial weapons into many subsections. Each section could be equipped with a separate fusing mechanism, with an option in the cockpit to arm selective sections in the warhead based on the size and strength of the target. This would give the pilot the option of controlled destruction over the target, which should significantly reduce collateral damage.

The theory of COIN reveals that the political competition between insurgents and counterinsurgents must have precedence over the military competition. This means that the military competition must be planned and executed with the cultural sensitivities of the local population in mind. Sometimes a minor military operation can incur significant political cost, demonstrated by the U.S. "show of force" missions frequently employed in recent months in Afghanistan. These missions are designed to reduce collateral damage and achieve military objectives through deterrence rather the actual application of force. Given Pashtun culture, however, such missions might have significant political cost. A public survey by Afghan journalists or researchers to establish public opinion on the passive application of airpower can offer valuable insights on the application of airpower for COIN.

The complexity increases if the COIN forces are a mix of local and external forces. The two forces may have different military and economic capabilities, and different levels of sensitivity to time and insurgent backlash through terrorist activity. This is the case in Afghanistan and FATA. The U.S. led coalition is fighting a "distant war." They have the advantage of technology, but operating in a strange environment, they lack HUMINT. As a result, it is often difficult to optimally employ high-tech weapons. In contrast, the Pakistani forces in FATA are fighting a "local war." They have

the advantage of HUMINT, but with technological handicaps are unable to verify the information. Fearing backlash in the form of terrorist incidents against the domestic population and the consequent political cost, the government is often reluctant to employ kinetic options. The intensity of the backlash and the political costs both increase significantly if collateral damage is caused by external forces.

Mutual support and cooperation between the U.S. and Pakistani counterinsurgent forces will benefit both. Verified by electronic means, HUMNINT should improve target selection for airpower, hence reducing collateral damage. Making modern weapons with improved accuracy available to Pakistan will improve target engagement. Less collateral damage should lead to a greater willingness to exercise kinetic options when appropriate.

The evidence and analysis in this thesis lead to few recommendations. In Afghanistan, to change direct employment of airpower from reactive to proactive, the density of ground forces should be increased. Planned levels of increase may not suffice. Areas should be identified where ground control can be consolidated. Ground forces should be concentrated in these areas first, with controlled expansion in accordance with the ink-spot strategy.

Until the coalition ground forces have the capacity to effectively serve as anvil, more emphasis should be placed on the indirect use of airpower. The improved mobility, logistics and reach afforded by the indirect use of airpower will optimize the use of ground forces.

Pakistani COIN forces rely heavily on airpower because of fire power deficiencies and the mountainous terrain with little communication infrastructure. Pakistan's airpower should be developed for both firepower and information gathering. The PAF's ability to deliver PGMs is outdated, especially under current operating conditions. The Air Force is also handicapped in terms of surveillance and reconnaissance. Improved capacity will help optimize exploitation of available opportunities to exercise kinetic options.

The use of drone attacks by the U.S. COIN forces over Pakistani territory should be stopped. Evidence suggests that the drone attacks have made reasonable tactical gains, but at a high political cost primarily because they are being employed by the U.S. The tactical benefits can be retained while significantly lowering the political cost if the drones are employed by Pakistan's COIN forces. Therefore, making this technology available to Pakistan should be considered.

The insurgents are not acceptable to the people of Afghanistan, FATA and Pakistan. Especially in FATA, people often shelter the insurgents in exchange for money. The people should be educated through an information campaign about the dangers of collateral damage from airpower when they provide shelter to the insurgents. In the long run, however, only economic development and jobs will empower people to stop supporting the insurgents.

APPENDIX: ROLE OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN SHAPING THE INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

The history of Afghanistan is full of confrontation between the state and the society. The last two and a half centuries shows that the society is more resilient than the state. Former Interior Minister Ali Jalali points out that "Afghanistan has a strong nation and a weak state."[223] The geopolitical environment is suitable for the state-society confrontation, which may be called insurgency from society's perspective. The Hindu Kush range, rugged mountainous terrain with isolated valleys, covers almost half of the country's landmass on the east-west axis. Tribes in these valleys are sensitive to outside interference and often resist attempts by the state bureaucracy to control tribal affairs.[224]

Various ethnic groups are not free of mutual confrontation. Pashtuns comprise 42 percent of the population. Most live in the southern and south eastern parts of the country and share a common language and culture with people in adjacent areas of Pakistan. The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens in central and northern parts of the country are 39 percent of the population; they share language, culture and history with the people of the central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. According to Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, until recently these tribes had more in common with tribes across international borders than with tribes within their own country.[225] Ethnic divides produce competition within the society; and ethnic commonalities with the tribes of adjacent countries make society susceptible to external interference.

Afghanistan's strategic location has always attracted foreign interventions. In ancient times, it was located close to the famous Silk Road. The two superpowers of the late 19th and early 20th century, the Soviet Union and Great Britain, competed for

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[223] Ali Jalali, "Afghanistan: Prospects for Nation Building," in Cheryl Benard, et al, eds., *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead* (Washington D.C.: Rand Corporation, 2008), 63-5.

[224] Peter Marsden, *The Taliban War Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11 and Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 10.

[225] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, viii.

influence over a mutually agreed "buffer state."[226] In the effort to contain communist expansion in the second half of the 20th century, the U.S. replaced Great Britain. After the 9/11 attacks, U.S.-led coalition forces launched a "Global War on Terrorism," invading Afghanistan in October 2001 to destroy its Al-Qaeda terrorist network.

In recent decades, Afghan society witnessed a shift in social structure that affects the prevailing insurgency. This annexure analyzes that how the nature of insurgency in Afghanistan has evolved. Why has the tribal struggle for power recently become what some people call "Islamic radicalism"? What is the role of external players who exploit the environment for their vested interests?

State-society confrontation, intense competition within the society and external interference often pose a threat to Afghan social structure. This annexure argues that under threat, the society favors the religious faction. When the threat recedes, the society swings back to its natural moderate state. The root causes of the social shifts are political, not religious or ideological: the desire for peace, justice, security and equal economic opportunities.

This annexure consists of three parts. The first describes traditional Afghan tribal society, Afghan social structure, and the delicate state-society relationship. The second part briefly covers Afghan history, focusing on competition between internal and external forces that polarizes traditional Afghan tribal society and social structure, and the society's inherent tendency to return to its natural moderate state and the balance of power as the threat recedes. Finally, the annexure analyzes the historical evidence, concluding with a possible solution to the problem.

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[226] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 88.

A.   SOCIAL STRUCTURE BASED ON TRIBAL SOCIETY

Malik

Afghan
Tribal
Society

Khan   *Mullah*
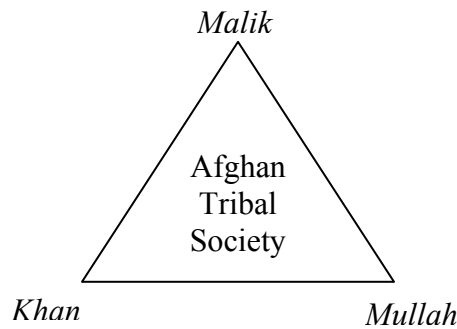
Afghanistan is a "weak state with a strong society,"[227] where society is in a revolt against the state.[228] Traditional Afghan society gains strength from a tribal culture based on consensus and democratic values. In most Afghan tribes, the elders choose the leader, called *malik,* based on ability. He is responsible for political matters and deals with other tribes on behalf of his tribe. The tribe respects his word on commitments made to other tribes. All decisions are made in tribal *jirga*, a gathering attended by the elders and the heads of the household.[229] Therefore, the *malik* is a representative of his tribe.

A rich landowner, called *khan*, controls the economic aspects of the tribe. He lends resources to the peasants to cultivate their lands. The *khan* plays a limited political role that depends on his knowledge and personality.

Islam plays a central role in unifying the tribes. The common people in Afghanistan consider religion important for transforming their personal behavior but it does not provide an ideology to transform the social structure. Any attack on Islam, however, meets negative sentiment.[230] The *alim*, a religious scholar, and the *mullah*, the religious leader who leads prayers in the mosque, both command respect, and they call people to fight (*jihad*) during crisis, but do not play prominent political role.

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[227] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 20.

[228] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 14.

[229] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 11.

[230] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 28-9.

Important reasons for the tribes' evolution into autonomous political units include Afghanistan's isolated valleys, frequent foreign interventions, and tribal political, legal, economic and to some extent military self sufficiency.[231] This makes the state almost redundant and is a major reason Afghanistan is characterized as a "weak state" by many authors.

A state requires resources to establish its authority and develop coercive means. The Afghan state never possessed sufficient natural resources. The tribes recognize the state as a legitimate power, but because it is perceived as redundant, tribes are reluctant to support the state financially. Any attempt by the state to extend its control into tribal areas for tax collection and other administrative reasons is considered interference and is strongly resisted.

Historically, the lack of resources often tempts the state to accept money from external powers. Considering Afghanistan's geographic importance, external powers have generally been willing to offer resources, but at a political price. The lending powers wanted to control the state's foreign policies. Tribes have been sensitive to foreign intervention into internal matters of the state, and revolted against the ruler. This dual dilemma facing its rulers has always made Afghanistan difficult to govern.

Traditional tribal society in Afghanistan is based on the "three pillars" of *malik*, *khan* and the *mullah*. Various ethnic tribes combine to form a social structure. Due to inherent resistance against external and foreign intervention, intense competitions exist between various tribes, as well as between the state and the social structure. The balance of power is not rigid, varying from place to place and shifting over time. The challenge posed by internal or external threats may also affect the balance of power.

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[231] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 18.

B.   HISTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

1.   1747 to 1978

Afghanistan was a monarchy during its first 225 years. It was ruled by three Pashtun tribes: Saddozai, Barakzai, and Musahiban.[232]   The Saddozai dynasty was founded by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747 and lasted until 1823. He united Afghanistan for the first time under native rule. Seventy-five years of Saddozai rule saw six different rulers who faced many external and internal conflicts. The external conflicts were mostly in the east against the Sikhs and the British rulers of India. The internal conflicts were mostly due to intense power struggles within the Saddozai family and sometimes the suppression of other tribes. There was little external interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan at first, because nearby states were embroiled in their domestic affairs and the Silk Road became less important with substantial increase in maritime trade. Internal family power struggles, feuds and defeats in external conflicts led to the decline of Saddozai rule.

The Barakzais ruled Afghanistan from 1823 to 1930, with seven different rulers in 107 years. The two colonial powers, the Soviet Union and Great Britain, consistently competed for political influence over Afghanistan during this period. The Barakzais sometimes tried to benefit from both sides by maintaining a balanced relationship with both, but found it difficult to please the two competing powers simultaneously. Sometimes they also attempted to ally with one power, but the resulting interference into internal state affairs invariably annoyed the local tribes.

The Soviets and the British tried various options. They made bilateral agreements to treat Afghanistan as a buffer state. At times they exploited the tribes, giving them resources so they would revolt against the state. A few direct invasions to plant dummy rulers were also attempted. These proved fairly easy to execute but extremely costly to sustain due to tribal resentment and uprisings. A modernization and secularization trend in some Muslim countries during the first half of the 20th century also influenced

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[232] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 75, 77, 111.

Afghanistan. The last few Barakzai rulers, especially Amanullah, defied tribal culture and values in pursuit of modernity and rapid progress. A strong tribal reaction supported by covert British support led to the decline of Barakzai rule by 1930.[233]

The next 50 years of Afghanistan's history witnessed moderate shifts in tribal society due to ideological confrontations involving communists and Islamists. The system continued to be dynastic under Musahiban from 1930 to 1973.[234] In 1973, Daoud Khan, a member of the Musahiban family, toppled the monarchic system with the help of communist forces in Kabul, ruling for five years. In 1978, another communist faction, led by Nur Muhammad Taraki, toppled Daoud's government, holding power until December, 1979.

Musahiban rule saw a shift of external interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. British influence was gradually reduced and almost ended after 1947, when Britain withdrew from India leaving two independent countries, Pakistan and India. The U.S. interest in Afghanistan increased due to concerns about communist expansion. The U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, however, was halfhearted, probably due to the Korean and Vietnam wars. This gave relatively free rein to the Soviets, who first offered economic and military assistance, and began ideological intrusion in the late 1950s. Urban areas were the main target for communist activities, especially the student community of Kabul University.

Internally, rural areas were relatively peaceful for three main reasons. First, the state reduced interference in internal tribal affairs. Second, the state had stronger police and armed forces to coerce people when required. Finally, development projects launched by the state provided economic opportunities to the people. An important development in the urban areas, instigated by the Soviets, was the establishment of the first political party, the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1965. Significant political differences existed within PDPA, and by the late 1960s it was divided into two hostile

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[233] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 110.

[234] Nadir Shah ruled from 1930 to 1933, followed by his brother Zahir Shah from 1933 to 1973. The brothers belonged to the Musahiban family, a clan of Durrani tribe.

factions, Khalq and Parcham.[235] Almost concurrently, the Islamists in Kabul University also mobilized, mostly influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB). They opposed communists as well as the division of Afghanistan along ethnic lines. They did not organize based on tribal structure and were skeptical of traditional Afghan *ulema*. Like the communists, the Islamists were divided in two categories. A moderate group wanted progressive reforms through social education. They adopted a traditional Afghan approach, saying Islam should guide individual lives, but community problems should be solved through Afghan culture.[236] The radical group subscribed to a strong interpretation of Islam and wanted active military struggle against communists.[237]

During the Daoud rule, the confrontations between communists and the Islamists were restricted to urban areas, especially Kabul. After the 1978 coup, when the Khalq faction of PDPA came to power, repressive communist reforms were launched in rural areas as well. According to Andrew Wenger, a concerted effort was made to change the basic dynamics of Afghan society by targeting the *khans* and the *maliks*. In less than two years, 90,000 to 100,000 men disappeared, which increased the power of *mullahs* and the *ulema* in rural areas. This polarized the society. The modernist and secular element that existed since the Barakzai era joined the communists against the young educated Islamists allied with *ulema* and *mullahs*.[238] The confrontation between Islamists and communists became intense, and by 1979 the Soviet Union became concerned whether the communist regime in Kabul would survive.

2.   Soviet Invasion: 1979 to 1989

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Like the British, they secured a puppet regime in Kabul with deceptive ease. They withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, however, after damaging the country more than any previous invader. Almost 10 years of repressive occupation affected Afghan society in three ways. First, probably for

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[235] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 129-48.

[236] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 69-83.

[237] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 80-1.

[238] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 20-4.

the first time, people felt a need to unify warring factions against an invading force. Second, the role of religious factions increased. Finally, the tribes' military skill increased. These effects played an important role in shaping insurgency in Afghanistan.

Afghan society, which always abhorred foreign intervention, received selfish support, especially from regional and Muslim countries. The western powers supporting Afghanistan wanted to block communist expansion. Regional neighbors exploited the situation to promote their vested interests. Saudi Arabia and Iran supported Sunni and Shia *jihadi* groups respectively; Pakistan and India supported Pashtun and Tajik groups respectively; all promoted their individual interests. *Jihadi* volunteers from the Muslim world, neither required nor invited by the Afghans, poured into Afghanistan. *Mujahidin* leaders often appealed to the world community for finances and weapons, but manpower was never a problem. In fact, at times, because weapons were limited, they had to refuse Afghan volunteers the opportunity of *jihad*.[239] Various organizations in the Muslim world sponsored volunteers so they could gain military skills for use against regimes back home. Ideological differences among *Hanfi* Afghans and their *Wahabi/Salafi* Arab guests sometimes led to tensions.[240] The external selfish support, which resulted in disunity among various Afghan groups, also frustrated the people of Afghanistan.[241]

Repressive communist reforms and the Soviet invasion caused a shift in traditional Afghan social structure. *Ulema* and *mullahs* gained a greater role. Given the religious nature of Afghan society, their appeal developed quickly, and their calls for *jihad* were effective. However, the *ulema* did not control the entire resistance campaign. Important military decisions were made by the resistance commanders. The *maliks* retained their traditional political role because the *ulema* and *mullahs* could not replace them.[242]

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[239] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 174.

[240] Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 80-118.

[241] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 41.

[242] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 207.

The ideological shift in support of the religious element during the Soviet invasion was limited and temporary. Lack of unity among *Mujahidin* groups frustrated the people. The majority did not support the Arab's extreme interpretation of Islam. Despite grievances, most people continued to support the *Mujahidin* against the invading forces. In 1986, however, when the Soviet Union decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, the ideological shift weakened and the traditional tribal structure resurfaced.[243]

The Soviet invasion was the biggest military challenge that Afghans had faced. They gained significant military skills with experience. They began with typical tribal frontal attacks. After suffering heavy losses, they switched to hit and run guerrilla tactics in the hilly terrain. Soviet convoys moving in narrow valleys were often worthwhile targets for ambush. Support from the U.S. and Muslim countries helped them sustain the resistance, and by 1986 some authors argued that the Soviets might not be able to defeat the *Mujahidin* militarily.[244] The Soviets had to increase their initial strength of 50,000 to about 115,000.[245] They learned that it is difficult to control Afghanistan while sitting in Kabul. Notwithstanding the importance of controlling Kabul, it is not sufficient to control the tribes in the countryside.[246]

3.   Internal Struggle: 1989 to 2001

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the next 12 years witnessed an intense power struggle between the Najibullah regime and the *Mujahidin*, and also within various factions of *Mujahidin*. The *Mujahidin* lacked unity. The regional players, apparently working to promote consensus among *Mujahidin* leaders, sensed opportunities to expand their influence in the future Afghan government. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan supported Sunni groups, with the latter biased towards Gulbadin Hikmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami (HIG). Iran supported Shia groups and India opted for

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[243] Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 149-71.

[244] Ibid., 203.

[245] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 37.

[246] Angel Rabasa, "The Tribal Structure of Waziristan: Implications for Counterterrorism Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan," in Benard, et al, eds., *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead*, 29-35.

Najibullah, probably to please the Soviets.[247] Encouraged by external powers, the *Mujahidin* attempted to install a parallel government to gain legitimacy. They failed due to poor planning, lack of commitment and disunity.[248]

In rural areas, the confrontation among local *Mujahidin* leaders resulted in great suffering for the people. However, Najibullah sustained power in Kabul with plenty of military equipment from the withdrawing Soviet forces and generous financial help from the Soviet Union. With the decreasing popularity of *Mujahidin,* he hired manpower to organize an Afghan army, and had sufficient money to buy the loyalty of some *Mujahidin* leaders. Finally, the financial support of the already-divided *Mujahidin* started to decline.[249] The people saw light at the end of the tunnel when Najibullah resigned in March, 1992 probably on the advice of Russian president Boris Yeltsin.[250]

With the opportunity to form a government in Afghanistan, the *Mujahidin* leaders led the people of Afghanistan to greater suffering. All the leaders rushed towards Kabul with their militias, hoping to grab maximum power in the new regime. Kabul became a battlefield. After pushing Hikmatyar, leader of Hizb-e-Islami and a Pashtun fundamentalist, south, Ahmed Shah Masoud, a Tajik military leader supported by some other leaders, managed to hold the largest area. Although nominated as prime minister for the coalition government, Hikmatyar demanded a greater role in the government and bombed the city for about two years, killing around 50,000 civilians, wounding another 100,000 and destroying about 70 percent of the city infrastructure.[251] Food shortages led to severe crises. Most small cities and rural areas were grabbed by the local warlords, who were brutal and changed allegiances frequently.[252] Having lost all hope, people were ready to accept anyone who could restore peace and security.[253]

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[247] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 189.

[248] Marsden, *The Taliban War Religion*, 36.

[249] Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 97-104.

[250] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 233.

[251] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 202.

[252] Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban*, 110.

[253] Ibid., 114.

The scene was set for the Taliban[254] when they entered southern Afghanistan in September 1994.[255] The Taliban movement, led by Mullah Muhammad Omer Mujahid, a Durrani Pashtun, arose from local feuds. Overwhelming support from the people in Pashtun-dominated areas helped them to gain control of southern Afghanistan easily, including Kandhar, Jalalabad, Herat and Kabul.[256] They faced resistance in the north from the Northern Alliance of Ahmed Shah Masoud (a Tajik), Abdul Rashid Dostum (an Uzbik), Hizb-i-Wahadat (Shia fundamentalists) and the Shia Hazara groups. Taliban got weapons came from the common people and the groups they had fought. The advanced military skills they displayed in some larger battles lead some to believe they were actively supported by Pakistan.[257]

The people of Afghanistan got peace, security and justice, but at a significant cost. Strict Shia rule was enforced. Men were instructed to grow beards. Women were not allowed to work outside their homes. Education for girls was forbidden until separate schools were established. The Taliban, including their leadership, were all common people, without the knowledge to manage a government.[258] They maintained peace with the help of religious police, but the economy, especially in larger cities, suffered badly.

Externally, the Taliban were recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Iran supported the Northern Alliance because the Taliban had anti-Shia policies. India, simply because of Pakistan's influence on the Taliban, also supported the Northern Alliance. Initially supportive of the Taliban, the U.S. turned against them because of their strong gender discrimination and extreme interpretation of Islam.[259] A few Taliban attempts to claim their United Nations seat were declined.

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[254] The word is the plural of the Arabic word *talib*, meaning "to seek."

[255] Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban*, 118.

[256] Marsden, *The Taliban War Religion*, 46-50.

[257] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 40.

[258] Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban*, 123.

[259] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 211, 219.

The Taliban's foreign policy, especially with regards to terrorism, compounded their difficulties. In May 1999, they allowed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to set up a terrorist training camp in the north, which annoyed Russia and China. In 1996, Osama bin Ladin was given refuge in Afghanistan to set up Al-Qaeda's headquarters in Khost, a base camp built by Bin-Ladin in 1987. Besides refusing a Saudi extradition demand in November 1999, Afghanistan also declined a UN Security Council extradition demand.[260]

Broadly speaking, people accepted the Taliban because they wanted peace and justice, and not because of the group's religious appeals. Dominated by Sunni Muslims, the Taliban movement targeted Shia Muslims for political reasons. Mostly Pashtun, it continued to fight with other ethnicities. This polarized the social structure on religious as well as ethnic grounds. The Taliban's interpretation of Islam and radical policies shifted the balance of power in tribal society extensively in favor of the *mullahs*. Considering their low popularity among the people of Afghanistan, evident from public celebrations when they were overthrown in December 2001, it appears that the shift in favor of the *mullahs* would not have lasted long.

4.   War on Terror: 2001 to Present

The U.S. started aerial bombing on October 7, 2001, less than a month after terrorist attacks on the United States. The Northern Alliance's ground forces supported by U.S. airpower easily defeated the Taliban in little over two months.[261] The Northern Alliance brutally killed any foreign fighters among the Taliban. The attitude towards local Taliban, however, was relatively mild, and especially in the south, where the forces of Hamid Karzai, later the president of Afghanistan, negotiated their way into Kandahar.[262] Many local Taliban were allowed to go home after surrendering their weapons. Many Taliban escaped into adjacent Baluchistan and Pakistan's Federally

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[260] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 220-1.

[261] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 7.

[262] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 29.

Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The U.S. and Afghan forces continued to target Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters hiding in eastern hilly areas. In May 2003, the U.S. announced an end to major operations in Afghanistan.[263]

The people of Afghanistan were happy to see the backs of the repressive Taliban rulers.[264] Fed up with prolonged fighting and destruction, the people broke with tradition and reconciled with the foreign forces.[265] Despite early chaos and looting in larger cities, people had high hopes for security, justice, jobs and return to normal life. Occasional insurgent activity and sporadic tribal feuds continued, but by the end of 2003 it appeared that the insurgency had died down. An upsurge was witnessed in mid 2006, which swiftly became an organized insurgency, mainly in Pashtun areas in the south and southeast, the stronghold of the Taliban.[266]

In addition to Al-Qaeda's foreign fighters, the Taliban are supported by the Haqqani network and Gulbadin Hikmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami. Jalal-ud-din Haqqani, the leader of Haqqani network, and Hikmatyar are known for their extreme interpretation of Islam. Their alliance with the Taliban, however, appears to be against a common external enemy, rather than based on a common ideology. In fact, Taliban and Hikmatyar were fierce enemies in the past. The resurgence of insurgency reflects the evolution of Afghan society over the last few years.

The deepened ethnic divisions in Afghan society make it internally unstable and also increase the complexity of the state-to-society relationship. The interactions among the various ethnicities have become more complex. They tend to unite against a common external enemy, but fight among themselves when the threat fades away. The majority of Afghans, while moderate Muslims, react violently to practices that are perceived as un-Islamic. The increased political role of *mullahs* during Soviet war was strengthened

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[263] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 7.

[264] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 64.

[265] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 242.

[266] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 21.

during the Taliban era. The Taliban once again seem to be exploiting popular religious sentiments, especially in Pashtun dominated areas, to gain support against an external enemy.[267]

Good governance is the key to counterinsurgency (COIN). One reasons for Karzai's weak governance is his inability to curb local strongmen and their militias. In fact, in some provinces he was blackmailed to hand over the powers to the warlords.[268] According to a recently published CRS, report Karzai calls the warlords "a major threat to Afghan stability."[269] Some of the warlords nominated to be provincial governors collect taxes and instead of depositing them to the central government, use the money for raising personal militias.[270] Their favoritism to their own tribes upset other regional tribes, leading to local feuds. Sometimes the warlords even misdirect security forces, inaccurately labeling rival tribes as Taliban or Al-Qaeda.[271] In some areas the warlords have been helped by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).[272] In southern and eastern areas, the U.S. co-opted some warlords to pursue counterterrorism goals.[273]

Because the Afghan National Police (ANP) is corrupt and the government is unable to provide security,[274] people started to recall the relatively peaceful period of Taliban rule, which gave the Taliban a window of opportunity.[275] One reason people accept the Taliban is their appreciable flexibility compared with their earlier extreme interpretation of Islam.[276] In many areas where government was unable to provide security, people had no choice but to support the Taliban. In addition to providing

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[267] Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency," 7.

[268] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 76, 79.

[269] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 12.

[270] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 62-3.

[271] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 175, 183.

[272] Wahab and Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, 244.

[273] Samina Ahmed, "Are We Learning? Military Engagement: The Taliban, Past and Present," in Benard, et al, eds., *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead,* 55-61.

[274] Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly,* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007), 100.

[275] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 193.

[276] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 65.

security, however, the Taliban disrupted development projects, humanitarian works by various NGOs and other local economic activities, creating difficulties for the government.[277]

The security forces adopted "heavy handed tactics"[278] to curb Taliban activities, which proved counterproductive. Generous use of airpower led to collateral damage, sometimes involving civilian causalities of women and children. Thomas Johnson observes that in routine house to house searches for terrorists and weapons, U.S. security troops were rude and did not respect local customs and culture in dealing with women. This increased the hatred of foreign troops in a society historically wary of foreign occupation. Inadequate numbers of security troops forced the government to deploy Afghan troops from other ethnicities into the Pashtun areas, increasing Pashtun resentment.[279]

Resources in Afghanistan were stretched significantly due to the Iraq war in 2003. Available resources were not optimally utilized by the weak, corrupt Afghan government.[280] With reduced levels of international commitment and the poor state of the Afghan government, the people started to fear regime change.[281] They hesitate to offer complete support to the government, fearing punishment if the Taliban return to power.

Part of the problem is that the apparent U.S. objectives in Afghanistan are vague and contradictory. According to Johnson, the stated U.S. goal in Afghanistan is "to create a stable democracy which would never again harbor international terrorists."[282] In contrast, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, the head of the Danish Institute of Military Studies, believes that the early U.S. ambitions were "to get rid of Taliban and to kill as many terrorists involved in 9-11 as possible."[283] The notion of democracy came later, involving

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[277] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 154.

[278] Johnson, "On the Edge," 97.

[279] Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 66.

[280] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 155. and Wenger, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 64.

[281] Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue*, 307.

[282] Johnson, "On the Edge," 100.

[283] Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "Afghanistan and the Boomerang Effect," in Benard, et al, eds., *Afghanistan: State and Society, Great Power Politics, and the Way Ahead,* 17-21.

development work for nation-building. Agreeing with Rasmussen, Jalali notes that as a result, the initial "level of investment in reconstructing Afghanistan was determined not by the actual needs of the country, but rather was shaped by the requirements of military operations."[284] For several years, the Pentagon treated the situation as "counterterrorism" rather than counterinsurgency.[285]

C.   ANALYSIS

The insurgency in Afghanistan emerges from the competitive nature of tribal society. There is a competition for power within as well as between tribes, and the society also resists the state interference. The society is not willing to support the state, nor does it allow the state to accept support from external sources. Tribes often unite to resist external intervention, while at the same time taking advantage of any opportunity to use external power against competing tribes.

When threatened, the balance of power in the Afghan tribal society triangle of the *malik*, *khan* and *mullah* shifts in favor of *mullah*. Three observations are made in this regard:

First, the extent of shift seems to have a direct relation to the gravity of the threat and the level of desperation among the people. Prior to 1979, the shifts were mild and of short duration. During the Soviet invasion, the shift was more extreme and persisted for a longer time. In 1996 it appeared strong due to the people's increased desperation.

Second, the shift may not be permanent, as demonstrated in the post Soviet period, when Gulbadin Hikmatyar, a strong fundamentalist, formed a coalition with Shahnawaz Tanai, a strong communist supporter; their only common ground was their shared Pushtun ethnicity. Mass jubilation in urban centers after the defeat of the Taliban also supports this observation.

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[284] Rasmussen, "Afghanistan and the Boomerang Effect."

[285] Johnson, "On the Edge," 97.

Last, the shift is not entirely due to religious motivation. It often results from the desire of peace, security and justice. The start of the Taliban movement in 1996 is a case in point. Most Afghans, as moderate Muslims, would not support extreme interpretations of Islam. In 1996, Pashtun Afghans supported the Taliban because local people were tired of prolonged fighting between various *Mujahidin* factions. In the south, the Taliban's ability to restore order motivated people to support them.

In 1996, the Taliban rose to power not because of their leadership qualities, or because of their ability to govern or their religious appeal to the people, but because most people were desperate for peace and security. They had lost faith in other leaders. The power of *mullahs* increased only in the Taliban dominated Pashtun tribes, and was maintained by repressive rule. Considering the internal strength of Afghan tribal society, it seems likely that with time, a counter trend would have emerged.

In post 2001 period, it appeared that Afghan society will revert to its traditional balance of power. Seeking peace and security, people were willing to accept the idea of foreign intervention. Poor governance and predatory warlords have thwarted the hope for peace, allowing the Taliban to resurface. In 2006, the coalition forces' heavy handed policy and collateral damage caused by inappropriate use of airpower further opened a window of opportunity for the Taliban. Hence, a shift in favor of an internal threat, perceived as smaller, has emerged against the external threat, perceived as more serious.

D.   CONCLUSION

Due to decades of war and internal and external threats, the balance of power in Afghan tribal society has shifted in favor of the religious element. Whenever such threats recede, the society shows signs of normalization. The failure of successive regimes is pushing the society toward religious factions yet again. Insurgent groups, including Taliban, Hizb-e-Islami, Haqqani network and Al-Qaeda seem to be gaining momentum.

In the last few decades, Afghanistan experienced military, political, ideological and religious intervention and interference. The Soviet Union and the U.S. invaded militarily for ideological and political reasons. India and Pakistan competed for political

influence; Iran and Saudi Arabia interfered to promote their own brand of religion. Al-Qaeda tried to exploit religious sentiments in order to pursue their agenda of global *jihad*.

It appears that peace will return to Afghanistan only after internal forces are allowed to compete and confront one another. For this to happen, external intervention and interference must cease. As internal forces compete or confront each other, external forces must not provide material support to exploit them. Humanitarian support for reconstruction should continue; any external presence required for such support should come from a moderate Muslim country. The level of expected peace must be based on Afghan standards (perhaps a situation similar to the late 1960s to early 1970s). An idealistic approach calling for peace to be perfect and fast is likely to prove counterproductive.

Because the Afghans are moderate Muslims, they will most likely support the efforts of *maliks* to win power back from *mullahs*. There is good chance that the society will reject extreme interpretation of Islam, as it did in 2001. The Northern Alliance's violent behavior against foreign fighters, the strained relations between Taliban and Arabs during the surrender of Kandahar in 2001 and the common people's hatred of Arab fighters are all evidence supporting the strong possibility that global *jihadi* groups will be rejected by the society.

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