Accounting for the Resilience of the Taliban

On-the-ground observations and reliable evidence suggest that the Taliban have an efficient leadership, are learning from their mistakes and are quick to exploit the weaknesses of their adversaries. They are building a parallel administration, have nationwide logistics, and already manage an impressive intelligence network
– Gilles Dorronsoro[1]

Following four years of civil war the Taliban captured and took power of Kabul in September 1996 and thereby assumed de facto control over Afghanistan. Soon after, by presenting itself as a 'cleansing force,'[2] the Taliban government set about consolidating a viciously regulated, religiously authoritarian state. For five years, the Taliban regime, under the direction of the *Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful) Mullah Mohammed Omar, enforced a distorted and extreme interpretation of Sharia law and repressed the Afghan people into brutal submission. Once it had been determined that the September 11th 2001 attacks had been planned and directed by the al-Qaeda leadership from within Afghanistan, and with the knowledge of Mullah Omar, a U.S.-led allied force invaded Afghanistan and rapidly removed the Taliban from power. Having been overthrown with such ease, and given the Afghan people's experience of living under the Taliban's barbaric regime, a determined Taliban resurgence was not envisaged. Nevertheless, the Taliban *has* re-emerged, and, backed by some extent of locally-based popular support, has arguably become a thoroughly resilient insurgent force.

Although many stress that the Taliban's "successes seem due as much to inattention and inadequate resourcing on our part as to talent on theirs,"[3] widely reported accounts of the conflict point to the development of an increasingly indefatigable insurgency that acutely threatens the world's most advanced military forces. Quite how the Taliban have managed to do this will therefore be the subject of this paper.

Two crucial aspects of an insurgency[4] will determine both its long-term survivability and its potential to triumph against the given counterinsurgent force – (I) the organizational structure and how this interacts with contextual and situational circumstances, and (II) the specific operational tactics and activities utilized to acquire and conserve power gains. It is this author's hypothesis that the Taliban have proficiently adapted these two fundamental characteristics so as to constitute a relentless insurgency.

Structural Adaptation: Organizational & Demographical

The Taliban's structure is resilient: centralized enough to be efficient, but flexible and diverse enough to adapt to local contexts
Gilles Dorronsoro[5]

Organizational:

The Afghan Taliban exists as a dual operating network composed firstly of those members and units operating in the Afghan theater and secondly, those within the relative safe haven across the mountainous border in Pakistan. Inside Afghanistan, there exist many "local clandestine networks,"[6] which are distributed primarily throughout the Pashtun-dominated southern and central regions, but also increasingly in some northern provinces.[7] These networks consist of full-time fighters, who are ideologically attached to the Taliban movement, and part-time local guerrillas who take

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part in operations almost purely for personal or local motivations. Compellingly, and of critical relevance to the counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign, is the estimation that full-time fighters constitute only ten percent of the Taliban's total fighting force.[8] Furthermore, these full-time fighters often function as classical-IRA-type insurgent "flying columns" that operate for four to six months at a time[9] and travel widely within a province whilst conducting armed attacks whenever and wherever their regional commander deems necessary. In addition to the full- and part-time fighters, the Taliban, where they are actively established, will have ad hoc underground cells that provide a local logistical, communication and supply capacity. This loose, and distinctly locally-organized network structure allows individual Taliban cells to target specifically local objectives in rough coordination with the overall Taliban strategy – to exhaust the commitment of ISAF, their respective political leadership, and the Afghan government.

By coordinating everyday activities along multiple levels – the village, district, province and nation – the Taliban can utilize and exploit traditional forms of social organization at the micro-level,[10] such as Pashtun tribal structures (explained below) that ensure strong cohesion, as well as wider nationalist and religious discourses that help sustain a mass movement. While village and district commanders act with relative autonomy[11] targeting their distinctly local objectives, they also coordinate with their respective regional-level 'front' objectives. As such, the Taliban represents an amalgamation of individual-, local- and tribal-based insurgent cells that exist concealed within local village life, and are therefore incredibly difficult to counter. A successful COIN strategy aims to secure 'the people' and to provide them with those services and state structures that project an impression of legitimate and efficient governance.[12] The Taliban have adapted in such a way that expressly counters this approach.

Another crucial aspect of the Taliban's organizational structure that has allowed it to survive and prosper is the integration of the Pakistan-based sanctuary. The Afghan Taliban's core leadership is commonly referred to as the *Quetta shura*,[13] which reminds us that the predominant political and religious leadership reside *outside* of Afghanistan. Subsequently, the Taliban's grand strategy and the directing of 'spectacular attacks' allegedly emerges from the frontier regions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Pakistan is also thought to be the source of increasing numbers of fighter recruits as well as most of the training and logistics support systems, financial sponsors and arms supplies.[14] These connections with Pakistan are well developed – they emerged when scores of Afghans fled Afghanistan during the Soviet War and converged in massive refugee camps along the border regions. It was within these refugee camps that what we now know as the Taliban was born.[15] It is likely that without this established sanctuary and support system, the Taliban would have ceased to exist as a competent fighting force. In fact, according to Jones, insurgencies "have been successful approximately forty-three percent of the time when they enjoyed a sanctuary."[16]

Demographical:

The strict and cohesive tribal structures of Afghanistan[17] cannot be emphasized enough as being *the* Taliban's key organizational capacity. Central to this, and to Taliban full-time fighter membership, is the Pashtun ethnic group, which accounts for approximately forty-two percent of the Afghan population[18] and is primarily distributed throughout the south, east and centre of the country,[19] and are most influentially represented by the Ghilzai and Durrani (constituting the Norzai, Alekozai and Eshaqzai sub-tribes) tribes.[20] Tribalism's preeminent societal influence within Afghan society gives the Taliban a considerable organizational advantage.

Compared with local power structures dominated by tribal allegiances, the Kabul government is of little relevance to the general population.[21] The Taliban therefore directs its activities towards two separate but interlinked issues – (I) appealing directly to local cleavages,[22] and (II) assimilating and manipulating traditional tribal *Pashtunwali* codes like *nang* (honour) and *haya* (shame) against the 'foreign occupation.'[23] As is the case for Pashtuns, tribal identity creates a fierce sense of loyalty through blood ties and obligations[24] – demonstrated by the historical emergence of *qawm* (an intense tribal kinship) and *asabiyya* (a social solidarity emphasizing social unity and group perspective),[25] which have been adapted from Arab-Islamic tribal customs.

Adapting tribal tradition with extreme Islamic Deobandi doctrine[26] has proven a valuable strategy for the Taliban. A notable exemplification of this as relating to structure is the replacement of the traditional *jirga* with the conceptual creation of the *tribal shura*, which acts as an official and high-level local consultation on matters relating to the tribe.

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In Pashtun tradition, a *jirga* is "inclusionary and egalitarian"[27] and therefore allows for protracted debate but inefficient decision-making. Conversely, a *tribal shura* is directed by a single individual and "its decisions are directive and binding"[28] and religiously sanctioned. Consequently, by means of persuasion and coercion, the Taliban has established itself in predominant positions of local power throughout regions of Afghanistan and the *tribal shura* has allowed them to dominate local decision-making dynamics.

Interestingly, although the Taliban have historically been a Pashtun-dominated 'organization,' this is gradually being transformed by a conscious initiative to establish "trans-tribal fighter groups" in the north and east[29] and to thereby adopt and represent a more Afghan nationalist identity. Therefore, increasing numbers of Uzbek, Turkmen and Tartar Taliban are fighting in the growing northern insurgency,[30] backed by veteran Pashtun guerrillas. As the Taliban becomes more representative and less exclusive, it becomes increasingly difficult for the counterinsurgents to isolate the Taliban ideologically.

Increased contact with non-Taliban insurgent organizations, like Jaish-e-Mohammed, Harakat-al-Mujahideen and the Haqqani Network has also introduced more foreign operatives, most of whom employ their expertise as commanders, advisors and trainers throughout the Taliban network.[31] The Taliban also has valuable contacts with criminal organizations involved in both conventional criminality and the vastly powerful Afghan narcotics trade. For the ISAF force, what seems like a Hobbesian anarchical region dominated by self-interested warlords, is for the Taliban an interlinked series of intensely united local contexts all vulnerable to idiosyncratic exploitation.

Operational Tactics and Strategy

> Our military strategy is to control a district center, kill the government soldiers there, and withdraw to our mountainous strongholds, where it would be very difficult for the government to pursue us
> – Taliban Military Chief[32]

> The Taliban seeks to exploit popular sentiment, drawing on local narratives, understanding that those ideas or grievances which already have some currency resonate the most
> – International Crisis Group[33]

Recruitment Themes

For recruitment, the Taliban, like most insurgent organizations, rely on conveying an air of legitimacy and power that relates directly to the concerns and grievances of the applicable population. In this sense, they shrewdly manipulate their 'identity' and 'intentions' specifically towards appealing to a broad Afghan base along different levels of society and across different ideological perspectives. As already pointed to, the Taliban fuse tribal identity norms and tradition with a conservative Deobandi Islam in order to generate a comprehensive identity applied to a national setting of resistance versus a foreign occupation and enemy government. Consequently, "the sources of support for the insurgency [are] more numerous than the label 'Taliban' suggests."[34]

Intrinsic to the Taliban, at least historically, is the Pashtun and tribal identity.[35] For recruitment purposes, the Taliban exploit Afghan tribal xenophobic tendencies[36] and a hostility to outsiders. As a means to an end, the *Pashtunwali* code is expressly engineered to engender violent hostility to a foreign occupying force – when one is unable to maintain *ghayrat* (the defence of private and tribal property[37]) and thus one's *namus* (a code of honour[38]) is compromised; inciting violence. The most prominent of Pashtun tribes are known to annually contribute a number of male constituents to the Taliban (like the Pakistan-based Mehsuds, who supply two men per family[39]) in return for protection and to enhance their tribal power standing. Given their distinctive focus on local cleavages, the Taliban also take advantage of tribal disputes over jobs or resources for recruitment purposes[40] by choosing to side with one party – logically whichever one offers the greatest potential benefit. Besides recruiting bona fide fighters, the Taliban can also make use of an intriguing local force that participates purely for pleasure. Given the Pashtun historical tradition of conflict, men with no particular allegiance to the Taliban have been known to hurriedly join their lines simply for the momentary thrill and excitement and also because not joining-in would dishonour one's family and tribe.[41]

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This, to a degree, gives rise to Kilcullen's widely renowned concept of the 'accidental guerrilla' who simply "fights us because we are in his space, not because he wishes to invade ours … [he follows] folk-ways of tribal warfare … [and] is engaged in 'resistance' rather than insurgency."[42] These 'accidental guerrillas' are exclusively motivated by local concerns and individual self-interests in terms of money, safety and honour. In fact, it has been claimed that the Taliban pays its fighters on average two or three times what the Afghan National Army (ANA) or Police (ANP) are paid.[43] Besides financial benefits, participation can also be motivated solely by the fear of repercussions for not fighting.

Despite the fact that the Taliban are fighting for a uniquely nationalist objective – to rid Afghanistan of foreign troops and influence – a very conservative brand of Deobandi Islam now dominates their discourse and rhetoric. Sustained reference to *jihad, sharia, mujahideen, martyrdom* and to the pivotal ambition of creating an *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*, helps the Taliban emphasize religion as both a source of legitimacy and recruitment. This is crucial for Taliban recruitment, especially from within Afghanistan when it is incorporated with other more local stimuli, and exclusively regarding external sources. As a link to 'religion,' the Taliban project a close association with the conflict and insurgency in Iraq, and the situations in Palestine and Chechnya, as being within a 'global war against Islam.'[44] This has arguably produced an increase in international recruitment and has also led to the adoption of sophisticated asymmetric weapons technologies from Iraq. References to the similarly controversial treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay and Bagram Prison, as well as overt threats of attacks on U.S. and European soil have begun to re-mould the Taliban into a more al-Qaeda-like organization.

As an insurgent group, the Taliban strive to portray themselves as representing a well organized, nationalistic *Afghan* alternative to the incumbent Karzai government. Consequently, the Taliban exploit with appreciable ease, the growing public disillusionment with official systems of governance, which are often corrupt, self-interested and distant. Furthermore, the Taliban take advantage of rising unemployment, now at forty percent,[45] which arguably results from insufficient official governance. Although this state of affairs is purposely instigated and advanced by the Taliban, government 'misrule,' corruption and a consequent lack of legitimacy is emphasized by insurgency analysts, including David Galula, as being "*the* root cause"[46] of guerrilla recruitment and strategic success. As such, the Taliban can continue to represent themselves as a 'cleansing force.'

Accordingly, local Taliban units assume control of district centres and gradually begin distribution of essential services and imposition of the law so as to appear *the* "legitimate central authority"[47] and to acquire the local population's trust.[48] As "in civil wars and insurgencies, popular support tends to accrue to locally powerful actors" – the Taliban therefore gain local favor by offering "survival through certainty."[49] As Kalyvas famously stresses, control of local systems and structures inherently shapes collaboration.[50] Insurgents can naturally spread their influence by means of coercion and control more easily than can counterinsurgents – the Taliban is no exception to this.

Propaganda & Information Operations

Since 2006 the Taliban have operated along a five-line information strategy – (I) Our party the Taliban, (II) Our people and nation, the Pashtun, (III) Our economy, the poppy, (IV) Our constitution, the Sharia, and (V) Our form of government, the emirate[51] – that targets four principle audiences: (i) direct Taliban supporters, (ii) the undecided populous, (iii) the U.S.-led coalition decision-makers, and (iv) transnational extremists.[52] Projecting such a broad-based informational ideology is a clear attempt to appeal to multiple identities and allegiances. As Mao acknowledged, "the richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people"[53] and their connection with "the cause"[54] – the Taliban's wide-scoped appeal base reveals their appreciation of this fundamental strategic objective. Moreover, the Taliban operate an increasingly "sophisticated communications apparatus"[55] that "routinely outperforms the coalition in the contest to dominate public perceptions."[56] Such an efficient propaganda and information operations system that is closely coordinated with armed attacks and campaigns, acts to 'strategically spoil'[57] COIN efforts as well as to present a well-organized image of an insurgent movement that offers a viable alternative to the current government.

The Taliban publish and disseminate their propaganda and information material on a number of levels. Given the

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Afghan literacy rate lies around twenty-eight percent,[58] the use of audio and visual material is preeminent. DVDs, mobile phone videos and audio-cassettes provide users with *jihadi* songs and poems, interviews with leading Taliban figures, and high-quality fresh combat footage. Magazines seem to have become the newly favored output, with the proficiently designed al-Samoud (Resistance) leading the way, followed by Morchel (Trench), Saraq (Flame), and Shahamak (Dignity),[59] all of which are certainly produced by modern presses (probably in Pakistan) and come as hard copies in Pashto and Dari, and often in Arabic and English online. The Taliban are also keen to ensure that their perspectives are represented in news arenas and in so doing, despite the debatable accuracy of their claims, are renowned for responding to media enquiries "around the clock," and far quicker than any government sources.[60] Though primarily aimed at a more foreign audience, the Internet is also a critical source of Taliban propaganda and is also where the Taliban associates itself with a wider Islamic resistance movement defending the *umma* (Muslim world) from the *munafiqoon* (hypocrites, or infidels).

Taliban propaganda appeals to popular sentiment and local grievances as a method of winning local but broad-based support. As discussed earlier, the Taliban exploit local cleavages such as tribal disputes, micro-level disenfranchisement and local xenophobic tendencies for recruitment. In combination with religious rhetoric, the Taliban can utilize a widespread rural distrust of the cities, foreigners and the new Afghan post-invasion elite[61] in order to acquire popular confidence and support *against* the existing authority and ISAF forces. The Taliban are therefore developing an alternative Afghan nationalism to the one espoused by the Karzai administration, one that focuses more on religion and tribal traditions and less on Western concepts of governance.

Taliban propaganda and information operations also aim to alienate and undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the ISAF, ANA and ANP forces. The principle focus for achieving this is to highlight, and in reality, often exaggerate, the morally-questionable activities of ISAF forces and their supposed connection to a wider 'war on Islam,' as well as to draw attention to the rife corruption and ineptitude of indigenous security forces. The main themes used to undermine the Afghan security forces is their perceived corrupt nature and the fact that they are protecting what the Taliban see as a *gawdagai* (puppet) or *ajir* (agent)[62] of the West, President Karzai. Emphasis is placed on their incompetence and inefficiency in the face of Taliban assault as well as high rates of desertion.[63] This propaganda tactic has two clear purposes – to lower the morale of Afghan security forces, and to persuade Afghan civilians to view the Taliban as a more responsible and trustworthy custodian of Afghanistan's interests.

Regarding the international presence in Afghanistan, increasing civilian casualties caused largely by ISAF aerial bombardment gives the Taliban an excellent propaganda tool.[64] The lack of ISAF accountability in the event of this "collateral damage," and the fact that many Afghans are still haunted by memories of horrific civilian casualties during the Soviet War, means that the Taliban gain an invaluable propaganda victory every time an accident occurs by the hands of ISAF forces. Needless to say, the considerably larger number of civilian casualties brought about by Taliban actions is never mentioned. As a result of the Taliban's persuasive accounts of ISAF's malicious intentions, including frequent cases of arbitrary detention and prisoner mistreatment, the Taliban help promote the idea that the international community in Afghanistan must necessarily be shifted in terms of Pashtun traditional status from *mehman* (guest) to *dushman* (enemy).[65] This again serves the interests not only of propaganda but also of recruitment.

Thus far, what has been discussed regarding the Taliban's propaganda and information campaigns has related to methods of acquiring support via informational persuasion. However, the Taliban also rely *very* heavily within Afghanistan on what has been termed 'armed propaganda,'[66] which is forceful coercion and persuasion through direct or threatened violence. The best and most common example of Taliban armed propaganda is the now notorious *shabnamah* (night letter), which is left outside a home or business deemed to be violating Taliban norms and conveys clear demands for specific behavioral changes together with a palpable threat of punishment, normally death. Two noteworthy illustrations of *shabnamah*-use are the cases of the 'Battle for the Mosques' and the 'War of the Schools'[67] where the Taliban conducted extensive armed propaganda campaigns aimed at acquiring complete control of education and religious instruction – two pivotal tools of social control. By using 'object lessons'[68] the Taliban project a widespread threat of collaboration with government or foreign forces[69] and institute an intense level of social control, which is critical to maintaining a strong insurgency. Fundamentally, the *shabnamah* represent a "cost effective method of instruction and intimidation"[70] for "managing local perceptions"[71] and conduct that

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suit the Taliban's interests. Moreover, given the simplicity of the *shabnamah*, its extensive use allows the Taliban to demonstrate a sense of extensive reach throughout rural Afghanistan despite their comparatively small size. Furthermore, the fact that when the Taliban come to punish collaboration or misbehavior they do so with public brutality, means that very often, the demonstration effect this has on the wider population bestows yet more influence to the insurgency.

Attack Tactics

The Taliban militarily confront Afghan and ISAF forces as an insurgent movement heavily influenced by tribal warfare traditions with an intriguing incorporation of both guerrilla *and* asymmetric terrorist tactics. The overarching objective of Taliban attacks is to exhaust the international community's willpower and to wear down the Karzai government's legitimacy – thus opening the path to reestablishing Taliban governance. In many respects, it is executing this strategy with apparent ease. Even with the emergence of changing circumstances, such as the recent ISAF troop surge, the Taliban has been quick to adapt their attack tactics in order to maintain the insurgent advantage.

One aspect of the Taliban's attack tactics is seemingly designed expressly to counter classical *and* newly adapted COIN strategy and to encourage alienating kinetic counter-terrorism tactics. The Taliban focuses principally on acquiring control of rural areas and the green land surrounding cities by infiltrating strategic towns and villages with small 'vanguard teams.'[72] It is this Maoist strategy of infiltration and influence, combined with the subsequent use of combat "flying columns" that engenders the impression of extensive reach and therefore provides the catalyst for an ISAF troop surge – an act that, in the long-term, will likely serve only to engender more local-based anti-Western sentiment.[73] By consolidating local 'base areas,' primarily in district centres,[74] and by rooting out government 'collaborators' and disrupting government-related activity, the Taliban curtail all government influence within the given municipality and thus acquire a monopoly of local authority. This counters another critical COIN objective: increasing indigenous governance capacity.[75] By also targeting ISAF, ANA, and ANP development and security initiatives as well as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the Taliban operate "an integrated program to disrupt government operations"[76] and indigenous COIN capacities that severely impairs *any* efforts to "clear, hold, build."[77]

Another feature of the Taliban's attack tactics aims to draw enemy forces into areas and situations of relative weakness where the Taliban can ensure some extent of enemy loss or the promotion of disorder, which can cause miscalculation. The Taliban's large-scale acquisition of 125cc Honda motorbikes in the summer of 2003,[78] combined with exploitation of their superior knowledge of local terrain, enhances their mobility and allows them to conduct rapid ambushes before immediately concealing their location – a feature of combat distinctly associated with tribal warfare.[79] As Antonio Giustozzi claims, this resembles Taber's 'war of the flea' where the insurgent induces "fighting in villages to deliberately provoke air strikes and collateral damage" and forces the counterinsurgents into a situation that resembles a "dog chasing its tail and gnawing at each flea bite until it drops from exhaustion."[80] When, as a deputy commander of NATO forces has stressed, "you're spread kind of thin, sometimes the cavalry has [to have] wings,"[81] the likelihood of civilian casualties is magnified, something the Taliban is keen to exploit. Furthermore, when faced with an invisible enemy force, the counterinsurgent is susceptible to applying kinetic counter-terrorist operations that generally have "no more effect than a fly swatter"[82] in subduing the Taliban's strength and often inflame tensions with residents. The local autonomy of Taliban commanders, and the widespread use of localized reconnaisance and human intelligence (HUMINT) networks, together with a high level of familiarity with the local terrain means that the Taliban can develop comprehensive and secure defensive positions and be aware of any counterinsurgent assault before it arrives.

It is the author's view that the Taliban employ an attritional 'Focoist' strategy of harassment operations conducted by locally-based units with an overarching intention to engender opposition to existing authority and eventually generate a popular insurrection through "inspirational violence"[83] and an illumination of incumbent government incompetence. The actual nature of Taliban combat operations is of crucial relevance to this. In many respects the Taliban's combat activity resembles classic guerrilla warfare in a modern context – rapid ambushes, hidden improvised explosive devices (IEDs), frequent but momentary sniping, targeted assassination and a general focus on low cost asymmetric gains. A notable addition is the adoption of terrorist-style 'spectacular events,' especially urban

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suicide bombings and brutal public executions, which help to aggrandize Taliban power perceptions. Exemplary discipline and audacious determination[84] sustained by fervent Deobandi-jihadism combines potently on the battlefield in brief stealthy exchanges of fire that harass the enemy and emphasize the delusive insurgent presence. Perhaps one of the Taliban's most significant enhancements has been the employment of sophisticated shaped and directed IEDs that were originally used with great success in Iraq. Not only has they allowed the Taliban to severely damage heavily armored vehicles but it also indicates to Western audiences a demoralizing sense of allied failure in both Iraq *and* Afghanistan.[85] Indications that high-level Taliban-al-Qaeda cooperation is continuing, and indeed expanding into the realm of weapons sharing and training serves only to promote this demoralizing impression even further.

Despite a considerable advantage in terms of manpower, weaponry, funding and logistics, the international military presence in Afghanistan has been unable to defeat the Taliban insurgency. In fact, it could perhaps be argued that the presence of foreign troops on Afghan soil has been *the* instrumental factor in allowing the Taliban to not only survive, but to expand and prosper. By uniting against a *non*-Afghan threat, the Taliban have managed to construct a multifarious identity that appeals to a broad base of the native and regional populations. The geographical, ethnographical and demographical features of Afghanistan, especially its distinctly rural and tribal features, lend themselves perfectly to the formation and perpetuation of a resilient insurgent movement. Unfortunately, a prolonged history of conflict has precipitated a widespread culture of distrust, corruption and local introversion, all of which expressly challenge the establishment of a *national* government, which expects to command control at a local level. The Taliban has adeptly capitalized on this reality by exploiting intrinsically *local* cleavages in order to generate *local* legitimacy in what is in effect, an expansive 'battle for hearts and minds.' However, as has been claimed, the Taliban support this policy with 'armed propaganda' and the threat of merciless punishment – something that counterinsurgents clearly cannot do. The implication of this disparity is that the Taliban have a strategic advantage in acquiring local 'collaboration through control.' Moreover, the integration of terrorist *and* insurgency tactics has presented the international forces with a dilemma as to whether to favour population-centric COIN or kinetic-centric counter-terrorist solutions. Consequently, from a position of preliminary advantage, the Taliban have expertly adapted their organizational structure, their use of a Pakistani safe haven, and their operational attack tactics to simultaneously expand their micro-level control, highlight the incompetence of indigenous forces and government, and demoralize and exhaust the international forces.

The words of Bernard Fall are particularly pertinent to conclude here: "When a country is being subverted [by an insurgency] it is not being outfought; it is being out-administered."[86]

[1] Gilles Dorronsoro, 'The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,' *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* 2009, p.8

[2] Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' *RAND,* 2008, p.28

[3] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (C. Hurst & Co., 2009), p.44

[4] For the purpose of clarity, an insurgency will be defined as: 'a political-military campaign by non-state actors seeking to overthrow a government or secede from a country through the use of unconventional – and sometimes conventional – military strategies and tactics.' (Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' p.1)

[5] Gilles Dorronsoro, 'The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,' p.1

[6] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.54

[7] Bilal Sarwari, 'Taliban Infiltrate Once Peaceful Afghan North,' *BBC News,* July 8th 2009

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[8] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.49

[9] Ibid. p.84

[10] Adam Roberts, 'Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan,' *Survival,* February-March 2009, p.31

[11] Gilles Dorronsoro, 'The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,' p.10

[12] See for example: John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Lessons in Counterinsurgency from Malaya and Vietnam* (University of Chicago Press, 2005)

[13] Sean M. Maloney, 'A Violent Impediment: The Evolution of Insurgent Operations in Kandahar Province 2003-2007,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* June 2008, p.202

[14] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.83

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[16] Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' p.22

[17] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Harvard University Press, 1996), p.152

[18] 'Afghanistan: Background Note,' *U.S. Department of State,* March 2010

[19] Gilles Dorronsoro, 'The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,'

[20] Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' p.46

[21] Vern Liebl, 'Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and the Taliban: A Short View,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* September 2007, p.494

[22] Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.344-6

[23] Vern Liebl, 'Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and the Taliban: A Short View,' p.507-8

[24] Phillip Zeman, 'Report from the Field: Tribalism and Terror,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* September-December 2009, p.686-689

[25] Ibid. p.685

[26] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.88

[27] Vern Liebl, 'Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and the Taliban: A Short View,' p.504

[28] Ibid.

[29] Gilles Dorronsoro, 'The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,' p.27

[30] Ibid. p.14

[31] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.84

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[32] 'Taliban Military Chief Threatens to Kill U.S. Captives,' Interview with *al-Jazeera TV,* July 18th 2005

[33] 'Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of the Words,' *International Crisis Group,* July 24th 2008, p.17

[34] Adam Roberts, 'Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan,' p.31

[35] Hayder Mili & Jacob Townsend, 'Tribal Dynamics of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Insurgencies,' *CTC Sentinel,* August 2009

[36] 'Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of the Words,' *International Crisis Group,'* p.20

[37] Vern Liebl, 'Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and the Taliban: A Short View,' p.507

[38] Phillip Zeman, 'Report from the Field: Tribalism and Terror,' p.687

[39] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.85

[40] 'Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of the Words,' *International Crisis Group,* i

[41] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.41

[42] Ibid. xiv

[43] Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' p.42

[44] 'Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of the Words,' *International Crisis Group,* p.7

[45] Adam Roberts, 'Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan,' p.44

[46] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Praeger, 2006), p.9

[47] Seth G. Jones, 'Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,' p.18

[48] Phillip Zeman, 'Report from the Field: Tribalism and Terror,' p.693

[49] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.67

[50] Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War,* pp.118-124

[51] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla,* p.58

[52] 'Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of the Words,' *International Crisis Group,* p.1-2

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[54] Thomas A. Marks, Mao Tse-Tung and the Search for 21st Century Counterinsurgency,' *CTC Sentinel,* October 2009, p.18

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