

Bullets, Bombs, and Bystanders:
The Strategic Implications of Collateral Damage in Afghanistan

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

Recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the difficulties modern militaries have when confronting insurgencies. As a product of history, modern Western militaries focus conventional efforts on achieving decisive victory by applying maximum force to an enemy's center of gravity. Unfortunately, in a counterinsurgency operation this model rarely works. Much of the reason for this is that as government forces focus efforts on insurgent forces, they tend to forget the plight of the civilian populous. As collateral damage increases, the civilian populous is forced to choose between an insurgency that is threatening them and a government that is killing them. In areas where the government does not have significant influence this usually pushes the populous toward the insurgency providing them with supplies, information, and a recruitment base. The solution to this predicament is for the government to choose a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. However, in doing so, they are confronted with a number of challenges. Namely, they must determine what factors are affecting public perception and then convince the military as an organization that it must adopt a strategy which focuses less on kinetic operations and more on social and political solutions. One of the variables which many believe affect public support is the amount of collateral damage involved. This study attempts to substantiate established beliefs about collateral damage and also determine if there are other kinetic factors which negatively affect public support for the operation.

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INTRODUCTION

When we fight, if we become focused on destroying the enemy but end up killing Afghan civilians, destroying Afghan property or acting in a way that is perceived as arrogant, we convince the Afghan people that we do not care about them. If we say, "We are here for you – we respect and want to protect you", while destroying their home, killing their relatives or destroying their crops, it is difficult for them to connect those two concepts. It would be difficult for us to do the same.

General Stanley McChrystal
Commander
International Security Assistance Force



Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan

Source: CIA World Factbook

22 August 2008 – Shindand District, Afghanistan

In the early morning hours, special operations forces descended on the village of Azizabad, in the Herat province of Afghanistan. Their objective was to carry out a capture or kill order on a prominent Taliban leader. Upon approaching the village, the combined Afghan and US special operations force came under attack from within the village. After identifying

locations where the enemy fire was originating, the on-scene commander, supported by an AC-130H gunship, directed firepower against the enemy locations. Unfortunately, the on-scene commander was unaware of the presence of civilians in close proximity to the target locations. Following the engagement, the special operations team discovered two wounded Afghani civilians. They administered immediate medical care and then transported the casualties to the provisional reconstruction team site in Herat for further medical treatment.¹

In the aftermath, a range of national and international allegations were leveled against the United States regarding the number of civilian casualties. After the United Nations, the Government of the Islamic Republic of

¹ Brig Gen Michael W. Callan, "Executive Summary of AR 15-6 Investigation (U)," (MacDill Air Force Base 2008). Unclassified

Afghanistan (GIROA), and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) reported between 78 and 90 civilian casualties, US Central Command opened an investigation into the incident.

26-27 August 2008

On 26 August, US forces acknowledged 30 people were killed during the operation. Of those killed the military suspected five were the civilian members of the Mullah Sadiq's family; the target of the operation.² However, an investigation completed by the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) on the same day determined 90 civilians were killed during the assault. By their calculations, the casualties included 60 children, 15 women, 15 men, and an additional 15 wounded non-combatants. In response to this investigation, UN Special Representative Kai Eide questioned the military's use of force and stressed the need to prioritize the safety and welfare of the Afghan people.³

An additional investigation completed by the AIHRC on 27 August made yet another determination. After a three day investigation which involved interviews, collection of physical evidence, and the examination of freshly covered graves in nine locations around Azizabad the investigation team concluded that 91 people were killed during the operation and 13 houses were destroyed. Of those killed, 78 were determined to be civilian casualties while the status of 13 armed men found dead was unknown.⁴ These three competing accounts spurred international media coverage and focused attention on the US and International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) ability to control collateral damage.

2 September 2008

Immediate concerns over the number of civilian casualties following the assault prompted General David McKiernan, ISAF commander, to launch an investigation into the events of 22 August. Completed on 2 September, the US investigation determined the actions of US and Afghan forces were justified

² Agence France-Presse, "US-Led Force Says 5 Afghan Civilians Killed in Strikes," *ABC News*, 26 August 2008.

³ United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan, "Special Representative Kai Eide on Civilian Casualties Caused by Military Operations in Shindand," *UNAMA Press Statement*, 26 August 2008.

⁴ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, "From Hope to Fear: An Afghan Perspective on Operations of Pro-Government Forces in Afghanistan," (Kabul2008).

based on the intense enemy fire encountered upon approaching the village. The report determined that, in the ensuing battle, five to seven civilians and 30 to 35 Taliban militants were killed.⁵ The following day, McKiernan, after reviewing the report, concurred with the findings and stressed the need to improve coordination of investigative efforts with outside agencies in the future; specifically the GIRoA and UNAMA.⁶

Unfortunately for the military, video footage that surfaced in early September raised doubts about the military's account of the operation, and forced the military to open a second investigation regarding the assault on Azizabad.⁷

7 September 2008

US Central Command announced it planned to appoint a senior US Military officer responsible for reviewing the previous investigation released on 2 September. The new investigation was prompted by "new information that [became] available since the completion of the initial investigation."⁸ On 9 September, Lt General Martin Dempsey, acting commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM), appointed USAF Brig General Michael Callan as the senior investigating officer in charge of reevaluating the circumstances surrounding the civilian deaths of 22 August.⁹

1 October 2008

After a lengthy investigation, Callan determined the military undertook a legitimate operation based on credible intelligence which indicated Mullah Sadiq and others were planning an attack on a nearby coalition base. During the assault, US and Afghan forces came under fire and responded accordingly. Callan assessed their actions were necessary and proportional based on the information available to the on-scene-commander at the time. In assessing the

⁵ Combined Joint Task Force-101, "Coalition: August 22 Actions in Afghanistan Justified," *US CENTCOM Press Release*, 2 September 2008.

⁶ ISAF Public Affairs Office, "General Mckiernan Expresses Sorrow for Civilian Non-Combatant Casualties and Proposes Joint Approach to Future Enquiries," *ISAF News Release 2008-456*, 3 September 2008.

⁷ Brad Adams, "Letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates on US Airstrikes in Azizabad, Afghanistan," Human Rights Watch, 11 Feb, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org>.

⁸ US Central Command, "CENTCOM Commander Directs Review of Investigation," *USCENTCOM Press Release*, 7 September 2008.

⁹ US Central Command, "USCENTCOM Names Investigating Officer," *USCENTCOM Press Release*, 9 September 2008.

number of casualties, Callan calculated a total of 55 people killed of which 33 were civilians.

The report recommended that in any future incidents of collateral damage, the military should strive to preserve evidence and attempt to document casualties in the immediate aftermath. Also, military leadership should promptly pass all pertinent information to the GIRoA, and other applicable organizations, as part of a joint investigation into the respective incident.¹⁰

Collateral Damage in a Small War

The turmoil surrounding the Azizabad assault underscores the high degree of global concern regarding incidents of collateral damage. The GIRoA, US forces, and ISAF cannot afford to take civilian deaths, destruction of infrastructure, or affronts to cultural norms lightly. Unlike a large-scale pitched battle between rival nations where speed and ferocity of action are the keys to success and questions of morality are often left until after the conflict, the counterinsurgency (COIN) fight allows various agencies to question the validity of collateral damage throughout the entire conflict. It is a topic of extreme interest for the host nation, its population, international media, non-governmental organizations, and, this paper will argue, the United States and ISAF. Incidents of collateral damage impact coalition prestige and credibility which eventually erodes ISAF strategy in the region. It isolates internal and external populations which are necessary for mission success and takes the focus away from the battle against insurgent forces. Incidents like Azizabad, and the perceived attempts by American forces to cover up the extent of the damage, affect US strategy from the national to the tactical level.

Afghanistan from Past to Present

After several attempts to coerce the Taliban government to turn over Osama bin Laden following the September 11th attacks, President Bush announced on October 7, 2001 the United States and its partners had begun to strike terrorist training camps and Taliban military infrastructure within

¹⁰ Callan, "Executive Summary of AR 15-6 Investigation (U)."

Afghanistan.¹¹ Codenamed Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), this action marked the beginning of US military efforts in the region. Initial fighting consisted of a combination of hi-tech US aviation, lo-tech special operations support on the ground, and the conventional forces of the Northern Alliance. Within a relatively short period of time, this deadly combination pushed the Taliban out of Afghanistan and introduced a period of relative calm to the country.

In August of 2003, NATO took over responsibility for the command, coordination, and planning for the ISAF in Afghanistan. Over the next three years the coalition took responsibility for various areas of the country and by October 2006 implemented the final stage of expansion into the US-led portion of eastern Afghanistan.¹² However, US forces under USCENTCOM are still on the ground and with the exception of a combined ISAF/OEF commander, currently General Stanley McChrystal, the command structure of the two forces remains separate.

The failure to eliminate the Taliban in 2001-2002 came back to haunt the US and coalition partners in 2006 when insurgents began to reenter Afghanistan. Unfortunately, increased concerns in Iraq during the same year focused US attention away from Afghanistan. The Iraq Study Group and President Bush's decision to surge troops in Iraq to quell violence provided an umbrella of inattention which allowed the Taliban to step up operations in Afghanistan. In 2006, terrorist activities increased by 94% as insurgent forces reasserted themselves in the country.¹³ In an attempt to control this renewed activity, ISAF relied on airpower to support the limited number of troops on the ground. This caused a ten-fold increase in munitions dropped in 2006 over the previous year. This number doubled again in 2007 to reach a total of 3,572 munitions expended; a number which has remained fairly stable since that time. Unfortunately the renewed insurgent violence and the attempts by ISAF and the United States to control the situation resulted in an increased level of

¹¹ President George W. Bush, "President Bush Announces Military Strikes in Afghanistan" (speech, Washington D.C., October 7, 2001).

¹² International Security Assistance Force, "International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan: History," ISAF, March 14, 2010, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/en/our-history/>. <http://www.isaf.nato.int/en/our-history/>

¹³ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, <https://wits.nctc.gov/FederalDiscoverWITS/index.do?N=0>.

civilian casualties. Some of which received an immense amount of media coverage which damaged US and ISAF credibility in the region.

Upon taking office in 2009, President Obama directed a policy review of operations in Afghanistan. As a result, the President recognized the need for a comprehensive strategy in the region; one that might demand an increase in troops to get the job done.¹⁴ Later that same year, the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, announced the decision to place a new commander in Afghanistan for ISAF and US forces. Officially confirmed by the Senate on June 10, 2009, General McChrystal moved quickly to refocus efforts in Afghanistan toward a population-centric COIN strategy and published a tactical directive aimed at minimizing risk for non-combatants.¹⁵ In August, he also published an assessment of the situation which called for a properly resourced, comprehensive approach that focused efforts on winning the population. The mitigation of collateral damage played a key element in this new strategy.¹⁶ President Obama endorsed the commander's assessment in December and announced the deployment of an additional 30,000 troops to support the operation.¹⁷

Understanding the Implications of Collateral Damage

The desire to embrace the population and limit collateral damage has met mixed reviews. Some are concerned this strategy places coalition troops at a greater risk by denying them the overwhelming firepower resident in western militaries. They argue it gives the insurgency an added advantage as the Taliban attempts to use the rules of engagement against friendly forces. In both cases these naysayers are correct. The population-centric strategy does force the coalition to accept more risk, and it does make their job more difficult. However, war is about accepting risk, and it is never easy. Thus, the real question is whether or not a population-centric strategy is necessary, and if so, is collateral damage avoidance as important as some assert. This thesis will

¹⁴ Jesse Lee, "A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," The White House, February 23, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

¹⁵ International Security Assistance Force, "ISAF Revises Tactical Directive," *ISAF Press Release*, July 6 2009.

¹⁶ Stanley A. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," (Kabul: Headquarters ISAF, 2009).

¹⁷ President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan" (speech, United States Military Academy at West Point Eisenhower Hall Theatre, West Point, NY, December 1, 2009).

explore the answers to these questions by identifying the legal, moral, and technological constraints that drive coalition forces toward a population-centric strategy, and then present data and argumentation which support the importance of collateral damage mitigation when utilizing this strategy.

This begins in Chapter One by detailing the history of civilian casualties in war. Often thought of as an extraneous appendage of war, non-combatants have suffered through mass exterminations, rape, pillage, plunder, and enslavement. The reasons for these actions against civilian populations have varied, but as the Athenians declared in 416 B.C., "...the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."¹⁸ In many respects, little has changed since the Athenians first uttered these words. Contemporary conflict is immersed in violent acts against non-combatants. From the genocide in Rwanda, Darfur, and Bosnia to the rampant terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the plight of civilian populations is challenged as much today as during wars of antiquity.

Global efforts to mitigate suffering on and off the battlefield began in the mid-1800s when international agreements were formed to regulate war. However, the first comprehensive step to curb violence against civilians, civil property, and other important sites in time of war, occurred in 1949 with the ratification of Geneva Convention IV, and additional protections were added with the 1977 Protocols I and II. Taken collectively, these treaties provide a comprehensive list of protections for civilians in a time of war. More importantly, this steady progression of humanitarian law created an international community that believes it is morally reprehensible to needlessly kill non-combatants in the course of waging war. The degree of concern over the issue has grown to such an extent that states are often more concerned with how their actions are viewed by the international community, or their domestic populations, than whether or not their actions are grounded in legal precedent. For those capable of limiting extraneous damage, such as the United States, this is of particular concern. This is because, in many ways, the

¹⁸ Thucydides, Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides : A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press,1996), 352.

evolution of precision weaponry produced an environment which not only wants military forces to limit collateral damage, but expects it.

Aside from the moral implications of the laws of armed conflict, Chapter Two explores the historical underpinnings which encouraged states to resist limitations to their right to act in war. In order to protect their ability to seize victory in war, states developed military strategies which placed the prominence of victory over morality. This mindset produced militaries that sought fast-paced, decisive engagements which maximized the use of combat power. It created military planning processes which held the accomplishment of the desired end state above all other concerns. Proponents of this approach declared that a short, intense war caused less overall damage than a lengthy drawn out war. Hence, while the casualties from collateral damage were unfortunate, the limited duration of the war was morally better than allowing the conflict to plod along.

In keeping with this mindset, states eventually agreed on legal standards for armed conflict which include the principles of distinction, humanity, proportionality, and military necessity. These principles will be described in more detail in Chapter Two, but for now it is enough to say that although many see these principles as protections for non-combatants, in many ways they actually protect a state's ability to act. This is especially true when considering the concepts of military necessity and proportionality. After all, the commander at the scene of the battle decides when an action is necessary and what level of force is required. Questioning his judgment in hindsight is problematic and any type of reprimand is unlikely except in the most extreme circumstances. However, while the principles protect a commander's right to act tactically, they are more of a hindrance strategically. That is, while a single act that stretches the interpretation of proportionality and military necessity may be excused, it is unlikely a series of actions which demonstrate a national disregard for civilian casualties will find the same acceptance. This is especially true when the conflict does not involve an element of national survival.

The moral, legal, and technological considerations discussed in Chapters One and Two, provide an essential backdrop to any discussion of the appropriate strategic approach in COIN operations, such as the one currently

taking place in Afghanistan. With this in mind, Chapter Three delves into the two widely accepted categorizations of COIN strategy; termed here as annihilation and attrition. Also known as the enemy-centric and population-centric strategies, this chapter breaks down the specific considerations of each method and evaluates the acceptability of each from a military point of view and in light of the discussions from previous chapters. In the end, it is determined an attrition based approach (population-centric) is the only viable option for coalition forces in Afghanistan, and resident within that determination is that collateral damage mitigation is essential to success.

The next two chapters discuss the impact of collateral damage on the pertinent populations. In externally supported COIN efforts there are two populations relevant to overall success. The first, and most important, is the internal population. Without its support the conflict will undoubtedly last much longer, and any government left after the departure of foreign forces will stand on shaky ground. The second group is the external population of each foreign contributing nation. Without the support of these populations the coalition will be unable to provide the economic and military assistance necessary to build confidence in the government. If the foreign populations reach a point when they no longer support continued operations against the insurgency, then the under-resourced indigenous government must continue the COIN effort unaided. If government success is reliant on outside support, the most probable outcome of this action is defeat. Therefore, if an externally aided counterinsurgent force is to defeat an insurgency it must understand its impact on both the internal and external populations which are necessary for success.

Using Afghanistan as the relevant case study, Chapter Four considers the impact of collateral damage incidents, civilian casualties, and overall level of violence on public perception. To do so, it uses ten public opinion surveys conducted in Afghanistan over the last five years and measures the degree of correlation between the decline in public opinion and the increase in violence in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, since available data regarding civilian casualties is sparse, and divergent depending on the source, the study looks primarily at the impact of collateral damage caused by airstrikes which is a more reliable source

of data. However, this is not a study condemning airpower collateral damage as the sole source of the decline in public support. Given that airpower incidents make up only a small fraction of the overall collateral damage incidents and an only slightly larger fraction of civilian casualties it is likely other ground-based forms of collateral damage also share a strong relationship with the decline in public opinion.

Chapter Five discusses the role of the external population in COIN operations. In Afghanistan, the coalition, and the United States by extension, relies on a number of external populations to maintain support for the operation. These externally supporting populations ultimately determine the length of deployment for their respective forces and the duties each are allowed to perform. These determinations are based on cultural and foreign policy considerations which are often much different than those held by an American polity. The most significant difference is with regard to the acceptability of kinetic force application in the counterinsurgency. Unlike the domestic US population, many allied populations believe reconstruction and training provide the way ahead in Afghanistan, and deplore instances of collateral damage. If the United States hopes to maintain the alliance over an extended period, it must accept a strategy which more closely approximates this view of the situation. In short, if it chooses to pursue an enemy-centric strategy which focuses more effort on the elimination of insurgent forces than the protection of the population, the coalition will likely crumble.

The strategic implications of internal and external population perception are profound. Many of the issues regarding the population have already been covered by the new strategy in Afghanistan. However, providing the evidentiary link between the population and military actions further supports ongoing efforts, and may point out areas where greater emphasis is necessary. In the end, commanders and the American public must realize that mitigating collateral damage is the key to success in Afghanistan. This is true both in the internal Afghan population and in maintaining a cohesive coalition. If the coalition fails in this endeavor, it is likely the COIN operation will fail as well.

Chapter 1

The Evolution of Collateral Damage

The bodies of dying men lay one upon another; and half-dead creatures reeled about the streets and gathered round all the fountains in their longing for water. The sacred places also in which they had quartered themselves were full of corpses of persons that had died there just as they were.

Thucydides
The Peloponnesian War

The fire, now rising two thousand meters into the sky, snatched oxygen to itself so violently that the air currents reached hurricane force, resonating like mighty organs with all their stops pulled at once...Those who fled from their air-raid shelters sank with grotesque contortions, in the thick bubbles thrown up by the melting asphalt...The smoke had risen to a height of eight thousand meters, where it spread like a vast anvil shaped cumulonimbus cloud. A wavering heat which the bomber pilots said they had felt through the sides of their planes.

W.G. Sebald
On the Natural History of Destruction

Collateral damage in war is a concept that has evolved significantly since men first faced each other in battle. Methods that contemporary society defines as collateral damage were once considered a primary instrument of war. Belligerents razed entire villages, destroyed crops, and sold enemy citizens into slavery as a customary practice of warfare. Even in more current history, belligerents have chosen to ignore the plight of civilians during war in an effort to achieve victory. The 1943 aerial bombardment of Hamburg, Germany described by Sebald is just one example of how the events and pressures of World War II pushed the regard for civilian casualties to a new low. Sickened by the wanton devastation of the war, the international community gathered in 1949 and for the first time established comprehensive protections for civilians in times of war. With these new protections in place the term collateral damage entered the vernacular of military and civil leaders, and the matter of civilians in the combat zone progressed from general disregard to a point of consideration for military commanders.

However, states were careful to protect their ability to act as required, and protections fell far short of actually prohibiting the killing of civilians and the destruction of non-military infrastructure during war. Nor were the provisions applicable to the most prevalent form of warfare following World War II: actions between state and non-state actors. The rise of insurgencies, civil war, and wars of national liberation highlighted an old category of conflict often ignored by nation-states. In 1977, the international community attempted to close this gap by agreeing on provisions for the protections of non-combatants caught up in civil strife. This and the continuing interest in highlighting humanitarian issues produced an international environment focused on the preservation of life. For the first time in history the mitigation of civilian casualties became more of a moral imperative than a mere battlefield consideration. Backed up by the precision capabilities of the United States, many in the international community not only desire non-combatant casualty avoidance, but expect it.

Civilian Casualties: A Persistent Element of War

From wars of antiquity to present-day conflicts, civilians have suffered through the horrors of war. In his account of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides describes numerous strategies which targeted civilian populations. The destruction of land, razing of crops, and the selling of women and children into slavery while killing all the men, were common tactics for both the Athenians and the Spartans.¹ Unfortunately this disregard for human life is not confined in ancient wars. In fact, the killing of innocents is a prime feature of conflict throughout history.

Even with the humanitarian protections ratified in the twentieth century the killing of innocent civilians continues to plague mankind. In Rwanda in 1994 over 750,000 Tutsis were killed in just 10 weeks (out of a population of seven million) before international efforts stopped the genocide. Likewise, before the United Nations Security Council intervened in the Darfur crisis in 2005 between 180,000-300,000 people had died and another 2.4 million were

¹ Thucydides, Strassler, and Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 102-21, 357.

displaced.² Hence, while humanitarian protections continue to advance, it seems human beings are still able to find ways to slaughter their fellow man.

Collateral Damage as a Consequence of War

Prior to the codification of legal norms for war in the mid-1800s the primary means of establishing international legal precedence was through customary practice.³ Contrary to treaty law, customary law is a process by which states accept or fail to accept a custom of practice. To be binding it requires “consistent and recurring action,” and a general recognition by states in the international system that the practice is required or permitted.⁴ Ancient cultures such as the Greeks and Romans observed customary practices in warfare which later became fundamental rules of contemporary law.⁵ This trend, to somehow regulate the horrors of war, continued through the centuries. King Richard II of England issued rules for the conduct of war in the fourteenth century, and King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden took similar action for his forces in the seventeenth.⁶ However, during this period most guidelines for action in warfare were either self-regulating or between only two belligerents.

The international scene changed drastically with the emergence of Napoleon Bonaparte and the national wars he introduced. Just prior to this, wars between states meant a meeting of professional armies on a battlefield and while the plundering of civilian centers did occur, the civilian population was largely left out of the equation. This all changed with the introduction of larger armies during the Napoleonic era. Warfare evolved beyond contests between small professional armies. Instead, it was a battle of mass, and to achieve that

²K. A. Mingst and M.P. Karns, *The United Nations in the 21st Century* (Boulder: Westview Press,2007), 110-13.

³ Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, Seventh Revised ed. (London and New York: Routledge,1997), 35.

⁴ Adam Roberts and Richard Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2000), 7.

⁵ See Coleman Phillipson, *The International Law and Custom of Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: MacMillan,1911), 166-384. in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 3.

⁶ Great Britain. Ministry of Defence., *The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2004), 7. See also Kenneth Ögren, *Humanitarian Law in the Articles of War Decreed in 1621 by King Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden* (IRRC,1996), 438-42. Quoted in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 3.

mass, entire national populations mobilized to support the war effort.⁷ As these wars developed throughout the nineteenth century, the carnage of war was laid bare as never before. The devastation forced governments to attempt to limit the occurrence of war and the immense suffering on the battlefield. They did so by setting directives for their own forces, and eventually by agreeing to guidelines for going to war all together. An example of efforts to mitigate suffering occurred through the Congress of Vienna in 1815 which followed the surrender of Napoleon at Waterloo. While it did not set out any specific standards of behavior on its own, it was the first time in history that multiple nations came together as a large group to shape treaty agreements regarding the conduct of war. This practice continued until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

As the character of war progressed through the early 1800s, and states began to comprehend the sheer magnitude of war's potential consequences, national efforts to codify legal norms for warfare began in earnest. The 1856 Paris Declaration limited actions in maritime warfare and President Lincoln introduced The Lieber Code of 1863 as a compilation of standards for Union forces during the US Civil War which later set a precedent for the definition of military necessity.⁸ In 1868, the St. Petersburg Declaration limited explosive projectiles and established the weakening of the enemy force as the only legitimate object in war. It further declared that actions in war should not unnecessarily aggravate the sufferings of the wounded or make their death inevitable.⁹

In an effort to protect those not participating in a conflict, 16 states met in Geneva, Switzerland in 1864 and agreed upon the first of four Geneva Conventions concerning the improvement of conditions for the wounded on the battlefield. This established the Geneva Law branch of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) which focused on the protection of the wounded, sick,

⁷ Michael Howard, *War in European History*, Updated ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 93.

⁸ Great Britain. Ministry of Defence., *The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*, 22.

⁹ "St. Petersburg Declaration: Declaration Renouncing the Use, in Time of War, of Explosive Projectiles under 400 Grammes Weight," December 11, 1868. in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 55.

shipwrecked, and non-combatant, and led to successive Geneva agreements in 1906, 1929, and 1949 each building on previous treaties.¹⁰ Efforts to regulate the conduct of armed conflict, known as Hague Law, also took place during this period. In 1899 and 1907, 27 and 43 states respectively, met in The Hague to decide further restrictions to the conduct of war. Unfortunately, while important, the agreements failed to address the real issues and tensions of the international community and thus failed to prevent World War I.¹¹

World War I

The devastation of the “war to end all wars” was on a magnitude never before witnessed by mankind. Countries throughout Europe, Russia, the United States, and the contemporary colonial possessions of Great Britain, France and Germany battled in a four year bloodbath that claimed the lives of an estimated 20,000,000 people; 8,000,000 of which were civilians.

Technological innovations prior to the war made battle especially destructive. In the stagnant lines of the Western Front artillery proved the most deadly killer of men. By 1918, the Germans fired an average of 8,000,000 shells per month which in combination with allied shelling created a wasteland over much of the front. To escalate the devastation of shelling, a portion of the shells fired contained noxious gas which spiraled into a chemical warfare race between states as they strained to beat the opponent in a deadly battle of one-upmanship. Attempts to break free from the immovable front were met with terrifyingly accurate fire from the latest machine guns, and those that stayed in the trenches were under the continual threat of aerial bombardment.¹²

Still just a fledgling capability at the beginning of the war, the aircraft evolved significantly during the course of the conflict. Military leaders became increasingly more convinced of the importance of this new weapon of war, and utilized it extensively over the frontlines and even for long range “strategic” bombardment. As the aircraft became larger and capable of reaching the

¹⁰ Great Britain. Ministry of Defence., *The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*, 8.

¹¹ Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, 22.

¹² Michael S. Neiberg, *Warfare in World History*, Themes in World History (London ; New York: Routledge,2001), 63-64.

enemy population, both the German and British militaries considered the impact of the new weapon on civilian morale.¹³ Aerial attacks began as early as 1915 with German Zeppelin raids against Paris and Britain. Although not highly effective, a raid against London in 1915 did manage to kill thirteen and wound 87 Britons.¹⁴ As advancements in aircraft continued, raids on civilian centers by the German Gotha bomber became prevalent. In 1917, the bombers began raids on Paris and London with incendiary munitions. The most deadly attack of the war killed 259 Parisians; a number that seems quite insignificant when compared to World War II death tolls.¹⁵ However, the use of airpower in World War I demonstrated its potential in future conflicts and led to attempts to minimize its impact during the interwar period.

Following the conflict, nations were appalled by the state of affairs that had developed during the war. They had witnessed destruction on a scale never before seen. Entire towns were leveled along the front, the devastating effects of gas led to intense suffering in the trenches and lingering effects long after the war, civilian populations were bombed from the air for the first time, and thousands upon thousands of soldiers were killed in single battles, some, like Verdun, lasting for months. In the post-World War I era states made attempts to mitigate the risks of this happening again.

As states internalized the carnage of the latest war they soon realized that civilians in the battle area were as affected by the dangers of war as the combatants. To remedy the situation they spent the interwar years attempting to limit the impact of war on non-combatants.¹⁶ Two of the more prevalent innovations of the war, the aircraft and the widespread use of gas, stood at the front of the minds of world leaders. Governments answered the question of gas

¹³ John Howard Morrow, *The Great War in the Air : Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 222-74.

¹⁴ Robin D. S. Higham, *Air Power; a Concise History* (New York,: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 49.

¹⁵ Neiberg, *Warfare in World History*, 65.

¹⁶ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 299.

on the battlefield by approving a 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting its use.¹⁷ Unfortunately, agreeing on controls for the use of airpower was not as easy.

The fear societies had about being attacked from the air emerged very early; attempts to control aerial warfare began prior to World War I. During the 1899 Hague Convention attendees prohibited the dropping of projectiles and explosives from balloons, but this prohibition expired after only five years. The 1907 Hague Convention adopted a similar provision, but it failed to reach a level of customary practice. For one thing several powerful states such as France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Russia refused to agree to the provision, and in 1942, the United States added its refusal to observe the terms of the agreement. Hence, although the provision is still technically binding it received no widespread acceptance and is now relegated to a treaty provision that has no standing in customary law.¹⁸

Attempts during the interwar period to regulate the use of airpower were thwarted by states that wished to protect their ability to use the new weapon in future wars. Various conventions, conferences, and commissions convened without resolution. Finally, in 1923 states came together again in The Hague. While the final report of the *1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare* was not ratified by the signatory states, several states did announce later their intention to apply by the regime and during World War II both sides proclaimed their adherence to its principles.¹⁹ Therefore, even while not ratified, it took the first steps necessary to become customary law.

Particularly interesting in the *Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare* are the stipulations regarding the use of aerial bombardment. Article 22 prohibits the bombing of civilian populations for the purpose of causing terror, destroying private property, or injuring non-combatants. In addition, Article 24 states that aerial bombardment is only legitimate if it is directed against a military object; the destruction of which provides a *distinct* military advantage. It also prohibits the bombardment of cities or buildings not in the immediate operating area of

¹⁷ "1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous, or Other Gases, and of the Bacteriological Methods of War," June 17, 1925.

¹⁸ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 139.

¹⁹ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 140.

land forces, and stipulates that commanders must “spare as far as possible” historical, cultural, and medical buildings.²⁰ The core of these restrictions was reiterated in political rhetoric of the time and eventually became integral parts of contemporary legal code.

Further steps were taken to limit airpower’s destructiveness by the League of Nations in 1938. Prompted by a speech from British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, to the House of Commons on the 21st of September the League of Nations resolution reinforced three principles as a basis for any further regulation.

1. The intentional bombing of civilian populations is illegal.
2. Objectives aimed at from the air must be legitimate military objectives and must be identifiable.
3. Any attack on legitimate military objectives must be carried out in such a way that civilian populations in the neighborhood are not bombed through negligence.²¹

In essence, the resolution, unanimously agreed upon by 49 states reinforced the provisions of the 1923 Hague Draft Rules. The narrative of the resolution also noted the horror involved in bombing civilian populations which is indicative of the international abhorrence to such a practice in the years leading up to World War II. This makes it all the more interesting that by the end of the next major war the civilian protections of the interwar period were wholly ignored by the major belligerents as national interests took precedence over questions of morality.

World War II

The devastation of World War I paled in comparison to the havoc wreaked by the destructiveness of World War II. By the time the war ended in 1945, an estimated 28,000,000 civilians and 22,000,000 military personnel lay dead, and another 30,000,000 were refugees. Aside from the genocide

²⁰ "1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare," February 19, 1923. in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 141-53.

²¹ "Protection of the Population against Bombing from the Air in the Case of War," September 30, 1938.

perpetrated by Hitler's Nazi regime, German military units called Einsatzgruppen were tasked with the elimination of Jewish and Slavic persons encountered during the German advance through Poland and the Soviet Union. The ensuing carnage ordered by German Generals Walther von Reichenau and Erich von Manstein resulted in the death of 10,000,000 Soviet and 4,000,000 Polish civilians. However, massacres of civilians were not limited to Germany. During the two-day rampage of Nanking, in December, 1937 an estimated 200,000 civilians were killed by the Japanese. Also, in retaliation for the German abuses, it is estimated the Soviets killed 2,000,000 German civilians on their advance toward Berlin.²² Even the United States and Great Britain disregarded prewar proclamations denouncing the bombing of civilian centers, and as matter of policy sponsored strategic bombing operations which claimed the lives of over 800,000 civilians in Germany and Japan.²³ Granted in some instances the targeting of civilians was an outcome of deliberate policy, while in others it was an indirect effect of an accepted strategy. However, in each case the result was the same. Thousands of civilians died either through malice or accepted indifference.

Perhaps as an ominous premonition of what eventually became the accepted practice of bombing strategies during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt implored parties to the conflict to abstain from bombing civilian centers prior to the start of hostilities.

The President of the United States to the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Poland and His Britannic Majesty, September 1, 1939

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities which have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years, which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenseless men, women, and children, has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity.

²² Neiberg, *Warfare in World History*, 74-75.

²³ A. C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities : The History and Moral Legacy of the Wwii Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: Walker & Co. : Distributed to the trade by Holtzbrinck Publishers,2006), 5.

If resort is had to this form of inhuman barbarism during the period of the tragic conflagration with which the world is now confronted, hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings who have no responsibility for, and who are not even remotely participating in, the hostilities which have now broken out, will lose their lives. I am therefore addressing this urgent appeal to every government which may be engaged in hostilities publicly to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event, and under no circumstances, undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities, upon the understanding that these same rules of warfare will be scrupulously observed by all of their opponents. I request an immediate reply.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The governments of Great Britain, France, and Germany needed no encouragement. British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, had already instructed the Royal Air Force (RAF) to confine its targets to identifiable military objectives. Unaware of this, Hitler instructed Hermann Goering, head of the German Luftwaffe, to relay to Britain that if they restricted targets to military forces and objects, the German government would do the same.²⁴ Unfortunately, while aiming at a Short aircraft factory in Rochester on 24-25 August, 1940 a navigationally challenged German bomber group accidentally dropped ordnance on London. The British response was to send a force of 81 bombers to attack the Berlin airport on the next night precipitating the acceptance of area bombing as an instrument of war.²⁵

Already immersed in the Battle of Britain, the German Luftwaffe adjusted its strategy to begin attacking selected targets within London to destroy military capability and affect the will to resist. By September 5, this strategy evolved further as Hitler directed a general campaign against urban centers and enemy

²⁴ J. Slessor, *The Central Blue* (London: Cassel, 1948), 213. and E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, vol. VII, Third (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954). in R. J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945*, 1st ed., *Cornerstones of Military History* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 24.

²⁵ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 38.

morale.²⁶ By the end of the Battle of Britain over 40,000 had died in the United Kingdom from aerial bombardment.²⁷

Certainly German actions during the Blitz had some affect on British strategic thinking, but another motivator for Britain's acceptance of area bombing was the RAF's inability to be as precise as pre-war airpower theorists had hoped. Intelligence estimates in 1941 indicating the bombing offensive's failure to hit selected targets and the heavy losses of aircraft in day raids was the impetus for this change. Without the ability to bomb specific targets, Sir Arthur Harris, in charge of RAF Bomber Command, determined area bombing at night was the only effective strategy.²⁸ A new Air Staff directive published 14 February, 1942 stated, "The primary object of your operations should now be focused on the morale of the enemy civil population, and in particular industrial workers."²⁹ The results of this decision were seen in the utter destruction of several German cities by war's end.

For its part, the United States began the war with the intention of maintaining a strategy of precision bombing of strategic enemy centers. To facilitate this strategy the Army Air Forces (AAF) decided daylight raids over Germany were the only effective way of maintaining precision. With this strategy in hand, the AAF pressed forward with intelligence and scientific planning to determine which target sets to bomb in order to bring Germany to its knees.³⁰ While the intention to concentrate on military targets by the AAF bombing offensive is admirable it came with some caveats. First, although they concentrated on military targets, these targets were often in close relation to urban areas. Also, by early 1943, the practice of individual bomb sighting was abandoned and replaced by a process of pattern bombing which required every

²⁶ R. J. Overy, *The Battle of Britain : The Myth and the Reality*, 1st American ed. (New York: W.W. Norton,2001), 88.

²⁷ Overy, *The Battle of Britain : The Myth and the Reality*, 109.

²⁸ Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945*, 110.

²⁹ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, eds., *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-45*, vol. IV, Official History (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office,1961), 143-48. in Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 50.

³⁰ Overy, *The Air War, 1939-1945*, 74, 111.

aircraft in the formation to release ordnance on a signal from the leader.³¹ Additionally, in November of the same year, Commander of the Air Forces, General “Hap” Arnold authorized bombing crews to attack targets through cloud cover.³² The use of these “blind” raids significantly increased the operational tempo and comprised a large portion of the US bombing effort. Worried about what the American public would think of the tactic, Arnold cautioned against describing it as blind bombing, instead preferring “overcast bombing technique,” or “bombing through overcast.”³³

America’s aversion to the intentional targeting of civilians soon waned as the war’s weight of effort transferred to the Pacific theater. The policy of precision bombing followed prior to 1944 in the Pacific was soon replaced by area bombing and incendiary raids when General Curtis Lemay took command of the air forces responsible for Japan. By the AAF’s own account, in just five months the Twentieth Air Force fire bombed sixty-six cities, killed 310,000 Japanese, injured another 412,000, and rendered another 9,200,000 homeless.³⁴ Yet, the coup de grâce of the bombing offensive in Japan was the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which killed over 105,000 bringing an end to the war. A sad fact for a group of nations that considered attacks on civilian centers morally wrong just seven years earlier.

The Cold War Years

In light of the massive numbers of civilian casualties during World War II the international community was eager to agree on statutes to limit harm to civilians in the future. The outcome of this endeavor was the initiation of another round of Geneva Conventions in 1949. Easily the most significant step

³¹ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare : The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,2002), 228.

³² General Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General Army Air Forces, HQ Army Air Forces, *Combined Chiefs of Staff Air Plan for the Defeat of Germany*, memorandum, November 1, 1943 in Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, 228.

³³ Richard G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Air Force History : For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. G.P.O.,1993), 296-98. in Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, 228.

³⁴ "Highlights of the Twentieth Air Force," ed. Air Force Historical Research Agency (Maxwell AFB). in Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare*, 269.

thus far, in codifying humanitarian norms for warfare, the treaty includes four separate conventions. These include:

1. Geneva Convention I for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field
2. Geneva Convention II for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea
3. Geneva Convention III Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War
4. Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War

Prior to the fourth convention, there were no treaties exclusively devoted to the protection of civilians and it is the longest convention of the group. To summarize, the treaty lays out specifics for the care of the wounded and sick, the marking of safe zones and hospitals, the prohibition of genocide or experimentation, and the treatment of internees, all of which were a factor in the previous war. The agreement applies during war, other armed conflicts, and in cases of territorial occupation. Additionally, if the conflict is not of an international nature it stipulates that a minimum number of provisions must be followed. These include the prohibition of violent acts such as “mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;” hostage taking; humiliating or degrading treatment; and battlefield sentencing and execution outside the control of a correctly constituted court.³⁵

Collateral Damage as an Arbiter of War

While large scale war of the kind experienced previously in the twentieth century failed to materialize during the Cold War, wars of a more limited nature were prevalent. The conflicts that ensued were given names like limited war, low-intensity conflict, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and revolution. International conflicts, such as the Korean War, 1956 Suez Crisis, Vietnam War, and the string of Arab-Israeli wars, were fought with the patronage and support of the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and China

³⁵ "1949 Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protections of Civilian Persons in Time of War," August 12, 1949. in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 299-369.

among others. In the shadow of these larger conflicts struggles for national liberation or just plain ethnic retribution occurred in places like Algeria, China, Indo-china, Malaysia, Palestine, Turkey, and several others. The significant increase in these wars of liberation was a result of the declining influence of colonial powers internationally. Powerful states prior to World War II were unable to continue to govern colonial possessions effectively. The result was a string of independence movements and ethnic clashes as European dominance receded. Insurgency movements within states resulted in unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by national and international parties to the conflict. These incidents highlighted the need for additional clarification of the 1949 Geneva Conventions which inspired two additional protocols in 1977. A key feature to both protocols is the rising appreciation for humanitarian law as a marker for international conduct.

Protocol I deals with the protection of victims of international armed conflict. Adding to the provisions in the 1949 convention, Protocol I widens the applicability of the treaty to include protections for people fighting against colonial domination, alien occupation or against racist regimes. It also states that combatants must distinguish themselves from the population. However, if a valid combatant fails to abide by the provisions of the convention they do not lose their designation as a combatant and the protections accorded in that capacity. Commonly referred to as the principle of *military distinction*, Article 57 (2) stipulates that military commanders must “do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilian nor civilian objects and are not subject to special protection.”³⁶

The creation of Protocol II was an attempt to codify protections for victims of internal or civil wars. Prior to the *1948 Genocide Convention* and the *1949 Geneva Convention* the laws of war were only considered applicable to a civil war or insurrection if the governing authorities declared the insurgent group a belligerent. In an effort to amplify the provisions of previous conventions, Protocol II took steps to better define the rights and protections for

³⁶ "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)," June 8, 1977. in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 421-79.

civilians affected by civil strife.³⁷ Part IV of the protocol deals specifically with the aspect of civilian populations. Article 13 specifies that civilian populations “shall not be the object of attack,” nor are those taking part in the fighting allowed to use threats or violence to terrorize the population. Furthermore, attacking or destroying sources of food or other objects necessary for survival is prohibited.³⁸ Unfortunately, states were reluctant to accord significant protections to a possible future enemy within their state. Hence, the final protocol was significantly reduced. This desire to protect the state’s ability to use force in a manner it deems necessary is an enduring legacy of regulations for armed conflict, and will be covered more in-depth in Chapter 2.

The Precision Years

Although the United States signed, but failed to ratify the provisions outlined in Protocol I and II in 1977, the aspects of the accords seemed to have an impact in the operations that followed. During the 1991 war with Iraq the topic of collateral damage became a prominent topic for discussion. With the “smart” weapons developed throughout the 1980s the military now had more capability to target valid military targets while avoiding excessive collateral damage. The publicity of this new capability caused some to believe inadvertent killing and damage was a thing of the past. However, as much as the televised military briefings during the war made the public think precision munitions were the norm, the truth was of the matter was that only 20% of the bombs dropped during the conflict were actually precision guided munitions.³⁹ Unfortunately, determining accurate collateral damage figures is next to impossible in an environment that did not offer the independent investigation of events.

After Desert Storm, precision munitions continued to play an important role in US Air Force operations. United States involvement in the Balkans

³⁷ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 480-81.

³⁸ "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)," June 8, 1977. See Articles 13, 14 in Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 483-512.

³⁹ Eliot A. Cohen, "Gulf Air Power Survey: A Statistical Compendium and Chronology," (Washington DC 1993), 418, 514. Total strikes 41,309 – Precision strikes 9,117.

during the mid-1990s and in Kosovo in 1999 made heavy use of precision munitions versus non-precision. For example, during Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, in 1995, 98% of the munitions employed by the United States were precision.⁴⁰ In addition, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2001 provided a unique example of using precision attack in combination with low-tech warriors on the ground to incrementally break the death grip of the Taliban over Afghanistan, and its use during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM facilitated the dissolution of Saddam Hussein's government in 2003.

For the military, the ability to apply precision engagement is most valuable as a method to apply disastrous effects with fewer munitions, but in political discourse the power of precision weaponry is in its ability to limit the impact of collateral damage. With this in mind, the advantage of precision munitions is diminishing in current US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not because munitions are not accurately hitting the targets, but because the munitions are unable to distinguish between civilian and insurgents. In this light, it may be that employing no weapon at all is better than using the most accurate.

Conclusion

The development of collateral damage protections proceeded cautiously as states attempted to protect national military options in the face of wars which threatened national survival or prestige. Governments reluctantly agreed to limitations only after the devastation to civilian populations surfaced following wars. Initially, limitations only applied to non-combatants operating within the military structure such as medics, wounded, and prisoners of war, but in 1949 states extended these protections to include civilians caught up in hostilities. However, in keeping with the legal practice of the day, the protections only included those embroiled in inter-state rivalry. Intra-state protection of civilians remained the purview of the individual domestic legal systems.

⁴⁰ Richard P. Hallion, "Precision Weapons, Power Projection, and the Revolution in Military Affairs," in *USAF Air Armament Summit* (Eglin AFB, Florida: USAF Air Armament Center, 1999).

By 1977, the rise in insurgencies, wars of national liberation, and civil war prompted states to extend protections to those entangled in civil strife. The additional protocols accepted in 1977 provided a comprehensive set of protections for civilians and created an international community increasingly concerned with the plight of civilians in war. In Operation DESERT STORM, collateral damage became a hot topic for discussion among the media and military leaders. To allay concerns, the military pointed to the ability of precision weapons to alleviate collateral damage on the battlefield. In doing so the military raised the level of expectation. In the conflicts that followed, the international community not only desired limitations on collateral damage, but fully expected it.

Chapter 2

Challenging the Persistent Paradigm

On Seizing the Objective:

In combat operations this involves executing offensive operations at the earliest possible time, forcing the adversary to offensive culmination and setting the conditions for decisive operations. Rapid application of joint combat power may be required to delay, impede, or halt the adversary's initial aggression and to deny the initial objectives.

Joint Publication 3-0
Doctrine for Joint Operations

While it is true the moral considerations of collateral damage became more stringent in the latter half of the twentieth century, this is not to say that legal precepts followed suit. Even as additional measures were codified to protect civilians in warfare, states continued to protect their right to act in war. This is not surprising considering the development of military and national strategic thought in the post-Napoleonic era. It is in this era when the primacy of advancing against the enemy and destroying his fielded forces became the guiding principle behind military action. This tendency drove military theorists to call for overwhelming force applied at decisive points along the battle front, and spurred national militaries to seek quick, decisive victories. With this in mind, legal principles developed during the period reflected the desire to retain the operational use of decisive force. Thus, while states recognized the catastrophic effects of wars, they also refused to limit their ability to act when faced with war. Interestingly, the principles agreed to by states which protected their right to act tactically in conventional war actually limit their ability to act strategically in many unconventional situations.

The Age of National Wars

The drive to secure survival is a common desire among states, organizations, and people. In fact, for some international relations theorists it is the propellant cause of international conflictual relationships.¹ Taken in this light, the primacy of state survival means that wars which potentially threaten the state's survival or its vital interests are the driving force behind a nation's

¹ Common references to this exist in Kenneth Waltz's, *Theory of International Politics*, Irving Janis's book *Groupthink*, and are described by Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*.

security policy and the military forces of the state are the primary organizations responsible for this security. It comes as no surprise then that military doctrine is highly reliant on fighting a war which calls for the ability to overwhelm the enemy, destroy centers of gravity, and force an expedient capitulation. In wars such as these collateral damage is rightfully set at a much lower level of priority when compared with other national military objectives; a carefully guarded concept that is codified in international law.

The Napoleonic era of war also spawned new theories of warfare that continue to influence military thought and national security policy to this day. One such theorist, Baron de Jomini, a product of Switzerland and military advisor in Napoleon's army, was a guiding force for US military theory in the 1800's. In his book, *The Art of War*, Jomini lays out the principle he believed was fundamental to military engagements; one must throw the mass of his army against the decisive points of the other and his lines of communication at the proper place, time, and with the energy necessary to overcome his forces.² Elements of this principle exist in several other theories of war as well, including Jomini's rival, Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz.

Contemporarily, Clausewitz's teachings are considered the pinnacle of military theoretical excellence. Military officers in the United States and other nations study his writings in detail to formulate and solidify an understanding of warfare. Among the many principles Clausewitz introduces, his first principle of strategy is to ensure that military forces are massed at the decisive point, and that no force is detached from the main unless the need is urgent and definite.³ He further explains that greater force is more likely to lead to success. Hence, a military can never use too large of a force, and must strive to apply all available force simultaneously. By doing this, the commander can expect to suffer fewer casualties by ending the conflict sooner.⁴ A short listen to

²Baron De Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. Capt. G.H. Mendell; Lt. W.P. Craighill (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 52.

³Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Eliot Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 195-204.

⁴Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret, *On War*, 207.

military rhetoric during the twentieth century will uncover several declarations that resonate with Clausewitz's view of war.

American experience in war, and the resulting interpretation of events, only served to reinforce the theoretical base provided by Jomini and Clausewitz. Respected historian Russell Weigley characterized American attitudes toward warfare in his 1973 book, *The American Way of War*. In it he contends there is a distinctive way in which Americans look at war and it is a result of national attitudes and resources. The strategies of annihilation and the goal of unconditional surrender, which underpin US military strategic thinking, began with the Indian wars during westward expansion and during the US Civil War. These ideas became ingrained in US military structure and were carried forward into the wars of the twentieth century; specifically World War I and World War II. Such wars justified an all-out pursuit of victory, and the need to energize national capabilities to make it quick and decisive. During this period, the concept of attacking the economic structure and civilian morale of the enemy began to have an influence in military strategy.⁵ This notion became the basis for US bombardment strategy in World War II; a strategy which resulted in the destruction of an immense amount of infrastructure and the death of thousands of non-combatants.

When faced with smaller wars and ambiguous objectives the United States found it difficult to achieve the unconditional, decisive victory it had in the past. Discontent with performance in Korea and Vietnam government leaders sought to reinforce the importance of establishing a clear objective in war, and of applying the full weight of American power to achieve it. President Reagan's Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, detailed this concept of American power during a speech in 1984 to the National Press Club. In it he emphasized that the United States should not commit troops overseas unless it is to protect a vital national interest. If it does occur, the desire to win should be resolute, the objectives clearly defined, the necessary resources available, and forces should only be committed as a last resort with the support of the

⁵ Russell F. Weigley, "How Americans Wage War: The Evolution of National Strategy," in *Major Problems in American Military History: Documents and Essays*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers and G. Kurt Piehler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

American public.⁶ General Colin Powell later elaborated on the doctrine by emphasizing the need for overwhelming troops and materials to ensure the operation was quick, decisive, and that it minimized risks to American military personnel.⁷ Government and military leaders followed this concept in Operation DESERT STORM and were exceptionally successful. When the time came to invade Iraq again in 2003, military leaders continued to press for overwhelming force prior to troop commitment. Only after it became obvious that additional resources were not forthcoming did leaders accept the idea of invading with a smaller force.⁸ Simply put, the desire to seek decisive results, use overwhelming force, and tenaciously drive toward objectives is ingrained in every soldier, sailor, marine, and airman in the US military and the national command authority it supports. Relinquishing this behavioral norm is difficult to achieve.

Shaping Legal Principles to Match Security Policy

In an effort to protect military options if national security becomes threatened, states took numerous steps during the development of the laws of armed conflict to slow its progress. Initial protections, agreed to in the mid-1800s, only provided for the improvement of conditions for the wounded on the battlefield while neglecting other horrors. Provisions to regulate conduct in warfare, established during the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions, were largely ignored during World War I, and attempts to rectify this during the interwar period were hampered by state interests. The illustrious League of Nations, established after World War I, to promote international cooperation and promote peace required only a three month cooling-off period prior to hostilities, and if a state failed to abide by this requirement other members were not obliged to punish group defection. Another attempt to abolish war during the period was the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 which sought to ban war altogether. Yet, states failed to provide an enforcement mechanism for the

⁶ Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power" (speech, The National Press Club, Washington D.C., November 28, 1984).

⁷ Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5 (1992): 38.

⁸ Mark S. Coppess, "Comparing the Design and Execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom" (United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2005), 16.

provision.⁹ Simply put, in the multipolar, balance of power political structure in existence prior to World War II there was no incentive for states to limit their options in warfare, or their ability to resort to war. Even at a time when states were war weary following World War I, the need to protect state interests took precedence over humanitarian interests.

The steady rise in wars of national liberation, civil war, and insurgencies after World War II presented a new problem for legal precedent. Protections enacted following the war were primarily concerned with state versus state warfare and failed to protect non-combatants in domestic wars; a condition traditionally considered outside the purview of international law. The introduction of the 1977 Additional Protocols was a direct result of the atrocities that took place during this period. However, once again, states were reluctant to limit military options when faced with a threat. The original 48 provisions introduced by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were eventually whittled down to just 28 by the time the protocols were finished, and then several states failed to ratify the agreements including France, Great Britain, and the United States.¹⁰

However, in a recent study of the Geneva Protocols the ICRC determined that many of the rules codified in the additional protocols also have credibility as portions of customary law; therefore applying to states that failed to sign or ratify the protocols.¹¹ Currently there are 169 states that have ratified Protocol I and 165 have ratified Protocol II.¹² Out of 194 countries recognized by the US State Department that is not a bad representation, and lends additional credence for the protocols to be accepted outright as customary law in the future.

The protections included in Geneva Law, the additional protocols and various other legal treaties include a number of specific protections for non-

⁹ Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, 24.

¹⁰ Roberts and Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, 482, 93-99. France eventually acceded to Protocol II in 1984.

¹¹ Jean-Marie Henchaerts, "Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law: A Contribution to the Understanding and Respect for Rule of the Law in Armed Conflict," in *International Review of the Red Cross*, ed. Toni Pfanner (Geneva2005), 187.

¹² International Committee of the Red Cross, "States Party to the Main Treaties," ICRC, 18 February, 2010, http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/party_main_treaties.

combatants and those deemed out of action. Central to the use of military force in these documents are four fundamental principles meant to guide military actions in war. Unfortunately, while these principles are intended to protect non-combatants in a time of war they are also a measure by which states can excuse their actions in time of conflict. The fundamental principles include *humanity, distinction, proportionality, and military necessity*.

1. *Humanity* - prohibits the infliction of unnecessary suffering, injury, and destruction while achieving military objectives.
2. *Distinction* - demands that military commanders distinguish combatants from non-combatants and legitimate military targets from civilian infrastructure.
3. *Proportionality* - requires that losses occurring from military action must be considered in light of the military advantage to be gained, and should not be excessive.¹³
4. *Military Necessity* - limits the degree of force which can be applied. It also allows for the destruction of infrastructure and killing of non-combatants when it is “incidentally unavoidable by the armed conflicts of war.”¹⁴

The key feature of all these principles is the way each protects the state’s right to act in a situation in a manner it determines necessary. So while the principles may highlight the need to consider collateral damage in military operations, like many previous attempts to regulate warfare, they do little to actually contain a state’s ability to inflict suffering. This is not to say militaries do not strive to limit civilian casualties in warfare. It is only presented to illustrate how states continue to protect their right to act in a way they determine necessary in the event of war. The principles merely provide the loop-hole needed if collateral damage becomes a factor.

¹³ Great Britain. Ministry of Defence., *The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*, 23-25.

¹⁴ Great Britain. Ministry of Defence., *The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*, 22.

Legal Precedent as a Constraining Factor

When collateral damage does occur the first inclination is to evaluate the necessity and the proportionality of the event. That is to say, did the circumstance presented to the military commander require the use of force to resolve the situation, and did the commander use the appropriate amount of force given the circumstances. In the Azizabad incident Brig Gen Callan decided the actions of the special operations team were necessary and proportional based on the information available to the on-scene-commander at the time. Using these criteria he determined the collateral damage inflicted, while unfortunate, was excusable.

The military or national authority of the nation which inflicted the damage is usually the one to determine the necessity and proportionality of an event. Therefore, with the exception of particularly catastrophic events, established legal principles are more likely to excuse military action than to condemn it. This is a direct result of national desires to preserve capability to react in a time of war.

However, while these legal principles do protect military actions at the tactical level, they also have a residual effect of limiting actions on a strategic level. As the Geneva Conventions and additional protocols garnered international acceptance, the principles of humanity, distinction, military necessity, and proportionality became a measuring tool for international acceptance of state violence. Therefore, states that want to project an image of abiding by international standards are restricted from using methods that clearly violate these four principles.

The historical evidence shows that nations threatened with national survival are unlikely to concern themselves with the specifics of collateral damage mitigation. However, this does not hold true for conflicts which fall beneath this level of measurement. When participating in internationally sanctioned conflicts such as the first Gulf War, Somalia, Kosovo, or in drawn out counterinsurgent actions which do not threaten national survival, it is unlikely the international community will condone unrestricted violence against the civilian population. This is a factor which is particularly pertinent to current coalition actions in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The national wars prevalent in the post-Napoleonic era emphasized the need for states to retain the right to utilize any method to protect the existence of the state. With this in mind, states continually attempted to block restrictions to the use of force particularly with regards to collateral damage. However, as humanitarian law developed and human suffering in war became a more prominent subject in international relations, the legal precepts enacted to protect a state's right to act tactically eventually provided the impetus to restrict state actions strategically. Now, any state that participates in a conflict must defend its strategy against the principles of humanity, distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. Within this environment a state is unable to wage a war of unrelenting ferocity against a population if it hopes to garner the support of the international community.

The concepts explored in Chapters One and Two, are of particular concern when considering available options in a counterinsurgent operation. As members of the international community, participants must consider the legal and moral implications of their actions as they pertain to international law. If they wish to remain in the good graces of other nations, or hope to maintain a level of national prestige, exceptionally violent actions are not tolerable. This is especially true for nations such as the United States which have the ability to limit collateral damage through the use of precision munitions.

Chapter 3

The Strategic Nature of Insurgencies

If we disabuse ourselves of the notion that there has to be only one acceptable American way of war, if we devise military forces and tactics, operational methods, and strategies suited to conflicts of less than total means and objectives, if we learn to fight with measured applications of military strength and with adroit maneuver skills, then policies of intervention in complex circumstances need not be foredoomed by a military commitment to the unrelenting quest for unconditional surrender as our only way of war.

Russell F. Weigley

As a concept, revolutionary war is a type of conflict very different from the traditional understanding of nation-state war. It is a war within a state as opposed to between states which may take the form of an insurgency, guerilla war, terrorism, conventional military battles, political action, strikes, or agitation.¹ In an international legal sense it is a type of conflict that has been very difficult to regulate. Partially this is because of the primacy given to state sovereignty in international matters, but it is also because of the difficulty in defining opposing groups. As the common saying goes, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Hence, the officially recognized state likely defines internal acts of aggression as criminal whereas other nations, be it on political or moral grounds, may define the aggressor as a recognized group fighting for national liberation. Conflicts of this nature escalated drastically following World War II, and attempts to regulate behavior during these conflicts followed. Unfortunately, careful attention to the different variables involved in these types of conflict did not develop significantly. States, involved in small wars, often resorted to using traditional military practices in conflicts which bore little resemblance to the large conflicts state forces were trained to execute. As experience in these conflicts continued, two branches of theory developed to handle such actions. One called for direct action against the enemy, and the other advocated a more indirect approach to the problem.

¹John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 817.

Dual Forms of Strategy

The German military theorist Hans Delbrück utilizes the broad division of annihilation and attrition to describe different strategies of warfare in his book series, *History of the Art of War*. Contrary to the pejorative use of the term attrition in describing the deadly trench warfare of World War I, Delbrück describes the strategy of attrition as an approach which considers a variety of options, military or otherwise, to affect the desired end. This does not mean that battle does not take place in a strategy of attrition, merely that it is not the overriding priority. On the other hand, in a strategy of annihilation, battle “is the one means that outweighs all others and draws all others into itself.”² Consequently, he describes Napoleonic strategy as a strategy of annihilation, but the approach of Frederick the Great as a strategy of attrition. In both cases, national armies met on the field of battle, but in Frederick’s case he did not always seek the destruction of the enemy army or even the capitulation of the enemy state as his final aim. Instead, he was more concerned with the preservation of his force and the state of Prussia.³

Surrounded by larger and more powerful empires, Frederick had no choice but to use a strategy which focused on the ability of a commander to decide from moment to moment whether to attack or maneuver. It is within this continuum of maneuver and battle that Delbrück’s strategy of attrition exists.⁴ Unlike annihilation, it accounts for the non-linear aspects of a campaign. It does not seek to force surrender through the destruction of enemy forces or the decapitation of regime leadership. Instead, forces utilizing attrition consider unintended consequences of military action and attempt to bring objectives to fruition by exercising a variety of methods.⁵

Delbrück used the two forms of strategy to describe conventional warfare taking place between states, and his division makes adequate sense of the wars fought since the age of Napoleon. His broad categorization does not cover every

² Hans Delbrück, *History of the Art of War within the Framework of Political History*, trans. Jr. Walter J. Renfroe, 4 vols., vol. IV, Contributions in Military History (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 294.

³ Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, 439-44.

⁴ Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, 108.

⁵ James Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy from World War II to the War on Terrorism*, Cass Series-- Strategy and History, (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 62.

aspect of war; that is not its purpose. Instead the purpose is to provide an understanding of the overarching strategy used. Large wars of the twentieth century overwhelmingly followed the strategy of annihilation, but various aspects of attrition were also present. For example, the British naval blockade of Germany during the two World Wars and the German assaults on English shipping were examples of an attrition strategy. For the most part though, Western military strategy has followed the concept of annihilation either through the direct targeting of fielded forces, the decapitation of regime leadership, or destruction of the military's command, control, and support structures.

With the arrival of new technology on the battlefield it is likely Delbrück's strategy of attrition is obsolete for large forces. Unlike in the days of Frederick the Great, contemporary militaries enjoy the all-weather, all-season capability to strike enemy forces as required. Modern airpower, space assets, and long range power projection capabilities afford modern militaries the ability to achieve a global reach unimaginable in wars of the past. Thus, states fighting wars under these conditions are not likely to rely on attrition as a strategy for their main conventional force. However, this does not mean that attrition is obsolete as a strategy. In fact, it is particularly valuable in situations involving small group actions, such as special operations, or as a counter strategy for states facing insurgency and guerilla movements.⁶

Application to an Insurgency

Of particular concern within the realm of revolutionary war are the concepts of guerrilla and insurgent warfare. Generally both methods of waging war against the state pit a numerically and materially superior state against a weaker opposition group. This fairly common distribution of force in such conflicts means the opposition group must resort to a strategy that deemphasizes force on force engagements in lieu of a strategy which seeks to use dispersion, mobility, and surprise to slowly eat away at the state's military superiority. Mao Tse-Tung describes this highly adaptive form of warfare as that which uses mobility, diversion, and surprise. He states, "When guerrillas

⁶ Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy*, 61-68. James Kiras discusses the applicability of attrition strategy to special operations.

engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws.”⁷ The dichotomic relationship between battle and mobility is the fabric that binds an insurgency or guerrilla movement together strategically. It is within this context that adaptive movements flourish and inflexible movements fail. Using the temporal realm as a force enabler, successful movements offset the inherent ability of the state to project force with a strategy of attrition which gradually eats away at the state’s base.

The use of attritional based warfare stands in stark contrast to the type of strategy often used in nation-state wars. Faced with a threat to national survival or in defense of a vital or national interest most a states resort to a strategy which seeks to annihilate or destroy enemy forces and compel the state to capitulate. As described in chapter two, the desire to seek all-out decisive victory by attacking the enemy’s centers of gravity or fielded forces is an example of this method of warfare. However, another, although less common alternative, is the use of an attrition-based approach.

Application to Counterinsurgency

The concepts, expressed by Delbrück for conventional war, apply equally well to the body of theory involving counterinsurgency operations. John Nagl author of *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, refers to the two dominant approaches to COIN as direct and indirect strategies.⁸ Others use the terms enemy-centric or population-centric to describe the approaches to COIN strategy. Regardless of the terms used to describe the methods for countering an insurgency movement, the body of literature and historical record suggest two primary methods; an approach which directly engages insurgent forces and an approach which focuses on the political and culture aspects that give the insurgency life; the population.

In either of these strategies there are three main participants which have a bearing on the outcome. Those are the indigenous government, the population, and the insurgent force. Also, in many conflicts the government

⁷ Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith II, 2nd ed. (Norwalk: The Easton Press,1992), 73.

⁸ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife : Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Paperback ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,2005), 27.

and insurgents are supported by additional international participants when intervention suits their political or security interests. These external actors often must also rely on support from their respective populations. This is particularly true in situations involving liberal democracies that must answer to the population through a political structure (Fig. 2).

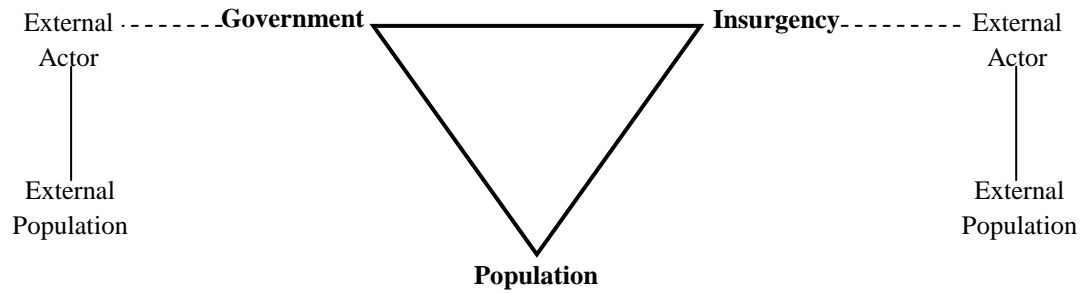


Figure 2. Actors in an Insurgency Movement
 Source: Author's Original Work

Strategy of Annihilation in Counterinsurgency

Using Delbrück's definition of an annihilation strategy, a counterinsurgency force that attempts this method to deal with an insurgency will target the enemy forces. In doing so, COIN forces will seek out and attempt to defeat the insurgents with little regard for auxiliary concerns.⁹ Intentional or inadvertent destruction of civilian infrastructure, killing of the population, and disruption of the system of civilian livelihood often result from this type of strategy (Fig. 3).

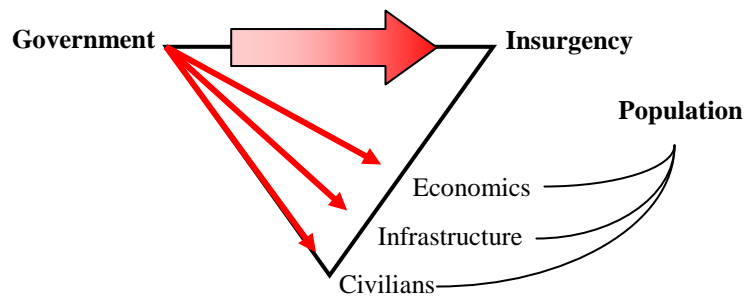


Figure 3. Strategy of Annihilation in Counterinsurgency
 Source: Author's Original Work

⁹ Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, 294, 442.

In this situation, the civilian population, squeezed between the tyranny of the insurgency and the indifferent or tyrannical behavior of their government, tends to support the side which poses the greatest risk to its existence. In many cases, this is the insurgency. The only recourse for a government bent on applying this sort of strategy is to relocate the civilian population forcibly to divide the support link between the population and insurgent forces.

Taken in its absolute sense, this approach may be better described as barbarism. In this case COIN forces seek the surrender or destruction of insurgent forces at all costs. Laying waste to fields, infrastructure, and the environment to starve the insurgency of resources are likely outcomes of an annihilation strategy bordering on barbarism. In other more heinous situations rape, indiscriminate killing of civilians, the use of chemical weapons, or torture may constitute elements of annihilation as well.

Given the military reliance on doctrine and organizational reluctance for change, it is no wonder that many states have used this strategy as a method for ridding themselves of insurgency movements in the past. Faced with an armed threat it is often easy to assume that the counter use of armed action is the appropriate method to deter or destroy the threat. The US Army took this stance in the early years of Vietnam. General Paul Harkins, commander of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam, declared all that was necessary to defeat the Viet Cong was men, money, and material.¹⁰ However, barely ten years later, the United States withdrew from South Vietnam without establishing a stable political regime capable of defending itself against North Vietnamese aggression as it had intended. This does not mean that an annihilation strategy cannot work. In some instances, this method of dealing with the insurgency has proven effective. While, in others, it proved detrimental.

Turkey vs. the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), 1978-1999

The Turkish government eventually defeated the PKK insurgency after nearly a 20 year struggle. However, to do so the government resorted to some fairly drastic means. According to the Netherlands Kurdistan Party,

¹⁰ General Paul Harkins commanded MACV from 1962-1964. During the period he administered a heavy increase in US support for South Vietnam, and pushed a strong strategy of annihilation.

government forces relocated thousands of Kurdish citizens, mined mountain pastures, burned villages, and enforced the use of village guards through “random shootings, severe beatings, arson, and destruction of property.”¹¹ The group also reported that special teams used to enforce evacuations often destroyed food stuffs and chased villagers away with the threat of death.¹² In 1993 alone, the Turkish Human Rights Association reported 874 villages and hamlets had been partially or completely evacuated.

By the end, the government had reduced a force of nearly 90,000 insurgents in the early 1990s to an estimated 3,000 by the end of the decade. The violence between the PKK and the government claimed more than 30,000 lives, destroyed over 3,000 villages, and displaced more than 3,000,000 people.¹³ Eventually, through pressure exerted on neighboring countries and outside assistance, Turkish authorities captured the group’s leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999 effectively ending the resistance movement.

Although in some instances this method has had some success, for the most part it has failed to bring about the desired political conditions for the state. Even in Turkey, annihilation alone did not produce the desired results. Ultimately, reconciliation depended on the government making minor political concessions to the Kurdish population to prevent uprisings in the future.¹⁴

The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan, 1979-1989

The Soviet military began moving into Afghanistan on Christmas Eve 1979. Their initial intent was to prop up an unstable political system after Hafizullah Amin had the previous Prime Minister, Muhammed Taraki, executed. However, what Soviet Premier Brezhnev intended to be a three to four week operation turned into a war which lasted 10 years and left the Soviet Union bankrupt.

Within the first six months of the operation the number of Soviet forces in Afghanistan climbed to 80,800 personnel and this number continued to

¹¹ Netherlands Kurdistan Society, "Forced Evictions and Destruction of Villages in Turkish Kurdistan," *Middle East Report* (1996): 8.

¹² Netherlands Kurdistan Society, "Forced Evictions and Destruction of Villages in Turkish Kurdistan," 9.

¹³ M.M. Gunter, "The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Ocalan's Capture.," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 851.

¹⁴ Nicole F. Watts, "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 4 (1999).

grow.¹⁵ Soon afterwards, Afghans who viewed the new Prime Minister as a puppet of the Soviet government quickly organized an opposition movement and began operations against primarily Soviet forces.¹⁶ Ill-equipped to fight an insurgent style war, the Soviets experienced a long period of trial and error. Afghan insurgents were adept at forcing the Soviet military into regions which downplayed their conventional superiority.

During the first phase of operations, the Soviet Army concentrated on securing installations and lines of communication. However, by March 1980, their priority transitioned to fighting the Afghan opposition. After much consternation, they determined the only way to “achieve decisive results was to liquidate the Mujahedeen’s regional bases.”¹⁷ Unable to secure rural areas, the Soviets set upon a plan to drive the population from the countryside to break the link between the public and the insurgents. “Soviet aircraft bombed and strafed the countryside while helicopter gunships shot up herds of sheep, goats, and camels. Soviet artillery pummeled the countryside, and Soviet forces blanketed rural areas with scatterable mines, particularly on paths, pastures, and farm land. Some seven million Afghans became refugees – traveling to Pakistan, Iran, or the cities of Afghanistan.”¹⁸

Soviet military camps were usually segregated from the population and soldiers were instructed to avoid unofficial contact with Afghans. They were told to consider every Afghani as a potential enemy, including women, children, and even the Afghan military.¹⁹

The separation from the population and unwavering desire to liquidate insurgent camps and potential supply areas clearly makes the Soviet operation a strategy of annihilation. In the end, this strategy failed to achieve the results desired. While it did make logistical challenges more difficult for the Mujahedeen it also pushed the population farther from the central government.

¹⁵ Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War. How a Superpower Fought and Lost* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 12.

¹⁶ Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 18.

¹⁷ Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 20.

¹⁸ Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 29.

¹⁹ Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1988), 20.

Estimates of insurgent strength in 1983 peak at approximately 45,000 personnel, but by 1985 the insurgency had grown to 150,000.²⁰

By the mid-1980s the Soviet military realized a strictly military option could not solve the situation in Afghanistan. It required a political solution. However, time was running out for the military. Soviet Premier Gorbachev was eager to withdrawal troops from Afghanistan and instructed the military to prepare for such an action. The Soviets made attempts to strengthen the Afghan government, but the decision to leave was made. On 15 February 1989, the last Soviet troops left the country of Afghanistan, and the war that had consumed them for nearly 10 years.

Overall, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a failure. Granted the government left in place on their departure was able to maintain control for a few years, but discontent was high, and when the Soviets withdrew financial aid, the government collapsed. It is important to note that the Soviets did not just face a formidable enemy in the Mujahedeen. They also faced high levels of financial, military, and training support from outside countries; most notably the United States. However, the Soviet strategy to defeat the insurgency through military means while totally ignoring the welfare of the population fueled the insurgency. With unlimited time and money it is possible their strategy of annihilation may have worked, but without those criteria satisfied, and facing an insurgency that had both, it made the task insurmountable.

Strategy of Attrition in Counterinsurgency

Bear in mind the reference to attrition in this context relates to Delbrück's definition of attrition, not the more popular contemporary meaning when discussing warfare that equates it to a slow, labored process of annihilation similar to that encountered in World War I. As discussed when referring to conventional battle, it is a strategy of choices.²¹ One that requires COIN forces to use a number of indirect methods to achieve the ultimate goal of rendering the insurgent movement ineffective so that it eventually withers away at the vine. The methods employed range from reconstruction projects, reinforcing military and police organizations, improving public welfare,

²⁰ Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 24.

²¹ Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy*, 66.

extending government infrastructure, and securing the population from the insurgents. The ultimate goal is to sever the link between the insurgency and the population and destroy its supply and recruitment base (Fig. 4).

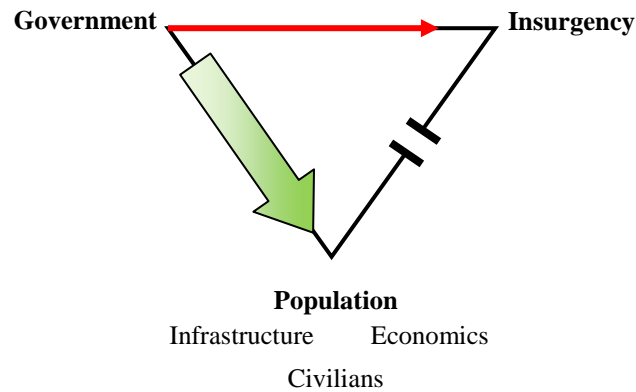


Figure 4. Strategy of Attrition in Counterinsurgency

Source: Author's Original Work

The French in Algeria, 1954-1962

David Galula followed this type of strategy in the Aissa Mimoun region of Algeria as a company commander in 1956. His belief that the support of the population was an integral part to winning the war stemmed from his experiences in China observing the communist revolution in 1945-48, and the Greek struggle against the National Liberation Army in his following assignment. He had also monitored events in Indochina at the time and had close relations with the British Army which was fighting an insurgency in Malaya.²² His understanding of these struggles led him to believe the only way to kill the insurgency in Algeria in the long term was to win the active support of the population.

His basic premise was the population existed in three main categories: 1) those which actively supported the insurgency, 2) the neutral majority, and 3) those which were actively against the insurgent cause. He reasoned that whichever side controlled the neutral majority controlled the war.²³ An insurgency left without the support of the neutral majority could not survive

²² David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 69.

²³ Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, 70.

and continue to wage war against the government. While the French force as a whole did not adopt Galula's theory of counterinsurgency, the steps he took in his own region as a company commander and later as a deputy battalion commander proved quite successful.

The Malayan Emergency, 1949-1960

While the French fought an insurgency in Algeria, the British were also engaged in an insurgent struggle in Malaya. Their initial strategy during the first two years of the struggle followed the concept of annihilation as British military forces sought out and attempted to destroy the guerrillas.²⁴ However, in June 1950, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, Director of Operations, government security forces established a plan which focused on protecting the population and separating them from the insurgents. The four basic components of the plan were:

1. To dominate the populated areas, increase their perception of security, and eventually increase the amount of intelligence received regarding the insurgents.
2. To break up the Communist organization in the populated areas.
3. To isolate the guerillas from their food and supply structure within the population.
4. To destroy the insurgents by pushing them into force on force engagements with government security forces.²⁵

Under the Briggs Plan government forces were given some direction, but still lacked the unity of command necessary to effectively quell the disturbance. This changed, in 1951, after the High Commissioner of Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney, was killed in a guerilla ambush. As a result of the event, the offices of High Commissioner and Director of Operations were combined under the same person, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer. "The unity of effort that Templer contributed to the Briggs Plan permitted the government information effort to

²⁴ Joel E. Hamby, "Civil-Military Operations: Joint Doctrine and the Malayan Emergency," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (2002): 55.

²⁵ A.H. Peterson, G.C. Reinhardt, and E.E. Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency and Unconventional Warfare: The Malayan Emergency*, Memorandum RM-3651-PR (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1963), 7.

succeed in demoralizing the communists, emphasizing democracy, and improving morale.”²⁶

Another Templer innovation was an integrated working relationship between the police and military forces. At the core, it was a police action and security forces played a supporting role. Corresponding to this philosophy, Royal Air Force missions were tightly controlled to limit collateral damage. Aircrews were not allowed to “bomb anything other than a briefed target, irrespective of circumstances, because any other area had not been cleared by the police.”²⁷ The concern over collateral damage stemmed not only from a desire to limit civilian casualties, but also a desire to limit destruction of infrastructure and the economic base. According to Squadron Leader J.C. Hartley, aircrew members were told when entering the country that any bombing of rubber trees or industry was punishable by court martial. As a result, “Every bomb aimer, rightly or wrongly, was afraid of hitting rubber or hitting anything that was civilian.”²⁸

The British strategy focused on the primacy of the population and the political underpinnings of the insurrection. By instituting methods to separate the population from the insurgents, coordinating actions between the police and the military and at times relocating portions of the Chinese population the government eventually isolated the insurgents. As the control of the population developed, British forces were able to drive the communists into remote parts of Malaya and then hunt them down remorselessly.²⁹ Ultimately, the endeavor ended in success for the British and the government of Malaysia.

US Efforts in Iraq, 2003-Present

The 2003 invasion of Iraq began a process that will likely consume the American and Iraqi populations for years to come. The original belief that the operation was nothing more than a quick conventional confrontation followed by the establishment of a US-friendly Iraqi government and the subsequent withdrawal of US forces faded as it became apparent the infrastructure for such

²⁶ Hamby, "Civil-Military Operations in Malaya," 58.

²⁷ Peterson, Reinhardt, and Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 58.

²⁸ Peterson, Reinhardt, and Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 58.

²⁹ Brigadier Gavin Bulloch, "The Application of Military Doctrine in Counterinsurgency Operations: A British Perspective," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 19(1996): 248.

a government was not present. The decision by US Ambassador Bremer to dismantle the Iraqi military and disenfranchise former members of the Baath party left a hole in Iraqi society that was not easily filled. US efforts during the first few years were largely based on the philosophy of transferring governance and withdrawing troops. Military actions within the country focused on hunting down and killing or capturing high value individuals of the previous Saddam Hussein regime and foreign insurgents fighting against the Iraqi government.

By 2006, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had left the country in the face of the increasing violence and diminishing security. In February, the crisis hit a new high when Sunni extremists bombed the sacred Golden Dome Mosque in Samarra. The outrage which sprang from this event led to a downward spiral in Iraq and claimed thousands of lives. It was a civil war between Shias and Sunnis which the US military was ill-prepared to stop. By mid-2006, the insurgents detonated an average of 1000 improvised explosive devices a week, and the next 12 months were the bloodiest of the war for US troops; 1,015 service men and women killed.³⁰

The bloodshed of 2006 led President George W. Bush to establish an Iraq Study Group under the co-chairmanship of former Secretary of State, James A. Baker, and Lee Hamilton. In the report submitted to the President in December, 2006, the committee recommended a new diplomatic offensive to build international consensus on a stable Iraq. This included negotiations with Iran and Syria, and efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The board believed the policies and actions of neighboring countries greatly affected Iraq's stability. A failure to address these concerns weakened the likelihood of resolution. Internally, the board suggested the US begin handing more responsibility over to the Iraqis making clear that Iraq's future was the responsibility of Iraqis. This included increasing the number and quality of Iraqi Army brigades, and the number of US military personnel embedded with Iraqi Army units. The primary mission of the US military should become that of support not combat action. Finally, the US needed to encourage Iraqi progress on key issues and

³⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble : General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press,2009), 33, 36.

make sure that Iraqi government officials were aware the US could not make an open-ended commitment of a large number of troops in Iraq.³¹

In response to the Iraq Study Group's Report and an internal review of strategic objectives, the Bush administration decided in 2007 to support a surge of more than 20,000 combat troops to enhance security and give the Iraqi government the freedom to proceed forward with national reconciliation. President Bush's new strategy relied on inputs from a National Security Council review and the *Iraq Study Group Report*, and comprised six fundamental elements: 1) let the Iraqis lead, 2) help Iraqis protect the population, 3) isolate extremists, 4) create space for the political process, 5) diversify political and economic efforts, and 6) situate the strategy in a regional approach.³²

General David Petraeus implemented the new approach by pulling forces out of the highly fortified forward operating bases, and establishing them among the population. Over time the security situation improved dramatically. While this is not a definite indication the United States, and the government of Iraq, have prevailed against the insurgency, indications are encouraging. From 2007 to 2009, coalition casualties declined by 73% and average daily enemy initiated attacks decreased by approximately 85% during the same period.³³ Signs the population-centric strategy incorporated by General Petraeus is proceeding toward success.

Choosing a Strategy

When faced with an insurgency movement the strategy picked by the government will likely decide the conflict for good or bad. An approach incorrectly matched to the insurgency encountered will waste resources and likely extend the situation longer than necessary. The strategies of annihilation had little effect during the early years of the Malaya Emergency and in Iraq. However, a transformation of strategy improved the situation for the counterinsurgent.

³¹ James A. Baker, Lee H. Hamilton, and et. al., "The Iraq Study Group Report," (Washington D.C.2006), 33-42.

³² The White House, "The New Way Forward in Iraq," May 1,2008, <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

³³ Iraq Coalition Casualty Count Database, <http://icasualties.org>. and Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers, "Iraq and Afghanistan: Security, Economic, and Governance Challenges to Rebuilding Efforts Should Be Addressed in U.S. Strategies," in *GAO-09-476T* (Washington D.C.: The United States Government Accountability Office, 2009), 6.

A study conducted by Ivan Arreguin-Toft determined that governments are more likely to lose opposite-approach strategic interactions, and these types of conflicts take longer to resolve.³⁴ In examining 197 cases ranging from 1809-1996, the study showed strong actors won 76% of the time when fighting a weaker opponent with a matching strategic approach and the weak actor won 63% of the time when strategies were not matched.³⁵ However, this is not a condemnation of the annihilation strategy because, at times, the weak actor used a conventional force strategy. In these cases, the force with a superior resource base is in a much better position to defeat the weaker.

If Arreguin-Toft's study is any indication, in a counterinsurgency, a state that resorts to a strategy of annihilation is only likely to win the conflict if the insurgent force adopts a similar strategy or if the government pushes its strategy of annihilation to the point of barbarism (Table 1). While this type of behavior may have worked in certain situations, such as the Turkish suppression of the Kurdish insurgency, it is improbable that a contemporary liberal democracy will accept this sort of behavior. As outlined in the British Counterinsurgency Manual, "Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds and his campaign against the Marsh Arabs in Southern Iraq are contemporary examples of the use of [barbarism]." However, it also points out that these "solutions" are not acceptable to modern liberal democracies and that the approach has only a limited role to play in modern COIN operations.³⁶

Strategies of annihilation which do not resort to barbarism often fail to achieve government objectives. This is partially because the strategy tends to alienate and harm innocent civilians and the ratio of collateral damage favors the insurgent over the population.³⁷ Also, if the government faces an insurgency utilizing an indirect strategy, any attempt to eradicate the threat

³⁴ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 112.

³⁵ Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," 111.

³⁶ Ministry of Defence, Army Code No. 71596, *Army Field Manual. Volume V, Operations Other than War. Section B. Counter Insurgency Operations. Part 2. The Conduct of Counter Insurgency Operations.*, 1995. in Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, 26.

³⁷ Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, 32.

using an enemy-centric approach cannot succeed against an enemy that is able to control its loss rate by avoiding direct confrontation.³⁸

Table 1: Comparison of Counterinsurgent and Insurgent Strategies

Counterinsurgent Strategy	Insurgent Strategy	
	Direct Approach	Indirect Approach
Barbarism	Barbarism may work against an insurgent using either strategy. It succeeds based on sheer ferocity. The population, fearful of its own existence, views the government as the most extreme belligerent and cedes to its wishes. Thus, the insurgency is left without a support or recruitment base.	
Annihilation	This situation presents a force on force scenario which the more powerful actor (most probably the state) is likely to win.	The government seeks out the insurgent forces in attempt to destroy the organization, and in the process alienates the population by destroying infrastructure and destabilizing the security situation.
Attrition	It is unlikely a materially superior state actor will adopt a strategy that attempts to pacify an armed conventional insurgent force through indirect methods.	By countering the insurgent approach with a strategy that considers the needs of the population the government takes the recruitment and supply base from the insurgency.

Source: Author's Own Work supplemented by Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," International Security 26, no. 1 (2001)

If dissimilar strategies fail more often for government forces, then the government must make adjustments to correlate strategies. The reason for this is simple. Stated succinctly by David Galula, "Since the insurgent alone can initiate the conflict, strategic initiative is his by definition."³⁹ If the insurgent decides to employ a method of guerilla warfare and terrorism, it is unlikely the government will be able to force it into adopting a strategy of conventional warfare. Hence, if the government wants to increase its chances of winning the conflict, it must attempt to match the insurgent strategy as it stands.

³⁸ Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, 146.

³⁹ David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare : Theory and Practice*, PSI Classics of the Counterinsurgency Era (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International,2006), 3.

Most insurgencies, since the time of Mao, have chosen to adopt one variant or another of the attritional, indirect approach purported by Mao. By using this strategy, it allows the insurgency to offset its inherent resource weakness against the government and to build a level of resistance which in time will eclipse the power of the government; if everything works according to plan.

Governments seeking to match this insurgent strategy must also choose an attrition strategy. The most common form of this approach is referred to as a population-centric strategy. The goals of this approach are to win over the population, convert moderate insurgents, and alienate hard-core insurgents. The crux of the theory rests on a major assumption. That is, as the process develops, the population will accept the government, stop supporting the insurgency, and provide intelligence which allows security forces to find and kill any remaining insurgent groups. Hence, winning the population is the key to the operation.

Conclusion

Military theorists have struggled for years to classify warfare. With such a complicated and diverse subject, this is not an easy task. However, scholars, such as Hans Delbrück have succeeded in taking such a complex topic area and condensing it into a broad categorization that generally fits. Taken in this context, it is possible to classify modern wars as generally following either a strategy of annihilation or attrition to achieve the political ends.

Although Delbrück intended this categorization for conventional state-on-state conflicts, it works equally well as a method for cataloging unconventional conflicts. Other authors and scholars use different terms to describe the same division in asymmetric struggles. Direct or indirect and enemy-centric or population-centric all refer to the use of military power as the primary means to achieve the objective versus a non-linear use of power across a spectrum of options which seek to weaken enemy resistance until the opposition either fades away or is defeated.

The importance of Delbrück's contribution is that it highlights the reason why states often resort to strategies of annihilation to quell insurgencies. Given a military structure and doctrinal base which is accustomed to annihilation

strategies, the transformation to an attrition strategy is a difficult process. In the end, the primary consideration for the military must be to consider the option which has the best possibility of achieving success. Ultimately, this means accepting a strategy that is similar to the opponent strategy. Therefore, if the insurgent movement accepts an indirect strategy of attrition then the government should do the same.

In a strategy of attrition the government must consider factors which often have a lower priority in a strategy of annihilation. Taken broadly, the chief concern in this approach is the population. A counterinsurgency fight is a zero-sum game of chess, and the non-combatants are the pieces on the chessboard. If the government is able to win the support of the population, then the insurgency is dealt a corresponding loss. As the process continues the insurgency is left without sanctuary, supply, or a recruitment base and the government is awarded with a population that provides information on insurgent locations. However, this is not as easy as it may sound.

The decision to select a strategy of attrition in a counterinsurgency is supported by the legal, moral, and technological constraints highlighted in earlier chapters. In a modern military conflict that does not threaten the survival of the state the international community will not support a wanton disregard for international norms. Therefore, if a state desires to maintain its position in the international hierarchy of nations, it must abide by the established laws of war. Hence, based on legal, moral, technological, and strategic considerations the only viable approach in Afghanistan is a strategy which protects the populations and attempts to win their support against the insurgency.

To garner the support of the population, the government must show that it can offer a safer, more prosperous alternative to the insurgency. Effectiveness in this endeavor is measured by the population's perception of their situation, not the governments. Therefore, actions which diminish this perception run counter to the desired strategic direction. It is the responsibility of the government to identify and rectify counterproductive actions before they become a hindrance to the COIN operation.

Chapter 4

Measuring Internal Public Perception

Pre-occupied with protection of our own forces, we have operated in a manner that distances us – physically and psychologically – from the people we seek to protect. In addition, we run the risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage.

General Stanley McChrystal
Commander, ISAF

In August 2009, General McChrystal published his commander's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. The strategic review came barely two months after McChrystal took command of US and ISAF forces in the region. In it, he detailed the need for a new comprehensive approach to the situation in Afghanistan. The new approach harkened back to the basics of counterinsurgency warfare; namely to protect the population. However to make the new strategy succeed, contributing nations needed to ramp up support for the historically under-resourced war in Afghanistan, troops needed to change their operational mindset, and states needed to realize that tactics which focused on the protection of friendly forces over the civilian population was counter-productive.¹

A prime focus of General McChrystal's assessment was the need to understand that success is derived from the perception of the Afghan population. If the public does not believe the government can protect them, or provide for their needs, then they are more likely to support insurgent movements. "Perceptions are generally derived from actions and real conditions...the key to changing perceptions is to change the fundamental underlying truths."² The actions he spoke about dealt primarily with how the coalition approached the population. Spreading security and prosperity were at the top of the list, but a major item on the agenda was the effort to transform public opinion regarding coalition forces. To do this it was necessary to change

¹ McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 1: 1-4.

² McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 2:3.

the institutional mindset that placed self-preservation so high above protection of the population.

Understanding the Situation

To understand the point of view of the citizenry it is first necessary to understand the intricacies of the situation. The conflict in Afghanistan is a complicated state of affairs. It has a very poor road system, a tribal system made up of several different ethnicities, in places it has very rugged terrain, and most importantly its population has suffered through a tumultuous period of warfare over the last 20 years. In a country built around tribal leadership, these conditions make it exceptionally difficult to convince the public to support a centrally led government.

The Environment and Culture

Pro-government forces in Afghanistan are challenged everyday with the complexities involved in provincial reconstruction, protecting the population, and hunting down insurgents. As Carl Von Clausewitz declared, "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult."³ Nothing rings truer for the forces attempting to bring stability to the war-torn country.

Comprising 652,230 square kilometers, Afghanistan is only slightly smaller than the state of Texas and has a population of approximately 28,395,716 people.⁴ The population and rugged terrain of Afghanistan is patrolled by only 84,150 ISAF personnel, some exclusive US forces, and the Afghan National Army with approximately 100,000 personnel as of December 2009.⁵ With a resurgence of Taliban activity in recent years it is proving exceedingly difficult to protect the population in Afghanistan.

The environmental problems are exacerbated by the divergent population. The people of Afghanistan are overwhelmingly Muslim, and 80% of the Muslims are of the Sunni sect. However, much of the political turmoil in the country centers along ethnic lines rather than religious (Fig. 5). Ethnically, the Pashtun make up the largest majority of Afghans at 42%, but are followed

³ Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret, *On War*, 119.

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Afghanistan," Central Intelligence Agency, 26 January, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>. By comparison the population of Texas is roughly 24,326,974 according to the US Census Bureau

⁵ ISAF, "International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Facts and Figures," (2009).

by the Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Baloch ethnicities.⁶ The bulk of the Taliban fighters consist of Pashtun tribesmen, while many of the other ethnicities comprise their traditional rival groups. The political tensions produced by these ethnic differences are pivotal in the success of the Afghan government and in the ability of ISAF forces to convince the population that a central representative government is preferable to the Taliban.

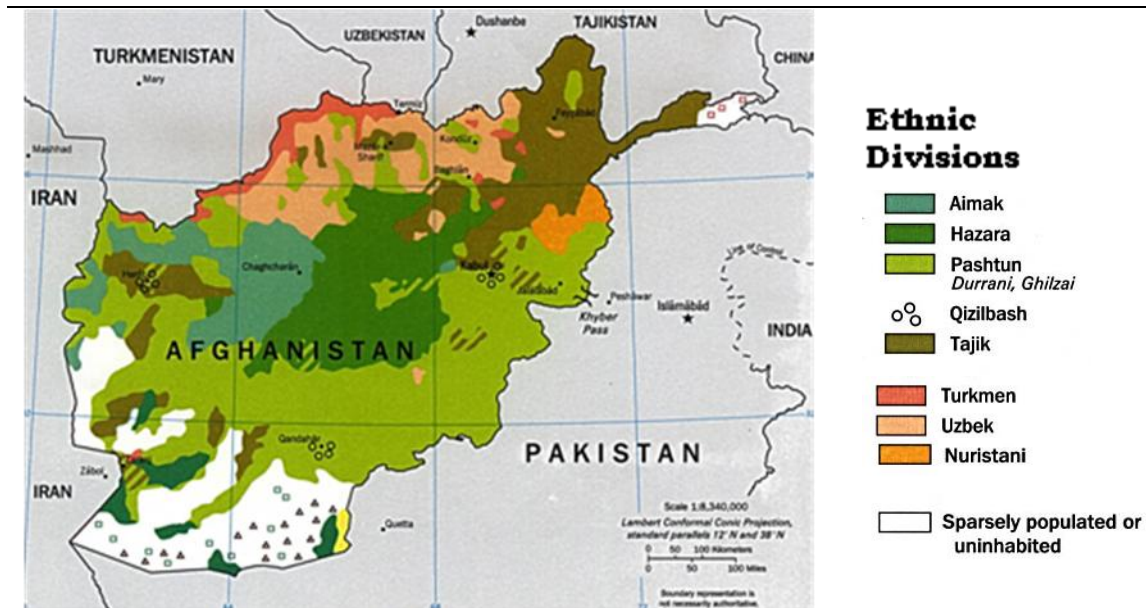


Figure 5. Ethnic Divisions Within Afghanistan

Source: *The University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Afghanistan: Ethnolinguistic Groups (1997).*

The Enemy

By 2004, Afghanistan had experienced three uncertain years following the fall of the Taliban government in 2001. The United States and an international coalition under the direction of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) established a foothold in the country and by 2003 insurgent groups reverted to operating as a disorganized guerrilla resistance in the southern provinces; incapable of operations larger than platoon level. However, resistance did not cease during the period. Enemy forces continued to conduct a limited terrorist campaign using improvised explosive devices and

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA World Factbook."

suicide attacks in and around Kabul and Kandahar.⁷ The presence of a weak Afghan government during this period and the inability of the coalition to expand throughout the country meant most provincial governors were anti-Taliban leaders with home-grown armies allied under them.⁸

Unfortunately, beliefs that Taliban elements were no longer a threat to the government of Afghanistan proved unwarranted. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's assertion in 2003 that, "We have clearly moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction activities. The bulk of the country today is permissive, it's secure," was overly optimistic.⁹ Hindsight shows the situation was only on a slow simmer while the insurgency regrouped for a major offensive.

Contrary to popular belief, coalition forces face three separate insurgencies, of which the Taliban is the most powerful.¹⁰ However, the Haqqani Network and the Hezb-i-Islami are also significant threats to the government of Afghanistan. Operating out of Pakistan, each of the groups enjoy significant support from elements within the Pakistani government, and from this are able to project their influence primarily throughout the southern and north western areas of Afghanistan. While not an integrated organization in opposition to the Afghan government, the insurgent movements do "coordinate activities loosely, often achieving significant unity of purpose and even some unity of effort, but they do not share a formal command-and-control structure."¹¹

In 2005, these insurgent groups resurrected the movement they had abandoned after the US invasion, and the increased sophistication of insurgent operations along the border areas led some to believe the Taliban was planning major offensives in the future.¹² By mid-2006 these premonitions proved

⁷ Sean M. Maloney, "Conceptualizing the War in Afghanistan: Perceptions from the Front, 2001-2006," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 1 (2007): 31,33. NATO took control of ISAF in August 2003. Prior to that, ISAF was under the command of individual nations determined at the Bonn conference in 2001.

⁸ Maloney, "Conceptualizing the War in Afghanistan," 32.

⁹ Quote in Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos : The US and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking,2008), 200.

¹⁰ McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 2:6.

¹¹ McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 2:6.

¹² Maloney, "Conceptualizing the War in Afghanistan," 36.

correct as the incident level, which had remained relatively stable, doubled.¹³ The southern and eastern areas of Afghanistan, where the Taliban and other insurgent groups are the strongest, bore the brunt of the violence. The attacks increased dramatically over the next three years, and provided the impetus for the new ISAF strategy (Fig. 6).

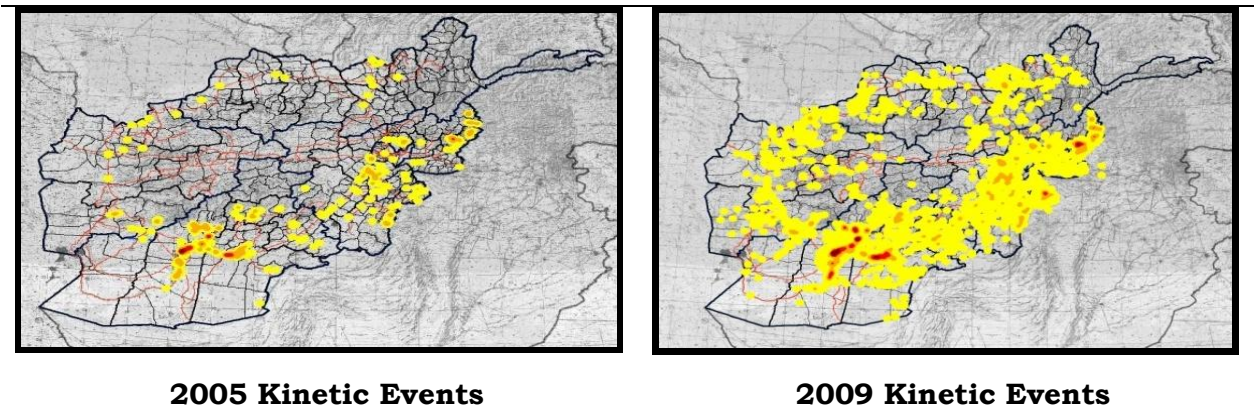


Figure 6. Insurgent Activity Growth

Source: Afghanistan JOIIS NATO SIGACTS Data 15 Dec 2009.

The Response

Insurgent efforts to challenge governmental authority in the Kandahar and Oruzgan provinces in 2006 spurred coalition action. The Taliban had orchestrated a system of built up fortified areas, which were supplied with weapons and personnel, to threaten the approaches to Kandahar. When confronted, insurgent forces often dispersed. However, operations became increasingly more conventional in nature, and the coalition responded in kind using mechanized infantry, artillery, and airpower.¹⁴

As conflict intensified, the United States military and ISAF answered enemy aggression with increasing amounts of firepower. In a security environment starved of manpower, the air forces' ability to provide increased flexibility and cover large combat areas meant the demand for its use rose dramatically over the next 3 years. Essentially, it became the asymmetric equalizer when ground troops confronted insurgent fighters. In 2004, a mere 86 munitions were dropped in Afghanistan for the entire year. However, at its

¹³ Major General Michael Flynn, "State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions, and Objectives (U)," (Kabul: ISAF Directorate of Intelligence, 2009), 8. Unclassified

¹⁴ Maloney, "Conceptualizing the War in Afghanistan," 38.

peak in 2007, this number reached a total of 3,572 munitions for the year. Also, close air support sorties flown during the period tripled.¹⁵

In November 2008, the deputy commander for NATO forces in Afghanistan, Brig. General Michael Tucker, declared that when forces are spread thin, “sometimes the cavalry has wings.” He went on to say that if more troops were introduced in Afghanistan, the reliance on airpower would diminish.¹⁶ However, US Air Force analysis suggests this is not the case. As ground forces increased in theater, a corresponding increase in air strikes also occurred. This implies that an institutional reliance on firepower drives the request for airpower strikes rather than a lack of personnel.¹⁷

The increased reliance on conventional methods of warfare to battle an insurgency using a mixture of conventional and unconventional methods suggests organizational rigidity played a role in the strategic culture of ISAF and US military forces. This is not to say that conventional methods should never be used against an insurgency. As detailed in the previous chapter, if an insurgency uses a direct conventional defense, often times the proper counteraction is to respond conventionally. However, when facing an insurgency movement that relies primarily on an attrition strategy, the use of kinetic force may be counterproductive to the overall operation. This is especially true when kinetic actions result in civilian casualties which are communicated throughout the media, and used as propaganda by the insurgents.

With the increase in close air support sorties and enemy activity, the number of civilian casualty events also increased. According to the Human Rights Watch sources, civilian casualties attributable to airstrikes increased from 20 in 2005 to 321 in 2007; a marked increase which is in line with the increased level of violence. However, the number of civilians dying from collateral damage incidents is minuscule when compared with the 2,580 killed

¹⁵ Air Force Central Command, "2004-2008 Combined Forces Air Component Commander Airpower Statistics," (Shaw AFB 2008).

¹⁶ Jim Michaels, "Airstrikes in Afghanistan Increase 31%," *USA Today*, November 5 2008.

¹⁷ Frederick Schmokel et al., "Kinetic Airpower and Civilian Casualties, (U)

during the same period through terrorism in Afghanistan.¹⁸ A report by the USAF A9 division points out that sorties resulting in civilian casualties account for only 1% of the total instances in which aerial munitions are employed.¹⁹ Given this, it seems the international uproar over these incidents is disproportionate to the number of deaths and the frequency of events. However, if the objective of a population-centric COIN strategy is to win the support of the population, then metrics matter less than perception.

The vast majority of the collateral damage incidents which occurred in Afghanistan from 2008-2009 were attributed to ground based actions such as direct and indirect fire, rules of engagement actions, and escalation of force incidents (96%). However, the 3% of the incidents attributed to airstrikes accounted for 22% of total casualties (Fig. 7).²⁰ Part of the reason for this is that when airstrikes do kill civilians the numbers that die per event are generally higher than other sources. This prompts political figures, NGOs, the international community, and media outlets to take notice.



Figure 7. Comparison of Civilian Casualty Events and Sources
Source: ISAF Combined Joint Operations Center, Civilian Casualty Cell Database

The Azizabad incident, in 2008, prompted calls for action from President Karzai, the Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations to apply stricter controls on airpower employment. A similar uproar occurred in 2009, when

¹⁸ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, <http://wits.nctc.gov/Incidents.do>

¹⁹ Schmokel et al., "Kinetic Airpower and Civilian Casualties (U)."

²⁰ ISAF Combined Joint Operations Center, Civilian Casualty Cell Database (U)

German forces directed the targeting of two fuel trucks hijacked by the Taliban. Unfortunately, since the initial identification of the trucks, Taliban members had invited locals to come out and take fuel from the tankers. When the airstrike was finally executed, numerous civilians were in close vicinity of the vehicles and died in the resulting explosions.²¹ Incidents such as these play out in front of an international audience which includes the Afghan people and the domestic populations of troop contributing nations. The question for coalition and Afghan forces attempting to win the support of the people is what type of impact these incidents have on public opinion.

Complicating the issues is a complex array of civilian and governmental organizations each with differing objectives and analytical processes. In 2008 alone, the range of civilians killed by ISAF or OEF forces varied greatly depending on who compiled the numbers (Table 2). Agencies with a desire to see more restrictive measures taken with regards to airpower employment may be more apt to accept higher civilian casualty numbers, while military forces seeking to downplay issues of proportionality and bad press, arguably have a vested interest in favoring lower casualty numbers. These institutional biases cloud the reliability of information, and means civilian casualty numbers are only reliable as a basis for trend information.

Table 2. 2008 Civilian Deaths Attributed to ISAF/OEF Forces

Human Rights Watch	173 **
United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan	700
Marc W. Herold, Ph.D., University of New Hampshire	624 *
Associated Press	169
International Security assistance Force	226 **

* Mean figures derived from ranges.

** Partial year data.

Source: Frederick Schmokel et al., "Kinetic Airpower and Civilian Casualties (U)

²¹ Ulrike Demmer et al., "New Allegations against German Officer Who Ordered Kunduz Air Strike," *Spiegel Online*, September 21 2009.

Perceptions of the Internal Population

The Asia Foundation sponsored the first survey used in this study in March 2004. The primary purpose of the survey was to gauge public opinion regarding upcoming elections. However, within the survey, it asked a number of questions that are relevant to US efforts in Afghanistan. Hence, the 2004 survey provides a sufficient baseline for further study of perception trends.

The public opinion in 2004 was very optimistic compared to just five years later. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported they believed the country was headed in the right direction, and the vast majority was pleased with the transitional Afghan government and the performance of President Hamid Karzai. Of those supportive of the direction of efforts, most cited peace, the end of war, disarmament, and security as the main reason for this opinion. However, the largest remaining concerns among the population were security and economic prosperity. While those interviewed in the south and northwest of the country were less supportive of the government, they, like others in Afghanistan, overwhelmingly viewed the Taliban unfavorably. By contrast, the population held positive views of the United Nations, foreign aid workers, the United States, and American military forces (Fig. 8).²²

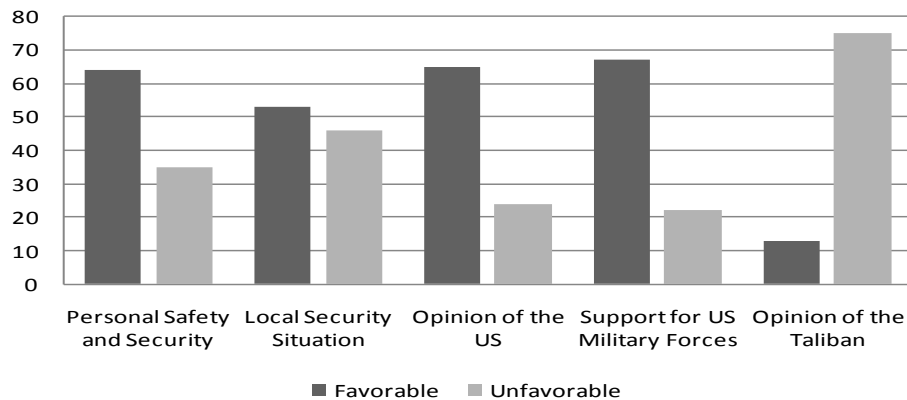


Figure 8. Baseline Opinions – Afghanistan 2004

Source: Craig Charney, Radhika Nanda, and Nicole Yakaton, "Voter Education Planning Survey: Afghanistan 2004 National Elections" (Washington D.C.: The Asia Foundation, 2004).

²² Craig Charney, Radhika Nanda, and Nicole Yakaton, "Voter Education Planning Survey: Afghanistan 2004 National Elections," (Washington D.C.: The Asia Foundation, 2004), 6.

Since 2004, the opinion of the United States has steadily declined and more of the population has begun to question the need for foreign forces in Afghanistan. Understanding the reasons for this transition is a complex endeavor. However, the opportunity exists to compare public perception derived from public opinion polls and various data available concerning the conflict. By doing so, it is possible to correlate a relationship between the two variables and determine to what degree an explanatory variable, such as civilian casualties, incidents of collateral damage, or an increase in violence explain the unfavorable trend in public opinion with respect to the United States and ISAF forces.

Methodology

This study consists of 10 surveys sponsored either by The Asia Foundation or the American Broadcasting Company “Where Things Stand” series. In each survey, the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research conducted in-person interviews with a varying number of randomly selected citizens throughout Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. In each case the sample group consisted of 50% men and 50% women respondents (See Appendix: Methodology for more details).

Using this survey data, this study compared the degree of favorability over a range of 11 questions concerning the security situation, opinions of the United States and ISAF, and the amount of support for US and ISAF forces to a variety of possible explanatory variables for the period ranging from 2004 to 2009. These included the number of civilian casualties from airstrikes, the number of incidents of collateral damage attributable to airstrikes, and the number of aerial munitions employed. To account for fluctuations in perception based on insurgent activity, the survey questions were also compared to the number of terrorist acts and victims during the same period.

The study utilized a linear regression model to test the strength of relationship between the variables. Results of 0.25 or better are considered statistically significant; meaning the correlation is considered statistically strong. To condense the survey data for each question per year, it was necessary to formulate a method to ascertain the overall degree of opposition. To accomplish this, a *slope of discontent* was calculated from the available

question responses which are generally categorized in areas such as very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. The resulting slope was then used as the dependent variable for the linear regression.

Securing the Population

Effects on Personal Safety and Local Security

Based on the material presented in the last chapter, and on the overview of ISAF's new strategy in Afghanistan, the population's perception of their level of security is of prime importance to the current COIN operation. Over the timeframe of the study, the overall perception of personal safety and security declined by 25%. In the 2004 survey, 64% of the respondents had a favorable opinion of the level of security for themselves and their family. By 2007, this feeling had decreased to 50% and it remained there ($\pm 2\%$) throughout 2009.

Every explanatory variable showed significant correlation to this question. While examining this relationship it is easy to understand, from the point of view of the public, how violence perpetrated by the insurgents or the coalition can lead to feelings of insecurity and a lack of safety. The most important point to gain from this information is that acts of violence, regardless of the intentional or unintentional nature have an effect on public perceptions of safety.

A similar relationship exists when considering the local security from crime and violence. In 2005, 73% of the population rated local security at a favorable level. By the end of 2008, the percentage dropped to 55% and remained relatively stable through 2009.

Once again, all explanatory variables showed a strong correlation to this decline in public opinion. Aerial munitions released and terrorism incidents and victims had the strongest correlations; all were in the eightieth or ninetieth percentile. During this study interval, the number of aerial munitions dropped increased from 86 in 2004 to 3,572 in 2007 and remained relatively stable throughout the study period. Likewise, terrorist events and victims also increased significantly during the period; roughly 800% increase in incidents and victims from 2004 to 2009.²³

²³ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Worldwide Incidents Tracking System,

Table 3. Correlation Results Relating To Questions of Security

	Strength of Relationship					
	Independent Variable 1	Independent Variable 2	Independent Variable 3	Independent Variable 4	Independent Variable 5	Independent Variable 5
	Incidents of Air-induced Coll. Damage	Civilians Killed by Airstrikes	Civilian Casualties due to Airstrikes	Airborne Munitions Released	Terrorism Victims	Terror Incidents
Question 1: How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days?	0.813	0.360	0.584	0.583	0.570	0.573
Question 2: How do you rate local security from crime and violence?	0.556	0.416	0.375	0.833	0.980	0.945
Question 3: How confident are you that US, NATO, & ISAF are capable of providing security and stability in your area?	0.420	0.417	0.336	0.897	0.963	0.919
Question 4: Which of the following do you think poses the biggest danger in our country: TALIBAN	0.320	0.089	0.070	0.407	0.690	0.713
Question 5: Which of the following do you think poses the biggest danger in our country: UNITED STATES	0.142	0.404	0.501	0.188	0.124	0.149
Surveys	Note: Statistical significance for strength of relationship is 0.250 or better.					
A. Asia Foundation Survey - October 2006 B. Asia Foundation Survey - September 2007 C. Asia Foundation Survey - October 2008 D. Asia Foundation Survey - October 2009 1. ABC News Poll - October 2005 2. ABC/BBC World Service Poll - October 2006 3. ABC/BBC/ARD Poll - November 2007 4. ABC/BBC/ARD Poll - January 2009 5. ABC/BBC/ARD Poll - December 2009						

Source: Author's Own Work

The strong correlation of these dramatic increases in violence supports an assertion that warfare, regardless of its origination, spurs public discontent. In other words, the public does not care whether coalition forces are attempting to rid them of the Taliban or protect them from insurgent abuse if it means an escalation in violence is the result. The mere increase in fighting causes the public to perceive a lower level of security. This may seem rather elementary, but strategies of annihilation often center on the idea that getting rid of the insurgent is the most pressing problem, and once this occurs the public support will rebound. Using this rationale, a steep increase in kinetic operations, similar to the increase in aerial munitions released, will likely have a comparable relationship to the decrease in public opinion.

This is not to say the variables concerning collateral damage were not profound. Of the three variables considered, each resulted in a very significant correlation. Comparing the correlation to that derived from terrorist activities, it seems the main cause of the decrease in public opinion is the insurgent actions against the population. However, bear in mind, this study only considered the relationship between aerial acts of collateral damage and not the

overall impact of coalition collateral damage on the population.²⁴ Thus, any attempt to claim insurgent activities have a greater impact on public opinion is inadvisable. Also, if the goal of the insurgency is to discredit the coalition's ability to protect the population, then a strong correlation seems to support their ability to achieve that objective.

Confidence in the Coalition to Provide Security

A key aspect of many insurgent strategies is to discredit the government's ability to protect the population by waging an aggressive campaign of terrorism. This type of strategy may seem somewhat counterintuitive, because it seems that while the terrorism may discredit the government it should also lead the population to resent the insurgency. However, an important aspect one must realize is that often the insurgents goal is *not* to win the support of the population, but merely the acquiescence. If the population refuses to side with the government which it believes cannot protect it from the insurgency, then the insurgency has won a major advantage regardless of whether or not the population supports it. After all, the objective of the insurgency is to dismantle the government and take over its role.

In considering this variable, the study examined responses to the question, "How confident are you that the United States, NATO, and ISAF are capable of providing security and stability in your area?" Like previous examples, the confidence in coalition forces to provide security dropped nearly 20 points over the course of the study; in 2008 the majority (56%) actually lacked confidence in the coalition.

The explanatory variables were all statistically significant in explaining the decline in confidence. As with the previous question, the most significant results were from the number of munitions dropped and terrorist activities. However, once again, instances of aerial bombardment resulting in civilian casualties remained strongly significant. Based on this information, if the insurgency has an active goal to discredit the coalition's ability to provide

²⁴ There is not enough data available on ground-based acts of collateral damage to compare that data as an explanatory variable. ISAF began measuring this area of interest only in 2008.

security, then its reign of terror seems to be succeeding.²⁵ Unfortunately, the significant correlation between collateral damage incidents and confidence implies that ISAF and US efforts are contributing to the decline as well.

The Greatest Danger

One of the questions asked since 2005 relates to what entity the public believes poses the greatest danger to the country of Afghanistan. While the ratings for the Taliban and the United States vary only slightly, it is the relationship between the two that is the most useful (Fig. 9). As illustrated below an increase in discontent with the United States is met with a corresponding decrease in discontent for the Taliban. It is also important to note that 2005-2007 represent years when the number of collateral damage incidents consistently increased along with a marked increase in the number of munitions released. In the next two years, 2008-2009, the number of collateral damage incidents, deaths, and total casualties declined. Granted in 2008 and 2009 the total number of civilian casualties and munitions dropped still exceeded the amounts in 2005 and 2006, but the decline itself may have had an effect on the change.

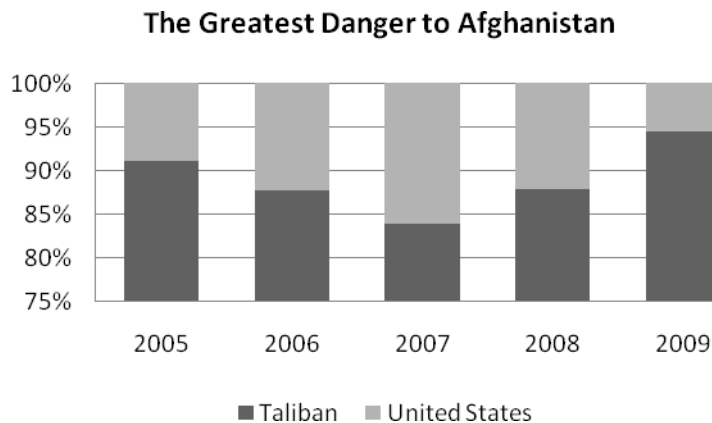


Figure 9. Greatest Danger Relationship: Taliban and the United States

Source: Polling data listed in Appendix A

²⁵ Flynn, "State of the Insurgency: Trends, Intentions, and Objectives (U)." Briefing asserts the Taliban's overarching goals are to expel foreign fighters from Afghanistan, undermine GIROA authority and perception of security, and establish a Sunni state.

It is important to note the overwhelming majority of respondents believed the Taliban was the greatest threat to the nation throughout the survey. The diagram above only depicts the relationship between the two variables not the rating of the respondents. It is also important to point out that other groups make the list as well, and some rate a higher degree of danger than the United States. However, the relationship between anti-governmental forces and pro-governmental forces are in line with the Taliban/US relationship.²⁶

The Taliban rated consistently between 41-69% with discontent growing over time. This increase is statistically significant when compared to the number of terrorism activities and victims. It is also significant in relation to the number of munitions dropped indicating that respondents, to some degree, blamed the Taliban for increase in airstrikes.

The United States rating remained consistently low during the period, between 4-10%, but discontent rose to its highest in 2007 and declined again after. Statistically, the increase and then decline in collateral damage victims during the five year period correlates highly with discontent for the United States; other variables share no significant correlation.

Support for Foreign Forces Assisting the Government

A key principle of counterinsurgency operations is for the government to gain the support of the population. Arguably, this is also true for a foreign state which provides troops, resources, and training to the government. In the relationship between Afghanistan and the coalition, if the population does not support the coalition, then efforts to develop and train an internal security force will become hampered. It may also affect efforts to spread reconstruction and legitimacy. Hence, the degree of public support over time can provide a valuable metric for determining the success of coalition efforts. This is especially true if it correlates strongly with various coalition actions (Table 4).

²⁶ Anti-government forces comprise the Taliban, local warlords, and drug traffickers. Pro-government forces are comprised of the United States and the Afghan government, which consistently rates very low.

Table 4. Correlation Results Relating To Questions of Support

	Strength of Relationship					
	Independent Variable 1	Independent Variable 2	Independent Variable 3	Independent Variable 4	Independent Variable 5	Independent Variable 5
	Incidents of Air-induced Coll. Damage	Civilians Killed by Airstrikes	Civilian Casualties due to Airstrikes	Airborne Munitions Released	Terrorism Victims	Terror Incidents
Question 6: Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the presence of <i>United States military forces</i> in Afghanistan today?	0.349	0.434	0.367	0.879	0.908	0.834
Question 7: Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the presence of <i>NATO/ISAF military forces</i> in Afghanistan today?	0.343	0.285	0.209	0.805	0.993	0.940
Question 8: What would you say is the level of support among the people in this area for US/NATO/ISAF Forces?	0.413	0.317	0.232	0.835	0.998	0.971
Surveys - Reference Table 4-1.		Note: Statistical significance for strength of relationship is 0.250 or better.				

Source: Author's Own Work

In this analysis, each question was asked only from 2005 onward. Yet, during that time, the support for US troops declined 10 points and the support for NATO and ISAF military forces declined by 17 points. All questions were highly correlated with the independent variables. However, NATO and ISAF forces did not have a significant relationship when compared to the total number of casualties from allied airstrikes. The inconsistency between independent variables two and three when compared to questions seven and eight is interesting; in all other instances the two variables share significance or insignificance. Considering the majority of aircraft involved in the operation are from the United States, one possible explanation for the disparity is the public primarily blames the United States for instances of airborne collateral damage.

Once again the number of munitions dropped and terrorist activities correlated highly with the level of support given to foreign forces. Since overall support declined during the period, it is reasonable to determine that an increase in terrorist activity and in coalition kinetic operations against the Taliban make the public believe the coalition is unable to handle the problem presented. In other words, it discredits them as a security force and supports previous assertions.

Do you like us?

Granted, how the population feels about the United States should have no real impact on if the mission succeeds or not. After all, if the public feels secure and supports US actions then much of the COIN fight is already won. However, it is possible the opinion of the United States is a contributing factor to success and failure. If the population begins to disfavor the United States, is unhappy with the work completed, or with the decision to enter the country in the first place, then it stands to reason their support will begin to diminish. This, in turn, may affect their perception of security. Hence, opinion does matter.

Table 5. Correlation Results Relating To Questions of Opinion

	Strength of Relationship					
	Independent Variable 1	Independent Variable 2	Independent Variable 3	Independent Variable 4	Independent Variable 5	Independent Variable 5
	Incidents of Air-induced Coll. Damage	Civilians Killed by Airstrikes	Civilian Casualties due to Airstrikes	Airborne Munitions Released	Terrorism Victims	Terror Incidents
Question 9: How do you rate the work of the United States in Afghanistan?	0.670	0.597	0.565	0.940	0.994	0.976
Question 10: Is your opinion of the United States very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?	0.551	0.450	0.404	0.851	0.965	0.909
Question 11: From today's perspective, do you think it was very good, mostly good, mostly bad, or very bad that US military forces came into our country to bring down the Taliban government in 2001?	0.450	0.740	0.748	0.769	0.614	0.554
Surveys - Reference Table 4-1.		Note: Statistical significance for strength of relationship is 0.250 or better.				

Source: Author's Own Work

Over the course of the survey periods, how the public rated the work of the United States in Afghanistan declined considerably; over 35 points. Although the term *work* may be interpreted in a variety of ways, the highly significant correlation of every variable implies the public interpreted this to mean overall performance, not just how well the United States executed reconstruction projects.

Another major decline in favorability is seen in the opinion of the United States over the five years. At its peak, it went down 35 points. Once again, all of the independent variables shared a strong relationship with the question. The effect of the terrorist activities likely goes to credibility, but it is also important to point out the decline in favorability as civilian casualties increased. Considering, according to Human Rights Watch numbers, at its

peak the coalition forces were responsible for a total of 442 total collateral damage casualties from airstrikes the sharp decline in opinion and correlation is telling. Also, keep in mind that 442 people make up a mere 0.002% of the population. Bearing this in mind, it seems clear that media and political coverage of the events, as well as public indignation played a part in the decline in public opinion.

An alarming trend in the surveys is how opinions regarding if the United States should or should not have entered the country in 2001 to dismantle the Taliban regime began to favor the Taliban. Over the five year period, support of the United States on this question fell by 19%. Like the other questions in this section, this too shared very high correlation with the explanatory variables. Surprisingly, even though the Taliban, and various other groups, killed approximately 2000 people in 2008, and wounded or kidnapped a number of others, the percentage of the Afghan population which believed the United States should not have brought down the Taliban rose to 24%. If the survey is an accurate representation of the population, that amounts to nearly seven million people.

Conclusion

Regarding the impact of collateral damage, in nearly every instance the number of collateral damage incidents, deaths, and total casualties held a significant degree of correlation with the respective survey question. The only question not falling within this category asked whether the Taliban were the greatest danger to the country. For the period of the survey, the level of discontent with the Taliban remained fairly stable and relatively high compared to other actors, while the United States ratings, consistently became less favorable. The high individual correlation and number of correlations suggests that collateral damage incidents and their resulting casualties do have an impact of public perception.

While it is not possible to specific how much impact collateral damage has on public opinion, the results of the study suggest those variables which do impact perceptions predominantly deal with violent actions perpetrated by the

government or the insurgencies. This is supported by a separate analysis using variables of reconstruction activity. In the analysis three separate development indications had no significant correlation with the decline in public opinion.²⁷

Another indication which supports the contention that collateral damage has a significant impact on public perception is the way in which public opinion declined until 2008 and then leveled-off or resulted in a slight increase for the surveys in 2009. This is also the year when General McChrystal took over command of ISAF and announced a strategy realignment which prioritized the protection of the civilian population. Granted the impact is not conclusive, especially based on one data point. However, in 2009 the number of airborne munitions dropped remained relatively high, while the number of civilian casualty incidents and victims declined considerably. This development suggests that taking a more transparent approach to collateral damage incidents, reducing their occurrence, and supplementing this with effective rhetoric may have had an impact on public perception. Only more time and study will show if this is the case.

²⁷ The study considered these additional variables as a means to test the impact of collateral damage on perception by excluding factors of reconstruction. Although, it is possible that some of the population is unsatisfied with reconstruction efforts, the analysis of new construction, projects, and active industrial activities was produced a negative correlation; meaning these variables contributed to favorability rather than unfavorability.

Chapter 5

ISAF's External Populations

Without ever defeating any large body of American troops in battle, without coming close to exhausting American material strength, the North Vietnamese won by successfully exploiting diplomacy and propaganda to fragment the American political consensus that sustained the war effort.

Edward N. Luttwak
Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace

More often than not, counterinsurgency theories focus on the principles and factors that contribute to the success or failure of the indigenous government against the insurgents. Little is available on what factors specifically apply to a foreign supporting government. However, a quick examination of past insurgencies shows one such factor for these actors is the support, or lack thereof, from their respective home population. Just as the loss of public support for the Vietnam War led the United States to withdraw from that conflict, a loss of support for actions in Afghanistan may push coalition nations to withdraw as well. Considering America's dependence on these countries to execute reconstruction and security operations, the loss of these nations as active allies, means strategic failure for US efforts in the area.

Taking into consideration that nations rarely have identical political objectives in a given conflict, it is likely that actions taken by one or more nations may run counter to the objectives of another. This is especially likely when considering the use of force. Both before and after the invasion of Afghanistan, support for combat action was low among European countries. In fact, in some instances, individual countries have actually refused to allow their forces to operate in areas of increased violence within Afghanistan. Since the majority of the alliance is made up of European partners, the level of violence and the use of force are of particular concern for those hoping to maintain the coalition. This means that understanding the strength of external support and the impact of collateral damage on that support is of great importance to the NATO-led coalition.

The Power of External Population

In democratic societies the power of public opinion is instrumental in the formulation of foreign policy. This relationship between the public and the politicians means government actions abroad must often receive the tacit or open approval of the population. This is especially true when governments resort to force in a foreign land. When the sons and daughters of the constituency are placed in harm's way, the public is much more attentive. With this attention comes advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand an operation which enjoys the support of the domestic population has greater latitude to achieve its goals. Whereas an operation which does not have the support of the public often endures increased scrutiny, in some circumstances the constituency may force the withdrawal of government forces, ending the operation before success is achieved. Contemporary examples include the United States withdrawal from Vietnam and the French withdrawal from Algeria. Also, public discontent with the Soviet war in Afghanistan played a significant part in Gorbachev's eventual decision to withdraw from that country as well; illustrating that the power of popular opinion is not limited to the confines of a democratic society.¹

The reasons for the loss of public support may vary depending on the situation. In some instances, the economic impact of the operation in relation to domestic concerns may entice the public to push for withdrawal. In others, it may be the increasing level of casualties, a vague set of objectives, or even public abhorrence over the level of brutality utilized by the government to quell the insurgency. In his book, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, Gil Merom contends it is the inability to escalate the level of brutality against the insurgents which causes democratic states to lose small wars. The public's unwillingness to accept the necessary level of violence means military forces cannot exert the level of force needed to win.² While the thesis of this paper

¹ Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires : America's War in Afghanistan*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.,2009), 35.

² Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars : State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press,2003), 15, 48.

does not share Merom's theory of force usage in insurgencies, it does agree the level of violence imposed by the government may negatively affect public support at home.

Significance of the Coalition

The relationship between external supporting populations and the indigenous government is extremely complex in Afghanistan. The COIN operation is currently supported by forty-three nations in both combat and non-combat roles which make up 45% of the ISAF forces in country and are responsible for reconstruction and security in nearly 75% of the Afghanistan.³ These governments stepped forward at the request of the United States in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist bombings and as part of a United Nations resolution calling for assistance in the stabilization of Afghanistan.⁴ Their contributions to the overall effort are immeasurable. If the United States and the United Nations are to succeed in Afghanistan the continued support of these nations is essential.

Operation ALLIED FORCE - 1999

Similar circumstances surrounded the NATO coalition formed in 1999 to compel Slobodan Milošević to cease ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. In this particular situation the political atmosphere was especially complex. The organization originally formed as a defensive alliance against possible Soviet aggression found itself in an offensive action for somewhat ambiguous goals. To further complicate the situation, each nation in NATO had the ability to limit or affect the actions which took place. This varying degree of political commitment from different NATO states combined with the multitude of disparate opinions regarding the proper course of action made the application of military power in Serbia a very complicated process.

Most NATO members believed Milošević only needed a slight enticement to refrain from his actions in Kosovo. Therefore, the original plan called for the

³ International Security Assistance Force, "ISAF: Facts and Figures," (2009).

⁴ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1386," (New York: United Nations, 2001).

bombing of 51 targets over the course of two to three nights.⁵ Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent this initial attempt was falling short of the anticipated objective. In the end, the operation undertaken with little solid support, ambiguous strategic goals, and in an environment of extremely complex political relationships lasted a total of 78 days.

The real area of learning during this operation does not lie in the application of military force; rather it lies in understanding the complicated nature of the political environment. The desire to maintain the alliance and demonstrate united resolve was of prime concern to those involved. It was especially important to General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Command-Europe. In the initial stages of the operational planning, General Clark developed three measures of merit to match military efforts with the overall political will of the alliance.⁶ The first measure called for the avoidance of allied losses. In a post-Cold War environment, with shrinking defense budgets, many nations simply could not afford to lose the expensive air assets which were being employed. Clark's second measure of merit focused NATO efforts on the Serb forces in Kosovo which were committing the atrocities. In the complex political environment, some NATO nations were not comfortable with heavy air strikes within Serbia proper. This meant that much of the action during the beginning of the operation focused on Serbian Army units in the south. Divergent alliance views spurred the production of an air campaign plan which involved several iterations with varying conditions, parameters and measures for success.⁷

Of particular concern to this study, a third measure of merit for the operation was to maintain the alliance. The coalition was on shaky grounds because its various members held divergent opinions of how to compel change among the Serbian leadership. In order to keep the alliance intact it meant

⁵ General Wesley K. Clark, "The Strength of an Alliance," in *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions*, ed. William Joseph Buckley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 254.

⁶ Clark, "The Strength of an Alliance," 253.

⁷ William Joseph Buckley, "The Strength of an Argument: A Response to General Clark's Essay," in *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions*, ed. William Joseph Buckley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 264.

military leaders were forced to focus efforts in that area while continuing to fight the war. Incredible care was taken in the selection and approval of targets, in the safety restrictions placed on pilots, and on the amount of collateral damage imposed on the population. Lt. General Michael Short, the air commander for Operation ALLIED FORCE, made alliance cohesion one of his top priorities. This involved incorporating allies throughout the planning process and meeting often with senior alliance military leaders in an effort to gauge the political situation in each country and determine the degree to which military actions in Serbia were affecting national resolve.⁸

One of the factors deemed critical to maintaining alliance unity was collateral damage. The campaign leadership took great care to limit the amount of collateral damage during the operation. This involved the utilization of detailed risk analyses and the use of precision munitions on the battlefield. Unfortunately, collateral damage incidents did occur. In interviews following the operation General Clark hailed the accuracy of the aerial bombardment stating that only 20 incidents of collateral damage occurred; a mere .001% of the total attacks executed.⁹ However, in a contrary report, Human Rights Watch determined an estimated 428-528 civilians were killed during the Allied bombing campaign in 90 separate incidents.¹⁰ Irrespective of which account is more accurate, the alliance maintained its unity throughout the conflict, and Milošević eventually submitted to NATO demands.

The Kosovo War was the first opportunity for the NATO alliance to exercise its political inner-workings since the end of the Cold War. In many ways the task was more difficult than it should have been. This is largely attributable to the significance of the situation. War and conflict had waged in the Balkans for nearly ten years. In this period, the domestic populations of the European states had developed distinct opinions regarding the warring parties.

⁸ Lt General Michael C. Short, "Comments by Lt Gen Short" (paper presented at the AFA Air Warfare Symposium 2000, 25 February 2000).

⁹ US Senate Armed Services Committee, *Combined Prepared Statement of General Wesley Clark, USA; Admiral James Ellis, Jr., Usn; Lt Gen Michael Short, USAF of the United States European Command* October 21 1999, 3. NATO forced flew over 38,000 sorties, 14,000 of which were strike sorties which dropped over 23,000 weapons.

¹⁰ William M. Arkin, "Civilian Deaths in the NATO Air Campaign," (New York 2000), Summary.

In some cases, this mutated into a more stringent desire for action in Serbia while in others it manifested as a desire to minimize damage and bring Milošević back into political negotiations. The overall lesson to draw from the conflict is to understand the difficulties inherent in coalition operations. There is not just one coherent opinion of which every nation ascribes, and keeping the disparate objectives congruent with a cohesive strategy is difficult at best. In Kosovo, the military leadership accomplished this by continually discussing developments with coalition partners and by working to minimize both friendly and non-combatant deaths.

The Build-up to Afghanistan

Immediately after the two aircraft collided into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, America and her allies began working on a collective response to the attack. By the next day NATO took a historic step by enacting Article Five of the NATO treaty which stipulated an attack on one country constituted an attack on the entire alliance; the first instance of its enactment since NATO was established in 1949. Clearly the allies took the attacks on America seriously and were ready to respond. However, there were concerns. A small group of nations wanted assurances on two issues. First, in determining the nature, scale, and timing of actions taken, each state retained its right as a sovereign nation to determine its response, and second, military action by NATO forces was not authorized prior to further consultation and a decision by the North Atlantic Council.¹¹ The hesitation by some nations is understandable given the circumstances. This was a unique situation which did not affect the survival of the alliance. Under these conditions, it was prudent for NATO allies to limit the range of national commitment.

In the aftermath of the attacks American and European views as to the existence of an external threat were synonymous. However, while they agreed a valid threat existed, this did not mean that every nation sought to confront the threat in the same way. In fact, a Gallup poll conducted prior to the US invasion of Afghanistan showed none of the 18 NATO nations polled, excluding

¹¹ Edgar Buckley, "Invoking Article 5," *NATO Review*, no. 2 (2006). <http://www.nato.int>

the United States, favored military attacks by the United States on a country harboring the 9/11 terrorists. Instead, the vast majority of the respective populations preferred extradition.¹² This did not mean that European populations did not support action against the terrorist, only that they had a different interpretation of what that action should entail.

While a large number of NATO countries did not believe military action was advisable, many did agree that if action was taken their government should support it. However, even in this case, the support did not necessarily mean troops. Most of the countries polled preferred sharing intelligence and providing US basing. Only five out of fifteen countries agreed that sending troops was necessary.¹³

In a surprising turn for its European allies, the United States declined support under Article Five and invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. In the initial stages, military action in Afghanistan consisted of American Special Operations personnel on the ground working with the Northern Alliance, while US airpower provided the kinetic action necessary to push the Taliban out of their strongholds. While this occurred, alliance members took up positions in the United States flying air defense patrols. It is impossible to measure any perceptual damage done by the refusal to use European allied forces in Afghanistan. However, some believe it perpetuated a growing feeling of irrelevance in the coalition.¹⁴

This did not mean an end to NATO participation in Afghanistan. In December 2001, the United Nations authorized the establishment of an International Security Assistance Force to support the interim Afghan

¹² Gallup International Poll on Terrorism in the U.S., 37 countries – 19 of which were NATO members including the United States, September 14-17, 2001. Question read, "In your opinion, once the identity of the terrorists is known, should the American government launch a military attack on the country or countries where the terrorists are based or should the American government seek to extradite the terrorists to stand trial?" Information derived from Eric V. Larson et al., *Misfortunes of War : Press and Public Reactions to Civilian Deaths in Wartime* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2007), 143.

¹³ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 114: International Crisis* (Brussels: European Commission, 2001). http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb35/eb35_en.htm in Larson et al., *Misfortunes of War*, 142.

¹⁴ Galia Press-Barnathan, "Managing the Hegemon: NATO under Unipolarity," *Security Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 297.

government in and around Kabul, and with that authorization the United Kingdom took the first rotation as the lead nation for ISAF.¹⁵ By August 2003, NATO took over control of the ISAF mission as a way to alleviate the lead nation responsibility.¹⁶ It also set upon a course to expand ISAF influence outside of Kabul.¹⁷ Now the lead entity in Afghanistan, ISAF is the primary source for security and reconstruction throughout the country. However, the diverse set of nations which provide the framework of ISAF has not changed, and it is this group of states with divergent goals, dissimilar COIN methodology, and influential populations which the coalition must hope to hold together.

The Situation in Afghanistan

The ISAF coalition, while strong, has weathered its share of controversy from before the US invasion until the present. Initially, the United States shunned support from NATO as it pursued military options to depose the Taliban government. Then European nations committed assistance to the UN-backed ISAF. However, this operation soon began to flounder as it became difficult to find lead nations to fill the six month post. The decision to establish a more structured ISAF force in 2003 and expand its influence throughout Afghanistan helped iron out some of the issues, but even then political maneuvering and national caveats presented many obstacles for the security force. Several nations readily volunteered forces for the “safer” areas of Afghanistan while at the same time refusing to send troops into the more violent south. Before long, the main contingent in the south consisted of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and The Netherlands.

During the 2006 NATO summit in Latvia four of the largest foreign troop contributing nations, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy remained hesitant to send troops to southern Afghanistan, but did agree to send them in an emergency. The reasons behind this refusal varied. However, a concern by some countries was the US-led COIN model was not the correct method to employ. They believed development and reconstruction was the most likely way

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1386."

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1510," (New York: United Nations, 2003).

¹⁷ International Security Assistance Force, "ISAF History." <http://www.isaf.nato.int/en/our-history/>

to ensure success, and that any attempt to use combat force was likely to alienate the Afghan population.¹⁸

Those nations that did deploy to the south paid a price for their actions. Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and The Netherlands lead the coalition in the number of deaths in relation to the size of the deployed force.¹⁹ Additionally, the impact of continual mobilization is felt more acutely among nations like Canada and The Netherlands which possess some of the smallest military forces among the top ten deployed countries; 59,000 and 52,000 respectively. The combination of military casualties and the strain on the national military structure are factors which play heavily on allied nations.

Recently, the Dutch government dissolved over the issue of extending participation in ISAF past 2010. With this action the Dutch became the first state to withdraw support for the coalition operation. This is especially surprising when one considers The Netherlands were one of the highest European supporters for US actions in Afghanistan in 2001, and continue to have a higher approval rating for supporting troop deployments than many of the other states in Europe.²⁰ Many worry this move by The Netherlands will spell the end of European support in Afghanistan. Once one country in the alliance breaks the mold it is easier for others to follow. Adding to this political hit to the alliance, Canada has refrained from passing an extension authorizing its troops to remain in country past 2011.

The exit of two of the top ten troop contributing nations from the alliance, not to mention two which operated in the most dangerous regions of Afghanistan, is a definite area of concern. As stated earlier, some coalition allies are reluctant to allow their troops to participate in combat operations. However, they are also concerned that combat actions may not be the way to solve the COIN issue. Therefore, if the United States is unable to quell the violence in the south, it is possible the increasing violence will have an effect on alliance cohesion; both because the increasing violence is reaching into

¹⁸ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires : America's War in Afghanistan*, 249-50.

¹⁹ Iraq Coalition Casualty Count Database, <http://icasualties.org>

²⁰ Angus-Reid Global Monitor, "Dutch Divided on Afghanistan Mission," (Angus-Reid Public Opinion, 2010). Public opinion survey provided by Maurice de Hond.

traditionally stable areas and because it may lead domestic populations to decrease support for the operation further, eventually leading to national withdraw.

The Impact of Operations

Cultural, political, and security interests affect the way a specific nation views its role in foreign operations. This is no different in Afghanistan. To maintain alliance cohesion, coalition leaders must work within the confines of the situation as it is presented. In Afghanistan this has amounted to dealing with national caveats and an inequitable distribution of combat operations. It has also required states to understand that not every participant approaches the insurgent problem in the same way and neither does their respective domestic population.

Attack on Meymaneh - 2006

In February of 2006, a contingent of Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Afghan soldiers stationed in the town of Meymaneh in northern Afghanistan were attacked by a large mob of Afghans. Apparently a reaction to recent cartoons published in Europe depicting the Prophet Muhammed, the attack consisted of approximately 100 hostile personnel out of a mob numbering in the thousands. The security forces within the compound began taking fire, and returned fire on the attackers. In the resulting fight six Norwegians were wounded and four of the attackers were killed.²¹

On the surface this does not seem a particularly significant event. Forces in the south deal with similar situations on a regular basis and often members of the alliance in that area are killed or are forced to kill their attackers. The interesting part of this example is that even though the primarily Norwegian contingent was attacked and fought valiantly for their survival, back home in Norway the matter was largely ignored. The media outlets that did report on the incident focused primarily on the fact that Norwegian soldiers had killed Afghans, not on the fact that they were fighting

²¹ Henrick Hovland, "Tausheten Etterpaa," *Aftenposten*, June 17 2006.

for their survival. Even in an article condemning the media coverage, the author felt it necessary to commend the soldiers because of the amount of restraint they showed by only killing four attackers. In the situation they found themselves in, they could have easily killed more. Hence, the author contended, even in a life-threatening situation the Norwegian contingent took the moral high-ground.²²

This reaction by the Norwegian media to an attack on its military forces is in stark contrast to the general public opinion which prevails in America when US forces are attacked. As an example, in a poll undertaken by the Pew Research Center in November 2001, 85% of the Americans surveyed believed civilian casualties were an unavoidable consequence of war, and 56% believed US forces should place more emphasis on achieving victory rather than minimizing civilian casualties.²³ Nearly nine years later, the opinion of the American public has not changed much, and the US population-centric strategy receives mixed reviews in national media. Many continue to question the mentality of placing military forces in further danger in an attempt to prevent civilian casualties. Based on the Norwegian example, it seems Norwegians may lean the other way.

Fuel Tankers in Kunduz – 2009

On September 4, 2009, German Colonel Georg Klein gave clearance for fighter aircraft to drop munitions on two fuel tankers which were stolen by Taliban forces. In saying the words, "Weapons release," he reportedly ended the lives of over 100 people crowded around the tankers; many of which were Afghan civilians collecting fuel. Adding to this situation there are indications that Klein failed to follow ISAF guidelines when directing the strikes; guidelines which may have prevented the incident.²⁴

In a country still coming to grips with its involvement in the two largest wars of the twentieth century, a large collateral damage incident such as this sparked a controversy which reverberated throughout the country. Immediately

²² Hovland, "Tausheten Etterpaa."

²³ Pew Research Center/PSRA poll conducted November 13-19, 2001, N=1500.

²⁴ Demmer et al., "New Allegations against German Officer Who Ordered Kunduz Air Strike."

following the incident General McChrystal appointed a Joint Investigation Board under the leadership of Canadian Maj Gen C.S. Sullivan to determine the details of surrounding the bombing.²⁵ Five additional investigations followed the official ISAF investigation by General McChrystal, including one conducted by the German parliament. The incident also led to the resignation of the German Defense Minister, the Assistant Minister of Defense, and the head of Germany's armed forces, General Wolfgang Schneiderhan over an attempt to withhold information regarding the civilian deaths.²⁶ Taking advantage of the situation, the German Left Party orchestrated a large anti-war protest in Berlin, and the German Foreign Minister, a member of the Social Democratic Party, unveiled a plan for German withdrawal from Afghanistan.²⁷

The attention raised in Germany stands in stark contrast to American reactions to civilian casualties. Several large civilian casualty incidents have occurred in Afghanistan under US direction. Yet, the US public has not come close to asking for the resignation of leading officials or drafting plans for withdrawal.

Conclusion

The important thing to understand when working in coalition operations is that each state operates under its own group of objectives, understandings, and perceptions of the conflict. These do not always coincide with the US views. In fact, in most cases they probably will not. These cultural differences are both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the differing views of the situation add to operational discourse and provide the possibility of looking at a given situation from many different views. However, it also means that states and coalition leadership must deal with the multitude of national caveats that often accompany the differing views.

²⁵ ISAF Public Affairs Office, "ISAF Commander Appoints Board to Lead Investigation into Kunduz Air Strike," *ISAF News Release #2009-681* 2009.

²⁶ Marcus Klocker, "Afghan Mission and Broader Role for Military Divide Germany," *Stars and Stripes*, February 26 2010.

²⁷ Demmer et al., "New Allegations against German Officer Who Ordered Kunduz Air Strike."

In a conflict like Afghanistan, where each coalition member is needed to achieve success, it is essential that coalition members remain in the alliance and continue to support the operation actively. If this is to occur, the United States must realize that other nations place a higher level of importance on the issue of collateral damage. This is not to say that American forces are not concerned the preservation of non-combatants, only that some coalition partners value that aspect of the operation in a different manner. In an international political environment which seems to question the participation of coalition states on a regular basis, the alliance cannot afford to pursue a policy which considers civilian casualties as a consequence of war. Otherwise, eventually the coalition will crumble.

Chapter 6

Strategic Implications

Collateral Damage – Unintentional or incidental injury or damage to persons or objects that would not be lawful targets in the circumstances ruling at the time. Such damage is not unlawful so long as it is not excessive in light of the overall military advantage gained from the attack.

US Joint Doctrine for Targeting

When a man's life is at stake, it takes more than propaganda to budge him.

David Galula

Security does not exist because the counterinsurgent force declares it exists. It is not a measurement of the number of troops in the country or the capacity to saturate a given hostile province. Nor is it achieved when a specified number of bridges are constructed or when a certain length of roadway is paved. Physical security without the feeling of security is pointless, because the first is a description of the observable environment and the second is a fundamental part of the human condition. One lends itself easily to measurement while the other is more malleable. While physical security is a readily identifiable aspect of the environment, the perception of security is a product of it. It is within this complex mix of interrelated variables the counterinsurgent must attempt to determine which actions will produce or contribute to the desired result. If the counterinsurgent judges incorrectly, then the effort is all for naught. The internal population will remain passive, or worse actively support the insurgency.

For a foreign supporting government, garnering the support of the external domestic population is equally important. Without it the campaign is lost before it even begins. The population must be willing to accept the length of the operation, the level of brutality imposed, and the costs to their economic base. If this is not the case, then it is likely the COIN effort will fail. Of these three areas of interest the level of the brutality is one area which transcends both populations. Coincidentally, it is also the only one of the three which military forces have a direct capability to control. The decision then is whether to exert overwhelming force to achieve objectives or whether to apply a

measured use of force while observing the impact. Gil Merom believes democracies lose small wars because the external supporting population is unwilling to support the level of violence necessary to win the engagement.¹ If this is in fact the case, then democratic states should shy away from conflicts which are, or may become, insurgent in nature. However, states do not pick the war as much as the war picks the state. Nations are drawn into conflict based on national interests, and in the complex arena of international politics states are unable to dictate which entities will threaten their interests and which will not. Therefore a state must fight the war it is presented, and it must do so within the social constraints of its polity.

The requirement to balance the needs of the internal population in Afghanistan with the expectations of the external populations in troop contributing nations lies at the heart of the counterinsurgency movement. Without the support of the internal and external populations the effort will fail. Therefore, understanding the various factors which play in the perceptions of each group is important from a strategic point of view. This paper specifically considered the level of destruction and how it contributes, through collateral damage, to a decline in such support.

Strategic Implications

Determining the cause of public disapproval is not an easy task, and this study does not attempt to declare that collateral damage is the only factor which impacts public opinion. It merely seeks to show that collateral damage does in fact have an impact; both internally and externally. In the example of Afghanistan the impact seems to be quite significant.

At its core, the public perception of an ongoing operation is a wicked problem; one that is non-linear in nature with several possible causes for any given outcome.² In this particular instance, the operation has more characteristics of a social problem rather than the classic military problem. This is precisely why it is often difficult for military personnel to understand the

¹ Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars : State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*, 15, 48.

² Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4(1973): 161. In this context, wicked is not meant to mean any sort of evil intent, rather it describes the complexity of the problem.

true impact of military actions. In the counterinsurgency fight, the social and political realms reign supreme. It is within this domain that success either materializes or dissolves, and where the results of actions taken have their greatest impact.

The complexity of the problem prevents the determination of any absolute causality. Any attempt to make such an assertion is easily refutable by citing another example which also shows some level of causality. This is why, in a wicked environment, it is best to rely on trend information. By demonstrating a correlation between the rate and direction of change in public opinion and the rate and direction of other independent factors it is possible to determine a level of correlation. A significant relationship between the various factors leads one to believe the overt relationship is also substantial.

The Internal Population

The analysis in Chapter Four did just this. By comparing various aspects of collateral damage to public perception over a five year period the study showed civilian casualties, incidents of collateral damage, the number of munitions dropped, and terrorist events all shared a significant correlation to the fluctuation in public opinion. This revelation bolsters the argument of the population-centric theorists by statistically connecting collateral damage and public perception. It also lends additional insight into the complex relationship between the population and the government in a COIN fight, and expands the definition of collateral damage beyond the traditional view of civilian casualties and destroyed infrastructure.

Joint Publication 3-60 restricts the definition of collateral damage by limiting it to the destruction of personnel or objects not considered lawful targets at the time. Unfortunately, in the social and political environment of a COIN operation this definition falls short. Unlike a traditional military operation, the objective is not the capture of a specific town, terrain feature, communication node, army unit, or national leader. Instead, in a COIN operation the military objective is the support of the population; either passive or active. By achieving this, the military erodes the support base of the insurgency and reinforces the possibility of a long term solution. Therefore, traditional military actions which erode the popular support base run counter

to the overall objective. While the military attempts to destroy or kill the insurgency they sometimes unintentionally crush the support of the populous. Therefore, in a COIN operation any action which causes an unintended decline in the perception of the population's security is also a form of collateral damage. At times the cause may be cultural insensitivity during a raid, or deaths from indirect ground fire, escalation of force events, an errant airstrike, or as this study suggests the increase in overall violence. To counter the unintended decline in public opinion the coalition must look for ways to diminish these factors.

Damaging Public Perception through Increased Levels of Violence

It is obvious today that coalition attempts to dismantle the Taliban and dissolve the insurgency from 2001-2004 were not successful. The bulk of the Taliban escaped across the porous border with Pakistan or settled back into Afghan society. Insurgent activity during the period primarily consisted of terrorist activities which remained at a fairly stable level of violence. The average number of casualties from terrorist attacks between 2002 and 2004 was 442 per year.³ Signaling the beginning of the Taliban resurgence, in 2005 the number of terrorism victims nearly tripled. This trend continued over the next four years. In 2009, over two-thousand terrorist incidents occurred in Afghanistan producing 7,584 victims.⁴

The coalition confronted the trend toward increased insurgent violence with an increase in kinetic actions. The number of aerial munitions dropped increased from a mere 86 in 2004 to a total of 3,572 at its peak in 2007 and this number remained fairly stable through 2009.⁵ These munitions were dropped in support of numerous coalition operations and troops in contact situations which escalated in number during the Taliban resurgence.⁶

The correlation between the levels of increased violence and the decrease in public support for coalition operations is too significant to ignore. It also

³ RAND Corporation, Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, <http://www.rand.org>.

⁴ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, <https://wits.nctc.gov>

⁵ Air Force Central Command, "AFCENT Airpower Statistics."

⁶ Operations MOUNTAIN THRUST, MEDUSA, and MOUNTAIN FURY (2006), ACHILLES (2007), EAGLE'S SUMMIT (2008), and KHANJAR (2009) were only a few of the instances when increased insurgent activity resulted in specific battles. Additional battles and small-force engagements also increased over the period contributing the amount of munitions dropped.

produces a conundrum for coalition forces. On the one hand, ISAF must battle insurgent elements to limit their influence on the population, while on the other the increase in violence tends to intensify public discontent. If the coalition fails to address insurgent sponsored terrorism then it loses the support of the populations, but if the alliance addresses it without considering the impact of its own actions on the population it also fails in its objective of winning the population. It may be tempting for some to believe the populous will forgive past transgressions once the insurgency is defeated and they are able to live in a secure environment under the leadership of a representative government. However, this assumption rests on the belief that the COIN force can defeat the insurgency before the bulk of civil support tips in favor of the insurgents (Fig. 10). Given that public opinion rests on a number of different variables, it is unlikely the COIN force will be capable of accurately predicting when this transition will occur. Therefore, a more prudent course of action is to explore ways of limiting the amount of kinetic actions in and around population areas.

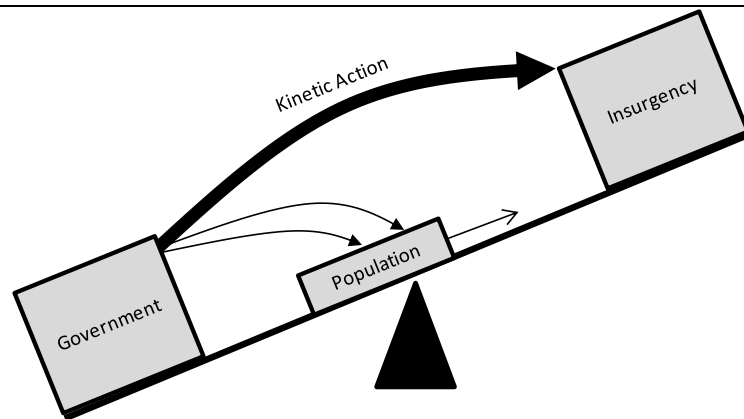


Figure 10. Balancing Strategy and Objective

Source: Author's Own Work

This is not to suggest that coalition forces should not defend themselves or that kinetic operations must cease. Obviously, the coalition must counter the outwardly aggressive insurgent effort it faces. However, the possibility may exist in some instances to take a less aggressive approach which decreases the overall amount of kinetic activity.

Public Opinion and Civilian Casualties

The 2010 ABC Survey, “Where Things Stand,” showed a turn-around in public opinion regarding the United States and coalition operations. This change in the polls came after a year which saw a decrease in the overall number of civilian casualties and number of munitions dropped. It also followed a new emphasis by General McChrystal to limit civilian casualties and tighter restrictions on when and how to use force.

Granted a slight increase in public approval does not make a trend. Further study is necessary to determine if the upwards trend is attributable to a decrease in violence and fewer civilian casualties. However, an interesting point to make is that public opinion reversed when the overall level of civilian casualties from airstrikes remained high compared to pre-2007 totals (Fig. 11). While it is possible the coalition’s rhetoric had more of an effect on the changing trend than the actual decrease in casualties, a decrease in casualties certainly supported the rhetoric.

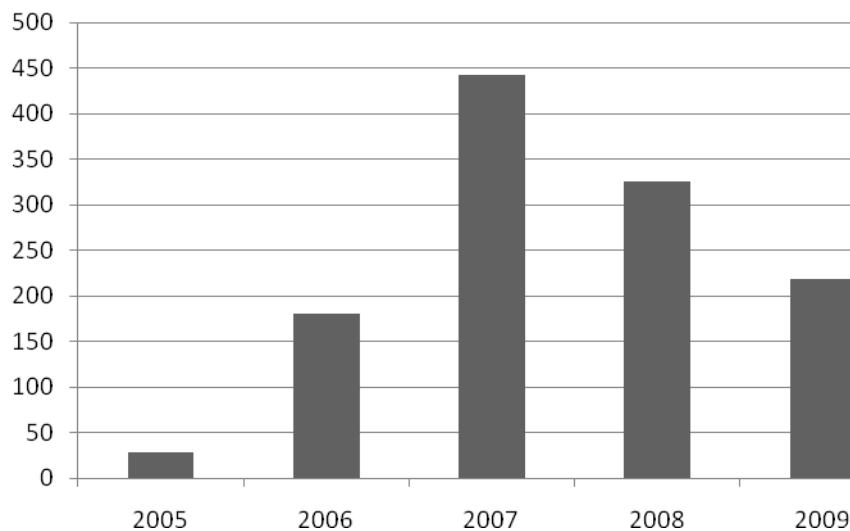


Figure 11. Civilian Casualties from Airstrikes

Source: Human Rights Watch Database 2005-2007, ISAF Civilian Casualty Database 2008-2009

As discussed in Chapter Four, the study only considered civilian casualties and incidents due to airstrikes because the necessary data for a more detailed study of collateral damage as a whole was not available.

However, it is likely the findings are universal. In the two year period, 2008-2010, ground-based actions accounted for 96% of collateral damage incidents and a full 77% of the casualties.⁷ While casualties and incidents due to airstrikes receive more media coverage, it is unlikely that ground action of this magnitude does not also correlate with a decline in internal public opinion.

The External Populations

The complexity of the problem becomes even more pronounced when one considers the large number of foreign supporting nations in ISAF and their respective populations. Each country comes to the alliance with its own unique set of challenges, security concerns, view of the world, and cultural backdrop. This makes the task of managing the alliance all the more difficult. In many instances, it may be easier to deal with alliance issues as they arise, rather than attempt to determine which factors influence allied population opinion.

Although the number of factors affecting a foreign supporting population may seem insurmountable, one area that clearly differs from country to country is the application of force. This differing view of force manifested in the pre-Afghanistan invasion period as a desire to seek extradition for terror suspects rather than military action to recover them.⁸ It continued as NATO took the lead in Afghanistan with some nations refusing to operate in the southern part of the country where combat operations were more prevalent. For many of these states, they deemed the reconstruction and training aspects more important to the operation, and had no desire to participate kinetically on an active basis.

This left the job of executing kinetic operations to four main countries the United States, Britain, Canada, and The Netherlands. Of the four the Dutch will withdraw troops in August 2010, the Canadians have not agreed to continue support past 2011, and over half of the British population opposes UK participation in Afghanistan.⁹ Even in the United States, only a slight majority

⁷ ISAF Combined Joint Operations Center, Civilian Casualty Cell Database (U)

⁸ Gallup International Poll on Terrorism in the US, September 14-17, 2001.

⁹ Angus-Reid Global Monitor, "Majority of Britons Oppose the Military Mission in Afghanistan," ed. Andy Morris (London2010), 1.

support US actions in the region.¹⁰ Granted, it appears more probable that eroding support in these four countries is more attributable to the continuing need for combat actions than the civilian casualties the actions sometimes produce. Therefore, the conundrum which surfaced for the internal populations arises again with the external population. How can the coalition deal with the insurgency while at the same time reducing the combat operations tempo?

While civilian casualties may not have a significant effect on citizens in the four countries mentioned above, they certainly do have an impact on others. The international media attention focused on collateral damage incidents, and the recent turmoil created by the German-directed bombing of two fuel tankers highlights the turbulent nature of the topic. Whether the United States chooses to admit it or not, incidents of collateral damage are an important concern for other states, and any strategy which seeks to keep the alliance strong must consider this factor.

Recommendations

War in its most simple form is a complicated endeavor. Through the centuries theorists have attempted to break it apart and identify the essential components of an effective combat strategy. However, even the most adroit observer of warfare is left with the realization that war is a complex phenomenon which is best understood in generalities. For this reason, past military leaders have relied on common precepts for winning in battle; take the high ground, isolate the leadership, or employ overwhelming, decisive military force at the point of the enemy's greatest weakness. These principles have served their clients well, but as with anything in war they are not all inclusive.

Unlike wars in the not-so-distant past, contemporary wars are waged in the light of 24-hour, international news franchises which provide immediate feedback on every aspect of the conflict. Military leaders are unable to shape the news coverage in a way that best suits their needs as occurred in earlier wars. This means that issues of collateral damage which were considered, then disregarded, by military leaders in World War II now become the lead story for

¹⁰ Angus-Reid Global Monitor, "Half of Americans Support the Military Mission in Afghanistan," (New York 2010), 1.

today's media outlets. This is especially the case in COIN conflicts which lack many of the highly kinetic, large scale operations of conventional war, forcing reporters to search for another story. Military commanders that fail to appreciate the available publicity for incidents of collateral damage and the level of discontent it fosters in the international community will find managing a COIN effort exceedingly difficult.

Collateral Damage as an Arbiter of War

Military commanders must understand the international community has become increasingly more protective of non-combatants over the last century. Once considered the mere cost of doing war, the plight of non-combatants evolved throughout the twentieth century until civilian protections were codified in the 1949 Geneva Convention IV. The Additional Protocols agreed to in 1977 extended these provisions to participants in all types of conflict including insurrection and civil war. Since that time, the issue of civilian casualties has held a more prominent position in military planning and international media coverage as conflicts like Kosovo in 1999 and the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate.

If the war is merely a continuation of politics by a different means as Clausewitz claims, then those that execute operations must understand the impact of their actions on the political environment. In a COIN operation this includes the internal population, the external supporting populations, and in some instances the international community as a whole. If counterinsurgent actions negatively affect internal or external support, the operation is doomed to fail.

In the past, scholars have asserted that collateral damage is a primary consideration when fighting a population-centric strategy. However, these assertions have rarely if ever been supported by evidence of a link. This study provides that support. Through a combination of inductive and deductive processes this study established a highly correlated link between collateral damage and public discontent both at home and abroad. It also provided a lengthy discussion on exactly how public discontent can hinder COIN progress. Now, commander's in the field need to take this information and make sure they are orchestrating strategies which highlight the importance of collateral

damage avoidance, and then communicate to their troops how this will achieve the overall goal of building a stable environment in Afghanistan.

A New Way of Thinking for an Old Organization

While the leadership may profess a COIN strategy which properly considers the importance of collateral damage, it is useless without the support and understanding of the individual on the frontline. For a foreign supporting state this may be particularly difficult since the foreign soldiers do not have as strong of a connection with the indigenous population. Therefore, when considering the amount of force necessary to achieve tactical mission success some may choose more kinetic approaches in an attempt to increase their own safety margin. This is especially so when the military indoctrination of such troops centers on applying overwhelming force to a given situation. Although recent military publications have extolled the virtues of “less is more” in the COIN fight, this may be difficult for some to believe and even harder to apply.

With this in mind it is absolutely essential that commanders ensure the population-centric COIN message is understood at the lowest level. They must make sure that troops and leaders are aware of how their actions can affect not only the internal population but also the population of coalition allies. While they may be hesitant to accept a strategy which appears to place them in greater danger in the short-term, they must understand that if the operation is to succeed it is necessary, and the safer environment they produce will reduce casualties in the long-term.

The Dual-faced Political Environment

The complex socio-political environment of a counterinsurgency operation demands that commanders understand a myriad of factors which influence the strategic situation. Unlike some military actions in the recent past, America is not a position to push its agenda on its allies. The alliance in Afghanistan is not just one of political necessity, but also one of military necessity. The United States cannot afford to concentrate substantial effort in Afghanistan while it remains in Iraq. It must rely on allies to pick up the slack of its overburdened forces. If additional nations follow The Netherlands’ lead, it will have a considerable strategic impact on US foreign policy for Afghanistan. If the United States fails to adequately address collateral damage incidents,

which some coalition members consider an important issue, then it is likely more external populations will withdraw support for the operation.

An issue at both the international and national levels, COIN strategy must address collateral damage as it pertains to both political realms. General McChrystal has taken impressive measures to ensure the importance collateral damage avoidance is communicated to military members and the civilian populace inside and outside of Afghanistan. This practice must continue, and ISAF must back this message up with actions. Some recommended actions are:

- Increase transparency regarding civilian casualties. The military must realize that several outside agencies do not trust military estimates of civilian casualties. By publishing the totals and statistics on a frequent basis the military not only increases its credibility in the international community, but also produces a metric which will focus coalition efforts to mitigate civilian casualties and destruction.
- Establish a firm structure for investigating incidents. Obviously, military forces, non-governmental and governmental agencies will not always agree on the specifics of a collateral damage incident. However, it is in the coalition's interest to be seen as a driving force in attempting to find out the "truth." This also provides a conduit for outside agencies to see that coalition investigative techniques are comprehensive and credible which increases the confidence in the coalition.
- Establish procedures which limit the use of large-scale kinetic attacks. This is accomplished by training frontline troops on the options available to them. Perhaps it is possible to monitor a group of insurgents in close proximity to casualties until collateral damage is no longer an issue, or it may be possible to disengage enemy elements all together and plan for future action which is more carefully planned to avoid civilian casualties. This is not meant as a critique of the on-scene commander. It is more a realization that few are knowledgeable of the full range of options available them in a given situation either from their respective service or others. Hence, it is incumbent on senior commanders to make sure troops are trained properly or are asking the pertinent questions when in doubt.

A Final Few Words

The population-centric COIN strategy adopted by General McChrystal in 2009 falls in line with the recommendations presented. However, having a strategy and following a strategy are two different things. Fortunately, during recent operations in the southern Afghan city of Marjah the strategy seemed to be in full force. This does not mean that collateral damage did not occur. After the operation completed, the Afghan Human Rights Commission reported a total of 28 civilians killed in the fighting. This included 12 killed after an errant ground-launched rocket missed its target.¹¹ However, military officials insisted the operation was taking longer than normal because of the concern over killing civilians. Also, unique to the Marjah offensive, ISAF warned the city in advance of the operation to allow citizens to flee the city if they desired.

Obviously more will need to happen before Afghanistan is a safe place for its citizens. Counterinsurgent forces will not accomplish this merely by reducing the amount of collateral damage. It is just one factor among many, but it is an important one. If the internal population believes that ISAF forces are indifferent to their plight, or worse, intentionally causing civilian casualties then it is unlikely they will turn to the coalition for protection, and in this case their participation is necessary for success.

¹¹ Heidi Vogt and Noor Khan, "Afghan Rights Body: 28 Civilians Killed in Marjah," *Associated Press*, 24 February 2010.

Appendix

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This study used a total of 10 surveys to compile public perception trend information a spanning five years, 2004-2009. All surveys were conducted by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research in Kabul and sponsored by The Asia Foundation or ABC, BBC or ARD. In each survey the interviewees were selected randomly from a specified sample in most provinces of Afghanistan and interviewed in person. The surveys included rural and urban areas. Some of the methodology data for each survey is listed below. If more detailed information is required for a specific survey visit The Asia Foundation or ABC website.

Survey	Dates	Smpl	Error	Omitted Provinces
Voter Education Planning Survey: Afghanistan 2004 Elections	22 Feb - 13 Mar 2004	804	±3.5	Uruzgan, Neemroz, and Ghor; 6% of Population
ABC News Poll: Life In Afghanistan 2005	8-18 Oct 2005	1,039	±3.5	Zabul, Nuristan, Nimroz; 2.4% of Population
Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2006	14-29 Jun 2006	6,226	±2.5	Uruzgan, Zabul: 2.3% of Population
ABC/BBC: Afghanistan: Where Things Stand	14-19 Oct 2006	1,036	±3.5	None
Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2007	11-22 Jun 2007	6,263	±2.4	None
ABC/BBC/ARD: Afghanistan Where Things Stand	28 Oct – 7 Nov 2007	1,377	±3.0	None
Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2008	12 Jun – 2 Jul 2008	6,593	±2.4	None
ABC/BBC/ARD: Afghanistan: Where Things Stand	30 Dec 2008 – 12 Jan 2009	1,534	±2.5	None
Asia Foundation: Afghanistan in 2009	17 Jun – 6 Jul 2009	6,406	±3.7	None
ABC/BBC/ARD: Afghanistan: Where We Stand	11-23 Dec 2009	1,534	±3.0	None

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