THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE:

CIVIL WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

A Monograph
by
MAJ Ryan M. Leigh
U.S. Army

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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    The delineation between an insurgency and a civil war is vital to assessing the violence in Afghanistan. Proper classification and management of the violence is the key to success for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. While the U.S. classifies the conflict in Afghanistan as an insurgency, in reality it is a civil war. This failure to properly identify and classify the violence is impeding U.S. efforts at managing the conflict. This monograph develops benchmarks that signify a civil war and then applies them to Afghanistan to further support the hypothesis that Afghanistan is experiencing a civil war.

    The existence of civil war in Afghanistan is problematic for the U.S. due to a fundamental shortcoming in doctrine. Current U.S. Army doctrine does not adequately address the form of conflict classified as a civil war. This doctrine and theory place unrealistic demands upon the incumbent government and does not provide concrete measures properly attend to these shortcomings. Winning a civil war requires more from the government than counterinsurgency does. This is a direct reflection of both a scale of escalation in violence and a significant difference in the purpose behind the conflict.

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MAJ Ryan Michael Leigh

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Approved by:

_____   Monograph Director
Matthew Schmidt

_____   Second Reader
Scott Gorman, Ph. D.

_____   Director,
Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., COL, IN   School of Advanced
                                        Military Studies

_____   Director,
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.   Graduate Degree
                                        Programs

i

Abstract

THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE: CIVIL WAR IN AFGHANISTAN by MAJ Ryan M. Leigh, U.S. Army, 43 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to explore the operational impacts of differentiating between an insurgency and a civil war. At first glance, the distinction between the two is just a matter of scale, but there are other differences as well. Comparing and contrasting civil war with insurgency focuses on the purpose behind the violence and less on the methods employed in the fighting. Using Afghanistan as a case study, including the Taliban to account for the incumbent and challenger in the conflict, this monograph shows that Afghanistan is currently in a state of civil war.

The delineation between an insurgency and a civil war is vital to assessing the violence in Afghanistan. Proper classification and management of the violence is the key to success for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. While the U.S. classifies the conflict in Afghanistan as an insurgency, in reality it is a civil war. This failure to properly identify and classify the violence is impeding U.S. efforts at managing the conflict. This monograph develops benchmarks that signify a civil war and then applies them to Afghanistan to further support the hypothesis that Afghanistan is experiencing a civil war.

The benchmarks for civil war developed here include a minimum of 1,000 war-related deaths, specifically, both civilian and combatant casualties from physical attacks. The second criteria is validates that state sovereignty is challenged by the rebels. A necessary condition for these criteria is that the violence is occurring within the territory of the state in question. The third benchmark specifies that the State and its security apparatus is one of the principal agents conducting the fighting.

The last three benchmarks clearly delineate a civil war from an insurgency. The first of these benchmarks is that the rebels mount an organized military opposition. This makes explicit the military opposition to the government, whereas in an insurgency, military opposition is just one of the many activities conducted by the insurgents. The second criterion is the replacement of government institutions by the rebel's shadow governments. The last benchmark is that the rebels are fighting for the complete and total control over state.

The existence of civil war in Afghanistan is problematic for the U.S. due to a fundamental shortcoming in doctrine. Current U.S. Army doctrine does not adequately address the form of conflict classified as a civil war. This doctrine and theory place unrealistic demands upon the incumbent government and does not provide concrete measures properly attend to these shortcomings. Winning a civil war requires more from the government than counterinsurgency does. This is a direct reflection of both a scale of escalation in violence and a significant difference in the purpose behind the conflict.

Table of Contents

Glossary

ABP	Afghan Border Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces (ABP, ANA & ANP)
AOGs	Armed Opposition Groups
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COW	Correlates of War
DOD	Department of Defense
FM	Field Manual
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ICOS	International Council on Security and Development
IGOs	Intergovernmental Organizations
MCO	Major Combat Operations
MOOTWA	Military Operations Other Than War
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PGFs	Pro-Government Forces (ANSF & Coalition Forces)
TTPs	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan
UW	Unconventional Warfare

Illustrations

Introduction

The purpose of this monograph is to explore the operational impacts of differentiating between an insurgency and a civil war. The delineation between an insurgency and a civil war is vital to assessing the violence in Afghanistan. Dr. David Singer, who founded the Correlates of War (COW) project writes, "By accepting conventional labels of certain armed conflict, we buy into simplistic interpretations, and ultimately embrace disastrous reactions and responses" even though no universally consistent typology exists. Therefore, he continues, any conflict classification system should "remain as atheoretical as possible." [1] At first glance, the distinction between the two is just a matter of scale, but there are other differences as well.

Proper classification and management of violence in Afghanistan is the key to success for U.S. efforts there. The U.S. classifies the conflict in Afghanistan as an insurgency. Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency,* defines insurgency as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."[2] While this definition may be sufficient to describe the conflict, the possibility exists that the violence could be something more than just an insurgency.

This monograph will examine the differences between an insurgency and a civil war to determine the impact on operational approaches to counter these forms of violence. Comparing and contrasting civil war with insurgency, this study focuses on the causes of conflict instead of the methods employed in the fighting. The essence of the differences between civil war and insurgency revolves around the ends and means of the conflict. Definitions of insurgency focus on the means of conduct, while definitions of civil war focus on the ends of the violence.

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[1] David Singer, "Armed Conflict in the Former Colonial Regions: From Classification to Explanation," in *Between Development and Destruction: An Enquiry into the Causes of Conflict in Post-colonial States*, ed. Luc van de Goor, Kumar Rupesinghe and Paul Sciarone (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 35-49.

[2] U.S. Department of Defense, *Field Manual 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency,* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-2.

A growing number of analysts have classified the violence in Afghanistan as a perpetual civil war. This civil war started with the communist coup d'état in April 1978 and the subsequent Soviet invasion in 1979, and has perpetuated until the present. Historians, political scientists, international relations theorists, and conflict specialists alike have determined that Afghanistan is still undergoing a civil war. Robert Crews, a historian writes, "A civil war has raged in Afghanistan for nearly thirty years."[3] James Dobbins, a former ambassador of the U.S., testified before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations about how to end Afghanistan's "civil war."[4] Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells also use Afghanistan as one of their case studies in a critical examination of civil wars.[5] While academics may agree on how to classify the conflict, there is no accounting for the impacts that these classifications have for how a campaign is prosecuted.

Using the criteria identified, an assessment of the violence in Afghanistan shows that the conflict has evolved into a civil war. The statistical data clearly demonstrates that the violence meets the benchmarks of a civil war. Coupling this data with the professed intent of the Taliban to overthrow the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) it is clear that Afghanistan is in the midst of a civil war.[6] What is not clear is whether that classification has any impact on the operational approach employed on the ground.

Insurgency vs. Civil War

Internal strife and civil wars have devastating consequences that threaten the future of states struggling to build institutions across divided societies. The Chinese strategist Sun Tzu

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[3] Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi eds., *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 10.

[4] James Dobbins, *Ending Afghanistan's Civil War*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND%5FCT271.pdf (accessed March 25, 2010).

[5] Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict." Unpublished monograph dated May 2010, provided by authors in email contact.

[6] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 2nd edition, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 236.

recognized this long ago when he wrote, "War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied." [7] This violence transcends boundaries as weaponry, mercenaries, terrorists, refugees, epidemics, and other repercussions of conflict affect people and governments across borders. Strife internal to one country can destabilize an entire region in the process. Better understanding of these internal conflicts is necessary to be more effective at reducing the impacts of this violence.

In 2006, there was a national debate about whether the conflict in Iraq was an insurgency or a civil war. Edward Wong of the New York Times examined the debate among academics, the press and policy makers. He determined that although the conflict clearly fit the definition of a civil war, the administration refused to recognize it as one.[8] In his estimation, this decision resulted from the perception of waning public support and a failure of strategy for the Iraq war.

Another factor was a lack of consensus between any of the participants of this debate and that this lack of coherence made it infeasible to classify the violence as a civil war. James Fearon also recognized the political implications of renaming the conflict a civil war when we wrote, "The U.S. media would interpret the change [recognizing the violence as a civil war, instead of an insurgency] in the White House's position on this question as a major concession, an open acknowledgement of dashed hopes and failed policy."[9] In the end, the government never did

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[7] Sunzi and Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War*, UNESCO collection of representative works, (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971), 63.

[8] Edward Wong, "A Matter of Definition: What Makes a Civil War, and Who Declares It So?" *The New York Times*, November 26, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/26/world/middleeast/26war. html (accessed April 25, 2010).

[9] James D. Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no 2 (March/April 2007), 2.

recognize the violence in Iraq as a civil war due to the political blowback.[10] Iraq epitomizes the difficulty of seeking to apply operational definitions of war.[11]

Debates over the American public's support for operations and interventions overseas continue today. An example of a current debate revolves around Nigeria, a country with unclassified internal violence.[12] Due to Nigeria's importance as a hydrocarbon supplier to the U.S. and the world,[13] there are significant political and economic implications of classifying the violence.[14] These discussions exemplify the highly political nature of naming conventions when it comes to civil violence.[15] Empirical evidence aside, the naming conventions in use to describe conflict carry domestic and international consequences.

The type of violence scrutinized by decision makers has domestic policy implications for the nation and others abroad. David Laitin argues that the distinctions are critical, "There is a scientific community that studies civil wars, and understands their dynamics and how they, in general, end. This research is valuable to our nation's security."[16] However, the tensions that surface from this debate are clear. Classification of violence in concrete terms is necessary to address it properly, while that clarification could be politically inconvenient and restrictive.

When a conflict is determined to be an insurgency, organizations within the international community such as Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organizations

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[10] Blowback is the unintended negative effects of a particular policy decision.

[11] Wong.

[12] Adam Nossiter, "Death Toll From Religious and Ethnic Violence in Nigeria Rises to 500," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/09/world/africa/09nigeria.html (accessed May 9, 2010).

[13] Nigeria holds the largest natural gas reserves and the second largest reserves of light sweet crude in Africa. Nigeria is also the 5th largest foreign supplier of U.S. oil.

[14] "Nigeria" Country Analysis Brief, United States Energy Information Agency, http://www. eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Nigeria/Background.html accessed October 8, 2010.

[15] Mahmood Mamdani, "The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency," *The London Review of Books* 29, no. 5 (2007), 5.

[16] Wong.

(NGOs) and other Nations can perceive that classification as an absolution of the challenging faction's grievance(s). Under international law, any government that recognizes an insurgency "regards the insurgents as legal contestants, and not mere lawbreakers."[17] The U.S. government first employed this method of recognition with respect to the Cuban Civil War of 1868-78.[18] Therefore, it can become a matter of convenience for a third party government to recognize an insurgency in order to avoid explicitly declaring an allegiance or adopting a position of neutrality towards the conflict.

If, however, a conflict is classified a revolution, third party governments perceive that to be an indictment of the incumbent government's ability to provide for the needs of their people. By acknowledging the challenging faction's grievance(s), the international community is inherently supporting the movement, which garners support for that revolution. Looking to the recent past in Afghanistan, in April 1989, the U.S. appointed a Special Envoy with the rank of Ambassador to demonstrate its continuing support to rebel groups.[19] Official governmental recognition also influences how the Laws of Land Warfare apply to the insurgents. Recognition of belligerent forces entitles the recognized forces to have the rules of war apply to them as legitimate contenders instead of treating them as pirates or illegal combatants.[20]

Hew Strachan captures the complex nature of conflict when he writes, "We do not possess sufficient understanding of war itself, its nature, and its character. Today's wars can seem 'new' because we have not been addressing them properly."[21] The changing face of war also

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[17] Rosalyn Higgins, "Internal War and International Law," in *The Future of the International Legal Order*, edited by Edwin Cyril Black and Richard A. Falk (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969-1972), 88.

[18] Anthony Cullen, *The Concept of Non-International Armed Conflict in International Humanitarian Law*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

[19] S.K. Verma, *An Introduction to Public International Law*, (New Delhi, India: Prentice-Hall of India, 1998), 114.

[20] Verma, 113.

[21] Hew Strachan, *The Changing Character of War,* (Oxford, UK: Europaeum, 2007), 28.

5

makes any knowledge transitory at best. Strachan captured the essence of the problem in Afghanistan, which is that misunderstanding the nature of a particular conflict drives solutions that are not appropriate to the situation.

Insurgency

Across the spectrum of literature on insurgency there is little consensus as to what an 'insurgency' means. Such phrases as 'unconventional warfare,' 'irregular warfare,' 'internal war,' 'guerrilla war,' 'insurrection,' 'rebellion,' 'revolution,' and 'people's liberation war' undoubtedly presents anybody with a formidable array of like-meaning terms. This clearly presents a dilemma when attempting to understand what an insurgency is and what it represents. Therefore, it becomes necessary to either dismiss these terms as jargon, 'all the words mean the same thing,' or accept them and meticulously distinguish between each term. Many of these definitions and their meanings derive from the context of the usage.

Early definitions of insurgency written by the colonial forces conducting counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are void of any ideological underpinnings. Arguably, this is an indictment of the colonial imperial mindset in order to absolve the exploitative policies. According to Jeffrey Record, "Insurgents are any organized movement aimed at overthrowing a constituted government via subversion and armed conflict, including terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and traditional military operations; the latter include all armed rebellions against foreign government rule or military occupation."[22] The key military characteristic of insurgent wars is the clash between regular government forces and irregular insurgent forces. While this definition addresses the military aspect, it completely ignores the political underpinnings causing the conflict.

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[22] Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win,* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009), ix.

6

According to John Pustay, the term 'insurgency warfare' refers to a phenomenon of composite conflict. He continues his description by adding, "It is a cellular development of resistance against an incumbent political regime which expands from the initial stage of subversion-infiltration through the intermediate stages of overt resistance by small armed bands and insurrection to final fruition in civil war."[23] This definition introduces a concept of escalation regarding the amount of violence and instability resultant from the conflict. Figure 1 attempts to
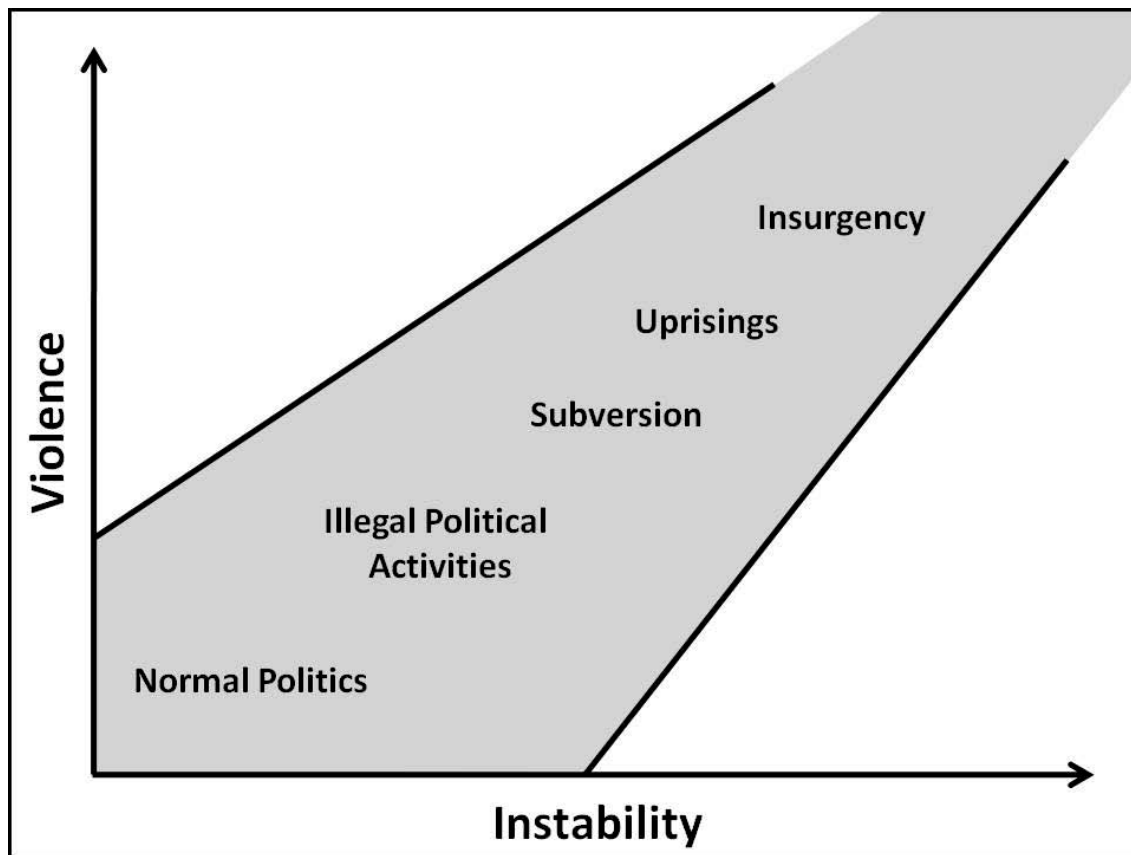

Figure 1: Low End of the Spectrum of Conflict

graphically represent this escalation along a continuum of warfare. The lower end of violence and instability represents normal political interaction. The higher end of this graphic represents a relatively higher degree of instability and incurred violence in the event of an insurgency.

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[23] John S. Pustay, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 5.

The fundamental fact about an insurgency is that insurgents are weak relative to the governments they are fighting, at least at the start of operations. If government forces knew whom the rebels were and how to find them, operations to destroy or capture them would be relatively easy to conduct. This is true even in a state whose military and police capacities are low.[24] The operational environment defines the specifics necessary to conduct any insurgency campaign because the conditions on the ground constrain what is possible.

The philosophical and theoretical foundation of insurgency warfare is the ability to find weakness in strength and strength in weakness. The fundamental overarching prescription derived from this concept is to completely politicize warfare through ideological mobilization of the masses in support of an insurgency. This particular understanding of insurgency warfare is generally referred to as a 'Maoist Theory of People's War.' This Maoist form of warfare has proliferated globally since the success it achieved against both the Imperial Japanese Army and the Chinese Nationalist Army in the 1940s. Modified versions of Mao's 'people's wars' have met with varied success in such countries as Vietnam, Bolivia, Turkey, Nepal, and Peru.[25]

Some argue that insurgencies and guerrilla operations are not new. Rather, they are adaptations of traditional principles of irregular warfare; traditions that have evolved out of pragmatic necessity while remaining intrinsically linked to dogmatic political-ideological prescriptions.[26] Here again, the term irregular warfare has a different connotation. The implication in this usage is that irregular warfare equates to 'dirty' warfare. In this respect, the term 'irregular' implies that this form of warfare is outside the traditional, culturally acceptable norms of waging war.

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[24] Pustay, 80.

[25] Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary, and John Tirman, eds., *Terror, Insurgency, and the State* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 3-4.

[26] John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counterinsurgency*, (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishers, 2005), 3.

Walt Rostow described guerrilla warfare as a reactionary measure of society to modernization. He argued that the benefits of modern technology brought changing societal norms, resulting in violent struggles over those changes. Rostow wrote that this process is "truly revolutionary. It touches every aspect of the traditional life- economic, social, and political." This revolutionary process fundamentally changes the existing relationships. The ideology present behind guerrilla warfare can certainly evolve over time especially with the transition from traditional practices to a more interconnected globalized world.[27]

Many authors mix terminologies when the distinction is unclear. Stathis Kalyvas uses terms interchangeably while still providing explicit definitions. In his writings, he uses the term 'irregular war' equivalently with 'guerrilla war.' He goes on to clarify that "analytically, the distinct character of irregular war is marked by the lack of clear frontlines between the parties to the war and the unwillingness of the insurgent to directly face-off with the incumbents in the context of set-piece battles."[28] This is one example of where it is helpful for the author to clarify the intent behind the terms, instead of forcing the reader to divine the meaning.

For Kalyvas, the use of the term 'irregular' is technical. He is providing a precise description of the forces partaking in the conflict as something other than regular army soldiers. This description as a form of warfare is something more akin to the term in use by the U.S. Army of Unconventional Warfare (UW). According to FM 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphic*, UW is "a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped,

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[27] W.W. Rostow, "Guerrilla Warfare in Underdeveloped Areas," in *The Guerrilla-And How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette*, ed. Thomas Nicholls Greene (New York: Praeger, 1965), 55.

[28] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Fear, Preemption, Retaliation: An Empirical Test of the Security Dilemma." In *Intra-State Conflict, Governments and Security: Dilemmas of Deterrence and Assurance,* ed. Stephen M. Saideman and Marie-Joëlle Zahar (London, UK: Routledge, 2008), 20-32.

9

supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external sources."[29] Again, this describes the

type of warfare and does not account for the rationality behind the fighting.

John Mackinlay discusses the evolution of insurgency and the Western military

understanding of the processes and actions behind it in his book *Insurgent Archipelago*. He

claims that most people's understanding of insurgency focuses on Mao's 'people's war' concept,

and any refinement in that understanding ceased after the end of the Cold War. Realistically, the

phenomenon of insurgency continued to progress after that time and therefore, "Insurgencies

based on a people's war and its derivations, which were potent and successful through the Cold

War, no longer represented the entire span of activity."[30] He asserts that this new form of

insurgency is more complex than any previous form of insurgency. This modern day insurgency

brings together political activists and fighters from many different countries and cultures.

Mackinlay further elaborates on this point of greater interconnectedness when he writes,

"By the first decade of the 21st century, modern forms of insurgency were unrecognizable from

the 1960s versions that continued to fixate counter insurgent thinking."[31] He argues that this

evolution is not taken into account by the DoD when it released the 2006 COIN doctrine. In his

assessment, this doctrine is nothing new, only a rehashing of old concepts pertaining to

insurgencies. Mackinlay professes that this new doctrine is focusing on the Maoist concept of

'people's war' and does not account for the types of insurgencies that are currently developing.[32]

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[29]U.S. Department of Defense, *Field Manual 1-02, Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2004), 1-193.

[30] John Mackinlay, *Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to bin Laden*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 72.

[31] Ibid., 78.

[32] Ibid., 78-79.

Mackinlay also addresses the profound impact of globalization[33] on the conduct of insurgencies. He argues that globalization has informationalized the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) of successful insurgency cells. Coupled with increased modernization, the technologies of warfare have also made the attacks by insurgents more deadly and therefore more sensational for the global media. According to Mackinlay, "Principles that had long been the backbones of an insurgency are being altered by new technologies and global changes."[34] The globalization, modernization, and informationalization of insurgency warfare greatly increased the effectiveness of global communications between like-minded groups and therefore increased the difficulty in countering the insurgents.

Mackinlay holds that insurgents no longer needed a wilderness for survival, nor is it necessary to accept the overwhelming strength of the opposition. The altered social environment resultant from globalization provided the means for a different way of uprising. Utilizing technology insurgents are now able to subvert the beliefs of a much wider audience. The proliferation of mass communications allows insurgents to mobilize an international array of migrant minorities and nations around the world. This enables insurgents to attack the government through propaganda instead of having to achieve tangible results such as soldiers killed or territory seized.[35]

Mackinlay emphasizes the basics; namely, that it is of supreme importance to remember the genesis of the word insurgence. The essence of insurgency is the political activity and not the conduct of fighting. Mackinlay again comments on this phenomenon stating, "insurgency refers to the act of rising up against a stronger authority. It is not a method of fighting, it cannot be used

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[33] Globalization being a technology-enabled process of improved communications and transportations that facilitates a more rapid movement of goods, people, money, technology, ideas, and cultures across and within international borders.

[34] Mackinlay, 78-79.

[35] Ibid., 79.

to defeat armies or invade territory."[36] Even if the military forces that emerge at the final stages of an insurgency to fight civil wars can fight, win, and occupy territory, insurgency focuses on the stages of activism and subversion that precede conventional conflict. In this context, insurgency is more specifically concerned with the organization and direction of purposeful action to achieve a political concession rather than a particular technique of warfare.

Fearon and Laitin use the terms 'civil war', 'insurgency', and 'rebellion' indistinguishably from one another. This inter-mixing of terminology perpetrates the fundamental flaw of failing to recognize any difference between them. Fearon and Laitin's critical examination of conflict explores the causes of internal wars. They show that the current prevalence of internal war is mainly the result of a steady accumulation of protracted conflict since the 1950s and 1960s rather than a sudden change associated with a new, post-Cold War international system.[37]

Fearon and Laitin thus argue for a new understanding of civil war and insurgency. They define insurgency as "a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas."[38] They continue this thought arguing for understanding civil war in a post-Cold War system in terms of insurgency and guerrilla warfare. This particular form of military practice harnesses diverse political agendas. Their findings indicate that countries at risk for civil war possess the same conditions that favor insurgency.[39] This description of conflict adds to the concept of escalation introduced earlier in this monograph.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) pamphlet entitled, *Guide to the Analysis of an Insurgency*, provides the definition of insurgency as:

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[36]Mackinlay, 223.

[37] J.D. Fearon and D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003), 75.

[38] Ibid., 79.

[39] Ibid., 75.

> A protracted political-military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. Insurgent activity–including guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilization, for example, propaganda, recruitment, front and covert party organization and international activity - is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and legitimacy.[40]

Delegitimizing the government provides the people with an opportunity to support and/or facilitate insurgent action because the population believes the insurgents can best meet their needs and the government cannot.[41] While this definition describes the technical what of an insurgency and may even begin to address some of the how, it completely disregards the purpose driving people to commit violent political acts.

In this definition the terms guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and illegal political activity, are all lumped together under the umbrella of the term insurgency. Failing to differentiate between these forms of warfare avoids specific questions with respect to international law. As discussed earlier, officially recognizing a terrorist as an insurgent or belligerent officially sanctions their cause. Therefore, "the recognizing state becomes entitled to the status of a neutral state and the laws of war become applicable to the armed conflict."[42] Due to the transnational nature of terrorism in the current operational context, it would significantly affect the U.S. government's ability to conduct a global counter-terrorism campaign.

This is especially true since many of the terrorists are residing in countries that may not know the location of the terrorists or do not possess the will or capability to appropriately address terrorism. Therefore, to expedite counter-terrorism operations, not recognizing groups as insurgents or belligerents has facilitated prosecution of targets. This becomes most apparent in the

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[40] Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* (Washington, DC), 2.

[41] Peter R. Mansoor & Mark S. Ulrich, "Linking Doctrine to Action: A New COIN Center-of-Gravity Analysis," *Military Review* (September-October 2007), 45-51.

[42] Ranbir Singh, "Insurgency and International Law & its Legal Consequences," http://www.nlsir.in/attachments/077_20%20Isurgency%20and%20International%20Law%20and%20its%20legal%20conseq uences.pdf (accessed August 19, 2010).

extraordinary rendition program that the U.S. operates. This program allows for the apprehension and extrajudicial transfer of an individual from one state to another. If official recognition occurs, this program would not be consistent with the Hague Conventions and the U.S. would then be subject to international law.[43]

The form, function, and tactics employed in an insurgency are what typically qualify it in some manner as one of the many terms applied to it. Thus, if the purpose of the insurgency is to replace an existing sociopolitical order, it is revolutionary in nature. When insurgent units are small bands employing unconventional tactics, it is guerrilla warfare. If the insurgents are illegitimately using violence against the population, then it is terrorism. In discussing this problem, Samuel Huntington satirically remarked, "No doubt each term serves some purpose, although one cannot help but feel that semantics has perhaps outstripped theory."[44] All of these terms are still applicable to an insurgency, they just become qualifying descriptors of the conflict.

The specific application of insurgency warfare is unique for each event. Therefore, it is vital to assess the environment in which the insurgency is occurring. Warfare is too complex to believe that regardless of how similar a situation is, that doing the same exact thing in a different context will achieve the same effect. In his 2004 article entitled "Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare," Robert Tomes identifies four elements that distinguish an insurgency: "cell-networks that maintain secrecy, terrorism used to foster insecurity among the population and drive them to the movement for protection, multifaceted attempts to cultivate support in the general population, often by undermining the new regime, and attacks against the government."[45] Clearly identifying and distinguishing insurgency is difficult, however, these elements will assist in delineating civil conflict from insurgency.

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[43] Singh.

[44] Samuel Huntington, "Guerrilla Warfare in Theory and Policy," in *Modern Guerrilla Warfare,* ed. Franklin Mark Osanka (New York, NY: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 1.

[45] Robert R. Tomes, "Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare," *Parameters*, XXXIV (2004): 18.

Civil War

As various definitional criteria for civil war are considered, the nature of war does not change. War is a political act of organized violence to obtain some advantage or goal in terms of power, territory, or security.[46] Thus, war is not an isolated act of random violence, but rather one entailing political goals and outcomes. War is a form of armed contest between and among governments, factions, and groups wanting recognition of an expressed purpose in concrete political terms. This understanding of the term 'war' results in higher level of instability and violence and represents the high end of the continuum of warfare. These forms of warfare
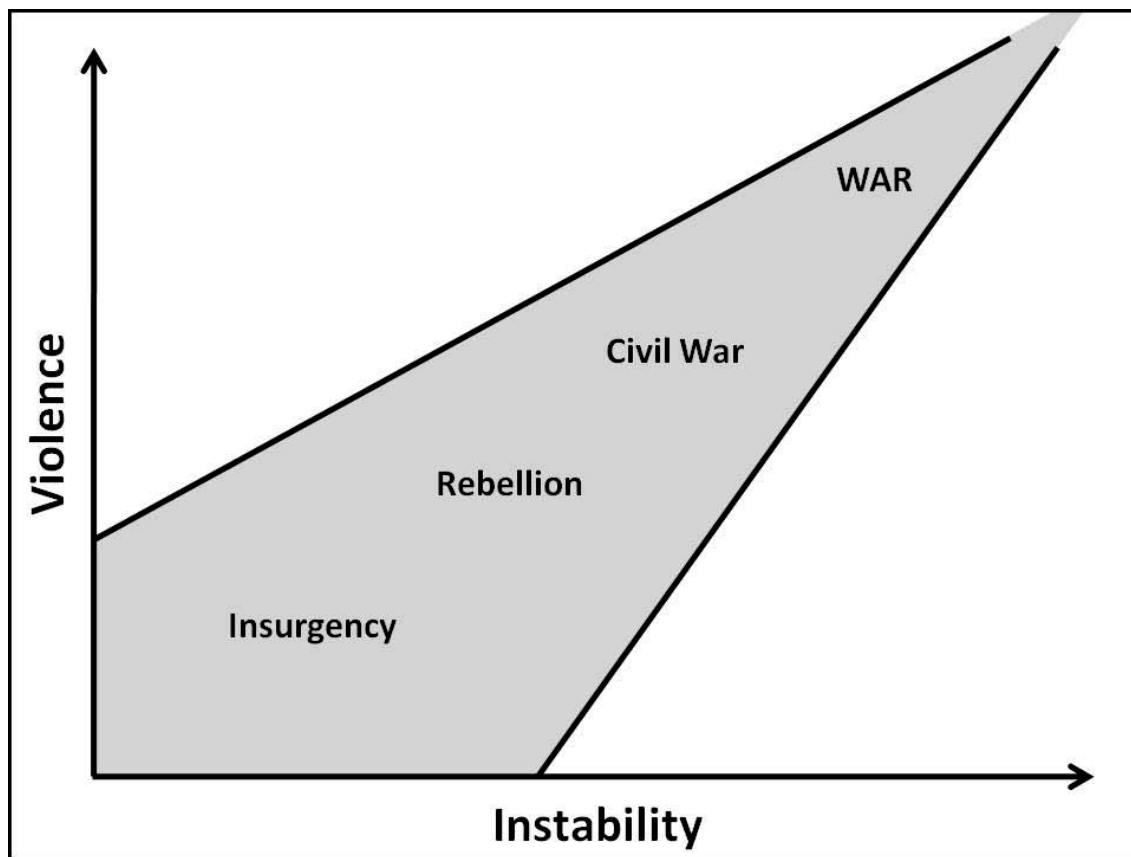

Figure 2: High End of the Spectrum of Conflict

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[46] Marie Olson Lounsbery and Frederic Pearson, *Civil Wars: Internal Struggles, Global Consequences* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3.

include force short of war or lesser levels of political violence. Graphically displayed in Figure 2 is the concept of gradual escalation along the spectrum of conflict, a logical extension of Figure 1.

Along this continuum of warfare, somewhere below full-scale civil war, it is common to find uprisings and rebellions by disaffected groups. These uprisings are frequently termed insurgencies, and if sustained over time by organized forces, while reaching a certain level of lethality, they transition into civil wars. Insurgent groups might begin by attacking symbols of government power such as police officers or infrastructure in order to accumulate warfighting resources and undermine public confidence and support for the sitting government.[47] These acts also contribute as a deterrent to the occupying authorities and potential foreign interveners. The attacks, if sustained and nurtured by local or outside supplies of arms and resources, might then escalate into full-fledged civil war as bands of fighters become organized into military, paramilitary, or militia formations.

In the Correlates of War (COW) project, Small and Singer have defined a civil war as "any conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole, (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides." Further separating the idea of civil war from other forms of internal armed conflict is the requirement that state violence is sustained and reciprocated. Additionally, the war should exceed a certain threshold of deaths, typically more than 1,000.[48] The Small-Singer definition, consistent with their international war definition, provides a clear-cut reference point for identifying, counting, and accounting for civil wars. However, this definition is more stringent than those of other civil war analysts are since it sets a higher (1,000) battle death threshold and excludes incidents of significant pitched battles between groups in a society. Some even argue that civil violence resulting in the death of 500, for

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[47]Lounsbery and Pearson, 5.

[48] Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars 1816-1980.* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982).

example, would be devastating enough to be considered a war if it showed patterns of recurrence and continuity, and would likely result in lasting bitterness that might spur future revenge attacks by the victimized groups.[49]

Several scholars have modified the COW threshold level as they search for a comprehensive dataset from which to analyze civil war patterns. Regan, in his "Users Manual," has defined civil wars as violence against the recognized government of a state involving 200 or more battle related deaths during a given year.[50] Bercovitch, although primarily focusing on international conflict, maintains that an "internationalized civil war," i.e., one attracting significant outside intervention by a regional or major power, is one that reaches 100 battle-related deaths per year.[51] These modifications generally increase the number of cases or specifically include a country these scholars are using in a comparative analysis model. Typically, the larger academic community does not accept these cases due to the unclear motivations for including the specific country in the dataset.[52]

Many scholars of intrastate conflict, and the world's premier conflict database (COW) commonly treat civil wars as a form of political violence with three major characteristics.[53] First, they involve fighting between agents of a state and organized non-state group(s) that seek to capture control of the government, or over a region. Second, the fighting kills at least 1,000 people over its course and 100 on average in every year. Third, at least 100 people die on both

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[49] Lounsbery and Pearson, 4.

[50] Patrick M. Regan, "Users Manual for Pat Regan's Data on Intervention in Civil Conflicts." http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~pregan/ (accessed June 7, 2010).

[51] Jacob Bercovitch, ed. *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996).

[52] Nicholas Sambanis, "What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December, 2004), 825.

[53] See Sambanis, Small & Singer, Fearon & Laitin, and COW database.

sides of the conflict.[54] This working definition of civil war provides a solid baseline to delineate when conflict reaches civil war proportions. Placing the onus of perpetrating violence on both opponents captures the duality necessary to consider any conflict a civil war.

This duality is a distinct component of civil war, which sets it apart from other types of internal political violence. Sustained conflict between relatively organized forces is a clear distinction from an insurgency. An insurgency does not require any violent response from the incumbent government, a political concession is equally plausible. Opposing parties must have the ability to engage in more than just sporadic fighting for any violence to be classified a civil war. This applies regardless of the actual tactics employed in sustained combat, which might range from pitched battles to guerrilla hit-and-run raids (hence the term 'guerrilla war' as one potential form of civil war).

Kalyvas and Balcells further support this concept of scale in a more recent work when they write, "Our argument applies to conflicts that have already reached a certain level of intensity; at very low levels of intensity, conflicts fail to reach the level of a military contest."[55] These authors continue to explore the connections between civil war and insurgency and conclude, contrary to widespread understanding, that not all civil wars are insurgencies. Going further into their analysis, they determine that "there is considerable heterogeneity in civil wars."[56] Essentially, the old axiom from the study of insurgencies still applies here, while they may look alike, no two are ever the same. For the purposes of their research, Kalyvas and Balcells disaggregate civil wars based on the technology of rebellion, which are conceptually the joint military technologies of incumbents and challengers engaged in armed conflict.

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[54] Fearon and Laitin, 76.

[55] Kalyvas and Balcells, 1.

[56] Ibid., 10.

Several terms in use refer to those who have taken up arms or who promote the use of violence against a government. These terms can be interchangeable, but often carry political or legal implications in the way they are used. The term 'belligerent' has been used rather generically to identify those engaged in any armed conflict, and the term 'rebel,' of course, is applied to armed opponents of governmental authorities. The implications of international law again appear with the term 'belligerent.' Under international law, "When belligerency has been established, the relations between the warring powers are determined by the laws of war. In civil wars, if the insurgent force is granted belligerency rights, neutral nations generally abstain from supplying or helping either the established government or its opponent."[57] Therefore, international law constrains the menu of options for a country that officially categorizes a conflict.

The political implications of using the terms 'belligerent,' 'rebels,' 'insurgents' and 'freedom fighters' is important to understand. The terms used to describe the acts that are occurring informs the international community's perceptions of the legitimacy and legality of actions by both sides of the conflict. Likewise, a more neutral term often assigned to insurgents by their admirers is 'freedom fighters,' in reference to their perceived pursuit of justice. For the same reason, governments wishing to delegitimize their opponents are ever more frequently prone to refer to insurgents as 'terrorists' or 'criminals.' This terminology often magnifies the population's negative perceptions of the destructive tactics used by these groups.[58]

Lounsbery and Pearson argue that many civil wars share similar characteristics by definition, but the motivations for violence vary in relation to the conduct of war. The reasons to fight in an identity war differ from the motivations to prosecute an ideological war. This

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[57] "Belligerency" Columbia Online Encyclopedia, 6th edition, 2010. http://www.answers.com/topic/belligerency (accessed August 19, 2010).

[58] Lounsbery and Pearson, 6-7.

discussion progresses even further when they write, "While both forms ultimately relate to struggles for power, ideological wars tend to be wars of revolution, where rebellious participants aim to overthrow or radically restructure their form of government, thereby changing the nature of the regime in the process."[59] These conflicts ultimately revolve around defining the political and economic structures of a given society and their future direction. The evolution of these governmental structures often results in a change in the type of government, or the party controlling the existing government.

The 'identity wars' that Lounsbery and Pearson explore tend to focus more on political machinations. This becomes clearer when they assess that, "Identity groups, on the other hand, will more likely find themselves engaged in struggles for political rights, autonomy, security, territory, or secession."[60] These groups focus more on limited goals and objectives. Achieving varying degrees of political/economic power, government services, and political representation define success. Groups will often receive some separate recognition from the state without necessarily changing the form of government. In the end, it is difficult to study civil war without considering how groups in conflict shift from one form of violence to another. It may be useful to analyze political violence taken holistically, rather than attempt to cut across the complex social phenomenon of 'war' with arbitrary definitions.[61]

Dr. Nicholas Sambanis is a political scientist intricately connected to this argument, and has written on this subject extensively. His publications have appeared in several journals. He is the co-author of *Making War and Building Peace*, a book about United Nations peacebuilding. He is co-editor of *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, two volumes of case studies on civil war, published by the World Bank in 2005. He is also working on a book on the causes of

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[59] Lounsbery and Pearson, 35.

[60] Ibid., 35.

[61] Ibid., 37.

self-determination movements and secessionist civil war. Dr. Sambanis is researching questions

on violent civil conflict; the interaction of economic development, political institutions, and civil

war; and the uses of international organizations to prevent or resolve large-scale political

violence.

In his article entitled "What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an

Operational Definition," Nicholas Sambanis comprehensively defines civil war.[62] The

components captured here are the relevant ones, disregarding coding criteria for onset and

termination of conflict. The essence of his definition clarifies some of the general confusion

surrounding classifications of violence. Sambanis offers the following criteria to mark a civil war:

> a. The war takes place within the territory of a state that is a member of the international system with a population of 500,000 or greater.
> b. The parties involved in the conflict (incumbent and challenger) have political and military organizational structures, and they have publicly stated political objectives.[63]
> c. The government (through its military or militias) must be a principal combatant. The main insurgent organization must be locally represented and recruit locally.[64]
> d. Throughout its duration, the conflict must experience sustained violence, at least at the minor or intermediate level.[65]
> e. Throughout the war, the weaker party must be able to mount effective resistance.[66]

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[62] Sambanis, 825.

[63] This should apply to the majority of the parties in the conflict. This criterion distinguishes insurgent groups and political parties from criminal gangs and riotous mobs. But the distinction between criminal and political violence may fade in some countries. "Terrorist" organizations would qualify as insurgent groups according to this coding rule, if they cause violence at the required levels for war. Noncombatant populations that are often victimized in civil wars are not considered a "party" to the war if they are not organized in a militia or other such from, able to apply violence in pursuit of their political objectives.

[64] Additional external involvement and recruitment need not imply that the war is not intrastate. Insurgent groups may operate from neighboring countries, but they must also have some territorial control (bases) in the civil war country and/or rebels must reside in the civil war country.

[65] There should be no 3-year period during which the conflict causes less than 500 deaths.

[66] Effective resistance is measure by at least 100 deaths inflicted on the stronger party. If the violence becomes effectively one sided, even if the aggregate effective resistance threshold of 100 deaths has already been met, the civil war must be coded as having ended.

These criteria form the basis of a definition for 'civil war.' Comparing this definition with the conflict in Afghanistan will determine if the violence there qualifies as a civil war or an insurgency.

Dr. Sambanis also distinguishes civil war from insurgency largely based on the scale of violence and the amount of popular mobilization. In personal communications with the author he wrote, "A reasonable way to distinguish between civil war and insurgency is to think of insurgency as a strategy that can be used in a civil war and civil war can be the term that describes a conflict that engages the majority of the population."[67] By contrast, an insurgency might be a strategy pursued by a small group of relatively low levels of public support. Therefore, the scale of the conflict and the amount of popular support (either implicit or explicit) differentiates an insurgency from a civil war.

Assessing the Conflict in Afghanistan

After nine years of conflict, the U.S. has not been able to achieve its stated goals of "denying al-Qaeda safe haven, denying Taliban the ability to overthrow the government, and strengthening the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future."[68] The nature of the conflict in Afghanistan is something fundamentally different that what the U.S. understands it to be. George Kennan recognized this propensity in all conflicts when he wrote, "War has a momentum of its own and it carries you away from all thoughtful intentions when you get into it."[69] U.S. intentions were clear when the war started, but have now changed overtime as the civil war continues to grow. Failing

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[67] Nicholas Sambanis, e-mail message to author, June 14, 2010.

[68] "National Security Strategy of the United States, 2010" (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2010), 20.

[69] Quoted in Mark Danner, "Iraq: The War on the Imagination," *The New York Review of Books,* December 31, 2006.

to properly address all of the aspects of this conflict is degrading international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan.

Much of this misunderstanding begins with how the U.S. perceives the enemy it is fighting in Afghanistan. While the term 'Taliban' is used in a very generic sense to describe the opposition, such clear distinctions do not exist on the ground. Ahmed Rashid made this observation explicitly when he wrote:

> The United States and NATO have failed to understand that the Taliban belong to neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan, but are a lumpen population, the product of refugee camps, militarised madrassas, and the lack of opportunities in the borderland of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The longer the war goes on, the more deeply rooted and widespread the Taliban and their transnational milieu will become.[70]

Describing the opposition as the 'Taliban Insurgency' conceals the possibility that the sources of support for the insurgency have been more numerous than the label would suggest, or that the ideology of the Taliban may have adapted over time.

Using the criteria identified so far, Figure 3 encapsulates the benchmarks for civil war. Assessing the conflict in Afghanistan using these benchmarks will assist in determining the type of violence now occurring. While these criteria appear to be highly objective, there is some amount of ambiguity in their application. There is still much debate in academic circles surrounding the notion of the state and the subsequent recognition as being a member of the

Criteria	Insurgency	Civil War
1,000 war-related deaths	X	X
Challenges sovereignty of state	X	X
Occurred within territory of the state in question	X	X
State is one of the principal combatants	X	X
Fight for national control of governance	X	X
Supplant/Replace Government Institutions		X
Rebels mount organized military opposition		X

Figure 3: Criteria for Classifying Conflict a Civil War[71]

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[70] Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2009), 401.

[71] Derived from Small & Singer, Collier, Hoeffler, Tomes, Mackinlay, and Sambanis.

international system.[72] Furthermore, attempting to quantify rebels mounting organized opposition

can be problematic when confronted with a complex system, which Afghanistan most certainly is.

In addition, it is difficult to measure how capable the belligerents are of challenging the

sovereignty of the state.

Fatalities Resulting from Violence

The Brookings Institute's Afghanistan Index provides the empirical data used to assess the

conflict in Afghanistan.[73] Figure 4 displays the number of casualties as a direct result of combat

Figure 4: War Related Deaths in Afghanistan, 2006-2009[74]

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[72] Sambanis, 829. The international community (through the United Nations) rejects a state's claim of sovereignty on occupied territories, is one example of this dispute. Specifically, West Bank and Gaza in Israel and Western Sahara in Morocco.

[73] Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," (July 31, 2010), http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index20100731.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

[74] All empirical data used in the creation of these tables was obtained from Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," (July 31, 2010), http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/Files/Programs/ FP/afghanistan%20index/index20100731.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

operations. These figures are a compilation of Department of Defense (DoD) and United Nations

Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA).[75] This data also accounts for the casualties of the

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANSF is comprised of the Afghan National Army

(ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP), and the Afghan Border Police (ABP).[76] With the

current data set, it becomes apparent that the 1,200 casualties resulting from violent activities in

2006 met the benchmark for classifying the conflict as a civil war. Using an expanded operational

definition of civil war from Sambanis, it is realistic to consider that the civil war in Afghanistan

started in 2005.

State Sovereignty

The belligerents, armed opposition groups (AOGs)[77], or Taliban, in this case, have

demonstrated an enduring capability to challenge the Government of the Islamic Republic of

Afghanistan (GIRoA). The Taliban are capable of resuming control over the governmental

functions necessary to run the country, especially since they were the established government

from 1996-2001. In some areas, the Afghans perceive the Taliban to be a more effective form of

government, rather than GIRoA. David Kilcullen also has observed this phenomenon and writes,

"By mid-2008, the Taliban were operating 13 guerrilla courts throughout the southern part of

Afghanistan-a shadow judiciary that expanded Taliban influence by settling disagreements,

hearing civil and criminal matters, and using the provisions of Islamic shari'a law and their own

Pashtun code to handle everything from land disputes to capital crimes."[78] The Taliban may be

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[75] Some of the coalition casualties may have occurred under the auspices of Operation Enduring Freedom. Therefore, the number of fatalities inside of Afghanistan is slightly less, but this discrepancy is not significant enough to invalidate the 1,000 fatalities benchmark.

[76] These casualty figures combine the ABP fatalities into the ANP numbers.

[77] For the purposes of this monograph, AOGs are a composition of any groups operating against the government. These include drug lords, warlords, crime lords, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda (AQ).

[78] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 47.

cruel, but the Afghans consider them fair. Lacking anything better from GIRoA, dispute resolution is governing in the eyes of the people.

The most recent reporting by the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) regarding Taliban penetration is highly informative with respect to their capacity to challenge the GIRoA. As demonstrated in Figures 5 and 6 the Taliban are rapidly spreading
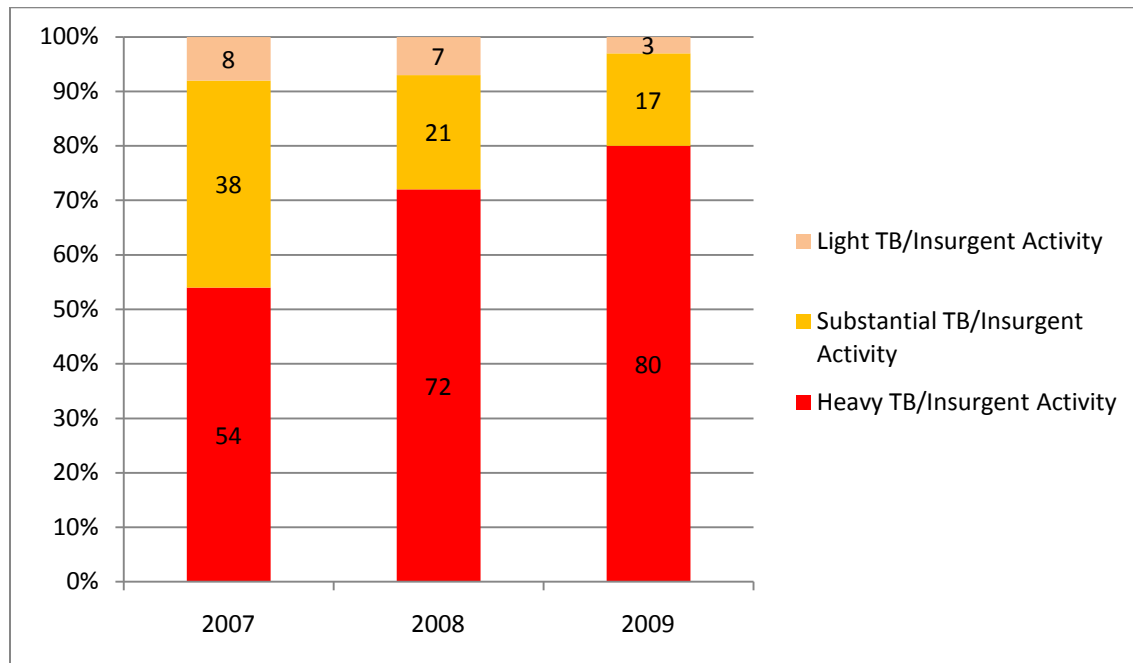

Figure 5: Taliban/Insurgent Penetration in Afghanistan[79]

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[79] Data courtesy of International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), http://www.icosmaps.net/latest_maps/051_map/iframe_3 (accessed August 18, 2010).

Areas of Taliban presence in Afghanistan during January - August 2009. Data detailing the presence of the Taliban in Afghanistan was gathered from daily insurgent activity reports between January and September 2009. ICOS believes that the level of incidents recorded by this methodology is conservative, as it is based on public third-party reports, and not all incidents are made public.

Permanent presence: defined by provinces that average one (or more) insurgent attack (lethal and non-lethal) per week.

Substantial presence: an average one or more insurgent attacks per month and include residents who believe Taliban are active locally (based on frequency of Taliban sightings).

Light presence: defined by less than one insurgent attack per month and local residents don't believe Taliban is active locally (based on frequency of Taliban sightings).

To calculate percentages, the total area of Afghanistan was divided by the total area hosting a permanent/substantial/light Taliban presence.
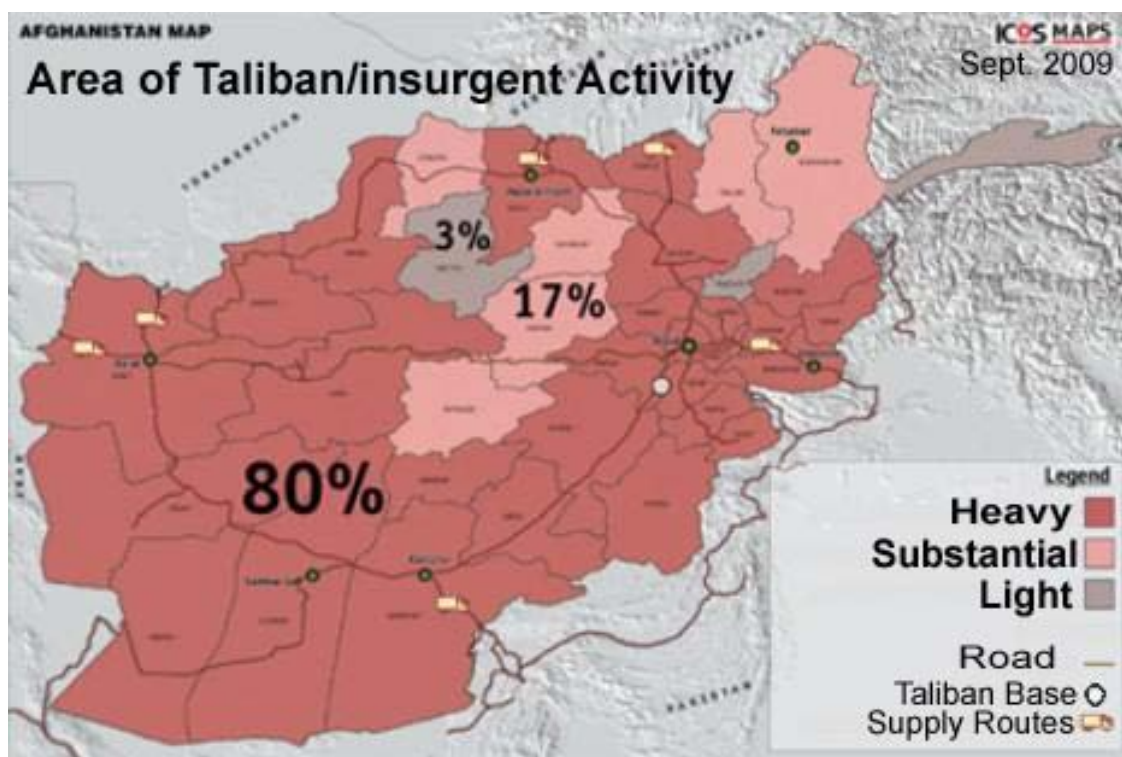
Figure 6: Taliban/Insurgent Activity Dispersion within Afghanistan 2009[80]

throughout the country. In just three years, the Taliban has increased their capacity to conduct

violent activities by fifty percent. This information, combined with the assessment from

Afghanistan last year that all of the provinces except Kabul have shadow governments

established and operated by the Taliban, most certainly indicates their ability to challenge the

sovereignty of GIRoA.

Reciprocal Violence

Figures 7 and 8 delineate the number of civilian casualties resulting from AOGs and

ANSF/Coalition Forces, also described as Pro-Government forces (PGFs).[81] These figures clearly

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[80] International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), http://www.icosmaps.net/ latest_maps/051_map/iframe_3 (accessed August 18, 2010). See previous note for a description of the benchmarks used to classify the activity levels.

[81] Pro-Government Forces (PGFs) encompass all elements of the ANSF (ANA, ANP, and ABP) and Coalition Forces operating against the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs).

indicate that the AOGs have perpetrated a majority of the violence on the population inside of

Afghanistan. This monograph does not use Taliban body counts due to the infrequency in reports
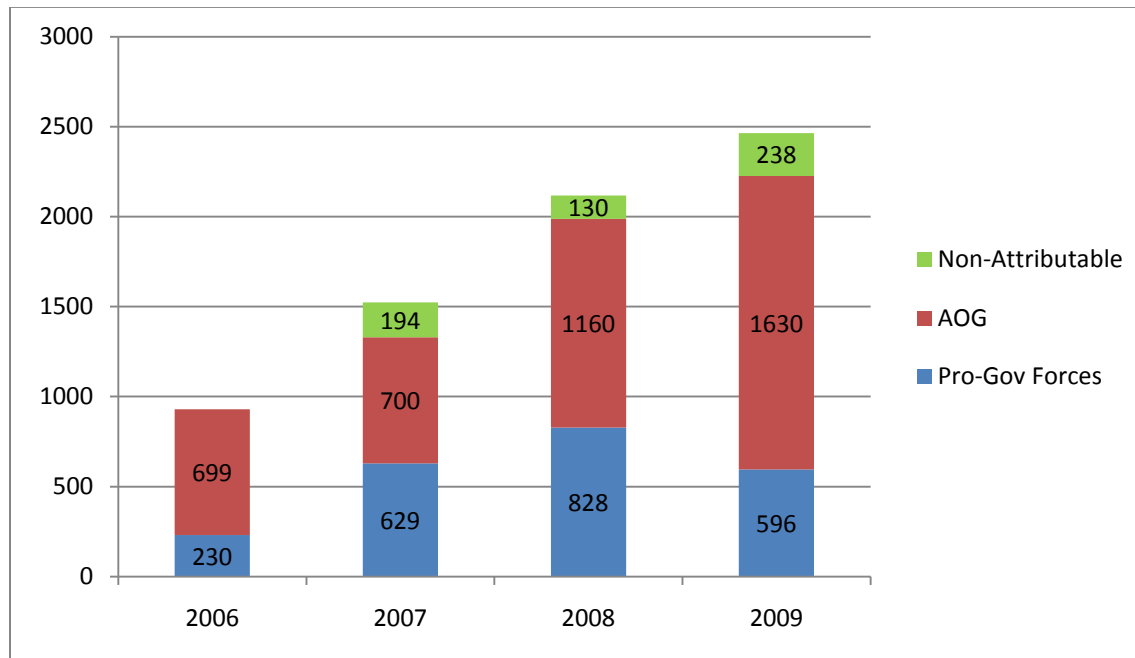

Figure 7: Attribution of Civilian Casualties Resulting from Kinetic Activities[82]

concerning enemy casualties. This makes it hard to show empirically that the government is

effectively combating the challengers within its borders. However, given the number of casualties

attributed to Pro-Government forces, it is clear that officially sanctioned government agencies are

one of the principal combatants in this conflict.

Organized & Sustained Resistance

Figure 9 represents a compilation of all casualties caused by either AOGs or PGFs. It is

clear from the number of casualties attributed to the Taliban that they are capable of mounting

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[82] All empirical data used in the creation of these tables was obtained from Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," (July 31, 2010), http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/Files/Programs/ FP/afghanistan%20index/index20100731.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

organized resistance. There are many reports from Afghanistan that describe in detail the fighting

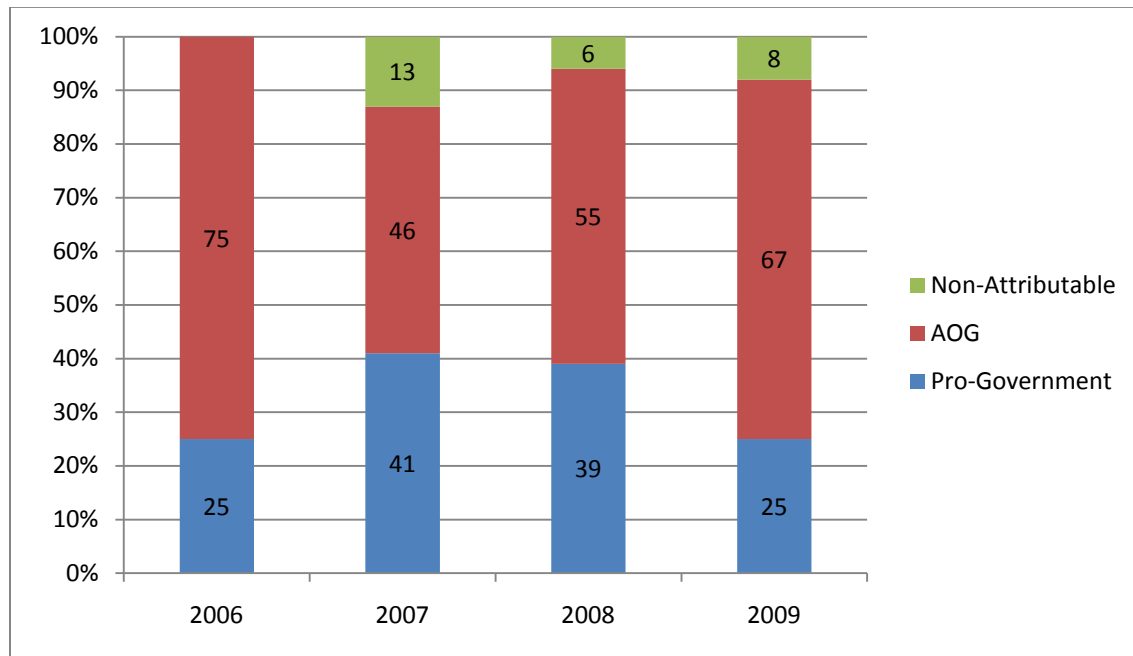formations that the AOGs regularly employ against PGFs. In some areas, the Taliban have been

Figure 8: Percentage of Civilian Casualties Accredited to the Parties of the Conflict[83]

able to employ combined arms tactics against static locations of coalition soldiers. Other recorded

events include Taliban forces capable of waging major standing battles involving assaults by

hundreds of militants.[84]

While the effects of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan were devastating to the Taliban

regime in place in 2001, the organization survived its expulsion. Little over a year later Mullah

Omar, the spiritual leader of the Taliban, reconstituted the organization back into a functioning

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[83] All empirical data used in the creation of these tables was obtained from Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," (July 31, 2010), http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/Files/Programs/ FP/afghanistan%20index/index20100731.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

[84] Crews and Tarzi, 346.

body. By January 2003, the Taliban had already regrouped the ranks by assigning people to head

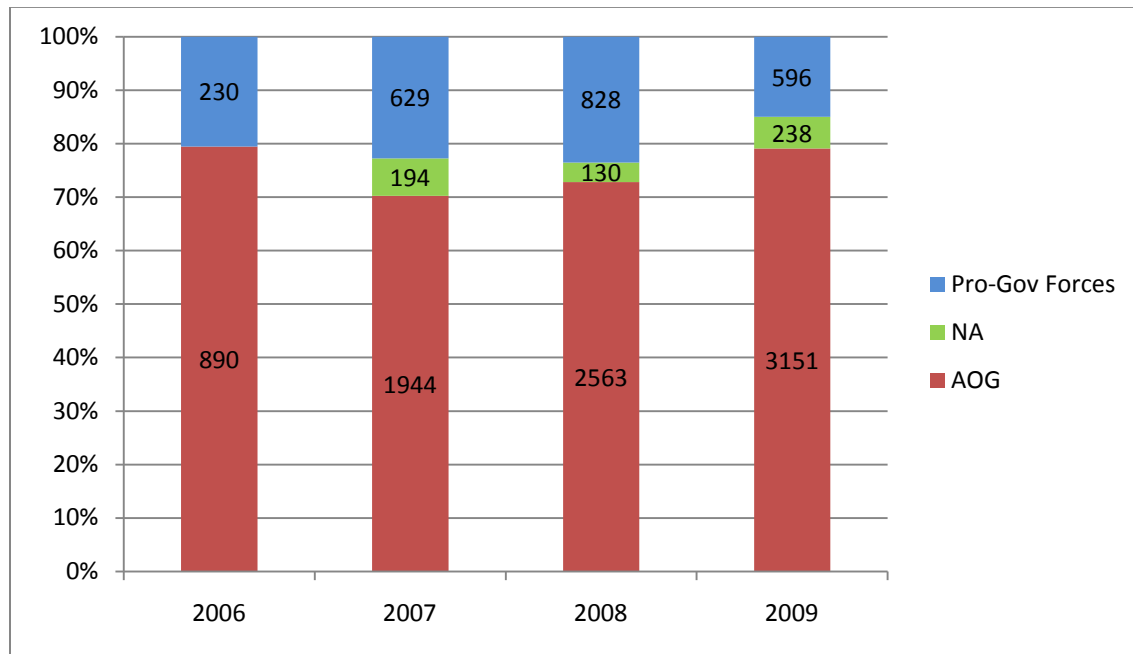operations in thirteen provinces to increase attacks on the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan.[85]

Figure 9: Compilation of Total Casualties Attributed to the Parties of the Conflict[86]

Proponents of the Taliban have retained or regained a certain appeal, especially given the

many failures of the post-Taliban government to improve the lives of Afghans in many regions of

the country. Almost nine years later, the Taliban clearly have not lost sight of their vision for

Afghanistan, nor have many Afghans fully abandoned their support for the movement. Backed by

international militant networks, and in part by local Pashtun populations who are alienated from

Kabul and oppose the presence of the U.S. and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

[85] "Taliban Chief Mullah Omar Reorganizes His Group," Jama`atul Dawa website, January 31, 2003, http://www.jamatuddawa.org (accessed March 25, 2010). This article was obtained from and translated from Urdu by the Open Source Center.

[86] All empirical data used in the creation of these tables was obtained from Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," (July 31, 2010), http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/Files/Programs/ FP/afghanistan%20index/index20100731.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

member states, disparate groups fighting under the Taliban banner have demonstrated that this symbol retains it power among many Afghans.[87]

Replace Governmental Structures

Given that an insurgency is an attempt by a group to overthrow the government in certain locales within the country and not the whole country, the Taliban have clearly moved beyond the insurgency phase of political violence. Mullah Omar has repeatedly stated that he will not negotiate with GIRoA to come to some form of political concession. His stated goal is to overthrow the current government and regain governmental (territorial) control over the country of Afghanistan.[88] This explicitly stated goal of the Taliban is just one more reason why the conflict in Afghanistan qualifies as a civil war. Further strengthening this hypothesis is the proposition that civil war is an extension of insurgency, progressing beyond a certain threshold of violence. The scale and scope of the violence in Afghanistan clearly meets the benchmarks for a civil war.

The Taliban clearly identify a need for some form of governance inside the country. Their operational approach centers on providing for the population where GIRoA cannot. Understanding the danger of a power vacuum has led the Taliban to emplace shadow governments throughout the country where possible. This tendency is demonstrated in the graphics provided showing their growth in Figures 6 and 10.

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[87] Crews and Tarzi, 57.

[88] Ismail Khan, "Omar Threatens to Intensify War: Talks with Karzai Govt Ruled Out," *Dawn*, January 4, 2007.

The purposeful violence of the Taliban establishes a degree of control over the people facilitating their tacit cooperation. Kalyvas captures this concept best when he writes:

> Control is increasingly likely to shape collaboration [with the principal locally present armed actor] because political actors who enjoy substantial territorial control can protect civilians who live in that territory, both from their rivals and from themselves, giving survival-oriented civilians a strong incentive to collaborate with them, irrespective of their true or initial preferences. In this sense, collaboration is largely endogenous to control though, of course, high rates of collaboration spawned by control at a given point in time are likely to reinforce it in the future.[89]

The U.S. unwittingly de-legitimizes GIRoA by generating civilian casualties from collateral damage. The message lost in this debate is the fact that Taliban-inflicted casualties are far higher as shown in Figures 7 and 8. The U.S. approach to achieving political objectives is diminishing the basic tenets of Afghan traditions and culture, constantly reducing the Afghan's patience with international efforts.

The time sequence graphical representations of known Taliban shadow governments displayed in Figure 10 further supports the conclusion that the Taliban do indeed threaten the sovereignty of GIRoA. From these maps, it is apparent that between the years of 2005 and 2007 there was a significant increase in the penetration of the Taliban shadow governments. From 2005 to 2006 there was an approximately eighty-two percent increase in the number of shadow governments. Although somewhat smaller the following year, there was still a forty percent increase in the number of shadow governments. Over this two-year period, 2005-2007, the total increase is approximately one hundred and fifty-five percent, which also coincides with the onset of the current civil war in 2006.

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[89] Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12.
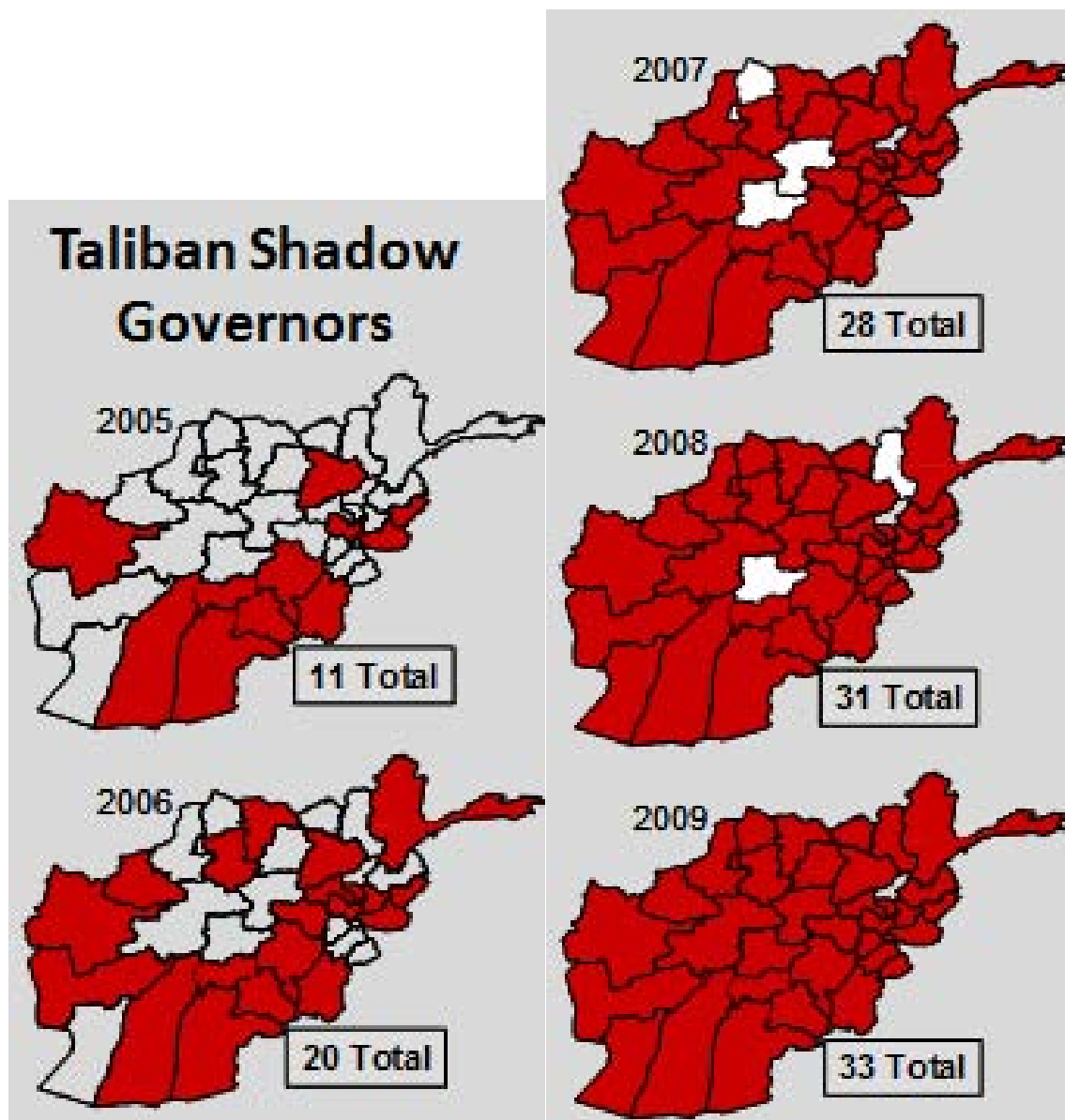
Figure 10: Time-Phase Expansion of Taliban Shadow Governments[90]

National Control

The President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has evaluated Taliban threat and

understands the danger his government is in. Afghan Analyst Dan Green assesses this situation

when he writes,

> His [Karzai's] pragmatic ambitions begin with the survival of his government, and any
> notions of anti-corruption, reconciliation, counterinsurgency, development and fiscal
> autonomy are permeated by his new focus on continuing to exist following the departure
> of U.S. and coalition forces.[91]

This statement clearly subjugates insurgency to the overall conflict occurring between GIRoA

and the Taliban. This is an existential battle over the form of government implemented in

Afghanistan after international assistance reduces. This analysis further supports the idea that a

civil war is under way in Afghanistan and the end game will be total control over governmental

institutions.

Regardless of how outsiders perceive the Taliban, they see themselves as fighting for

control of the national government. After the U.S. removed the regime from power in 2001,

Mullah Omar continued to deny that the movement was a Pashtun phenomenon. In early 2007, he

insisted, "without doubt, the people of the region are behind us, not on a tribal or ethnic basis, but

in a national and Islamic spirit."[92] Large numbers of Pashtuns do not hold the same opinion of the

Taliban that the international community does. Amin Tarzi analyses Afghan sentiments and

writes, "Pashtuns may not have supported all the platforms and ideologies of the Taliban,

[however] they did appreciate the position of power the Pashtun-dominated Taliban held over the

population."[93] This re-enforces the concept of collaboration introduced earlier from Kalyvas. The

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[91] Dan Green, "Karzai's Exist Strategy: The Afghan President's Goal is Survival, not Victory Over the Taliban," *Armed Forces Journal* 148, no. 2, (September 2010), 38.

[92] Khan.

[93] Crews and Tarzi, 285.

people are choosing the physically proximate power of the Taliban due to the historical

precedence of control over the population.

The purpose of the violence is apparent to many others with experience in the region.

Lakhdar Brahimi, an Algerian diplomat and one-time UN representative to Afghanistan captured

it best when he said:

> The conflict is not about territory. It is about the Afghans finding a peaceful solution that
> is acceptable to them. An offensive may bring more territory under your control, it may
> even bring all of the territory under your control. And then what? You know well there
> will be more Afghans willing to fight against you.[94]

Rory Stewart, a retired UK diplomat who walked across Afghanistan in 2002, also echoes this

sentiment. He wrote, "The Taliban, which was a largely discredited and backward movement,

gains support by portraying itself as fighting for Islam and Afghanistan against a foreign military

occupation."[95] This indicates that the very presence of international troops undercuts the

legitimacy of the government.

The totality of the Taliban effort to control Afghanistan is apparent in the lack of interest

in any negotiations. Mullah Omar has consistently rebuffed all of the efforts by GIRoA to

conduct negotiations. In fact, he has even gone so far as to forbid his captains from talking to any

government representatives, unless it is to coerce them to collaborate with the Taliban.[96] This

aversion to any type of power-sharing agreement with the Karzai Government indicates that for

the Taliban there is only one solution, complete and total control of the governmental structures

in Afghanistan.

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[94] Rashid, 53.

[95] Rory Stewart, "How to Save Afghanistan," *Time*, July 17, 2008.

[96] Bruce Riedel, "Afghan Taliban Leader Mullah Omar Breaks His Silence," *The Daily Beast*, November 27, 2009, http://www.brookings.edu/2009/1127_taliban_riedel.aspx (accessed September 7, 2010).

Summary

The conflict in Afghanistan between GIRoA and the Taliban is an existential one. The outcome after nine years can only be total control over the government for one party or the other. Evidence presented in this monograph demonstrates that the violence in Afghanistan is escalating. Since 2006, the casualties incurred by all parties have increased and surpassed the benchmark of 1,000 casualties for a civil war.

The spreading of Taliban shadow governments to all but one province demonstrates the organization's intent to gain and maintain control over the majority of the population, not simply create a breakaway state. Although the Taliban was removed from power in 2001, the organization has been reconstituted and continues to regenerate resources to challenge the sovereignty of GIRoA. Mullah Omar has directly challenged the Afghan government's control of the outlying areas. Through taxation, conscription, and dispute resolution, the Taliban is gaining the acquiescence and acceptance of the Afghan people. These factors demonstrate that a civil war is occurring in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

This monograph has explored the differences between an insurgency and civil war to determine if there are any impacts on the development of an operational approach. In order to do this it was necessary to differentiate between an insurgency and a civil war. Finding the differences between these two terms established five criteria that were then useful in assessing the conflict in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan case study demonstrated that the conflict is a civil war. However, this monograph was unable to determine if differentiating between an insurgency and civil war affected the operational approaches used.

Counterinsurgency literature argues that solutions be developed at the lowest political or military level. However, the local level solution is counter-productive to a strong and functioning central government that is necessary to counter a civil war. David R. Haines provides an

explanation, "Responsibility for counterinsurgency should never be given to a level of government in which the upset group constitutes a majority of the population; the entire region could sympathize and the provincial government may turn on the national government, resulting in a civil war."[97] A strong local government may de-legitimize the national government, further deteriorating popular support for the government.

Wars among the people have devastating consequences. Better understanding of these conflicts assists in managing the violence. The comprehension achieved in the analysis of the violence provides an opportunity for change as the situation dictates. The form and function of violence employed in a conflict qualify the terms used to describe it. The specific application of violence is unique for each event. Therefore, it is vital to assess the context of the conflict as it is occurring. While these assessments may assist in classifying the conflict, the tactics employed may not necessarily change.

While there is no evidence to support that how the U.S. classifies the conflict has any effect on the tactics employed to achieve the strategic goals, there does appear to be a linkage between how the war is conducted by the opposition and the operational approach employed by the incumbent government and any international supporters. With this in mind, the U.S. military may possibly have a shortcoming in current doctrine to effectively manage the transitions between insurgency and civil war.

Correctly identifying the type of conflict occurring provides examples of effective and practical approaches that have worked in the past given the context of the violence. Using the concept of escalation along a continuum of warfare, as displayed in Figure 11, aids in determining the conflict that is occurring and indicate what strategies may achieve success. Recognizing the differences between the types of conflicts enables the incumbent government to address certain aspects of the violence in a deliberate way.

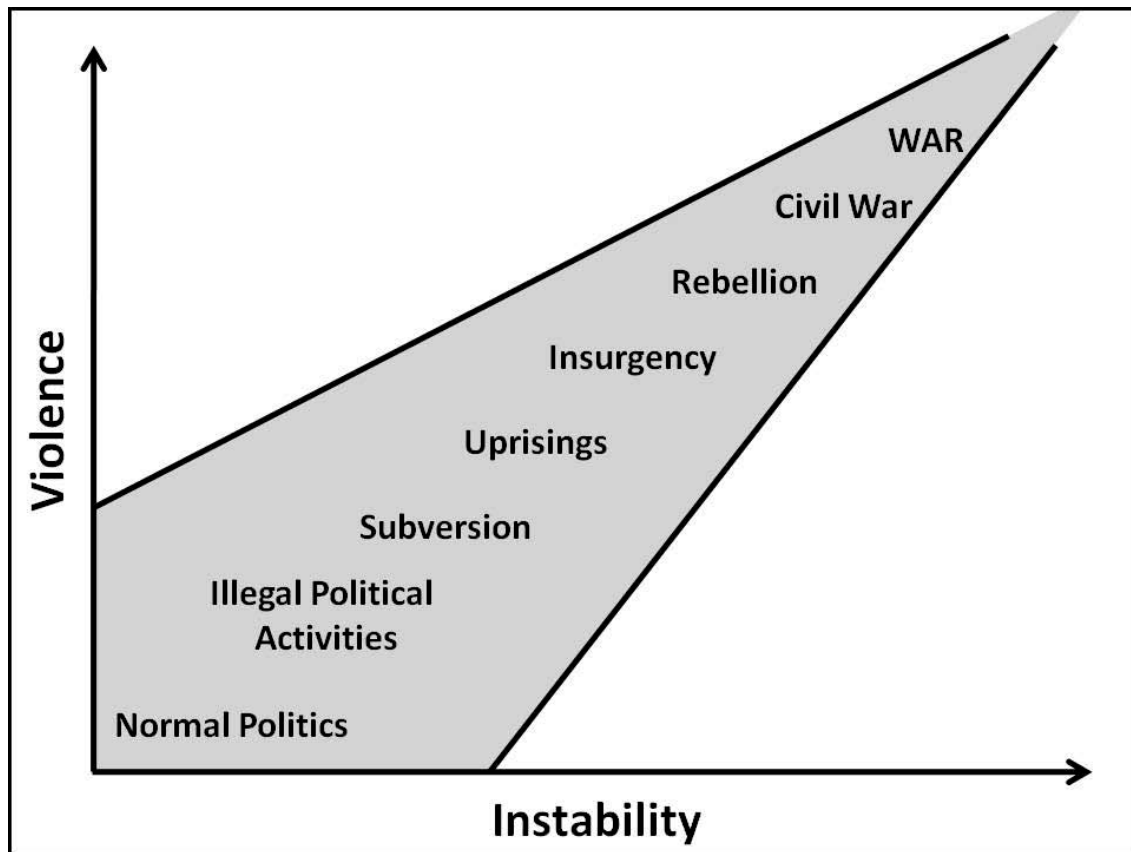[97] David Haines, "COIN in the Real World," *Parameters* XXXVIII, no. 4 (Winter 2008-09): 56.

Figure 11: The Full Spectrum of Conflict

The findings of this monograph provide numerous opportunities for further research. Of most interest, perhaps, is a gap in our operational doctrine. In short, no doctrine appears to address the actions necessary when the armed forces are entering a conflict when it has already exceeded the threshold of an insurgency. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, presents overarching doctrinal guidance and direction for U.S. forces conducting operations anywhere in the world. Specifically, Chapter 3 describes the Army's operational concept - full spectrum operations.[98] Likewise, Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, is an attempt to institutionalize the knowledge existent within the Army and Marines Corps with respect to the principles of COIN.[99] However,

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[98] U.S. Department of Defense, *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, February 2008), v.

[99] FM 3-24, ix.

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in the area where these two meet, virtually nothing describes how the operations significantly

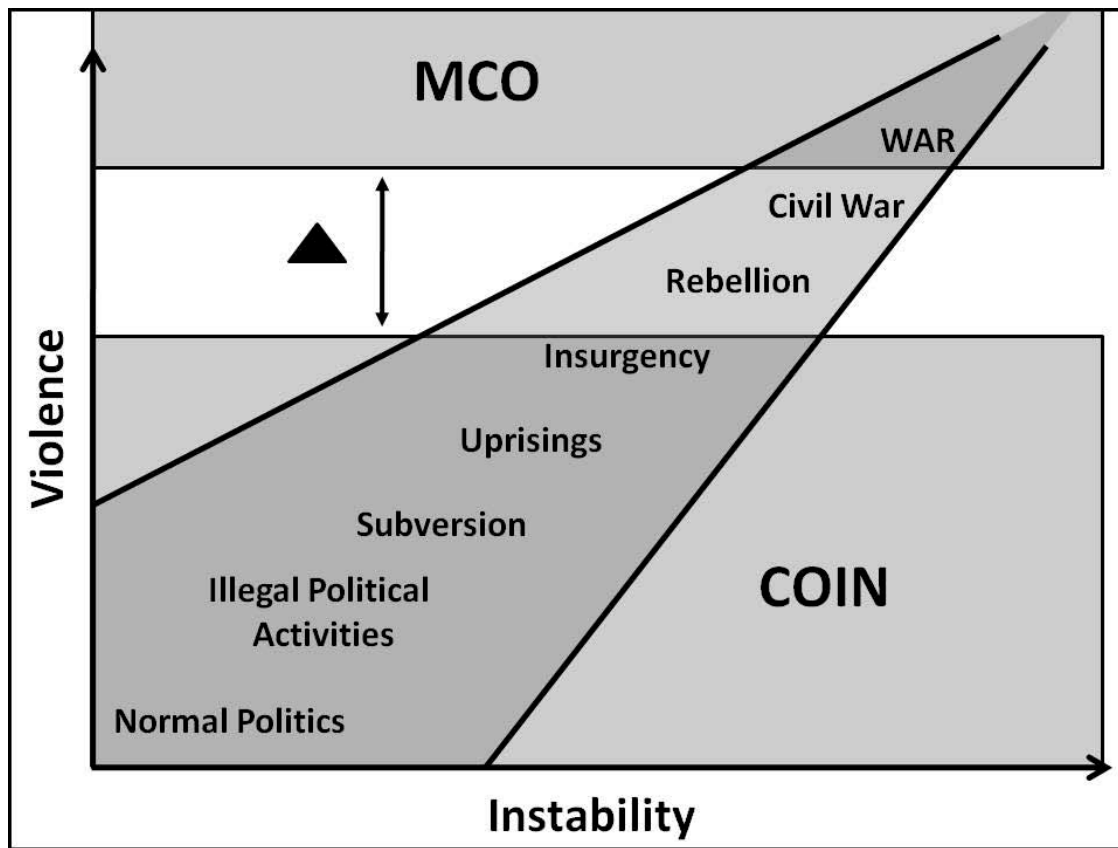change during the transitions from offensive to stability operations.

Figure 12: Identifying a Possible Gap in Doctrine

       The publication of FM 3-24 by the U.S. Army indicated that the previous operational

framework did not effectively account for counterinsurgencies. The foreword of the manual

addresses this, "This manual is designed to fill a doctrinal gap. It has been 20 years since the

Army published a field manual devoted exclusively to counterinsurgency operations."[100] The

intent of this manual was to account for military operations residing between major combat

operations (MCO) and military operations other than war (MOOTW). However, this monograph

has identified the potential for a gap in doctrine that falls between MCO and COIN. Graphically

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[100] FM 3-24, Foreword, inside front cover.

representing this gap in Figure 12, using the concept of escalation introduced earlier, highlights where a seam may exist.

Policy and implementation delegated to the local level provides the enemy an opportunity to counteract the official policies of the state. Therefore, empowering local governance can undermine the ability of the central government to provide for its people. Decentralized state governance provides opportunities for all challengers to co-opt the local levels of government to work against the central government. The central government, and its international supporters, must provide guidance and direction to the sub-regional institutions to blunt the spread of opposition influence. This guidance must address how to develop local capacity while enabling the connection of civil society to the central government. The problem of closing the seam between the local and national levels without bolstering the enemy is the defining issue current COIN doctrine does not sufficiently address. By differentiating between an insurgency and a civil war this study offers an additional question for COIN theory to take up.

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