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Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification

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This article is concerned with exploring the recent observations of Lieutenant-General Lamb who stated that there was no simple binary between counterintelligence (COIN) and counterterrorism (CT). Specifically, the article will use the intelligence-gathering, assessment, and target identification processes and methods used on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to examine this further. What makes this an interesting exercise is that the effectiveness of a COIN/CT intervention totally depends on whether an insurgent has been properly identified. If the wrong person has been targeted then kinetic, influence, or policing activities are at best exploratory and at worst wasteful or even positively harmful. Thus, by investigating the intelligence model that frames the way adversaries and communities are identified, it becomes possible to understand the limitations in the processes and methods used. At the same time this approach makes it possible to cast light on how and to what extent various techniques drawn from COIN and CT work together in Overseas Contingency Operations.

There’s a debate in the White House about whether it’s Counter-Terrorism or COIN. It’s all of the above. It always has been it always will be and when people try and apply a binary or a simplicity to what is enormous complexity ... this is a confusion ... it is not either or ...

—Lieutenant-General Sir Graeme Lamb

The decision in 2009 by the Obama administration to use the phrase “Overseas Contingency Operations” instead of the “Global War on Terror” or “the Long War” does not simply represent a relabeling exercise. Instead, this new language points to the emergence of military practices that are the product of Coalition and International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts to defeat insurgencies and Al Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan. These practices do not emphasize global Counter Insurgency (COIN) over Counterterrorism (CT) but more accurately represents a certain blending of the two techniques in a manner that reflects the U.S. military’s large-scale troop deployments on operations overseas.

The notion that COIN and CT techniques are blending on overseas operations contrasts with contemporary academic discussions that have typically sought to emphasize how the

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methods differ from each other. According to this line of reasoning COIN is characterized as “population-centric,” demanding a quasi-political whole-of-government response that works within the Law of Armed Conflict and that aims to win over the people so as to isolate insurgents and deprive them of indigenous support. This differs from CT, a technique often portrayed as a law-enforcement approach working within a domestic legal context that is directed at the pursuit of a terrorist group through the development of intelligence provided by the security services and police combined with the occasional surgical use of special forces.

By way of contrast with the discussion highlighted earlier, this article is concerned with developing the observations of Lieutenant-General Lamb by showing where the similarities and tensions between COIN and CT lie. Specifically the article will use the intelligence-gathering, assessment, and target identification processes and methods used on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to explore this further. What makes this both an interesting and an important exercise is that the effectiveness of a COIN/CT intervention totally depends on whether an insurgent has been properly identified. If the wrong person has been targeted then kinetic, influence, or policing activities are at best exploratory and at worst wasteful or even positively harmful. Thus by exploring the intelligence model that frames the way adversaries and communities are identified it becomes possible to understand the limitations in the processes and methods used. As a result strategists should be more readily able to identify and isolate the unintended consequences that might be implicit in the intelligence methods used. At the same time new light can be cast on how and to what extent various techniques drawn from COIN and CT work together in contemporary overseas conflicts.

To do this ambition justice, however, a degree of care is required in exploring the way that COIN and CT are defined and understood. This is especially the case as the two terms are contested, open to a range of interpretations and can take on different connotations depending on a number of factors. For instance CT has different implications when the technique is being used at home or overseas and on whether it is being applied by Americans, Europeans, or British. Similarly, COIN has been subject to several interpretations that emphasize a number of factors that include the extent to which the military should be “enemy”- or “population”-centric or should apply force to coerce, kill, or incentivize communities to change behaviors or attitudes.

Given the goal of this article and bearing in mind the breadth and depth of the CT/COIN debates, the definitions of terrorism and insurgency adopted here mirror those of John MacKinlay when he describes contemporary conflict as Post-Maoist. According to this perspective, Post-Maoism further develops the principles associated with insurgency as advanced by Mao but in the process drops the communist ideological agenda. Thus for MacKinlay, Post-Maoism accepts Paul Wilkinson’s interpretation of terrorism as a violent method applied by a group that has a political objective but one that lacks popular support. By contrast a popular militia is an insurgency that may use terrorist methods on occasions but avoids targeting the indigenous population that it relies on for support. Finally a Post-Maoist global insurgency involves an, “...array of communities spread across the world” that develop their support in a virtual dimension utilizing dramatic terrorist activities in order to activate popular will through the efforts of the media. In this context and following Wilkinson’s distinction between terrorism and insurgency Mackinlay argues that it is “the nature of the response rather than the armed rebel group that determined how a group should be defined.” By extension then, by developing a better understanding of the response in terms of intelligence work it becomes possible to cast light on what Lieutenant-General Lamb meant when he denied that there was a binary distinction between COIN and CT.
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It should be noted early on that this article does not make explicit reference to the intelligence operations of security agencies such as the CIA or the National Security Agency (NSA). This is not to suggest that these agencies have not historically or do not have a role to play in what follows but rather that it is not possible to categorically define what processes they may be responsible for or what methods they might use on current Overseas Contingency Operations in their efforts to develop an intelligence thread. Instead, the focus of this article is on the processes and the methods used, not on which agency might undertake those activities. Austin Long has recently written an extensive review essay of the role played by the CIA and NSA in counterinsurgency/irregular war since the Vietnam War. This comes to tentative conclusions as to the role of these agencies in recent Overseas Contingency Operations.

This article starts then by examining the processes and methods used to identify targets in Overseas Contingency Operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. This is followed by a discussion of the tactics that emerged during military operations in Iraq, particularly focusing on the way intelligence was used to achieve greater target definition in the insurgency. This leads to a discussion of how these tactics have been applied to Afghanistan from 2010 and explores the limitations of the techniques in light of the Obama strategy review of 2009. Finally, the article explores some of the assumptions and implications that arise out of this intelligence model. In the conclusion, the article shows how the intelligence model developed in Iraq and applied in Afghanistan casts light on the claim by Lieutenant-General Lamb that there is no simple binary between COIN and CT.

Intelligence-Led Insurgent Identification

Intelligence-led insurgent identification might best be contrasted with an approach that emphasizes what the military describe as reconnaissance by fire. With regards to the latter, it does not take a social scientist to tell those in uniform how they might identify an insurgent: that shots have been fired and the culprit has been caught red-handed with the smoking weapon will be enough. The challenge lies in those situations where such obvious signs of resistance are not apparent. For if insurgents do not wear uniforms but prefer to blend in among the populace, to fight among the people, carefully choosing the time and location of their engagements so as to avoid a battle of annihilation, then how do counterinsurgents distinguish between combatant and non-combatant? Apart from waiting to get shot at, then, the question of finding the insurgent has to take on more theoretical tones, tones that involve intelligence analysts, data gathering, and information processing.

At the more practical end of this set of tasks, the most obvious technique for identifying an insurgent lies in the application of intelligence-gathering procedures that have at their heart a strong similarity to policing methods. This is recognized in FM 3-24, the 2006 U.S. Counterinsurgency Field Manual, which states that, “Few military units can match a good police unit in developing an accurate human intelligence picture of their Area of Operations.” However, in those situations where insufficient numbers are available or the security context does not permit an indigenous police force to operate, the military have to undertake the kinds of intelligence work that might ordinarily be left to law-enforcement agencies.

What this might mean in practice is described by Dr. James Russell who explains how, for instance, the 1st Battalion of the U.S. 7th Marine Regiment made extensive use of Los Angeles and Phoenix Police Department techniques in Iraq’s Western Anbar Province during 2006. Underpinned by a census and vehicle registration program for the towns under their control it became possible for the U.S. Marines to identify unregistered vehicles
from outside a district. These could then be further investigated in case they were being used for insurgent activities. Given the quantity of information being gathered, this created a demand for various enabling technologies that allowed the Marines to enter, store, and access data about the neighborhoods in which they were operating. Subsequently the U.S. Marines pioneered the introduction of a number of technologies and procedures, including biometric profiling, which were designed to help them sift the potential insurgent from the ordinary citizen.17

However, while the equipment that made it possible to quickly gather, store, and access various data sources may have been novel, the methodological impulse for collecting the information in the first place was of course not particularly new. The British Army in Northern Ireland, for instance, had gathered large quantities of information about the communities that it was operating in.18 When this information was transferred onto a Rolodex, it formed a sort of analogue equivalent to a database that intelligence officers could cross-examine.19 Putting the technical differences aside, in both the Iraq and Northern Ireland examples, the goal was to build up an intelligence profile of the individuals and the communities they operated within so that unusual activity could more easily be investigated.20 As FM 3-24 recognizes, what has made this pattern recognition possible is the collation, tagging, and analysis of data stored on databases.21

In a similar fashion to their American counterparts, contemporary British military COIN practices seek to identify indicators of insurgent activity through the application of policing approaches to intelligence-gathering.22 This sort of intelligence-gathering is undertaken as part of what the British Army currently calls “Framework Operations” where soldiers patrol an area to demonstrate a presence and at the same time gather local information, much as a policeman might in a more permissive security context.23 The goal here is to get to know the community in such a way as to reduce the social barriers that prevent them from providing information that might prove crucial for identifying insurgents.24

The underlying model that describes the ambition behind Framework Operations has in many ways much that is in common with the National Intelligence Model (NIM) developed by the U.K.’s National Criminal Intelligence Service in 2000.25 The foundations of the NIM lie in intelligence-led policing and the community policing movement.26 These policing models sought to reform police work that had become reliant on technology and motorized patrol and instead tried to re-establish connections between law-enforcement and the community it served.27 The goal was two-way communication with the public, providing information about how to avoid crime while law-enforcement acted as a point of access to talk about potential sources of friction in a community. The only way to achieve this was to go out and actively engage with key leaders and those communities who had been identified as critical to the success of local policing.28

Enabling the whole process were the police analysts who in light of patterns of crime, interpreted the information that community engagement produced and developed an intelligence picture that could lead to arrests. Firmly routed in solving problems that might include, for instance, street crime or targeting high-rate chronic offenders, the method lends itself to the countering of domestic terrorism.29 For, as Paul Wilkinson notes, the domestic and foreign intelligence agencies may be responsible for gathering, collating, and analyzing information on terrorism but it is the police service with their “unrivalled ‘bank’ of background information” that makes it possible to develop the necessary contact information.30

Thus, just like the domestic application of the NIM to countering terrorism, current military intelligence procedures seek to develop strategic and tactical assessments that help
define what intelligence-gathering ought to be focused on at a local level and relate this to specific activities that generate target and problem profiles. Generated from Framework Operations and other sources such as signals (SIGINT) and image (IMINT) intelligence being made available by Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) assets these profiles outline an individual’s “habits, lifestyle, modus operandi, addresses, places frequented, family-tree chart, photographs, risk to public, ability to protect him/herself, and related information.” At the Company level developing the contact information that frames further intelligence-gathering and assessment entails foot patrolling and direct engagement with a local population so that the neighborhood “atmospherics” and “patterns of life” are properly understood.

However, when compared to the policing of a domestic neighbourhood, understanding the “atmospherics” and “patterns of life” is not easy given that the operating environment is culturally alien to counterinsurgents. Nonetheless, it is crucial to the success of follow-on interventions that those involved in assessing intelligence undertake their analysis carefully and in relation to what might be considered culturally “normal” for their area of operations. This is reflected in both British and American COIN doctrine, which makes clear that developing a sufficiently detailed understanding of the cultural environment is extremely important if the insurgency is to be properly understood and appropriate targets are to be identified.

In this context the development of U.S. Human Terrain Teams (HTT) and the U.K.’s Defence Cultural Specialist Unit becomes more intelligible. This is not simply because these teams help gather information but more precisely because they have the potential to play a crucial role in providing a cultural framework against which intelligence assessments might be evaluated. The problem has been that, at least with regards to the United States, the quality of the information that HTT has so far been able to provide has been doubtful. This is in part caused by the U.S. military’s reliance on a social scientific community (especially anthropologists) that has been unwilling to engage directly with the armed forces. Consequently the U.S. military has been forced to work with other social scientists that do not always have the level of regional, cultural, or methodological knowledge required.

While extremely important in terms of framing intelligence-gathering activities cultural understanding is nonetheless not the only factor shaping the process of target identification. For if any of these exercises are to bear fruit, then the sheer quantity of information that these police-style practices might develop clearly not only needs to be managed but analysts also need to mine, interpret, and make explicit the patterns and connections contained in the data. Given the operational conditions and the amount of staff work that this requires it is doubtful whether a deeper level of analysis is possible at the Company and Battalion level without significant reorganization of personnel and intelligence assets. In these circumstances more senior command Headquarters and the analyst resources that they bring with them can be crucial if day-to-day tactical intelligence is to reveal longer-term trends and connections in insurgent activities.

Even at this level, however, what complicates this process further is the quantity of additional information provided by SIGINT and IMINT intelligence. Thus, with so many sources of intelligence “noise” it can be hard for analysts to identify what is important and what is not. Consequently what analysts have needed is a method to help them segment the indigenous population so as to make sense of the intelligence provided by ISTAR as well as local commanders undertaking Framework Operations. In this respect FM 3-24 suggested that counterinsurgents made use of Social Network Analysis (SNA), a form of analysis also used by the U.K.’s Serious Organised Crime Agency and the Police.
Purportedly the method that underpinned the capture of Saddam Hussein, SNA helped to pare down the data sets and focus the analytical effort so that an intelligence picture could slowly be built up of the former Iraqi leader’s relationship network. This information could then be used to track down those who were helping Saddam and eventually lead the Coalition Forces to the dictator himself. The utility of SNA stemmed from the method’s focus on the relationships between people, relationships that could be tracked every time someone used a phone, wrote a letter, or had some form of contact with another person.

For example, the data being collected by counterinsurgents may well detail familial connections. By treating each person as a node on a chart, SNA can be used to graphically represent how different members of a family are related. By adding layers of complexity to this, for instance by including a reference to how many times various members of a family have talked to each other in a certain period of time, the relative importance of individuals in that family can be further deduced. If one person communicates with most of a family then it might be established that they have the most influence in that group: that their large number of connections gives them a high degree of centrality within their network. SNA therefore reveals the size, density, degree of connection, centrality, closeness, betweenness, and the clusters of a social network.

Clearly when SNA is applied to mapping an insurgency it becomes at least theoretically possible to explore the organizational dynamics of those posing the threat. The factors that influence relationships between nodes may become more easily observable and the correlations between factors more easily exposed. For example, a network that demonstrated a high density and a high degree of connection might lead the analyst to deduce that the organization’s focus was on work efficiency rather than covertness. This might be indicative of a forthcoming attack and might suggest countermeasures are appropriate. In this respect, analysis might reveal where bottlenecks exist in the network and how they might be effective to target if they could be used to break a network in two. Alternatively the bottleneck may be a useful feature of the network that restricts information flow allowing counterinsurgents to undertake activities that increase uncertainty in the target group. Thus, if the factors shaping the network structure can be identified then there is a possibility that these can be manipulated in order to undermine the insurgent network. Finally, by placing the factors shaping insurgent organization in a rank order it becomes easier to prioritize counterinsurgent activities that aim to break the threat.

Gaps in data no doubt exist. However, SNA can provide the analytical tool for delimiting the bounds of the existing data, show how it relates to other sources, and at least potentially help analysts work out where the gaps in intelligence might lie. In addition, new technologies have been developed to help fill in the data gaps. Counterinsurgents already reliant on ISTAR assets such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles can now develop real-time depictions of social networks that can potentially make up for any gaps in knowledge that might stem from the difficulties of foot patrolling or limitations in the numbers of appropriately skilled analysts.

Thus, like the framework established by the NIM, the ambition behind intelligence-led insurgent identification has been to identify targets by triangulating the intelligence feed provided by Framework Operations with that being gathered by other sources such as IMINT and SIGINT. To make sense of this material SNA has been used to mine the various sources, helping the analyst sift through the noise and find what is most important for the purposes of identifying insurgents. However, combining all these various data sources to make a complete picture of the insurgent network is, needless to say, time consuming and complex. Finding people with the right skills to analyse the data sets has therefore proven to be quite difficult. The most obvious indicator of this is that the analysts undertaking
analytical work are typically a long way from the frontlines. Consequently, the analysis being provided by higher Headquarters has not always been relevant to or made available for counterinsurgents at Company and Battalion level who are undertaking Framework Operations.

**Industrializing the Operational Intelligence Cycle**

Where the gaps between analysts, their intelligence output and frontline troops undertaking Framework Operations have been most clearly exposed is in relation to the use of special forces on kill or capture missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In this respect the efforts of General Stanley McChrystal, commander of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in Iraq and subsequently in Afghanistan stand out. McChrystal’s initial ambition was the reorganization of the intelligence-gathering, analysis, and distribution cycle so as to map insurgent networks quickly and preferably in real time so that special forces could engage those targets that had been identified.

This iteration of the intelligence cycle led to what some have called the “industrialization” of the technique. Consequently the gap between button and bang: between the surveillance, analysis, and the launching of a kill or capture mission could be reduced in time. This “industrialized” process might mean going out on one operation, exploiting the information that had been found in that location, and then launching another strike almost immediately. The speed and coordination of these operations produced circumstances in which as many as ten raids might happen in far-flung parts of Iraq just on one night. What emerged then, was a special-forces doctrine that became known as F3EA or find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze.

In the context of the Iraq insurgency, speeding up operations so that U.S. forces could strike before the insurgent had organized themselves to make an attack potentially gave the Coalition a coercive lever that they could use to influence the campaign. However, if F3EA were to work then having timely access to surveillance and analysis, including intelligence products developed from SNA and evidence provided by forensics teams, was essential. This meant reorganizing various elements of the military organization into “Fusion Cells” where all of the necessary information could be combined quickly. As Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicated, “We’re living in a world now where targets are fleeting.”

Underpinning the idea of “industrializing” the surveillance, analysis, and targeting loop was the belief that speeding up the tempo of special-forces operations would produce disorientation in the insurgent’s own operational rhythm. If the insurgent suffered casualties and lost important nodes in their networks before they could reorganize to commit further violence then there was the possibility that the counterinsurgent might create a space for a political reconciliation to occur. This was the classic John Boyd, “Observe, Orientate, Decide, Act” (OODA) cybernetic loop applied to the capture and killing of insurgents. If insurgents processed their OODA loop more slowly than JSOC they would constantly be disoriented by the speed of the blows landed by Coalition special forces and find themselves permanently on the back foot. At this point either they would disband or negotiate. They would do so, however, knowing that they had been militarily defeated.

Removing Al Qaeda leaders and other High Value Targets at this pace has, however, caused tension in Coalition counterinsurgency efforts, both in Iraq and subsequently in Afghanistan. For instance, in Baghdad between 2003 and 2006 and in Helmand up until at least 2008 more senior Headquarters have used special forces independently of the demands of those frontline counterinsurgents undertaking Framework Operations. The result has
been that a JSOC raid might occur in an area of operations that has been managed by another unit. If that unit did not know about the occurrence of the raid then they could be left in a situation where they had to clear up any negative fallout among the local population. In this situation the unit might be left with having to care for wounded civilians who as a result, and contrary to the tenets of Framework Operations, would be less inclined to offer up intelligence from the local community.\(^{58}\)

This weakness has, however, clearly been recognized by senior Coalition commanders who, in Iraq at least, have subsequently adapted their tactics to help coordinate JSOC activities with local units undertaking Framework Operations. In this respect what was crucial was ensuring that the Coalition did not appear to instigate an attack but waited until they had been attacked themselves thereby ensuring that they guaranteed striking the right target. Based on an Israeli Defence Force counterterrorism technique called “grass-widow,” it was only when the insurgent made a move to engage the Coalition that it became totally obvious who was hostile and who was not.\(^{59}\) Thus the counterinsurgency forces (i.e., those engaged in low-level policing, intelligence-gathering, and Framework Operations) were crucial. Not only did they constitute the Coalition’s face on the street, they also usefully performed the function of providing a target for the insurgents to attack.\(^{60}\)

During the course of 2006 and 2007, this turned into a game of cat and mouse that ultimately evolved into what the Deputy Commander Multi-National Force Iraq, Lieutenant-General Sir Graeme Lamb, described as a “squeezebox strategy.”\(^{61}\) The arguments over why sectarian violence in Iraq declined during 2007 are complicated and contested.\(^{62}\) However, irrespective of the causal chain of events a couple of observations are possible, especially in so far as they have some importance for the way U.S. military practice has subsequently been described.

The first is that JSOC operations did successfully target certain elements of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).\(^{63}\) At the same time, AQI overstretched itself in its sectarian attacks on the Imam Ali Mosque, the al-Askariya Mosque, and the Imam Husayn Shrine. This helped to create the conditions for the “Anbar Awakening,” which in turn led Sunni communities to work with the Coalition to establish the “Sons of Iraq” program, a Sunni militia. This program may not have been sufficient to deter sectarian violence;\(^{64}\) however, the presence of U.S. forces helped to dissuade the Shi’a community from pursuing its civil war with the Sunni community and pursuing Al Qaeda in Iraq into Sunni neighborhoods.\(^{65}\) The result was a shift away from escalating levels of violence toward a situation that became more manageable.

With regard to the evolution of U.S. tactics in Iraq, these changes when combined with the erection of high blast walls around various Baghdad neighborhoods created the ideal conditions for finding insurgents that continued to pursue violence.\(^{66}\) At the time opinion on the erection of these blast walls was divided.\(^{67}\) On the one hand they segregated communities. On the other they held out the possibility of reducing violence. What most opinion failed to observe, however, was the way in which the walls themselves were designed to make insurgent movement more problematic; how the Sons of Iraq militia could be left to manage checkpoints freeing up manpower for operations inside these newly “gated communities”;\(^{68}\) and how in combination these changes allowed counterinsurgents to create cordons and undertake search and sweep operations.\(^{59}\)

By themselves, however, search and sweep operations held out the prospect of alienating the communities in which Coalition Forces were operating among.\(^{70}\) Accordingly, if the people were going to be won over then it was important to reduce the number of untargeted Coalition operations inside these newly created “gated communities.”\(^{71}\) For, by demonstrating the ambition to do no harm, the Coalition could show how they were not
contributing to the cycle of violence being instigated by Al Qaeda and other militias in Iraq. The problem of targeting insurgents did not, however, go away. Instead, as Mark Urban makes clear, during his visits to Baghdad’s Dora market, U.S. troops were collocated in “Combat Outposts” with special forces forward observers inside these newly walled-in neighborhoods. Once these troops were attacked or a major incident occurred, JSOC could track the insurgent through surveillance and analysis and special forces could be deployed to engage them.

Operations were not simply the application of either local Framework Operations or SNA-based JSOC doctrine but a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic activities that sought to minimize the untargeted application of force by Coalition Forces through an intelligence-led approach. In the context of not wanting to further alienate the population in Baghdad, this intelligence-led approach was only made possible by counterinsurgents presenting themselves as the target for insurgent attack. The solution to the tensions caused by the process of gathering and assessing intelligence was to increase the coordination between the various counterinsurgency communities between Battalion level and above. It is in this context that the discussions about COIN versus “CT Plus” and its application to Afghanistan following Obama’s 2009 strategy review ought to be understood.

**Applying F3EA to Afghanistan—Toward a Hybrid Option?**

When it comes to Obama’s review of Afghan strategy in late 2009 Bob Woodward makes it clear that McChrystal’s JSOC operation in Baghdad had a great effect on the thinking of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden who sought to influence U.S. strategy by developing an alternative approach to that being advanced by the president’s military advisers. The focus, he argued, need not be on Afghanistan *per se* but on what he described as CT Plus: a kill or capture program aimed at Al Qaeda operations located across the Durand Line. By contrast, McChrystal, backed by Petraeus and others, was pushing for a full-scale deployment of troops in order to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. President Obama’s eventual decision was something of a compromise in which 30,000 more troops were made available until July 2011 for what became known as a “hybrid option.” In the context of the discussions outlined earlier, the question arises as to what these additional 30,000 troops might be expected to do if McChrystal was to be believed and a full-scale counterinsurgency operation could not be launched.

The answer to this question it seems has not been straightforward. Lacking the capability to launch a countrywide counterinsurgency, McChrystal decided to cordon off and clear insurgents from Kandahar, the Taliban’s heartland. Throughout the middle of 2010, well-publicized operations designed to minimize non-combatant casualties have been going on around the city. This started when special forces began killing or capturing Taliban leaders. This was quickly followed by opinion polling, aimed at establishing the main concerns of the local population. As part of what COIN theorists would describe as “clear operations,” the goal has been to surround Kandahar with an ISAF presence so as to more easily control the movement of insurgents in and out of the city. At the same time population movements caused by the upsurge in violence in the surrounding villages has helped concentrate the population in Kandahar, thereby making it easier for ISAF to show them the benefits that come from the quick unveiling of their build strategy, also known as a “government-in-a-box.”

Concentrating the population in Kandahar has also made it easier for ISAF to assert its control over what has come to be known as the Human Terrain. Compared to Iraq, where 67 percent of the population were urban, only 24 percent of Afghans live in urban...
environments.\textsuperscript{85} As a result, counterinsurgents in Afghanistan have had to be widely dispersed if they were to have any contact with the population at all. However, as the British found out in the first months of their deployment to Helmand too much dispersal does not help to control the population and makes troops more vulnerable to being overrun.\textsuperscript{86} Making Kandahar the focus of operations therefore gave ISAF the chance to win over a significant population center.

With the clear operations around Kandahar completed in 2010 it is the decision to erect high blast walls around the city that indicates the direction of ISAF strategy in the forthcoming months.\textsuperscript{87} For this not only parallels U.S. tactics in Iraq but also suggests that the template for future operations in Kandahar was designed on the streets of Baghdad.\textsuperscript{88} If this is correct then within these blast walls, citizens of Kandahar might expect: an increased police presence backed by ISAF forces; an effort to demonstrate the benefit of the Kabul government; and at least potentially, the co-location of Combat Outposts backed by special forces teams ready to target those insurgents who might be tempted to reveal their identity when they attack ISAF forces.

The problem with this is of course that President Obama has not authorized the deployment of sufficient forces to do anything more than “secure” Kandahar. As a result, Afghanistan Fusion Cells are reliant on ISTAR assets and SNA to provide special forces and drones with the necessary information to launch a strike on a target outside this security bubble.\textsuperscript{89} Without the local knowledge provided by counterinsurgents undertaking Framework Operations this can produce fatal mistakes. Indeed, this was probably the case when U.S. Special Forces killed Zabet Amanullah in September 2010. Basing their assessment on intelligence provided by ISTAR assets tracking the use of a mobile phone, Kate Clark concludes that Amanullah’s death was possibly illegal.\textsuperscript{90}

Problems with the intelligence cycle in Afghanistan had been recognized well before the attack on Amanullah. For example, Major-General Flynn, the then ISAF commander of intelligence operations, publicly acknowledged the issue in January 2010 when he observed that intelligence had been developed that satisfied the demands of higher headquarters but not of those in the field.\textsuperscript{91} This was reflected in the fact that most of the existing intelligence assets in Afghanistan were directed toward identifying improvised explosive device (IED) supply networks and to a lesser extent narcotic production: matters that were of grave concern to audiences back home.\textsuperscript{92} This use of intelligence was being driven by an apparently ever-increasing insurgent use of IEDs, the need to protect existing forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations, and to prevent Western public support for involvement in Afghanistan from draining away.\textsuperscript{93}

As General Flynn acknowledges, however, by targeting the IED supply chain, intelligence assets were not being used to properly segment the indigenous population at the local level. This did not constitute an activity that was designed to protect the populace from the insurgent. Instead, it clearly represented an activity designed to protect the counterinsurgent from the IED. One of the purposes of the Flynn report was therefore to address this problem by pushing intelligence analysts closer to those undertaking Framework Operations at Company and Battalion level. This, it was hoped, would alleviate those tensions in the existing intelligence-gathering model that had developed as result of the complexity of SNA and the lack of suitably skilled personnel working down in the frontlines.

What the Amanullah case would suggest, however, was that despite Major-General Flynn’s public acknowledgment and the increase in intelligence assets in Afghanistan, tensions in the intelligence cycle continue to exist.\textsuperscript{94} The problem now is not simply an issue associated with coordinating the intelligence between relevant ISAF communities. Rather, it is clear that there are insufficient counterinsurgents to safely control the country making
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it impossible to conduct Framework Operations that allow different intelligence sources to be triangulated and thus apply those methods pioneered in Iraq to the rest of Afghanistan. One way out of this dilemma is to undertake more capture and exploit operations that target potential insurgents. However, the dangers are clear. In a non-permissive security context, a raid that intends to capture a potential target can easily lead to possibly illegal, unnecessary, and inappropriate loss of life. This is especially the case when military rather than law-enforcement procedures are being followed.

In Baghdad JSOC operations became more closely coordinated with frontline counterinsurgents out of an ambition to limit the chance of casualties to non-combatants. By contrast, in Afghanistan, McChrystal, Petraeus, and subsequently General Allen can only effectively target those insurgents that present themselves within the security bubble established by existing ISAF forces undertaking Framework Operations. For every other target, SNA-based intelligence analysis is the only way of striking at the adversary beyond those areas controlled by ISAF. In effect then, SNA-led intelligence analysis has been designed into the overall strategic goals outlined by President Obama: “Nation building is off the agenda, the military can occupy what they can transfer to the Afghans and the goal is to ‘degrade’ the Taliban with eventual reconciliation in mind.”

It is therefore the single pillar around which an intelligence picture is built. Without sufficient troops to undertake Framework Operations across the country, a hybrid option has been forced on ISAF commanders from on high: the strategic cost/benefit calculation simply not being sufficiently in favor of a full-blown military commitment.

The Intelligence-Model and its Implications

What this article has so far demonstrated is that there are three pillars to the intelligence model that emerged from Iraq, a model that has subsequently been applied and adapted to Afghanistan. The first pillar is the intelligence feed coming from troops undertaking Framework Operations as part of their efforts to get to know the community that they are operating within. The second is the surveillance information that comes from ISTAR assets including SIGINT and IMINT. Finally, deeper level intelligence can be generated by analysts using SNA to mine data for patterns that might be indicative of insurgent activity. This can then be used by special forces as part of the F3EA process.

In the context of Overseas Contingency Operations, Coalition experience in Baghdad and Afghanistan has shown that insurgent identification is at its most robust when intelligence is assessed and corroborated against several of the intelligence pillars elaborated on earlier. In response to those situations where intelligence has been insufficiently developed or mistakes have occurred the Coalition has sought to more effectively coordinate the various agencies involved in information gathering and assessment. However, as this last section shows, better coordination by itself cannot resolve all of the tensions in this intelligence model. For there are a number of questions associated with undertaking Framework Operations and utilizing SNA that point toward deeper problems in the model, problems that demands a brief description of COIN doctrine if they are to be properly understood.

According to both the British and American armed forces engaged in COIN the indigenous population is currently understood to form the center of gravity around which various military, political, and development activities must be geared. In such circumstances the central challenge is to show that an established government will serve the population better than a shadow insurgent one. The application of force has utility in this context but according to the COIN theorists it must be applied carefully in order to protect the population and isolate them from those armed groups threatening the authority of the established
government. In the process of isolating the enemy insurgent, counterinsurgents work to foster low-level engagement with various local communities in order to deepen security, develop greater economic capacity and as a result demonstrate the benefits of reconciliation with the established government. This it is hoped will drain popular support away from the insurgent.

Both current U.S. and U.K. doctrine on counterinsurgency operations reinforces these basic principles in the slogan, “clear, hold and build.” Put simply, “clear” is the tactical mission to find, fix, and strike at insurgents in order to remove them from the area of operations. “Hold” involves restoring or implementing government authority, protecting the population from insurgents, and creating the security infrastructure in the area of operations. Finally, “build” centers on winning the consent and support of the population by various activities that might include, for example, building schools or developing road infrastructure.

However, given this U.S. and U.K. approach to COIN it is not easy to see how the three-pillared intelligence model as outlined earlier maps to the framework established by the doctrine. For example, Framework Operations demand a sufficiently permissive security environment, if communication between counterinsurgent and the indigenous population is to be two-way. At the beginning of an operation there is no guarantee that this kind of security context will be available. Consequently, lacking a sufficiently granular perspective of who is involved in the insurgency at the outset of a clear operation it becomes extremely difficult to undertake precision targeting.

In this situation it would seem that “advance to contact” techniques are necessary: advancing into a location and waiting until shots have been fired. This of course does not preclude the opportunity to use special forces as part of an SNA-led approach before Framework Operations can be carried out. However, this presents the possibility of alienating a community if the wrong people are accidentally targeted. If counterinsurgents are looking for ways to de-escalate the levels of violence then it would appear then that the real phase for fixing the identity and undertaking the precise targeting of insurgents is during the hold phase. In either case it seems that those interpretations of COIN that underplay the kinetic side of operations do not do justice to the difficulty of gathering intelligence in a non-permissive security environment.

Mapping the intelligence model to COIN doctrine aside, even assuming that the security context emerges to allow useful intelligence to be gathered through Framework Operations the technique continues to have limitations. At a deeper level this is partly generated by the assumptions implicit in both COIN theory and doctrine. From an intelligence perspective, key among these are the notions that: (A) there is an undecided population waiting to be brought round to favoring an established regime; and that (B) the insurgent category might be considered to have an essential or fixed quality. For only on the basis that it is possible to fix the identity of a notional and legitimate population group can such categories as insurgent be defined. From an intelligence perspective, then, what is required is a certain identity baseline from which unusual or out of the ordinary patterns might be discerned.

In accordance with the ambitions associated with intelligence-led policing, Framework Operations seek to develop this identity baseline so that unusual patterns might be observed. However, Framework Operations do not simply gather the facts. For example, just like key leader engagement activities that have emerged out of intelligence-led policing, counterinsurgents have to make decisions about with whom they will try to engage and avoid. Given the counterinsurgent’s strategic objectives and their limited understanding of the human terrain at the start of an operation, this has the potential to be based on presuppositions and interpretations that are dependent on pre-conceived perspectives.
No doubt the nuances of a particular community’s identity and way of life will become more familiar to counterinsurgents. However, this will take time to develop.

Framework Operations hold out the promise, then, that communication between the counterinsurgent and the indigenous population is two-way: that a degree of shared understanding might be possible between the counterinsurgent and the community they are operating among. In practice, however, the indigenous population can be all too aware of the instrumental nature of this form of engagement and can be wary of becoming overly familiar with counterinsurgents if this compromises their ability to survive the violence embracing their community. The instrumental nature of the communication process can then compound what is already an intensely problematic interpretative exercise and lead, for example, indigenous rival factions to feed counterinsurgents false information in an effort to settle old scores.106

Problems with the intelligence model are not, however, limited to Framework Operations. Sociological techniques like SNA also have inherent problems associated with instrumentalizing target communities and are indicative of a mindset that needs to essentialize identity so that a population can be defined and thus manipulated.107 This is clearly a bureaucratic response to the demand for actionable data, data that makes it possible for counterinsurgents to do something to advance their overall strategic goals.

The problem is that in Afghanistan, for example, it is not obvious whether the forms of society currently in place lend themselves to the sorts of manipulations that are being implemented by ISAF. It is not clear, for example, whether ISAF has properly understood the relationships between actors: either at the tactical level with regards to local communities or at a provincial or even strategic level where the Taliban might interlink with tribes, warlords, or Al Qaeda.108 Where such uncertainties exist then, techniques such as SNA can be extremely important to the international community because through them different constituencies can be defined and thus created. Some of these groups are defined as “red forces” susceptible to interdiction.109 Other non-hostile actors ISAF can do business with. Thus SNA helps to define an indigenous population in a particular way irrespective of their preferences.

In this respect, it is not entirely certain whether ISAF operations are trying to defend a government and by implication an already existing civil society with its own political identity or in fact are undertaking a competitive state-building exercise with the Taliban.110 If ISAF is pursuing the latter then clearly the international community is seeking to construct a population with a political identity that was not previously in existence.111 Consequently, the application of sociological techniques like SNA to the problem of insurgent identification is very much at the sharp end of the process for developing a population group with a political identity that is acceptable to the international community.

Clearly, then, the international community in Afghanistan is doing more than simply watching and categorizing population groups in a neutral fashion. A more accurate observation would recognize the way in which ISAF is actively choosing with whom it is prepared to do business. It is, for example, a policy choice to prop up the Karzai government by marginalizing or neutralizing the extremely violent elements in Afghanistan so as to create the conditions through which the moderates in society can be made and mobilized.112 Subsequently the hope is that a form of government that in some way embodies civil society will emerge and be acceptable to the international community generally and the United States in particular.

Thus the deeper tensions in the intelligence model lie in the fact that the indigenous population itself does not have a say in the way it is being represented. This contradicts the notion that the object of COIN is to “outgovern rather than outgun” the insurgency...
and instead suggests an orientalist preoccupation with form over content. For analysts are attentive to the form of the network in the hope of deducing patterns indicative of hostile intent. However, they are less concerned with the political and social concerns of those people that make up the nodal points in their network diagrams. The outcome is the undermining of those counterinsurgency practices that aim at backing up political initiatives designed to persuade population groups to side with an established government. As a result it can be even harder to employ Framework Operations to develop an intelligence picture that might reflect the political and social concerns of the population. Counterinsurgents may then be further tempted to use SNA-based intelligence analysis to deploy special forces on kill or capture missions even though they lack a proper appreciation for the political ambitions of those they have been asked to target.

This is of particular concern in Afghanistan where part of the Obama strategy is aimed at delivering some form of political reconciliation with the Taliban. In this context the conduct of operations in Afghanistan is clearly of great significance. If special forces are being let off the leash, “...not waiting for gold-plated intelligence to launch strikes...” but, “...just really going for it” then there is every danger that coercive techniques will be counterproductive. For the elimination of certain parts of a network in order to encourage the military disintegration of the insurgency is not effective if there is no one left to talk to.

At the same time the alternative situation can be equally as unhelpful. For as Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn have recently pointed out the aggressive targeting of senior Taliban leaders leaves the movement open to being taken over by younger, more ideologically driven lieutenants more inclined to work with Al Qaeda than to seek reconciliation with the United States. As both Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn note, “If a political settlement is indeed being sought, there is little sense in trying to destroy the organisations one wants to talk to.” Perhaps more strikingly than this they note that the tensions in ISAF COIN operations have left some Taliban leaders uncertain as to what ISAF wants. Indeed, they quote one Taliban leader, who says,

They [ISAF] divide people into black and white, radical and moderate, but there is no clear policy. Why are they fighting here in Afghanistan? What do they want for the people of Afghanistan? What do they want for themselves? The people of Afghanistan do not seek to deny their legitimate interests in the region, but still our national interest is dear to us, so why do they not coordinate their policies with our high interests? By neglecting our national interest they are following their own interest in an ambiguous environment.

As FM 3-24 makes clear, SNA constituted an analytical method that was considered appropriate for COIN. In practice, however, SNA has formed part of a logic that seemed more pertinent for special forces conducting strike operations. The problem with the method is that it is empty of the kinds of analysis that make it possible to develop a wider understanding of a community’s politics. In Iraq where there was a stronger sense of what government ought to do and where civil society could be co-opted into a process of violence reduction this was not such a problem. In applying the same technique to Afghanistan, however, analysts effectively categorize the population in unrepresentative ways, fail to account for the social capital that exist within a community, and potentially undermine the process of reconciliation with the Taliban.
Conclusion

This article has sought to show how intelligence is used in Overseas Contingency Operations in order to identify insurgent communities. In the process the ambition has been to offer a perspective on the comments by Lieutenant-General Lamb who claims that the binary distinctions between COIN and CT are false. What this article has argued is that there are strong similarities between intelligence-led policing techniques as they are applied to domestic CT and the intelligence model that has emerged out of both U.S. and U.K. COIN doctrine and its application in Iraq and Afghanistan. The differences in the domestic versus foreign application of the model lie in the permissive nature of the security context and whether the law of conflict or a domestic legal framework are applicable. In a non-permissive security context like Iraq and Afghanistan it is not possible to use the police to gather a “bank” of information that can be used to further develop intelligence threads. Instead frontline troops have had to undertake “Framework Operations.” This contrasts with those intelligence-led policing techniques that have increasingly been applied to domestic counterterrorism. In this situation the police can provide the intelligence context against which other security agencies can work to identify potential terrorists.

What is clear, however, is that intelligence assessments have increasingly sought to corroborate information against a number of intelligence pillars. Those tensions that have arisen have typically developed out of a lack of coordination between the various communities involved in gathering and assessing these different sources. Coalition intelligence agencies have, however, attempted to rectify this to the point where JSOC forward observers have been collocated with frontline troops as part of an effort to provoke and then entrap those insurgents who might be tempted to break cover and attack counterinsurgents.

The instrumental nature of both Framework Operations and SNA does, however, remain implicit to the model and continues to cause friction in intelligence-gathering and assessments. Given the political and social conditions in Iraq this was not so problematic. For the fact was that Iraqis were familiar with the purposes of government, recognized the dangers posed by their Iranian and Saudi neighbors should sectarian conflict overwhelm the country, understood the importance of de-escalating violence, and consequently were willing to play their part in engineering political change. This contrasts with the situation in Afghanistan where there is little chance of playing off religious rivalries among the Pashtun in order to cut deals and deliver a Sons of Iraq militia; where there are insufficient counterinsurgents available to control the country; and where in any case the population is insufficiently concentrated to control. The attempts then to apply the same techniques in Afghanistan as had been used in Baghdad tend to ignore the social and political concerns of Afghans and instead given the Obama strategy push the problems posed by the Taliban into Pakistan where they are only subject to intelligence-led strike operations. As a result insurgent identification becomes more dependent on forms of analysis that are remote from the battlefield. This is a problem if counterinsurgents are looking to find ways to deescalate violence and produce political solutions to the conflict in Afghanistan.

Notes


8. Ibid., pp. 161–162.


11. Ibid., p. 73.

12. See, for example, the excellent study of the role played by the CIA and other agencies in Vietnam by Mark Moyar. See M. Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). There are countless books on the CIA and the War on Terror. Austin Long provides an extensive list of these, see Note 77.


14. R. Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London: Penguin Books, 2006). These ideas are repeated by General Sir Richard Dannett, former Chief of the UK General Staff (2006–2009) who is quoted in current UK COIN doctrine as saying, “But at the end of the day, this is all about the people. Yes, in Afghanistan we are living, operating and fighting when necessary, among the people—but importantly we recognise that people are more than just the environment, they are the object of our endeavours, so what we are doing is about the people and for the people of Afghanistan, of the Region and of the international community more widely.” Quoted from Anon, “British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10, Countering Insurgency,” ed. Land Warfare Centre (London: UK MOD, 2010), vol. 1, chapter 3, 1.


17. See Noah Shachtman, “Iraq Diary: Fallujah’s Biometric Gates,” *WIRED*, 31 August 2007. The approach has led to some notable successes above and beyond COIN. For instance, the system for collecting and storing biometric data helped in the recovery of 35 Taliban prisoners who had escaped


22. However, there has been some criticism of Britain’s ability to join up the various Information Technology infrastructures that make insurgent identification at the frontlines possible. See J. Bethell, “Accidental Counterinsurgents: Nad E Ali, Hybrid War and the Future of the British Army,” *British Army Review* 149 (Summer 2010).


24. In operations in Northern Ireland this included establishing an antiterrorist telephone hotline. This idea has subsequently been applied by counterinsurgents in Afghanistan and was also mooted by U.S. officials who suggested they would fund the Pakistani government to establish their own antiterrorist hotline. See “US Embassy Cables: US Funnels Secret Funds to ‘Terrorist Hotline,’” *The Guardian*, 30 November 2010. Available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/194822 (accessed 28 July 2011).


27. The over-use of technology and the supposed avoidance of foot patrols in favor of motorized patrol is similarly blamed for the failure of early COIN interventions by some. See for example, J. Lyall and I. Wilson III, “Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars,” *International Organization* 63 (Winter 2009).

28. It should be noted that key leaders and important communities may simply reflect preexisting bias and therefore these groups may not be the most appropriate targets for intervention. See M. Innes, N. Fielding, and N. Cope, “‘The Appliance of Science?’ the Theory and Practice of Crime Intelligence Analysis,” *British Journal of Criminology* 45(1) (2005).


35. The number of articles on this subject is vast. For an introduction to and criticism of HTT see for example R. Gonzalez, *American Counterinsurgency: Human Science and the Human Terrain* (Chicago: Prickly Press, 2009).

36. For Petraeus’s own critical views on the efficacy of HTT see, “Petraeus Quietly Disses ‘Human Terrain,’” *WIRED*, 3 September 2010.

37. In order to overcome this limitation the UK approach has been to teach British military officers a certain number of anthropological skills.


40. General David Petraeus subsequently asked Colonel Brian Reed (a recently completed Ph.D. in SNA) to formalize the approach and roll it out across the U.S. military’s COIN doctrine where it appeared as part of Appendix B to FM 3–24. See ibid., Appendix B. For a fuller account of the operation to capture Saddam Hussein see also D. R. Segal and B. Reed, “Social Network Analysis and Counterinsurgency Operations: The Capture of Saddam Hussein,” *Sociological Focus* 39(4) (2006); and D. R. Segal and B. Reed, “Capturing Saddam Hussein: Social Network Analysis and Counterinsurgency Operations,” in S. Carlton-Ford and M. G. Ender, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of War and Society* (London: Routledge, 2011). Not everyone agrees that SNA has been useful. See, for instance, Chris Wilson, “Searching for Saddam—Why Social Network Analysis hasn’t led us to Osama Bin Laden,” *Slate*, 26 February 2010. However, the jury is still out on whether SNA played a part in the recent killing of bin Laden.

41. Aleksandra Krotoski gives a good summary of the relationship between social network analysis and the way social groups can influence attitudes or behaviors. Her research very much typifies the counterinsurgent’s ambition to shape the perspectives of communities with regards to insurgency. See A. Krotoski, “Social Influence in Second Life: Social Network and Social Psychological Processes in the Diffusion of Belief and Behaviour on the Web” (University of Surrey, 2009), pp. 48–64.


43. B. Reed, “A Social Network Approach to Understanding an Insurgency,” *Parameters* XXXVII (Summer 2007).


51. Ibid.

52. This has been described as McChrystal’s most important contribution especially given the institutional resistance he no doubt faced in attempting to introduce Fusion Cells. See Thom Shanker, “Study is Said to Find Overlap in US Counterterrorism Effort,” The New York Times, 18 March 2006; and Ann Scott Tyson, “Manhunter to Take on a Wider Mission, Gen. McChrystal Faces Raft of Issues in Afghanistan,” The Washington Post, 13 May 2009. Forensics teams are currently in place in Afghanistan; see Spencer Ackerman, “CSI Afghanistan: It’s not about Fingering the Bad Guys Anymore,” WIRED, 16 August 2010.


54. Ibid.


59. The “Grass Widow” technique had been videotaped and in combination with lectures and participation in training sessions with the IDF Counter-Terror unit, US Army officers had taken the technique back to Iraq. R. Bergman, The Secret War with Iran: The 30 Year Covert Struggle for Control of a “Rogue” State (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd, 2008), pp. 286–287.

60. Urban, Task Force Black.

61. Ibid.


63. The most notable being Abu Musab al-Zakawi in June 2006.


66. Creating these sorts of barriers has long been the approach adopted by counterinsurgents. While there are many examples of this in the COIN literature, the blockhouse and barbed wire cordons used during the latter phases of the Boer War spring to mind. See T. Packenham, The Boer War (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), pp. 535–550.


75. Ibid., p. 102.


77. Austin Long sets out a credible CT strategy, including an outline of appropriate military assets required to pursue kill or capture missions across the Durand Line. See A. Long, “Small in Beautiful: The Counterterrorism Option in Afghanistan,” *Orbis* 54(2) (2010).

78. This increase was nowhere near as many as the 68,000 troops some reports were suggesting that McChrystal had initially hoped for as part of a full-blown COIN strategy. See Peter Graff and Adam Entous, “McChrystal Troops Request Shelved Pending Spending Review,” *Reuters*, 26 September 2009. Bob Woodward writes that the dream figure for additional troops was as high as 80,000.

79. Prior to this increase in troop numbers, it is clear that ISAF was not sufficiently focused on population-centric operations of the kind outlined in FM 3-24. British forces in Helmand were, for instance, doing a lot of what might be described as “clear” operations without any idea as to whether this would produce a permanent effect on the insurgency. These large-unit sweeps were not always backed by “hold” and “build” operations. See Grey, *Operation Snakebite*, pp. 64–65 and 124–128; see also J. Pritchard and M. L. R. Smith, “Thompson in Helmand: Comparing Theory to Practice in British Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan,” *Civil Wars* 12(1) (2010). Recent work by Rhudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell would contest this claim. They argue that “Clear, Hold, Build” COIN doctrine has been more effectively implemented through 2009 and into 2010. See R. Chaudhuri and T. Farrell, “Campaign Disconnect: Operational Progress and Strategic Obstacles in Afghanistan, 2009–2011,” *International Affairs* 87(2) (2011).


83. Thom Shanker et al., “US Elite Units Step Up Effort in Afghan City.”


90. Clark, *The Takhar Attack*. 

92. Ibid.


97. See Anon, “Field Manual 3–24 Counterinsurgency,” chapter 1, paragraph 1–3. Both the current and previous British Army Chiefs take the similar views; see, for instance, General Sir David Richards, Address to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, 18 January 2010. Available at http://www.iiss.org/recent-key-addresses/general-sir-david-richards-address/?locale=en (accessed 2 December 2010).

98. This approach has a long tradition in the British Army. See A. Alderson, “The Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine after the War in Iraq 2003–2009” (Cranfield University, 2009), pp. 99–136.


100. As shown in “British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10, Countering Insurgency,” ed. Land Warfare Centre (London: UK MOD, 2010), vol. 1, chapter 4, pp. 14–16; and “Field Manual 3–24 Counterinsurgency,” pp. 5/17–5/25. It should be noted that British Military Doctrine also includes an initial step of shaping the way the battlefield is understood by insurgent and other actors in order to positively influence them with regard to British objectives.

101. These include, for example, a lack of clarity as to what local popular support for an insurgency might mean; that there is a political process and that it is possible or even necessary to persuade or coerce communities to join it; that there is a shadow insurgent government that aims to win over the indigenous population; that persuading a population to support an indigenous government is more effective than coercive strategies. For a discussion of these see, C. Paul, “As a Fish Swims in the Sea: Relationships between Factors Contributing to Support for Terrorist or Insurgent Groups,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33(6) (2010); as many commentators have shown, a shadow government of sorts clearly does operate in Afghanistan but it is unclear how effectively these figures exercise direction over the multifarious local commanders; see Bethell, “Accidental Counterinsurgents: Nad E Ali, Hybrid War and the Future of the British Army,” p. 10; C. J. Chivers, “In Eastern Afghanistan, at War With the Taliban’s Shadowy Rule,” *The New York Times*, 6 February 2011; M. Mcfate and A. Jackson, “The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition,” *Military Review* (January–February 2006); A. S. Wilner, “Targeted Killings in Afghanistan: Measuring Coercion and Deterrence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33(4) (2010); J. Jordan, “When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation,” *Security Studies* 18(4) (2009); H. Bennett, “A Very Salutary Effect’: The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32(3) (2009).

102. This notion is derived from the Mao-ist interpretation of insurgency. See MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, pp. 19–25.


104. Innes, “Policing Uncertainty.”
105. Innes, Fielding, and Cope, “‘The Appliance of Science?’”
107. Mitchell Dean describes this as the “Conduct of conduct.” See M. Dean, Governmentality—
108. Bethell, “Accidental Counterinsurgents,” p. 10; A. Strick van Linschoten and F. Kuehn,
   Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Cores of Success in Afghanistan (New York: New York
   University: Center on International Cooperation, 2011); the same point is made more generally by S.
109. This is a process that is clearly articulated by Keith Stanski, “ ‘So These Folks Are Ag-
   Roland Marchal develops an argument along the same vein but in relation to developing target lists
   for Western military operations in Somalia. See R. Marchal, “Warlordism and Terrorism: How to
   Obscure an Already Confusing Crisis? The Case of Somalia,” International Affairs 83(6) (2007),
   p. 1093.
111. Many Afghans do not have a sense or concept of what an Afghan government is for. This
   is reinforced by the findings of US Human Terrain Teams working in Marja during 2010. See Micah
112. A. Chowdhury and R. R. Krebs, “Making and Mobilizing Moderates: Rhetorical Strategy,
   Lamb, while Deputy Commander Multi-National Force Iraq, described this as a squeezebox strategy.
   This strategy is discussed further on in the article. See Urban, Task Force Black.
113. David Miliband, “The Danger is Being Outgoverned, rather than Outgunned,” New States-
   Strategy?,” Critical Studies on Terrorism 3(2) (2010), pp. 219–222.
115. Thomas Harding quotes a military source directly. See “SAS kills Taliban ‘on an Industrial
   Scale’, British Casualty Rates Fall as Insurgent Leaders are Targeted,” The Daily Telegraph, 1
   September 2010; Rhudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell indicate that from July to September 2010 some
   300 insurgent leaders were killed or captured in SOF operations; a further 850 lower-level insurgents
   were killed and 2,100 captured. See Chaudhuri and Farrell, “Campaign Disconnect: Operational
   ternative perspective on the benefits of targeted killings on Taliban professionalism and specifically
   their success rate in planting IEDs, see Wilner, “Targeted Killings in Afghanistan: Measuring Coer-
   cion and Deterrence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency,” pp. 323–324. While it may not be
   unreasonable, Alex Wilner is nonetheless still working within an ISAF assumption that the Taliban
   are made up of Tier 1 leaders and the rest who can be pared away because they are “ordinary people”
   (p. 323). SNA type analysis can be used to support this hypothesis but it does not address questions
   about Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 motivations. This has to come from another form of data gathering
   such as a census, opinion polling, or a focus group. Given the circumstances, this cannot easily be
   undertaken. Consequently, there is no easy way to identify how many Taliban fighters still remain or
   categorically state what motivates them.
117. Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda, pp. 9–11.
118. Ibid., p. 11.
119. Ibid., p. 10.
121. The Pakistan government does not welcome troop deployments across the Durand Line.
   Consequently, ISAF may well find it easier to strike insurgent networks by UAV drone attack. See,
   for example, Spencer Ackerman, “ ‘Unprecedented’ Drone Assault: 58 Strikes in 102 Days,” WIRED,
   17 December 2010.