Exhibit 3

The Scholar

UNBEATABLE: SOCIAL RESOURCES, MILITARY ADAPTATION, AND THE AFGHAN TALIBAN

Theo Farrell

Following the 9/11 attacks, the Afghan Taliban were obliterated in a lightning war prosecuted by the United States. Their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ceased to exist as a physical entity, and the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, fled to Pakistan. Within five years, however, the Taliban had regrouped and returned in large numbers to southern and eastern Afghanistan. By 2016, they had overrun at least a third of the country. How did the Taliban come back so successfully from utter defeat? This article draws on the literatures on civil wars and on military adaptation to identify and unpack two sets of factors that explain the relative success of insurgencies: the availability of social resources and the elements that drive and enable military adaptation. Using a large number of original interviews with Taliban leaders, cadre, and field commanders, I demonstrate how these factors combined to make the Taliban essentially unbeatable.

Insurgencies are famously difficult to defeat, yet the Afghan Taliban have proven especially so. Accounts of Taliban resilience have focused on both the deficiencies of Western efforts and the Afghan state and on Pakistani support for the Taliban. These accounts fail, however, to reveal the full picture of how the Taliban have been able to survive. Drawing on original field research, this article explores how the Taliban's success has been shaped by factors internal to the insurgency, namely, the social resources that sustain it and the group's ability to adapt militarily.

The fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was swift and brutal. Shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States went to war against al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts in Afghanistan. Taliban forces were obliterated in a lightning war prosecuted by American special operations forces and their Afghan allies, supported by an armada of warplanes. U.S. air forces did most of the killing.

The U.S. Air Force and Navy dropped 18,000 bombs in the air campaign, 10,000 of which were precision munitions. The exact number of Taliban fighters killed is unknown, but according to one estimate the death toll was 8,000 to 12,000.[1] By early 2002, the Taliban emirate had ceased to exist as a physical entity, and its leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, had fled to Pakistan.

Within five years, however, the Taliban had regrouped and returned in large numbers to southern and eastern Afghanistan. In the decade that followed, the new Afghan state and its Western backers were unable to stop a Taliban insurgency from steadily gaining more ground across the country. In 2016, the Taliban seized Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan for a second time, having done so the year before as well.[2] The Taliban had also come close to capturing the provincial capitals of Helmand and Uruzgan in the south and Farah in the west. In May 2016, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan command reported that only 65 percent of the

1   Michael E. O'Hanlon, "A Flawed Masterpiece," *Foreign Affairs* 81 (May/June 2002): 48, 55, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2002-05-01/flawed-masterpiece.

2   Mujib Mashal and Najim Rahim, "Afghan Forces Push Taliban Out of Kunduz Center, Officials Say," *New York Times*, Oct. 4, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/05/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-kunduz.html.

country's 407 districts were under government control.[3] This highlights the question of how the Taliban were able to come back so successfully from utter defeat.

Between 2001 and 2016, the United States spent around $800 billion on war in Afghanistan. The international community spent an additional £240 billion building up Afghan security forces. In 2010, at the height of the international military effort in Afghanistan, just over 100,000 U.S. troops and around 40,000 troops from 50 other nations were deployed there. Despite all this military might and international largesse, the Taliban were not defeated. How can this be explained? To date, studies on the war have mostly focused on deficiencies in the international military effort and problems with the Afghan state. Lack of success in defeating the Taliban has been blamed on the failings of Western leadership and strategy, on the hubris and incoherence of the international effort, and on flaws in counterinsurgency tactics and operations.[4] Equally important has been the scale of corruption in Afghanistan, fueled by the massive influx of international aid, which has undermined both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the Afghan government and security forces.[5]

In explaining the persistence and success of the Afghan Taliban, many commentators have highlighted the support the group received from Pakistan. The long, porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan (across which men, material, and money move with relative ease), the use of refugee camps in Pakistan as secure rear

bases, and significant military assistance from the Pakistani Army have unquestionably been important to sustaining the insurgency in Afghanistan.[6] The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency of the Pakistani Army has been central in this. The ISI has largely succeeded in hiding its involvement in the Afghan conflict, working through undercover agents, civilian sympathizers, contractors, and retired officers. Taliban interviewees are also cautious about commenting on Pakistan's role in their struggle. Thus, outside the world of secret intelligence, it is possible to get only glimpses of the ISI's assistance to the Taliban. While the group receives significant financial support from Gulf Cooperation Council states (and from various sources within GCC states), and some military assistance from Iran and possibly Russia, Pakistan has been the Taliban's most important source of funds, training, and military supplies.[7] According to the journalist Steve Coll, by 2008 it had become apparent to the U.S. military that the Pakistan Army was supporting the whole deployment cycle of Taliban forces, from their training in Pakistan to their deployment in Afghanistan to their return to Pakistan for rest and recuperation. Coll even notes that "Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps troops along the Pakistan border were firing on American border posts to provide covering fire for the Taliban to infiltrate into Afghanistan and return."[8]

Less studied, however, is how the Taliban have been the makers of their own success. To be sure, the literature on the Taliban is sizable and includes important books on the group's origins, politics,

3   Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, July 30, 2016, 86, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-07-30qr.pdf.

4   Theo Farrell, *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001–2014* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017); Jack Fairweather, *The Good War: The Battle for Afghanistan, 2006–14* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014); Daniel P. Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014); David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: The Liberal Disconnect* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London: Harper Press, 2011); Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); M.J. Williams, *The Good War: NATO and the Liberal Conscience in Afghanistan* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

5   Chris Kolenda, "Endgame: Why American Interventions Become Quagmires," PhD thesis, King's College London, 2017; Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016); Antonio Giustozzi, *The Army of Afghanistan: A Political History of a Fragile Institution* (London: Hurst, 2015); Astri Suhrke, *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2011); Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan: Aid, Armies and Empires* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

6   Peter Bergen with Katherine Tiedemann, eds., *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973–2012* (London: Hurst, 2013); Carlotta Gall, *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001–2014* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

7   Carlotta Gall, "Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Supports Afghan Government," *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/saudi-arabia-afghanistan.html; Ahmad Majidyar, "Afghan Intelligence Chief Warns Iran and Russia Against Aiding Taliban," *The Middle East Institute*, Feb. 5, 2018, http://www.mei.edu/content/io/afghan-intelligence-chief-warns-iran-and-russia-against-aiding-taliban; Justin Rowlatt, "Russia 'Arming the Afghan Taliban', Says US," *BBC News*, Mar. 23, 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43500299. The extent of Pakistan support to the Taliban is documented in Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001–2016* (New York: Random House, 2018); and Gall, *The Wrong Enemy*.

8   Coll, *Directorate S*, 329-340.

culture, and war making before 2002.[9] Antonio Giustozzi has produced a number of studies on the organization, governance, and fighting tactics of the post-2002 Taliban insurgency.[10] Still missing, though, is a comprehensive explanation for the Afghan Taliban's remarkable resilience. How is it that the Taliban managed to survive an onslaught by the most powerful military alliance in the world?

In this article, I draw on two bodies of theory from the field of security studies, one on the roots of insurgency and the other on military adaptation. The former identifies the critical nature of social resources that give resilience to insurgencies — in particular, the strength of horizontal networks within the insurgency and vertical links into host communities. The latter identifies those factors that make it more likely for militaries to adapt to evolving challenges in war. When applied to the Afghan Taliban, what's revealed is an insurgency that has a deep well of social resources and that has, over time, improved its ability to innovate and adapt. Taken together, these factors point to an insurgency that is highly resilient and one that is unbeatable by military means alone. This finding has vital implications for the Trump administration's strategy, which revolves around intensifying the military effort against the Taliban.

In addition to presenting new insights informed by theory-driven inquiry, this article draws on a large number of original interviews with Afghan Taliban leaders, officials, and field commanders. Careful protocols were followed to ensure the fidelity of the interview data.[11] Of course, the reliability of what Taliban members say is inevitably open to question. On some matters, Taliban interviewees were inclined to exaggerate (e.g., the level of public support the group enjoys) or to be less than forthcoming (e.g., the role that Pakistani intelligence plays in providing support for the group). To minimize the risk of corrupt

data undermining the analysis, the main findings are developed from multiple interviews and, where appropriate, are related to published scholarship on the Taliban.

This article proceeds with a review of the literature on the social roots of insurgency, applying those insights to the Afghan Taliban, as well as a review of the literature on adaptation in war, likewise applying insights to the Taliban case. It concludes with a look at the implications of these findings for the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan.

Social Sources and Insurgency

Even in situations that are ripe for rebellion, organizing an insurgency is far from easy. As political scientist Jeremy Weinstein notes, insurgent leaders face multiple challenges, chief among them maintaining control, especially as the insurgency grows, and extracting resources (e.g., funds, supplies, and recruits) without alienating local populations.[12] Some insurgent groups rely on terror to impose discipline within their ranks and to keep local populations subdued. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is a prominent practitioner of this tactic.[13] Even more savage was the Revolutionary United Front, whose atrocities in Sierra Leone in the 1990s included abducting children and turning them into sadistic killers, and hacking off the limbs of countless thousands of civilians.[14] One problem with wielding terror as a tactic is that it "can stifle opposition but cannot engender loyalty and support from the civilian population." For insurgent groups seeking to hold territory, this creates the ever-present risk of civilian defection to the opposing side.[15] For many insurgencies, consent is as important as coercion in maintaining both internal control and external local support.

Weinstein points to the importance of "social

9   Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2001); Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970–2010* (London: Hurst, 2012); Rob Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War: Culture and Pragmatism: A Critical History* (London: Hurst, 2011).

10   Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2007); Antonio Giustozzi, ed., *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (London: Hurst, 2009).

11   In total, 282 interviews with Taliban and 138 interviews with non-Taliban Afghan locals were conducted by Afghan researchers over two periods, from 2011–12 and 2014–15. Those interviewed were not paid for their interviews. Interviews were recorded in field notes and transcribed into English. The research project was led by myself, and the field research was supervised by Dr. Antonio Giustozzi. In conformity with the project protocols, I do not reveal the precise location and date of the interviews in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. The findings from the 2011–12 pilot project were published as Theo Farrell and Antonio Giustozzi, "The Taliban at War: Inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004–2011," *International Affairs* 89 (2013): 845-71. The overall findings of the main project will be published as Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War* (London: Hurst, forthcoming).

12   Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43-44.

13   Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (London: William Collins, 2015).

14   Kieran Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil War* (London: Hurst, 2015).

15   Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 52-55.

endowments" in mobilizing people to join or support an insurgent movement. Social endowments include preexisting networks, common identities, shared beliefs, and norms of reciprocity, all of which facilitate cooperation and collective action, especially in situations with short-term costs and only the promise of long-term gains.[16] In his major

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study on the cohesion of insurgent organizations, Paul Staniland also highlights the role of prewar social networks, noting that insurgent leaders often "'socially appropriate' existing structures of collective action for new functions." Staniland distinguishes between two types of structures: horizontal networks and vertical ties.[17] Horizontal networks link people who may be dispersed geographically through common ideological beliefs or professional identities. Political parties are a prime example. Insurgent movements often originate from or incorporate political parties. One example is the peasant insurgency in Nepal from 1996 to 2006, which sprang from the Maoist wing of the Communist Party of Nepal.[18] Vertical ties, on the other hand, are preexisting linkages between insurgent groups and local people, often based on common ethnic, tribal, or familial networks. These make it possible for insurgent groups to bind local communities to their cause and to extract resources from and exert control over them. Thus, "bonds of family and kinship" were crucial to the success of the Naxalites in mobilizing peasant support for their Maoist insurgency in eastern India.[19] Staniland

argues that variance in the cohesion and resilience of insurgencies may be explained by the degree to which they are founded on, and are able to exploit, both horizontal networks and vertical ties.

Over time, many insurgencies develop governance processes and structures to provide services for civilians in the territory they control. This requires insurgent groups to divert resources that could otherwise be devoted to their armed struggle. It may also require insurgent groups to take civilian preferences into account, even when they differ from the interests and preferences of the insurgency.[20] In the case of secessionist insurgencies, the impulse to govern is obvious since the struggle is focused on achieving independent statehood. In other cases (especially with Maoist insurgencies), insurgent groups are ideologically predisposed to govern the areas and populations over which they have control.[21] For most insurgent governments, establishing the means to police the population and regulate disputes is the first order of business. The provision of other public services, such as education and health care, is usually a secondary concern.[22] Nonetheless, providing some governance is important in the long term for insurgencies to sustain public support. This can, in turn, lead to the moderation of ideologically driven insurgent governments, if only for pragmatic reasons.[23] Regardless of the extent and effectiveness of their governance, insurgencies will often take on the symbolic trappings of statehood, and "perform" like a state. As Zachariah Mampilly notes, "[b]y mimicking the behavior of the modern state, rebels seek to discursively construct a political authority imbued with a comparable legitimacy enjoyed by national governments."[24] Such behavior can be important in sustaining the political claims of an insurgency group.

When it comes to the Taliban, this discussion

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16   Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, 48-49.

17   Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

18   Madhav Joshi and T. David Mason, "Between Democracy and Revolution: Peasant Support for Insurgency Versus Democracy in Nepal," *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2008): 765-82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640768.

19   Alpa Shah, "The Intimacy of Insurgency: Beyond Coercion, Greed or Grievance in Maoist India," *Economy and Society* 42 (2013): 480-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2013.783662

20   Nelson Kasfir, "Rebel Governance — Constructing a Field of Inquiry: Definitions, Scope, Patterns, Order, Causes," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 22-23.

21   Bert Suykens, "Comparing Rebel Rule Through Revolution and Naturalization: Ideologies of Governance in Naxalite and Naga India," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 138-57.

22   Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 63-64.

23   Till Forster, "Dialogue Direct: Rebel Governance and Civil Order in Northern Cote d'Ivoire," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 203-25; and Suykens, "Comparing Rebel Rule Through Revolution and Naturalization."

24   Zachariah Mampilly, "Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 77-78.

raises two questions. First, what role did horizontal networks and vertical ties play in the development of the post-2002 insurgency? Second, how successful have the Taliban been in creating state-like structures and public services since 2002?

The Social Roots of Taliban Resurgence

At the core of the Taliban movement is a horizontal network, based on common religious schooling and shared military experience, that endows the group with a powerful, unifying ideology and worldview. The Taliban movement was founded on a network of Deobandi madrassas in Pakistan within which the group's leadership and cadre were educated. Thousands of young men were mobilized from these madrassas to fight against the Soviets in the mujahedeen war in the 1980s. Mujahedeen fighting groups organized themselves into larger networks, called "fronts," or *mahaz*, each led by a great leader who was able to disburse military supplies from foreign donors across his front to field commanders.[25] According to one major study on the origins of the Taliban, "In greater Kandahar, there were literally hundreds of Taliban commanders and dozens of Taliban fronts. ... The Taliban sought to distinguish themselves from other mujahedeen groups by offering a more ostentatiously religious jihad to those who fought with them."[26] Young Taliban fighters formed strong bonds with the movement and with each other through the rigors and hardships of the mujahedeen war.[27]

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul three years later, removed the common cause that had held different mujahedeen parties together, and civil war promptly ensued. In southern Afghanistan, local warlords had free rein to prey on civilians, imposing arbitrary fines, stealing land, and kidnapping people for ransom and sexual abuse. In Kandahar, the Taliban returned to arms in 1994, under the leadership of Mullah Omar, to bring security and justice to the Pashtun population. Within four years, Taliban fighters had swept across the country, defeating or buying off rivals who stood in their path. By 1998, only a few pockets of resistance remained, most notably the Tajik Northern Alliance, which was holed up in its mountain retreats in the northeast. Upon seizing control of the country, the Taliban established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Chronically underfunded (with an annual budget of around $80 million) and untrained in public administration, the Taliban were unable to reestablish basic public services across the country. Moreover, the group imposed myriad fundamentalist strictures on the population, most notably preventing women from going to work and girls from going to school.[28] Accordingly, the downfall of the Taliban in late 2001 and early 2002 was welcomed by a great many Afghans.

The major challenge for the interim Afghan administration of Hamid Karzai in 2002 was asserting government rule beyond Kabul and preventing a return to civil war. Karzai did this primarily by coopting various warlords into the new Afghan government. In this way, the corrupt warlords who had been pushed out of power by the Taliban in the 1990s returned as local governors and police chiefs. Under the guise of officialdom, these reincarnated figures once again stole from and abused the population. This, in turn, provided fertile ground for the gradual return of the Taliban into southern and eastern Afghanistan beginning in 2004. As one local elder from Helmand province noted, "day by day people got fed up with this Afghan government and welcomed the Taliban back into their districts."[29]

The United States ruled out peace talks with the Taliban in 2001 and 2002, and Karzai did not respond to a number of Taliban overtures during this period. Instead, U.S. special operations forces hunted down Taliban "terrorists," who were rendered to detention facilities in Bagram, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay. Many "common people," as the Taliban call non-Taliban locals, also were caught up in the net thrown by U.S. special operations. As Mike Martin notes, the Americans "failed to understand how offering a bounty would cause people to denounce anyone they were

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25   Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War*, 217-39.

26   Van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created*, 45. Initially, it was believed that the Taliban originated in Kandahar in 1994 as a religious militant group that sought to bring law and order to southern Afghanistan and stop local warlords from abusing the area population. This view was most notably advanced in Rashid's *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords*. However, van Linschoten and Kuehn have subsequently proven that the Taliban predated the 1990s and indeed fought in the mujahedeen war. This is also recounted in the published memoir of a former senior Taliban. See Abdul Salam Zaeff, *My Life With the Taliban* (London: Hurst, 2010).

27   On the mujahedeen as "brothers-in-arms" communities forged in war, see David B. Edwards, *Caravan of Martyrs: Sacrifice and Suicide Bombing in Afghanistan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

28   Christina Lamb, *The Sowing Circles of Herat* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).

29   Interview with local elder no. 7, Nad-e Ali district, Helmand, March 2012.

having a feud with, or even innocent people, in order to collect the money."[30] The injustice of U.S. counterterrorism operations, combined with the return of abusive warlords, drove the Taliban to remobilize. Echoing the views of several Taliban interviewees, one noted: "When Karzai became president, Taliban were not fighting, they were in their houses. ... But when the Americans and Afghan governments were disturbing and attacking on the families of all those Taliban ... this is the reason that Taliban started fighting again."[31] In late 2002 and 2003, groups of Taliban began to operate in the southern provinces of Uruzgan, Helmand, and Kandahar and the eastern provinces of Paktia and Khost.

Senior Taliban figures also began to remobilize in Pakistan, leading in March 2003 to the formation of a Taliban leadership council in the city of Quetta. Called the Rahbari Shura by the Taliban, it is more commonly known in the West as the Quetta Shura. In the years that followed, the Taliban effectively reestablished a government in exile. Mullah Omar remained in hiding so his deputy, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, chaired the Quetta Shura. Provincial and district governors were appointed, starting in Kandahar and Helmand in 2003 and 2004 with other provinces in southern and eastern Afghanistan following in 2005. Twelve national commissions were established in Pakistan (military, politics, finance, culture, health, etc.) that effectively operated as shadow Taliban government departments.[32]

From 2004 on, the Taliban returned in a more concerted way to southern Afghanistan. Taliban infiltration of rural districts followed a pattern. In most cases, it began with small groups of Taliban visiting villages to make contact with sympathizers, foment rebellion, and intimidate or kill pro-government elders and clerics. As they became more confident, these Taliban emissaries held open meetings to call on people to wage jihad on the "cruel government" and "foreign invaders." Taliban mullahs were also dispatched to preach jihad to villages. As leading expert on the Taliban,

Antonio Giustozzi, notes, "The strategic task of these 'vanguard' teams was to prepare the ground for a later escalation in the insurgency."[33] In Musa Qala district in northern Helmand in 2004, the Taliban "secretly entered the district and talked to some villages and elders ... they told the people that they were coming back to the district to fight against the government."[34] In 2005, the Taliban returned in force to Musa Qala and "within two to three months they had captured all the villages," leaving only the district center under government control.[35] In eastern Afghanistan, significant Taliban mobilization predated the formation of the Quetta Shura. In mid-2002, the former Taliban minister of tribal affairs, Jalaluddin Haqqani, began to remobilize his front, and later that year Haqqani fighting groups were operating in Paktia and Khost.[36]

Indicative of a powerful horizontal network, mobilizing Taliban fronts in southern Afghanistan reunited under the Quetta Shura. Invariably, rivalries emerged between some senior Taliban figures and the fronts they led. The rivalry between Mullah Baradar and Mullah Dadullah was especially pronounced. The eastern Taliban also resented the dominance of the Kandahari clique within the movement, and in time this led to the emergence of two additional leadership shuras that rivaled the Quetta Shura. The first was Miran Shah Shura, based on the Haqqani network, which declared autonomy from the Quetta Shura in August 2007.[37] The second was the Peshawar Shura, which declared autonomy from the Quetta Shura in 2009.[38] Both shuras took direct control of the fronts and fighting groups in their networks. Yet neither openly challenged the primacy of the Quetta Shura. This was both symbolically important and consistent with Taliban ideology, which emphasizes the centrality of obedience to the emir. It also ensured that most Taliban members, regardless of what front they were in, retained and evoked a residual loyalty to Mullah Omar.[39]

Vertical links were equally important to the establishment of the Taliban insurgency. A closed

30   Mike Martin, *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2014), 125.

31   Interview with *mahaz* commander no. 2, Nangarhar, 2015.

32   Interview with national commission member, 2014; interview with former member of Rahbari Shura, 2014.

33   Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 101.

34   Interview with local elder no. 3, Musa Qala, Helmand, 2012.

35   Interview with local elder no. 4, Musa Qala, Helmand, 2012.

36   Interview with Taliban cadre no. 10, Peshawar, 2015. A number of Taliban fronts also reactivated in Nangarhar in 2004–05, each with many hundreds of fighters. Interview with *mahaz* commander no. 1, Nangarhar, 2015; interview with *mahaz* commander no. 2, Nangarhar, 2015.

37   Interviews with two cadre, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

38   Interviews with four Taliban leaders, Nangarhar, 2015.

39   See, for example, Graeme Smith, "What Kandahar's Taliban Say," in *Decoding the New Taliban*, 191-210.

political system developed under Karzai whereby government resources flowed primarily to the familial and patronage networks of the warlords appointed to office.[40] Many disenfranchised communities ended up siding with the Taliban out of disgust at the inequitable distribution of those resources and the corruption of the new warlord-officials.[41] Downtrodden communities also aligned with the Taliban to gain protection from abusive pro-government militias. In some cases, the Taliban expertly exploited local dissatisfaction by supporting local elders and mullahs who called for rebellion and silencing those who were opposed.[42]

The Taliban also stoked popular opposition to the presence of armed foreigners. This was not difficult given the growing Afghan anger toward U.S. night raids on homes as well as civilian casualties caused by U.S. airstrikes. Expressing a view typical of many interviewees, one local elder in Ghanzi noted that he "was happy for return of Taliban in our district because of the cruelties of the Americans."[43] Clumsily executed British operations in Helmand — and the widespread perception that these were targeting the poppy crop, the main livelihood for most locals — caused a popular revolt in the province in 2007.[44] One group of local elders later recalled, "We thought the British were trying to kill us with hunger — they destroyed our opium but didn't give us one Afghani [the Afghan currency]. That is why people decided to join the Taliban; they needed someone to defend them."[45] In fact, the British did provide compensation for the destruction of poppy crops, but farmers got nothing as this scheme was administered by corrupt local officials.[46]

In many places, rebellion mapped onto existing tribal rivalries. A noted example is the Ishaqzai community within Sangin district in Helmand. For generations, the Alizais and Alikozais of northern Helmand had been in competition with the Ishaqzai. Under the Taliban state, Ishaqzais held a number of key government posts in the province, including the governorship. The tables turned when Karzai appointed an Alizai warlord as provincial governor and an Alikozai warlord as head of the provincial secret police. As Martin notes, warlords in both positions "used the cover of their government positions to tax, harass and steal from the Ishaqzai."[47] One Alikozai admitted in 2007 that "The Ishaqzai had no choice but to fight back."[48]

> In many places, rebellion mapped onto existing tribal rivalries.

As they gained control of sizable portions of territory, the Taliban set about trying to reestablish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan. To achieve this goal, Taliban provincial governors were provided with a modest budget.[49] The Taliban lacked the resources and expertise, however, to replicate the state. For many Afghan locals and Taliban commanders in Helmand, establishing a shadow government was not seen as a major

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40   On closed versus open political orders, see Douglas C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

41   Interview with local elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

42   Carter Malkasian, Jerry Meyerle, and Megan Katt, "The War in Southern Afghanistan, 2001–2008," unclassified report (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, July 2009): 11, 14, https://info.publicintelligence.net/CNA-WarSouthernAfghanistan.pdf.

43   Interview with local elder no. 3, Qarabagh, Ghanzi, 2014.

44   Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 226-28.

45   Interview with group of local elders no. 9, Nad-e Ali district, 2012.

46   Interview with elder no. 3, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

47   Martin, *Brief History*, 49.

48   Cited in Tom Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," in *Decoding the New Taliban*, 139. The British Army provided limited and reluctant support to the Afghan government's poppy eradication program. Britain was the lead nation for the international counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan; however, the British Army quickly realized that it risked losing local support in Helmand if its forces were too closely associated with the destruction of the poppy crop. The British got blamed for it anyway. See Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 227-28.

49   Interview with Taliban leader no. 14, Quetta, 2015.

part of the Taliban war effort.[50] The only area in which the Taliban were able to provide alternative government services was in the administration of justice. There was high demand for Taliban services given the frequency of rural disputes over land, trade, and family matters. Initially, the Quetta Shura sought to replicate the court system of the Islamic emirate of the 1990s, with standing lower and higher courts. In Helmand, the Taliban were able to reestablish the emirate court system for a time. But in most places, justice was administered by shadow governors, Taliban mullahs, and military commanders. According to Thomas Johnson and Matthew DuPee, "The Taliban shadow justice system is easily one of the most popular and respected elements of the Taliban insurgency by local communities, especially in southern Afghanistan."[51] Under growing pressure from operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Taliban switched in 2009 from standing to mobile courts in Helmand. As one elder noted, "Judges are hiding; sometimes they meet in people's houses, sometimes in the mountains, sometimes in the mosques."[52] Nonetheless, Taliban courts remained widely used because, compared with the official Afghan courts, they offered accessible, quick, and corruption-free justice. As one elder observed, "In two or three hours, [the Taliban] could solve disputes with someone over one jerib of land. Now in Lashkar Gah, if you have a dispute with someone over one jerib of land, you have to sell twenty jeribs to pay the courts."[53]

In the end, the Taliban never fully invested in reconstituting their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Instead, the military campaign took precedence. The 2010 edition of the Taliban rulebook (the *layeha*) specifies the structure of the Taliban shadow government at provincial and district levels and even provides for the appointment of suitably skilled non-Taliban officials. In reality, in many cases the local Taliban commander *de facto*

acted as the shadow governor.[54] As one local elder from Musa Qala noted, "There was a [Taliban] district chief, but he didn't have much influence. Most of the power was with commanders who had lots of fighters in the district."[55] U.S. and international forces intensified their campaign targeting Taliban leadership, which led many shadow governors to flee to Pakistan, where they would issue instructions by mobile phone.[56] This gave local commanders even more authority in matters of governance. A local elder from central Helmand described the status quo this way in 2011: "When people have an issue, they will approach the local [Taliban] commander. They don't know who the district chief is."[57]

The Taliban focus on the military campaign meant that, with the exception of administering justice, the Taliban were not able to provide public services to people in areas under their control. This, combined with the conflict's growing intensity, led support for the Taliban to decline over time in many parts of Afghanistan. Aside from those villages and sub-tribal groups that had allied with the Taliban, many farmers just wanted to get on with their lives in peace. In eastern Afghanistan, Taliban restrictions on the movement of civilians, and interrogation of locals suspected of spying, became further sources of friction.[58] The Quetta Shura did regulate the shadow governors to ensure that they took measures to win over communities, such as banning arbitrary executions and limiting attacks on teachers and health officials. The 2007 and 2010 editions of the *layeha* outlined processes for communities to complain to the Quetta Shura if a provincial or district governor was too repressive or corrupt. Two district governors were replaced in Sangin in 2009, one for allowing Taliban fighters to attack local farmers who had received government agricultural aid and the other for his overly draconian administration of justice.[59] The Taliban also took measures to strengthen the

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50   Interview with local elder no. 3, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; Taliban commander no. 2, Nad-e Ali, 2012; and Taliban commander no. 1, Marjah, 2011.

51   Thomas H. Johnson and Matthew C. DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): An Assessment of Changing Perspectives and Strategies of the Afghan Taliban," *Central Asian Survey* 31 (2002): 84, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2012.647844; see also Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 148-49.

52   Interview with local elder no. 5, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011. Also confirmed by interviews with elder no. 1, Now Zad, 2011; elder no 6, Nad-e Ali, 2011; and elder no. 2, Garmsir, 2011.

53   Interview with local elder no. 7, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; similar view was offered in interview with elder no. 5, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

54   Johnson and DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code," 85-86.

55   Interview with elder no. 3, Musa Qala, 2011.

56   Interviews with elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; and elder no. 3, Musa Qala, 2011.

57   Interview with elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

58   Interview with local elder no. 1, Logar, February 2015; interview with local elder no. 2, Logar, February 2015; interview with local elder no. 10, Nangarhar, March 2015.

59   Phil Weatherill, "Targeting the Centre of Gravity: Adapting Stabilisation in Sangin," *RUSI Journal* 156 (2011): 98, 22n, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2011.606655.

military chain of command to improve adherence by field commanders to directives from Quetta (This is discussed further in the next section). While attacks on schools and extrajudicial killings declined in 2010 and 2011, they did not disappear altogether.[60]

The Taliban benefited from extensive social resources in establishing the post-2002 insurgency. Shared education, ideology, and military experience all endowed a powerful horizontal network that helped the Taliban mobilize its fighting groups and maintain the coherence of a movement that contained many rival fronts and shuras. The Taliban were also able to develop and exploit vertical links with disgruntled villages and disenfranchised sub-tribal communities, which helped the group to seize control of rural areas from pro-government warlords. The situation is more mixed with regard to the Taliban's success in developing legitimacy by establishing state-like structures and services. The Taliban sought to reestablish the Islamic emirate in the areas they controlled and took care to listen to the concerns of locals. But the group's ability to govern was severely hampered by the conflict. Only in the administration of justice were the Taliban able to provide a public service that was valued by local Afghans. Shoring up insurgent morale and public support was an extensive Taliban propaganda campaign that utilized many forms of media — including jihadi magazines, radio, night letters, and sophisticated uses of social media — and contained narratives tailored for local Afghans and Pakistanis as well as global audiences.[61]

Military Adaptation in War

War involves a dynamic struggle between two or more armed parties, each trying to outwit and outfight the other.[62] By its nature, war demands that those engaged in this bloody struggle be prepared to adapt both to their environment and to the other side's strategy and tactics. Military history is replete with examples of how fighting forces have adapted under battlefield pressure,[63] as well as how they have taken advantage of newly

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60   Antonio Guistozzi and Claudio Franco, *The Battle for the Schools: The Taleban and State Education* (Berlin: Afghan Analysts Network, 2011), http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/2011TalebanEducation.pdf.

61   Thomas H. Johnson, *Taliban Narratives: The Use and Power of Stories in the Afghanistan Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2017).

62   The dynamic competition at the heart of war is captured by Carl von Clausewitz's description of it as "a duel on an extensive scale." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), 101.

63   Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

available technologies.[64] Those militaries that fail to adapt quickly or extensively enough are at greater risk of defeat and find that, even if they do end up winning the war, the price of victory was higher than necessary.[65]

Notwithstanding these realities about adaptation, military organizations can nevertheless be slow to

In the end, the Taliban never fully invested in reconstituting their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Instead, the military campaign took precedence.

change. That is in part because, through training, planning, and equipment, militaries invest heavily in excelling at particular methods of waging war. This, in turn, creates a "competency trap," whereby it becomes difficult to abandon existing ways of doing things.[66] So, how and when do militaries adapt? The literature on military change identifies the shock of defeat as a key driver.[67] Although militaries have powerful incentives to adapt based on their battlefield setbacks, higher-ups sometimes fail to appreciate and act upon lessons learned on the ground. This points to another key factor in military adaptation identified in the literature: namely, effective organizational leadership. When the innovations originate from below, i.e., on the battlefield, all that is required are senior leaders who are prepared to support the

necessary changes throughout the organization.[68] In some cases, innovations will flow from the top, for example, when senior leaders champion organizational change in order to harness new technology, incorporate foreign military lessons, or respond to new political direction.[69]

In a study published in 2010 on British military operations in Afghanistan, I identified two key enablers of military adaptation. One is the degree of centralization within an organization. Here it is about getting the balance right. Military adaptation requires sufficient delegation of authority so that battlefield commanders have the latitude to try out new tactics when the old ones prove ineffective.[70] It also requires sufficient centralized direction to ensure that organization resources are committed to developing and rolling out new tactics and to acquiring the equipment necessary to operate in new ways. A second key enabler is personnel turnover: Fresh ideas can travel into organizations with people. This is well understood in business, in what has become, in many sectors, a global hunt for talent. It applies in the military context with changes of command and the rotation of units into and out of theaters of operation.[71]

In an important correction to my model, Kristen Harkness and Michael Hunzeker identified political considerations as a further factor critical in enabling military adaptation. In a study of the failure to adapt in the British counterinsurgency campaign in Southern Cameroons in 1960–61, they found that "British politicians chose to sacrifice military effectiveness for broader strategic and political interests, thus subverting bottom-up adaptation." Their research highlights the importance of political leadership in setting overarching objectives for military campaigns, putting in place any high-level operational constraints, and allocating the

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64   Theo Farrell, "Introduction: Military Adaptation in War," in *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 9-10.

65   The classic study is by Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

66   James G. March and Barbara Levitt, "Organizational Learning," in *The Pursuit of Organizational Intelligence*, ed. J.G. March (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 78-79.

67   Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

68   Philipp Rotmann, David Tohn, and Jaron Wharton, "Learning Under Fire: Progress and Dissent in the US Military," *Survival* 51, no. 4 (August 2009): 31-48, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330903168824. Thus, nonresponsive senior leaders within the military or the government can block necessary military adaptation. See Adam M. Jungdahl and Julia M. Macdonald, "Innovation Inhibitors in War: Overcoming Obstacles in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (2015): 467-99, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.917628.

69   The importance of senior leaders with the vision and organizational standing to lead military innovation is explored in Rosen's *Winning the Next War*. See also Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning, and Terry Terriff, *Transforming Military Power Since the End of the Cold War: Britain, France and the United States, 1991-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

70   The importance of sufficient "force autonomy" to enable military adaptation is also identified in Torunn Laugen Haaland, "The Limits to Learning in Military Operations: Bottom-Up Adaptation in the Norwegian Army in Northern Afghanistan, 2007–2012," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 7 (2016): 999-1022, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1202823.

71   I also identified a third enabling factor, poor organizational memory, that is not relevant for the Taliban case. Theo Farrell, "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 567-94, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489712.

resources necessary for adaptation.[72]

Until now, scholarship on military adaptation has focused on the armed forces of states — that is, organizations with centralized authority exercised through a formal hierarchy and structured into functionally based subunits.[73] Indeed, through a process of transnational emulation of professional norms and practices, state-based militaries around the world have come to adopt remarkably similar organizational structures since the 19th century.[74] However, non-state military actors are more heterogeneous. Some emulate the hierarchies, units, and uniforms of state-based militaries, to varying degrees of fidelity. Others have a hybrid structure, with subunit formation reflecting local circumstances, and a less centralized and more informal hierarchy in which authority is often exercised through patronage networks. This variation can be seen in the military forces of Afghanistan's foremost warlords during the late 1990s, specifically the more hierarchical and formally structured army of Ismail Khan and the patrimonial and semi-regular forces of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostrum.[75]

In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. military commanders perceived themselves to be at a disadvantage when it came to military adaptation, believing that, with their flatter hierarchies and networked structures, insurgent groups found it easier to adapt.[76] Certainly, the less regimented culture and informal hierarchies of insurgent groups reduce the social and organizational barriers to experimentation. At the same time, as noted above, military adaptation requires sufficient organizational capacity to identify operational problems and develop tactical and technological solutions.[77] Modern militaries devote considerable resources to developing such capacities whereas insurgencies are less able to do so, suggesting that insurgencies may find it more difficult to ensure wider adoption of new tactics and integration of new technologies.

The literature on military adaptation thus leads to the following questions when considering the Taliban. First, how did the Taliban adapt to battlefield setbacks? Second, what role did Taliban leadership — military *and* political — play in enabling that adaptation? Third, how centralized is the Taliban, and how has the group's organizational structure affected military adaptation? And, finally, as the insurgency grew, is there evidence that new ideas about military matters had a significant impact on the Taliban?

Military Adaptation and Taliban Resilience

The Taliban have proven to be highly adaptive adversaries. During the war with the Soviets, the Afghan mujahedeen developed a pretty standard repertoire of guerrilla tactics. In particular, these involved planting mines in roads, ambushing convoys, and conducting raids against military bases.[78] Experience gained in this conflict shaped Taliban thinking about how they should fight. However, this did not stop the Taliban from adapting after the fall of the Islamic emirate. As noted above, the deployment of Western combat forces into southern and eastern Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007 increased pressure on the Taliban insurgency. The group responded with a number of adaptations to improve its ability to mass and control its forces in the field. The Taliban also adapted tactics to take advantage of bomb technology and to reduce exposure to Western firepower.

The Taliban's loose organizational structure, based primarily on a large number of semi-autonomous fronts linked to various shuras, presented a fundamental problem for the Quetta Shura in terms of managing the war effort. Initially, the Quetta Shura tried to get fronts to cooperate by offering financial incentives. The Taliban also tried to mass forces by moving experienced fighting

72   Kristen A. Harkness and Michael Hunzeker, "Military Maladaptation: Counterinsurgency and the Politics of Failure," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (2015): 777-800, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.960078. (Quote is from p. 778-79.)

73   James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Chad C. Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The US Army in the Iraq War* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011); Farrell et al., ed., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*; Stephen M. Saideman, *Adapting in the Dust: Lessons Learned from Canada's War in Afghanistan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

74   Theo Farrell, "Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army," *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (2001): 309-26.

75   Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2009).

76   Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (London: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013), chap. 7–10. For a stinging critique of the U.S. military's failure to adapt in Iraq, see Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

77   Francis G. Hoffman, "Learning Under Fire: Military Change in Wartime," PhD thesis, King's College London, 2015.

78   Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *Afghan Guerrilla Warfare: In the Words of the Mujahideen Fighters* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2001); Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. and ed. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (University of Kansas Press, 2002), 62-72.

groups across provinces, usually within the same *mahaz* network. By 2008, the Taliban leadership realized that this attempt to reform the mahaz system was not working. Anecdotal evidence from Helmand province illustrates the problem. In Kajaki, an Afghan interpreter hired by the British to listen to Taliban communications "described almost comical attempts by different commanders to shirk combat and foist the responsibility on other commanders."[79]

Around this time the Peshawar Shura began to develop a more centralized command system for Taliban fighters in the east and northeast. This new system involved the creation of provincial military commissions to plan large-scale operations, manage logistics, and deal with disputes between front commanders, as well as the appointment of district military commissioners (*Nizami Massuleen*) to ensure that field commanders complied with direction from the Peshawar Shura. This type of centralized system was alien to Taliban culture. So where did it come from? The Pakistani military's extensive support for the Taliban, including providing military advisers, no doubt contributed to the creation and functioning of this more centralized system. But recent work by Claudio Franco and Antonio Guistozzi suggests that the Taliban's organizational innovations originated in the more regimented structure of Hezb-i Islami, a rival mujahedeen party during the Soviet war. The Peshawar Shura was formed partly out of a breakaway faction from Hezb-i Islami in 2006. In this way, Hezb-i Islami's ideas about how to organize the insurgency came into the Taliban. This more centralized system was subsequently adopted, with some reluctance, by the southern Taliban when Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir was appointed to head the Quetta Military Commission in 2009. There is a complicated but important backstory here: Zakir, a prominent Taliban commander from northern Helmand, had fallen out with his erstwhile patron, Mullah Baradar, and so he aligned instead with the Peshawar Shura.

It was only under pressure from Peshawar that Baradar appointed Zakir to oversee the Quetta Military Commission. From this position, which he occupied until 2014, Zakir was able to ensure that the new centralized system rolled out across the south.[80] In addition, from 2008 on, foreign aid flowing through Pakistan was increasingly directed toward the Peshawar Shura, which allowed them to progressively outspend the Quetta Shura in funding the war.[81] This, in turn, enabled Peshawar to push its professionalization effort on Taliban fronts in the south as well as the east.[82]

The result was a somewhat cumbersome double chain of command, in which Taliban units belonging to a particular front would respond to both their parent networks and the Peshawar or Quetta military commissions (whichever had given direction).[83] As one field commander noted in 2011, "If we see an ISAF convoy or police or army, we have orders to attack them. But if we make a plan to attack someplace, I ask Haji Mullah [his *mahaz* chief]. Sometimes we get orders from the *nizami* commission as well."[84] Taliban interviewees also confirmed that the military commissions took over the task of resolving problems among commanders: "When some small problems come between to Taliban commanders, they are solved by the *nizami* commission in a very short time."[85] Where necessary, a mediator figure — "a Pakistani mullah," sent from Quetta — would be dispatched to sort out conflict between commanders when the district military commissioners were unable to cope on their own.[86] Thus, while it enabled more coordination between fronts and fighting groups, the Taliban's new centralized system did not foster state-like command and control.

The Taliban also adapted tactics in response to battlefield pressures. In Helmand, for instance, the group made wide use of fairly conventional infantry assaults in 2006 and 2007 in an attempt to overrun British outposts. The exact number of Taliban fighters killed in action over this period is unknown, but British defense intelligence

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79   Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 145.

80   Claudio Franco and Antonio Giustozzi, "Revolution in the Counter-Revolution: Efforts to Centralize the Taliban's Military Leadership," *Central Asian Affairs* 3, no. 3 (2016): 272-75, https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-00303003.

81   On the rise of the Peshawar Shura, see Franco and Giustozzi, "Revolution in the Counter-Revolution," 249-86.

82   On the importance of "resource control" to the leadership of insurgent groups, see Alec Worsnop, "Who Can Keep the Peace? Insurgent Organizational Control of Collective Violence," *Security Studies* 26, no. 3 (2017): 482-516, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1306397.

83   Interview with Taliban commander no. 2, Nad-e Ali, 2012. This procedure is confirmed in interviews with Taliban commanders from other provinces (Baghlan, Kunduz, Wardak) conducted in 2011–12 as part of a project run by one of the authors.

84   Interview with Taliban commander no. 1, Marjah, 2011.

85   Interview with Taliban commander no. 1, Now Zad, 2011; also confirmed by interviews with Taliban commander no. 4, Garmsir, 2011; Taliban commander no. 4, Marjah, 2011; Taliban commander no. 2, Now Zad, 2011, Now Zad; and Taliban commander no. 4, Kajaki, 2011.

86   Interview with Taliban commander no. 5, Sangin, 2011. See also Antonio Giustozzi and Adam Baczko, "The Politics of the Taliban's Shadow Judiciary, 2003–2013," *Central Asian Affairs* 1 (2014): 199-224, https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-00102003.

estimated it to be in the thousands.[87] In response to these growing losses, Taliban field units adapted by moving toward greater use of asymmetric tactics. Taliban commanders interviewed across nine districts in Helmand reported this change. Three of these interviewees confirmed that the imperative to reduce Taliban battlefield casualties drove the shift in tactics.[88] Nevertheless, the Taliban still engaged in occasional large-scale attacks and paid a heavy price when they did so. This included, most spectacularly, an assault on Lashkar Gah in October 2008 by a 300-strong force, with the objective of decapitating the provincial government and discrediting the British mission. This attack was repulsed by airpower, leaving around 150 Taliban dead.[89] Perhaps having learned from such setbacks, in 2010 the Quetta Military Commission issued a general order instructing field units to avoid direct combat and to make greater use of guerrilla tactics.[90]

Based on extensive interviews with Taliban commanders and officials, Giustozzi shows how alongside the new tactics came a number of "technological innovations," including the introduction of anti-aircraft heavy machine guns, heavy mortars, advanced anti-armor weapons, and large-scale use of sniper rifles and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).[91] Taliban interviewees admit to having received military equipment from Iran, and some said they had received military supplies from Russia.[92] Interviewees are far more careful in discussing support the Taliban received from the Pakistani Army. It is very likely, however, that these Taliban technological innovations were facilitated by equipment and training provided by Pakistan.

The Taliban's most significant technology-enabled military adaptation was the move to industrial-scale use of IEDs. In Quetta and Peshawar, the Taliban established Mine Commissions to lead this effort. In 2006, around 30 percent of all coalition fatalities were caused by IEDs. The next year, the share rose to almost 40 percent. From 2008 to 2010, IEDs were responsible for more than half of all coalition troop deaths.[93] By late 2008, use of IEDs had quadrupled in Helmand from the previous year. The number of such devices detected in Helmand jumped from around 100 per month in late 2008 to more than 450 per month in the summer of 2009 (they caused 80 percent of British fatalities that summer). This number continued to rise in 2010, to more than 600 in February and 700 in March.[94]

Initially, most improvised explosive devices were made using recycled Soviet mines and unexploded ISAF ordnance. To meet demand, however, the Taliban had to switch to large-scale production of explosives using fertilizers from Pakistan.[95] By 2009, 80 percent of IEDs used these types of homemade explosives.[96] Western forces responded to the threat by deploying far more capable armored vehicles. The Taliban's homemade explosives were about twenty times less powerful than military explosives, so it was difficult for the group to produce IEDs large enough to destroy such vehicles. U.S. and British forces also invested more heavily in IED detection capabilities. The Taliban responded by reducing the metal content in the devices to make them harder to detect. By 2011, the Taliban were producing IEDs on an industrial scale in Helmand, Kandahar, and Khost.[97] Hunting down IED makers became a priority for U.S. and coalition intelligence and special operations forces. One Taliban source gives insight into the impact of this counter-IED campaign on the Haqqani network: It

87   Interview with staff officer, Defense Intelligence, Ministry of Defense, London, November 2008. Tom Coghlan reports that "British commanders estimated that approximately 1,000 Taliban died during 2006." He places less credence in newspaper reports of many thousands of Taliban dead. Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 130.

88   Interviews with Taliban commander no. 8, Garsmir, 2011; Taliban commander no. 3, Kajaki, 2011; and Taliban commander no. 3, Marjah, 2011.

89   Interview with senior staff officer, 3 Commando Brigade, Ministry of Defense, London, July 1, 2010. For a dramatic account of the Taliban attack, see Ewen Southby-Tailyour, *3 Commando Brigade: Helmand Assault* (London: Ebury Press, 2010), 55-66.

90   Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Sangin. This is confirmed by 12 interviewees, with a number referring specifically to a "general order" from the Quetta Shura.

91   Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War* (London: Hurst, forthcoming), chap. 4.

92   Interview with former Taliban front commander, November 2016; interview with former Taliban provincial governor, November 2016.

93   Ian S. Livingston and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington: Brookings Institution, May 2014), 11, figure 1.17, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/index20140514.pdf.

94   Directorate Land Warfare, Lessons Exploitation Centre, Operation Herrick Campaign Study, March 2015 [redacted and publicly released version], Annex A to Annex E, chap. 3-6, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492757/20160107115638.pdf; also Olivier Grouville, "Bird and Fairweather in Context: Assessing the IED Threat," *RUSI Journal* 154 (2009): 40, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840903255252.

95   Fertilizers containing ammonium nitrate are banned in Afghanistan.

96   Antonio Giustozzi, "Military Adaptation by the Taliban, 2002–11," in M*ilitary Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 251.

97   Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War*, chap. 6.

lost almost 100 IED makers in 2013 and around 75 in 2014.[98] According to Taliban sources, the Iranians began to provide remotely triggered mines capable of penetrating Western armored vehicles in 2010 and increased the supply in 2011 and 2012.[99]

Such extensive use of IEDs made it increasingly difficult for U.S. and coalition forces to move around. In 2006–07, the British had only two IED disposal teams for the whole of Helmand. There were six teams by late 2008 and 14 by late 2009, but this was still not nearly enough. A British military review of the IED threat concluded that it had created "a defensive mindset" in British forces, who were increasingly focused on simply not getting blown up. The situation gradually improved for U.S. and international forces with the deployment of new armored vehicles, better training and equipment for detecting IEDs, and the targeting of IED production. By 2011, the proportion of coalition troops killed by IEDs fell below 50 percent. It dropped further, to around 30 percent, in 2012.[100] Since the coalition mission ended in December 2014, bringing with it the withdrawal of Western combat forces, the burden of fighting the Taliban has fallen on the Afghan National Security Forces, whose unarmored trucks and lack of counter-IED capabilities leave them highly vulnerable to such devices.

Professionalization of the war effort by the Peshawar Shura, including adoption of military commissions by the Quetta Shura, was critical to the Taliban's ability to adapt militarily. With a shift in tactics came a new military training regime, reinforced by directives from Quetta and Peshawar compelling the tactical commanders to undergo training and receive regular advice on guerrilla tactics. One Taliban commander in Helmand noted in early 2012 that "now we are all focused a lot on getting training of IEDs, making of Fedayeen vests, getting ready of Fedayeen bombers and guerrilla fighting."[101] According to another commander, Taliban units undergo "15 or 20" days of training every four months.[102] One interviewee from Sangin

said that the Taliban "decided to open new training centers for mujahedeen."[103] Yet another offered a contradictory and altogether more convincing view, given U.S. and British military operations: "We don't have a secure place for our training. One day we get training in one area and the other day we get training in another area."[104] Many Taliban interviewees from Helmand reported "foreign Taliban" (in this case meaning fighters from Pakistan) entering their districts for a week or two to provide military training. These men are most likely members of mobile training teams dispatched from Quetta or Peshawar that move from village to village.[105] Pakistani and Iranian military advisers appear to have provided significant support to the Taliban training effort.[106] This centrally directed and resourced training regime greatly increased the Taliban's capacity to absorb new weapons and bomb-making technology into general use by field forces.[107]

The ability to adapt has been key to the success of the Taliban insurgency. Early tactics learned during the Soviet war — ambushing military convoys and raiding enemy bases — proved suicidal in the face of Western artillery and airpower. The loose structure of the Taliban, based on the *mahaz* system, also greatly limited the group's ability to mass force and achieve decisive outcomes on the battlefield. The Taliban adapted in two major ways: first, by introducing some degree of centralized command of fighting groups through a system of provincial military commissions and district military commissioners; and, second, by shifting to guerrilla warfare tactics and avoiding direct engagement with enemy forces. The latter adaptation involved a massive increase in the use and sophistication of IEDs, significantly hindering freedom of movement by international and Afghan security forces.

The typical drivers of military adaptation are present in the case of the Taliban. Growing battlefield losses drove the Taliban to find new ways to fight and organize. This effort accelerated

98   Interview with Taliban leader, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

99   Interview with several Taliban commanders, Faryab, 2014; interview with Taliban commander, Kandahar, 2014; interview with Taliban leader, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

100 Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 242-44.

101 Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Marjah, 2011.

102 Interview with Taliban commander no. 4, Garmsir, 2011.

103 Interview with Taliban commander no. 6, Sangin, 2011.

104 Interview with Taliban commander no. 5, Marjah, 2011.

105 Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Sangin, 2011.

106 Interviews with Taliban commander, Kandahar, 2014; and with Taliban cadre, Nangarhar, 2015.

107 On the importance of organizational capacity to "absorb" new military technologies, see Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

when Mullah Zakir assumed leadership of the Quetta Military Commission in 2009. The Taliban's political leadership, in the form of the Quetta Shura old guard, was not keen on Zakir and his organizational reforms, but pressure from the Peshawar Shura backed by Pakistani funds swept aside these concerns. The decentralized structure of the Taliban had given local commanders too much latitude to fight when and how they liked. Under Zakir, some semblance of centralized command was superimposed on the *mahaz* system. This, over time, enabled the rolling out of new tactics, training, and bomb technologies. Finally, new ideas travelled with people into the Taliban: Organizational and tactical innovations came not only from the Pakistani ISI (as previously believed) but were also adopted when a breakaway faction of Hezb-i Islami was absorbed into the Taliban movement, forming the Peshawar Shura.

Conclusion: The Problem with U.S. Strategy

The resilience of an insurgency is substantially shaped by its social resources and its ability to adapt. The importance of these factors is identified in the relevant theoretical literature and is furthermore evident in the case of the Afghan Taliban. The group was founded on a powerful horizontal network. In establishing a post-2002 insurgency, however, the Taliban were able to exploit vertical links into host communities as well. The group was less successful in its efforts to rebuild the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan but garnered some legitimacy from the efficiency of Taliban courts. The Taliban also adapted militarily, in terms of tactics and supporting technologies, as well as in the command of insurgent fighting groups. The latter improvements to the Taliban's chain of command, and the overall professionalization of the insurgent war effort led by the eastern Taliban, also increased the group's capacity to adapt tactically. Previous studies have further highlighted the importance of foreign support for the Taliban and of their ability to operate from sanctuaries in Pakistan.

The combination of the group's social resources, ability to adapt, and trans-border support make the Taliban's resurgence from what had looked like utter defeat not all that surprising.

Ultimately, insurgencies win by not losing, especially when facing off against a foreign great power. Essentially, the insurgents need only outwait the foreign interloper. This has been the Taliban's basic strategy. Under President Donald Trump, the United States has decided to double down in Afghanistan. One element of the "new" Trump strategy involves getting tough with Pakistan for failing to crack down on the Taliban. On Jan. 1, 2018, the president tweeted that Pakistan was playing the United States for "fools" by giving "safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan."[108] His comments triggered an immediate suspension of U.S. military assistance to Pakistan.[109] The Trump administration is gambling hugely by cracking down on Pakistan given Islamabad's capacity to make things far worse both by interfering with the U.S. logistical routes through Pakistan, and by increasing support to the Taliban.[110] Even in the unlikely event that the Pakistan Army withdraws its support for the Afghan Taliban, the United States would still have to contend with an adaptive insurgency that has strong social roots.

This is where the other element of the Trump strategy to intensify the relatively modest U.S. military effort in Afghanistan becomes problematic. Around 11,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Afghanistan, 8,400 of whom are committed to supporting NATO's Resolute Support mission to "train, advise, and assist" the Afghan security forces. In August 2017, Trump approved the deployment of an additional 3,900 troops to Afghanistan. Gen. Joseph Vogel, head of U.S. Central Command, declared that in 2018 U.S. forces would "focus on offensive operations and ... look for a major effort to gain the initiative very quickly as we enter into the fighting season."[111] It is hard to see how such a modest increase in U.S. ground forces could have a decisive effect. The U.S. military's last attempt to turn the tables on the Taliban came in late 2009 and early 2010, when there were around 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and about 40,000 troops from coalition partners.[112] Afghan capabilities, insofar as

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108 Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, Jan. 1, 2018, 4:12 a.m., https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947802588174577664.

109 Haroon Janjua, "'Nothing but Lies and Deceit': Trump Launches Twitter Attack on Pakistan," *Guardian*, Jan. 2, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/01/lies-and-deceit-trump-launches-attack-on-pakistan-tweet.

110 Mujib Mashal and Salman Masood, "Cutting Off Pakistan, U.S. Takes Gamble in Complex War," *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/world/asia/pakistan-aid-afghan-war.html.

111 Carlo Muñoz, "U.S. Forces to Go on the Offensive in Afghanistan, Says Top Commander," *Washington Times*, Jan. 2, 2018, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/2/top-commander-us-forces-go-offensive-afghanistan/.

112 Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 292-324.

they have grown since 2010, can hardly make up for the withdrawal of Western combat forces.[113] Indeed, the Afghan security forces have steadily lost ground across the country since 2014, with major Taliban gains that year in the south (Helmand and Uruzgan provinces), east (Ghanzi, Wardak, Kapisa, and Logar provinces), and north (Kunduz province).[114] According to the U.S. special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, only around 70 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts were under government control in late 2015. Two years later, that share was down to just over half of the districts.[115]

History is instructive here: When the United States got bogged down in drawn-out wars against peasant armies in Korea and Vietnam, it resorted to major bombing campaigns to break the stalemate. This failed to work in both of those wars.[116] In Afghanistan, history is repeating itself. In December 2017, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, revealed that a major campaign by U.S. air forces was targeting some 500 Taliban drug laboratories in southern areas, bringing the number of airstrikes in 2017 to three times more than had occurred in 2016. [117] Afghan civilians have borne the brunt of this bombing campaign: The United Nations reported a 52 percent increase in civilian deaths caused by airstrikes in 2017 in comparison to the year before.[118]

Civilian casualties notwithstanding, the United States is pursuing a targeted bombing campaign. Noting that the Taliban earn around $200 million a year through its taxation of the opium trade, Nicholson declared, "We're hitting the Taliban where it hurts, which is their finances." He added: "The Taliban have three choices: reconcile, face irrelevance or die."[119] According to the leading analyst on the Afghan opium trade, David Mansfeld, the U.S. military is grossly overestimating both the Taliban's ability to collect taxes and the amount of poppy being destroyed in the bombings. Mansfeld finds accordingly that the bombing campaign is having far less impact on Taliban revenue than is claimed by U.S. military commanders.[120]

In a January 2018 *Foreign Affairs* article titled "Why the Taliban Isn't Winning in Afghanistan," Seth G. Jones argues that "Although the Taliban has demonstrated a surprising ability to survive and conduct high-profile attacks in cities like Kabul, it is weaker today than most recognize."[121] Jones is only partly right. Citing various Afghan opinion polls, Jones argues that public support for the Taliban has plummeted thanks to its extremist ideology, brutal tactics, and reliance on both the drug trade and support from Pakistan. He fails to note, however, that polling in Afghanistan is famously unreliable and that public views of the Taliban are especially difficult to gauge in areas under Taliban control. He is on safer ground in noting that few non-Pashtun Afghans recognize the legitimacy of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban and that Afghanistan's growing urban population abhors the socially regressive ideology of the Taliban. Some in the Taliban leadership have long understood these realities and foresee the Taliban entering government only through a power-sharing arrangement.[122] These days, the Taliban's main problem is not the group's

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113 In a less-than-encouraging development, the U.S. Department of Defense for the first time in eight years classified the data on Afghan security forces' operational readiness. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, Oct. 30, 2017, 99-100, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-10-30qr.pdf.

114 Lauren McNally and Paul Bucala, "The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security," *Afghanistan Report no. 11* (Washington: Institute for the Study of War, March 2015): 13-17, 19-20, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH Report.pdf.

115 Of the 407 districts in Afghanistan, 7 percent were under insurgent control or influence, 21 percent were contested, and 72 percent were under government control in November 2015. By October 2017, these ratios had shifted to 14 percent under insurgent control or influence, 30 percent contested, and 56 percent under government control. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Addendum to SIGAR's January 2018 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, Jan. 30, 2018, 1, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Addendum_2018-01-30qr.pdf.

116 On Korea, Robert A. Pape finds that U.S. bombing was unable to have a significant impact on the enemy war effort or the civilian economy, hence he concludes that no coercive leverage was produced. On Vietnam, he argues that the U.S. bombing campaign "succeeded in 1972 where it had failed from 1965 to 1968 because in the interim Hanoi had changed from a guerrilla strategy, which was essentially immune to air power, to a conventional offensive strategy, which was highly vulnerable to air interdiction." Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), chap. 5 and 6 (Quote is from p. 209).

117 Eric Schmitt, "Hunting Taliban and Islamic State Fighters, From 20,000 Feet," *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/world/asia/taliban-isis-afghanistan-drugs-b52s.html.

118 U.N. figures comparing civilian deaths from U.S. airstrikes in the first nine months of 2016 and 2017. Shashank Bengali, "U.S. Airstrikes Rise Sharply in Afghanistan — and So Do Civilian Deaths," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 4, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-afghanistan-us-airstrikes-20171204-htmlstory.html.

119 Schmitt, "Hunting Taliban."

120 Andrew Cockburn, "Mobbed Up: How America Boosts the Afghan Opium Trade," *Harper's Magazine*, April 2018, https://harpers.org/archive/2018/04/mobbed-up/.

121 Seth G. Jones, "Why the Taliban Isn't Winning in Afghanistan: Too Weak for Victory, Too Strong for Defeat," *Foreign Affairs*, January 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2018-01-03/why-taliban-isnt-winning-afghanistan.

122 Michael Semple, Theo Farrell, Anatol Lieven, and Rudra Chaudhuri, *Taliban Perspectives on Reconciliation* (London: Royal United Services Institute, September 2012), https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/taliban_perspectives_on_reconciliation.pdf.

decline in popularity but its waning cohesiveness.

In November 2016, Michael Semple and I spent a week conducting interviews with seven senior Taliban figures. Our subjects included two former deputy ministers, a former provincial governor, and two former senior military commanders. What we discovered surprised us. We had expected Taliban confidence to have been boosted by recent battlefield success. Instead, those we interviewed reported widespread disillusion within the movement, with the state of Taliban leadership, and with a seemingly endless war. Multiple interviewees told us that many Taliban members feel that the war lost direction and purpose after the withdrawal of foreign combat forces. The Taliban's current leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, is widely seen as ineffective and lacking the moral authority of the group's founder, Mullah Omar. This is undermining the ideological cornerstone of the Taliban, namely obedience to the emir. Several factions are vying for power within the movement, most notably the Ishaqzai-dominated Mansour network based in northern Helmand (led by Mullah Rahim, the Taliban governor of Helmand).[123] Thus, while the Taliban maintains strong vertical ties with rural communities, which have supported the group's battlefield gains since 2014, the horizontal network holding the insurgency together is weakening.[124]

Sending more U.S. troops into Afghanistan and pushing them out into the field is likely to provide some short-term gains. Importantly, the presence of a Marine battalion in Helmand helps prevent the provincial capital from falling to the Taliban. Yet this marginal increase in combat-force levels will not break the strategic stalemate in Afghanistan when massive U.S. military power failed to do so in 2010. Rather, sending in more troops and conducting more airstrikes may well make the Taliban stronger. Meanwhile, destroying drug processing and production facilities will hurt not only the Taliban but also anybody involved in opium farming, which is just about every farmer in Helmand. It stands to once again drive them into the arms of the insurgents. And just as before, public patience is likely to wear thin at apparent U.S. military carelessness and mounting civilian casualties.[125] In the end, ramping up the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan risks reenergizing the Taliban's sense of purpose and uniting a movement that may be beginning to unravel. If the United States is not careful, it could end up bombing its way to defeat in Afghanistan.

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123 Theo Farrell and Michael Semple, *Ready for Peace? The Afghan Taliban After a Decade of War* (London: Royal United Services Institute, January 2017), https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201701_bp_ready_for_peace.pdf.

124 For more recent analysis supporting this view, see Antonio Giustozzi, "Do the Taliban Have Any Appetite for Reconciliation in Kabul?" Center for Research and Policy Analysis, Mar. 19, 2018, https://www.af-crpa.org/single-post/2018/03/20/Do-the-Taliban-Have-any-Appetite-for-Reconciliation-with-Kabul-Antonio-Giustozzi.

125 Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Afghan Civilians Count Cost of Renewed US Air Campaign," *Guardian*, Sept. 5, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/05/afghan-civilians-count-cost-of-renewed-us-air-campaign.