



# **COUNTERINSURGENCY**

## **GENERAL MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS**

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About Tribal Analysis Center

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## *General Measures of Effectiveness*



*Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!* [The Queen]

*It was much pleasanter at home, when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits.* [Alice]

Excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland*  
Lewis Carroll

The concept of *relative power* provides a way to use the characteristics of insurgency as Measures of Effectiveness to help evaluate the performance and progress of both the insurgent and counterinsurgent. At its basic level, an insurgency is simply political violence, not unlike Clausewitz's often misquoted dictum, "War is a continuation of policy by other means." But insurgencies are generally fought with tactics that are far below the levels of violence studied by strategists looking at conflict between states. Traditional combatants oppose their enemies through an increasingly violent series of tactics that can range from street demonstrations, robberies and kidnappings, terrorism, and guerrilla operations into forms of conventional warfare where armed insurgent elements are sufficiently powerful to attack government forces openly. The upper "levels of political violence" are not generally available to insurgents, especially in the early stages of an insurgency, who are restricted to the tactics found in the lower levels: terrorism and guerrilla operations. Within these forms of conflict between the antagonists there runs a common but often misunderstood factor: relative power. At its foundation, this simple concept is just the difference in the power available to the political group controlling a national entity, such as a nation-state, and the power available to the political opposition that seeks to displace them. Additionally, this power relationship is reversible and normally varies greatly between rural and urban settings within the same insurgency. This power balance is responsible for the variety of tactics available to the insurgent.

For example, there was a tremendous difference in the power available to the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) in San Francisco and the United States Government it sought eventually to overthrow. The factor that separated their compared strength is

best seen as “relative power” and when compared to the power available to the entire nation-state, the strength available to the SLA was insignificant to the point of non-existence, but the SLA survived for nearly two years as an insurgency within the United States.

Another example occurred prior to World War II in China in which communist insurgents were able to survive the nearly overwhelming “power” available to the Nationalist Chinese government. After enduring defeat after defeat, the communists retreated far into China’s interior and continued an insurgency. Soon after the end of World War II, the communist insurgency was able to defeat its more powerful enemy as the relative power shifted in their favor because of a variety of factors.

In the case of Russia, an extended period was required to go from initial insurgency development until the power relationship ultimately shifted in the insurgent’s favor. From the defeated Decembrist Revolt in 1825 until the overthrow of the Czar’s government, there was almost a century of nearly continuous anarchist activity – a low level insurgency – before the collapse of the Czar’s government and an eventual insurgent victory. And in the end, the victorious insurgents were not identical to the original group that initiated the rebellion, but that early revolt produced the continuing grievance which sustained the various insurgents against their powerful opponent until the power relationship gradually shifted in their favor. At the least common denominator level, however, the relative power relationship between insurgents and the Czar’s government was completely reversed during the century of unrest.

Any discussion of relative power requires an understanding of what is meant by the use of the term, “power.” In a traditional Western context, power is generally defined in terms of military capability and the capacity to sustain it. In the case of insurgency, the old Soviet analytical approach with its use of “correlation of forces” is probably more appropriate and nearly every conceivable factor that has a positive or negative impact on the power relationship between the two adversaries becomes significant. These factors may range from one side possessing a trusted, charismatic leader to having access to sympathetic international news media and all the factors in between the two. Insurgency analysis is much like passing through Lewis Carroll’s “looking glass” when compared to traditional military analysis, but every conceivable factor becomes significant when trying to understand this sort of conflict. In this strange, often upside down, world the insurgent intentionally kills innocent civilians, murders prisoners (while making a video of the event), but often fails to be condemned for the terror tactics. The generally more powerful security forces are routinely condemned by the same media sources that avoid criticism of the insurgents if innocent civilians are killed accidentally and prisoners are physically mistreated during interrogations. Under these realities, even the harsh word “interrogation,” is forbidden and must be substituted by “interview.” But every conceivable factor related to the power relationship between the insurgent and the entity the insurgents seek to replace is important. The efforts of both sides involve gaining control of as many of these interrelated factors as possible as they seek power at the expense of their opponent.

Given the overwhelming power held by the challenged government during an insurgency’s initiation, their security services generally will hold the initiative and develops its own strategy regardless of the early activities of the insurgents. Frequently, a misguided strategy develops into efforts to dominate the population, particularly in rural areas, as this is the most common source of

support for the insurgents. Insurgent operations also develop within urban areas, but there are significant differences between the two, especially in the tactics that can be employed in urban areas where the government is much more powerful than the insurgent.

The rural insurgent is able to disperse forces widely, making discovery of training areas and supply caches far more difficult. Security forces in rural areas are caught in a dilemma and must defend every conceivable target the insurgents may choose to attack. The insurgent, having access to a potentially large “auxiliary,” or part-time, force, is able to concentrate forces at the least defended location. Having the advantage of initiative, the insurgent can use both terrorist and guerrilla tactics against the government’s widely dispersed security forces. In this case, the relative power balance favors the insurgent who is able to develop the guerrilla’s “hit and run” tactics against the defenders.

Inside urban areas, the insurgent normally faces overwhelming government force, frequent penetration of both the auxiliary and operational cells by government agents, and seldom has the ability to concentrate its available force in full raids and ambush operations as are seen in the countryside. Here, the government’s security forces are able to guard potential targets far better than in the rural areas and the relative power balance between the two so greatly favors the government that the insurgent must rely upon terrorist tactics, usually conducted by one or two operatives. Specific tactics are bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings that are low risk, but with high impact on the general population that sees itself at great risk of becoming a victim of similar attacks.

Finally, urban areas may be relatively secure and terrorist tactics become difficult to utilize under conditions favorable to the government. If the relative power balance has shifted in the government’s favor, the rural insurgents may be less capable of launching guerrilla operations in the countryside. In cases such as these, two phenomena are likely to occur. First, the insurgent is forced by the power available to the government to shift to terrorist tactics, shedding the unusable guerrilla warfare tactics and shifting to bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings. Under these conditions, this failing insurgency shifts a large amount of its effort into propaganda as it attempts to rebuild its support, particularly within the rural population. Second, sensing a lack of forthcoming support from the population, the floundering insurgency often begins to attack their former supporters in an effort to force them to return to their previous orientation toward the insurgents. The relative power balance that makes this dramatic shift toward stable urban areas with terrorism occurring in the countryside is an observable sign of a failing insurgency.

It is this point in an insurgency that the government’s forces should take dramatic steps to end the insurgency. Normally, the repeated failures on the part of the insurgent’s leadership to achieve success leads to individual leadership personalities blaming one another for their lack of collective success. This leads to the fragmentation of the insurgency’s leadership.

Most armed political movements are composed of a coalition of smaller groups that are held together loosely by bonds that are created by their greater animosity toward the government than toward one another. Loosely allied leadership figures frequently turn against one another, movements splinter, internal assassinations and battles occur, and losers within the bureaucratic squabbling that becomes increasingly bitter often seek reconciliation opportunities with the government they recently opposed.



Under these conditions, key charismatic leadership personalities normally seek seclusion even more than during growing insurgent operations and they are unable to provide the constant leadership and motivation average fighters require in order to keep them active. Additionally, ambitious subcommanders selected primarily for their fighting ability may become increasingly ambitious and seek to replace the insurgency's leaders who are often in hiding. This increases the fragmentation process as splinter groups often begin to form. Under these conditions violence against the insurgent's former supporters may emerge as a significant factor. Subcommanders within a violent political group normally move upward with their organization because of their ability to conduct fierce operations and they usually have a total lack of the political instincts that leaders possess. Experienced leaders understand the need to calibrate violence to accomplish only their immediate political requirements; combat commanders, however popular with the average fighters, generally lack this sophistication and turn to violence as their only political goal. Such violence tends to further alienate the population that once supported them.

Competition between the insurgency's political leadership and their combat leaders more on the periphery of the political movement is a normal occurrence. Ambitious men among the insurgent leader's combat commanders can always be expected to listen to admirers within their individual groups, people prone to blame the core leadership for any of their current misfortunes while making heroes out of their local commanders. It is at this point that the insurgents are most vulnerable and leaders fearing intentional compromise of their locations to the government's forces tend to become increasingly reclusive. Movement leaders know that violence must be carefully calibrated to bring the desired political concessions, but this is hard to enforce from hiding. This leaves them unable to provide political guidance to combat commanders who normally resort to the only tactic they know to work, the use of violence to force an increasingly reluctant population to support them. Attacking the population is an insurgency's equivalent to consuming one's own seed corn during a famine. Under these circumstances, the relative power balance tends to shift toward the government to the point that the insurgent must rely nearly exclusively upon low-level terrorist acts, often performed by a single combatant

Failing insurgencies are also unable to raise sufficient funds needed to continue their operations. Under these circumstances, insurgents normally return to the point at which they started – engaging in common criminal acts as they attempt to rebuild their political movements. Failed insurgencies resort to kidnappings for ransom, robberies, and extortion to obtain funds that are no longer available due to the alienation of their former supporters as the relative power balance completes a full cycle and returns to its starting point. Importantly, the key and common factor throughout a failing insurgency, or a succeeding one for that matter, remains the relative power balance between the two opponents: the besieged government and the insurgent seeking to displace them.

While the illustration above reflects a losing insurgency, winning insurgencies pass through the exact same levels of relative power compared to the losing government. The main difference involves “Economy of Force,” a factor that allows the insurgent's leadership to decide at which level the violence being applied against a faltering government is sufficient to accomplish the movement's political goals. If the leadership believes that terrorism, alone, will force their government opponent to acquiesce to the insurgent's

demands, it is unlikely that the insurgency will advance to guerrilla operations. What is clear, however, is a “gaining” insurgency will pass through the levels of conflict as far as necessary in order to win.

The degrees of this “level of conflict” may be described, in general, first as common crimes perpetrated to gain funds and recognition needed to attract additional supporters. This was the point at which the Symbionese Liberation Army stalled and collapsed, as even the highly visible kidnapping of Patty Hearst and the murder of a local school official with a cyanide-tainted bullet was insufficient to attract supporters. A second level of conflict – terrorism – becomes a viable tactic within an insurgency as sufficient funding and recruits become available to openly challenge the primacy and power of the established government. Terrorist tactics may first appear in either urban or rural areas, as happened in the case of Uruguay’s Tupamaros, and with Vietnam’s Viet Cong, respectively, during their formative years. It was at this stage in the relative power balance that the Tupamaros failed to advance while the rural Viet Cong were able to attract additional supporters and advance their relative power compared to that available to the faltering Vietnamese government. The Vietnam scenario is also a good example of a strengthening insurgency advancing to conduct sustained guerrilla operations in rural areas while continuing terrorism within Vietnam’s urban areas where the relative power balance remained unfavorable to them. El Salvador’s insurgents followed a similar pattern, but failed to advance beyond the terrorism and guerrilla stages and eventually failed to win a military victory. Again, it is Vietnam that provides an example of a shift in the relative power balance that allowed the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese allies to advance to mobile conventional warfare, as would normally be seen between nation-states, to finally overcome their South Vietnamese opponents.

In the previous series of examples, specific stages in the relative power balance between insurgent and a targeted national government were carefully explained. In summary, these are:

- Common criminal activity conducted to gain funds and supporters in what is best described as a pre-operational stage.
- Terrorist operations conducted where the relative power balance was in favor of the insurgents. Frequently, this developed initially in rural regions and spread into urban areas.
- Insurgents gaining strength normally progressed to guerrilla operations in rural areas while continuing to conduct terrorist attacks where the relative power balance was unfavorable, usually in urban areas where the government was strongest.
- Successful insurgents normally progressed to conduct mobile conventional operations in rural areas under their control. In many cases, they conduct urban guerrilla operations when they are stronger than the government’s security forces in specific urban localities. Their terrorist operations may continue in urban areas where the relative power available to them was less than that available to the government.
- In the final stages of a successful insurgency, united guerrilla forces may conduct mobile conventional attacks in areas where the power balance is completely in their favor, continue guerrilla activity in both rural and urban areas where there is some opposing government strength, and terrorism is continued within the government’s strongholds.
- Insurgent leaders will stop at any level at which the tactics utilized allows victory without committing scarce resources. They are normally well aware that a tactical “over-reach” can result in the collapse of an entire movement.

- All gains made through this “insurgency framework” are reversible. If the relative power balance becomes unfavorable due to a tactical error, such as the loss of a key charismatic leader, or unanticipated external support being provided to the government or withdrawn from the insurgents, the insurgency will regress along the same stages through which it progressed.

Based on the indicators detailed above, the success of counterinsurgency operations may be gauged while body counts and tabulation of incidents are useless measures and plays directly into the insurgent’s propaganda plans.

Counting enemy casualties during an insurgency is a very unreliable means to gauge effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations. The lack of uniforms or distinctive insignia not worn by insurgents allows their propagandists to claim that casualties from government or allied combat operations resulted only in civilian casualties. There is also the “sympathetic international media” factor that generally accepts reports of insurgent casualties only to turn to prepare reports about “overwhelming firepower” and “horrendous numbers of casualties,” as occurred during the First Gulf War and the infamous “Highway of Death.” Invariably, insurgents will be capable of producing innocent “eyewitnesses” for media interviews to take advantage of the casualty and, consequently, impede the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency operations. They are becoming just as adept at fabricating “atrocities” that are investigated by sympathetic legal organizations.

Counting individual incidents is just as fallible. During the early, successful stages of an insurgency, a large raid or ambush resulting in large numbers of government casualties is normally tallied as a single incident. In the later stages of a failing insurgency, it is very common for the numbers of incidents to actually increase as single individuals detonate mines on highways, kill themselves as “suicide bombers,” or assassinate government supporters in acts of near desperation intended to remain in the headlines as much as in the minds of potential victims. With the media, as well as bureaucratic competitors within allied governments, these attacks by individuals remain as quantified “incidents” without any effort to sort them according to type. Again and again, reports are published of “increasing fighting” that are in reality attacks perpetrated by one or two individuals instead of company-sized guerrilla operations and are a general indication of a failing insurgency.

### **Developing General Measures of Effectiveness**

A general estimate of the relative power of an insurgency can be made by looking carefully at the tactics being utilized against the government being attacked. Tactics are usually specific for the “level of violence” in which the insurgent is operating. For example:

- Kidnapping, extortion, assassination, and similar criminal acts are found under circumstances in which the government security forces control most of the relative power balance and the insurgent has little or no actual power.



This situation occurs at the beginning of an insurgency or when the violent group has been weakened to the point of near collapse. Government pressure must be maintained or the insurgency may rebuild itself and return to active operations. *(Depending on context, this can be either a growing or may possibly be a rapidly declining insurgency. A declining insurgency may increase its reliance on propaganda and attacks on civilians generally increase.)*

- Initiation of a terrorism campaign is the second general stage of an insurgency. At this level, the government maintains most of the available power, particularly within urban areas while rural terrorist operations may begin to coalesce into guerrilla warfare as additional local support is developed. At this point, the insurgent may be gathering strength, but an insurgent group losing power will pass through this stage. *(Again, context is critical in determining the status of counterinsurgency efforts. If the insurgency is young, growing, and its members maintain high morale this is a growing insurgency. On the other hand, if the insurgency can no longer mass fighters to attack fixed facilities or is unable to move freely when it had in the past, the insurgency has probably culminated and is gradually disintegrating.)*
- Open guerrilla warfare in rural areas while nearly unrestrained terror operations occur in urban areas is a third general stage. As the government's relative power continues to weaken, insurgent leaders may accomplish goals of forcing major concessions, enter into a coalition government with its former opponents, or the government's primary supporters may flee. An early morbid sign involves relocation of families of government officials and capital flight. *(The successful prosecution of this stage generally is the culminating point of an insurgency and it will be successful or gradually break down from this point.)*
- Mobile conventional warfare may develop as a final stage if large scale defections to the insurgents occur from the government's security forces. This may also occur if the insurgents have a nearby external sponsor willing to intervene with its regular forces to ensure an insurgent victory for a group that was basically a proxy for the invading power. *(Prior to this point, all successes credited to the insurgents are reversible, if the besieged government is able to gain external support or a strong, charismatic leader emerges to rally faltering government efforts.)*

Insurgencies pass through these general stages and the broad transition zones between one another where tactics in both stages may be occurring simultaneously. Emerging insurgencies normally begin with terrorism and actions that are more criminal than political in nature, much like the Symbionese Liberation Army example. In the case of both Afghanistan and Iraq, this framework may foreshadow some future government successes as the insurgents located in each country are generally able to conduct only small-scale terrorist attacks and have resorted to common crime as sources of external funding dissipate. These are indicators of faltering insurgencies.

### **Afghanistan as a Case Study**

The current Afghanistan insurgency has followed the typical pattern. Evicted from their fighting positions soon after active combat operations began in late 2001, the Taliban leadership quickly evacuated the cities and soon departed Afghanistan in large numbers for safe havens located primarily in Pakistan as the United States' war planners made an interesting discovery. This was something they would have learned well before the actual invasion if they had spent time reading history before trying to make it.

The US quickly found itself loosely allied with non-Pashtun ethnic groups engaged in a long-running civil war with the Pashtun tribes that comprised the vast majority of the membership in the Taliban Movement that formerly governed most of Afghanistan. In a very short period of hostilities, the Taliban's forces were soon in disarray and retreating toward safe havens in nearby Pakistan. Over a relatively short period, several factors began to combine to allow the insurgents to grow stronger and escalate the violence of their tactics.

- Increasing numbers of non-Pashtuns began to enter government positions in Kabul to provide the broad impressions that the US had tilted toward its new allies, the Tajiks and the other ethnic minorities, and that Kabul was essentially a Tajik city. As this perception spread, Pashtun support for the Taliban Movement appears to have increased.
- “Warlords,” the powerful local leaders with heavily armed militias, had created chaos following the defeat of Afghanistan’s communists and soon moved back into positions of authority following the Taliban defeat. This provided the Taliban with enormous propaganda opportunities while the actions of the “warlord class” served to alienate many Pashtuns.
- Incompetence surrounding the United Nations’ Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program managed to disarm many local militias that generally opposed the Taliban while providing sources of income for numerous locals. When this program failed to provide the expected employment to arrive with “reintegration,” many of these men seem to have sought employment with local criminal gangs or entered the Taliban. This process continued as the local militias were no longer available to deny the Taliban freedom of movement in rural areas.
- Corruption within the new government in Afghanistan also served to create resentment within the local population that began to lose hope for a better future.
- Heightened expectations of rapid reconstruction and development were not met as Afghans waited for massive economic assistance to arrive.
- Insurgents were left with no option other than to continue fighting in a culture that normally ended conflict through elders negotiating and arriving at a consensus to end the warfare. Rumors and facts related to US and Coalition “black lists” also kept Taliban leaders and ordinary fighters from reconciling with the new government in Kabul.
- Risk aversion and fear of casualties kept coalition forces from taking broad offensive operations against the insurgents whose ability to increase their own operations rose.

Under these slowly shifting circumstances, the Taliban insurgency gradually began to increase its relative power when compared to that available to the Coalition and the nation’s government. Unfortunately, the glacial pace of training the Afghan National Army and the police forces left the bulk of the actual fighting to foreign armed forces and the unavoidable civilian casualties that seemed to create additional support for the Taliban while eroding the previous levels of resolve found in the international community.

Complicating the rural balance of relative power, the Pashtuns follow cultural guidelines, *Pashtunwali*, that requires revenge for casualties. This also benefits the Taliban Movement. Additionally, affronts to personal honor created by women being searched, nighttime raids into family quarters, and casualties within the extended family were also factors that appear to have gradually changed the rural population's view of the Taliban from brutal fighters to defenders of Pashtun nationalism.

Under these conditions, support for the rural insurgency grew as villagers appear to have moved into "local force" Taliban that were allied closely with "main force" Taliban from Pakistan that operated inside Afghanistan during the fighting season. Insurgents normally are unable to conduct field operations during Afghanistan's harsh winters. Other factors also began to have an impact on the power equation:

- The opium industry in southern Afghanistan became a good source of funding that helps sustain the insurgency. Growing Taliban power now had access to nearly unlimited funds as well as to clandestine travel routes, safehouses, and facilitators in a system that also secretly transferred funds.
- New tactics emerged from lessons learned in Iraq combat as roadside bombs became a preferred tactic. These attacks involving only a single individual carrying a detonation device began to create more casualties than most other insurgent tactics.
- Several generations spent life in refugee camps where young men were no longer exposed to Pashtun culture. Instead, they were taught in madrassas where they gradually became "neo-Pashtuns." Such men are capable of killing themselves in suicide attacks that were previously forbidden in the Hanafi Islam taught to most Pashtuns. Suicide attackers soon were taking terrorism into Afghanistan's cities.
- Kidnappings for ransom and hostage-trading began to emerge as an insurgent tactic. Taliban fighters appear to have taken the path of least resistance into alliances with drug lords and criminal gangs once again taking advantage of the chaos.
- As these new facts began to appear in Afghanistan's violence, there was a parallel growth in the volume and sophistication of the Taliban's propaganda. Newly arriving American troops will have to learn as they go and their errors will be capitalized upon by the Taliban propagandists.

Faced with the new set of Taliban initiatives and increased aggressiveness on their part, the Coalition and the Afghan government began to lose ground. Like any typical insurgency, the balance of relative power began to shift suddenly and dramatically. Soon the Taliban began to engage in highly mobile guerrilla operations in rural areas where the relative power balance was in their favor while terrorist operations were increased, primarily in urban areas under the control of the Afghan government where the relative power balance was not in the Taliban's favor.

As the military balance began to shift in their favor, the Taliban began to make a series of significant errors. The greatest mistake occurred when they went on the offensive long before they were adequately prepared, and the years 2005 and 2006 witnessed the rural Taliban attempt to take and hold key terrain when faced with well-trained Coalition forces. After suffering large numbers of casualties, the Taliban's relative power balance with the government and Coalition again shifted downward as circumstances again forced them to renew terrorist tactics as they generally abandoned guerrilla operations.

Predictably, their urban terrorist activities began to create large numbers of intentional civilian casualties – their own version of collateral damage that was only partially offset by the civilian casualties caused by Coalition forces. Stalling at this lower level of violence, the Taliban were able to create political benefits through a new emphasis on propaganda, an activity that went generally unopposed by the Coalition's generally feckless "information operations."

Taliban propaganda increased proportionally to their drop in relative power and nearly to the point that it became the only aspect of their insurgency tactics that worked well. Whether this reflects the results of training the US provided to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI, during the anti-Soviet jihad or their increased capability shows the presence of skilled foreign advisors, the Taliban managed to field an impressive propaganda capability in a relatively short time. Locating and developing relationships with Western media representatives, the Taliban's propagandists were soon able to deliver their themes to responsive reporters in about 30 minutes. By utilizing cooperative reporters seeking access to big stories and the reporter's "stringers" and their interpreters, they soon built a formidable propaganda machine capitalizing on Coalition mistakes, government corruption, and demonstrating violently what happens to those individuals the Taliban viewed as "traitors."

In a situation that could only happen in front of Carroll's looking glass' view of an insurgency, the Taliban moved back down the levels of violence to the point that they are generally unable to conduct major guerrilla operations and are normally restricted to the use of improvised explosive devices along roads and vehicle borne explosives into urban areas where random suicide bombers also operate. These are indications that the Taliban Movement is weakening militarily, substantially, but their drop in the relative power balance has been greatly augmented by their superior ability to use propaganda as an excellent force multiplier.

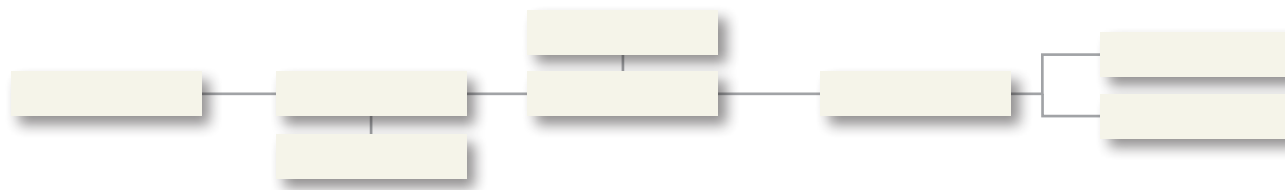
So the insurgency that initially failed following the 2001 US invasion only to rebuild itself has become a credible threat once again. Currently, the fighters are once more at the bottom of the violence scale where their propaganda makes them appear to be winning the conflict while they are actually in disarray and facing new US forces – arriving in large numbers. They are continuing their low-level insurgency while using terrorist and criminal tactics that are greatly enhanced by propaganda while opposed by an unskilled and inexperienced American administration facing mid-term elections in just over a year and European allies desiring little from Afghanistan other than a gracious way out. The lesson of Vietnam has not been lost on the Taliban and their advisors, which they undoubtedly have: *Insurgents may lose militarily and still win their victory politically when confronting the United States.*



# TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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