

INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE ROLE OF PAKISTAN

Brig Gen George Kruys (ret)
Research Associate: Institute for Strategic Studies
University of Pretoria

ABSTRACT

Afghans weary of the Taliban's harsh rule were a major factor in the overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001. Since then four factors have resulted in the resurgence of their ability to instigate a viable insurgency, namely the Iraq war which drew the United States' attention away from Afghanistan; the cross-border bases which the Taliban were afforded in Pakistan; poor governance and widespread corruption on the part of the Afghan government; and an ongoing poor economy and lack of work opportunities. The Taliban insurgency in Pakistan is of utmost importance to the United States and the international community because Pakistan is a nuclear state. The United States can shift more troops to Afghanistan as they are phased out in Iraq, but Pakistan's insurgency could gain priority at the expense of Afghanistan as happened before. The United States president regards the Afghan war as of vital importance in opposing international terrorism. The safe haven used by the Taliban in Pakistan must be brought under Pakistani military control, and the power of the Taliban in the Pakistani-Afghan border areas must be curtailed, if the Afghan war is to be brought to a successful conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The incidence of violence in Afghanistan, a country regarded to be in a state of revolutionary war, is quite modest when compared to other

countries racked by internal insurgent violence such as Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the civil war period. In fact some countries with serious crime problems such as Mexico, Russia and South Africa have higher *per capita* death tolls from violence than does Afghanistan.¹⁾ To support this statement it was reported that there had been 100 suicide attacks and 5 086 people killed in insurgency related violence in Afghanistan in 2007.²⁾ South African crime statistics from April 2007 to March 2008 showed that 18 487 murders had been committed in this period.³⁾ However, it could be argued that the South African authorities could improve the situation considerably, should the government have the political will to do so. The Afghan situation appears to be considerably more complicated and possibly beyond the means of any home-grown government which should take power without foreign aid, because of the cultural and religious contradictions at play in the population, as well as the proximity of Pakistan in which the same contradictions exist.

The Afghan population has little taste for a Western-type democracy which the government backed by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces, have hitherto attempted to establish. The newly elected United States of America (US) President, Barack Obama, has been reported on world media outlets to have adopted a new aim, namely to secure Afghanistan as a stable state, not necessarily as a Western-type democratic state as was the aim of the previous Bush Administration, but that it should not revert to being a base for terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda. Afghanistan's stabilisation is important to NATO because of its potential to export terrorism should the Taliban insurgency be successful.

2. UNITED STATES COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY AND DOCTRINE IN AFGHANISTAN

On 18 February 2009 President Obama committed an additional 17 000 troops to Afghanistan. When the three combat brigades arrived, there were about 55 000 US troops in Afghanistan. There were also about 37 000 allied troops deployed.⁴⁾ Not all the NATO allied troops are employed in a combat role, but generally the Western

countries are becoming more seriously committed to the war in Afghanistan, particularly since President Obama requested in April 2009 that there be greater European Union (EU) involvement in the war. Canada, Australia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK) have forces involved in combat roles, applying sound principles of counter-insurgency. They were deployed in combat areas prior to Obama's request however.

Before the arrival of all the additional US forces the US President, the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, the Commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), General David Petraeus, and the then Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, General David D McKiernan, were seriously considering to add as many as 25 000 additional US troops to the conflict in Afghanistan. This would bring the US force totals to more than 60 000 and the international troop totals to more than 90 000. In 2008 it was already decided in Washington that the US would help Afghanistan to double the size of its army to roughly 200 000. This would take the Afghan plus international force strength to close on 300 000.⁵⁾

2.1 The United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation strategy

The serious commitment to add so many additional troops to the counter-insurgency effort, indicated that the US authorities are determined to succeed in the implementation of President Obama's often quoted Afghan war strategy, namely "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future".⁶⁾ Pakistan is included in the strategy because the presence of al-Qaeda and/or Taliban forces there is an important factor in the success or failure of the US-NATO strategy. When the war in Afghanistan began in 2001, concerns were expressed that the operations in Afghanistan would destabilise Pakistan. This has proved to be true, and on 6 May 2009 international television media gave prominent coverage to the visit of a high level US government team to Pakistan, led by the Secretary for Defense, who stated that the US would make a considerable amount of financial aid available to the Pakistani authorities to defeat the al-Qaeda/Taliban insurgency in Pakistan itself.

2.2 The United States counter-insurgency doctrine: 2006

The application of the US Army and Marine Corps counter-insurgency doctrine authorised in 2006, proved to be a relative success in Iraq after the now famous 30 000 troops 'surge' was ordered by President George W Bush. The doctrine was published under the signatures of General Petraeus and US Marine Corps General James F Amos. Since it was successful and since General Petraeus, the previous general office commanding in Iraq, is now the CENTCOM commander, it is obviously being applied by the forces in Afghanistan with the necessary local adaptations.

Some of the principles of particular importance for application in Afghanistan are the following:⁷⁾

- The main objective of a counter-insurgency is to foster the development of effective governance by a legitimate government. To achieve this in Afghanistan is proving to be very difficult.
- Since most insurgencies require a political solution, political factors are predominant, and the old adage that revolutionary wars require 80 per cent political action, and 20 per cent military, is still true in Afghanistan.
- The counter-insurgents must make an in-depth study of their environment, so that the security forces conducting the operations understand the society and culture within which they are operating.
- Effective counter-insurgency requires timely, specific and accurate intelligence, collected and analysed at the lowest possible level, and disseminated to all who need it, in a form which ensures it can easily be understood.
- The counter-insurgency must isolate the insurgents from their cause and from their support. Capturing and killing insurgents will be necessary, particularly in the case of religious or ideological extremists, but since killing every insurgent is normally impossible, an orchestrated effort must be made to convince the uncommitted majority that the revolutionary cause is a bad one.

- The rule of law must be implemented and law enforcement operations must be undertaken as quickly as possible. The insurgency must be criminalised to cause it to lose public support. The counter-insurgency must operate within the law and eschew excessive use of force, unlawful detention, torture and punishments without trial.
- Since insurgencies are by nature protracted, counter-insurgents must accept that a long-term commitment will be required to be successful. Counter-insurgency operations invariably demand considerable expenditure of time and resources, consequently NATO and the Afghan government, the population, and the security forces must be organised to provide the infrastructure for a long drawn-out war.

2.3 United States counter-insurgency objectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan

The US and its NATO allies have vital national security interests in combating the insurgencies activated by the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Taliban aim to re-establish themselves in Afghanistan as the government in power. They seek and have established sanctuaries in Pakistan, from which they can destabilise both countries and manage the insurgency. The Taliban, made up of mostly the Pushtan local population, have co-operated with al-Qaeda who are largely Arabic and whose use of Taliban sanctuaries is concentrated on planning terrorist attacks on the US, India, Europe and other targets of opportunity.

The US objectives to achieve the core goals of the Obama Administration's strategy are the following:⁸⁾

- To disrupt the terrorist networks in Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to degrade their ability to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.
- To promote a capable, accountable and effective government in Afghanistan that will serve the Afghan people well and which can manage its internal security effectively with limited international support.
- To develop self-reliant Afghan security forces capable of con-

ducting counter-insurgency as well as counter-terrorism operations with much reduced US and NATO assistance.

- To support efforts which enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan, as well as a vibrant economy which will provide a better standard of living for the Pakistani people.
- To involve the international community, with an important leadership role for the United Nations (UN) in achieving the objectives of the US for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It is noteworthy that the US Secretary for Defense, interviewed on 3 May 2009 on Cable News Network (CNN), said that the 100 000 US and NATO troop strength level in Afghanistan would be the maximum number of foreign troops deployed there. He also said that a civilian surge of experts to aid in infrastructure and governance improvement would be of vital importance. On 7 May 2009, on the same news channel, he was reported to have said that no US troops would be deployed in Pakistan. Aid to the counter-insurgency effort in Pakistan would be financial and in other forms, but not involving troops on the ground.

3. AFGHANISTAN'S WAR-LIKE HISTORY AND ITS SUITABILITY AS A LOCALITY FOR INSURGENCY

The geography of Afghanistan, in which the insurgency and counter-insurgency is fought, obviously has a tremendous influence on the campaign design of the coalition forces. The terrain is rugged with large mountainous areas in which insurgents can establish base camps and hide-outs. Much of the 1 640 mile/2 640 kilometre border with Pakistan is extremely suitable for insurgent operations. This is due to the fact that the Pashtun people who constitute 39 to 42 per cent of the Afghan population, now estimated at approximately 32 million people, live on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. The Pashtun population consists of a number of tribes who are normally in constant strife with each other, who have an almost legendary reputation as fighters, and who form a large part of the Taliban

insurgency. They do so for various reasons, amongst others religious, including their dislike of foreigners, their leaders' desire for power, and the lack of other forms of employment for the ordinary tribesman.

The terrain in Pakistan, which has become the centre of the Taliban's territory since they and al-Qaeda were driven out of Afghanistan by the US forces in late 2001, consists of a heavily forested range of mountains in what is called North and South Waziristan. This area has evidently never been effectively ruled by any country. The British Empire was never able to conquer the region's Pashtun tribes and consequently chose to let them govern themselves according to local custom. In exchange the Pashtun tribesmen protected the Empire from invasions from the north. After independence in 1947, Pakistan continued to respect this arrangement.⁹⁾ This is now proving to be a major problem for both the Pakistani and Afghan governments.

From his base in Pakistan the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, envisions drawing out the war as long as it takes to force the US/NATO forces out of Afghanistan. He is reported to have said that the "Americans have all the watches but we have all the time".¹⁰⁾ Taking 20th century history into account, his evaluation of the situation may well be a realistic possibility. The former Soviet Union, a superpower at the time, invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and withdrew ten years later in the face of an insurgency fought by an anti-communist force known as the *Mujahidin*. A communist regime then remained in Kabul, the capital, until 1992 when it collapsed due to internal opposition and a lack of Soviet (or Russian) support. Thereafter civil war erupted between factions of the *Mujahidin* out of which the Taliban movement developed. The Taliban supported by Pakistan, fought to stop the civil war in Afghanistan, and managed to capture Kabul in 1996, from which it controlled most of the country. It never gained control over the Northern Alliance strongholds in the north east, a fact which became a major factor leading to the Taliban's loss of power in 2001.¹¹⁾

After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on New York, US, allied and Northern Alliance military action defeated the Taliban and captured Kabul. In December 2001, the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces retreated from their last urban stronghold, Kandahar, and headed into the mountains on the Pakistan border. From their mountain hide-outs they have managed to launch an ongoing insurgency with the

aim of ousting the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which has received a considerable amount of NATO support during the tenure of its first head of state, President Hamid Karzai. There is, however, a considerable amount of scepticism among Afghanistan observers as to whether the Afghan government received adequate support at the right time, particularly at the height of the Iraqi war.

Although Mullah Omar's Taliban is showing a resurgence in 2009 in Afghanistan, and is causing an atmosphere of insecurity in Pakistan as well, it is important to note that most Muslim citizens in the two countries are not necessarily in favour of the Taliban's goals and return to power. The Northern Alliance, elements of the Pashtun population, and the Pakistani government helped ensure that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were forced into hiding in the mountains in 2001.¹²⁾

The situation regarding loyalties and motivations to destabilise Afghanistan is infinitely more complicated than meets the eye. The governor of the Afghan province of Uruzgan, Asadullah Hamdam, is reported to have said that the Taliban is only responsible for 50 per cent of the resistance, while warlords, drug barons and inter-tribe conflict are responsible for the rest. He further explained that at provincial level he was engaged in intensive dialogue with Taliban leaders living in Pakistan. One of the latter evidently commands a considerable following in the east of Uruzgan, and the governor was of the opinion that the Taliban leader could help to defuse conflicts between tribes in the province. However, the governor found it difficult to obtain the Taliban leader's co-operation because he had been involved in a dispute with President Hamid Karzai's tribe for roughly 30 years.¹³⁾

The protracted character of the war is caused by the fact that the insurgents can operate from and escape into rugged terrain in Afghanistan, and then move further into Pakistan in which they have had a safe haven for some time. It is largely a rural insurgency where the Taliban and other disruptive elements harass the population of which roughly 85 per cent are agriculturalists.

4. THE TALIBAN'S USE OF TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban is not adverse to the use of violence to achieve its ends. They succeed in causing disruption in the major cities from time to time, over and above the terror tactics employed in the rural areas. Kabul is said to have a population of two to four million, a population large enough to infiltrate unnoticed, and the incidence of the use of roadside bombs and suicide bombers in the towns gives the insurgents their looked for media coverage. Many of the injuries suffered by counter-insurgency forces are caused by what are described as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). These explosives kill and injure both innocent civilians and military personnel. The Taliban is an extremist *jihadist* organisation as is its ally al-Qaeda, and is more than satisfied to achieve these results for publicity value. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 80 per cent of the IEDs are identified by locals and reported before they can go off.¹⁴⁾

The use of suicide bombers has escalated over time. The UN Mission in Afghanistan reported that there had been five such attacks between 2001 and 2005, which escalated to 17 in 2005 alone, and subsequently to 123 in 2006. By 30 June 2007, there had already been 77 such attacks. In September 2007, in Kabul, a suicide bomber in military uniform targeted a bus with a number of Afghan soldiers on board killing at least 30 of them. In October of the same year an identical attack resulted in 12 more deaths. In November 2007 a suicide attack on a sugar factory in Bughan province left 70 dead, including six members of parliament and many children.¹⁵⁾

In 2009 the pattern remained the same. On 9 July 2009 a bomb was detonated in a timber truck which lay overturned on the side of the road. Authorities suspected that the truck was headed for Kabul, with its load of explosives hidden under the timber. The explosives were remotely detonated when the militants saw the police arrive to clear the road. Four policemen and 21 civilians were killed, of which at least nine were children from a nearby school.¹⁶⁾ This type of insurgency-related violence makes the public war weary, and results in a lack of confidence in the security forces that seem incapable of keeping the peace.

Although the Afghanistan border with Pakistan provides a terrain which allows insurgents escaping from security forces a relative safe haven, the most insecure Afghan provinces — according to the Asia Foundation's data — do not necessarily lie on that border. The most insecure provinces are Helmand and Wardak. The former is on Afghanistan's southern border and the latter is not on the border at all. Some of the provinces being on the western Afghanistan border with Iran are the next most insecure, one of which is Farah.¹⁷⁾

On 11 May 2009 fighting broke out between US security forces and Taliban insurgents in Farah province. The Taliban came from both Pakistan and Iran and they concentrated near the village of Ganjabad in the Balu Baluk district which is a Taliban controlled area near the Iran border. The provincial police chief announced that 25 insurgents and three police officers were killed in the battle. During the firefight the US Marine special forcers had called in several airstrikes.¹⁸⁾ The local population told Afghan officials that they had put women, children and elderly men in several housing compounds in a village called Gerani, in order to keep them safely out of the battle area. Unfortunately the close support fighter aircraft targeted those compounds, killing the majority of the people inside. A former district chief of Balu Baluk village claimed that 100 to 120 people were killed.¹⁹⁾

It is often claimed and probably rightly so, that the Taliban falsely claim that women and children have been killed in contacts, and that the Taliban also put women and children in harms way on purpose prior to battles which are to take place. They even fire from buildings in which non-combatants are forced to stay while a firefight takes place. However, on 12 May 2009, Afghan villagers brought truckloads of dead bodies to the governor's office in the provincial capital of Farah province, to demonstrate that civilians had in fact been killed by both sides. The Taliban had begun the confrontation by executing three former government employees in the area where they had also occupied some of the villages.²⁰⁾

The Taliban target not only government officials as such, but prominent women as well, particularly those who attempt to change the role of women in Afghan society. A prominent policewoman, Malalai Kakar, was assassinated, as was Safia Ama Jan, who was the director of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kandahar, and a journalist, Zakia Zaki.²¹⁾ The Taliban regularly injure girls who attend

schools in order to prevent them from seeking education. This activity, as well as the Taliban's burning down of girl schools, receives extensive media coverage, and the movement clearly welcomes all the publicity which such activities can generate.

5. THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND AND THE RESULTANT COMPLICATIONS OF THE AFGHAN INSURGENCY

According to various sources the insurgency in Afghanistan is extremely complex. The notion that it consists of the Taliban who can be separated into radical and moderate elements is evidently an oversimplification of the situation. To begin with, the population is made up of a number of ethnic groups. They are estimated to consist of about 38 per cent Pashtun inhabitants, Tajik 25 per cent, Hazara 19 per cent, Uzbek 12 per cent, Aimaq four per cent and Baluchi 0,5 per cent.²²⁾

5.1 The threat to law and order

A prominent source describes the insurgent threat as a 'complex adaptive system'.²³⁾ This is an accurate description of the manner in which the various groups who disrupt Afghanistan operate. There are true insurgent groups who seek to overthrow the Afghan government, and who aim to coerce the NATO forces to withdraw. They include not only the Taliban and al-Qaeda but some other less-known networks. There are also criminal groups who are involved in drug trafficking, gem smuggling and a whole range of illicit activities. Then there are warlords and their militias who were present prior to the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, and who have managed to become increasingly prominent. Lastly, there are Afghan government officials and even members of the Afghan security forces, as well as Pakistani and Iranian officials, who have supported the involvement of insurgent groups in Afghanistan in criminal activity.²⁴⁾

The increase in disruptive groups present in the country, also considering the fact that they can easily communicate and co-operate when their aims converge, contributes to an extremely complex anti-government system. Drug traffickers, for example, are able to co-

operate with insurgents and government officials in exporting drugs across borders. Since any group, tribe or sub-tribe may gain financially by being involved in insurgency or criminal activity in a country where economic activity is limited, they will change sides between the insurgents and the counter-insurgents, depending on whether the NATO forces are able to clear and hold territory. This is emphasised by NATO force soldiers on the many programmes shown on international television networks.

5.2 The introduction of Shariah law to gain popular support for the Afghan government

A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and American Broadcasting Commission (ABC) opinion poll conducted in 2009, found that only four per cent of the Afghan population supported the return of a Taliban government. Close to 70 per cent of the people approached said it was a good thing, or at least mostly a good thing, that the Taliban regime had been removed from power by US forces. This is hardly surprising since the Taliban, when in power in the 1990s, banned music, closed cinemas and carried out brutal punishments in the presence of large crowds in a former soccer stadium. The Taliban were thus unpopular, and they still are. The real security threat emanates not from support for the Taliban, but from the lack of support for an unpopular and weak government which has become increasingly corrupt and which is incapable of protecting the public.²⁵⁾

In order to placate the Taliban, some elements of Shariah law were enacted by the Afghan government. These were reported in the media as being reversals of human rights, civil liberties and press freedoms.²⁶⁾ The Afghan president attempted to defuse the negative effect of this in the Western media by noting the idea that Afghanistan is a Muslim state and, consequently, that Shariah laws were applicable. It had little impact on his target audience who generally support the idea that the counter-insurgency should be less militarised, and be transformed to a largely civilian activity, managed by a strong human rights based and incorruptible Afghan government. At the same time Western governments are strongly in favour of the US Secretary of Defense's aim of training the Afghan Army, in order to turn the counter-insurgency into a local Afghan operation.

6. THE TALIBAN INSURGENCY IN PAKISTAN AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

In May 2009 the international television media reported daily about ongoing Pakistani army operations against the Taliban in the north-west Frontier Province of Pakistan which borders on Afghanistan. Large-scale counter-insurgency operations using jet aircraft and heavy conventional type weaponry were employed to destroy Taliban bases in the Swat Valley, which has been Taliban dominated territory for some time.

The Taliban may have 'over-played their hand' considering that they had earlier signed an agreement with the Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardani, which in effect recognised their control over the Swat Valley and enabled them to impose Shariah law on the residents of the region. The Pakistani government had embarked on a policy of containment on the assumption that the Taliban would restrict itself to the area agreed upon in the agreement. However, the containment strategy failed in that the Taliban advanced further in the direction of Islamabad, the Pakistani capital. The forces employed for this encountered little resistance, advanced to within about 100 kilometres from Islamabad, received massive media coverage, and then withdrew.

Some sources have suggested that fundamentalist militant Islam has gained so much support in Pakistan, that the Taliban commanders felt it wise to withdraw having proved their capabilities to their extremist supporters. They hoped that their action had supported the possibility of a *coup* by internal Pakistani forces, which would allow the Taliban to achieve its goals, without suffering unnecessary losses. The Taliban's long term aim is clearly to establish itself as an extremist Muslim government in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

6.1 United States diplomacy

The threat to Afghanistan emanating from Pakistan's western borders, and more importantly the imminent threat of the establishment of an extremist government in Islamabad, resulted in the US government's diplomatic efforts to ensure that the Pakistani government

would not fall. According to the International Panel on Fissile Materials, Pakistan is estimated to have about 60 nuclear warheads.²⁷⁾ The possibility that movements such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda could get control over nuclear weaponry is of course totally unacceptable to responsible governments. The insurgency in Pakistan and Afghanistan, within which al-Qaeda is firmly rooted, poses not only a nuclear threat to the world but a direct threat to the US itself. In response the US involves itself directly in the Pakistani insurgency short of supplying troops to fight the Taliban.

In April 2009 a high level delegation from the US, led by a special representative of the US State Department, Richard Holbrooke, visited Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, was a prominent member of this group. Convincing and pressurising the Pakistani government to take serious action against the Taliban insurgency was clearly one of the main aims. Another aim was to foster an alliance between the Afghan and Pakistani governments to co-ordinate their operations against their common enemy, the Taliban. It is noteworthy when considering later developments, namely the concentrated Pakistan Army operations in the Swat Valley and other Taliban held territory, that Admiral Mullen concluded that General Ashfaq Kayani, the Pakistan Army Chief of Staff, had a plan to defeat the Taliban.²⁸⁾

The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was shown on television channels prior to the large-scale Pakistan army operations in the Swat Valley, saying that the Pakistan government was abdicating when it implemented its strategy of containment of the Taliban. On 6 and 7 May 2009 the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan presidents, Obama, Karzai and Zardari, held trilateral consultations with senior members of their governments in attendance in Washington. It was announced that the three countries would strive to strengthen their strategic partnership in order to promote peace, security, stability and economic growth in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They also reaffirmed their commitments to combat the spread of extremism and terrorism.²⁹⁾

6.2 Pakistani security force operations in the Swat Valley

When the trilateral consultations took place in Washington, the Paki-

stan Army's offensive into the Swat Valley had already begun. It started on 26 April 2009 when the Pakistan Army Chief of Staff's plan was implemented. However, although the Army has a great deal of influence in Pakistan, Admiral Mullen nevertheless stated that General Kayani had not involved the Army in Pakistani politics.

Kayani evidently told Mullen during the latter's visit to Pakistan that he would provide the Frontier Corps with the necessary material support and efficient commanders, and that he would send more troops to the north-west frontier. For this purpose, five to eight brigades were withdrawn from the border with India to take part in the Swat Valley offensive. There are sources that contend that the operations in the Swat Valley are only the start of a long drawn-out war, since militants have gained virtual control over Waziristan, which lies to the south of the Swat Valley on the Afghan border. The Pakistani armed forces launched a major ground operation into South Waziristan in October 2009. The authorities reported that large numbers of militants had been killed, and that army operations had been highly successful. However the Taliban had succeeded in launching a number of suicide terrorist attacks on targets such as a university and an army headquarters, in the same period.

By early September 2009 Admiral Mullen expressed the opinion that the Pakistani Frontier Corps had been successful militarily, and that the initiatives to address extremists in Pakistan would eventually provide security for the population. He also noted that some of the people who presently protect al-Qaeda would turn against them, and that this, along with pressure from the Afghan side of the border, would provide a type of pincer movement against al-Qaeda and the Taliban militants.³⁰⁾

6.3 United States financial aid in support of operations

The Pakistani authorities were goaded into action by the Taliban threat to Islamabad, US diplomatic action and the promise of more US financial aid. Media reports mention five to ten billion US dollars over ten years in aid, but specific figures have been mentioned for specific purposes. The US plans, for example, to spend US\$27,5 million on its Department of Agriculture's Food for Pakistan programme.³¹⁾ A Bill is also being passed in Congress to authorise the

spending of US\$1,5 billion in non-military aid over the next five years. The US has evidently spent around US\$35 billion in aid to Pakistan since 2001.³²⁾

President Zardari and the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, also appealed for international aid for the roughly two million people reported to be displaced as a result of military operations in Pakistan. The UN promised to increase its aid appeal for Pakistan where US\$165,9 million in aid had already been requested for 2008-2009.³³⁾ On 19 May 2009 the US Secretary of State appeared on CNN saying that US\$60 million had been given in August 2008, and a further US\$100 million was to be given to help the refugees, as requested by the Pakistani president.

6.4 The Pakistani counter-insurgency strategy

The Pakistan Army's conventional style offensive against the Taliban has been so violent that it has led to as many as two million displaced people and 501 496 stranded people registered with the authorities. The Pakistani government described the military operations as a battle to 'eliminate' Islamic militants.³⁴⁾ The militants are reported to be fleeing, either cutting off their beards and mingling with the refugees, or escaping to areas not yet taken by the Pakistan Army. Obviously they could escape in the same manner into Afghanistan.

Although the Pakistani authorities are not operating according to a classical counter-insurgency strategy along the lines approved by Generals Petraeus and Amos, it is probably too late for this. The Taliban increased their sphere of influence while the ruling class in Pakistan was engaged in their own political struggles, and somehow seemed to deny the Taliban/al-Qaeda threat to the state. This in spite of the assassination of Benazir Bhutto during her election campaign, and the fact that it is estimated that 6 000 people were killed in 2008 as a result of bombings and terrorist attacks.³⁵⁾

While the Taliban was entrenching itself in Pakistan's western border areas and operating into Afghanistan, the movement gained control of the Swat Valley and Waziristan. The Kayani plan is clearly to regain control over the Swat Valley and the Northern Frontier Province employing all the military force available to achieve the mission. The same may be done in Waziristan as well, although this objective will probably be infinitely more difficult to achieve.

Offensive operations launched by the Pakistan Army into the Swat Valley area began in early May 2009. By 13 July 2009, the refugees who had fled the area were being allowed to return to their homes. On 17 July CNN showed how the movement of a mass of people, estimated at more than two million, had caused a traffic congestion of tremendous proportions. The Pakistan Army operations have evidently been successful in the Swat Valley. The Valley is a long-settled area not far from the capital and thus easier to dominate militarily than the remote and semi-autonomous tribal areas.³⁶⁾

Having reduced the Taliban ability to control their previously controlled areas, the Pakistani military will have to employ a real counter-insurgency strategy to stabilise the country and to gain the support of the whole population. The US Interagency Policy Group's report on US policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan, foresaw that it was necessary to develop and operationally enable the Pakistani security forces, so that they would be capable of executing protracted counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations.

To this end the US's Policy Group specified that it would be necessary to provide US military assistance of helicopters for enhanced air mobility, night vision equipment, as well as equipment and counter-insurgency training for Pakistani Special Forces and Frontier Corps.³⁷⁾ Most of the Pakistani military, which has largely been conventionally trained for conflicts involving India, probably need counter-insurgency training. Government officials, from the capital Islamabad to the lowest local levels, will also need to understand how a counter-insurgency war is fought if it is to be successful. Since the counter-insurgency will be an internal conflict, time will not necessarily be on the side of the insurgent. The authorities will have to clear and hold territory, close the militant schools and mosques where extremist teachings begin, and improve the population's living conditions. They must also prepare the state and the people for a protracted struggle. The latter not only requires good communication with the people, but also the right message.

As stated, the Pakistani military is reported to have launched their offensive in the Swat Valley on 8 May 2009. Nevertheless, on 22 May, a car bomb attack took place in Peshawar, a town south of the Swat Valley and just east of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Eight people were killed and 70 injured. By 29 May 2009 CNN reported that three suicide bombings had occurred in densely popu-

lated towns. The ongoing terrorism and the continued military operations confirm the fact that the insurgency in Pakistan is reaching a highly violent and intense phase. The military will have to continue its aggressive operations in Taliban base areas and pursue a classical counter-insurgency strategy in the rest of the country. The Taliban will not gain the hearts and minds of the people by using indiscriminate terror tactics, but neither will the military if they ignore the plight of the people, who are forced to flee their homes under military aerial and ground bombardments.

6.5 The effect of Pakistani operations on Afghanistan

According to news reports on CNN in late May 2009, the media war was not being won yet. However, a shift in sentiment was noticed among the Pakistani urban population regarding the operations against the Taliban in the North-West Frontier Province. People in the capital were expressing their support for the case for war.

The operations in Pakistan against the Taliban and their ally, al-Qaeda, will certainly reduce the Taliban's ability to operate in Afghanistan. Should the Pakistani security forces succeed in fighting a protracted effective counter-insurgency and in securing the voluntary co-operation of the Pashtun population residing on the Pakistani side of the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, the prospects increase that the counter-insurgency in Afghanistan will attain a favourable result in line with President Obama's stated strategic aim, namely to ensure that Afghanistan does not revert to being a base for terrorist organisations.

7. UNITED STATES AND NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION INTENTIONS AND OPTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

The aims of the US strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan are clearly to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorist base and training area again. The use of Pakistan as a staging area by the Taliban to operate in Afghanistan must be stopped,

and aid short of military ground troop deployment has to be supplied to the counter-insurgency in Pakistan. The US and NATO troop deployments in Afghanistan have to continue until the Afghan security forces are capable of conducting an effective counter-insurgency on their own, and in so doing keep the peace.

7.1 The likely future of the counter-insurgency in Pakistan

The intention of the US regarding the internal Pakistani situation is to assist the country — a nuclear power with an active military totalling a massive 619 000 personnel.³⁸⁾ In combating the *jihadist* militants in the country, in order to prevent the Taliban and its al-Qaeda ally from coming to power as a Taliban extremist government, the US has continued, despite the economic recession, to provide financial aid to Pakistan and intends to provide the Pakistani military with counter-insurgency equipment and training.

On 23 May 2009 it was reported on Sky News that the British Prime Minister had announced that the UK was to provide £22 million in aid to Pakistan. The announcement was linked to reports that more than two million people had been displaced as result of the military operations in the Swat Valley area. This gave the impression that the aid had to do with the plight of the refugees and that the money should be spent to alleviate their misery, which in turn has everything to do with winning the support of the people. Other NATO countries may well have helped the Pakistani government in various ways or may do so in future.

The Pakistani counter-insurgency is likely to be a long drawn-out affair which the Pakistani government and the less radical population must win, in order to allow them to live a 21st century lifestyle and to sustain a more moderate form of Islam. However, as a struggle for the psyche of the country and to ensure that the authorities can stay the course, the Indian-Pakistani confrontation must end. US authorities are reported to be trying to defuse this stand-off, and the Indian government has been requested to decrease their military deployments on the Indian-Pakistani borders. In July 2009 CNN showed the Pakistani Prime Minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani, and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, on television holding meetings reported to be aimed at bilateral co-operation and activities to com-

bat terrorist and insurgent groups in their respective countries. According to the news channel, they issued a statement creating an "atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence".

The gist of the counter-insurgency problem in Pakistan and Afghanistan is that the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and associated tribal militants, reside in and operate from the Pashtun regions of both countries. A clear decision to contain the violence in these areas has been taken by the US, NATO, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The strategy consists of the use of military force to weaken the insurgents, so that a classical counter-insurgency can be adopted to foster nation-building projects, and to win the hearts and minds of the Pakistani and Afghan populations.

7.2 The change of command in Afghanistan

President Obama, during his election campaign, indicated that US troop deployments in Iraq would be phased out. Having become president, he announced that extraction from Iraq will be done over roughly two years. Long-term nation-building goals in Afghanistan are evidently being given lower priority and are probably being degraded to achieve lesser results in order, to "chiefly contain and deflate the insurgency".³⁹⁾

To pursue the new strategy the commander of ISAF in Afghanistan, General McKiernan, an armour officer and therefore presumed to be a conventional type general, was replaced in June 2009 after only 11 months in the post by Lieutenant General Stanley A McChrystal. McChrystal is the former commander of Joint Special Operations Command which he headed from 2003 to 2008. Forces under his command found and captured Saddam Hussein and were involved in the killing of Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁴⁰⁾

General McChrystal, promoted to four-star general, is supported by a deputy commander or chief of staff, Lieutenant General David Rodriguez. The latter also has command experience in Afghanistan and in his newly created post oversees ongoing operations. The new command and control structure is expected to improve control over the multinational mission in Afghanistan. The previous system was evidently cumbersome and General McKiernan had to make do with it.⁴¹⁾ The two new commanders have been ap-

pointed to bring about new operational strategies and tactics within the framework of the overall strategy of President Obama, Defense Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus.

The new tactics emphasise the protection of the Afghan population from injury during military operations. General McChrystal issued a directive to the ISAF forces in which he made the point that the security forces would not win based on the number of Taliban killed, but rather on their ability to separate the militants from the rest of the population. To ensure that likely civilian casualties are avoided, he instructed that commanders should examine and estimate the possibilities of limiting the use of force, for example the use of close air support against residential compounds and other locations that could result in civilian casualties.⁴²⁾

His instructions were heeded on 2 July 2009, when shortly after assuming command on 15 June 2009, a force of about 4 000 US Marines and 650 Afghan troops carried out an offensive operation into Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. The marine commanders reported that neither had artillery been employed, nor had aircraft been used to bomb targets.⁴³⁾ In this operation the marines met little resistance, but both US and British fatalities increased in July 2009, probably more as result of the launching of offensive operations than the limiting of fire support.

Unfortunately the number of NATO casualties in August 2009 increased considerably, and received constant media coverage on television channels. Sky News showed the formal military funerals that were held on a regular basis in Britain, and daily screened debates on the British involvement in Afghan operations. The change in command did nothing to change the situation after the motivation for it had been presented, as if the new counter-insurgency expert in command would suddenly and almost miraculously change things for the better.

On 4 September 2009 a US fighter aircraft bombed two fuel tankers which had been hijacked by the Taliban. While many people reported to be local civilians, not terrorists, were siphoning fuel from the tankers just before dawn, two 225 kilogramme bombs hit the target triggering a fireball that killed about 70 people. Afghan officials claimed that dozens of villagers died in the blast but NATO stated that the air strike had aimed to target militants.⁴⁴⁾ The new ISAF commander whose instructions to limit air strikes on residential targets

had been widely publicised, visited the site and ordered an investigation into the incident. It, however, shows how difficult it is to avoid civilian casualties during operations, when for propaganda purposes the insurgents in fact welcome such mishaps even among their own people.

The growth in the number of security force casualties has resulted in extensive criticism of NATO involvement in Afghanistan in both the US and the UK. The winning of the war will most probably not depend on changes in military tactics, but on the establishment of better governance and a better economy. The Taliban is evidently largely funded by the opium trade which is centred in Helmand province, hence the importance of the area operationally. The best result emanating from the operations will be to ensure that the Taliban is no longer able to tap into the drug trade there, especially if the security forces can hold onto territory having taken it. However, reports regarding opium production are extremely contradictory. It may be true that a tremendous increase in Afghan opium production since 2001 has resulted in an oversupply and a drop in price. If so, it could have an effect on the Taliban's buying power although nothing indicates that as yet.

8. THE FUTURE UNITED STATES COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

It is important to reiterate that the US Secretary of Defense mentioned on CNN that he considered it necessary to initiate a civilian surge of aid workers into Afghanistan. Initially he said that the current troop level with the $\pm 25\ 000$ troops to be added, was the maximum troop level to be deployed. He later stated in early August 2009, that he was open to consider a request for more troops if General McChrystal made such a request. The latter was to submit a report to the Secretary within 60 days of taking command in June 2009. The report was received in early September and was being studied by the President, the Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Any request for additional resources, which subsequently included General McChrystal's request for an additional 40 000 troops, over and above the 25 000 already scheduled, would be considered by the

President's national security team with the aim of effectively implementing the President's strategy.⁴⁵⁾ He also indicated that the training of Afghan security forces was a top priority programme. These decisions indicate a major drive to win the support of the population as the doctrine stipulates, and to empower the Afghan authorities to conduct counter-insurgency operations and keep the peace themselves.

The civilian surge is obviously of great importance since the Afghan war's outcome does not depend solely on military success. Good governance reportedly not yet supplied by the Afghan government, and a poor economy, are major obstacles. Afghanistan has no major product to sell such as Iraq has with its oil, its greatest saleable product being its poppy crop from which opium is made. Most of its population is active in agriculture and all other crops sell at far lesser prices than the poppy crop does. The demand for the product for medicinal purposes is not large enough to compete with the prices offered by the drug trade. Hopefully a solution to this seemingly unsolvable problem will be forthcoming in future.

The counter-insurgency doctrine stipulates that the counter-insurgency must accept that a long-term commitment is required to be successful. The war in Afghanistan has been fought for an eighth consecutive year. For most of this time the US and certain other countries have also been active in Iraq. The deployments there may be ended by mid-2010. This will ease the pressure on the US forces, although it seems that Afghanistan may then still be the scene of an ongoing counter-insurgency requiring foreign troop deployments. However, if the military operations in the western border areas of Pakistan and the east of Afghanistan are successful, to the point that the Taliban and al-Qaeda have lost their support there, US and NATO forces may be reduced considerably.

A major problem is that the local population including the Pashtuns in the tribal areas, are susceptible to Taliban and al-Qaeda beliefs and attitudes. Only time will tell whether they can be convinced of the advantages of an alternative philosophy and lifestyle, and that the Western forces are not their enemy. As long as the Taliban insurgents are able to coerce the local population by force to do their bidding, there is anyway no hope of a change of heart. It is essential that the Taliban must also be opposed by their own people.

The US counter-insurgency doctrine and strategy with its em-

phasis on the development of effective governance by a legitimate government is attainable in Pakistan, in which the operations are undertaken by internal Pakistani security forces with time on their side. In Afghanistan it will take too long and cost too much in terms of lives and money to achieve, using mainly the foreign NATO forces who are deployed there. To ensure that Afghanistan does not regress into an al-Qaeda terrorist base again, the NATO alliance will probably have to support tribal and clan leaders to use their military forces to combat the Taliban. The financial and other means which will have to be used to ensure their support will certainly save US and other NATO force casualties, and should be considerably cheaper in financial terms than is spent at present. A small force to co-ordinate the counter-Taliban operations and to direct air and other forms of support will probably be necessary for some time after the withdrawal of the bulk of the NATO forces.

On 18 October 2009 a guest speaker on Fareed Zakaria's CNN programme, suggested that the above strategy should be employed in sparsely populated provinces. He suggested that General Petraeu's doctrine and strategy should be applied with the necessary troop density, only in the populated provinces where the large towns are situated. However, no matter how wise it may sound, it will not allow NATO and the US to withdraw most of their forces, having to achieve their aim, namely to end the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base with a minimum cost in lives and money.

9. THE EFFECT OF THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ON THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY

In August 2009, presidential elections were held in Afghanistan. By mid-September it was announced that President Hamid Karzai had gained a possible 54 per cent of the vote after about 92 per cent of the votes had been counted.⁴⁶⁾ However, on 20 October 2009 President Karzai was shown on virtually every major television channel, announcing that a second election would be held in Afghanistan. After a re-count it was found that there had been widespread fraudulent practices, and that he did not have the required 50 per cent of the vote to be appointed as president for another term. The re-

election, termed a run-off, would only have two candidates, namely Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah. The latter had previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Karzai-led Afghan government. The re-election was scheduled to be held on 7 November 2009.

Dr Abdullah Abdullah withdrew his candidature for president on 1 November 2009. On 2 November 2009 it was announced that the presidential election scheduled for 7 November was cancelled. Hamid Karzai was consequently pronounced the president for the next term of office. He was thus legally entitled to form a new government. The question was then posed by Afghan politicians whether President Karzai's government would be recognised by most of the Afghan people as being legitimate.⁴⁷⁾

The fact that the US government had to appreciate in detail whether it should send the 40 000 additional troops, to Afghanistan or not, as requested by the ISAF Commander in his appraisal of the future conduct of the war, received wide media coverage. It became apparent that the decision was strongly influenced by the character of the next Afghan government. This would influence not only troop densities, but the whole NATO/US strategy in the Afghan anti-Taliban operations.

10. CONCLUSION

The US and NATO authorities have obviously concluded that the Taliban cannot be defeated as long as they have a safe haven in Pakistan. Since the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North-West Frontier Province on the Pakistani western border, which have been Taliban and al-Qaeda base areas for some time, are a threat to Pakistan as well, a realistic regional strategy to conduct counter-insurgency in both countries is required. This has most probably been agreed upon by the US, Pakistan and Afghan governments. General Petraeus is the commanding general of the US Central Command and as such he can oversee such a strategy. The whole area including Iraq falls in his area of command, and he was along with a Marine Corps general, one of the signatories of the current US Army and Marine Corps counter-insurgency doctrine. The doctrine has been relatively successfully applied in Iraq, and will certainly be used with the necessary adjustments to suit the conditions in Afghanistan.

The conflict in Afghanistan is largely that of a rural insurgency and counter-insurgency. The war has to be won in the countryside and the élite in the cities will follow. To win, the uncommitted rural population needs to be secured and allowed to live free from Taliban aggression. As the US counter-insurgency doctrine stipulates, this requires military action to isolate the insurgents from the population.

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