Lorenzo Zambernardi

Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma

Ever since the conventional wars in Iraq and Afghanistan turned into irregular conflicts, both students of war and practitioners have furiously debated counterinsurgency's logic, goals, and chances of success.[1] Counterinsurgency doctrine, however, has experienced no radical change since its original development. It was originally, though not systematically, formulated in the twentieth century by none other than the British officer, T.E. Lawrence, and later extended, on the basis of the writings of Mao, by a variety of counterrevolutionary strategists such as the French theorists of *la guerre revolutionnaire*. Even the new counterinsurgency doctrine devised by General David Petraeus in Iraq and Afghanistan does not represent a fundamental shift away from its traditional understanding, which sees this type of conflict as a contest for the support and control of population and, in turn, places the security of the populace at the hub of military operations.[2]

While at present there is general agreement on how to carry out counterinsurgency,[3] a clear analysis of the tradeoffs that all counterinsurgents have to deal with is still lacking. While challenges within the field remain, counterinsurgency still faces numerous challenges in theory. Neither scholars nor practitioners have developed a theoretical framework that has been able to explicitly specify the existing tradeoffs among the three typical goals involved in this doctrine.

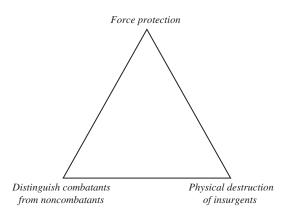## The Impossible Trilemma of Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency involves three main goals, but in real practice a counterinsurgent needs to choose two out of three. This is the "impossible trilemma" of counterinsurgency. In economic literature, the impossible trilemma—known also as the "unholy trinity" or the "open-economy trilemma"—has been used to assert that an economy cannot simultaneously have an independent monetary policy, a fixed exchange rate, and free capital movement.[4] The impossible trilemma in counterinsurgency is that, in this type of conflict, it is impossible to simultaneously achieve: 1) force protection, 2) distinction between enemy combatants and noncombatants, and 3) the physical elimination of insurgents (Figure 1).

In pursuing any two of these goals, a state must forgo some portion of the third objective. A state can protect its armed forces while destroying insurgents, but only by indiscriminately killing civilians as the Ottomans, Italians, and Nazis did in the Balkans, Libya, and Eastern Europe, respectively. It can choose to protect civilians along with its own armed forces instead, avoiding so-called collateral damage, but only by abandoning the objective of destroying the insurgents, as U.S. armed forces have started to do in Iraq after the success of the "surge."[5] Finally, a state can discriminate between combatants and noncombatants while killing insurgents, but only by increasing the risks for its own troops, as the United States and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have recently begun to do in Afghanistan. As in international economics, where states actually make a trade-off among its economic goals, the argument here highlights that, in counterinsurgency, it is almost impossible to reach all three objectives within a feasible time frame. So a country must choose two out of three goals and develop a strategy that can successfully accomplish them, while putting the third objective on the back burner.

Figure I: The Impossible Trilemma of Counterinsurgency

Force protection

Distinguish combatants from noncombatants

Physical destruction of insurgents

During counterinsurgencies, which of the three pairs of goals should a country choose? Should it relinquish the goal of destroying the insurgency in order to spare the lives of its soldiers and those of enemy civilians, or is the destruction of the insurgency so important that either the sacrifice of enemy civilians or a country's own troops is a price worth paying? Since every policy implies benefits and costs, there is no single answer to these questions. Similar to the "unholy trinity" in international economics, the impossible trilemma in counterinsurgency does not aim to explain why a state chooses one set of particular goals over another. What a state does and should do depends on the relative importance it attaches to these three objectives. The trilemma aims instead to highlight the inevitable politically difficult and *deadly* choices that states must necessarily make during counterinsurgency operations.

In the contemporary world, the first option (sacrificing civilians) seems infeasible for Western democracies, since it implies a policy of barbarism unacceptable for humanitarian reasons, as well as high domestic and international opinion costs. Indeed in irregular warfare, civilians and insurgents are closely inter-mingled and difficult to distinguish, and non-insurgent casualties often occur. In the middle of an insurgency, harming innocent civilians also backfires, generating unfavorable political effects which can far outweigh short-term gains in the physical destruction of an insurgency. In other words, killing noncombatants is not merely a moral wrong, but it is also counterproductive, creating a political problem since it contributes toward creating fresh insurgents and does nothing to help the counterinsurgent win the support of the population. While the remarkable accuracy of modern weapons has certainly improved the possibility of discriminating between combatants and non-combatants, the problem of indiscriminate killing in irregular warfare seems far from being solved.

A clear analysis of the tradeoffs that all counterinsurgents have to deal with is still lacking.

The second option (not physically destroying insurgents) implies cutting political deals with insurgents or agreeing to a very long-term commitment in the occupied country. As George Kennan and Hans J. Morgenthau argued in the context of the Cold War, this policy seems particularly difficult for democracies, because these are political regimes that tend to demonize their enemies and, in doing so, find it difficult to reach a diplomatic solution.[6] While today's context differs significantly from that of the Cold War, their point is still relevant. This option might prove ideal in certain contexts where insurgents can be persuaded to put down their arms, as it was in Iraq where political agreements with certain

factions of insurgents combined with improved security created by the "surge" strongly contributed toward stabilizing the country.[7]

Although there are currently attempts in Afghanistan to encourage insurgents to defect from the guerrilla movement (e.g., reintegration and reconciliation processes)—and this policy of persuasion should certainly continue—such a diplomatic campaign is unlikely to be successful. The assumption that a significant number of insurgents can be reconciled is, at this stage of the conflict, somewhat optimistic. While there is certainly an economic and defensive dimension connected with the insurgency, there is also strong evidence of religious and ethnic elements at its roots, which makes a large scale reconciliation program difficult to succeed.[8] Because most of the insurgents in Afghanistan appear to be irreconcilable, a political solution does not seem to be feasible in this country, at least in the short term.[9]

The third option (sacrificing force protection) implies significant losses of troops, which might be justified in relation to the political goals of the war, but which remain hard to "sell" to Western publics. Indeed, this option seems particularly difficult in the post-Vietnam era, in which the problem of casualty aversion was progressively heightened. It is no coincidence that in early October 1993, after the killing of "only" 18 American soldiers in Mogadishu, the United States dramatically decided to end its military presence in Somalia. And it is no coincidence that in order to minimize the risk of military casualties during Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, ground forces were not employed.

Contemporary democracies have problems with all three policy options: they can hardly stomach innocent lives in collateral damage and they have difficulties in finding a diplomatic solution with their enemies (especially those who are publicly labeled as terrorists). At this stage of the conflict in Afghanistan, however, the United States and ISAF seem to be stuck in the trade-offs implied in the third alternative with military casualties mounting.

The Rise and Fall of Force Protection

For a long time, warfare implied an almost total normative and political disregard for military casualties. As Napoleon famously explained, "Soldiers are made to be killed." Losing men in battle was certainly a strategic and economic problem—more soldiers meant more power—but the protection of armed forces did not traditionally play a central role in military doctrine. War was a legitimate state practice and soldiers were merely regarded as instruments of statecraft, to be used at the discretion of European monarchs.

Although its origins are not yet completely clear, a profound change in how soldiers' lives are perceived took place in the second half of the twentieth century: their death turned from a strategic and economic problem into a real

normative and political issue, able to jeopardize both governments' stability and their domestic war effort. In the case of the United States, Ohio State professor John Mueller has even noted that public support for wars in which the United States is involved is explained by one simple association: as casualties mount, domestic support decreases. According to Mueller, this is what occurred in Korea and Vietnam, as well as more recently in the war in Iraq, and it is also likely to be the fate of the military intervention in Afghanistan.[10] Although there are no comparable studies, recent public reaction in European states like France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom seem to extend the validity of Mueller's claim to Western democracies in general.[11]

Professors Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler have recently challenged this argument by suggesting that the American public is more "defeat-phobic" than "casualty-phobic," meaning that at least Americans are more concerned about losing a war than losing soldiers.[12] The validity of their thesis, however, is generally questionable because, as Mueller explains, "the overall pattern is one of erosion of support as casualties mount," regardless of temporary changes due to successful military operations. It is particularly questionable for those wars whose stakes the public sees as insufficient when costs rise, such as "wars of choice."[13]

> A counterinsurgent needs to choose two out of three main goals.

Although President Barack Obama has declared that the war in Afghanistan is a "war of necessity," the president's assertion is jeopardized by one simple fact. If he truly considered the conflict in Afghanistan a war of necessity, the president would not have hesitated to send just 30,000 additional soldiers. Put differently, during "wars of choice," when there is no immediate threat and humanitarian or state-building interventions are involved, public support is highly sensitive to military casualties. Interestingly, and above all worryingly, these are precisely the types of wars that Western democracies have most often fought in recent years.

To solve the political problems raised by the connection between rising force casualties and a decline in public support, military doctrines have put the protection of armed forces as a top priority of the entire war strategy. This doctrine had been adopted by the United States in Iraq, by ISAF in Afghanistan, and by Israel in its military intervention in the Gaza strip. In technical terms, this policy is generally labelled as "force protection." In many battlefields of the world, it is an explicit goal of the armed forces often superseding the declared objective of the war.[14] Force protection may involve strategic choices, such as the decision not to use ground forces and only employ air power as in Kosovo, or

it may concern minor but highly relevant tactical rules of engagement (e.g., checkpoint protocols, targeting, urban combat, patrolling, etc) as in Iraq and Afghanistan. In doing so, Western warfare has largely become "death from a safe distance."[15]

Western leaders, and arguably their citizens too, find force protection reassuring. To believe that war can be waged with little human costs is to believe that the problems of the world can be fixed through the use of force in a clean manner with little bloodshed. This view has particular relevance in an epoch in which Western states find themselves time and again employing violence abroad. Force protection offers a way of coping with the costs of war for societies that increasingly perceive soldiers as citizens whose lives cannot easily be sacrificed. It also provides a simple and reassuring tactic for the conduct of war, which claims to promise military success at tolerable human costs.

> When force protection becomes a priority, the trilemma kicks in.

The theoretical framework offered by the impossible trilemma, however, makes it clear that a strategy that pursues force protection and the destruction of the insurgency in irregular warfare has its own dark side. If the primary goals are to minimize casualties among a state's troops and to physically defeat the insurgency, killing civilians becomes highly likely when military strategies, such as aerial bombing and artillery bombardments, are used to protect troops.[16] While force protection remains an understandable and noble effort to reduce the human costs of war for Western soldiers, policymakers and military commanders alike have come to understand that force protection might well undermine the very political goals they are fighting for, especially in irregular wars.

The key in waging a war lies in harmonizing immediate military destruction with long-term political construction. This relationship appears to be even more important in irregular warfare, since the driving strategy in this type of conflict is to avoid alienating the local population in order to obtain its political cooperation. Given that acquiring civilian support is a political rather than a military task, counterinsurgency is the most political type of armed conflict. This is reflected in the canon of irregular warfare, in which conventional wisdom suggests that in order to win, insurgents and counterinsurgents need to gain the passive loyalty (at least) of a significant portion of the civilian population.[17]

Accordingly, a counterinsurgent following these priorities should pursue two primary goals: first, to destroy the military power of the insurgent and second, to ensure the support of the local population. But when force protection becomes a priority, the trilemma kicks in, shifting the casualties onto the local civilian

population, strongly exacerbating the political challenges, and ultimately jeopardizing the success of counterinsurgency.[18]

Applying the Trilemma to Iraq and Afghanistan

This is exactly what occurred in Iraq until the "surge" in 2007 and in Afghanistan before the appointment of Gen. Stanley McChrystal as the top U.S. and NATO commander in June 2009. To reduce risks, U.S. armed forces rarely had contact with the local populations, remaining isolated in heavily fortified bases, and conducting rapid raids as well as kinetic actions in armored vehicles with frequent use of strikes by warplanes. The focus was on killing insurgents and protecting Western armed forces, not on securing the population.

Concerns from Iraqi and Afghan authorities over mounting civilian deaths have originated from the fear that, in these conditions, people may choose to support insurgents. Again, these concerns are far from being purely humanitarian calls, which denounce the loss of innocent life, but instead express real political fears. Indeed, the harm inflicted upon civilians has embittered the population and strengthened the insurgency. Interviewed on U.S. strategy in Iraq, analyst Stephen Biddle observed that, "The model provides maximum force protection but it means minimum effectiveness at solving the problem."[19]

The United States and NATO military commanders as well as policymakers alike have recently come to understand that so-called "collateral damage" has jeopardized U.S. and ISAF operations by turning civilian populations against U.S. and coalition forces. In 2006, after a profound reassessment of the failures of counterterrorist operations in Iraq, Petraeus devised and implemented a new counterinsurgency strategy based on protecting the civilian population and restricting the military's use of air strikes and artillery bombardments. The priority, according to Petraeus, lies in the non-military sphere of the conflict: the population must be secured even if this undermines "search and destroy" operations. Although there is nothing original about Petraeus's population-centred strategy, recognizing the essentially political nature of the insurgency has produced a fundamental shift in how counterinsurgency is now carried out. Its key principles for U.S. armed forces—as summarized by experts Nathaniel C. Fick and John A. Nagl—are: focus on protecting civilians over killing the enemy; assume greater risks; and use minimum, not maximum force. These are a radical departure from the previous doctrine based on force protection.[20]

The new strategy was implemented in Iraq, and has now been adopted in Afghanistan by McChrystal, who has recently argued that coalition troops should "share risk, at least equally, with the people." In a confidential assessment of the war sent to U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, McChrystal argued that "pre-occupied with protection of our own forces, we have operated in

a manner that distances us – physically and psychologically – from the people we seek to protect . . . The insurgents cannot defeat us militarily; but we can defeat ourselves."[21] Accordingly, the latest version of the "ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance" is explicit in declaring that protecting the Afghan people is the mission. In other words, it has rejected excessive force protection. The document also states that "Security may not come from overwhelming firepower, and force protection may mean more personal interaction with the Afghan people, not less."[22]

This strong rejection of previous notions of force protection has produced a real and dramatic change in how military operations are conducted in Afghanistan. First of all, it has modified how force is employed during military operations. On July 2, 2009, McChrystal issued a directive restricting the use of airstrikes and artillery bombardments. As a consequence, according to U.S. Air Force data, as "military operations intensified in Afghanistan [last] summer, the number of times that coalition troops came under fire increased more than 30 percent compared with the summer of 2008, but the number of air munitions used fell by nearly 50 percent."[23] According to figures released by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, civilian casualties resulting from military operations by pro-government Afghan and foreign forces dropped by 28 percent in 2009 compared to 2008.[24] Although civilian casualties still occur, U.S. and coalition forces are trying to protect the lives of innocent civilians even as the risk for their own troops increases.

Second, in order to implement a genuine counterinsurgency strategy, McChrystal asked for more forces and declared that, without them, the conflict in Afghanistan would most likely fail. At long last, Obama met his general's request and decided to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan. These extra forces are necessary because a population-centric approach needs enough troops to secure the area where the Afghan people live.

In the long term, this counterinsurgency strategy certainly has the potential to be successful. This new strategy, however, has its problems. It basically raises the same issue previously "solved" by force protection—by increasing the immediate risks for U.S. and ISAF soldiers, it has produced more body bags. Not coincidentally, 2009 and 2010 have been the deadliest years in Afghanistan for coalition troops (see Table 1). Moreover, as evidence of the negative relationship between civilian and combatant casualties, Gates declared that the drop in civilian deaths has been associated with a 75 percent rise in the casualties among Afghan security forces and coalition troops.[25]

While in most conventional conflicts there might only be some tension between force protection measures and the political goals of war, during insurgencies this tension risks putting the United States and its Western allies into the typical conundrum entailed by the impossible trilemma. On one hand,

Table I: Coalition Military Fatalities in Afghanistan by Year and Month till May 26, 2010

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	4	12
2002	10	12	14	10	1	3	0	3	1	6	1	8	69
2003	4	7	12	2	2	7	2	4	2	6	8	1	57
2004	11	2	3	3	9	5	2	4	4	8	7	2	60
2005	2	3	6	19	4	29	2	33	12	10	7	4	131
2006	1	17	13	5	17	22	19	29	38	17	9	4	191
2007	2	18	10	20	25	24	29	34	24	15	22	9	232
2008	14	7	20	14	23	46	30	46	37	19	12	27	295
2009	25	25	28	14	27	38	76	77	70	74	32	34	520
2010	45	55	39	34	45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	218

to defeat the insurgency, Western states need to abandon force protection and assume greater risks for their soldiers. On the other, taking higher risks means more military casualties and, given casualty sensitivity, this could jeopardize domestic consensus for the mission in Afghanistan.

Obama's decision to send 30,000 additional soldiers to Afghanistan should, therefore, also be understood through the lens provided by the trilemma. While this decision is likely to strengthen the U.S. and ISAF counterinsurgency campaign, it is also likely to increase troop casualties, which in turn may jeopardize the already declining popularity of the war. If the number of casualties does increase this year, as current data suggests and military commanders foresee, public opinion support is likely to collapse and may either move in favor of less discriminate strategies, which will certainly undermine the political ends of counterinsurgency, or jeopardize public consensus for the war. In both cases, victory would be hard to attain. In other words, the United States seems to be stuck in a tragic impasse with no easy solution, which has led the Obama administration to publicly state that it will begin to withdraw troops in July 2011.

Protecting Soldiers, Losing Irregular Wars?

One of the most interesting books on war written in recent years is Rupert Smith's *The Utility of Force* which argues that "industrial war," the industrialized fight of mass armies started by Napoleon at the turn of the nineteenth century, has now finally ended. Today, Western armies fight instead "amongst the people," rather than between peoples.[26] Smith does not simply emphasize that contemporary wars are mainly intrastate and internationalized conflicts fought by non-state actors. His claim is that the overall goal of war has changed: military conflicts are now fought for the people, amongst the people, and it is the people who are the ultimate political objective of military operations. According to Smith, the main problem with this change is that Western armed forces are not prepared to fight in this type of conflict. Still used to waging industrial wars, they have been unable to end civil wars and carry out state-building. This implies that Western states need fewer armored vehicles and more infantry, fewer warplanes and more "boots" on the ground.

Smith is certainly correct when he suggests that new kinds of equipment, strategy, and organization are needed. He is also aware that if we need fewer heavy weapons and more light infantry, then the burden of war moves from advanced technology to foot soldiers. Smith's stress on force protection, however, fails to take into account its negative implications for the political objectives of war amongst the people. Indeed, Western armies and their civilian masters are ill-suited to win this type of warfare, not only and primarily because

they fail to recognize that the old conceptual model of industrial war is no longer applicable to these conflicts, but because Western states are neither ready to sacrifice the lives of their soldiers, nor able to opt for non-discriminatory policies such as barbarism, nor typically politically willing to negotiate with insurgents and terrorists who have been demonized, no matter how justifiably, in democratic publics.

War is not only, in the famous expression coined by military historian John Keegan, "collective killing for a collective purpose,"[27] it is also collective dying for a collective purpose. While this may appear somewhat cynical and insensitive from the soldiers' point of view, war does not come cheap, and if it is employed as a political instrument, both its political objectives and the means to pursue them should be clear from the outset. In the words of historian Peter Paret:

> . . . the armed forces do not exist for their own sake. They are an instrument to be used . . . If the political purpose demands it . . . *they must be prepared to sacrifice themselves, and neither society nor government should regard this sacrifice, if it is an expression of rational policy, as beyond their mission.*[28] (Emphasis added)

If the type of counterinsurgency advocated by McChrystal and Petraeus is carried out, the death of a significant number of soldiers is unavoidable. Putting the local population at the core of the counterinsurgency effort means sending soldiers outside their fenced bases into dangerous places where they are going to become easy targets for insurgents. The current attempt to increase the number and the efficiency of the Afghan national

> **2**009 and 2010 have been the deadliest years in Afghanistan for coalition troops.

security forces might certainly overcome the Western problem of casualty aversion in the long term,[29] but it can solve it only when these forces will be fully reliable and efficient, which will take a few years. In the meantime, Western troops will continue to bear a significant burden of the counterinsurgency operations.

The difficulty in Afghanistan is not principally that history has not been kind to foreign forces seeking to control that region, as Mullah Muhammad Omar declared in September 2009,[30] but rather the real problem is ingrained in the contemporary Western way of warfare, which risks becoming significantly less effective in those conflicts where states must be prepared to further endanger the life of their troops. If this is correct, Western states appear to be politically and socially inept at transforming their political goals into purposeful military action. The impossible trilemma implies that whether the use of force serves to achieve the ends of these wars depends on the willingness of Western states to sacrifice

the lives of their armed forces. The ongoing casualty aversion suggests that this willingness is insufficient for the political goals pursued by those states.

We currently live in an epoch where there is often a tension between political ends and military means, which seems to have reduced the political effectiveness of the Western use of force in those contexts. If war as an instrument of foreign policy has become a less politically effective means, then its use should be drastically reconsidered. In a world where the most important goals of states are political and in which, as Rupert Smith correctly notes, military conflicts are fought "for the people," it is not the development of new high-tech weapons and novel military strategies that secure victory. It is instead the political capacity of accepting and tolerating human costs, which is the key to winning these wars.

The impossible trilemma explains that to protect populations, which is necessary to defeat insurgencies, and to physically defeat an insurgency, forces must be sacrificed, risking the loss of domestic political support. Over the next few months, this is likely to become one of the most important challenges for the Obama administration.

Notes

1. See Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Colin S. Gray, "Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 35–57; Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 67–106; Jason Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy's Impact on War Outcomes and Duration," *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 167–192.
2. Colin H. Kahl, "COIN of the Realm: Is There a Future for Counterinsurgency," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (November/December 2007): 169–176.
3. For exceptions see Edward N. Luttwak, "Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice," *Harper's Magazine*, February 2007, pp. 33–42, http://www.harpers.org/archive/2007/02/0081384 and Ralph Peters, *Wars of Blood and Faith: The Conflicts That Will Shape the Twenty-First Century* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007), pp. 57–59.
4. Maurice Obstfeld, "The Global Capital Market: Benefactor or Menace?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 9–30.
5. The Iraq war has essentially had four phases: 1) the enemy-centric strategy, implemented in 2003–2005; 2) training and supporting the Iraqis in 2005–2006; 3) the population-centric approach or the "the surge" in 2007–2008, which was a very bloody phase for U.S. forces; and 4) the post-surge stage, which has been ongoing since 2009, and where military operations are no longer only carried out by U.S. forces.
6. See George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 59; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 387.

7. See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

8. See Antonio Giustozzi, "One or Many? The Issue of the Taliban's Unity and Disunity," April 23, 2009, pp. 3–6, http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/PSRU_Issue TalibanUnityDisunity.pdf.

9. On the likelihood of reconciliation with the Taliban, see Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July/August 2009): 34–45.

10. See John Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973).

11. Richard Auxier, "Few in NATO Support Call For Additional Forces in Afghanistan," Pew Global Attitudes Project, August 31, 2009, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1325/little-support-in-nato-for-afghanistan-troop-increases.

12. Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler, *Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

13. John Mueller, "The Cost of War," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 1 (January/February 2006): 143–144.

14. Thomas W. Smith, "Protecting Civilians ... or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq," *International Studies Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (April 2008): 144–164.

15. The expression "death from a safe distance" was used by a reader in the blog "At War" in the *New York Times*. See John F. Burns, "John Burns on the NATO Strike," *New York Times*, September 4, 2009, http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/04/john-burns-on-the-nato-strike/.

16. See Michael Reisman, "The Lessons of Qana," *Yale Journal of International Law* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 381–399 and Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

17. See Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Classic House Books, 2009) and David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 2006).

18. Although in this article, I do not discuss the current gap between the Afghan government and its people, it is apparent that the weakness of the local government is the strength of the insurgency.

19. L. Beehner, "U.S. Military Strategy in Iraq," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, April 12, 2006, http://www.cfr.org/publication/10434/us_military_strategy_in_iraq.html.

20. See Nathaniel C. Fick, and John A. Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual: Afghanistan Edition," *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2009.

21. Bob Woodward, "McChrystal: More Forces or 'Mission Failure'," *Washington Post*, September 21, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/20/AR2009092002920.html.

22. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), "ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance," August 26, 2009, p. 2, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf.

23. Ann Scott Tyson, "Less Peril for Civilians, but More for Troops," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/22/AR2009092204296.html.

24. See UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2009," January 2010, p. 16, http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Protection%20of%20Civilian%202009%20report%20English.pdf.

25. Elisabeth Bumiller and Carlotta Gall "U.S. Admits Civilians Died in Afghan Raids," *New York Times*, May 7, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/08/world/asia/08 afghan.html.
26. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London: Penguin, 2006).
27. John Keegan, *War and Our World* (London: Hutchinson, 1998).
28. Peter Paret, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Peter Paret, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 200–201.
29. The Afghan National Army currently consists of approximately 112,000 troops, which should expand to 171,600 by October 2011. The Afghan National Police consists of approximately 100,000 units and is expected to reach 134,000 by October 2011. At the end of next year, the total amount of the Afghan national security forces will be 305,600 units. See "NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan Combined Security Transition Command," unclassified, March 29, 2010.
30. See Robert Mackey, "How Many Troops to Secure Afghanistan?," The Lede, September 21, 2009, http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/21/how-many-troops-to-secure-afghanistan/.