Irregular Forces in Counterinsurgency Warfare

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Effective counterinsurgency requires a strategy aimed at securing control of civilian populations. Historically, irregular forces recruited from local communities and 'turned' insurgents have helped generate, sustain and manage collaboration between civilians and counterinsurgent forces. However, irregular forces do not necessarily promote counterinsurgent success. If poorly raised and managed, private interests may be pursued using the means of violence at their disposal, undermining the broader counterinsurgency campaign. This article identifies benefits of raising irregular forces and suggests management strategies for coalition commanders working with them. It concludes with recommendations for emerging approaches to the use of irregular forces in Afghanistan.[1]

Irregular forces embedded in local communities, including the 100,000 Sunni gunmen paid by the Iraqi government to form "Awakening Councils", played a crucial role in America's success in the counterinsurgency war in Iraq.[2] The "Awakening Councils" were bands of former insurgents that were armed by the Iraqi government and authorised to use force in support of coalition and national Iraqi forces. Most importantly, they supported American efforts to achieve population control by circumscribing collaboration with insurgents and securing local populations.[3] Arming bands of former insurgents and tribesmen was risky, and resulted in some unfortunate incidents.[4] However, from a strategic perspective these forces were essential to America's success in pacifying much of Iraq. As has historically been the case, raising irregular forces from local communities and turned insurgents undermined the ability of hard-core insurgents to mobilise resources, increased the ability of coalition commanders to collect human intelligence and eased pressure on coalition forces, permitting their deployment to areas in which they could have most effect.[5]

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[2] Peter Filkins, 'Afghans and U.S. Plan to Recruit Local Militias', *New York Times*, 24 December 2008.
[3] Carter Malkasian, 'Did the Coalition Need More Forces in Iraq? Evidence from Al Anbar', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 46 (3rd Quarter 2007), pp. 120-6.
[4] Allisa Rubin and Rod Norland, 'Troops Arrest an Awakening Council Leader in Iraq, Setting off Fighting', *New York Times*, 28 March 2009.
[5] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 174. For a review of the Sons of Iraq and

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Beyond Iraq, experience suggests locally embedded irregular forces can support a broader counterinsurgency strategy by fostering collaboration with counterinsurgent forces. Specifically, irregular forces increase the ratio of counterinsurgents to civilians; increase the quantity and quality of human intelligence available to counterinsurgent commanders; circumscribe collaboration between local communities and insurgents; encourage the defection of insurgents; and grant counterinsurgent commanders a means through which to support and protect sympathetic communities and local elites.

Despite their potential benefits, irregular forces do not have an unblemished history.[6] The Soviet Union's use of large, heavily-armed irregular forces during its intervention in Afghanistan is notorious, having contributed to the collapse of the Afghan state and the 1990s era of warlord politics.[7] Like any security institution, irregular forces need to be properly raised and managed if they are to contribute to counterinsurgent success and the long-term stability of states facing violent internal challengers.[8] In this article three lessons that should guide emergent Coalition approaches to the development of irregular forces in Afghanistan are identified. First, irregular forces should be embedded within and bound to the local communities from which they are raised. Second, irregular forces should be raised and managed by a competent corps of Coalition advisers, selected specifically for this work. Third, irregular forces should be employed as a component of a broader counterinsurgency campaign, performing a limited yet important set of functions within a broader conception of joint operations. Thus, rather than forming large, heavily armed autonomous militias, Coalition commanders should develop small, lightly armed local defence groups, supported by carefully selected Coalition advisers able to call upon Coalition support assets such as quick reaction forces and air-power.

Awakening Council programs view Farook Ahmed, 'Sons of Iraq and Awakening Forces', *Institute for the Study of War, Backgrounder #23*, 21 February 2008, <http://www.understandingwar.org/files/reports/Backgrounder%2023%20Sons%20of%20Iraq%20and%20Awakening%20Forces.pdf> [Accessed 1 March 2009].

[6] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 108-9.

[7] Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2000), pp. 198-231. See also Gilles Dorronsoro and Chantal Lobato, 'The Militia in Afghanistan', *Central Asian Survey*, vol.8, no. 4 (1989), pp. 95-108.

[8] See Yoav Gortzak, 'Using Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations: The French in Algeria, 1954-1962', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol.32, no. 2 (2009), pp. 307-33; Geraint Hughes, 'A "Model Campaign" Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965-1975', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2009), pp. 271-305; Major Darin Blatt, Captain Eric Long, Captain Brian Mulhern and Staff Sergeant Michael Ploskunak, 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan', *Special Warfare* (January-February, 2009), pp. 18-26; Robert Cassidy, 'The Long Small War: Indigenous Forces for Counterinsurgency', Parameters, vol. 36, no. 2 (Summer, 2006), pp. 47-62; and, Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, pp. 106-9.

The Logic of Violence in Counterinsurgency War

The relationship between an insurgency's hard-core supporters and dispersed local communities is the source of an insurgency's strength and weakness. Typically, insurgents rely on local populations for the bulk of their recruits, and to access resources that are essential to operations and routinely required, such as food, shelter, concealment and intelligence.[9] Thus, insurgents work through and with local populations to craft an informal logistics, communication, and intelligence system, as well as conduits for recruiting the vast majority of their fighters.[10]

Insurgents in Afghanistan receive support from elements in Pakistan's borderlands, as well as international *jihadist* organisations. However, they overwhelmingly rely on local guerrillas, recruited through the "village underground" units embedded across the Afghan countryside, for the bulk of their formations.[11] Consequentially, and despite the presence of some hard-core insurgents, the majority of anti-government combatants in Afghanistan are minimally committed local recruits, young men who become "accidental guerrillas" as a result of being in a particular place at a particular time, with few opportunities and/or little ability to resist insurgent threats. In this sense, Afghanistan is entirely ordinary. As Galula remarked, "in any situation … there will be an active minority for the cause, a neutral majority, and an active minority against the cause".[12] The technique of power, employed by successful insurgents and counterinsurgents alike, consist of relying on the favourable minority to rally the neutral majority, and neutralise or eliminate the hostile minority. As Kitson argued:

> There has never been much doubt that the main characteristic which distinguishes campaigns of insurgency from other forms of war is that they are primarily concerned with the struggle for men's minds, since *only by succeeding in such a struggle with a large enough number of people can the*

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[9] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 50-62.

[10] John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (London: Praeger, 2002), p. 28.

[11] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, pp. 83-7; cf. Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kolashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2007), p. 35; C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, 'Securing Afghanistan: Getting on Track', United States Institute of Peace Working Paper, 23 January 2009, <http://library.usip.org/articles/1012068.1022/1.PDF> [Accessed 8 July 2009], p. 6.

[12] David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), pp. 75-6. General David Petraeus assessed that around 3 to 4000 Afghan insurgents are "*hard-core fanatics who are not reconcilable under any circumstances and thus have to be dealt with through police and military security measures*", while the others can be co-opted so long as the counterinsurgent force is in a position of strength, see General David Patraeus, 'The Future of the Alliance and the Mission in Afghanistan', *45th Munich Security Conference*, Remarks for the Panel Discussion (8 February, 2009), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/02/the-future-of-the-alliance-and/> [Accessed 20 February 2009].

> *rule of law be undermined and constitutional institutions overthrown.*
> [emphasis added][13]

Due to the ratio and relation of hard-core insurgents to local recruits, the threat to state survival posed by an insurgency can be dramatically reduced by severing an insurgency's hard-core members from civilian populations. As Mao noted, fish perish when removed from the sea.[14] Even if a residual terrorist threat remains, the survival of the state will not be threatened *unless* the hard-core cells can muster a large number of people to fight for change. When insurgent numbers dwindle and the strength of the incumbent government is made clear to local communities insurgents are often compelled to rely on dramatic acts of indiscriminate violence. Ordinarily, brutality undermines attempts to muster popular support. Thus, in general terms an insurgency can be said to be defeated if and when it is largely separated from civilian populations.

The logic of violence in counterinsurgency war is such that the counterinsurgents' prospects of separating insurgent cadres from civilians are low unless they can first impose control upon the communities in which civilians live, and solicit intelligence from them.[15] Control has a clear territorial foundation because rule presupposes a constant and credible armed presence.[16] As an American participant in the Vietnam War noted, control at the micro-level means establishing "suzerainty" over each village.[17] Thus, while violence, alongside administration and the selective provision of benefits, is a means of control, it is not an end in and of itself.[18] Violence is a tactical option, which may contribute to population control if applied selectively, or, if applied indiscriminately, may encourage and even compel civilians to turn to insurgents for protection.[19]

In Afghanistan, criminal violence and insurgency has significantly declined where and when counterinsurgent control has been established.[20] A broad principle of counterinsurgency warfare is evident in such data: control of the

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[13] Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 282.

[14] Quoted in RAND, *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium*, (16-20 April 1962, republished 2006), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/2006/R412-1.pdf> [Accessed 27 January 2009], p. 2.

[15] This proposition is supported by recent studies of collaboration and violence in the Iraq war, view Carter Malkasian, 'Did the Coalition Need More Forces in Iraq': Evidence from Al Anbar', pp. 120-6.

[16] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, p. 132.

[17] Francis West, *The Village* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 191.

[18] Indeed, the amount of violence required to defeat an insurgency through the overwhelming application of force is manifestly in excess of that which Western societies could morally sanction, cf. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, p. 26.

[19] For an excellent discussion of the counterproductive effects of indiscriminate violence view Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, pp. 141-72. For a practitioner's comments supportive of Kalyvas' position, view Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 77.

[20] Anthony Cordesman, 'Winning in Afghanistan: Afghan Force Development', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 14 December 2006, <www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080919_ afghanforces.pdf> [Accessed 2 February 2009].

population is more important than the attitudes of the population because violent intimidation is an effective way of silencing political opponents.[21] As Simpson observed in Vietnam:

> in the dirty, dangerous business of revolutionary war, the motivation that produces the only real long-lasting effects is not likely to be an ideology, but the elemental consideration of survival. Peasants will support the [insurgent] … if they are convinced that failure to do so will result in death or brutal punishment. They will support the government if and when they are convinced that it offers them a better life, and it can and will protect them against the [insurgents]—forever. Forever is a long time, but so is death.[22]

Insurgents regularly threaten people's lives, and the lives of their loved ones. Thus, capturing "hearts and minds" does not necessarily equate to developing emotional or political support for the government within local populations. While such support is helpful,[23] it is more important that local populations trust a counterinsurgent's "integrity and ability to deliver on promises, particularly regarding security".[24] Where expectations about a conflict's outcome matter, and knowledge is mostly local, local control signals broader dominance and, perhaps, a high prospect of success. This phenomenon has been confirmed in current operations in Afghanistan's eastern Pashtun tribal regions.[25] As American Special Forces personnel discovered:

> Without the ability to provide security from the insurgents, no amount of improvement in the standard of living was going to convince local tribes to support the [Afghan government]. Once the security situation improved to the level that the insurgents could not mass on isolated villages, the conditions were set to effectively begin reconstruction projects.[26]

This assessment was confirmed by their observations of collaboration in Kunar province:

> Tribal elders in close vicinity to [counterinsurgent bases] are much more likely to support the [Afghan government] because of the constant presence [of the Afghan government]. Enemy groups and facilitators constantly engage local villagers, but most of the time they get little or no support because of the constant [counterinsurgent] presence.
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> The Afghan people understand power, and they will support the element that has power in their eyes—either [Afghan government] or enemy. The elders know the enemy can affect them more in remote areas, so they will

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[21] For an empirical study which confirmed this assumption's validity in Iraq view Malkasian, 'Did the Coalition Need More Forces in Iraq? Evidence from Al Anbar', p. 123.

[22] Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, p. 62.

[23] The benefits and limits of popularity are well expressed by Blatt et al., 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan', p. 23.

[24] David Kilcullen, 'Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company Level Counterinsurgency', *Iosphere: Joint Information Operations Centre*, Summer 2006, <http://www.au.af.mil/info-ops/iosphere/iosphere_summer06_kilcullen.pdf> [Accessed 27 January 2009], p. 5.

[25] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, p. 128.

[26] Blatt et al., 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan', p. 23.

> harbor enemy facilitators more readily than elders who are near coalition
> firebases. The elders near a coalition or [Afghan National Security Force]
> ANSF presence understand the power of the ANSF to arrest any facilitators
> that harbor enemy elements.[27]

In this way, popular support in counterinsurgency war accrues to those who are locally powerful, not necessarily popular.[28] While initial patterns of insurgent and government control may be the effect of pre-war preferences and existing military resources, as an insurgency develops the control of populations trumps pre-war preferences in determining collaboration.[29] Local populations have collaborated with insurgents regardless of their political preferences whenever they have not been protected by the state and have been within reach of insurgent cadres.[30] As Giustozzi reported,

> [i]f unsuccessful in … [accessing] … a local village's territory … [due to] …
> resistance from a section of the elders, the insurgents would start targeting
> elders in a campaign of intimidation and murder, usually accusing the
> victims of being US spies.[31]

Threats have also been used to intimidate Afghans to quit government jobs, abuse and inform upon counterinsurgent forces and follow rules imposed by insurgents, such as prohibitions against girls' education and men's shaving.[32] Thus, selective intimidation has easily overcome any affection which local communities may have for the Afghan government or International forces.[33] If one studies the emergence of the "neo-Taliban" between 2006 and 2007 it becomes evident that

> it proved easy for the Taliban to mobilise marginal groups of the population
> even in areas where they did not have significant support. These groups
> were not politicized and their activities were low-scale, but nonetheless were
> having an impact. In the Loy Karez area of Kandahar, for example, the
> Taliban presence was limited in 2006 to six or seven marginal youth and
> smugglers who would have benefited from the creation of a lawless
> environment. Unable to carry out significant military activities, this small
> group was sufficient to intimidate hostile members of the population in the
> absence of any state policing of the villages.[34]

While persistent coalition failures to protect local supporters have assisted insurgent recruitment, coercion is not the only way insurgents have

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[27] Ibid., p. 26.

[28] Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 283.

[29] Ibid., p. 112.

[30] This is not a phenomenon unique to Afghanistan, view Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 78.

[31] Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 51.

[32] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[33] For a review of historical material and a theoretical framework which explains why patterns of collaboration are determined by control view Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Chap.5.

[34] Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, p. 41.

generated collaboration. Selective rewards have also been employed. For example, young men have been paid to launch rockets at counterinsurgent forces and the Taliban have used their capacity to inflict violence as a selective benefit, 'outsourcing' their services to assist disgruntled local leaders who have lost power in local feuds and who, in exchange, help generate support for the Taliban.[35] Such techniques have a limited appeal to those few individuals willing to risk their lives for relatively meagre rewards. Moreover, they are difficult to employ in areas under the state's control.

If establishing control is necessary to defeat an insurgency, so too is amassing significant intelligence about local areas.[36] As Kitson argued, "if it is accepted that the problem of defeating the enemy consists largely of finding him, it is easy to recognise the paramount importance of good information".[37] An enemy cannot be targeted unless he can be identified, and hopefully, isolated from otherwise innocent civilians. While monitoring is difficult when one's informants cannot be protected, routine administration is impossible unless local control is established. Once an area is controlled inhabitants can be registered, movements can be checked, trust and confidence can be built and detailed lists and databases can be compiled. Thorough psychological and developmental operations can be commenced. 'Hearts' and 'minds' can be secured. Moreover, generating an impression of local dominance induces further collaboration. As Galula argued:

> Intelligence is the principal source of information on guerrillas, and intelligence has to come from the population, but the population will not talk unless it feels safe, and it does not feel safe until the insurgent's power has been broken.[38]

The insurgent's power cannot be broken all at once. Rather, the gradual extension of counterinsurgent control causes a snowball effect, which cumulatively guarantees the security of civilian populations, and the inflow of valuable intelligence.

In counterinsurgency warfare, the ultimate aim of intelligence operations is to identify the core insurgent cadres embedded in local communities so that they can be killed or arrested.[39] In Afghanistan, these cadres form the Taliban's "village cells" and link full-time fighters to local villagers; in particular, they police the latter's interaction with coalition troops and government representatives.[40] While few are better able to identify local insurgents than local people there is an exception, former insurgents co-

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[35] Ibid., p. 41; cf. Fair and Jones, 'Securing Afghanistan', p. 3.
[36] For an exceptional analysis of the place of and practice of intelligence operations in counterinsurgency view Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Chapter 7.
[37] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, p. 95; cf. Kitson's comments in RAND, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 124.
[38] Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 72.
[39] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 84.
[40] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 85-6.

opted by the government. Whatever the nature of an insurgency, some insurgents are always willing to surrender to counterinsurgent forces, if only because many combatants are low commitment recruits that were coerced or induced to join an insurgency. Historically, former enemies have provided immensely useful information to counterinsurgent commanders *if* they are well treated and carefully interrogated.[41] Crucially, if former insurgents are to collaborate with counterinsurgents, they must perceive that their futures will be safe and relatively prosperous. After a small number of insurgents defect in any given area it is likely a snowball effect will develop. The depth of information they posses about the organisation of local insurgent cells and the relation of insurgents to community members allow counterinsurgents to build dense portfolios of knowledge about local insurgent operations. With this information, counterinsurgents can conduct interrogations which "shock … the truth out of [the insurgent] far more effectively than torture" or mistreatment has ever been able to.[42] By avoiding mistreatment, future defections are encouraged, and the moral integrity of Western governments is maintained.

Irregular Forces in Past Counterinsurgency Campaigns

Commanders in Afghanistan are able to draw upon a broad history of counterinsurgency to inform current operations. In the following, the use of irregular forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of British India, following the third Anglo-Afghan war (1919-1947), in the Vietnam War (1957-1972), and during the British advisory mission in support of the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces (SAF) in Dhofar (1965-1975), is reviewed to develop guidelines for emerging coalition approaches to the development and use of irregular forces in Afghanistan. In all three cases, irregular forces were most beneficial when locally raised and deployed, when advised by select cadres of international forces, and when given important yet limited tasks, within the context of broader joint-operations.

GOVERNANCE IN THE FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS OF BRITISH INDIA (1919-1947)

The Frontier Scouts formed by the government of British India provide a case in which effective irregular forces were formed from Pathan (Pashtun) peoples, whose politics were as imbued with localism, nationalism and tribalism as the Pashtuns of Southern and Eastern Afghanistan today.[43] Importantly, the Frontier Scouts were deployed to minimise conflict between the British Indian authorities and the Pathan tribes. They were not intended

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[41] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 87.
[42] Ibid., p. 87.
[43] For a short review of Pashtun tribalism, how it impacts leadership and how it is affected by Islam and Islamic fundamentalism view Vern Liebl, 'Pushtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and Taliban: A Short View', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (September 2007), pp. 492-510.

to form a mechanism for the exercise of routine state authority over the Pathan tribes.

The Frontier Scouts were a locally-raised irregular force established by the British. They were tasked with supporting the civil administrators of the Pathan tribal region, six Imperial Political Agents who "reason(ed) with [the tribes] when they planned mischief and punish[ed] them when they committed crimes in the administered districts".[44] While persuasion was the preferred technique of tribal management, the Political Agents could call upon the support of the Frontier Scouts to carry the flag, inflict punishment, and enforce the resolution of conflicts. They were

> the Political Agents' striking force … their constant duty was … to show the flag, [and] to proclaim the presence of the Government and its right to go up to the Durand Line [which formed the Indian-Afghan border]. [45]

In this sense, the Scouts were used to enforce the sovereign claims of the British crown in a tribal region whose political dynamics complicated formal routine governance. Their success was premised upon a grand compromise; the Scouts were employed to "keep only the most elementary order, and that in accordance with Pathan standards of conduct".[46] Consequentially, "the tribes were controlled but neither pacified nor destroyed".[47] No taxes were raised on a routine basis within the FATA, and the Indian Penal Code did not apply between tribesmen.[48] Thus, so long as tribes did not interfere with the administered regions of British India, the conduct of the tribal people was not considered the business of the Imperial authorities.

The grand compromise underpinning the Frontier Scouts was supported by a system of payments, *de facto* bribes, that were intended to "compensate" the Pathans for the booty they would ordinarily have gained by pillaging and raiding what had become Imperial territory.[49] Many Pathans enrolled in the Frontier Scouts out of pecuniary considerations. They, and their communities, benefited from the payment of salaries and the provision of education. However, there was an emotional element to Scout recruitment as well. Due to the status of *izzat* (honour) within the *Pashtunwali*, the normative code of the Pashtuns, social prestige was associated with fighting in the Frontier Scouts, even if this involved assaults upon one's own tribe. In addition, the loyalty of each Scout was framed within the context of their corps, or immediate institutional setting, and fostered *esprit de corps* rather

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[44] Philip Mason in Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1985), pp. xii-i, xiii.
[45] Ibid., p. xiv.
[46] Ibid., p. xvii.
[47] Ibid., p. xvii.
[48] Ibid., p. xiii.
[49] Ibid., p. xiv.

than a more abstract entity such as the "Empire".[50] Thus, tribes associated with specific armed formations, but not always the Imperial government.

Both the soldiers and officers of the Scouts were recruited from Pathan tribes, the exception being an elite group of British officers who led them. The cohort of dedicated British officers who commanded the Scouts were willing and able to gain the trust of specific Pathan communities, and understand the logic of *Pashtunwali*, without being recognised as Pashtun themselves.[51] They would form training teams, who would work hand in hand with local elites and the Frontier Scouts over the course of several years.[52] The officer cadre received pay and career opportunities commensurate to the importance, danger and difficulty of their service. Pathan officers and NCOs exercised authority not so much because of their ascribed rank but because of the authority they held within the traditional societies from which they were drawn. As Trench recalled, the skilled Pathan NCOs, platoon and company commanders who supported the British officers were generally very experienced and commanded significant authority in the platoons, which with time permitted them to develop a strong rapport. As a result, "many recruits took as their primary loyalty the British and Pashtun officers who commanded them".[53] Such authority permitted a recognizably disciplined fighting body to develop, which was nonetheless distinct from the main forces of the British Indian authorities. Thus, while irregular, the Frontier Scouts were not informal. Pathans were recruited on regular terms of service, served in formed units and were organised as light infantry, but served exclusively in the tribal area and through mixed systems of tribal and imperial authority.[54]

The Frontier Scouts were not an unqualified success. In their early years, they were riddled by organisational problems. In particular, tribal loyalties undermined efficient operations in multi-tribal formations. Moreover, problems of control were exacerbated whenever the British were perceived as weak, as in the period immediately after the Anglo-Afghan war of 1919.[55] While the Scouts would often engage in courageous engagements, sometimes they would turn a blind eye and do "rather less than they should

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[50] Ibid., p. 6.
[51] Mason in Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, p. xvi.
[52] The quality of this officer cadre was ensured by a thorough selection process, which culled unsuitable candidates through a range of tests, observations and interviews. The Frontier Scouts had not always been commanded by such carefully selected or talented British officers. Indeed, alongside the re-organisation of the Corp's tribal makeup and an increased emphasis upon the development of *esprit de corps* the British Imperial authorities focused upon improving the selection of British officers following the treachery of some Frontier Corps formations before the Third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919, cf. Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 6-8.
[53] Ibid., p. 7.
[54] John Prendergast, *Prender's Progess: A Soldier in India, 1931-47* (London: Cassell, 1979), p. 80.
[55] Mason in Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, p. xvi-ii; cf. Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 6.

have done according to the book".[56]   Regardless of these flaws, the presence of the Frontier Scouts affected a situation of minimum Imperial control far preferable to a situation of no control whatsoever.

The Frontier Scouts usually operated independent of regular forces. However, such forces were deployed together when significant displays of strength were required. Thus, "regular forces [we]re so placed in tribal territory as to be able to support rapidly the militias forces".[57]   Crucially, primitive air support and quick reaction forces were available to support the Scouts if the fighting became more intense than that which they were equipped and trained to handle alone. Nonetheless, the Scouts did not simply mirror regular forces. They were able to perform tasks and operate in regions that regular forces could not because of their particular relationship to local tribal groups. As "the presence of regular forces in Waziristan … constitute[d] an irritant to the tribes and provoke[d] rather than ameliorate[d] trouble", Pathan Frontier Scouts secured government security goals with greater ease.[58]   In this sense, the irregular and regular forces at the disposal of the colonial administration were combined so as to complement one another, and maximise each other's unique advantages.

In Imperial British India the *Khassadars* were another irregular formation. They were recruited to help tribal *jirgahs* (councils) implement commands, and perform certain tactical functions, primarily guarding roads, providing escorts and assisting in the extradition of criminal offenders.[59]   While these forces were paid for by the British Political Agent, they were the servants of the tribes and formed at best a "primitive local constabulary".[60]   Beside the payment of wages, which was itself subject to violent contention, the government had no other administrative responsibility towards the *Khassadars*. As a force, they armed, clothed and fed themselves.[61]   They received no support or advice from British officers, and underwent no formal training.

From the perspective of the Imperial authorities, the main strength of the *Khassadars* was the relationship it instituted between the Political Agent and the tribes. As the *Report of the Frontier Committee* noted,

> [s]uspension of a khassadari is sometimes an effective sanction [due to the associated cessation of payments]; [and] the personal relationship between khassadar and Political Agent encourages mutual appreciation of the tribal mind and Government's wishes.

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[56] Mason in Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, p. xvii.
[57] 'Report of the Frontier Committee' (1945), partial reproduction held by Dr. Daniel Marston, Australian National University, Canberra.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., pp. 12-3; cf. Victoria Schofield, *Afghan Frontier: Feuding and Fighting in Central Asia* (New York: Tauris Parke, 2003), p. 158.
[60] 'Report of the Frontier Committee', p. 12.
[61] Ibid., p. 12-3.

Further, the "dispersal of money among the lower tribal strata extended the influence of the [tribal] authorities over a wide field".[62] In this sense, the *Khassadars* provided Imperial authorities with a mechanism by which they could manipulate the relative status of their tribal allies and enemies.

From the perspective of the Political Agents, the *Khassadar* suffered from many problems because their aims and those of government did not always coincide. As they were the servant of tribal councils, they were sometimes accused of accommodating their action to the latter's political will in ways that did not advance the government's specified interests. Similarly, because a *Khassadar* was situated within tribal structures, he "rarely [shot] to kill as its consequences may involve him in a blood feud from which the government is powerless to protect him". Moreover, the *Khassadari* persistently manipulated their relationship with the state so as to draw state resources into conflicts that served parochial interests, often at the expense of the goals which the Political Agents wished to pursue. Thus, in Southern Waziristan, a custom of hereditary *khassadars* developed, alongside the practice of "mortgaging" *khassadar* positions, which prevented the state from redistributing wealth to gain political leverage.[63] Finally, while the *Khassadars* were used to support column marches, they were infamous for sniping tribal enemies by day and the Political Agent's forces by night.[64] Thus, the *Khassadars* were largely ineffective as a fighting force.

IRREGULAR FORCES IN VIETNAM (1957-1972)

The Regional Forces (RFs) and Popular Forces (PFs) were locally embedded irregular forces formed by the Republic of Vietnam's (RVN) government during the Vietnam War. They were tasked with providing local security as part of a pacification strategy designed to separate the guerrillas from the population, and provide stability so that police could locate and arrest Vietcong (VC) cadres.[65] While forces of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) were able to provide rural security for short periods of time, they lacked the resources to provide "full-time sustained protection at the key village/hamlet level".[66] Consequentially, as the war continued, the RFs and PFs were incorporated into the American civil-military pacification management. A consequence of this was an increase in the quality and quantity of resources committed to irregular forces and an elevation of their role in local security.[67]

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[62] Ibid., p. 12.
[63] 'Report of the Frontier Committee', p. 12.
[64] Schofeld, *Afghan Frontier*, p. 158.
[65] Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 218.
[66] Robert Kromer, *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam* (California: Rand Corporation, 1970), p. 5.
[67] Ibid., p. 5.

The RFs and PFs were staffed by locally recruited men, who usually volunteered, sometimes as a way of avoiding the draft into regular forces.[68] RFs were typically company-sized formations (approximately 100 men) tasked with mobile operations within the provincial areas of operations from which they were drawn. PFs were typically platoon-sized formations (approximately thirty men) tasked with more or less static defence of their own village.[69] Despite their being irregular forces designed for local area operations, the RFs and PFs were initially used to support main-force missions out of their local areas, a task for which they were ill suited.[70] In part, this was an effect of a flawed command structure. Between 1961 and 1965 the RFs and PFs were placed under the operational control of regular ARVN corps and division commanders, whose focus was generally upon large contacts, and not local security.[71] Later, authority over the RFs was transferred to provincial command, while the PFs were ordered to report to village chiefs.[72]

The PFs were part-time soldiers, and maintained their regular jobs. They were not a professional force. Irregularity was a source of their strength. The PFs enjoyed closer ties with local communities than the American or regular Vietnamese forces. As a result, they were particularly effective at impeding VC movement within their local areas, especially at night.[73] When RFs and PFs were combined to provide mobile and static defence within a local area over a sustained period of time, the population was most secure.[74] Thus irregular forces that mirrored insurgent forces, in so far as they were recruited from and embedded within local communities and supported by outside military/political advisors, were able to curtail the operational effectiveness of insurgent cadres.

Effectiveness was matched by efficiency. Irregular units were far less expensive than ARVN units, and could free up the latter from local security operations so that they could conduct clearance operations, and confront regular North Vietnamese forces. These were roles suited to their comparative advantages.[75] As a result,

> the RFs and PFs accounted for 12-30 percent of all VC/NVA (North Vietnamese Army) combat deaths (depending on the year), yet they consumed only 2-4 percent of the total annual cost of the war.[76]

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[68] Ibid., p. 5.
[69] Lt Gen Ngo Quang Truong, *Indochina Monographs: Territorial Forces* (Washington: US Army Center of Military History, 1981), p. 83.
[70] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 219.
[71] Ibid., p. 219.
[72] Kromer, *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam*, p. 6.
[73] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 219.
[74] Ibid., p. 221.
[75] Ibid., p. 219.
[76] Ibid., p. 221.

The impact of the RFs and PFs upon the counterinsurgency campaign was not overlooked by the insurgency. Captured VC documents reveal the significance the VC gave to disrupting RF and PF formations, perceiving this as the best way to undermine RVN pacification strategies.[77] Consequentially, the RFs and PFs consistently suffered casualties at a higher rate than the ARVN, and endured a higher rate of VC attacks than the ARVN.[78]

The RFs and PFs were not effective because of any *a priori* attribute of their being "irregular forces". Earlier irregular forces raised by the RVN government, were:

> poorly trained and equipped, miserably led, and incapable of coping with insurgents; they could scarcely defend themselves, much less the peasantry. Indeed, they proved to be an asset to the insurgents in two respects: they served as a source of weapons; and their brutality, petty thievery, and disorderliness induced innumerable villagers to join in open revolt against the [Government of Viet Nam].[79]

The effectiveness of irregular forces was contingent upon training, mentoring and supervision. When this was thorough and sustained, irregulars served as a vital adjunct to regular forces; when it was haphazard and inadequately resourced, irregulars undermined the counterinsurgency campaign. Initially, the RFs and PFs were under-resourced because ARVN commanders wished to maintain their own forces' superiority.[80] The Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program was instrumental in rectifying this situation.[81] The RFs' and PFs' strength rose from roughly 300,000 in 1967 to 532,000 in 1971, and vintage military equipment was replaced by contemporary stock.[82] Crucially, because of CORDS and the US Marine Corp's Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program this force was trained, mentored and adequately supervised, circumscribing behaviour that could have undermined success against the rural insurgency.

Before CAP, the RFs and PFs were also stifled by a lack of timely support from the ARVN's quick reaction forces, which only rarely provided support to hamlets under heavy VC attack.[83] The CAP program increased the support

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[77] Ibid., p. 221.

[78] Ibid., p. 220.

[79] *Pentagon Papers: The Defence Department of the United States Decision Making on Vietnam*, Senator Gravel Edition, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 314.

[80] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 219.

[81] Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) was integrated under Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) in 1967. CORDS was the organisation within MACV designed to unify and provide oversight over the pacification effort. In 1968, when General Abrams became the commander of the war in Vietnam, CORDS and pacification became the main effort. Focus turned toward rural development and security, away from conventional and large sweep and destroy operations, cf. Cassidy, 'The Long Small War', p. 56.

[82] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 220.

[83] Ibid., p. 220.

offered by American commanders to irregular forces. As the CAP program stationed Marine rifle squads with platoons of local forces it connected the fate of individual American soldiers with that of the local population, ensuring communities under attack could draw upon support assets such as air power, artillery and intelligence services to assist with defence. Moreover, elite American forces were used to develop local capacity, thereby multiplying the number of counterinsurgent forces operating in South Vietnam and forming a conduit through which intelligence collected in the field could be transferred to senior commanders. Thus, the CAP program proved an efficient way to expend limited international resources. While CAP accounted for 7.6 percent of insurgent deaths, it was staffed by only 1.5 percent of the Marines in Vietnam.[84]

While the RFs, PFs and CAP forces were designed to provide local area defence, the American 5th Special Forces Group trained and led the Civilian Irregular Defence Groups (CIDG) Mobile Strike Forces (Mike Forces) and reconnaissance companies, whose task was more mobile and aggressive. CIDGs were manned by ethnic minority tribes from Vietnam's mountain and border regions. Their formations were tasked with conducting small unit patrols, denying area-access to the NVA and VC, and defence of local areas. CIDG and Mike Force operations prevented the VC from recruiting the Montagnards, an ethnic minority that was a prime target for insurgent recruitment, and enabled the government to exploit the remote tribal-minority regions to disrupt VC and NVA infiltration. 5th Special Forces Group began training and leading CIDG forces in late 1961, developing their capabilities from limited reconnaissance and observation tasks to aggressive combat missions by 1965. Like the other programs discussed, the development of the CIDG and Mike Force formations proved an efficient way to expend finite international force elements. The 2500 soldiers assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group raised and led an army of 5000 tribal fighters, in some of Vietnam's most austere territory.[85]

THE BRITISH ADVISORY MISSION IN DHOFAR, OMAN (1965-1976)

The Sultanate of Oman faced a series of interconnected insurgencies from 1965 to 1976, emanating from the southern region of Dhofar.[86] From 1970 an irregular force (the *firqats*) was raised by the British Army Training Team (BATT), with syndicates drawn from 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment.[87] The *firqats* were recruited from the tribal Dhofari population, who were also the social base of the insurgency.[88] The force was never large. In June of 1974 there were sixteen *firqat* formations, in which no more

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[84] Cassidy, 'The Long Small War', p. 57.
[85] Ibid., p. 58-9.
[86] Jim White, 'Oman 1965-1976: From Certain Defeat to Decisive Victory', *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/docs-temp/93-white.pdf> [Accessed 15 February 2009], p. 1.
[87] Colonel Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (London: William Kimber, 1980), p. 11; cf. Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 3.
[88] Ibid., p. 37.

than 1000 men were recruited.[89]   The *firqats* are an important case study because they demonstrate that effective irregular forces can be drawn from tribal populations.   Indeed, similarities between the Oman and Afghan campaigns should be noted (though not overstated).[90]   First, while Dhofar's topography varied it was invariably rugged, inhospitable and ill-suited to vehicular movement, denying regular forces many of their normal advantages. The *adoo* (insurgent force) were "brave men, not afraid to push home an attack if SAF made a blunder".[91]   In the war's early years they dominated the Sultan's regular forces, who tended to remain inside forward-operating bases.   Consequentially, the ill-equipped Omanian regular forces, commanded by seconded or contracted British officers, rarely held the initiative in the campaign's opening half.   They were

> restricted in where they could go, they had been driven off the Jebel [a mountain range to the north of Dhofar], they were surrounded by mines, they were taking casualties and the enemy offered no tangible target, nothing SAF could bring their weaponry to bear upon.[92]

Thus, before the formation of the *firqat* the Sultan's forces were in a poor position vis-à-vis a growing insurgency.

Moreover, political, demographic and anthropological similarities link the Afghan and Omanian case.   The politics of the *adoo* insurgency were intertwined with those of Dhofar's tribes, inciting many feuds.[93]   Communication between Dhofari communities was invariably oral, the traditional form of communication due to high rates of illiteracy.   The *adoo* were connected to the international arms market and received support from elements within Yemen, Oman's southern neighbour.[94]   While a core of the insurgency was trained overseas, in Yemen or communist countries, the bulk were "just tribesmen given weapons" who "lived in their own tribal environments".[95]

Forming the *firqats* was challenging because of the tensions between tribal custom and military discipline.   The first *firqat* (*Firqat Salahadin*) required the BATT to break down "tribal traditions and tribal isolation" as it was drawn from a variety of tribes.[96]   The intention was to "create one *firqat* which would grow until it was a thousand strong" and could be deployed to "sweep the Jebel from end to end".[97]   Yet, the integration of many tribes in a single

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[89] Ibid., p. 162.
[90] For a sound comparison of the Oman and present Afghan campaigns view Hughes, *A "Model Campaign" Reappraised*, pp. 298-300.
[91] Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 22.
[92] Ibid., p. 19.
[93] Ibid., p. 49.
[94] Ibid., pp. 22-3, 35.
[95] Ibid., p. 36.
[96] General Graham Papers, University of Oxford, 27 April 1971, cited in Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 3.
[97] Salim Mubarak quoted in Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 38.

formation was unsuccessful, as tribes simply refused to fight with one another, and feuds of blood and honour undermined command. Redistributing members of the multi-tribal *firqat* to *firqats* recruited from their ancestral tribes, and implementing a policy of recruiting future *firqats* from only one tribe, circumscribed the most destructive effects of tribal custom.[98] Thereafter, training and discipline provided by the BATT, as well as a policy of only deploying a *firqat* within its ancestral tribal areas, ensured the effectiveness of the force.[99]

Bonds of trust between the BATT and tribesmen were fundamental to the *firqats'* effectiveness, as was time spent training the force. Trust was derived from intimacy, and could only be developed when the ratio of *firqatmen* to BATT was low. In the campaign the ratio did not exceed five BATT men per 100 *firqat*. Because BATT armed, fed, trained and fought alongside the *firqat,* a very close personal relationship developed between them, uniting the British SAS soldiers and tribesman in a way that intermittent training or a distant command could not.[100] Building the *firqats'* confidence in combat slowly was also crucial. As Jeapes remarked, "[w]hen a unit is being 'blooded' for the first time it must be successful or their confidence may be irretrievably destroyed".[101] Building combat confidence presupposed the ability to shield irregular forces from intense attacks until they are ready to participate in defence from them.

It took a special type of soldier to train the *firqat*. Even within the SAS some men were ill-suited to the task. The issue was a fundamental cultural difference between British soldiers and tribesmen. While the former valued discipline, smartness and self-sacrifice, the latter were generally regarded as "undisciplined, untidy and selfish".[102] Yet, so long as the tribesmen were approached with patience, understanding and tolerance, irregulars could be developed into

> an invaluable adjunct to the regular army … [because] [t]he *firqats* provided
> information on the ground, the people and the enemy which could not have
> been obtained in any other way.[103]

Nonetheless, the *firqats* were an irregular force, and this was as true with regards to their conception of discipline as it was to their force structure. As General Jeapes recalled,

> one of the principles of successful handling of a firqat was 'coincidence of
> aims' … There was absolutely no point in tasking a firqat to do something

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[98] Ibid., pp. 110-1.
[99] Ibid., p. 85, 210.
[100] Ibid., p. 130.
[101] Ibid., p. 63.
[102] Ibid., p. 230.
[103] Ibid., p. 231.

> that they did not wish to do or which would bring no profit to them; *the[y] were not disciplined regulars.* [emphasis added][104]

Irregularity could be a source of strength. Persuading an insurgent to defect and support the government is more effective than killing him, as it contributes to the size of government forces while depleting the enemies' material strength and morale.[105] The affinity between *firqats* and individuals within the insurgency became increasingly valuable as the campaign in Dhofar developed. Enemy personnel would surrender and volunteer to fight for the Sultan within their tribe's *firqat* when put in a tight position or subject to appeal from relatives and friends.[106] Thus, in part, the *firqat* were able to encourage defection *because* they maintained communication with the enemy, directly or through their local communities throughout the campaign.[107] Yet, defections were not simply the product of communication between the forces. They were also induced by a lenient government amnesty policy. As Hughes recorded:

> under British guidance Qaboos [the Sultan of Oman] offered an amnesty policy similar to that employed in Malaya in the 1950s. The amnesty appealed to ex … guerrillas who favoured reform rather than revolution, and who by the summer of 1970 had become involved in clashes with the [insurgency's] hardline Marxist-Leninists. Between 1970 and 1974, 797 guerrillas defected to the government, and these Surrendered Enemy Personnel … joined the *firqat* militias.[108]

Due to the income received by *firqatmen,* the *Jebelis* (highlanders) were for the first time able to match the prosperity of the lowlanders.[109] In this sense, the benefits to be accrued from supporting the government were manipulated to exceed those to be accrued from violently resisting its authority. The rate at which insurgents surrendered and then served with the *firqat* increased as the government succeeded in clearing and developing sections of the Jebel range.[110] In part, this was because defection from the *adoo* to the *firqat* helped convince the enemy they had lost the support of the people, inducing further defections which, in turn, manipulated perceptions of the probable outcome to the conflict and induced further defections.[111] Deploying tribesmen to combat tribesmen also brought tactical advantages. While it was honourable for tribesman to surrender to their kin, it was not honourable to surrender to SAF or British forces.[112]

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[104] Ibid., p. 100.

[105] Ibid., p. 37.

[106] Ibid., p. 35; cf. Stephen Doril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), pp. 733-4.

[107] Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 76.

[108] Hughes, *A "Model Campaign" Reappraised*, p. 283; cf. Walter Ladwig III, 'Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion', *Small Wars and Journal*, vol. 19, no.1 (March 2008), p. 73.

[109] Ibid., p. 169.

[110] Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, pp. 3-4.

[111] Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 230.

[112] Ibid., p. 83.

Further, the presence of former enemy personnel in the *firqats* ranks ensured the *firqat* were effective in countering their tactics, and better able to fill intelligence gaps.[113]　　Once again, by mirroring the insurgents, counterinsurgent commanders were able to circumscribe the former's operational effectiveness.

Dispute exists as to the value of intelligence gathered by the *firqat*. Undoubtedly, *firqatmen* had their own parochial agendas in offering to serve the Sultan, and sometimes they would withhold information or pass on false intelligence, intentionally or unintentionally.　However, their impact can best be gauged by noting the SAF's poor performance prior to the *firqats'* formation in 1970.　Moreover, remembering the role of *firqat* in inducing defections from the insurgents, the debriefing of defected *adoo* increased intelligence significantly.[114]　The *firqat* were not a "silver bullet", and could be misleading, directing BATT officers astray because they were "pretending to know ground they did not, or … misunderst[ood] where you wanted to go".[115] However, despite such risks the *firqat* were fundamental to the success of the Dhofar campaign.

The *firqat* were employed in every stage of counterinsurgency operations. As tribal militias, they were used to provide local area defence.　Yet, their role went beyond simple cordon operations.　As General Graham recounts, a typical operation would be a cooperative endeavour:

> A SAF operation in strength supported by a firqat secures a position of the firqat's choice which dominates its tribal area.　Military engineers build a track to the position … A drill is brought down the track followed by a Civil Action Team [who set up a] shop, school, clinic and mosque.　SAF thins out to a minimum to provide security.　Water is pumped to the surface and into a distribution system … Civilians come in from miles around to talk to Firqat, SAF and Government representatives.　They are told that enemy activity in this area will result in the water being cut off.　Civilians move out in surrounding areas and tell the enemy not to interfere with what is obviously a good thing. [The] Enemy, being very dependant on the civilians, stops all aggressive action and either goes elsewhere or hides. [The] Tribal area is secured.　All SAF are withdrawn.[116]

The operation described above was typical in so far as it involved international, regular and irregular host-nation forces in a joint operation. Ethnic tensions ensured that the relationship between the Arab and Baluch SAF and the Dhofari *firqats* was never too affectionate or intimate.[117]　Yet, these differences did not prevent their becoming interdependent.　As Jeapes recalled,

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[113] White, 'Oman 1965-1976', p. 7, 11.
[114] This paragraph is derived from Hughes, *A "Model Campaign" Reappraised*, pp. 292-3.
[115] Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 231.
[116] General Graham Papers, 1972, cited in Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 4.
[117] Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 3.

> even the *firqat* would not receive the support of the civilian population [from their own tribes] until SAF established a permanent presence on the Jebel [and] [o]nce they had done that, the *firqats* could move among the people and deny their support to the adoo.[118]

Thus, despite affinities of kinship, control prefigured political preferences when determining patterns of collaboration. The SAF had to support the *firqat* to 'hold' ground because of the small size of the *firqat* and their modest firepower. An important lesson is emphasised: while irregulars are a force multiplier, they should not be considered independent of other force elements. Instead, they must be used in combinations that maximise the effect of each discrete force component.

Irregular Forces in the Afghan War to Date

In early 2009, it was announced that Coalition and Afghan officials were finalizing plans for two new programs which would be piloted in Wardak province: a Community Outreach Program (COP) which would establish local committees of sympathetic elites, and a Community Guard Program (CGP) which would raise and manage local irregular forces.[119] The Americans' stated plan was to establish militias of between one and two hundred combatants in each of Wardak's eight provincial districts, thereby formalising operations which had been underway in the province since early 2001.[120] General McKiernan has suggested that the COP will operate through community councils that transcend tribal boundaries, by drawing a range of tribal, religious and secular community leaders into a locally accountable decision-making body.[121] The *shuras* formed through COP will be recognized as a legitimate local government authority by the Afghan state, and will be allowed to pursue an as yet unspecified range of governance functions. It is intended the forces raised under the CGP will be accountable to these local *shuras*. However, it has been stated that they will be connected to the ANSF and able to call upon coalition assistance, "so that they can always count on communication and reinforcement". Their task will be local area defence. As Woods stressed, "[t]he idea is to help them protect their homes and their villages and their communities, not to enable them to go out beyond the boundaries of their villages to bother other[s]".[122] American officials purport not to be arming these groups, in part because

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[118] Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 211.
[119] Ambassador William Wood, *Media Roundtable,* Kabul, 30 December 2008, <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/amb_speech_3012.html> [Accessed 10 February 2009].
[120] Filkins, 'Afghans and U.S. Plan to Recruit Local Militias'.
[121] General David McKiernan, 'Transcript: General David McKiernan Speaks at Council's Commanders Series', *Atlantic Council of the United States*, 18 November 2008, <http://www.acus.org/event_blog/general-david-d-mckiernan-speaks-councils-commanders-series> [Accessed 11 February 2009].
[122] Wood, '*Media Roundtable.*

they have acknowledged that most Afghani communities can already access ample weaponry.[123]

In Afghanistan's east, counterinsurgent commanders developed a less formal irregular force, which, in many ways, appears similar to the *Khassadars*. Kilcullen's description of irregular forces recruited to support a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunar province suggests an organisation characterised by informality, limited regular force support and capability:

> the (Government of Afghanistan) gave its approval to raise five men from each population center to act as police along the road. The U.S. forces created a program to equip, train and jointly operate with these local police; (Colonel) Cavoli commented that "they were the *only* thing remotely like police out there, so we jumped in with both feet. Doc Scholl [the PRT commander] bought them red caps so we could identify them, I made B Company commander give over a bunch of handheld radios, we gave them flashlights, sandbags and Afghan flags, and C Company trained them and interacted with them and planned patrol schedules … This (policy) put even more people on the road (which was being targeted for ambushes and [Improvised Explosive Device] assaults) who were interested in keeping the project going and who were under the control of the government.[124]

An alternative system has developed in some parts of the Loya Paktia region of eastern Afghanistan, where American forces have cooperated with tribal authorities to strengthen the traditional Pashtun institution of *Arbakai*, a community guard which performs local policing function.[125] Thus, in late 2006 the Mangal tribe in Loya Paktia declared that any person who collaborates with the insurgency would be banished and have his house burned down. Moreover, the Mangal tribe's *Arbakai* was given the responsibility to prevent the introduction of poppy crops to the tribe's territories. Nonetheless, this tribal response has been far from automatic.[126] The *Arbakai* are a dual-edged sword, which can be wielded by insurgents or counterinsurgents depending upon who is able to exercise control in a local area. Thus far no sustained Afghan government or coalition effort has been made to ensure the collaboration of these groups with the Afghan government against insurgent forces.[127] Moreover, Coalition personnel have only provided support to these forces in a haphazard, inconsistent manner.

Lessons Learnt: Control, Intelligence and Irregular Forces

Insufficient information is available to provide more than a cursory review of emergent coalition approaches to the use of irregular forces in Afghanistan.

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[123] Cf. Fair and Jones, 'Securing Afghanistan', p. 15.
[124] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 98.
[125] Blatt et al., 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan', p. 20, 22.
[126] Mohammed Osman Tariq, 'Tribal Security System (Arbakai) in Southeast Afghanistan', *Crisis States Research Centre Occasional Paper*, no. *7, Development as State Making* (December, 2008), pp. 11-12.
[127] Ibid., p. 12.

Nonetheless, the three historical cases reviewed above provide sound guidance for counterinsurgent commanders embarking upon this task with the assistance of increased executive attention and national resources.

Historically, population control has been achieved through operations designed to clear an area of insurgents, build institutions of local government and hold these areas in the face of recurrent insurgent attacks and infiltration attempts.[128] Such operations have always been labour intensive, lengthy and risky.[129] Inevitably, counterinsurgent forces lack sufficient troops to control entire national populations, with the implication that insurgents often melt away when they attract government attention, so as to recommence agitation in less secure regions.[130] The problem is particularly acute in Afghanistan, a country with poor roads, immense mountains and one and a half times the landmass of Iraq.[131]

In combination, four approaches help manage the inevitable scarcity of counterinsurgent forces. First, the allocation of scarce security resources should be prioritised to maximise effect; efforts are applied successively, area by area.[132] Second, nuanced strategies can be adopted which manipulate the 'ink-spot' method so that it is suitable for the Afghan context.[133] Third, as the security situation improves in one area a process of dilution can occur, whereby the counterinsurgent to civilian ratio is increased, returning civilian life to normal conditions, permitting international and national forces to be redeployed to 'hotter' zones elsewhere. Yet, these sites of reduced government attention are often the focus of new insurgent

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[128] For a discussion of these operations in a historical context view RAND, *Counterinsurgency*, in particular Galula's comments on p. 15. For more extensive analysis, view Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, Chapter 7.

[129] Greg Mills, 'Calibrating Ink Spots', *RUSI Journal* (August 2006), p. 19.

[130] Indeed, a lack of resources has coupled with poor command to undermine otherwise effective counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan to date, cf. Daniel Marston, 'British Operations in Helmand, Afghanistan', *Small Wars Journal* (2008), <http://www. smallwarsjournal.com/mag/docs-tempo/98-marston.pdf> [Accessed 4 February 2009].

[131] Indeed, the poor performance of the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan to date is unsurprising if one considers that, until recently, the conflict had been allocated only 29 percent of the military forces and one third of the money committed to the war in Iraq, cf. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 41. Moreover, while Afghanistan has twice as much land as Iraq, it has only one fifth of the paved roads, cf. Nathaniel Flick and John Nagl, 'Counterinsurgency Field Manual: Afghanistan Edition', *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2009), <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4587> [Accessed 4 February 2009].

[132] For a discussion of how to prioritise population centres view Mills, 'Calibrating Ink Spots', p. 22, and Galula in RAND, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 15-20. For a step-by-step guide to clear-hold-build operations, view Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 80.

[133] The 'ink-spot' concept draws upon a strategy employed in Malaya, and less successfully in Vietnam. It has recently been advocated by Lieutenant General David Richards, International Security Assistance Force Commander from May 2006 to February 2007, for use in Afghanistan; cf. Mill, 'Calibrating Ink Spots', p. 18, 20. For a description of how a modified 'ink-spot' approach has been applied in Afghanistan so far view Blatt et al, 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan', p. 22 and Cavoli's comments in Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, pp. 94-9.

assaults and infiltration attempts.[134]   While departing an area prematurely undermines government attempts to convince locals of its strength and tenacity, failing to establish mechanisms which guarantee local security after regular forces are withdrawn is equally counterproductive.[135]   As Galula emphasised, "[t]he problem is, how to keep an area clean so that the counterinsurgent forces will be free to operate elsewhere".[136]   The solution, as Galula knew, is to gain the support of the population, which is achieved through the fourth approach: raising irregular forces to secure the local population's active participation in the fight against one's enemy.[137]

During the 'build' phase of operations, regular forces and civil authorities should develop local governance councils and authorise them to control local self-defence corps.   These formations should be equipped to defend local communities against intimidation at the hands of small cadres of insurgents and be able to call upon coalition or host-nation regular forces in response to any sustained probes or large insurgent attacks.   If these forces are properly organised, counterinsurgent commanders can efficiently and effectively undermine an insurgency.   As Giustozzi observed in Afghanistan,

> although attacks on outposts manned by foreign troops were rare even in 2006 [a year of particularly intense violence], they might have been sufficient for the Taliban to conclude that concentrations of 300-400 Taliban were short of the critical mass needed to overwhelm even company—or platoon—size detachments.[138]

Under such conditions, insurgents, who operate on the premise that the incumbent government can neither identify them nor extend control into local communities, find their effectiveness dramatically reduced.   If insurgents must commit large forces to access even small villages, the efficiency of their operations is eroded, and the disparity between counterinsurgent and insurgent capabilities begins to favour the former because massed insurgents are far easier to identify than concealed village cadres.

When raised and deployed locally, irregular forces provide counterinsurgent commanders with knowledge of the local area and direct, established and trusted contacts with the local community, increasing human intelligence assets.   Moreover, if recruited from local families, irregular forces solicit a large investment in the success of the counterinsurgency campaign from civilians.   Simply, it makes little sense to collaborate with insurgents if they are attempting to kill your friends, relatives and loved ones.[139]   Invariably,

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[134] Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets*, p. 54.

[135] Ibid., p. 57.

[136] Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 75.

[137] For an example of how irregular forces relieved international and host-nation regulars in Oman view Marston, *Local Security Forces Report*, p. 5.

[138] Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop,* p. 124.

[139] Indeed, some go as far as to suggest traditional Pashtun norms (*pashtunwali*) of honour, loyalty to family and clan, indepedance, self-respect, revenge and tolerance be used to recruit

when irregular forces have been raised they have become the target of insurgent attack, partially because they are 'softer' targets than regular forces and partially because insurgents recognise them as an effective tool of counterinsurgency.[140] Regardless, the effect of such assaults is to clarify the cleavage separating local people from foreign insurgents, and to draw local people toward the government for support and protection. Once local people commit themselves to the counterinsurgency campaign through violent deeds directed against insurgents, their loyalty to the government is dramatically increased because they will then have everything to lose from the insurgents' return.[141] Moreover, historically, when support for the counterinsurgent is premised upon the defence of one's village, clan and family members, it has been more enduring than allegiance to an abstract nation or government.[142]

Irregular forces provide an institution in which actual and potential recruits of the insurgency can be transformed into local recruits of the government, operating under similar conditions of service, yet able to be identified, monitored, protected and gainfully employed by trusted government agents. Indeed, given the greater financial resources available to established governments, supported by international allies, it is entirely plausible that young men would rather fight and farm for a comparatively high paying government than a resource-poor insurgency. Finally, by granting command authorities to local community leaders, organised in recognised committees, and relying upon them to distribute pay and benefits, counterinsurgent commanders can support the relative status of sympathetic local elites. Such support can be advantageous if local elites are divided or ambivalent as to whether they should support the government or the insurgency. For these reasons, the emergent approach to irregular forces in Wardak province has the potential to critically undermine insurgent activities in this area.

Conclusion

When irregular forces are effectively raised and deployed, the population's isolation from insurgents ceases to be imposed. Rather, it is maintained by and with the population itself. When this is the case, hearts and minds have been truly captured, and the stability of the state begins to be assured. This approach requires coalition commanders to take risks, as they did when developing the "Awakening Councils" in Iraq. Reflections upon the history of

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young Afghans into counterinsurgent formations, view Julian Alford and Scott Cuomo, 'Operational Design for ISAF in Afghanistan: A Primer', *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 53 (2nd Quarter 2009), pp. 92-8.
[140] Irregular counterinsurgent forces have been prime targets of insurgents in other historical campaigns; cf. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, p. 109.
[141] Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, p. 82.
[142] Gortzak, 'Using Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations', p. 323.

counterinsurgency should compel them to mitigate against these risks by acknowledging demonstrated best practice.

Good reason exists to reserve judgements about the probable effect of any new irregular force formed in Afghanistan. Little evidence exists to suggest they are being adequately trained, supervised or supported. The potential benefits of developing locally embedded irregular forces are contingent upon the careful selection of small cadres of capable junior officers and NCOs, who are able to negotiate control of irregular forces through relations of authority and trust, the socialising process of training, constant observation and the manipulation of positive and negative sanctions. At the unit level, the quality of these NCOs is the key determinant of combat motivation and proficiency.[143] Before coalition commanders develop additional irregular forces in Afghanistan, they should develop a corps of advisers selected specifically to work with irregular forces. Such a force existed in the FATA, and in Vietnam and Oman when irregulars were most successful. Members of this corps of advisers should receive rewards commensurate with the risk and importance of their service. They should perform tours of duty long enough to permit them to develop thick bonds of trust with the combatants they are ordered to command. They should receive training with regard to the societies within which they are to be embedded. Due to the limited number of available advisers, that a trade-off may develop between the size and effectiveness of irregular forces should be seriously considered, and effectiveness, as a rule, should be favoured.[144] Responsible irregular forces will only be formed if irregular forces are raised with the support of local elites, developed slowly, monitored and supported by coalition forces and led and trained by appropriately skilled cadres.[145]

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[143] Ibid., p. 322.
[144] Ibid., pp. 329-31.
[145] Marston, *Local Security Force Report*, p. 1.