The Use of Force: Hard Offensive Counterterrorism

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THE USE OF FORCE: HARD OFFENSIVE COUNTERTERRORISM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

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ABSTRACT

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In the following research, I investigate whether hard offensive counterterrorism results in the failure or success of a counterterrorism strategy. In the second chapter, the academic literature of counterterrorism strategies is examined. Next, a hypothesis is put forth that if a hard offensive counterterrorism strategy is utilized, indicators such as high troop levels, more civilian casualties, more negative public opinion, and an increased rate of terrorism, will point to a failed counterterrorism strategy. Then, I put forth a methodology to test the hypothesis while introducing troop level databases, various public opinion polling sources, and terrorist attack databases to investigate the given variables. In the third chapter, a case study of the Iraq War is utilized, in which the initial invasion from 2003-2006 and the Surge/Withdrawal eras from 2007-2011 are examined. Both time periods are compared to see if hard offensive counterterrorism used in 2003-2006 resulted in a less effective counterterrorism campaign than the softer counterinsurgency strategies from 2007-2011. Data from the Brookings Iraq Index, Iraq Body Count, and Global Terrorism Database are then analyzed to investigate the variables of casualties, public opinion, and rate of terrorism during each era in Iraq. In the fourth chapter, the war in Afghanistan is presented as a case study. I then evaluate whether hard offensive counterterrorism used from 2001-2008 resulted in less terrorism than the counterinsurgency strategies of Surge and withdrawal used from 2009-2016. Data from the Congressional Research Service, UNAMA, Physicians for Social
Responsibility, the BBC, the Asia Foundation, and the Global Terrorism Database are then utilized to assess each variable. Finally, I present my findings and conclude that evaluating a strategy primarily using hard offensive counterterrorism strategies is rather complex and then present ideas for future research in counterterrorism strategy.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Terrorism has been around for a long time, yet until recently, terrorism was not a major area of policy concern in most countries. Since September 11, 2001, however, terrorism is a threat that many states now take seriously. The United States and other nations have elevated counterterrorism efforts to the highest consideration in policy circles. The main strategy of the United States immediately following 9/11 was to fight a so-called “War on Terror”. In this strategy, President George W. Bush utilized rhetoric marked by an “either with us or against us” mantra. The new global counterterrorism effort focused on bringing groups responsible for terrorist attacks to justice and preventing the next attack. Since declaring war on terrorism, the United States embarked on serious military campaigns in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite all this conflict, it is unclear whether this strategy has succeeded in reducing terrorism against the United States.

I introduce a new categorization of counterterrorism strategies to help define what hard offensive counterterrorism is. Hard offensive terrorism is military force utilized in effort to pre-empt terrorist attacks from occurring. Other counterterrorism strategies confront terrorism through means that are more cooperative with populations susceptible to terrorist activity or focus strictly on the prevention of terrorism. In some cases, counterterrorism strategies can be hybrids of the different categories of counterterrorism,

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such as counterinsurgency. An important question to answer is how do we measure the
success of a hard offensive counterterrorism strategy?

A methodology is presented to structure an evaluation of whether hard
counterterrorism results in the success or failure of a given counterterrorism campaign. If
the given hypothesis that hard offensive terrorism results in counterterrorism failure, then
indicators such as troop levels, civilian casualties, public opinion, and the rate of
terrorism should indicate that is the case. Two case studies in counterterrorism strategies
are utilized. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan feature three different eras of
counterterrorism strategies. In the first phase of both wars, hard offensive
counterterrorism in the form of a “traditional war” strategy was utilized. In the second
phase of the wars, a “Surge’ featuring counterinsurgency tactics was the primary strategy
used. In the third phase of each war, a withdrawal of troops was implemented, while
tactics from the Surge were still used. In each phase, the type of counterterrorism used
will point to indicators determining whether its implementation helped the U.S. to
succeed or fail in each given era.

In the chapter covering the Iraq War, I start by examining the history and politics
of the “traditional war period” in Iraq from 2003-2006. In this section, qualitative
evidence points to a failing counterterrorism strategy that resulted in a dangerous and
chaotic Iraq. In the following data analysis section, I find that the hard offensive
counterterrorism tactic used, combined with increased troops, high civilian casualties,
and negative public opinion helped to increase the number of terrorist attacks in Iraq from
2003-2006, therefore making the initial invasion period of Iraq a failure in countering
terrorism.
In another subsection, the history and politics of the “Surge” and withdrawal periods in Iraq from 2007-2011 are investigated. Evidence from the Surge period shows that the counterinsurgency strategy of the Surge helped to dramatically improve the security conditions from the chaotic pre-Surge period. In the subsequent data analysis, I find that Surge counterinsurgency tactics, when combined with increased troop levels actually helped to decrease civilian casualties, increase positive public opinion, and decrease the rate of terrorism when the Surge was at full strength. Therefore, the Surge in Iraq was a success. After the withdrawal was implemented, however, public opinion and the rate of terrorism returned to pre-Surge levels. The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq was therefore a failure, which lends evidence that too few troops can also have an adverse effect on the success or failure of a counterterrorism strategy.

For the chapter on the war in Afghanistan, I first look at the history and politics of the pre-Surge period from 2001-2009. During the pre-Surge era, Afghanistan witnessed an increase in violence and instability similar to that in Iraq. Upon examining the data trends, hard offensive counterterrorism once again involved increasingly high levels of troops, high civilian casualties, low public opinion, and resulted in a high rate of terrorism, and contributed to the failure of the 2001-2009 counterterrorism strategy.

In the next section, the history and politics of the 2009-2016 Surge and Withdrawal eras in Afghanistan are reviewed. Based on qualitative evidence, the Surge resulted in a very brief improvement to conditions within Afghanistan, but the imminent withdrawal helped to reverse counterterrorism gains. In the data section, the primary counterinsurgency strategy, when paired with increased troop levels, briefly exhibited reductions in civilian casualties, improved public opinion, and a lower rate of terrorism.
However, because the COIN strategy coexisted with increasingly hard offensive counterterrorism tactics, such as leadership decapitation, and was only full strength for a brief period, improvements were less noticeable than in Iraq. The following withdrawal period saw increases in casualties, lowered public opinion, and higher terrorism, helping lead to counterterrorism failure in Afghanistan.

In the final chapter, I conclude that hard offensive counterterrorism can result in an overall failed counterterrorism strategy. In contrast, a softer method of counterterrorism, such as counterinsurgency, can help to lower terrorism rates. However, too few troops in a counterinsurgency strategy can also lead to failures in counterterrorism. In addition, I argue that the success or failure of counterterrorism also depends on context, and several other factors other than the indicators tested likely played a complex role in the success or failure of a given counterterrorism strategy. I then conclude this study in counterterrorism by discussing possible future areas of research.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Academic research is largely inconclusive on the effectiveness of particular counterterrorism strategies. For example, some political scientists support evidence that there is an over reliance on military strategy to fight terrorism. They warn that trying to solely eradicate terrorism in the short term rather than attempting to manage it long term has significant implications that can negatively impact counterterrorism success. In this academic research, several causal mechanisms have been examined, including causal mechanisms such as alienation and collateral damage. However, these explanations have been largely inconclusive.

Because of this ambiguity, it is important to review the literature of offensive counterterrorism and how it may have the capacity to backfire. In the literature review, three prevailing trends are examined. These include research on the definitions of counterterrorism, the various strategies of counterterrorism, and the mechanisms of counterterrorist backlash. Additionally, a methodology is proposed to measure whether certain counterterrorism strategies do in fact have a negative impact on counterterrorism efforts.

First, it is important to understand the open-ended nature of counterterrorism. As Jason Rinehart states, counterterrorism is a vague concept to define and there is no universally accepted method of counterterrorism. The lack of a single monolithic use of counterterrorism is highlighted by the fact that “every conflict involving terrorism has its

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2 Purdy, “Countering Terrorism,” 5.
3 Purdy, 16.
own unique characteristics” that alters the way it is fought. In one definition, the US army defines counterterrorism as “operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism,” which could include a vast variety of tactics.

Ronald Crelinsten further emphasizes the definitional flexibility of counterterrorism by exploring two sides of what he sees as a contested strategic argument. On one side, “the criminal justice model” emphasizes the rule of law and views terrorism as a crime. On the other side, the “war model” views terrorism as a new form of warfare. Because of the broad theorization common in the literature, counterterrorism contains a plethora of different strategies that can be utilized.

There are four specific types of strategies common in the counterterror literature. First, Nacos distinguishes between hard and soft counterterror strategies. Hard strategies can be defined as “command power that can be used to induce others to change their positions,” and often emphasize the use of military force. These strategies include tactics such as military invasion, drone strikes, and special operations raids. Second, Nacos discusses soft strategies, which are designed to co-opt people rather than coerce them. Soft power contains strategies such as economic aid, community policing, and diplomacy, often focusing on long term terrorism mitigation.

There is also a distinction between offensive and defensive counterterrorism. Sandler defines offensive terrorism as strategies “which seek to limit or destroy terrorist

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5 Rinehart, “Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency,” 32.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
resources.”

Offensive strategies are used primarily to pre-empt terrorist attacks. For example, a government might choose to utilize a special operations mission to destroy critical terrorist infrastructure. In contrast, defensive minded strategies are designed to harden the security of terrorist targets and are often reactive measures to an attempted terrorist attack. For example, Sandler cites that airport security began to screen passenger’s shoes in response to the failed shoe bomber mission.

In regard to counterterrorist strategy, a problem exists in categorizing specific types of strategy. There is no general list of strategies, so individual scholars often explain their own arbitrary lists. For example, Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva list strategies such as deterrence, “persuasion, … economic aid and democratization, appeasement, and military force.” This variation across authors makes it difficult to compare strategies. I propose a new classification combining the insights of Nacos and Sandler, including four different broad categories of counterterror strategy shown in Figure 1.

The hard offensive portion of the chart includes tactics that are military in nature and attempt to destroy terrorist resources either to pre-empt or to retaliate against terrorist attacks. Hard defensive strategies are intended to increase protection for the targets of terrorism, but still include the use of force. In a soft offensive strategy, pre-empting terrorist activity is the goal, but the strategies elicit cooperation from populations susceptible to terrorist ideology. Lastly, soft defensive strategies are non-violent reactions.

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
intended to mitigate the damage of successful terrorist attacks. Counterterrorism tactics are not limited to those listed above, but the strategic categories provide a framework for understanding counterterrorism efforts.

Many political scientists try to weigh which types of counterterror strategies are the most and least effective. Several political science studies focus on hard offensive terrorism strategies, which are theorized to cause significant harm to counterterrorism efforts. An in depth look at several hard offensive strategies is necessary to understand why they can backfire.

Figure 1. Counterterrorism Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Offensive</th>
<th>Defensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military invasion, drone strikes, special operations, deterrence.</td>
<td>Target hardening, border controls, airport security, criminal justice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, drone strikes and special operations can often be loosely defined under the same umbrella of leadership decapitation tactics. The main theory behind leadership
decapitation is that the targeted killing of leaders in a given terrorist organization often causes the organization to collapse.\textsuperscript{15} Some political scientists, such as Patrick Johnston and Bryan Price theorize that leadership decapitation does in fact succeed in crippling terrorist organizations. After examining “207 terrorist groups from 1970 to 2008,” Price concludes that killing terrorist leaders “significantly increases the mortality rate of terrorist groups.”\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Johnston utilizes a statistical analysis that suggests that terrorism campaigns are more likely to end after leadership decapitation.\textsuperscript{17}

However, not all academics agree with these studies. Jenna Jordan takes a more nuanced approach, stating that leadership decapitation is only effective in a quarter of successful assassinations. Jordan explores evidence that several factors, such as leadership styles, organizational cohesion, and communal support, can often change the outcome of leadership decapitation.\textsuperscript{18} For example, Jordan finds that leadership decapitation used against al-Qaeda affiliated groups is unlikely to succeed because of their highly bureaucratic structure and popular support in their homelands.\textsuperscript{19} Jordan also finds that leadership assassination attempts carry unintended consequences, such as recruiting surges and retaliatory strikes, not to mention accidental civilian casualties.\textsuperscript{20}

Second, traditional war campaigns are also popular hard offensive terrorism tactics. A traditional war strategy generally entails the classic military strategy of

\textsuperscript{18} Jordan, 21.
\textsuperscript{19} Jordan, 25.
\textsuperscript{20} Jordan, 35.
defeating the enemy on the battlefield, the strategy initially used in both Iraq and Afghanistan in the “War on Terrorism”. Crelinsten refers to traditional war as the “war model” of counterterrorism. In this strategy, terrorists are considered enemy combatants and engagement is restricted to the rules of war and international law.\textsuperscript{21} As is customary with traditional war between states, the war model utilizes “maximal force,” which is “designed to overpower the enemy.”\textsuperscript{22} Success in a war model strategy “tends to be defined in terms of victory or defeat.”\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, counterterrorism efforts have to continue as long as the terrorist threat is viable, which can often lead to protracted or “never-ending war.”\textsuperscript{24}

Third, political scientists such as Trager and Zagorceva also theorize that counterterrorism strategies can operate similar to state deterrence. According to Stephen Quackenbush, deterrence theory states that “in order to deter attacks, a state must persuade a potential attacker that it has effective military capability,” it can impose heavy costs, and that their threats will be carried out when attacked.\textsuperscript{25} Like states deterring states, terrorist organizations can be “deterred from actions that harm targeted states” by the use or threat of force.\textsuperscript{26} Kevin Chilton and Greg Weaver support this theory of counterterror deterrence, calling for customized strategies “tailor made” for the unique threat that terrorist organizations pose.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Crelinsten, \textit{Counterterrorism}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Crelinsten, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Trager and Zagorceva, “Deterring Terrorism,” 88.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Gen. Kevin Chilton and Greg Weaver, “Waging Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century,” \textit{Strategic Studies Quarterly} (2009), 34.
\end{itemize}
Other political scientists like Robert Pape have criticized the effectiveness of deterrence, stating that terrorists are irrational (therefore undeterred by cost-benefit calculations), are so highly motivated they don’t fear death, and lack a return address for states to retaliate against.\textsuperscript{28} In response, Trager and Zagorcheva argue that terrorist groups do in fact often have rationally ordered goals, have less motivated individuals that support them, and can be tied down to specific geographic locations.\textsuperscript{29} For example, lower level support for terrorists such as financiers, religious figures, or lower level “foot soldiers” can be easily dissuaded using deterrence by punishment or deterrence by denial.\textsuperscript{30} In doing so, even the most highly motivated terrorist can be undone by this loss of support.\textsuperscript{31} This line of thinking is also supported by Chilton and Weaver, who believe these support components of terrorist networks are incredibly susceptible to influence by counterterrorist efforts.\textsuperscript{32}

However, more substantial doubts can be leveled at deterrence through quantitative means. In one study, counterterrorist retaliation by Israel often resulted in no significant deviation from the quarterly rate of terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{33} From this observation, the authors posit that “terrorists have rational expectations about the retaliation they receive,” meaning they are rarely surprised by counterterror retaliatory strikes.\textsuperscript{34} In fact, the only reprisal that produced any kind of change was the Israeli reprisal in response to the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, one of the first notable terrorist attacks in the

\textsuperscript{28} Trager and Zagorcheva, “Deterring Terrorism,” 87.
\textsuperscript{29} Trager and Zagorcheva, 89.
\textsuperscript{30} Trager and Zagorcheva, 96.
\textsuperscript{31} Trager and Zagorcheva, 98.
\textsuperscript{32} Chilton and Weaver, “Waging Deterrence,” 37-38.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
twentieth century.\textsuperscript{35} The lack of the element of surprise puts heavy doubt on whether deterrence (specifically retaliatory strikes) is a tenable long term strategy for disrupting terrorism.\textsuperscript{36}

Are there ways that the use of hard offensive strategies can become counterproductive? Pape believes that when hard offensive counterterrorism is utilized and becomes a protracted occupation, suicide terrorism increases. Defined, occupation is the “exertion of political control over territory by an outside power,” which could create resentment in local populations.\textsuperscript{37} As evidence, Pape refers to the rate of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Before the U.S. occupation, there were no recorded incidents of suicide bombing.\textsuperscript{38} By 2003, the first suicide attacks began shortly after the U.S. invasion and increased over “the course of the next few years.”\textsuperscript{39} What, if any causal mechanisms can explain this phenomenon?

Three potentially significant causal mechanisms can explain harmful effects of hard offensive counterterrorism. First, occupation is looked to by political scientists as a possible source of backlash to hard offensive counterterrorism. Pape is one proponent of citing occupation as a harmful effect. Pap, as mentioned previously, defines occupation as “the exertion of political control over a territory by an outside group” and believes that a local community chafes at a foreign military when force is used to prevent a change in government “that would otherwise occur” if foreign troops left.\textsuperscript{40} In turn, occupation

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{35} Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare, “Retaliating Against Terrorism,” 196.
\textsuperscript{36} Brophy-Baermann and Conybeare, 209.
\textsuperscript{37} Pape, Robert A. and James K. Feldman. Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop it, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 20-21.
\textsuperscript{38} Pape and Feldman, Cutting the Fuse, 30.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Pape and Feldman, 20-21.
\end{flushright}
pushes members of the community to “extreme sacrifices” to resist foreign influence, such as engaging in suicide terrorism.  

Second, political scientists examine the role of collateral damage. Luke Condra and Jacob Shapiro define collateral damage as “what happens when civilians are caught in the crossfire.” More simply put, collateral damage is the unavoidable, but unintentional damage (such as injury or death) to civilians who are uninvolved in combat. Causally, Condra and Shapiro studied the war in Iraq and determined that the more civilian killings that were attributed to the United States resulted in an increase in insurgent violence. Conversely, the more civilians killed by insurgents resulted in less support for insurgent groups.  

Thirdly, the literature examines alienation as a detrimental effect. Studying the Uyghur population in China, Christopher Cunningham believes that the alienation of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang province by China has led to an increase in terrorist activity. According to Cunningham, alienation can be defined as resentment or anger in a community when they are discriminated against or are prevented from expressing their culture and religion. Alienation is defined in various ways across the literature, but alienation is a solid potential factor of harmful counterterrorism.

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41 Pape and Feldman, Cutting the Fuse, 20.
44 Condra and Shapiro, 175.
45 Condra and Shapiro, 167.
47 Cunningham, 19.
In comparison to hard offensive terrorism, does using a softer counterterrorism method yield better results in countering terrorism? For instance, what if counterinsurgency, or COIN, used during the Surges in Iraq and Afghanistan worked better than traditional war strategy? Unlike other counterterrorism strategies, COIN doesn’t fit neatly into any of the categorizations of counterterrorism in Figure 1. Because of this, I would argue that COIN is a hybrid counterterrorism strategy borrowing tactics from multiple categories. Counterinsurgency is defined as a strategy that “recognizes a military solution to a conflict is not feasible, only a combined military, political, and civilian solution is possible.”48 Because of its reliance on winning hearts and minds of the populace, COIN borrows many ideas from soft counterterrorism, in addition to tactics borrowed from hard offensive counterterrorism. Therefore, perhaps a COIN strategy results in less blowback than utilizing a true hard offensive counterterrorism strategy.

To further explore COIN, Rinehart separates two competing types of counterinsurgency campaigns, classical and modern. Classical counterinsurgency (the model for the Surge in Iraq and Afghanistan) is “confined within the borders of a single state” and focuses on training local forces, developing quality local governance, and blocking opponents form receiving outside support.49 On the other hand, modern counterinsurgency takes on a more global meaning. Global COIN is similar to classical COIN, but the scale is much larger, like the international fight against various al-Qaeda franchises.50

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49 Rinehart, 41.
50 Rinehart, 42.
The drawback to COIN being utilized as a counterterrorism tactic is that it might not actually be a counterterrorism tactic at all. According to Michael Boyle, counterterrorism and COIN “aren’t necessarily compatible or mutually reinforcing,” meaning that using both interchangeably might be counterproductive.\(^{51}\) Clearly distinguishing between COIN and counterterrorism in Afghanistan, Boyle states that “a CT mission would focus exclusively on al-Qaeda, offering little or no support to the Karzai government.”\(^{52}\) Conversely, a COIN mission would entail “a comprehensive commitment to defeating the Taliban and rebuilding the Afghan state while destroying al-Qaeda operatives there.”\(^{53}\) The problem with fusing the two approaches is that the United States runs the risk of generating offsetting costs such as popular backlash, a legitimacy gap, and diminished leverage.\(^{54}\) The legitimacy gap is a very real risk in Afghanistan: the Afghan government needs to be seen as the legitimate state, but this is difficult when they must allow for unpopular strikes against the enemy.\(^{55}\) Balancing both strategies could mean that the Afghan government will be less willing to cooperate with U.S. forces in the future.

In the next section, I propose a methodology to measure and compare the effectiveness of hard offensive terrorism and counterinsurgency strategies against each other, and see which strategy resulted in counterterrorism backlash and failure. First, several conceptual issues are resolved. Second, a hypothesis is presented to predict what findings are expected from the comparison between the two counterterrorism strategies.


\(^{52}\) Boyle, 335.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Boyle, 336.

\(^{55}\) Boyle, 350.
Third, independent and dependent variables are identified, and several data sources are introduced.

**Methodology**

In order to accurately measure the backlash of counterterrorism, several conceptual issues must be resolved. First, a working definition of terrorism is needed. For the purpose of this research, a useful definition might be the one provided by Kydd and Walter. According to the authors, terrorism is “the use of violence against civilians by non-state actors to attain political goals.”\(^{56}\) Kydd and Walter’s definition restricts the ideas of terrorism away from terrorist military targets as well as the use of terrorism by states. By avoiding these two categorizations, Kydd and Walter help to simplify terrorism into a less controversial definition by limiting points of academic contention. In order to limit the scope of the methodology even further, future research should be limited to a specific region of terrorism. To better measure occupation, alienation, or collateral damage, a possible area of terrorism to look at is terrorism occurring in the Middle East region. By limiting the research in such a way, measurements on the dependent variable can be neatly kept in a single population group.

I hypothesize that if a highly aggressive hard offensive counterterrorist strategy is utilized then it is likely the overall counterterrorism campaign will fail. To measure the hypothesis, counterterrorism strategies will be considered the independent variable. Two levels of dependent variables are critical to the study. First, the direct impact of counterterrorist strategies should reveal increased levels of occupation, alienation, and collateral damage. Occupation will be measured by the number of troops stationed in the

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country, specifically of foreign origin, as recorded by troop level database. Alienation can be measured through political surveys that record negative public opinion (such as anger, rage, humiliation, etc.) in a given country. Collateral damage can be measured by the number of civilian casualties reported. At the second level of dependent variable, there should be a correlated rise in terrorist attacks in tandem with an increase of occupation, alienation, and collateral damage, which then helps evaluate whether a counterterrorism campaign was effective or not.

The invasions, counterinsurgency campaigns (or Surge), and withdrawals in both Iraq and Afghanistan by the United States are optimal cases and help to build a most similar systems comparison. This comparison allows for control over the independent variable, as well as the first level of the dependent variables. By doing so, I can examine how the “traditional war” stage of American occupation, COIN Surge, and withdrawal all correlate with the rate of terrorist activity, examining the success or failure of the counterterrorism campaign.

To measure the independent variable of hard offensive counterterrorism, I will provide qualitative evidence of how tactics differed between the preliminary invasion and the Surge that followed. Along with a plethora of other sources, Peter Mansoor as well as Peter Hahn have extensive historical and military backgrounds on the Iraq War in each of their published books which will be incredibly helpful.

For the dependent variables, several sources of data will be used. For measuring occupation, I will look at the number of troops used during each military campaign. U.S. and NATO records, such as the Boots on the Ground reports provided to Congress, can provide this information. To measure alienation, public opinion polls from the country in
question will be used, from media outlets such as the BBC and Gallup, as well specific polling sources such as the Brookings Institute Iraq Index and the Asia Foundation. Measuring collateral damage will involve data sets that provide an estimate of the number of civilian deaths in a period of time. A good source of this information is the Brookings Iraq and Afghanistan Indexes, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan which provide various data on a variety of statistics such as civilian deaths.

Finally, measuring the rate of terrorism requires an effective dataset. One particularly useful dataset is the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) compiled by Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan. The GTD compiles data on all known terrorist incidents, and classifies terrorist attacks with an adjustable filter on the definitional boundaries of terrorism. The GTD is highly customizable and provides information helpful to a variety of different quantitative research methods. For example, data can be filtered by country to country, or isolated by specific terrorist methods. Another strength of the GTD is that it is tailored to avoid the political biases of states, built upon a privately compiled database originally used by the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Agency.\textsuperscript{57} Designed by Pinkerton, the database was 56 utilized to help corporations gain information on potential areas they might decide to do business, and less tailored to a state’s agenda. Corporate biases remain to be discovered, but removing state bias lends credibility to the data set.

In the subsequent two chapters, the case studies of both U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are presented. The chapters are split into four sections. Two sections will focus specifically on the history and politics of the war in question, divided into Pre-
Surge and Surge/withdrawal eras. Two additional sections will investigate the variables of troop levels, civilian casualties, and public opinion with each of their respective data trends, divided again between the Pre-Surge and Surge/withdrawal eras.
CHAPTER 3

The Iraq War: How Effective was U.S. Counterterrorism in the Invasion, Surge, and Withdrawal?

The 2003 Iraq War is a useful case study to investigate the hypothesis of whether hard offensive counterterrorism tactics lead to counterterrorism failure. In the early stages of the war, the United States pursued a traditional military strategy, which can be defined as a strategy in which a military invasion and occupation of a foreign territory occurs. The traditional military strategy can be classified as a hard offensive counterterrorism tactic when the invasion is designed to counter a terrorism threat, which was one of the primary reason for toppling the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Ultimately, this traditional strategy gave rise to a nascent insurgency involving increasingly violent sectarian and terrorist attacks. American policy makers soon realized their initial strategy had made matters worse and were forced to go back to the drawing board. Facing mounting public pressure, President Bush ignored calls to withdraw U.S. from the Iraqi Civil War and implemented a counterinsurgency strategy in what is now called the “Surge.”

The following analysis looks at which counterterrorism strategy was ultimately the most effective in Iraq. First, the politics and strategy of the initial stage of the Iraq War from 2003 to 2006 is examined. Second, variables such as troop levels, civilian casualties, and public opinion are scrutinized to see if the tactics of 2003-2006 resulted in an increase in terrorism. Next, the politics and strategy of the 2007-2011 “Surge” and withdrawal phases of the war are presented. Lastly, Surge and withdrawal troop levels, casualties, and public opinion data are evaluated to record the differences between all
three Iraq eras with regards to the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism results in a failed counterterrorism campaign.

**History and Politics of Iraq 2003-2006**

Prior to the invasion of Iraq by U.S. and Coalition forces in March 2003, the Bush administration had led the United States public to believe that standing up to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was crucial to the “War on Terror”. As Colin Powell told the United Nations, the U.S. believed that a “sinister nexus between Iraq and al-Qaeda” existed.\(^5^8\) Powell claimed to have evidence of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD’s) and the capability to use them. In response to the purported threat of Iraqi WMD’s, President Bush delivered an ultimatum to Hussein. On March 17, 2003, Bush demanded that Hussein relinquish power within 48 hours or risk a U.S. invasion of Iraq.\(^5^9\) Believing that the United States “lacked resolve and was afraid to risk an invasion,” Hussein refused to step down.\(^6^0\) This refusal led to the immediate deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq and kicked off a war that would continue until 2011.

In 2003, the United States prepared to wage war, stressing “rapid, decisive operations and quick victories by high-tech warfighting forces.”\(^6^1\) Proponents of the Iraq War had been preparing since the end of the First Gulf War. However, they had planned little for the occupation after the initial invasion, and expected a quick occupation and a transfer of power to “Iraqis within 90 days.”\(^6^2\) This short term mentality largely ignored

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59 Pirmie and O'Connell, 6.
60 Ibid.
findings by U.S. agencies such as the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Central Intelligence Agency. For example, the Department of State’s “Future of Iraq” initiative recommended that the military needed to protect critical infrastructure such as “water and electricity” and plan for “lawlessness perpetrated by criminals” in the immediate aftermath of the invasion.

By ignoring recommendations from government agencies, the Bush administration set itself up for failure. Proponents of new pre-emptive strategy for the global “War on Terror,” such as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz dominated planning for Iraq. The two men at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and specifically its subsidiary the Office of Special Plans (OSP), rushed the war planning to avoid prolonged discussions of post war complications, which they saw as a ploy to “weaken the case for a preemptive strike.”

While no illegal wrongdoing occurred, as some believe, both OSP and the OSD at large promoted misguided assumptions about Iraq. OSP planners focused largely on post-invasion governance of Iraq, and decided that it would take too long for the Iraqi interim government to vet out Ba’athists from government. Instead, OSP argued that the interim government should mainly consist of returning Iraqi expatriates. OSP’s suggestion contradicted guidance from the Department of State and CIA, who warned

63 Hahn, Missions Accomplished? 167.
64 Ibid.
that a government of externals in Iraq would lack important domestic legitimacy.\textsuperscript{68} In addition, OSD had inaccurately likened Iraq to the occupation of Germany and Japan after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{69} As Pete Mansoor illustrates, these earlier occupations were much better planned than Iraq. General George Marshall had begun planning in earnest for the occupation of Germany and Japan “one month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor,” and that “the foundation of a military government in Germany had been laid 18 months prior”\textsuperscript{70}.

In contrast to General Marshall, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld authorized the creation of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). Under Lieutenant General Jay Garner, ORHA began planning for the occupation of Iraq on January 20, 2003, “two months before the beginning of the invasion.”\textsuperscript{71} The result of this rushed occupation planning was an ORHA organization that “was disjointed, fragmented, chaotic, and riven with bureaucratic rivalries.”\textsuperscript{72} For example, because of a policy feud between Powell’s State Department and Rumsfeld’s Department of Defense, staffers familiar with the “Future of Iraq” plan were forced out of the ORHA.\textsuperscript{73}

Under direction from Rumsfeld, the U.S. government assumed that the overwhelming superiority of the U.S. military would quickly topple the Hussein regime. Iraqis would “view American troops as liberators and would cooperate quickly to take charge of their own destiny”.\textsuperscript{74} Instead, the poorly planned occupation did exactly what

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Bensahel, “The Aftermath,” 323.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, 81; Mansoor, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Mansoor, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ricks, 103.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Mansoor, 6.
\end{itemize}
the “Future of Iraq” publication warned about. The U.S. war effort created a “chaotic occupation that failed to deliver enough security, jobs, and essential services” to Iraqis, resulting in a violent insurgency prone to destabilizing sectarian violence and terrorist attacks.75

After the initial invasion, despite previous warnings and even Garner’s own misgivings about “winning the peace,” the Bush Administration continued to ignore advice about the occupation.76 Donald Rumsfeld insisted on restricting the number of troops in Iraq and promoted a one month ORHA timetable to exhibit enough progress to warrant a rapid troop demobilization.77 Additionally, because of a lack of preparation for “language and cultural gaps” and ORHA general organizational inefficiencies, U.S. troops found themselves in a quickly deteriorating window of opportunity for the “creation of a new Iraq.”78

Soon enough, General Garner’s lack of progress and compliance with the Pentagon’s wishes brought an end to the ORHA. Garner followed orders and called for Iraqi elections within 90 days, but this imperiled the Bush Administration’ hand-picked Iraqi politicians’ preparation for elections.79 Additionally, Garner had planned to enlist the help of 100,000 of Saddam’s former army to gain their security expertise and train a new Iraqi force.80 Rumsfeld bristled at retaining the Baath party soldiers loyal to Saddam, and quickly began searching for Garner’s replacement.

75 Mansoor, Surge, 6.
76 Hahn, Missions Accomplished? 168.
77 Hahn, 169.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
However, problems in Iraq would quickly snowball from frustrating unpreparedness to a much more dangerous political situation. With the quick demise of the ORHA, Ambassador Paul L. Bremer was brought in to head the new Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) tasked with overseeing the Iraq occupation. The CPA got off to a bad start. Bremer, with little experience in the Middle East and no understanding of Arabic, had trouble managing the CPA.\textsuperscript{81} For instance, Bremer largely ignored Iraqi tribal politics, as the tribes were seen as “part of Iraq’s past and had no place in its present or future”.\textsuperscript{82} Ignoring the tribes exemplifies how misguided the CPA was, as engaging with tribal leaders would soon be an important step to combating the insurgency in 2006.\textsuperscript{83}

Additionally, Bremer failed to develop a working relationship with U.S. military officers in Iraq. In his introduction, Bremer told military leaders that “you all work for me.”\textsuperscript{84} Eventually, relations broke down to the point where Bremer and the head U.S. military general in Iraq, General Sanchez, refused to speak to each other.\textsuperscript{85} All was not well with Bremer’s relationships in Washington either. President Bush had appointed Bremer to work directly underneath Donald Rumsfeld and was subject to Rumsfeld’s decisions.\textsuperscript{86} Bremer twice asked for additional troops to send to Iraq but was ultimately denied due to Rumsfeld’s strongly held belief that more troops would not help stabilize Iraq.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{81} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 7.
\textsuperscript{82} Mansoor, 11.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Hahn, \textit{Missions Accomplished}, 171.
\textsuperscript{85} Hahn, 172.
\textsuperscript{86} Hahn, 170.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
Citing Bremer’s “control freak” personality, Mansoor writes that Bremer also lacked cooperation with other U.S. agencies, especially USAID.\textsuperscript{88} Even though the reconstruction of Iraq was the largest international aid package since the Marshall plan, Bremer shut out agencies like USAID and kept reconstruction plans firmly under CPA control. Under the “ad hoc” CPA organization, monetary waste and mismanagement began to build, and the pace of reconstruction slowed to a crawl.\textsuperscript{89}

However, these were not the worst issues with the CPA. Heavily influenced by OSP planning, Bremer made three major decisions that would greatly contribute to the failures of the occupation prior to 2007.\textsuperscript{90} First, Bremer announced CPA Order Number 1, dismantling Hussein’s Baath party and “barring senior and midlevel officials from holding positions in government agencies,” hospitals, and universities.\textsuperscript{91} Banning midlevel officials largely crippled the Iraqi technocracy, which had kept the Iraqi infrastructure running, and replaced them with new untrained “political hacks.”\textsuperscript{92} Bremer effectively left thousands of Sunnis barred from participating in a new Iraq, leaving them with “no political future … and deprived of their honor.”\textsuperscript{93}

Second, CPA Order Number 2 disbanded the Iraqi military, preventing a predominantly Sunni soldiery from gainful employment. Sacked Iraqi soldiers returned home with a vast cache of weapons which would be used against U.S. and coalition forces. Both of these orders alienated the Sunni elite, increasing sectarian tension and creating “the military basis for the insurgency.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{88} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 11.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Bensahel et al., “The Aftermath,” 324.
\textsuperscript{91} Hahn, 172.
\textsuperscript{92} Mansoor, 9.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
Third, Bremer went forward with his plan for the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), an Iraqi interim government that would oversee the Iraqi elections in 2005. The 25-member IGC became a predominantly Shiite dominated body, excluding the Sunni elite, which had been unaccustomed to limited political power since Iraq had been governed by the Ottoman Empire. Out of the 25 members, 13 of the members were Shiite. In contrast, the Sunnis had only 5 members elected due to their boycott of the January 2005 election, which left the Sunnis as a political minority along with the Kurd, Christian, and Turkoman delegates. Even when Sunnis appeared to vote in droves in the subsequent December election, Sunnis remained in the minority.

In addition to Sunni discontent, inter-Shi’a conflict would derail the IGC and Iraqi democracy. Many Shiites were dissatisfied because wealthy Iraqis who hadn’t lived in Iraq for years would now be making decisions for locals. The IGC brought to power Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exile who had been trying to gain U.S. support to overthrow Saddam since the 1990’s. Despite Chalabi’s enormous influence on U.S. policy and OSD pre-war planning, Chalabi’s role within the IGC was ill-advised. Both the CIA and State Department “were deeply skeptical about Chalabi’s leadership credentials” and concerned about his exile group’s financial mismanagement. However, the Department of Defense saw this as just more CIA and State attacks on their department, largely ignoring their concerns.
In Iraq, Chalabi was not as powerful as his OSD allies thought. Iraqi exile groups such as Chalabi’s were seen as “divided, weak, and irrelevant” by Iraqis, and had to compete with several other Shi’a political groups that were already entrenched in Iraq.103 Religious leaders such as the moderate Ayatollah al-Sistani and radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr had notable influence in Iraq. These leaders and their various Shi’a groups disagreed over various concerns such as “cooperation with the United States, elections, governance, reaching out to Sunnis and Kurds, the constitution, [and] federalism.”104 Often, the argument between groups centered on who was the most Iraqi, and who had sold out by spending exile in Iran or the West.105 As Shi’a dominance of the Iraqi government increased in the January 2005 elections, competition between Shi’a groups began to heat up.106

To his credit, Sistani did try to stay “above the fray” of the inter-Shia conflict, promoting a more moderate line of cooperation with the United States and Sunnis, and working to “deliver Iraq to the Shi’as” in a Shi’a dominated central government.107 Sistani viewed the new Iraqi state as the Shi’a state and saw “no reason to resist state-building.”108 Sistani was also less hostile to Sunnis than other Shi’a factions. For example, when Sunni insurgent violence resulted in a deadly stampede at a Shi’a religious pilgrimage, Sistani restrained Shi’as from retaliating against Sunnis.109

Not everyone was as cooperative as Sistani. The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (SCIRI), led by Iraqis who spent their exile in Iran, enjoyed close relations with the

105 Ibid.
106 Nasr, 189.
107 Nasr, 196.
109 Nasr, 197.
Iranian government. Despite a “moderate” veneer, SCIRI’s Badr Brigade military wing used its political power in the Iraqi Interior Ministry and its Iranian support to retaliate against Sunni insurgents.\textsuperscript{110} Badr militants dominated the Iraqi police forces, forming death squads that would eventually be used cleanse entire neighborhoods of their Sunni inhabitants.\textsuperscript{111} In Southern Iraq, SCIRI established itself as the theocratic independent government of Basra, but it solved “few social problems” and tolerated “a great deal of nepotism and corruption”.\textsuperscript{112} SCIRI’s Iranian support, sectarian leanings, and “theocracy mixed with thuggery” would hinder the U.S. war effort.\textsuperscript{113}

The United States also struggled to deal with Muqtada al-Sadr. Inheriting his religious following from his cleric father, al-Sadr had a very weak claim to religious knowledge. Jokingly referred to as “Mullah Atari,” al-Sadr had failed his seminary education and was more adept in playing video games than understanding Shi’a theology.\textsuperscript{114} To make up for his lack of religious legitimacy, al-Sadr adopted radical politics which were “exacerbated by his unstable personality.”\textsuperscript{115} Though al-Sadr could be manipulated by various other Shi’a leaders, he developed a rebel image which promoted a mix of Islam and nationalism, gaining him influence as an open challenger to U.S. authority.\textsuperscript{116} By opposing the U.S., al-Sadr utilized his father’s legacy and gained popularity amongst the “poor and uneducated Shi’a youth.” In addition to his opposition to the United States, al-Sadr competed with Sistani and SCIRI for political power. Al-Sadr argued that he alone was suitable for power as an \textit{ibn al-balad}, or son of the soil,

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{References}
\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{110} Nasr, \textit{The Shia Revival}, 192.
\bibitem{111} Kirmanj, \textit{Identity}, 196.
\bibitem{112} Nasr, 194-195.
\bibitem{113} Nasr, 195.
\bibitem{114} Nasr, 190-191.
\bibitem{115} Nasr, 191.
\bibitem{116} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
unlike the aforementioned exiles. Al-Sadr held tenuous control of the Jaish al-Mahdi Shi’a militant group, using the militia to challenge Sistani’s leadership and SCIRI’s control of Southern Iraq. As evidence of al-Sadr’s political ambition, he even tried allying with Sunnis to undercut his Shi’a opponents.

The rag-tag coalition of secular leaders allied with the religious al-Da’wa Party dominated the Iraqi central government, but they had very little control over SCIRI and al-Sadr. Leaders like Chalabi and his successor Iyad Allawi, struggled to rein in the sectarian leanings of the Shi’a. Eventually, Chalabi had lost favor with the United States, having been “non-compliant with U.S. wishes” in the IGC and denounced “for leaking sensitive intelligence information to Iran”. The U.S. infatuation with Chalabi quickly ended in 2004, but not soon enough to stem the more radical elements of the Iraqi Shiites. Eventually, U.S. and coalition forces would be fighting a three-headed insurgency, combating partisan forces led by Sunnis, Shi’as, and international terrorist groups looking to take advantage of the chaos.

Military strategy was also to blame for the disorganized occupation. Military leaders stuck to traditional methods, choosing to utilize aggressive raids and cordon and search missions to neutralize enemy combatants. At the highest levels, no attempts to adjust tactics were made in 2003. General Sanchez had made the decision that U.S. troops would remain in “Phase III (offensive operations)” through the end of the year.

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118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Hahn, *Missions Accomplished?* 176-177.
As Blair Wilcox writes, the overall strategy was conquest rather than insurgency, applying overwhelming force to degrade the enemy.\textsuperscript{123} Heavy firepower and relying on poorly trained Iraqi soldiers to bear the brunt of the violence. The result was heavy levels of civilian casualties and human rights abuses detrimental to reducing the growing violence.\textsuperscript{124} As the situation deteriorated, U.S. soldiers soon had to focus on counteracting growing numbers of suicide attacks, car bombs, and roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) instead of reconstruction and stability efforts.\textsuperscript{125}

Another major contributor to the growing insurgency was the tactical decision for U.S. and coalition forces to retreat back to forward operating bases (FOBs) on the outskirts of major cities such as Baghdad and Fallujah.\textsuperscript{126} The reasoning behind this particular tactic was that the U.S. military presence in urban areas was detrimental to keeping the peace, like a “virus infecting Iraqi society.”\textsuperscript{127} However, this had the opposite effect of what was intended. By retreating from the city streets, troops were not able to protect civilians or the critical city infrastructure from harm.\textsuperscript{128} Ultimately, this decision created more unrest and increased the sectarian tension between Sunnis and Shi’as.

The battle to control the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004 is most representative of this phase of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. As U.S. forces continued to pursue “order and stability through military action” and withdraw to FOBs, entire cities were left without any U.S. presence.\textsuperscript{129} In Fallujah, lack of security had resulted in four U.S. contractors

\textsuperscript{124} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 17-18.  
\textsuperscript{125} Hahn, \textit{Missions Accomplished?} 179.  
\textsuperscript{126} Mansoor, 14.  
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{129} Hahn, 179.
being murdered, burned, and hung from bridges by disgruntled Sunnis. In response, 2,000 Marines began an assault to re-establish control over Fallujah, an action “portrayed as civilian bloodbath by the Arabic media”. As a result, under pressure from members of the IGC, Bremer and Central Command generals decided to postpone the Fallujah operation.

Concurrently, U.S. forces also had to contend with the growing Shi’a insurgency led by al-Sadr’s Jaish al-Mahdi militia. The militia had declared open rebellion and had further “established a shadow government to challenge the authority of the CPA” in several southern Iraqi cities. Two U.S. armored divisions were sent to deal with al-Sadr, and they were quickly able to overwhelm the opposition with “superior discipline and firepower.” Despite success on the battlefield, several political settlements between the IGC and al-Sadr provided the Jaish al-Mahdi respite, allowing the militia to regain strength.

On the political side of things, the CPA transferred power to the IGC in June 2004. Inadequately trained Iraqi troops, already under strain from significant combat roles, would now have more responsibility and less oversight from the United States. With the power to “recruit, promote, and dismiss military personnel,” Iraqi politicians would continue to choose important command positions “on the basis of religious and political affiliations.” Less oversight meant the Iraqi military increasingly became a source of sectarian conflict rather than a solution to it, and ethnic cleansing was

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131 Mansoor, 15.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Mansoor, 16.
135 Ibid.
136 Mansoor, 17.
becoming more and more common in Shi’a-Sunni mixed neighborhoods. To illustrate how easy it was for Shi’as to implement sectarian actions, Shi’as dominated the January 2005 election, electing a body in which only 2 percent of elected officials represented Sunnis.

Problems continued to plague the Iraq war effort. Rising international pressure on the United States began to develop when it was discovered that there was no proof that Saddam Hussein’s regime had possessed WMDs. There had also been horrific reports of prisoner abuse at the U.S. Abu Ghraib prison in the spring of 2004. With everything that had gone wrong up to this point, it had finally dawned on the United States leadership that changes were needed with regards to the political and military strategy of the occupation.

However, change happened very slowly. After realizing that the military couldn’t deploy to each Iraqi city and level them to the ground, the Bush administration had decided to shake things up. The Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) that had been managing the Iraqi war from 2003 to 2004 was soon morphed into Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) under the direction of General George Casey. Casey steadily began to build the foundation for future counterinsurgency operations. Casey’s “fresh thinking” in the MNF-I introduced two counterterrorist experts to develop a new operational strategy, and most importantly, ordered the creation of an academy for soldiers to learn counter-

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139 Hahn, 179.
140 Mansoor, 17; Hahn, 177.
141 Mansoor, 21.
142 Mansoor, 18.
insurgency operations.\textsuperscript{143} These changes were slow developing steps, but they would eventually pay big dividends in 2007.

Another reason for the Casey’s slow start was the political end game the Bush administration was pursuing. Instead of investing for the long run, Bush and the Department of Defense prepared an exit strategy. Concerned with the American public’s distaste for long military ventures, the emphasis was placed on reintroducing Sunnis to the Iraqi political fold, neutralizing insurgents and terrorists, training Iraqi security forces, and getting U.S. troops out of Iraq as soon as possible. Many of these political objectives were being rushed, and they had a counterproductive effect. For instance, the “premature commitment of Iraqi forces” within 12 months led to increased violence because the troops were “too few, too apathetic, too ill-trained and poorly equipped, and in some cases too sectarian.”\textsuperscript{144}

The political calculations handicapped the MNF-I game plan, but several other military weaknesses were also apparent. Tactically, not much had changed between CJTF-7 and the MNF-I. U.S. and coalition forces still remained in large FOB’s outside the cities, and traditional military assaults were still a regular occurrence.\textsuperscript{145} For example, the long delayed Fallujah offensive was initiated, resulting in the deaths of 2,000 Sunni and al-Qaeda insurgents and virtually leveling the city to the ground.\textsuperscript{146} With General Casey promising to pass the baton to Iraqi forces by the end of 2005, MNF-I did not look feasible.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{143} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{144} Mansoor, 20.
\textsuperscript{145} Mansoor, 19.
\textsuperscript{146} Mansoor, 21.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
At the combat level, individual military commanders and units were gradually adjusting to counterinsurgency tactics. Leaders such as Colonel Stephen Davis and Colonel H.R. McMaster provided early case studies of how the counterinsurgency should be fought. Both leaders saw value in co-opting the local population and bringing the fight to the city cores in “clear, hold, and build” strategies.\(^{148}\) Despite individual success, inconsistent military-wide strategy and a lack of proper intelligence collection doomed the MNF-I to failure.\(^{149}\)

By 2006, things were looking grim. Because of the inconsistent distribution of units who adopted counterinsurgency to those that maintained classic war tactics, sectarian violence continued to increase.\(^{150}\) Sunni al-Qaeda elements led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began to participate in cleansing mixed areas of Shi’as, similar to what Shi’as had been doing to Sunnis.\(^ {151}\) In particular, al-Zarqawi began to target Shi’a holy sites. Most notoriously, al-Qaeda members planted explosives at the al-Askari shrine in Samarra in 2006, destroying the golden dome.\(^ {152}\) One Shi’a leader stated that “this is as 9/11 in the United States.”\(^ {153}\) Not long after the bombing, Shi’a reprisals began an Iraqi civil war.\(^ {154}\) The U.S. would be forced to consider a more unified counterinsurgency effort if they wished to achieve their objectives in Iraq.

The situation in Iraq from 2003 to 2006 illustrates the environment in which U.S. counterterrorism took place. The chaos of the occupation was complicated by both U.S. planning and tactical mishaps, as well as the sectarian nature of Shi’a and Sunni politics.

\(^{149}\) Mansoor, 19.
\(^{150}\) Mansoor, 26.
\(^{151}\) Mansoor, 27.
\(^{152}\) Mansoor, 28.
\(^{153}\) Ibid.
\(^{154}\) Ibid.
In the next section, the history of the early U.S. occupation is utilized to explore variables such as troop levels, civilian casualties, and Iraqi public opinion and their effects on counterterrorism success within Iraq.

**Iraq War Data Trends 2003-2006**

Based on the political and military developments from 2003 to 2006, the prevailing counterterrorism strategy utilized was invasion and occupation. U.S. and coalition forces did not fully embrace a counterinsurgency strategy until 2007, even though some counterinsurgency strategies emerged as early as 2005. Therefore, if the hypothesis that the use of hard offensive counterterrorism results in counterterrorism failure, the “Pre-Surge” period should feature variables that signify that relationship. First, troop levels from the Brookings Institution Iraq Index are examined to see if they increased or decreased. Second, casualty records from the Iraq Body Count will investigate the relation between civilian casualties and troop levels. Third, various public opinion polls from 2003-2006 compiled by Brookings will look at whether troop levels and civilian casualties affected Iraqi public opinion. Lastly, all previously mentioned variables will be compared to the number of terrorist attacks in Iraq registered by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to test whether or not the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterror strategies lead to failure in counterterrorism is valid.

**Troop Levels 2003-2006**

Overall, troop levels stayed largely below 180,000 troops stationed in Iraq from 2003-2006. As mentioned before, the Bush administration largely ignored pressure to drastically increase troop levels, even though leaders in Iraq requested higher amounts of
soldiers.\textsuperscript{155} As noted in Figure 1, troop levels only met or exceeded 180,000 for three whole months after the initial invasion. In 2003, troop levels steadily declined from the initial invasion as the Department of Defense anticipated a quick hand-off from U.S. and coalition forces to Iraqi forces. Once sectarian opposition increased in 2004, troop levels began to rise with major battles such as the first battle of Fallujah taking place. The battle for Fallujah in March of 2004 was prompted by the deaths of U.S. contractors in the city, so it is plausible that more troops were sent when major combat operations were required during this period. The military had realized that they didn’t have enough troops to handle taking Fallujah, sending “five Marine brigades and a U.S. army armored brigade” when they invaded a second time in November of 2004.\textsuperscript{156}

Political motives could also be in play. In February 2004, the number of total soldiers increased from 139,000 to 162,000 by that April, in conjunction with Iraq approving a new constitution. Numbers would mostly stagnate until the first troop peak in February 2005. After February, troops were lowered following a successful election in January 2005. The second increase also occurred near the December 2005, meaning that these troop level increases were likely a means to provide stability during crucial political developments in Iraq. By 2004, Bush had brought establishing democracy in Iraq to the forefront of U.S. policy objectives.\textsuperscript{157} This emphasis on democracy in part helped Bush to get re-elected in November 2004.\textsuperscript{158} With this in mind, troop increases helped to safeguard the Iraqi elections and head off the Bush administration’s political opponents back home. Did these troop increases have a positive or negative effect on casualties,

\textsuperscript{155} Hahn, \textit{Missions Accomplished}? 169.
\textsuperscript{156} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 21.
\textsuperscript{157} Hahn, 184.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
public opinion, or the rate of terrorism? Or is it too few troops that lead to counterterrorism failure as some scholars suggest?

Figure 2. Number of U.S. and Coalition Troops Present in Iraq from 2003-2006

Civilian Casualties 2003-2006

Iraqi civilian casualties gradually increased during the 2003-2006 period, as shown in Figure 2. Spikes did occur, and casualty spikes were correlated with periods of major events such as military operations. In April 2004, a spike in casualties occurred around the same time as the first battle of Fallujah, decried by the media and IGC as a “civilian bloodbath.” The same could be said in November 2005, as the second battle of Fallujah took place. Mansoor claims that Fallujah was likely abandoned by civilians at this point, but there was likely many civilians still in harm’s way. The Iraq Body Count

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160 Mansoor, Surge, 14-15.
161 Mansoor, 21.
tallied the deaths from Fallujah alone at 700, a substantial percentage of the monthly total for November 2004. These two spikes could be interpreted that higher troop levels, in tandem with aggressive military offensives, led to increased civilian casualties.

A casualty spike in August 2005 might have had a different cause than the previous spikes discussed. In this case, the casualty spike predated a troop surge by a month, which means additional troops actually might have helped to quell higher numbers of casualties. Terrorist attacks, which will be discussed further in a preceding section, might have a causal relationship with the August casualty spike.

As elections were approaching, insurgent and terrorist groups might have had motivations to up their attempts to increase instability. Both al-Zarqawi and al-Sadr actively resisted Allawi’s government from March 2004 onward, filling in substantial “political vacuums left by the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the cities.” A large number of terrorist attacks occurred in July (and the past several months before), which could have led to more casualties being recorded in Iraqi morgues in August. It would appear that the following troop increase actually reduced both casualties and terrorist attacks. Tactics started to change at the frontlines, as commanders began to shift to counterinsurgency operations, popularly known as “clear, hold, and build.” Commanders like Colonels Stephen Davis and H.R. McMaster utilized “clear, hold, build,” in areas like al-Anbar and Tal Afar respectively, but the overall U.S. strategy was still a mix between counterinsurgency and more aggressive, traditional operations.

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165 Mansoor, 23.
introduction of clear, hold, and build strategy might have been just enough to contribute to a lower rate of casualties. However, the relative stability might have been more influenced by the inclusion of Sunnis into the political fold in the elections than troops. For instance, the constitution drafting committee was gradually opened for Sunni representatives to participate in October.166

Evidence of a direct relationship between troop levels and civilian casualties can plausibly be argued for, but it isn’t entirely conclusive. Increased troop levels, parallel with the use of a hard offensive counterterrorist strategy, seemed to result in increased civilian casualties. However, other factors could also be in play in the increase, such as the many governing mistakes by the CPA and other U.S. administrative organizations, and the general political tensions between Sunnis and Shi’as. But in general, when paired with aggressive tactics, increases in troop levels did coincide with an increase in civilian casualties during the 2003-2006 period.

166 Hahn, Missions Accomplished? 184.
Iraqi Public Opinion 2003-2006

In Iraqi public opinion, support for the U.S. and coalition’s mission in Iraq started optimistically high in 2003, but subsequently declined as many Iraqis began to see the foreign troops as occupiers. The high public opinion recorded in Figure 3 would decline significantly as Shi’a and Sunni sectarian violence gained strength from 2004 to 2006. In 2003, Gallup polls (1) recorded that 67% of Iraqis believed that Iraq would be better off in five years than it was before the U.S. invasion, and 62% believed the hardships they endured since the invasion had been worth it. The Gallup poll also found that the majority of Iraqis wished to see U.S. troops stay longer, and that a majority believed that attacks against U.S. troops were unjustified.

In 2003, it is therefore likely that Shi’as and Kurds were supportive of the United States in Iraq because they were liberated from a repressive Saddam regime. Kurds, for instance, had decorated their northern cities with “welcoming signs” for U.S. forces after the invasion. At this time Shi’as had yet to begin their divisive inter-rivalries, as Sistani “argued for truce between various Shi’a factions… [and] focus on confirming their power at the polls.” On the other hand, Sunnis had welcomed American troops with graffiti promising that they would “remain a thorn in the chest” of the occupiers. Sunnis would become even more upset with the implementation of “draconian” de-Baathification laws by the CPA, which would mark the beginning of a full-fledged “nationalist Sunni insurgency”.

Table 1. Responses in Percent to Iraqi Political Opinion Polling Questions in 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Will Iraq be in a better condition five years from now than it was before the U.S.-led invasion? | Better off: 67%  
Worse off: 8% |
| Is Iraq better off now than it was before the invasion?                   | Better off: 33%  
Worse off 47% |
| Was ousting Saddam worth the hardships endured since the invasion?       | Yes: 62%                     |
| Would you like to see U.S. troops stay longer than a few more months?    | Stay longer: 71%  
Not stay longer: 26% |
| Are there circumstances in which attacks against U.S. troops can be justified? | No: 64%  
Sometimes justified: 36% |

169 Ibid.
By 2004 however, Iraqi public opinion began to slide among all groups in Iraq. By March 2004, 83% of the population polled by the CPA had a negative view of U.S. and coalition forces. A Gallup poll found that 71% think of foreign troops as occupiers, compared to 43% who thought of them as occupiers in 2003. As shown in Table 2, The CPA also found that 81% wanted U.S. and coalition forces to leave. Iraqis cited various reasons for their answer such as viewing coalition forces as occupiers, saying they brought too much death and destruction, saying they want Iraqi oil and resources, or believing that Iraqis alone could administer Iraq better.

Table 2. Number of Iraqis Answering that Coalition Forces Should Leave Iraq in 2004 CPA Iraqi Public Opinion Poll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should Coalition Forces leave or stay in Iraq?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leave: 866 (out of 1,068 respondents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why should Coalition Forces leave?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are occupiers and must leave immediately: 418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They brought only death and destruction: 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqis can administer Iraq better: 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They want Iraqi oil and resources: 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are facilitating Zionist domination of Iraq: 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not respect our religions and cultures: 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They abuse Iraqis: 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Don’t know/No answer: 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Polling broken down amongst the three major sectarian groups are the best indicator of the 2004 public opinion slide, as shown in Table 3. Support for the U.S. war effort was strongest amongst the Kurds, but even Kurdish public opinion dropped. In Kurdish dominant areas, public opinion dropped from 83.8% believing that Iraq was

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173 O’Hanlon and Albuquerque, 40.
174 Ibid.
heading in the right direction in June to 72.2% in October. In the Shi’a dominant south of Iraq, polling percentages oscillated with ten percentage points of 50% in 2004. This is perhaps in part due to the growing competition between the Shi’a central government and the Jaish al-Mahdi and Badr militias. Most dramatically, Sunni areas fell from 33.43% in June to 18.3% in October. Sunnis still felt extremely alienated leading into 2005 and had committed wholeheartedly to resisting the occupation and Shi’a rule.

Table 3. Percent Answering that Iraq is Heading in the Right Direction in 2004 Regional Iraqi Public Opinion Poll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Do you think Iraq is heading in the right direction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish areas:</td>
<td>May 27-June 11, 2004: 83.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 24-August 2, 2004: 71.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 24-Oct. 4, 2004: 72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (Shi’a areas):</td>
<td>May 27-June 11, 2004: 44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 24-August 2, 2004: 61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 24-Oct. 4, 2004: 51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni areas:</td>
<td>May 27-June 11, 2004: 33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 24-August 2, 2004: 28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 24-Oct. 4, 2004: 14.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some measure of stability and the first successful election propelled 67% of Iraqis to believe that Iraq was headed in the right direction in April 2005, as shown in Figure 3. The 67% was a high water mark in a period from May 2004 to December 2005, hovering around 50% by December 2005. Overall, 65% of Iraqis opposed the presence of Coalition forces in Iraq, but support for the war effort continued to be split along sectarian lines as noted in a November 2005 poll (Table 4). Sunnis were still wary of U.S. and Coalition efforts as 85% opposed the presence Coalition Troops and only 25% of

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175 O’Hanlon and Albuquerque, “Iraq Index,” 29.
Sunnis believed life was better since the war started. Additionally, Sunni support of the established Iraqi government was very low due to the lack of Sunni representation, with only 36% approving of the new constitution. For Shiites, a slim majority of 59% opposed the coalition, but 59% did believe life was better since the war occurred. And in contrast to Sunni disapproval, 85% of Shi’a polled approved of the new constitution. Kurds, the most supportive group to the U.S. and coalition effort, had a majority belief that life was better (73%) and only 22% opposed Coalition forces.

Figure 4. Timeline of Iraqi Public Opinion Percentages on Which Direction Iraq is Headed (2004-2005) 176

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Table 4. Percentage of Yes Answers to 2005 Regional Iraqi Public Opinion Poll Questions\textsuperscript{177}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Kurdish Area</th>
<th>Shiite Area</th>
<th>Sunni Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life is better since the war</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The US was right to invade Iraq</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very safe in my neighborhood</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I approve of the new Constitution</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I oppose Coalition Forces</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2006, public opinion of the U.S. military occupation of Iraq and the U.S. in general amongst both Sunnis and Shi’as was dangerously low. Shi’as were enraged by the al-Qaeda destruction of the al-Askari shrine dome in February of 2006 and had greatly increased retaliation against Sunnis, setting off a civil war. Al-Sistani stated that if the U.S. and Iraqi government couldn’t control the security situation, the Shi’a faithful would.\textsuperscript{178} For one of the first times, the International Republican Institute polling registered that a majority of Iraqis felt Iraq was headed in the wrong direction, as shown in Figure 4. 52% of those polled in both March and September felt the country was headed down the wrong path. When asked if they supported attacks against U.S.-led forces, 47% said yes in January 2006, and then 61% in September 2006. In another first, Shi’a approval of attacks on U.S. forces increased from 41% in January to 62% in September, joining Sunnis in venting their frustration (Sunnis registered at 88% and subsequently 92%).

\textsuperscript{177} O’Hanlon and Kamp, “Iraq Index,” 37.
\textsuperscript{178} Mansoor, Surge, 28.
From 2003 to 2006, Iraqi public opinion steadily dropped. As sectarian violence skyrocketed, both Shi’as and Sunnis became more disillusioned with the direction of the country. During this same drop in public opinion, civilian casualties began to mount. Civilian casualty spikes, often correlating with increased troop levels and aggressive military tactics, were followed by a general increase in casualties per year. Therefore, it is possible that there is a relation between the increase of U.S. troops and civilian casualties and a decrease in public opinion during the “Pre-Surge” period.

Figure 5. Timeline of Percentage of Iraqi Respondents on the Direction of Iraq (2004-2006) 179

Terrorist Attacks in Iraq 2003-2006

During the 2003-2006 campaign, terrorist incidents in Iraq occurred in very small numbers, as shown in Figure 9. For example, several months in 2003 only registered less

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than ten attacks. According to Robert Pape, there had even been no recorded instances of suicide terrorism in Iraq before 2003.\textsuperscript{180} As time elapsed, the number of terrorist attacks would steadily increase. Linearly, there is a steady rise in the number of attacks per month leading to 2007. This rise seems most related to the deteriorating conditions in stability and the rise of insurgent violence that occurred over the four years. The linear rise in terrorist attacks correlates to the linear rise in civilian casualties, as both terrorist attacks and civilian casualties steadily increased from 2003 to 2006. The rise in terrorist attacks also corresponds with a decrease in favorable Iraqi public opinion to the U.S. and coalition occupation.

In addition to the linear increase, several bursts of attacks began to regularly occur in early 2005. New record highs of terrorist attacks were recorded for 2005, especially after the January 2005 election. The first election involved a Sunni voting boycott, and when they did participate in the second election in December, Sunnis were forced to come to the realization that they couldn’t compete politically with the Shi’as.\textsuperscript{181} Instead, Sunnis resorted to intimidation and violence to curb Shia power and “sap their confidence.”\textsuperscript{182} Notably, these 2005 spikes also occurred with a significant U.S. and coalition troop increase, from 162,000 to 180,000. The period starting in late 2005 shows a different trend for troop levels and terrorism. During the late 2005 period, troop levels increased while civilian casualties and terrorist attacks decreased. This is in part thanks to evolving tactics used by commanders like Colonel H.R. McMaster, but also to more Sunni inclusion in the political process in the December 2005 election.

\textsuperscript{180} Pape, \textit{Cutting the Fuse}, 87.
\textsuperscript{181} Nasr, \textit{The Shia Revival}, 201.
\textsuperscript{182} Nasr, 203.
For the hypothesis that offensive counterterrorism leads counterterrorism failure to be proven, troop levels, influenced by high casualties and low public opinion, should lead to more terrorism. In the traditional war era, this logic seems to be true, as the indicators all point to counterterrorism failure. But again, other factors could be at play, such as the enmity of politics between Shi’as and Sunnis in Iraq at the time, or the ineptitude of the CPA government in navigating said Iraqi politics. In the next section, the politics and tactics of the “Surge” from 2007 onward are examined. The Surge featured a unified U.S. effort at counterinsurgency, where U.S. forces attempted to win back the Iraqi people by paying closer attention to the “type and amount of force used” and the competence and impartiality of those who wield force.\textsuperscript{184} By way of the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism causes a counterterrorism campaign to

\textsuperscript{183} Global Terrorism Database [gtd_96to13_0718dist], National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2019, retrieved from http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

fail, the Surge should show that less aggressive tactics help counterterrorism efforts to succeed.

**Iraq History and Politics 2007-2011: The Surge and Withdrawal**

By the end of 2006, politicians, soldiers, and the even the general public felt that the United States was losing the war in Iraq. Sunni and Shi’a sectarian violence had reached critical mass, and the Iraqi political system was largely deadlocked. If changes were to be made they needed to happen fast, before things got even worse. Soon enough, President Bush saw fit to change the direction of the war in Iraq by pushing a “Surge” strategy. This section investigates the political and historical context of the 2007 Surge by looking at the mounting U.S. public opposition to the war, Surge planning, President Bush’s decision making, implementation of the Surge, the Sunni/Shi’a political breakthrough, and President Obama’s drawdown of the war. By examining these topics, it is possible to evaluate the Iraq War from 2007 to 2011. It is then possible to look and see if hard offensive counterterrorism causes more terrorism, or rather, if the Surge caused less terrorism than the aggressive 2003-2006 period.

U.S. public opinion towards the war in Iraq plummeted in early 2006, and many called for a withdrawal of U.S. troops. By March 2006, the midterm election was fully on the minds of the American public. In a Pew poll recorded that month, 43% of those polled thought the war was going well, in contrast to 51% who believed the war was not going well.\(^{185}\) By November, “an all-time low of 29 percent” of Americans polled

supported Bush’s management of the war, and expected Democrats to end the war if they were elected to a congressional majority.\textsuperscript{186}

During midterm campaigning, Democrats had framed the war in Iraq as a failure. In contrast to the Bush administration’s rosy outlook, his political opponents criticized Iraq’s fall into a civil war.\textsuperscript{187} Leaders such as Senator Harry Reid argued that the “war in Iraq was unwinnable, owing to the country’s ethnic divisions … [and] the administration’s failure to adequately plan for the postwar occupation.”\textsuperscript{188} The Democrat’s plan eventually paid off. In the midterm elections, Bush was handed a decisive defeat when Democrats took a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.\textsuperscript{189} In a rebuke to Bush’s war policy, newly minted Senate Majority Leader Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi wrote to Bush and said that “the American people … don’t believe your current Iraq policy will lead to success.”\textsuperscript{190} They also recommended that “rather than deploy additional forces to Iraq,” the President should “begin phased redeployment of our forces … shifting the principal mission of our forces there from combat to training…”\textsuperscript{191}

Several months prior to the President’s disastrous 2006 midterm elections, Congress had created the “Iraq Study Group” to study the war and suggest a new strategy for Iraq.\textsuperscript{192} The bipartisan group was run by 10 government officials, including Republican James A. Baker and Democrat Lee H. Hamilton, both of which had served

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{186} Hahn, Missions Accomplished? 187. \\
\textsuperscript{187} McHugh, 5. \\
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{189} Hahn, 187. \\
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.}
distinguished government careers. In their examination of the war’s progress, they noted that Iraq was not doing very well. The Iraq Study Group soberly wrote that Iraqi violence was “increasing in scope and lethality.” Groups like Sunni insurgents, Shi’a militias, al-Qaeda, and criminals were a challenge to stability, and the Iraqi government was “not adequately advancing national reconciliation, providing basic security, or delivering essential services.” Mirroring recommendations by Congressional leaders, the Iraq Study group concluded that the United States should begin a gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops, and transfer responsibility to the Iraqi military.

Contrary to the conclusions of politicians, the Iraq Study Group, and the general public, a different approach to handling the war was also taking shape in 2006. Military discussions on whether to stay the course or create an entirely new approach were under way. Research groups in various departments such as the National Security Council, State Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had also begun to grapple with the “deteriorating situation in Iraq” to find a new way forward. Building on recommendations from working group members, and even the recommendations of the Iraq Study group, a new troop surge strategy began to develop.

The success of this planning began with General Casey’s building blocks that he had established after taking over the MNF-I execution of the Iraq War. Frustrated by the lack of success in curbing sectarian violence, Casey began to develop a counterinsurgency strategy for Iraq. By bringing in counterinsurgency advisors, slowly

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193 Hahn, Missions Accomplished? 187.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Mansoor, Surge, 34.
198 Ibid.
199 Hahn, 188.
changing tactics, and establishing a new counterinsurgency academy, Casey had helped to set the groundwork for the future Surge strategy. 200

Casey had also paved the way for his successor, General David Petraeus, to assume the mantle of leadership during the Surge period. Petraeus had lead the development of counterinsurgency tactics in Iraq since 2003, where those under his command had successfully provided stability in Mosul until their untimely replacement by another brigade. 201 Behind the scenes, Petraeus authored the basis for the Surge’s counterinsurgency strategy, the Army and Marines Field Manual 3-24. 202

Counterinsurgency, or COIN, would require U.S. and Coalition forces to enact a strategy that would be “a mix of offensive, defense, and stability operations conducted along multiple lines of operations.” 203 Most importantly, the manual stressed the importance of preserving the well-being of the Iraqi population. The field manual states that COIN efforts “should focus on supporting the local populace and [host nation] government,” and that “political, social, and economic programs are usually more valuable than conventional military operations … in undermining an insurgency.” 204

This counterinsurgency plan understood well some of the essential problems the war in Iraq had faced so far, and that had not been addressed by the initial OSD planning of the invasion. To secure and support the Iraqi people, the military would need to develop skills “most associated with nonmilitary agencies.” This would entail “providing all aspects of the basic quality of life,” like meeting basic economic needs, ensuring the

201 Hahn, *Missions Accomplished?*, 188.
202 Hahn, 189.
203 Ibid.
204 Field Manual 3-24, 2-1.
provision of essential services, sustaining social and cultural institutions, and providing security from insurgent intimidation, coercion, and crime.\textsuperscript{205}

In response to the strong insurgency that had developed in Iraq, the Field Manual also tried to foster a better understanding of the motivations of insurgents. Petraeus wrote that insurgents cannot “defeat the United States with conventional operations.”\textsuperscript{206} Instead, insurgents “do not limit themselves to purely military means” and instead “try to exhaust U.S. national will … by undermining and outlasting public support.”\textsuperscript{207} A successful COIN operation would need to not only secure the population from insurgent violence, but also establish the legitimacy of the Iraqi government. Ultimately, U.S. and coalition forces would need to stand down and allow for the government of Iraq to win on its own.\textsuperscript{208} The new surge, would still need to “strengthen local forces” in order to remove “foreign armies” such as the U.S., seen as an occupier.\textsuperscript{209}

Offensive operations would still be critical to the U.S. war effort. Petraeus warned that soldiers would need to be ready for a “handshake or a hand grenade” when securing the Iraqi people.\textsuperscript{210} As Mansoor quipped, “there was plenty of killing involved” in the new Surge strategy.\textsuperscript{211} The Field Manual noted that there would be times where it would be necessary to eliminate extremists “whose beliefs prevent them from ever reconciling with the [Iraqi] government.”\textsuperscript{212} Additionally, the new COIN strategy would make the population secure, but would ultimately leave U.S. and coalition forces less secure.\textsuperscript{213} No

\textsuperscript{205} Field Manual 3-24, 2-2.
\textsuperscript{206} FM 3-24, ix.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} FM 3-24, 1-26.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{210} FM 3-24, Foreword.
\textsuperscript{211} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 38.
\textsuperscript{212} FM 3-24, 1-1.
\textsuperscript{213} FM 3-24, 1-27.
longer would troops “remain in their compounds … [and] lose touch with the [Iraqi] people.”\textsuperscript{214} Aggressive tactics, such as “saturation patrolling, ambushes, and listening post operations” would need to be conducted, and would entail sharing more risk with the population.\textsuperscript{215}

However, unlike the general strategy in Iraq from 2003-2006, the Surge would require restrictions on the use of force. Petraeus and other contributors realized early on that the “United States did not have the leeway … to undertake counterinsurgency … focused … on killing the enemy regardless of the collateral damage caused to civilian lives and property.”\textsuperscript{216} The American public and the international media would not tolerate “such excesses” any longer.\textsuperscript{217} The military would need to pay close attention to the appropriate level of force, and be sure that those able to wield force were legitimate and committed to impartiality.\textsuperscript{218} Public perceptions of “both police and military units” were thus critically important to effective COIN operations.

In addition to his conceptual work in completing Field Manual 3-24, Petraeus enlisted several of his staffers, such as Mansoor and McMaster, to advise the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on how to rethink strategy for the Iraq War.\textsuperscript{219} Aptly nicknamed the “Council of Colonels,” the group criticized Rumsfeld and Casey’s conclusion that Iraqis had rejected the U.S. occupation, necessitating U.S. and coalition troops withdrawing from Iraq’s cities.\textsuperscript{220} Instead, the JCS discussed various strategies described as ‘Go Big,
Go Long, or Go Home”.

The JCS ultimately stressed the need for more troops and implementing a long haul counterinsurgency approach.\(^{222}\)

In parallel with the progressing military COIN planning, President Bush had perceptively felt that America was losing the Iraq War.\(^{223}\) Bush had come to his own conclusions without having consulted with the JCS or the other COIN recommendations. Partly, this was in order to avoid politically radioactive evidence of the Bush administration having second thoughts about the war before the 2006 election.\(^{224}\) Instead, Bush directed his National security Advisor Steve Hadley to undertake a secret review of Iraq policy.\(^{225}\) First, Hadley invited several “outside government” experts to brief the President on their views on the Iraq War.\(^{226}\) These experts recommended a shift to counterinsurgency methods, stressing increased troops and holding military leaders in “Iraq and Tampa accountable.”\(^{227}\) Second, members of Bush’s staff asked Petraeus for his advice on what would need to be done.\(^{228}\) Petraeus, of course, recommended a “fully resourced counterinsurgency strategy”\(^{229}\).

Third, after the “rebuke” of Bush in the midterm election, Bush accepted Rumsfeld’s resignation as Secretary of Defense.\(^{230}\) The President immediately appointed Robert Gates as Rumsfeld’s replacement. Gates had been a member of the Congressional

\(^{221}\) Mansoor, 45.
\(^{222}\) Ibid.
\(^{223}\) Mansoor, 46.
\(^{224}\) Ibid.
\(^{225}\) Ibid.
\(^{226}\) Ibid.
\(^{227}\) Ibid.
\(^{228}\) Mansoor, 47.
\(^{229}\) Ibid.
\(^{230}\) Ibid.
“Iraq Study Group,” but unlike the group’s final assessment, Gates had concluded that a “temporary reinforcement of U.S. troops” was necessary.

Fourth, Bush met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to see if his vision for Iraq was similar to that of the United States. After having been appointed Prime Minister, Maliki’s office had been known to prevent the detention of Shi’a hardliners, fill the military leadership with Shi’as, and neglect Sunni areas of important resources. It was unknown if al-Maliki was “just too weak to prevent such actions, or if he was a willing participant” in them. Maliki relied on the support of al-Sadr’s Jaish al-Mahdi, which constrained his public actions in support of the United States. When Bush met in private with the Iraqi Prime Minister, al-Maliki promised to commit more forces, allow more U.S. presence in Shi’a dominate neighborhoods, rein in Shi’a militias, and begin the process of political reconciliation of Shi’as with the other various Iraqi factions.

Finally, with the influence of West Point professor Fred Kagan and retired General Jack Keane, Bush had decided to choose “victory in Iraq” over an embarrassing withdrawal. Bush took Kagan and Keane’s advice of committing more resources, securing Sunni and Shi’a mixed areas in Baghdad, and training Iraqis without abandoning a properly secured Iraqi population. As General Casey was still committed to “transferring security responsibilities to Iraqi forces as soon as possible,” Bush’s new Secretary of Defense Gates recommended that Petraeus take over command of U.S. forces in Iraq.

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232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Mansoor, 49.
235 Mansoor, 51.
236 Mansoor, 51-52.
By January 2007, Bush had finalized most of the major decisions regarding the transition to the Surge, and all that was left to do was inform the American people of his decision. In the face of incredible opposition towards the escalation of the Iraq War, Bush doubled down and announced his new strategy for Iraq. Bush admitted personal responsibility for the direction the war had gone, and stated his intention to “change America’s course in Iraq.” Because “failure in Iraq would be disastrous to the United States and the region,” a new strategy was needed to succeed. In addition to the 15 brigade combat teams already in Iraq, a surge of 24,000 troops would head to Iraq to enact a counterinsurgency mission. 20,000 of the troops would be sent to Baghdad, while 4,000 others would be sent to the restive al-Anbar province. Bush would allow Petraeus to enact his vision of U.S. troops fighting alongside Iraqis to protect the population, build the Iraqi Army and Police Forces, and begin reconstruction of the country. As Bush concluded his speech, “we can, and we will, prevail.”

The President had taken major political risk to enact the new Surge strategy in Iraq. Bush had felt that it was necessary to go ahead with the troop increases, stating that “the Surge was our best chance, maybe our last chance, to accomplish our objectives in Iraq.” Bush’s political opponents were quick to oppose the escalation of the war. In the public, the Democratic Congress, and even his own Administration, Bush had to overcome major opposition to the Surge.

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237 Mansoor, Surge, 55.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Mansoor, 56.
In January 2007, 61% of Americans opposed sending more troops to Iraq, while only 36% agreed.\textsuperscript{245} The public opposition to Bush’s Surge was in part thanks to his unpopularity. Even though he went public with the Surge announcement, Bush was unable to reframe the war in the eyes of the American people.\textsuperscript{246} Despite his warnings that a withdrawal would increase the threat of “Radical Islamic extremists,” the public’s disapproval continued through the Democratic Congress.\textsuperscript{247} However, despite their landslide victory in the 2006 midterm elections, Democrats did not have a veto-proof majority in Congress.\textsuperscript{248} In order to pass a funding cutoff for the war, Democrats would also have to gain Republican votes as well. If Bush could keep the Republicans in support of his efforts, the Surge could continue unimpeded.\textsuperscript{249}

In the Bush Administration, many cabinet and military members agreed with General Casey that the U.S. should train Iraqi forces and “quickly minimize its presence in Iraq” in the existing “Stand Up/Stand Down” policy.\textsuperscript{250} In order to resist Democratic pressure, Bush would need to placate his cabinet and ensure the support of the military. For instance, senior political advisor Karl Rove “believed that if any generals were to resign in protest of the Surge,” it would have caused rebellion in the Republican ranks and cause the formation of a bipartisan antiwar alliance.\textsuperscript{251}

In this effort, the President was largely successful at containing dissent. By replacing Rumsfeld and Casey with their popular successors Gates and Petraeus, Bush was able to gain the approval of his skeptical cabinet members. For example,

\textsuperscript{245} McHugh, “A Tale of Two Surges,” 6.
\textsuperscript{246} McHugh, 7.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{248} McHugh, 6.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{251} McHugh, 7.
Condoleezza Rice had expressed her doubt in the new policy, but because Gates was now in command of the Department of Defense, she agreed to “fully endorse” the Surge. With the backing of his full Administration, Bush could now attempt to influence the fractured opinions of the Republican Party (GOP).

Several GOP members had been both publically and privately opposed to the Surge in 2007, and the Bush Administration needed to address these concerns. Bush sent Rice, Gates, and Petraeus, all popular with the GOP establishment, to plead their case. Rice, Gates, and Petraeus all were good choices because they held far more credibility with Congress than the President. For instance, Petraeus made use of his 67% approval rating amongst Republicans. With the help of his subordinates’ full court press on GOP members, Bush managed to placate GOP concerns about the Surge. First, the Bush Administration publicly suggested that the surge would be a “short-term approach,” even though they privately knew this was unlikely. Second, they promised Republicans that a comprehensive review of the strategy in September 2007. By promising these two major concessions, Bush was able ensure Republican unity towards the Iraq war.

With his Republican alliance, Bush could now divide and discredit Democratic opposition to the war. Republicans like Senator John McCain reframed the Democrat’s antiwar sentiment, reiterating Bush’s stance that withdrawal Iraq would harm both U.S. troops and national security. McCain helped to defeat a bill that would contain set dates for withdrawal by stating that any benchmarks would act as “a date for certain

253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid.
258 McHugh, 9.
surrender.” This type of rhetoric preserved Republican support, as the American public was “receptive to the Republican argument that Democrats were precipitously conceding defeat.” A July poll noted that 55% of the public was willing to wait for Petraeus’ report on the Surge in September. Ultimately, Democrats were never able to create substantial obstacles for the Surge in 2007, and the Surge continued unencumbered.

Amidst the public discussion of the Surge, General Petraeus quickly enacted Surge policy and tactics in January 2007. Despite some initial difficulty in ensuring the timely arrival of the Surge brigades, Petraeus was immediately able to begin planning for the first Surge operation. Codenamed Fardh al-Qanoon (or “enforcing the law” in English), the military began targeting Baghdad and its surrounding areas. Fardh al-Qanoon would immediately reverse the tactics used in Iraq from 2003-2006. As noted previously, the objective of the Surge was to provide security to the public. Instead of being holed up in FOBs like before, U.S. and coalition troops would operate where Iraqis “lived, worked, and slept,” and work more closely with Iraqi soldiers and policemen. By securing the public, they would become more cooperative with Americans, sharing intelligence on insurgent activities and helping to rebuild Iraq. The Surge would also limit the rules of engagement for soldiers, restricting the unhelpful collateral damage towards civilians and their property.

The major focus of Fardh al-Qanoon would be to achieve an important objective: securing Baghdad. Planners for the operation wanted to “win the Battle of Baghdad” by

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 Mansoor, Surge, 64.
264 Mansoor, 70.
regaining stability in urban areas and also targeting the so-called Baghdad “belts,” which were targeted in Fardh al-Qanoon’s sister operation entitled Phantom Thunder. The belts were the outer reaches of Baghdad where sectarian groups had garnered a substantial manufacturing and logistical base to attack the capital.\textsuperscript{265} By choking off the belts, U.S. and coalition troops could reduce accelerants, such as “car bombs and suicide bombers,” from disrupting Baghdadi security.\textsuperscript{266} The extent of the belts were massive and the operation would take months to unfold, as the full strength of the Surge brigades would only be felt by June of 2007. The uncovering of a vast network of bomb making factories, command centers, medical stations made it clear that sectarian groups wouldn’t give up the area easily.

Despite an increase in violence, the operation would ultimately prove successful. In May and June of 2007, U.S. troops had suffered a high casualty rate of 227 soldiers killed.\textsuperscript{267} However, by December, only 23 soldiers died, a marked improvement.\textsuperscript{268} By operating inside Baghdad, and providing Iraqis with “24/7 [security] coverage, several developments would help to reduce violence.\textsuperscript{269} For instance, as security improved and permanent U.S. outposts were established, Iraqis were more comfortable sharing information with soldiers because they no longer feared reprisals from insurgent and terrorist groups.\textsuperscript{270}

The new battalion level security stations and company/platoon level outposts also helped to restrict the movement of insurgents.\textsuperscript{271} No longer could militants move about

\textsuperscript{265} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 67.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{267} Hahn, \textit{Missions Accomplished}, 191.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{269} Schlosser, “The Surge,” 31.
\textsuperscript{270} Mansoor, 72.
\textsuperscript{271} Schlosser, 41.
the city unimpeded by U.S. military presence. Iraqi freedom of movement was also hampered by the building of controversial “gated communities.” Walls were erected around Baghdad where insurgent violence was the most prevalent. Though harshly criticized by insurgent propaganda and the international media, barriers between Shi’a and Sunni neighborhoods greatly reduced violence. For instance, walls constructed in the al-Ghazaliyah neighborhood helped to lower the murder rate in that area by up to 50 percent. Ultimately, the neighborhood walls and various traffic obstacles seriously limited both insurgent violence and terrorist attacks such as car bombs and suicide bombers.

Fardh al-Qanoon also marked the first steps towards increased reconstruction efforts across Baghdad. Before the operation, basic services were being neglected in many Baghdadi neighborhoods. In several places, trash and raw sewage waste was common in the streets. In many cases, electricity had to be “rationed, and was only available a few hours a day.” Insurgent groups could plausibly claim that the Iraqi government had “lost complete control” over Baghdad. As security improved, reconstruction efforts could begin. For example, in September 2007, a “four hundred-kilovolt electrical line” know as “Tower 57” was finally repaired, after having become a personal obsession for Petraeus.

272 Mansoor, Surge, 74.
273 Ibid.
274 Ibid.
275 Schlosser, “The Surge,” 47.
276 Ibid.
277 Schlosser, 40.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Mansoor, 119.
Operation Phantom Thunder was also a successful operation. Though insurgent resistance was fierce and deeply entrenched, U.S., coalition, and Iraqi troops were largely able to clear the belts. In May 2007, the final Surge brigade had arrived in Iraq and began work in driving hostile groups, especially al-Qaeda from the outermost parts of Baghdad.\footnote{Schlosser, “The Surge,” 51.} The clearing of the belts was intensive work, and al-Qaeda was dug in deep. In Baqubah, U.S. soldiers were met with a plethora of obstacles, such as “dozens of … improvised explosive devices” and even entire rows of houses that were rigged with explosives to kill the “Americans soldiers clearing them.”\footnote{Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 153-154.} Efforts to stabilize the belts “were uniformly successful” largely in part thanks to the fact that U.S. and coalition forces would “not clear and leave, they would clear and hold.” Fardh al-Qanoon and Phantom Thunder would help to put increasingly heavy pressure on insurgent groups, and Fardh al-Qanoon’s initial success would lead to a growing number of COIN operations throughout Iraq.

The success of the Surge in 2007 was also due in part to increasing U.S. reconciliation with Sunni leaders. In the western al-Anbar province, local Sunnis began “turning” against al-Qaeda, in what became known as the Awakening.\footnote{Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan}, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 294.} Before 2007, Sunni tribes and their sheikhs were alienated by the “end of Sunni political control in Baghdad.”\footnote{Mansoor, 123.} From 2003 to 2006, tribal leaders in al-Anbar chafed at the De-Baathification laws, which eliminated the important jobs and “sources of patronage” that
sheikhs relied upon for their political power.\textsuperscript{285} Alienation of the Sunni tribes ultimately led many Sunni leaders to join the insurgency or support al-Qaeda.\textsuperscript{286}

However, the tribes had become increasingly incensed by al-Qaeda’s brutal de facto rule in al-Anbar province. In 2005, some Sunni tribes tried to participate in the December 2005 elections after the failed boycott of the January elections, and were met with al-Qaeda violence. Al-Qaeda ruthlessly undertook a campaign of “murder and intimidation” against Sunnis that opposed their will.\textsuperscript{287}

Al-Qaeda also sought to aggressively impose a “brutal interpretation of Shari’a law on a Sunni tribal culture that was largely secular.”\textsuperscript{288} Egregious actions by al-Qaeda, such as the lack of burial of corpses within a 24-hour period, sacrilegious to the Islamic faith, rankled the sheikhs.\textsuperscript{289} Most importantly, al-Qaeda had put an end to the sheikh’s smuggling routes, which further reduced their ability to gain patronage.\textsuperscript{290} Soon enough, al-Qaeda would face a Sunni backlash.

The Sunni tribes of al-Anbar province had tried unsuccessfully to unseat al-Qaeda on several occasions, and their attempts only increased al-Qaeda’s retaliation. In one rebellion, infighting had left the Sunni tribes vulnerable, and al-Qaeda took advantage. Three fourths of the sheikhs involved in the early rebellion were murdered in what one U.S. colonel called the “night of long knives.”\textsuperscript{291} Increasingly desperate, Sunnis began to seek more cooperation with American forces. Sunnis had largely supported the resistance to American occupation of Iraq, but al-Qaeda’s violence had thrown them into the arms

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{285} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 123.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{287} Mansoor, 124.
\item \textsuperscript{288} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{290} Mansoor, 125.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
of their professed enemies. As one Sunni leader put it, “Life became intolerable. So we started looking for salvation, no matter who it was.”

By the summer of 2006, Americans renewed interest on securing al-Anbar and its major city, Ramadi. General Casey had tasked a brigade under the command of Colonel Sean MacFarland with retaking the city but asked MacFarland “to fix Ramadi, but don’t do a Fallujah.” Instead of pursuing the strategy known derisively as “Drive-by COIN” that had been popular before the surge, MacFarland and his troops would pursue reconciliation with the Sunni tribes.

At this point, the Sunni Awakening had coalesced under the leadership of a young sheikh named Abdul Sattar Abu Risha al-Rishawi. Controlling only a minor tribe, Sattar had miraculously come to control a renewed Sunni rebellion. In September, Sattar had managed to assemble a meeting of 50 sheikhs, where they promised to “declare war on al-Qaeda” and to “consider American forces friendly, and to forbid attacks on them.” MacFarland took advantage of this development to engineer an offensive to retake Ramadi, a prototype that would be used as an example in the following Surge. MacFarland utilized the walls and outposts defensive strategy to secure the city, in concert with allowing the Sunni tribes to join local police forces, removing al-Qaeda from the city. With Sattar’s help, Ramadi was back under control of U.S. and coalition forces. Al-Anbar was soon able to be put on a path towards reconstruction. The U.S. military’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) was utilized to

292 Mansoor, Surge, 125.
293 Schlosser, 37.
294 Mansoor, 128.
295 Mansoor, 125.
296 Ibid.
297 Mansoor, 126.
298 Mansoor, 128-131.
provide millions of dollars in contracts for the Sunni tribes to fix critical infrastructure and other essential services.299

As the Surge began to be implemented, the Awakening spread to other parts of Iraq. As Mansoor states, “the Surge had acted as the catalyst for the spread of the tribal rebellion across much of western and central Iraq.”300 Under the direction of General Petraeus, supporting the Awakening and reconciliation with Sunnis “was not optional.”301 As Awakening franchises became ubiquitous across Iraq, the U.S. began to support local armed neighborhood watch groups such as the *Ibnaa al-Iraq* (or Sons of Iraq).302 Even though they had been trying to kill American troops just weeks prior to this development, but the U.S. command thought it was well worth the risk based on how violent Iraq had become.303 Eventually, the Sons of Iraq became crucial to ensuring Iraqi security, and many soon entered into both the U.S. and the Iraqi governments’ payroll.304 Partly a strategy to assuage fears of Sunni militias by Shi’a leaders, the Sons of Iraq being paid by the government nonetheless gave the Awakening some legitimacy in the eyes of the Shi’a leaders.

Despite notable reconciliation between Shi’as and Sunnis there was still a lot of work to be done. Shi’a leaders such as Prime Minister al-Maliki were still deeply suspicious of Sunni intentions. Even worse, the central government could barely control the Shi’a militias. It was clear that the U.S. would also need to spend considerable effort

300 Mansoor, 120.
301 Mansoor, 137.
302 Ibid.
304 Mansoor, 142.
defeating the Shi’a insurgency. Surprisingly, initiative from the Prime Minister’s office would serve as the unlikely catalyst for bringing the Shi’a militias to heel.

With the emergence of the Surge and the Awakening, Sunni insurgents, as well as al-Qaeda, were in disarray. Shi’a militias would now be the main target of U.S. and coalition forces. At the end of 2007, groups linked to the Jaish al-Mahdi were continuing to attack U.S. forces, and now had deadly new techniques at their disposal. In November, Shi’a militants attacked a U.S. combat outpost with explosives and ball-bearings, which wounded 12 soldiers, and damaged or destroyed 24 vehicles. The new tactics were linked to Iran, which increasingly began to meddle in Iraqi politics.

Iran’s main goal was to ensure a “weak and pliable state in Iraq,” which could be influenced to help Iran pursue its interest of establishing Iranian hegemony in the Middle East. During increased sectarianism of 2006, a branch of Iran’s Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps military wing called the Qods force, began to infiltrate sections of the Jaish al-Mahdi. Their goal was to “create a client proxy force” beholden to Iran, much like Iran had done with Hezbollah in Lebanon. In 2006, Qods personnel were active inside Iraq, and had been smuggling arms to the Jaish al-Mahdi. These arms were increasingly deadly, like explosive penetrators that “could destroy an M1A1 tank.”

Initially, the main obstacle to combating the Jaish al-Mahdi militia was Prime Minister al-Maliki. Al-Maliki’s government was full of sectarian ministers that had largely failed to produce any political progress alongside the progress of the Surge. In

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306 Ibid.
307 Ibid.
308 Mansoor, 167.
309 Mansoor, 83.
310 Ibid.
311 Ibid.
private, al-Maliki had promised President Bush that he would allow for U.S. operations to take place in predominantly Shi’a neighborhoods, which had been previously off limits.\footnote{Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 49.} But in practice, al-Maliki’s government was beholden to al-Sadr and the Jaish al-Mahdi for political support, which constrained his actions.\footnote{Mansoor, 48.} Until Maliki was willing to stand up to the Shi’a militias, the Surge would likely fail.

Soon, an opportunity presented itself for al-Maliki to assert more control over the Shi’a militias. With the growing influence of Iran and increasing pressure from the U.S. Surge, al-Sadr began to lose control over the Jaish al-Mahdi.\footnote{Mansoor, 173.} Since al-Sadr had entered government, he was forced to moderate his political aims to align with al-Maliki’s government. Sadr’s moderation pushed parts of his militia to “turn their backs on al-Sadr’s leadership,” and turn to funding themselves by way of “organized crime.”\footnote{Schlosser, “The Surge,” 79.}

In the spring of 2007, the Jaish al-Mahdi pulled out of al-Maliki’s government, increasing al-Maliki’s willingness to retaliate against them.\footnote{Mansoor, 173.} In addition to their political exit, the Jaish al-Mahdi increasingly fought against its rival, the Badr Brigade. The Badr Brigade had become increasingly close to the central government and was embedded in its security forces. The Jaish al-Mahdi battled for control of Southern Iraq, and had undertaken several assassination attempts of government figures, both successful and unsuccessful.\footnote{Mansoor, 174.}

The final straw for al-Maliki would be the violence in the city of Karbala, where Ayatollah Sistani had threatened to cancel the religious celebration of mid-Sha’ban in the

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\begin{enumerate}
\item Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 49.
\item Mansoor, 48.
\item Mansoor, 173.
\item Schlosser, “The Surge,” 79.
\item Mansoor, 173.
\end{enumerate}
city. Likened to the “pope canceling Easter or Christmas Mass,” cancelled celebrations in Karbala would likely see the end of al-Maliki’s government. The government immediately began a “show of force” to assert its control of Karbala that August. At the head of a large vehicle convoy, al-Maliki personally oversaw the arrests of several Sadrist leaders in Karbala. The Karbala fiasco provided huge political gains to al-Maliki’s government. The Shi’a community blamed al-Sadr and the Jaish al-Mahdi for the violence in Karbala, and al-Sadr was forced to agree to a cease fire with the Iraqi government and U.S. forces in order to save face. With al-Maliki’s intervention, a temporary improvement in security conditions occurred.

Despite the success of the Surge in reducing violence, there was very little in the way of political reconciliation taking place. Al-Maliki was front and center in the political stalemate. Despite the veneer of a balanced ethnic government, al-Maliki was extremely suspicious of the Sunnis. Attempts had been made to distribute power amongst the various ethnic groups, but the Prime Minister undercut the other groups at every possible chance. For instance, al-Maliki used his Office of the Commander in Chief to bypass Sunni officials and work directly with the predominantly Shi’a military.

Additionally, Maliki was wary of the Sons of Iraq, crucial to the Sunni Awakening movement. Calling them the “hidden army,” al-Maliki was fearful that the Sons of Iraq would work to undermine the government. As Mansoor states, the Sons of

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318 Mansoor, Surge, 174.
319 Mansoor, 175.
320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 Bailey, Understanding the U.S. Wars, 299.
325 Ibid.
326 Mansoor, 215.
Iraq were hardly hidden. All Sons of Iraq members had been entered into a biometric identification database run by the government and were also paid directly by MNF-I (and by extension the Iraqi government).327

Relations with other political figures were also sour. Al-Maliki and his rival Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi both competed during the improving security to advance their own political gains. Hashemi tried to lay claim to the Sons of Iraq, which fortified al-Maliki’s “hidden army” claims.328 The United States was relying on an increasingly divisive Iraqi government, and huge political developments, such as repealing De-Baathification, passing a budget, oil sharing, and signing a Status of Forces agreement looked nearly impossible.

However, several political developments began to take place. At the local government level, leaders of the Sunnis in al-Anbar province and Shi’as in Karbala came together to discuss ways to increase cooperation between the two religious groups.329 Both groups managed to come together to sign a reconciliation accord, as well as to “address … the issue of displaced Iraqis.”330

National government political progress quickly heated up as well.331 Despite al-Maliki’s dysfunctional handling of politics, political progress would be pushed by other national leaders. Lack of political progress motivated several Iraqi leaders to propose forming a new government, and this vote of no confidence had scared Maliki enough to bring him back into political negotiations with Sunnis and Kurds.332 In the Iraqi Council
of Representatives, Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashadani began to skillfully engineer political compromise. In a matter of a few months, Iraqi lawmakers had passed a “grand bargain,” where the 2008 budget, amnesty for Baath members, provincial powers act, and even a symbolic redesign of the Iraqi flag had all been approved.\textsuperscript{333} Despite national reconciliation not being achieved, political progress was being made.\textsuperscript{334}

The political progress in early 2008 led al-Maliki to adopt an almost overconfident outlook in Iraq. This overconfidence would lead al-Maliki to pursue further control of his Shi’a political base, ultimately leading to another showdown between the government and the Iranian backed Jaish al-Mahdi.\textsuperscript{335} The showdown would occur in the southern city of Basra, a bastion of the Jaish al-Mahdi’s power, where al-Maliki pursued an action similar to the one in Karbala. The al-Maliki led an assault on Basra which would become known as \textit{Saulat al-Farsan}, or “Charge of the Knights.”

At the beginning of 2008, the military situation in Basra was dire. As part of the coalition forces, the United Kingdom was tasked with keeping the peace in Basra and had largely held the city without incident prior to 2007.\textsuperscript{336} However, while the United States began implementing the Surge, the British began to withdraw. By 2007, British troops, who were anticipating a withdrawal from Basra due to their own domestic political pressure, consolidated their forces to one single base at the Basra airport.\textsuperscript{337} So, like the United States had done elsewhere in Iraq prior to 2007, British troops left the Iraqi army and police to patrol Basra, opening the door for increased sectarianism inside the city.

\textsuperscript{333} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 227-228.
\textsuperscript{334} Mansoor, 231.
\textsuperscript{335} Mansoor, 233.
\textsuperscript{336} Mansoor, 234.
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid.
Eventually, competition between the Badr Brigade and Jaish al-Mahdi gave way to the Jaish al-Mahdi’s sole control over Basra, with al-Sadr claiming personal responsibility for “forcing the British out of Iraq.”

Since the British pullout, al-Maliki was unable to reassert government control of Basra. However, with the political “grand bargain” in 2008, al-Maliki was politically empowered to do something about the city. During the 2008 Shi’a Ashura holiday, the Jaish al-Mahdi tried to kidnap al-Maliki’s national security advisor, Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, giving al-Maliki the perfect opportunity to rally a military response. With al-Maliki “on the warpath against Iranian-backed militants of the Jaish al-Mahdi special groups,” the United States began to pay closer attention. U.S. leaders warned al-Maliki and his generals that a quick excursion like that in Karbala would not be feasible in Basra, due to the “deeply entrenched militias and criminal organizations.” It would be possible to clear Basra, but only if Iraq had enough time and resources to implement it.

Despite U.S. advice, al-Maliki rushed to “clean up Basra.” In March, al-Maliki informed the U.S. he intended to deploy troops within 24 hours, and would go “personally to Basra … with his AK-47, to meet with local leaders to resolve the situation.” This caught MNF-I unawares, leaving the Iraqi Army to begin the invasion by itself. Due to poor intelligence, logistics, and weaponry, al-Maliki’s offensive stalled.

339 Ibid.
340 Mansoor, 239.
341 Mansoor, 238.
342 Ibid.
343 Mansoor, 239.
344 Ibid.
345 Mansoor, 238.
346 Mansoor, 241.
when it entered the outskirts of the city. Al-Maliki was forced to hunker down while Jaish al-Mahdi rocket fire thundered overhead, which resulted in the killing of his head of security.

Concerned that al-Maliki’s defeat in Basra would ultimately endanger al-Maliki’s national political control, General Petraeus stepped in to ensure MNF-I could help in any way possible. U.S. and British forces rapidly deployed to Basra and were able to augment the Iraqi army and helped to push back the Jaish al-Mahdi. Despite al-Sadr trying to broker a ceasefire, al-Maliki continued the offensive to its conclusion, and ensured that the “Jaish al-Mahdi never again contested control of Basra.” Al-Maliki’s ultimate victory in Basra forced Iran to reconsider who it supported in Iraq. With the downfall of the Jaish al-Mahdi in Basra, as well as in other cities, Iran had come to the “conclusion that Iranian interest would be better served if Maliki remained in power.”

With Iran’s Qods force supporting the legitimate Iraqi government, and successful operations by the Iraqi and MNF-I forces across Iraq, the security situation in Iraq improved dramatically by July of 2008. The only question remaining was how long the Surge would continue to be U.S. policy. With the U.S. presidential elections coming up, the future of U.S. forces in Iraq was in question.

On November 17, 2008, both the U.S. and Iraqi government signed a status of forces agreement that would see U.S. and coalition combat troops withdraw from Iraqi cities and towns by the end of June 2009, and all troops leave Iraq by 2011. The basis

348 Mansoor, 242.
349 Ibid.
350 Mansoor, 243.
352 Mansoor, 258.
of the agreement was that Iraq “had exercised its sovereignty” and that the “tenure of U.S. forces on Iraqi soil was finite.” The status of forces agreement also stipulated that U.S. contractors and military personnel would now be subject to Iraq’s laws. Most importantly, the three year withdrawal date would also give both the U.S. and Iraq to negotiate a longer term agreement for U.S. presence in the country.

In reality, the negotiations for continued U.S. presence in Iraq did not materialize. The Iraqi government made no significant attempt to keep U.S. troops in Iraq. Nationalist sentiment in Iraq had pressured Iraqi politicians to call for the end of the foreign occupation. Similarly, in the U.S., President Obama took office and initiated a campaign promise to withdraw from Iraq. The U.S. would honor the previous status of forces agreement, continue its withdrawal, and leave Iraq before the December 2011 deadline. U.S. combat forces would leave by 2010, and then the U.S. role would be strictly limited to advising Iraqi forces.

The ultimate result of both the U.S. and Iraqi efforts to avoid a protracted conflict would be the return of sectarianism. Mansoor writes that after the last U.S. troops departed, political crisis returned to Iraq. Prime Minister al-Maliki quickly “went after his political enemies,” especially Sunni Vice President al-Hashemi, who he accused of running a Sunni death squad. Additionally, as the U.S. withdrew, al-Qaeda was “given a second lease on life”, resurfacing as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

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354 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
356 Mansoor, 271.
357 Mansoor, 272.
358 Ibid.
360 Mansoor, 272.
361 Ibid.
Increasing sectarianism and the emergence of the powerful ISIS group would haunt Iraq for years to come.

Despite the end result, the Surge may have important insight into what kind of counterterrorism strategy is the most successful. Was the Surge more effective than the previous 2003-2006 period and the subsequent withdrawal? In the next section, the tactics and politics of both the Surge and the withdrawal will be taken into consideration while evaluating trends such as U.S. and coalition troop levels, Iraqi civilian casualties, Iraqi public opinion, and the rate of terrorism. The comparison will help to determine whether hard counterterrorism does in fact result in a failed counterterrorism effort.

**Iraq Surge and Withdrawal Data Trends 2007-2011**

From 2007-2011, a general counterterrorism strategy of counterinsurgency was used. In comparison to the traditional war strategy utilized from 2003-2006, counterinsurgency utilizes tactics that are less aggressive and more cognizant of collateral damage. Therefore, the Surge and withdrawal periods should show trends that indicate lower troop levels and civilian casualties, higher public opinion of the United States and the Iraq war effort, and lower rates of terrorism, pointing to counterterrorism success. In the following section, the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism causes counterterrorism failure will be tested against a softer counterterrorism approach in the Surge. First, the troop level trends of U.S. and coalition forces is examined. Second, the relationship between troop levels and civilian casualties is analyzed. Third, troop levels and civilian casualties are investigated to understand their role in Iraqi public opinion trends. Fourth, trends in troop levels, civilian casualties, and Iraqi public opinion will be looked at to explain trends in the rate of terrorism during the Surge period. Lastly, the
implications of all aforementioned trends will be discussed to help determine whether the hard counterterrorism of the 2003-2006 period was more or less successful than the Surge.

**Troop Levels 2007-2011**

During 2007-2011, two general trends of troop levels are apparent. First, from January 2007 to October 2007, troop levels increased from 146,650 troops to 182,668 troops as the five additional U.S. Surge brigades were introduced to Iraq (Figure 5). Second, From November 2007 to November 2011, a very gradual troop withdrawal from 182,668 in 2007 to a complete withdrawal of U.S. combat troops occurred in 2011. These two trends coincide with military planning during the Surge period.

The general consensus was that the Surge would be a temporary fix, as domestic pressure was mounting to end the war. As Mansoor stated, the Surge “would be our last, best shot at salvaging victory.” Additionally, Petraeus aimed to make the withdrawal of Surge forces official by July of 2008, not long before the U.S. election which would spell the end of Bush’s second term in office. This way, the Bush administration ensured that Iraq’s future would be determined by the new President, Barack Obama. The two trends demarcate the change of policy from President Bush to President Obama, where Obama enacted a policy of facilitating full withdrawal of American combat troops. This break in policy is best signified by when the war was renamed from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn in 2010. In the new strategy, Obama would ended combat operations in Iraq in 2010, and honoring the agreement to withdraw all forces by

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363 Mansoor, 252.
In the next section, these two trends of troop levels will be examined to determine the relationship between troop numbers and civilian casualties.

Figure 7. Total Number of U.S. and Coalition Troop in Iraq from 2007-2011

Civilian Casualties 2007-2011

From 2007 to 2011, Iraqi civilian casualties gradually dropped from more than 3,000 in January 2007 to an average of 500 per month past July of 2008. During the true Surge from 2007 to 2008, casualties were still very high due to increasing military operations which were needed to wrest control from Iraqi sectarian and terrorist groups. General Petraeus and his staff were aware violence would be prevalent during the surge, as the U.S. made efforts to better secure the population. Parallel to civilian casualties, U.S. and coalition troop casualties in the first five months of the Surge were the most of

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366 O’Hanlon and Livingston, “Iraq Index,” 18.
any five month span of the war.\textsuperscript{368} However, by the summer of 2008, the successful military operations gave way to decreases in both Iraqi civilian and U.S. military casualties. Casualties didn’t completely disappear, but they had eventually reached controllable levels. So, compared to the troop level counts, the trend of civilian casualties were extremely similar. Troop level and civilian casualty trends point to a relationship where less troops correlated with less civilian casualties. Likely, changes to counterinsurgency strategy helped to bring the Iraqi civil war under control, and by the end of the Surge, military offensives were less aggressive as well as less needed. However, this reduction in casualties as troop levels increased could also be attributed to other factors, such as the reintegration of Sunnis via the Awakening.

However, evidence points to the fact that civilian casualties most likely increased after the U.S. withdrawal was complete. By 2014, a huge spike in civilian casualties occurred, and civilian casualties were much higher than during the Surge. Likely, this spike can be attributed to the U.S. withdrawal, which allowed political upheaval and terrorist violence to return to Iraq.

\textsuperscript{368} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 148.
Iraqi Public Opinion 2007-2011

In continuance with the declining Iraqi public opinion of U.S. and Coalition forces and the progress of the war from 2003 to 2007, the Surge period started out with dismal approval ratings. In February 2007, 78% of those polled opposed the presence of U.S. and coalition troops (Table 5). Additionally, 31% of those polled blamed the international military presence for the violence occurring in Iraq, more than double the percentage of any other entity blamed as seen in Table 6. Split into ethnic groups or regions, the same pre-Surge trends continued. Both Shi’as and Sunnis opposed the continuing presence of U.S. and Coalition troops, while 85% of Kurds believed the security situation in Iraq would become worse with their withdrawal.\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{369} Iraq Body Count, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/.
\textsuperscript{370} O’Hanlon and Campbell, “Iraq Index” December 21, 2007, 50.
Table 5. Percentage of Iraqis Who Support U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq\textsuperscript{371}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do You Support the Presence of U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq?</th>
<th>Strongly/ Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Strongly/ Somewhat Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2007</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Percentage of Responses on Who is Most to Blame for Violence in Iraq (February 2007)\textsuperscript{372}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Do You Blame Most for the Violence that is Occurring in the Country?</th>
<th>February 2007</th>
<th>August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. / Coalition Forces</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi Government</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Militias/ Leaders</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite Militias</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qaeda/ Foreign Jihads</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{371} O’Hanlon and Campbell, “Iraq Index,” December 21, 2007, 47.

\textsuperscript{372} O’Hanlon and Campbell, 46.
Eventually, the success of the Surge in achieving better security across Iraq led to slightly better outlook of the war in public opinion. As early as September of 2007, Iraqis blamed the U.S. and coalition less (19%) and Al Qaeda and jihadist groups more (21%) for the violence in Iraq (Table 6). However, overall approval for U.S. and coalition troops would only very slightly improve. In contrast with 78% disapproval of international forces in February 2007, 73% disapproval was recorded in February 2008 (Table 7).

Table 7. Percentage of Iraqis Who Support U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do You Support the Presence of U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq?</th>
<th>Strongly/ Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Strongly/ Somewhat Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2008</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite miniscule gains in international forces approval, the growing security conditions in Iraq led to better future outlooks of the war’s progress. February 2009 marked a high water mark for the Surge, with the transition to withdrawal taking effect.

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Iraqi public opinion reflects the Surge improvements in Iraqi security. 52% of Iraqis believed the security situation in Iraq had improved over the past 6 months before 2009 (Table 8). Also, 58% of Iraqis believed that things were going well in Iraq, compared to 35% in February 2007 (Table 9).

Table 8. Percentage of Iraqis Who Believe Iraq is Heading in the Right Direction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Past Six Months, has the Security Situation in Iraq Become Better, Worse, or About the Same?</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2008</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2007</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Percentage of Iraqis Who Believe Things in Iraq Are Good Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Would You Say Things Are Going in Iraq Overall These Days?</th>
<th>February 2009</th>
<th>February 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good/ Quite Good</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad/ Quite Bad</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good/ Quite Good</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad/ Quite Bad</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[374\] O’Hanlon and Livingston, “Iraq Index,” December 11, 2009, 42.

\[375\] Ibid.
By 2010 however, Surge gains in public support began to decline. As U.S. and coalition forces withdrew, public opinion took a drop. Iraqi beliefs that the security conditions were improved fell from 74% in October of 2009 to 59% in April 2011 (Table 10). In addition, 51% of Iraqis had believed the country was headed in the right direction in October 2009, whereas only 38% believed so in April 2011 (Table 11).

Table 10. Percentage of Iraqis Who Believe Security Has Gotten Better Over the Last Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has Security Gotten Better or Worse Over the Last Year?</th>
<th>April 2011</th>
<th>October 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Percentage of Iraqis Who Believe Iraq is Heading in the Right Direction\(^3\text{77}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the Country Headed in the Right or Wrong Direction?</th>
<th>April 2011</th>
<th>October 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Direction</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Right Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Direction</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Wrong Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Direction</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>Wrong Direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends in public opinion reveal that while most Iraqis didn’t support U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, they did support gains in Iraqi security from sectarian and terrorist violence. As international forces withdrew, public opinion once again slid. A change in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy, coupled with troop withdrawals, led to reduced civilian casualties as well as improved public opinion in some facets. However, it should be noted that too few troops led to decreased public confidence in Iraq at the end of the U.S. presence.

The Rate of Terrorism from 2007-2011

During the surge and subsequent withdrawal of U.S. and coalition troops, three trends in the rate of terrorism can be noted. First, the initial two years of the Surge resulted in dramatic spikes in terrorism, higher than most months of 2006. In June and October of 2007, terrorist attacks reached record numbers, at 223 and 198 recorded attacks respectively. Likely, this increase in attacks can be contributed to backlash against

U.S. and Sunni Awakening gains by al-Qaeda.\textsuperscript{378} Second, while record spikes occurred, subsequent months leveled out, and spikes were far less common after 2008 as security improved. Additionally, after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, terrorist attacks predominantly led by ISIS began to pick up and by 2014, had surpassed even the highest levels of attacks recorded during the U.S. occupation.

The record setting spikes in terrorism from 2007 to 2008 can be explained by two phenomena. First, the changing tactics of U.S. and coalition forces are partly to blame, at least at first. By focusing on securing the Iraqi population, the U.S. military had begun to interfere with insurgent and terrorist operations. Because COIN tactics impeded the movement of various violent groups, they tried to combat the improving security stability in Iraq.\textsuperscript{379} Second, the large terrorism spikes can be interpreted as the high water mark of the sectarian Iraqi Civil War. Aggressive tactics during the 2003-2006 period led to increasing instability in Iraq, which had made the U.S. enact the Surge to rein in sectarian and terrorist violence. In order to curb the violence, U.S. and coalition forces first had to increase the security situation in the country. After the implementation of the Surge, terrorist attacks did in fact lower, though not as substantially as the U.S. had hoped.

Possibly, the short term Surge might not have been long enough to ensure the stability of the Iraqi government or the security of Iraq in general. Perhaps, as some suggest, the Surge should have been more concerned with the long term security of Iraq, rather than a ploy by the U.S. government to save face.\textsuperscript{380} Surge terrorist attacks diminished from 2007 levels, but the withdrawal period witnessed terrorist attack levels

\textsuperscript{378} Mansoor, \textit{Surge}, 140.
\textsuperscript{379} Mansoor, 73.
\textsuperscript{380} Mansoor, 275.
that were higher than levels of terrorist attacks seen during the 2003-2006 period. Relative stability in attack levels that had been achieved were quickly reversed once U.S. troops no longer had a significant presence. By March 2014, the emergence of ISIS as a grave threat to Iraq had prompted terrorist attack levels to hit an all-time high of 503 attacks in a single month.

In comparison to troop levels and civilian casualties trends, terrorist attacks levels do yield some correlation. Tactics seem to be a relevant factor, like the new Surge focus on improving security and moving off of FOB’s, which yielded important dividends. If tactics hadn’t changed from 2003-2006 it could be argued that increased troops yield a reduction in both civilian casualties and terrorist attacks. As time went on, it is clear that less troops in later years opened the door for an increase in casualties and terrorist attacks after the U.S. withdrawal. Terrorist attacks would increase linearly into 2014, so perhaps a more sustained U.S. and coalition military effort could have helped to further reduction of terrorism. So, a change to softer counterterrorism strategies could have plausibly resulted in less terrorism. Therefore, the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism decreases counterterrorism success is possible, but not entirely proven. Other factors, such as increased political cooperation between Shia’s and Sunnis, and the emergence of the Awakening during the Surge could also be at play.
Conclusion

In attempting to understand the impacts of hard counterterrorism versus other counterterrorism tactics, understanding the U.S. war in Iraq is crucial. By looking at both

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382 Ibid.
the post invasion period from 2003-2006 and the Surge and withdrawal from 2007-2011, it is possible to compare the strategies. In the 2003-2006 period, temporary increases in troops, paired with the use of aggressive military tactics, might have led to an increase in civilian casualties, Iraqi public discontent with the war, and a rising level of terrorist attacks in Iraq. With the Surge and subsequent withdrawal, COIN tactics and a more sustained increase in troops initially led to an increase, but then eventually a minor decrease, in terrorist attacks. Possibly, if the Surge had maintained adequate troop levels, terrorist attacks might have reduced to manageable levels, instead of even an increase in instability during the ISIS era. But, other explanations are also possible. Maybe, al-Qaeda and insurgent groups decided to bide their time until they knew U.S and international forces intended to leave the country. So, the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism leads to counterterrorism campaign failure is possible, but not entirely conclusive.
CHAPTER 4

Afghanistan: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Strategies from 2001-2016

Since 2001, the United States has waged war in Afghanistan against the al-Qaeda organization and its Afghan ally, the Taliban. Generally, this war effort has entailed hard offensive counterterrorism strategies to reduce al-Qaeda’s global reach. After the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration quickly dislodged the Taliban using heavy aerial bombardment and help from an Afghan Northern Alliance ground offensive. Soon enough, President Bush handed control over to the interim Afghan government and a UN sanctioned international coalition designed to bring stability to Afghanistan, while U.S. forces focused on hunting down al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. However, the 2001-2008 period resulted in a renewed Taliban insurgency against the Afghan government and international forces. Following the success of the Surge in Iraq, Obama sought to salvage and win the war in Afghanistan following a similar counterinsurgency strategy from 2009-2016. Despite considerable efforts, the Surge in Afghanistan failed to bring about the end of the war, and U.S. forces are still committed to the country to this day.

The following chapter looks to analyze which strategy was the most effective at countering terrorism in Afghanistan. First, an in-depth qualitative section looks at the history politics, and strategy of the 2001-2008 period of the war under President Bush. Second, trends in troop levels, Afghan civilian casualties, Afghan public opinion, and terrorist attacks during the first phase of the war are presented. Third, the history, politics, and strategy of the Obama Surge and withdrawal eras are examined. Lastly, the aforementioned quantitative trends of the Surge and withdrawal are evaluated.
Ultimately, this chapter should help to examine the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism leads to counterterrorism failure.

**History and Politics of Afghanistan 2001-2008**

To understand the reasons the United States went to war in Afghanistan, it’s important to also understand the history of Afghanistan since the 1980’s. According to Tamim Ansary, Afghanistan became embroiled in Islamic-motivated revolutionary activity during this period. During the Cold War tensions between the United States and the USSR, Afghanistan became a prime target for communist expansion. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan, the Muslim world would view Afghanistan as the nexus of a burgeoning Islamist movement.³⁸³ Thousands of Islamist activists from around the Middle East flocked to the country to join fighters known as the *Mujahideen* to repel the Soviet invaders.³⁸⁴ Eventually, after several long and brutal years of war, Arab Mujahideen fighters were able to force a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Despite the overwhelming superiority of Soviet troops, Afghanistan fighters held their own, benefiting from the support of the United States and Pakistan, who wished to curtail Soviet interests in Central Asia. Despite achieving their Cold War interests, the U.S. and Pakistan ultimately contributed to people and groups who would later wreak havoc against them.

Fighting alongside the Mujahideen was a young Osama bin Laden. Heir to a wealthy Saudi family, bin Laden rejected his family’s “jetsetting” lifestyle and instead sought to leave his mark as a pious Islamist fighter in Afghanistan.³⁸⁵ Bin Laden’s role in

³⁸⁴ Ibid.
³⁸⁵ Ansary, 246.
fighting the Soviets was actually rather modest. Bin Laden was better known for the guest house he established across the Pakistani border in Peshawar for fighters who would ultimately enter Afghanistan to fight the Soviets.\textsuperscript{386} The house would eventually become known as “the base,” or \textit{al-qaeda} in Arabic.\textsuperscript{387} As the victorious Arab fighters of the Mujahideen returned home following the Soviet withdrawal, bin Laden would repurpose al-Qaeda as the name for his newly created Islamist organization.\textsuperscript{388}

Al-Qaeda would start to gain notoriety as bin Laden began to develop a grudge against Saudi Arabia and the United States. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and began threatening Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, bin Laden confidently told the Saudis that he could defend the country with an Islamist Arab army.\textsuperscript{389} However, Saudi Arabia turned to the United States to defend them from Iraq, allowing U.S. forces to use Saudi territory as a base.\textsuperscript{390} Bin Laden was infuriated that the Saudis refused his help, and publicly criticized the Saudi royal family.\textsuperscript{391} Soon enough, bin Laden was asked to leave the country.\textsuperscript{392}

Bin Laden ended up moving to Sudan, where he and his al-Qaeda organization began to research the possibilities of terrorism in achieving their political goals.\textsuperscript{393} By November 1995, al-Qaeda began testing their methods of terrorism, most notably the bombing of a U.S. compound in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.\textsuperscript{394} The Riyadh attack was successful in killing several Americans, prompting the CIA to take notice of bin Laden

\textsuperscript{386} Ansary, \textit{Games Without Rules}, 246.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{389} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{390} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{391} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid.
and al-Qaeda. CIA pressure on the Sudanese government forced bin Laden to once again relocate, this time to his old stomping grounds in Afghanistan and Pakistan. From the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, bin Laden would grow his organization and carry out several more terrorist attacks against the United States.

During this time, bin Laden developed relationships with both the Taliban government in Afghanistan and the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (or ISI) in Pakistan. To gain the Taliban’s trust, bin Laden funded Taliban efforts to buy the loyalty of various Afghan warlords. Once the Taliban had taken control of the Afghan capital of Kabul, bin Laden fully embraced the religious sentiment of the Taliban movement’s founder, Mullah Omar. As reward for his loyalty, the Taliban awarded bin Laden control of various properties throughout Afghanistan, such as Tarnak Farms and Tora Bora.

Soon enough, al-Qaeda had built up an impressive infrastructure for future terrorist operations. In 1998, despite his dubiously low level of religious authority, bin Laden issued a fatwa which declared war against Israel, the United States, and the West. Al-Qaeda claimed that killing Americans was now religiously acceptable, and al-Qaeda promptly planned more attacks against the United States. Soon after the fatwa, al-Qaeda operatives successfully carried out attacks against the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar al Salaam, Tanzania, killing over 200 people and injuring thousands.

396 Ansary, 247.
397 Ibid.
398 Ibid.
399 Ibid.
400 Ansary, 247-248.
401 Ansary, 250-251.
Parallel to the rise of al-Qaeda, the Taliban emerged out of the chaos of the post-Soviet Afghan period. The early 1990’s saw several Afghan warlords fight for power in two successive civil wars. First, Mujahideen groups collectively fought against the Afghan communist government that the USSR left behind. After the collapse of the USSR, the Afghan government lost all financial support from the Soviets, and the communist regime quickly lost control of Kabul. In the second civil war, Mujahideen groups fought amongst each other for control of the capital. The civil war period was the perfect incubator for the Taliban’s emergence. In response to the rampant violence and corruption of the warlords, Taliban leader Mullah Omar began to implement an austere version of sharia law.

Pakistan’s relations with the Taliban would also have a major impact on the future U.S. intervention. Pakistan’s ISI had supported the Mujahideen effort to repel the USSR through arms smuggling and monetary funds. During the Afghan civil war, the ISI had decided that the Taliban was an ideal proxy to promote Pakistani authority in Afghanistan. The ISI-Taliban marriage was easily facilitated, as Mullah Omar had close ties to the Pakistani religious community. In exchange for food, money, and weapons, the Taliban would help to achieve Pakistan’s two geopolitical goals in Afghanistan. First, Pakistan believed that a Pakistan friendly regime in Afghanistan would be of strategic help in case

402 Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 115.
403 Pape, 115.
404 Ibid.
405 Ibid.
406 Ansary, Games without Rules, 253.
407 Pape, 117.
of a war with India.\textsuperscript{408} Second, the Taliban could be used to help train guerilla soldiers for use in the contested India-Pakistan Kashmir region.\textsuperscript{409} By co-opting the Taliban, Pakistan believed it could control Afghan foreign policy.\textsuperscript{410}

However, Pakistan’s support of the Taliban would come back to haunt them. Pakistan might have sent the Taliban into Afghanistan, but the Taliban would also begin to exert their influence within Pakistan as well\textsuperscript{411}. The Pakistani military elite had failed to understand that the appeal of the Taliban would also appeal to millions of their own citizens.\textsuperscript{412} As Ansary states, “the Taliban were not only Islamists, but Pushtoon chauvinists” who attracted the support of Pakistani Pushtoon tribes who had a contentious relationship with the state of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{413} The Taliban had also made important allies with Pakistani radical religious parties and “smuggling mafias” that operated along the Pakistan-Afghan border.\textsuperscript{414} When the United States demanded the extradition of Osama bin Laden, Pakistan could do little to help. Taking visible efforts to combat al-Qaeda against the wishes of the Taliban would ultimately destabilize the Pakistani government.\textsuperscript{415}

In the United States, President Clinton ordered several attempts to kill or capture bin Laden. Despite having plenty of information on where bin Laden lived and worked, CIA plans to target him proved unsuccessful. In plans for a “snatch operation,” the CIA wanted to drop a 30-man special operations crew to abduct bin Laden from his Tarnak...
Farms headquarters. However, President Clinton backed out at the last minute. In a subsequent mission plan, the CIA proposed bombing one of al-Qaeda’s training camps while bin Laden was present. Again, Clinton refused the mission, as it could have also killed members of the royal family of the United Arab Emirates. Finally, Clinton approved a 55 million dollar air strike that dropped sixty tomahawk missiles on al-Qaeda targets in both Afghanistan and Sudan.

The missile strikes were a failure for several reasons. First, the missile strikes hadn’t killed any important members of the al-Qaeda leadership, because they had most likely been tipped off by Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif. Second, Clinton’s political opponents denounced the massive strike as a distraction from the Whitewater and Monica Lewinsky domestic scandals. Lastly, al-Qaeda had benefited from the strikes, as many disgruntled Muslims sought recruitment by al-Qaeda. Bin Laden’s cause against the United States was strengthened, as the world’s only superpower validated his image as an Islamist folk hero.

During this period following the Clinton approved strikes, bin Laden met with key members of a radical al-Qaeda cell in Hamburg, Germany. The German cell presented their plans for a bold new terrorist attack that involved hijacking airplanes and using them as suicide bombs. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda members flew hijacked planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

\*Ansary, *Games without Rules*, 250.
\*Ibid.
\*Ibid.
\*Ansary, 251.
\*Ibid.
\*Ibid.
\*Ansary, 252.
\*Ibid.
\*Ansary, 259.
killing thousands of Americans. Nearly a month later, the United States launched the invasion of Afghanistan.

Directly after the attacks, the Bush Administration was motivated by an intense domestic pressure to retaliate against the 9/11 perpetrators.\textsuperscript{425} Congress quickly authorized President Bush to retaliate against al-Qaeda. The Joint resolution passed by Congress stated that the United States would “use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons” responsible for the attacks.\textsuperscript{426} In effect, the U.S. not only targeted al-Qaeda, but also the Taliban who harboring them. At first, the U.S. pressured the Taliban to extradite bin Laden and destroy the al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{427} However, the Taliban refused both demands. As far as they were concerned, the 9/11 attacks wouldn’t affect them because they were so far away. In their minds, “what could the Americans do to Kabul?”\textsuperscript{428} Ultimately, the Taliban’s intransigence would cost them.

Unlike the later war in Iraq, The United States had very few barriers to eliciting international support for invading Afghanistan. The 9/11 attacks had garnered the United States sympathy from the international community. Great Britain responded quickly to aid the United States in its time of need and lent its military support.\textsuperscript{429} NATO invoked Article V of the Washington Treaty, in which an attack on one NATO member equals an attack on all members.\textsuperscript{430} Importantly, countries like China, Russia, India, and Pakistan,

\textsuperscript{425} Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 127.
\textsuperscript{426} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{427} Meredith L. Runion, \textit{The History of Afghanistan}, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2017), 180.
\textsuperscript{428} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 261.
\textsuperscript{429} Runion, 181.
did nothing to prevent the United States from invading Afghanistan. Ultimately, the United States was given the greenlight for Operation Enduring Freedom (or OEF).

Back in Washington, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was preparing to send troops to Afghanistan. Rumsfeld was a proponent of modernizing the U.S. military by increasing the use of new technology as well as reducing the size of ground forces. Rumsfeld’s doctrinal views would increasingly influence the course of the coming war in Afghanistan, where counterinsurgency tactics were subordinate to massive aerial strikes and a multitude of special operations missions. Based on a reluctance to repeat the war in Vietnam, the Bush administration de-emphasized counterinsurgency tactics and was hesitant to commit to any nation building in Afghanistan. The U.S. would maintain that Afghanistan would be responsible for its own reconstruction. With this anti-nation building strategy, the United States began its war in Afghanistan.

As bombing missions began in October 7, 2001, three main U.S. goals became apparent. First, the United States would topple the Taliban government regime in Afghanistan. Second, efforts would be made to destroy al-Qaeda’s bases. Third, U.S. forces would kill and capture al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists. To this end, superior U.S. firepower, in concert with special operations and cooperation with local Afghan partners, would combat the Taliban and al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan.

431 Runion, History, 180.
432 Bailey, Understanding the U.S. Wars, 126.
433 Bailey, 125-126.
434 Bailey, 126.
435 Bailey, 309.
436 Ibid.
437 Ibid.
In the first phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, Tomahawk cruise missiles rained down over Afghanistan from U.S. and U.K. ships. Additionally, allied bombers dropped their loads over Taliban and al-Qaeda targets. With all this firepower, the U.S. decimated enemy infrastructure and quickly ran out of targets. The Taliban and al-Qaeda quickly collapsed in the face of intense bombings. In the second phase of OEF, the United States would “entrust the actual fighting to the Northern Alliance,” assist the Northern Alliance with air support, and put pressure on Pakistan to cut ties with the Taliban.

Just months before the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban’s armed opponent in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance, had sent their leaders to Europe to plead for humanitarian aid. Led by warlord Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance plead their case that the instability in Afghanistan would come to hurt the West. Massoud warned the European Union that the Taliban acted as a front of their foreign occupier, Pakistan. Pakistan and the Taliban had allowed Afghanistan to become a major terrorist training camp for terrorists “whose only aim was to harm the West.” If the international community didn’t help the Northern alliance, “it would suffer terrible consequences.”

Unfortunately, Massoud’s call for aid fell on deaf ears. It wouldn’t be until after the 9/11 attacks that the United States and its allies would call aid the Northern Alliance. Two days before 9/11, Massoud was assassinated by two terrorists posing as Western

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439 Ibid.
440 Ibid.
441 Ansary, 261-262.
442 Runion, *History*, 175.
443 Ansary, 259.
444 Ibid.
445 Ibid.
journalists.\textsuperscript{446} Though Massoud was killed, the Northern Alliance would become instrumental in the early stages of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. As the United States was hesitant to send too many troops to Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance became the primary OEF ground force. With immense logistical support and the help of U.S. Special Forces, the Northern Alliance launched an offensive to drive the Taliban and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{447}

Additionally, the United States had finally put enough financial and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to cut their support to the Taliban.\textsuperscript{448} As the Northern Alliance closed in on the cities, Pakistan ordered the Taliban to leave their consulate in Karachi.\textsuperscript{449} Not long after, Taliban leaders quietly fled the capital Kabul back to their stronghold of Kandahar.\textsuperscript{450} By December 7, 2001, the Taliban were also forced to flee Kandahar for the Pakistani border.\textsuperscript{451} The United States and the Northern Alliance had successfully removed the Taliban from power, which helped to temporarily justify Rumsfeld’s plan to limit U.S. troops on the ground.\textsuperscript{452} However, in the Battle of Tora Bora, as well as in Operation Anaconda, large numbers of al-Qaeda forces escaped due to coordination difficulties between OEF air and ground forces.\textsuperscript{453} The ultimate legacy of this opening offensive was that the United States had achieved many of its Afghan war objectives, but had narrowly missed eliminating the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership, a legacy that would come back to haunt Afghanistan in the coming years.\textsuperscript{454}

\textsuperscript{446} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 260.  
\textsuperscript{447} Runion, \textit{History}, 181.  
\textsuperscript{448} Ansary, 262.  
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{450} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{451} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{452} Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 128.  
\textsuperscript{453} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{454} Bailey, 315.
The immediate aftermath of the relatively successful invasion of Afghanistan was a country without a government. The rapid pace of the Taliban’s disintegration surprised the United States, which quickly scrambled to capitalize on the mission’s “catastrophic success.” In December 2001, as U.S. and Northern Alliance forces besieged al-Qaeda at Tora Bora, several Afghan opposition groups met in Bonn, Germany in the hopes of forming a government to rule Afghanistan. In essence, the Bonn conference sponsored by the United States was a conference of “winners.” Leadership representing the Taliban were not invited to the conference, and the framework of the future governance of Afghanistan would be hammered out by the groups who had sided with the United States.

The Afghan opposition at Bonn Conference could be divided into four groups. First, the Northern Alliance, who had helped to oust the Taliban with U.S. support, represented the ethnic minorities of Afghanistan. Second, the so-called “Peshawar Group” represented the Pushtoon tribal Mujahideen that operated out of Pakistan. Third, the “Cypress group” was composed of various Hazara and Herati ethnic groups supported by Iran. Lastly, the “Rome group” acted as the representative of various Afghan expatriate technocrats spread across Europe and the United States, as well as royalist supporters of the former Afghan Shah. However, the Bonn Conference excluded the Taliban and largely rural Pushtoon tribes of Southern Afghanistan from the negotiations, excluding a large portion of the population. In effect, the Bonn agreement

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457 Ibid.
458 Ibid.
459 Ibid.
460 Ibid.
461 Ansary, 268.
would contribute to the growing divide between urban and rural portions of the Afghan population, a trend that would fuel the return of the Taliban in subsequent years.462

During the Bonn Conference negotiations, the Afghan opposition groups hammered out plans for Afghanistan’s future. With heavy guidance from Western powers, a four step plan was introduced.463 First, the Bonn Conference would assemble an interim government to rule the country for the first six months.464 Second, a loya jirga, adapted from the traditional Afghan tribal assembly, would help to create a two year long transitional government which would rule until elections were held.465 Third, Afghans would draft a new constitution for the country.466 Fourth, Afghanistan would hold presidential and parliamentary elections to help bring in to existence Afghan democracy.467

After formulating the four point plan, the Afghan groups elected to appoint Hamid Karzai as head of the interim government. Karzai was a compromise candidate for all those involved at the Bonn Conference.468 For the United States, Karzai was the most palatable choice, despite his lack of leadership experience, because of his extensive connections with American Afghans and the U.S. Republican Party.469 As Ansary notes, Karzai also had palpable Afghan tribal credibility. Karzai was a Pushtoon and his father was a Popalzai tribal leader in Kandahar, giving him sway amongst the important Pushtoon tribal constituency.470 In addition, Karzai’s father had been murdered by the

462 Ansary, Games without Rules, 268.
463 Ibid.
464 Ibid.
465 Ibid.
466 Ibid.
467 Ibid.
468 Ansary, 269.
469 Ansary, 269-270.
470 Ansary, 270.
Taliban, which made him a fervent opponent of the ousted group.\textsuperscript{471} With no major enemies or supporters inside Afghanistan, Karzai “had no blood on his hands” in fighting either the United States or anyone else, and was considered the most ideal choice for power.\textsuperscript{472}

Parallel to the negotiations between the Afghans, the international community also made lofty plans for the future of Afghanistan. As Afghanistan ranked in the very bottom of countries in terms of socioeconomic conditions, efforts were made to bring in billions of dollars in aid for the country.\textsuperscript{473} At a donor conference in Tokyo, it was estimated that the country needed twenty five billion dollars in international aid.\textsuperscript{474} In actuality, donors only pledged three billion dollars and only half of that trickled into the country.\textsuperscript{475} However, a billion dollars was still a large influx of donor money.\textsuperscript{476}

The Tokyo Conference also devised a “lead nation” approach to rebuilding Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{477} Instead of a singular effort to manage the funds, individual countries were given mandates to what they would be responsible for. For instance, the United States would aid the Afghan Army, and the United Kingdom would fund counternarcotic efforts.\textsuperscript{478} Many other countries were involved, such as Japan, Germany, and Italy.\textsuperscript{479} The Tokyo conference would create the backbone of aid efforts in Afghanistan over the following years.

\textsuperscript{471} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 270.
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid.; Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 128.
\textsuperscript{473} Bailey, 129.
\textsuperscript{474} Ansary, 280.
\textsuperscript{475} Ansary, 280-281.
\textsuperscript{476} Ansary, 281.
\textsuperscript{477} Bailey, 128.
\textsuperscript{478} Bailey, 128-129.
\textsuperscript{479} Bailey, 129.
On the military side of things, the international community was keen on increasing their role in Afghanistan, much to the chagrin of the Bush administration. The United States had been content with the international community’s role following the invasion of Afghanistan. Although NATO invoking Article V was unprecedented, the role of NATO was more symbolic than militarily significant. This arrangement suited the Bush administration just fine, as they had “no desire to involve NATO directly in [military operations].” With their new broad “War on Terror” counterterrorism campaign, the United States didn’t wish to be limited by NATO’s complicated rules and procedures.

The dominant strategy of the U.S. OEF campaign in Afghanistan was revenge and retribution, focused solely on “disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda and [the] Taliban.” Ultimately, this strategy put more emphasis on the traditional war paradigm of defeating the enemy and going home rather than ensuring Afghanistan’s future stability. Part of this focus was born out the United States’ strong aversion to “nation building,” which their European allies wished to promote in Afghanistan. President Bush had campaigned on his promise to not engage in nation building, so the U.S. effort in Afghanistan would remain “a purely military mission.” Even in 2006, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates concluded that the effort of the United States was “significantly hampered by muddled and over-ambitious objectives.” Therefore, stability minded international troops would play a minor role in the first years of the war.

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481 Berdal, 160.
482 Berdal, 161.
483 Berdal, 160.
484 Berdal, 161.
485 Ansary, Games without Rules, 292.
486 Berdal, 161.
However, an international force sponsored by the United Nations came into existence at the Bonn Conference. The International Security Assistance Force (or ISAF) composed of 4,500 troops would be sent to Kabul to support the Afghan Interim government and election process, as well as to promote “national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights.”\footnote{Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 309.} If ISAF’s goals seem difficult to achieve, the United States made it that more difficult. In exchange for allowing ISAF’s presence, the United States ensured that ISAF would only operate in Kabul, and that the U.S. military would be independent of ISAF jurisdiction.\footnote{Ibid.} Keeping ISAF restricted would fulfill the Bush Administration’s wish for marginal international presence and also allow the United States focus on its independent “mop up” operation against the remnants of al-Qaeda and the Taliban without international interference.\footnote{Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 271.}

Eventually, the United States would become distracted with the war in Iraq by 2003, so the views towards ISAF and nation building began to change. As issues with instability and violence in Iraq began to mount, ISAF’s role would grow exponentially in Afghanistan. By August 2003, NATO was given command of all ISAF forces.\footnote{Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 163.} This development was advantageous to the Bush administration. First, international cooperation helped to “legitimize the need for continuing involvement” by the United States in Afghanistan.\footnote{Ibid.} Domestically, the keen interest of NATO and the UN helped to prove to Congress as well as the American public that the U.S. military should continue to fight in Afghanistan.\footnote{Berdal, 161.} The international interest towards Afghanistan was critical to
ensuring the narrative of Afghanistan as a “good war,” especially during a time when the American public was deeply divided over the war in Iraq.⁴⁹³

Second, the Iraq War was a convenient excuse for the Bush administration to pass the burden of nation building onto the United States’ allies. Since Bush and his staff abhorred the very idea of nation building, it was a convenient way of avoiding discussion of nation building altogether. Passing the buck on to international forces allowed U.S. forces to focus on their narrow counterterrorism operation, and also divert more resources to Iraq.

As NATO assumed command of ISAF, the United Nations helped to expand their mission. The UN Security Council authorized ISAF to expand to areas outside of Kabul and establish stability, security and government through “all parts of Afghanistan.”⁴⁹⁴ Steadily, ISAF presence would increase through a strategic counterclockwise expansion, which featured steady troop increases from North to South from 2004 to 2006.⁴⁹⁵ By 2006, 25 ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (or PRT’s) were functioning in local bases across Afghanistan.⁴⁹⁶ The expansion of ISAF lowered the burden of the United States, and also granted its European allies a chance to meet their growing sense of duty in Afghanistan. In NATO’s mind, “the interveners now had to an obligation to deliver more than a government of warlords” to the Afghan people.⁴⁹⁷

Concurrently, Afghanistan began to work towards the four professed goals of the Bonn Conference. By June 11, 2002, Afghanistan’s interim government laid in motion

the plans to transform the country into a modern democratic nation. In keeping with Afghan tradition, the interim government assembled a loya jirga to appoint members of the transitional government. To nobody’s surprise, Karzai was elected to head the election transition. According to Ansary, this process might have gone “too smoothly.” The highly “stage-managed” process had ensured that America’s choice for government had been chosen. In effect, the loya jirga was seen by Afghans as an attempt to squeeze other political alternatives out of the running. For example, the former king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, a “countrywide symbol of reconciliation,” wasn’t allowed to run.

However, the process of democratization continued on. As head of the transitional government, Karzai assembled a commission to draft Afghanistan’s new constitution. A loya jirga was again convened, and Afghan leaders hashed out the final structure of government. Afghanistan formalized a bicameral legislature, where the lower house is elected by citizens, and the upper appointed by a president, who is supposedly restricted to two five-year terms. Additionally, the constitution states that Afghanistan is an Islamic republic, with no laws conflicting with Shari’a law, although there are also provisions common in western democracy, such as equality and other modern human rights. The new Afghan constitution ratified by December, 2003 in the loya jirga, and would set in motion the coming elections.

498 Ansary, Games without Rules, 272.
499 Ibid.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid.
502 Ansary, 273.
503 Ibid.
By the fall of 2004, Afghanistan held its presidential election, by many measures, it was a huge success. Twelve million Afghans had registered to vote, and 75% of those registered had made it to the polls.\textsuperscript{504} The election was largely violence free, and long lines at polling stations were prominent across the country. Additionally, many Afghans couldn’t read, and candidates utilized pictures to get the word out about their candidacy.\textsuperscript{505} Therefore, Afghan voters more or less voted to “express support for voting itself” rather than a specific candidate.\textsuperscript{506} As Ansary states, “in this light, the election was a big success.” As a result of the elections, Karzai once again emerged victorious as the uncontested leader of Afghanistan. In the parliamentary election that occurred months after, disorder and violence were more pronounced, but the two elections had left many Afghans with the impression that “Afghanistan was on the verge of a takeoff”.\textsuperscript{507}

However, the political and military developments in Afghanistan were accompanied by a fair share of problems. The 2001-2008 period of the Afghanistan war started off with high hopes, but ultimately the problems far outweighed the progress at the end of 2008. The growing split between the U.S. and NATO, aggressive counterterrorism strategies, a weak Karzai government, and growing backlash to foreign occupation all contributed to a growing lack of stability and security in Afghanistan.

The divide between U.S. and NATO was largely centered on the extreme reluctance of the United States to participate in nation building in Afghanistan. The U.S. strategy continued to be focused squarely on aggressive counterterrorism, which clashed

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[504] Ansary, Games without Rules, 274.
\item[505] Ibid.
\item[506] Ibid.
\item[507] Ansary, 275.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
with NATO’s focus on stability and reconstruction efforts. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates sums up the U.S. stance quite well, stating that the U.S. goal in Afghanistan needed to “be limited to hammering the Taliban and other extremists.” The United States never questioned “the supposedly unbreakable link between the Taliban and al-Qaeda.”

In contrast with the United States, NATO wished to forge a wide national reconciliation between all parties. NATO’s diverging view on Afghanistan would help to increase internal military tension and contribute to a “fragmentation of effort” during the war. However, the ultimate result of this divide was that the U.S. counterterrorism approach won out. Because of the United States’ dominant role in both decision making and resources allocated to Afghanistan, the counterterrorism strategy often held higher importance than NATO priorities.

The results on the ground in Afghanistan from the conflicting interests of NATO and the United States was “a complicated and dysfunctional set of command and control arrangements that included multiple and separate chains of command.” OEF continued to be separate from the ISAF mission, most notably the special operations missions that reported directly to USCENTCOM in Tampa, Florida. ISAF itself had issues, as the PRTs that were sent to various local regions of Afghanistan had very little oversight from

510 Berdal, 168.
511 Ibid.
512 Berdal, 167.
513 Berdal, 168.
514 Ibid.
515 Ibid.
central NATO command. Individual nations who each had their own PRTs, creating their own “national bubbles” that helped to undermine NATO’s “strategic coherence.”

The aggressive military strategy pursued by the United States, and in some cases ISAF, also contributed to the growing instability in Afghanistan. In what became known as the “Afghan Model,” the United States pursued a military strategy that featured a light traditional military footprint which relied heavily on special operations, aerial strikes, and local Afghan forces. In many cases, special operations and aerial strikes replaced ground troops in remote Afghan areas.

In particular, there were a lot of airstrikes which resulted in high collateral damage against Afghan civilians. ISAF used an incredible amount of airstrikes during this time. In a six month span at the end of 2006, ISAF forces initiated 2,100 airstrikes in Afghanistan, which was more strikes than had been carried out from 2001-2004. In comparison, only 88 strikes were carried out during that same time period in Iraq. General Stanley McChrystal remarked that “over-reliance on firepower and force protection … severely damaged ISAF’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people.”

As reparations for civilian casualties, both ISAF and the U.S. maintained a policy of reimbursement for civilian deaths. However, this further enraged Afghans who now believed international forces thought “that compensation for wrongful death was a business transaction.” It was also concerning was that “bombs from the air” couldn’t replace “boots on the ground,” as Taliban infiltrators began to move into areas outside of

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517 Bailey, Understanding the U.S. Wars, 139.
518 Pape and Feldman, Cutting the Fuse, 124.
519 Ibid.
520 Ibid.
521 Ansary, Games without Rules, 310.
the U.S. and international zone of control to take advantage of the lack of military presence.\textsuperscript{522} By 2006, the U.S. and NATO were facing a new threat from a Taliban insurgency.

As ISAF expanded to new regions, the United States also began new combat operations, in the south. Military forces were now entering areas of significant Taliban support from the local Pushtoon Afghans. After securing the relatively peaceful North, ISAF moved into the South and Southeast, and the United States initiated a bloody 2006 incursion into Helmand Province in Operation Mountain Thrust.\textsuperscript{523} As the U.S. and ISAF force deployed to these areas, a noticeable increase in terrorist attacks and other security issues occurred.\textsuperscript{524} However, there was no real effort to rethink the strategy in Afghanistan. For example, there was no concerted effort to implement a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy as late as 2009.\textsuperscript{525}

Parallel to warfighting in pre-Surge Iraq, the United States operated from large forward operating bases (FOBs). Bagram Air Force base was the primary location for United States forces. Bagram was a former Soviet airbase just north of Kabul that was no being retooled for the U.S. military.\textsuperscript{526} Most Afghans never saw the inside of the heavily secured base, and those that did witnessed “that an entire ready-made American city had gone up within Bagram, complete with nightclubs, cinemas, restaurants, and shops (a gross exaggeration).”\textsuperscript{527} With Afghans rarely having access to the base, it was easy for rumors to spread about what was going on there. For example, many Afghans had begun

\textsuperscript{522} Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 140.
\textsuperscript{523} Pape and Feldman, \textit{Cutting the Fuse}, 123.
\textsuperscript{524} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{525} Bailey, 139.
\textsuperscript{526} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 308.
\textsuperscript{527} Ibid.
to think they were selling mountains of pork, in an affront to Islam.\textsuperscript{528} Rather than working in and around the Afghan population, U.S. forces were rather isolated, propagating serious misunderstandings between themselves and the populace.

ISAF, however, did make some effort to get out amongst the Afghan people. The PRTs, the main force of ISAF that operated at the local level, maintained patrols across Afghanistan once they had been deployed across the entire country. With their nationwide presence, the PRTs sought to stabilize Afghanistan, “extending the influence of the central government” and “facilitating ‘reconstruction, security, governance, aid and development.”\textsuperscript{529} However, as previously mentioned, the PRTs had a counterproductive effect.

Instead of promoting stability, the PRTs not only undermined NATO and U.S. from attaining a coherent strategy in Afghanistan, but they also exacerbated tensions between international forces and the local Afghans, especially in the Pushtoon dominated South.\textsuperscript{530} First, individual PRTs led by different nations pursued different strategies, and the different nations varied on how aggressive the tactics they pursued were.\textsuperscript{531} Second, Afghans often didn’t distinguish between ISAF troops and the more aggressive counterterrorism strategies employed by the U.S.\textsuperscript{532} Lastly, as noted in a survey taken in five of Afghanistan’s provinces, Afghans in particularly low security areas viewed troops as disrespectful of Afghan “culture, religion, and traditions.”\textsuperscript{533} Ultimately, the PRTs helped to push Afghans back into the arms of the resurgent Taliban.

\textsuperscript{528} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 308.
\textsuperscript{529} Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 163.
\textsuperscript{530} Berdal, 171.
\textsuperscript{531} Berdal, 173.
\textsuperscript{532} Berdal, 172.
\textsuperscript{533} Ibid.
The Afghan central government also contributed to a renewed Taliban presence in Afghanistan. The thirty-year political chaos of Afghanistan and its tribal oriented society made Afghans suspicious of central authority. But, after the Bonn Conference handed power to the Karzai government, Afghans found itself under a heavily centralized government’s rule. The new Afghan constitution that passed in 2004 gave Karzai “near absolute authority… without any checks and balances to executive power.” Karzai’s government was a radical change for an Afghanistan that was used to weak central government and dominant tribal politics.

Despite its centralized power, the new Karzai government lacked a politically legitimate mandate for ruling Afghanistan. Over time, the government had lost its novel luster, and was soon “widely and increasingly seen by many as weak, corrupt, and abusive.” Corruption was rampant in post invasion Afghanistan. First, Karzai himself contributed to the instability of the government by using his power for personal gain. Karzai installed many members of his own Popalzai tribe to positions of power. This nepotism included his brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, who assumed an important council position in Kandahar Province. Second, other government officials used their power for financial gain. For instance, the minister of mines, Ibrahim Adel, took a $30 million bribe in exchange for awarding a government copper rights contract to a Chinese company.

534 Pape and Feldman, Cutting the Fuse, 123.
535 Ibid.
537 Ibid.
538 Pape, 123.
539 Ansary, Games without Rules, 301.
The financial aspect of corruption was the most problematic issue for the Afghan government. As international money flowed into Afghanistan, powerful Afghans took advantage of funds meant for reconstruction of the country. Because this money didn’t enter the domestic economy, only Afghans who worked closely with foreign NGOs, companies, and governments ever saw it pass through their hands. Ultimately, the new and elite economy contributed to pervasive “lunch-pail corruption” that ordinary Afghans now had to face on a daily basis. For instance, cops who responded to vehicle accidents detained anybody they could find at the scene regardless of their involvement and force them to pay fines. In another case, government bureaucrats would slow down their processing of paperwork unless the requestor paid bribes to expedite the process.

International development funds also helped to undermine the Karzai government. Seventy-seven percent of reconstruction funds used in Afghanistan “bypassed the Afghan government entirely,” making the government appear as a useless bystander, instead of a competent authority. In addition, the often rushed and shoddy workmanship of the reconstruction did the government no favors. For example, an American led effort to build a paved road between Sar-e-Pul and Shiberghan ran into a few issues. First, the road didn’t do the local Afghans much good, as they rarely had vehicles and traveled mostly by foot with their goods carried by donkeys. A paved road was better than the previous dirt path, but it didn’t cut travel time by very much. Second, the new raised road acted like a dam, water pooled on one side, and there were no culverts to divert the

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541 Ibid.
542 Ibid.
543 Ibid.
544 Ansary, 294.
545 Ibid.
546 Ibid.
water.\textsuperscript{547} The local Afghans took it upon themselves to cut drainage ditches along the road, which then meant that cars could no longer travel on the road.\textsuperscript{548} Ultimately, the Afghan police got involved and arrested those responsible for defacing the road, creating another negative interaction between the Afghan people and the central government.\textsuperscript{549}

Coinciding with the poor economy and ineffective government, a robust drug trade became a lucrative money maker in Afghanistan. Farming was tough in the countryside, and farmers preferred to lean on their skills in growing and selling opium. The opium crop was far superior to anything else they could grow on their properties, as the opium plant can be grown on a small unirrigated plot of land, is relatively drought resistant, unperishable, and can be transported easily as heroin.\textsuperscript{550} Opium farming had funded the Taliban before the war, and it would do the same as the Taliban returned from exile.

Of course, the burgeoning drug trade concerned the U.S. and its international partners. As the primary lead nation for countering narcotics in Afghanistan, the United Kingdom led an extensive eradication effort of the opium crop. Through the policy of eradication in Helmand province, the U.K. ultimately cut into the “main source of livelihood to thousands of farmers” as well as the “power and profits to officials and strongmen” in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{551} Eventually, local Afghans provided the Taliban with a share of their profits in return for protection against international eradication efforts.\textsuperscript{552}

\begin{footnotes}
\item 547 Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 294.
\item 548 Ibid.
\item 549 Ansary, 295.
\item 550 Ansary, 299.
\item 551 Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 170.
\item 552 Pape and Feldman, \textit{Cutting the Fuse}, 129.
\end{footnotes}
The West was also partly to blame for this drug economy. In a haste to achieve its counterterrorism objectives and get out of Afghanistan, the United States relied on the Northern Alliance and other warlords to keep control of the country. The United States allied with warlords such as Ismail Kahn and Gul Aga Shirzai, who had gained power in the 1992 civil war, reintroduced the “venal, predatory, and violent” relationship with the warlords that many Afghans despised. The Afghans who had suffered under the warlords before the arrival of the Taliban, were now back where they started. As a result, many Afghans once again embraced the Taliban as way of rejecting warlord control.

The warlord debacle also cut both ways. As the Taliban group led by Mullah Omar regrouped in Pakistan, Mujahideen warlords like Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar began to operate under the Taliban umbrella. In post-invasion Afghanistan, the Taliban group began much more diverse, and also under much less central control. As Pape writes, there were really about three different independent subgroups of the Taliban insurgency. First, the religiously motivated group of the Taliban under Mullah Omar, which numbered around 10,000 individuals, only accounted for a quarter of the entire Taliban movement. Second, the southern drug lords of Helmand and Kandahar who profited off the opium crop, were motivated by profit and not religious motivations. Third, the aforementioned warlords, such as Haqqani, were opportunists who chose sides whenever it suited them. The U.S. and its partners didn’t

554 Ansary, Games without Rules, 313.
555 Ansary, 314-315.
556 Pape and Feldman, Cutting the Fuse, 114.
557 Ibid.
558 Ibid.
quite understand these organizational divisions, and instead adopted a narrative of a singular and unified Taliban insurgency.\textsuperscript{559}

Meanwhile, as the Taliban regained control of parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan interfered in the missions of the U.S., NATO, and the Afghan government. As the Taliban gained strength, the Talibanist movement had directed an insurgency towards the government in Islamabad, and Pakistan desperately needed to redirect the Islamist momentum back into Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{560} Therefore, Pakistan sought to prevent an autonomous Afghan government from forming in Kabul in order to combat a movement they helped to create and subsequently lose control of.\textsuperscript{561} To achieve this goal, Pakistan sent “agents in to [Afghanistan to] commit occasional acts of senseless sabotage.”\textsuperscript{562} To make matters worse, the Pakistan and Afghanistan border became increasingly volatile, with each armed border mafia creating their own militias.\textsuperscript{563} The Taliban now had a perfect climate of instability to launch a violent insurgency.

As a counter to growing Talibanist sentiment, the Afghan government under Karzai began to build up its own security through the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), together known as the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Unfortunately, the rapid deployment of many unqualified men who “were given guns and authority” and no clear directives backfired on the government’s security efforts.\textsuperscript{564} Many soldiers and policemen took advantage of their new found authority by physically abusing people or collecting exorbitant bribes.\textsuperscript{565} Problematically, the ANA

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 314-315.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ansary, 278.
\item Ansary, 308.
\item Ansary, 309.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and ANP were also made up of predominantly Tajik and Uzbek ethnic groups, and
deployed to the restive Pushtoon tribal areas.\textsuperscript{566} The lack of Pushtoons further tarnished
Afghan government authority, and the resulting ethnic conflict was yet another reason
that Afghanistan struggled to achieve national unity, instead devolving into another
violent chapter in Afghan history.\textsuperscript{567}

By 2006, the Taliban began their violent insurgency by targeting schools. Before
then, the Taliban had avoided violence against schools because of their fear it would
alienate their Afghan patrons.\textsuperscript{568} After a successful propaganda campaign against western
style education, the Taliban launched several attacks against school teachers and
property.\textsuperscript{569} Beyond targeting schools, the renewed violence helped to spur increasing
suicide attacks, assaults, and murders.\textsuperscript{570} Eventually, the group managed to convince
everyday Afghan people that attacks against foreigners and foreign aid were good for the
country: U.S., NATO, NGO, and other international groups were now easy targets for
Taliban violence.\textsuperscript{571}

Combined with the failing war effort and reconstruction of Afghanistan, the
violence tightened the Taliban’s grip on the country. By 2008, the Taliban had
established a shadow government directly competing with the legitimate Afghan
government.\textsuperscript{572} Despite not actually doing any government administration, the Taliban
created at least a veneer of a substitute for Karzai’s corrupt government.\textsuperscript{573} The biggest

\textsuperscript{566} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 309.
\textsuperscript{567} Pape and Feldman, \textit{Cutting the Fuse}, 136; Ansary, 309.
\textsuperscript{568} Ansary, 318.
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{570} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{571} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{572} Ansary, 320.
\textsuperscript{573} Ibid.
substitute was a Taliban run judicial system. Any Afghan of even a falsely claimed religious scholarly background could now dispense justice as they saw fit in accordance with their limited understanding of Shari’a law.574 The Taliban judicial system became much more palatable to the indigenous customs of Afghanistan, and easily supplanted law established by the central government.575

As President Obama took office in 2009, it was clear that the war in Afghanistan was not going well. The future of Afghanistan would be up to Obama and the United States’ international allies to find a new way forward. With the relative success of the Surge in Iraq, President Obama decided Afghanistan needed a Surge of its own. Before exploring the road to a Surge in Afghanistan, it is important to also examine quantitative data on the 2001-2008 period. In the next section, factors such as U.S./NATO troop levels, Afghan civilian casualties, and Afghan public opinion are examined to determine whether the hard offensive counterterrorism approach in Afghanistan contributed to the failure of the U.S. counterterrorism mission.

**Afghan Data Trends 2001-2008**

The United States’ counterterrorism campaign dominated strategy considerations in the first eight years of the war in Afghanistan. Though there were efforts by U.S. international partner nations to pursue stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan, the period from 2001-2008 can’t be seen as a softer “hearts and minds” counterterrorism campaign. In analyzing the data and trends of from 2001-2008, the war under President Bush should show indicators that the aggressive counterterrorism approach utilized resulted in a failed counterterrorism campaign. First, trends in troop levels for both OEF

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574 Ansary, *Games without Rules*, 320.
575 Ansary, 321.
and ISAF forces are analyzed. Second, Afghan civilian casualty rates and their relation to troop level trends are examined. Third, the relationship between Afghan public opinion and the previously mentioned troop level and casualty trends are investigated. The rate of terrorism is then examined. Finally, troop levels, casualties, public opinion trends, and the rate of terrorism will be utilized to determine whether the Bush era Afghanistan counterterrorism strategy resulted in counterterrorism failure.

**Troop Levels in Afghanistan 2001-2008**

During the 2001-2008 period, a steady increase of both OEF and ISAF troop levels can be observed (see Figure 9). From January 2002, U.S. forces rose from 4,100 to over 35,000 in May 2008. ISAF forces also increased, from 5,000 in February 2002 to 31,400 in December 2008. Two trends are mainly responsible for the increase in both U.S. and ISAF troops. First, the declining security climate and resurgence of the Taliban necessitated both military organizations to deepen their involvement in the country. Reconstruction efforts, as well as ineffective and corrupt governance ultimately drove Afghans back into the arms of the Taliban. With ample Afghan public support, the Taliban was emboldened to carry out attacks against U.S., international, and Afghan forces. Facing a frustrating insurgency which utilized “murders, assassinations, and small-scale hit-and-run tactics,” OEF and ISAF troops needed to increase their numbers to rein the deteriorating security situation.576

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Second, NATO’s increasing involvement was also influenced by the U.S. shift in focus to the Iraq War in 2003. Instead of further involvement in Afghanistan, the U.S. allowed NATO to take control of ISAF’s nation building efforts in Afghanistan. Faced with a “growing and resilient insurgency” from 2006 to 2009, ISAF troops not only heavily increased to improve security, but also to meet their expanding stability and reconstruction responsibilities. The data also reflects ISAF’s growing importance to the war in Afghanistan. In July of 2006, ISAF forces increased by over 10,000 soldiers, making their overall total number of troops even with that of U.S. forces conducting OEF. If the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism leads to a failed counterterrorism campaign is correct, than the increasing troop levels and aggressive

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tactics in 2001-2008 should point to an increase in civilian casualties, lower afghan public opinion, and a higher terrorism rate.

**Afghan Civilian Casualties 2001-2008**

From 2001 to 2008, Afghan civilian casualties peaked during the initial invasion, dipped below 500 casualties a year from 2003 to 2005, and then began to increase in 2006 as the Taliban began its insurgency. Despite not a single source that kept detailed civilian casualty records during the first eight years of the Afghan conflict, the Physicians for Social Responsibility group compiled data which combined several casualty counts, helping to create a yearly estimate for civilian casualties. In Figure 10, the civilian body count estimates both a low range estimate and a high range estimate to account for the discrepancies between different casualty datasets.

Figure 12. Yearly Estimated Number of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan 2001-2008

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Three explanations for the graph trend can be presented. First, the high casualty count at the onset of the war is clearly related to the tactics of the invasion. The intense bombing campaign against Taliban and al-Qaeda targets decimated their organizations, causing both groups to quickly fold.\textsuperscript{580} In the haste to retaliate in Afghanistan, it can be inferred that the bombings hit more than just the individuals that actively participated in either al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

Second, a lull in violence helped to drastically lower the number of casualties between 2003 and 2005. Many Afghans had high hopes for the new government that emerged from the Bonn Conference. The influx of foreign investment and democracy led many Afghans to believe that things were finally looking up. For instance, when President Bush promoted a “Marshall Plan” reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, Ansary anecdotally recalls that an Afghan man who looked like he could have been used as a Reuter’s stock photo of the Taliban planned to build a cosmetics factory in Kabul.\textsuperscript{581} This man believed he would be successful because Afghan women would once again freely roam the street with the Taliban in exile, and his optimistic views for the country were shared with millions of other Afghans. However, the lack of violence could also be the result of the aforementioned shift by U.S. policy makers to Iraq instead of Afghanistan, or the fractured and disorganized nature of militant groups following the highly disruptive U.S. invasion.

Lastly, like the increased number of OEF and ISAF troops, a notable increase in civilian casualties from 2005 to 2008 also occurred. With the Taliban on the rise, they

\textsuperscript{580} Runion, \textit{History}, 181.
\textsuperscript{581} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 279-280.
began to target military personnel, schools, and even NGO workers.\textsuperscript{582} Despite employing a “hearts and minds” propaganda campaign towards the Afghan people, their guerilla tactics most likely caught innocent Afghans in the cross fire. In the Physicians for Social Responsibility report, nearly 20-30\% of Taliban attacks were directed at civilians.\textsuperscript{583} The Taliban weren’t the only perpetrators of civilian casualties, however. Pro-government forces (OEF, ISAF, ANA, etc.) accounted for a sizable portion of the casualties. In particular OEF Special Forces and aerial bombings produced a numerous of civilian deaths, which explains why international forces paying Afghan families for accidental deaths backfired- too many people were being killed. A recent study found that U.S. Special Operations Forces raids and bombings accounted for half of all U.S. caused civilian deaths.\textsuperscript{584} Even more problematic, the spec ops mission collateral damage is largely under-reported because many of the operations are kept secret from even the regular U.S. military.\textsuperscript{585} Civilian casualties could even be much higher than what the data implies.

Despite the flaws in recording civilian casualties and the lack of a single constant body count dataset, the available record point to a plausible correlation between aggressive tactics, troops, and Afghan civilian casualties. As more troops arrived in Afghanistan, the security situation deteriorated immensely, with increased collateral damage from both Taliban and OEF/ISAF forces. Once again, however, the relationship between tactics, troops, and casualties can also be put into question. Many factors besides just tactics and troops could account for high civilian casualties. Maybe increasing

\textsuperscript{583} “Body Count,” 76.
\textsuperscript{584} “Body Count,” 77.
\textsuperscript{585} Ibid.
casualties had more to do with the resurgence of the Taliban than U.S./ISAF troop levels and tactics alone. In the next section, troop and casualty trends will be compared to trends in Afghan public opinion from 2001-2008.

**Afghan Public Opinion 2001-2008**

Based on available polling information from the 2001-2008 period, it appears that Afghan public positive opinion towards the direction of Afghanistan and towards the presence of the United States slowly declined as the war approached its eighth year in 2009. Similar to data on civilian casualties, Afghan public opinion should be observed with several important caveats. First, not much significant data polling of Afghan public opinion occurred in the early years of the war, and useful public opinion is hard to find from 2001 to 2005. Much of this section will rely on polling done by the Asia Foundation and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which took place from 2006 to 2009. Though past the 2001-2008 era, 2009 was a transition point between the Bush and Obama strategies in Afghanistan. 2009 public opinion was therefore similar to the end of the Bush era and is important to also include 2009 in the examination of 2001-2008.

Second, polling in Afghanistan is dangerous work. In many instances, polling authorities were prevented from collecting data because of the unstable security situation in Afghanistan. As the Taliban gained strength, they became more willing to target both military and civilian international personnel. The Asia Foundation and the BBC both reasonably tried to collect polling information across all regions of the country, but safety of the poll workers often dictated how many Afghans could be polled. For example, when UN staff went to survey Afghans in the Paktika province near Pakistan in 2007, they
couldn’t get into many districts because of the increasing levels of violence and insurgency.  

The BBC polls from 2004 to 2009 includes the opinions of about 1,500 people from Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. Their data, especially in Helmand Province, was limited by the violence and instability. For the Asia Foundation, they polled a total of 6,263 Afghans in 2007, but some areas had a higher percentage of Afghans polled. People in Kabul accounted for 19% of the data, and the Northern provinces accounted for 29%. In comparison, the Hazarajat and South Western Regions accounted for 7% and 9% respectively. These oversamples in more secure areas likely skews poll findings to favor pro-U.S. and ISAF views. To their credit, however, the Asia Foundation did try to compensate for their oversamples in regions like Kabul by weighting their data to be more representative of the Afghan population as recorded by the Afghan Central Statistics Office. Despite polling flaws, the Afghan public opinion that was recorded helps to provide helpful insights into whether hard offensive counterterrorism lead to more terrorism from 2001-2008.

As previously noted, Afghan public opinion towards the U.S. and the direction of Afghanistan gradually decreased from 2001-2008, as noted by both the BBC and the Asia Foundation polling. Both polls asked Afghans whether they though Afghanistan was headed in the right direction or the wrong direction. For the BBC, their poll noted a high

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586 Ansary, Games without Rules, 321.
588 Ibid.
591 Ibid.
592 “Afghanistan in 2007,” 118.
of 77% of Afghans felt that the country was headed in the right direction in 2005 (Table 12). By 2009, only 40% believed the country was in a good direction, compared to 38% who believed Afghanistan was going in the wrong direction. However, the BBC did not carry out the survey during 2008.

Table 12. Percent of Afghans Answering whether Afghanistan is headed in the Right Direction or Wrong Direction by Year (BBC)\(^{593}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right Direction</strong></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrong Direction</strong></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No opinion</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Asia Foundation noted a similar decline in favorable opinion about where Afghanistan was headed. In their survey, those who had responded that Afghanistan was headed in the right direction never reached above 50%, and declined from 44% to 38% from 2006 to 2008 (Table 13). In comparison, public opinion that Afghanistan was headed in the wrong direction climbed from 21% in 2006 to 32% in 2008. As the Taliban returned, it appears negative perceptions about Afghanistan’s future were growing.

\(^{593}\) McGivering, “Afghan People,” 1.
Table 13. Percent of Afghans Answering whether Afghanistan is headed in the Right Direction or Wrong Direction by Year (Asia Foundation)\textsuperscript{594}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Direction</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Direction</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Afghans also had several reasons for why they thought Afghanistan was headed in the right or wrong direction. In the Asia Foundation’s 2006 survey, the top three reasons cited by right direction respondents for their responses were good security, reconstruction efforts, and peace (Table 14). From 2006 to 2008, right direction respondents fluctuated between these three main reasonings. Oppositely, wrong direction respondent reasonings were largely diverse in 2006 (Table 15). Several issues, such as a bad economy, bad government, and no reconstruction were cited. However, by 2008, rising insecurity concerned 50% of wrong direction respondents, which increased from 6% in 2006. General corruption and corruption by officials concerned 28%.

Table 14. Percent of Afghans Citing a Specific Reason for their “Right Direction” Survey Answer (Asia Foundation)$^{595}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Security</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools for Girls</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom/ Free Speech</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Government</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Percent of Afghans Citing a Specific Reason for their “Wrong Direction” Survey Answer (The Asia Foundation)$^{596}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Corruption</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Economy</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Government</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Prices</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


$^{596}$ Rennie, 19.
The 2009 BBC survey also seem to confirm the Asia Foundation’s 2008 findings. Like the Asia Foundation, Afghans surveyed by the BBC echoed similar reasons for their right or wrong direction responses. On the right direction side, Afghans cited reconstruction, good security, and peace as their top three answers, almost exactly the same as the Asia Foundation survey responses (Table 16). For the wrong direction respondents, violence, corruption, and the economy were the top three responses, not much different from the Asia Foundation poll (Table 17). Clearly, Afghan public opinion is a function of increasing Taliban violence and lack of ability of U.S. and ISAF forces to protect the population, but also the increasing issues with corruption and a weak economy.

Table 16. Percent of Afghans Citing a Specific Reason for their “Right Direction” Survey Answer in 2009 (BBC)\textsuperscript{597}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom/ Free Speech</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Security</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Revival</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Assistance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ Schools</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmament</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Government</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free movement</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{597} McGivering, “Afghan People,” 1.
Table 17. Percent of Afghans Citing a Specific Reason for their “Wrong Direction” Survey Answer in 2009 (BBC)\textsuperscript{598}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security/Warlords/Violence</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Influence Too Great/ Dangers to Islam</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Schools/Literacy</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Poverty/Jobs</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction Problems</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Government</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighboring Countries Cause Problems</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Afghan public opinion also noted a gradual decline in positive attitudes towards the United States and ISAF, as noted by the BBC. Despite lowering attitudes, the views still remained relatively positive. In Table 18, majority support for the U.S. and ISAF fell from strongly support to somewhat support from 2006 to 2009. Despite the slide from strong support, opposition to international forces only received a slight bump during the same period. In Table 19, justification for attacks against international forces remained relatively low. Only 25% of Afghans believed attacks against the U.S. and ISAF were justified, lower than the 30% recorded in 2005, whereas those who replied “not justified” remained in the 60-70% range.

Opinions on whether international forces should withdraw remained relatively promising for the U.S. and ISAF as well. Despite a steady decline, many Afghans felt that forces should remain for 1-2 years or stay until security is restored, around 56%.

\textsuperscript{598} McGivering, “Afghan People,” 1.
compared to 37% who felt they should leave sooner. Also, many Afghans continued to see the Taliban and al-Qaeda as the main threat to Afghanistan. A combined 49% of Afghans placed blame the Taliban and al-Qaeda for the continuing violence.

Table 18. Percentage of Afghans Polled who Strongly Support, Somewhat Support, Somewhat Oppose, or Strongly Oppose U.S. and ISAF Military Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S. Military Forces</th>
<th>ISAF Military Forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Support</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Support</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Support</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Support</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Oppose</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Oppose</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Oppose</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Oppose</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19. Percentage of Afghans Polled who Believe Attacks against U.S. and ISAF Forces Can or Cannot be Justified\textsuperscript{602}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justified</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Justified</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, some polling data should have concerned U.S. and ISAF officials. When asked if the use of air strikes by international forces are acceptable, 77% of those polled in 2009 responded that strikes are unacceptable.\textsuperscript{603} 41% of Afghans also responded that they blamed U.S. and ISAF for mistakenly targeting civilians on the ground.\textsuperscript{604} Civilian casualties were a concern of the public, and it might have benefitted foreign forces to take better care when planning aerial strikes to diminish Afghan opposition.

Despite polling oversamples and a lack of Afghan public opinion throughout the entire 2001-2008 period, the public opinion polling by the Asia Foundation and the BBC highlight the relationship between public opinion and other factors such as troop levels and civilian casualties. As both troop levels and casualties increased, Afghan public opinion slowly decreased. While the surveys showed that Afghan public still largely supported the U.S. and ISAF presence, there is room for concern. As noted, oversampling favored the views of Afghans in Kabul and other areas with high international presence. Likely, there are more Afghans that have negative views that were not included in polling due to poll worker safety. Additionally, those polled in the surveys provided opposition

\textsuperscript{602} McGivering, “Afghan People,” 12.
\textsuperscript{603} McGivering, 19.
\textsuperscript{604} Ibid.
to bombing campaigns and excess civilian casualties by international forces. The data provided by Afghan public opinion polls show that there is a possible correlation between increasing troops and casualties and the declining Afghan public sentiment, despite some evidence of polling discrepancies. Do these factors show an increase in terrorism during 2001-2008?

**Afghanistan Terrorist Attacks 2001-2008**

Similar to increases in troop numbers and civilian casualties, terrorist attacks in Afghanistan increased dramatically in the 2001-2008 period (Figure 11). Once again, however, the increase in terrorist attacks can also be linked to increasing levels of Taliban violence, and not just rises in troops and casualties. The increase became even more defined at the beginning of 2006. By 2006, a year which Ansary calls the tipping point, “chaos began to inch ahead” in Afghanistan.605 2006 also marked the beginning of the Taliban attacks against schools, which helped to stoke an increase in other insurgent attacks, in turn reducing the security situation, and forcing international troops to increase both troop levels and military operations.606 Additionally, the increase in terrorist attacks also coincide with a steady decrease in Afghan public opinion about the direction of the country and views about the presence of U.S. and ISAF troops. However, like Ansary states, the renewed Taliban insurgency “began to drain away that aroma of hope,” and the bright Afghan dreams for the future began to dim. The growing Taliban movement offers an alternative explanation for a decline in public opinion rather than the tactics and troop levels of the U.S. and ISAF alone.607

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606 Ansary, 318-319.
607 Ansary, 318.
With clear trends of increasing troops, civilian casualties, and a steadily declining Afghan public opinion, it is possible that these trends helped lead to an increase in terrorist attacks, and the failure of counterterrorism efforts. Like the pre-surge era of the Iraq War, the period from 2001-2008 in Afghanistan also featured aggressive counterterrorism tactics. Specifically, the war in Afghanistan featured aggressive war tactics, such as intense aerial strikes and numerous special operations raids to hone in on the United States’ al-Qaeda and Taliban targets. With both the data trends and the predominant aggressive counterterrorism tactics and strategy, it is possible to argue that the counterterrorism strategies pursued lead to increased terrorism and ultimately failed.

Of course, there also alternative explanations to increased terrorism. For example, it is possible that the increased terrorism was caused by growing dissent from Afghans.

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towards the increased corruption of the Karzai government. In the following section, the Surge era of the war in Afghanistan will be analyzed. If Obama’s replication of the Iraq Surge in Afghanistan utilized less aggressive counterterrorism strategies, than it should have resulted in a successful counterterrorism campaign.

**Afghanistan History and Politics 2009-2016: The Surge and Withdrawal**

As the conflict in Afghanistan entered its eighth year, the resurgent Taliban had begun to make the situation for U.S. and ISAF troops look bleak. By January 2009, there were approximately 64,000 U.S. and ISAF forces in Afghanistan, and both terrorist attacks and civilian casualties began to mount.609 As newly elected President Barack Obama took office, he saw fit to utilize the success of the Surge in Iraq to forge a new path in Afghanistan. Under Obama’s watch, the Surge in Afghanistan was enacted. However, the Surge entailed much of the same counterterrorism strategies as the pre-Surge period. Despite troop increases and a supposed emphasis on COIN, the Surge failed to produce meaningful results in Afghanistan, as U.S. troops are still involved in the country to this day. In this section, the political and historical contexts of the Afghanistan Surge and withdrawal are investigated. By looking at Obama’s Surge planning, the military command of the war by Generals Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus, how the Surge went wrong, and the resulting stalemate between international forces and the Taliban, it is possible to examine whether the continued hard offensive counterterrorism strategy during the Surge in Afghanistan was successful or not.

Before being elected, President Obama had made it clear that the war in Afghanistan would be one of his top priorities. In comparison to Bush’s “bad” war in

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Iraq, Obama would devote more resources to the “good” war in Afghanistan.\(^{610}\) Obama had criticized the Iraq War as a distraction, and blamed the Bush Administration for not focusing on Afghanistan. On the campaign trail, Obama lambasted the lack of effort in Afghanistan, stating that it “was unacceptable that seven years after 3,000 Americans were killed on our soil, the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large.”\(^{611}\) After visiting Afghanistan in 2008, Obama assured the commander of ISAF that he would provide the troops the Afghanistan campaign needed.\(^{612}\)

In office, Obama largely kept his promises. After assuring the drawdown of the Iraq War, the Obama administration set to work on providing more resources to Afghanistan. After an initial review of the war, the President committed to sending an additional 17,000 troops to the country by February, 2009.\(^{613}\) Before considering sending even more troops, Obama began an additional review process that would coincide with the fall 2009 Afghan election.\(^{614}\)

Despite some level of support from the American public in increasing U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Obama had to overcome political opposition to his plan by both the Democratic and Republican parties. The Democrats in Congress voiced their strong opposition to any escalation in the war in Afghanistan.\(^{615}\) Citing their skepticism of the Karzai government, politicians like Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and David Obey began to warn the Obama Administration that they were unwilling to allow for many more Afghanistan funding requests to pass through Congress.\(^{616}\) Pelosi stated that

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\(^{611}\) McHugh, “A Tale of Two Surges,” 10.

\(^{612}\) Ibid.

\(^{613}\) Ibid.

\(^{614}\) Ibid.

\(^{615}\) Ibid.

\(^{616}\) McHugh, 10-11.
she “didn’t think … a great deal of support for sending more troops to Afghanistan” existed “in the country of in Congress.” Similarly, Congressman John Murtha threatened that any more war funding measures would be rejected by the majority of Democrats, and that the passage of funding would have to depend on hostile Republican votes. Additionally, Obama was concerned that the Democrats wouldn’t support new war plans if he didn’t include a strict withdrawal timeline from Iraq in the near future.

As for the Republicans, the party largely supported the continuance of the war in Afghanistan, but pushed Obama to commit to a blank check policy to the military. Republicans warned that if a withdrawal timetable was included, it “would be met with disapproval from the party.” Ultimately, if Obama couldn’t counterbalance both parties and promote his own plan, his campaign promise to focus on Afghanistan would flounder.

The divisions over the war in Afghanistan were also present in the Obama Administration. Two camps existed on how to proceed in the country. On “Team Pentagon,” comprised of Defense secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, General Stanley McCrystal and others, they believed that Afghanistan needed a “comprehensive, countrywide counterinsurgency” campaign, and a large influx of new troops. They felt that the U.S. not only had to defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but also to ensure stability of Afghanistan. And like Republicans, the Pentagon group resisted

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618 Ibid.
619 McHugh, 10.
620 McHugh, 11.
621 Ibid.
622 Ibid.
623 Ibid.
plans for a withdrawal deadline, instead asking for a withdrawal once “conditions on the ground” warranted it.\textsuperscript{624}

In opposition, many of Obama’s cabinet members and advisors, such as Vice President Joe Biden and the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, were dead set against a COIN strategy and felt that the mission in Afghanistan should be a limited counterterror operation featuring a strictly timed withdrawal.\textsuperscript{625} Heavily skeptical of both the Karzai government and the “possibility of political progress,” the “Biden Group” reasoned that the U.S. goal should be to kill members of al-Qaeda instead of escalating efforts to combat the Taliban.\textsuperscript{626} In addition, they felt that Obama had limited political capital to pursue a policy in Afghanistan unpopular with the Democrats in Congress.\textsuperscript{627}

In order to rein in the competing political camps in Congress and within his own administration, President Obama was forced to pursue a politically expedient way forward in Afghanistan. Instead of choosing one side over the other, Obama engineered a political compromise between them, while also tamping down each side’s dissent. For team Pentagon, President Obama quickly and effectively ended attempts by McChrystal and others to go public with the debate inside the administration in order to force support for a COIN mission.\textsuperscript{628} If Team Pentagon had been successful, they might have likely formed an alliance with Republicans in Congress, scuttling Obama’s efforts to placate the Democrats. Obama also “sought to ensure that there would be no defections” from military and Department of Defense leaders once he had made his final decision on

\textsuperscript{624} McHugh, “A Tale of Two Surges,” 11.
\textsuperscript{626} McHugh, 11.
\textsuperscript{627} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{628} McHugh, 12.
Afghanistan strategy. Team Pentagon members were asked to endorse a “terms sheet” where it was noted that the new strategy would not be “fully resourced nation building, but a narrower approach.” In return for their support, Obama pledged to limit any withdrawal with the appropriate “conditions on the ground.”

With Team Biden, Obama took careful measures to win over their support. By including a withdrawal date for July 2011, Obama was able to convince both Biden and Democrats in Congress that the new plan would not be an open ended campaign in Afghanistan. Before taking his plan public, Obama met with Biden and Congress to explain his decision. Democrats weren’t pleased with a deepened commitment in Afghanistan, but support from Biden kept the plan from being openly opposed. As Biden told the Congressional Democrats, “Just so everyone knows, I’m not for drawing down the troops.”

After wrangling support for his plan in both the administration and Congress, Obama pitched his plan in a speech to the American public. At West Point on December 10, 2009, Obama outlined his plan to send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan to focus on counterinsurgency. Additionally, a “civilian surge” would help to fund Afghan government efforts to stem corruption. Similar to President Bush in Iraq, Obama justified the move as an attempt to prevent new threats from terrorism in the

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630 Ibid.
631 McHugh, 13.
632 Ibid.
633 Ibid.
634 Ibid.
636 McHugh, 13.
region. He warned that “the danger would only grow if the region slides backwards, and al-Qaeda can operate with impunity.”

With his speech, Obama was able to reframe the debate over the way forward in Afghanistan. Having co-opted critics within his administration, the speech helped improve public opinion of the war, and further convince Democrats of his willingness to keep the war in Afghanistan limited in scope. By December 2009, 51% of Americans supported the new plan, while 40% opposed. Most importantly, 58% of Democrats supported the plan, up from 27% in November. Likewise, 55% of Republicans supported the Obama plan, and those that opposed disapproved of the addition of a withdrawal date. Democratic leaders like Pelosi seemed placated as well. Pelosi stated after the speech that she believed that Obama effectively “articulated a way out of this war.” Instead of challenging the plan, the Democratic leadership helped to curb any strong challenges from the Democratic “doves’ in demanding a shorter withdrawal timeline.

The result of the political process was that Obama’s new strategy in Afghanistan was now neither a true COIN campaign nor a military counterterrorism campaign. The mission in Afghanistan had been narrowed, and the bar for success lowered. Now, the U.S. and ISAF would focus on “disrupting and dismantling al-Qaeda” rather than pursuing a total victory over the Taliban and instead choosing to gradually transfer

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638 Ibid.
639 Ibid.
640 Ibid.
641 Ibid.
642 McHugh, 14.
643 Ibid.
responsibility to the Afghan army. In actuality, the plan was a broad blend of both COIN and counterterrorism strategies. More attention would be paid to securing the safety of the population and nation building, but the aggressive military strategies of aerial bombings and special operations missions would continue. Ultimately, a true COIN mission was never authorized in Afghanistan. Instead, the campaign was the “worst of both worlds- a troop increase that was inadequate for requirements … and a deadline that would hearten enemies.”

General McChrystal had first go with the new plan. A disciple of General Petraeus, McChrystal had served as head of Petraeus’s Special Operations Forces counterterrorism operations in Iraq, and was therefore a proponent of COIN warfare. After taking command of ISAF in June 2009, McChrystal set about establishing the COIN strategy in Afghanistan that been previously used in Iraq. In his assessment in the preliminary discussions of creating the Afghan Surge, McChrystal spoke in depth of how he felt that the campaign strategy needed to be “focused on protecting the population rather than seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces” and how changing the operational culture would be necessary. On his watch, troops in Afghanistan would now follow strict rules of engagement and utilize a clear, hold, and build strategy to limit the growth of the Taliban.

However, McChrystal’s COIN strategy worked in parallel with the counterterrorism strategy being utilized on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to hunt down Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda members who were still on the loose. With Obama

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645 Bailey, *Understanding the U.S. Wars*, 141.
646 Ibid.
reaffirming the U.S. aim of disrupting and dismantling al-Qaeda, “kill and capture”
counterterrorism was intensified.\textsuperscript{649} NATO Special operations continued to operate
throughout the country, utilizing night raids, where special ops forces would swoop in
under cover of night and bag suspected Taliban members.\textsuperscript{650} Of course, some suspects
arrested were innocent, and the noisy attacks startled the families and friends of those
taken- guilty or innocent.\textsuperscript{651} As one Afghan who worked as an interpreter for the U.S.
military put it, the strikes left women yelling, “children screaming, and babies crying,”
and the man remembered thinking as he stared at a certain child, “Whoa. We’ll be back
for him one day.”\textsuperscript{652}

Drone strikes began to replace aerial strikes in the 2009-2016 period as well. By
utilizing drone strikes, the U.S. and ISAF could now target the remote areas that the
Taliban terrorists were hiding in without risking military lives in the process. In 2008,
drone strikes conducted by the U.S. military were carried out about 35 times.\textsuperscript{653} Under
Obama’s first year in office, the number of drone strikes jumped to 140.\textsuperscript{654} Despite saving
U.S. and international forces’ lives, the new method of choice for aerial targeting was
increasingly controversial amongst Afghans and even neighboring Pakistanis who also
were targeted from time to time.\textsuperscript{655} Disputes between NATO, who claimed the strikes
targeted terrorists, and the Afghans, who believed innocent people were being targeted,

\textsuperscript{649} Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 165.
\textsuperscript{650} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 325.
\textsuperscript{651} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{652} Ansary, 326.
\textsuperscript{653} Ansary, 327.
\textsuperscript{654} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{655} Ibid.
became common place.656 Likely it was a combination of both claims- the drone strikes hit terrorists, but also resulted in high levels of collateral damage.657

In the midst of the counterterrorism campaign in southern Afghanistan, McChrystal’s clear, hold, and build strategy would be tested. In Helmand Province, McChrystal’s forces engaged the Taliban in one of the biggest battles of the war.658 The city of Marjah, which was described as the “headquarters of the insurgency,” became the center point of the battle to retake Afghanistan.659 NATO quickly defeated the Taliban in Marjah in about a week, and proceeded to set up a “government in a box” to administer the city, opening schools and medical facilities, patrolling the streets, and enacting reconstruction efforts.660

However, violence continued to plague Marjah. Despite a lack of military battles to retake the city, isolated instances of violence continued to pop up.661 McChrystal described Marjah as a “bleeding ulcer,” as the U.S. and ISAF presence failed to keep the city stable.662 Marjah wasn’t the only issue, as areas held by international forces and the ANA around the country had similar problems. Like Marjah, clear, hold, and build wasn’t working like it was supposed to across the country, perhaps in part to the different conditions in Afghanistan than what existed in Iraq.663

McChrystal’s rein as commander of ISAF ultimately didn’t come to an end on account of the failures on the battlefield, but rather because of his strained relations with

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656 Ansary, *Games without Rules*, 327.
657 Ibid.
658 Ansary, 329.
659 Ibid.
660 Ansary, 328.
661 Ibid.
662 Ibid.
663 Bailey, *Understanding the U.S. Wars*, 144.
the Obama administration. Tensions had already been high during the initial planning of the Surge, as McChrystal had clashed with Team Biden on what strategy should be pursued in Afghanistan. On several occasions, the General publicly rallied for a true COIN mission, until confronted by the President.\textsuperscript{664} Once the Surge had been established, McChrystal continued his political maneuvering, and the relationship with Team Biden continued to sour. In particular, the bad relationship with Ambassador Eikenberry made the war effort incredibly difficult, likely severely limiting any close cooperation between the military and the Department of State.\textsuperscript{665} Ultimately, McChrystal went too far in his public activism. After being featured in a \textit{Rolling Stone} article where he heavily criticized President Obama, McChrystal was fired and replaced by General Petraeus.\textsuperscript{666}

Petraeus was of course the obvious choice to replace McChrystal, as he was seen as the architect for the successful Surge in Iraq.\textsuperscript{667} After the drawdown in Iraq, Petraeus had served as the commander of CENTCOM, so after resigning his post he was able to focus on Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{668} Much like he did in Iraq, the General exercised his adept expertise in COIN. Petraeus reformed several aspects of the COIN strategy in Afghanistan. First, he loosened restrictions on the rules of engagement that troops had to follow, mirroring his approach to engagement in Iraq.\textsuperscript{669} Second, Petraeus stepped up the number counterterror raids, while also demonstrating his ability to handle the nation building side of COIN strategy.\textsuperscript{670} By opening a corruption task force, and working to

\textsuperscript{664} McHugh, “A Tale of Two Surges,” 12.
\textsuperscript{665} Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 141.
\textsuperscript{666} Ansary, \textit{Games without Rules}, 328.
\textsuperscript{667} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{668} Bailey, 142.
\textsuperscript{669} Ansary, 328.
\textsuperscript{670} Bailey, 142.
build constructive dialogue with the Taliban, and improving relations with Ambassador Eikenberry, Petraeus looked to be making progress.671

By 2011, the military situation in Afghanistan seemed to stabilize, targeted violent areas in the country were more secure, and had provided “time and space to train” Afghan police and military forces. And on May 2, 2011, after 10 years on the run, U.S. Special Forces had finally located and killed Osama bin Laden. At this point, Petraeus became a victim of his own apparent success. As the deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops was quickly approaching, Obama saw the death of bin Laden as a sign that the withdrawal could be undertaken as planned. However, Petraeus argued that the loss of the Surge troops would adversely affect the gains that had been made the past seven months under his leadership. A compromise agreement between Obama and Petraeus sponsored by Secretary Gates ensured that the Surge troops would remain at least until September 2012, giving Petraeus a little more time.

Underneath the surface of Obama’s decision to withdraw the Surge troops and the progress of General Petraeus, problems were still lingering. Gains in the South against the Taliban were deteriorating. Both Marjah and Petraeus’ later invasion of Kandahar were quickly dissolving. In April 2011, eight hundred prisoners had escaped from a Kandahar prison in a tunnel that had been dug without anyone noticing.672 The focus on the South also allowed for Taliban instability to gain steam in the north and east of Afghanistan, prompting the CIA to report that the war in Afghanistan “was headed for stalemate.”673 As the troop withdrawals began to gain steam, the U.S. and ISAF wouldn’t

671 Bailey, Understanding the U.S. Wars, 142.
672 Ansary, Games without Rules, 327.
673 Ibid.
be able to decisively defeat the Taliban, contributing to the fact that U.S. troops are still stationed in Afghanistan to this day.

Why didn’t the Surge in Afghanistan work very well? Much of the reasoning for its failures can be centered on the lack of a new and specific Surge policy unique to Afghanistan, the continued interference of Pakistan, and the continued instability of the Karzai government. Despite the strategic facelift to the campaign in Afghanistan, much of the U.S. and ISAF strategy in the country stayed very much the same.

For the United States, the idea of a Surge in Afghanistan closely resembled the plan for Iraq. Like Iraq, the COIN strategy in Afghanistan was based largely around Field Manual 3-24. Though 3-24 tried to make counterinsurgency applicable to any situation, the reality was that it was written in a relatively quick span of 9 months. In order to have a coherent plan early enough to begin the Iraq Surge, 3-24 was a very Iraq specific clear, hold, and build plan. In Iraq, the COIN approach was able to rely on a strong central government with large armed forces and big oil revenues, which Afghanistan severely lacked. Additionally, the deadline for U.S. troops to withdraw from Afghanistan sent clear messages to both the Afghan government and the Taliban— the U.S. did not plan to stay long. Likely, this helped to dissipate the impact of the Surge in Afghanistan.

Another issue with relying on 3-24 is the Surge in Iraq was a largely urban strategy. Unlike Iraq, where a sizeable portion of the population resides in urban areas, Afghanistan was a largely rural nation. By the numbers, Iraqi population density in 2009 was close to 66 people per square mile compared to Afghanistan’s 43.5 people per square mile. Iraq also had an urban population of over 19 million (70% of the population),

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674 Bailey, *Understanding the U.S. Wars*, 140.
675 Bailey, 141.
compared to Afghanistan’s 6 million (24% of the population). Securing Afghanistan à la Iraq would not make a lot of sense if the main goal of Iraq had been to secure Baghdad and its surroundings. To compound this issue, Iraq had been the beneficiary of a Sunni Awakening, a local uprising against al-Qaeda, in less populated areas. Without a similar movement in Afghanistan, the situation would likely not improve if more rural areas were not co-opted or better protected against gains from the Taliban.

What the U.S. war effort also overlooked was the source of violence and resistance to occupation felt by many Afghans. The conflict in Afghanistan was more than just the simplified government versus Taliban narrative that the U.S. and NATO had relied upon. The continuing violence “had far less to do” with “insurgency and counterinsurgency than they did with complex local political dynamics” that more often than not revolved around the “narco-economy” and “rival social groups,” which had been the basis of conflict in Afghanistan for centuries when foreign powers meddled in the country. In the 2001-2016 war period, local actors often aligned themselves in relation to insurgent or COIN forces based on what suited them the best at any given time. Ultimately, misunderstanding the source of violence resulted in unintentional exacerbation of the issues, such as the British led opium eradication program.

An increasing resistance to foreign occupation, especially in Pushtoon tribal areas, also hindered any progress for the Surge in Afghanistan. As time went on, U.S. and ISAF forces had to deal with the fallout of having reintroduced warlords to rural areas, as well drone bombings and special operations military missions. As one provincial

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676 Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 170; Runion, History, 212.
677 Berdal, 170.
678 Ibid.
679 Berdal, 171-172.
government put it, “people are slowly but surely coming to the conclusion that they are
an occupied country … and as a result of the bombings, house searches, being bitten by
dogs, people are thinking the U.S. is worse than the Soviets.” The problem these
actions caused were well noted, but “attempts to address [the issue] remained half-
hearted.” Despite COIN being a priority of the Surge era, aggressive counterterror
continued during the Surge in Afghanistan.

Besides the U.S. war effort, Pakistan continued to play a problematic role in
Afghanistan from 2009-2016. Despite President Obama’s “muted” acknowledgement of
the role of Pakistan in Afghanistan’s instability, the porous border between the two
countries continued to make it hard for ISAF to succeed militarily. Obama knew the
importance of stabilizing the border region, emphasizing the area as one combined “Af-
Pak” war zone. But in practice, the prescribed remedy of a troop Surge did little to
alleviate the problem. U.S. and ISAF troops couldn’t just cross the border to go after
Taliban forces, and the Taliban took advantage of this by establishing a “base from which
to plan and launch attacks in Afghanistan.”

After having been chased out of Afghanistan, the Taliban leadership under Mullah
Omar regrouped in Pakistan. Mullah Omar and others settled in the Pakistani city of
Quetta, just a few miles from Afghanistan, and established a shura, or council, to guide
the Taliban war effort. Despite dubious claims regarding the council’s actual
administrative control over the insurgency, the Quetta Shura was free to operate in the

681 Berdal, 272.
682 Ibid.
683 Ansary, Games without Rules, 323.
684 Ibid.
685 Runion, History, 206.
686 Ansary, 313.
unstable border region, where they were safe from ISAF as well as the Pakistani government. Highlighting the relative safety in Pakistan for the Taliban and other groups, U.S. Special Forces had found Osama hiding in the Pakistani village of Abbottabad, nine years after the U.S. had set out to hunt him down. The U.S. could initiate raids or use drone strikes in Pakistan, but these often had a political cost for U.S. and Pakistan relations, severely limiting military operability over the border.

With the issues in the Af-Pak region continuing unabated, instability also affected the Afghan government, which the U.S. was counting on to assume greater responsibility for the war effort after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Corruption and the autocratic leanings of the Karzai government continually endangered the military and stability gains of the Surge era. Like the previous era from 2001-2008, the Afghan government was successful in angering Afghan civilians who now had to deal with frustrating levels of bureaucratic bribes and other modes of corruption to fill out even the most simple of forms and applications.

The increasing levels of corruption soon leaked over into elections as well. In the 2009 presidential election, serious accusations of voter fraud were raised. A UN official at the time recognized that the “election had been marred by ‘widespread fraud,’” even after he himself was accused of “covering up fraud to benefit Hamid Karzai.” In the 2010 parliamentary elections, voter fraud concerns were once again raised. Combined

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689 Runion, *History*, 207.
with Taliban violence targeting the two elections that severely limited voter turnout, corruption was severely undermining the new democratic system in Afghanistan.690

Negative images of the Afghan government did little to help the Surge COIN strategy. As mentioned in field manual 3-24, counterinsurgency operations require a strong and dependable government to work with. In Afghanistan, U.S. and ISAF forces took for granted that the Karzai government could garner political legitimacy.691 Unfortunately, as time passed, Karzai and his government were “widely and increasingly seen by many as weak, corrupt, and abusive.”692 Surge projects implemented by the ISAF PRTs, such as the so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), which helped to create local “quick wins” by funding infrastructure building and improvements, ultimately worked within corrupt local and national frameworks.693 QIPs made some progress, but they ultimately helped to “alienate those outside the patronage networks of corrupt and violent strongmen” who many Afghans commonly detested. The corruption was so pervasive that it was believed that almost every Afghan in the country had been affected by corruption in one form or another, severely crippling the already weak legitimacy claims of the Karzai government.694 For example, a 2010 UN survey found that “one out two Afghans had paid bribes to Afghan officials to obtain basic public services” and that the bribe payments had reached about 2.5 billion dollars total that year.695

The highly autocratic system of government created by Karzai was also partly to blame. Karzai’s executive branch had widely powerful influence over the whole of

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690 Runion, *History*, 207.
692 Ibid.
693 Ibid.
694 Ibid.
government. For instance, Karzai was responsible for appointing all thirty two provincial governors, “creating loyalty to the state” but not necessarily to the Afghan voting public.\textsuperscript{696} To compound the issue of government legitimacy, government services rarely covered areas outside of “provincial and district government centers,” and the best candidates for government jobs were often reluctant to apply.\textsuperscript{697} Combined, corruption, inept governance, and the political disenfranchisement of the Afghan people made relying on the Karzai government difficult at best for the United States and its international partners.

With the U.S. suspicious of the Karzai government, a level of distrust began to emerge between both sides. Upon announcement of the Surge, leaders of the Democratic Party like President Obama and Nancy Pelosi warned that Karzai would no longer have a “blank check of support” from the United States.\textsuperscript{698} After two elections marred by corruption and voter fraud, this sentiment only hardened. For Karzai, he took the rhetoric as a sign that the U.S. was planning to abandon him.\textsuperscript{699} Karzai’s belief was in his mind confirmed when he found out that Ambassadors Richard Holbrooke and Eikenberry were helping other Afghan candidates to run against him.\textsuperscript{700} At a time when the U.S. needed to rely on Karzai, the foreign interference in the presidential election greatly deteriorated the working relationship between them.

By 2012, the United States began its Surge drawdown, continuing ahead in their training and eventual hand off of control to ANSF. With the chances of a military draw

\begin{footnotes}
\item[696] Bailey, \textit{Understanding the U.S. Wars}, 317.
\item[697] Ibid.
\item[700] Ibid.
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between ISAF and the Taliban inching higher, NATO troops also began to transfer power to Afghans, with a target date of withdrawal by the end of 2014.\footnote{Berdal, “A Mission Too Far?” 166.} Despite promises that the ISAF withdrawal would be “conditions based,” domestic pressure from NATO countries ensured that the “process never stood much chance of being truly conditional.”\footnote{Ibid.} The end result of the specific withdrawal timelines is that international forces had strict time limits to train Afghan troops who were suffering from high desertion rates and corruption. Despite “over fifty-nine billion dollars in U.S. funding,”\footnote{Bailey, Understanding the U.S. Wars, 316.} the ANSF continued to “suffer from inadequate logistical, sustainment, and other support capabilities” while also being “deeply pervaded by corruption, nepotism, and ethnic and patronage fissures.” Leaving Afghanistan to the ANSF on a short timeline was looked to by many that the U.S. and Obama had adopted a “surge, bribe, and run” war strategy.

Ultimately the Surge portion of the war in Afghanistan was deemed “at best a wildly inefficient partial success and at worst a failure”. Despite increasing troops and professing a COIN strategy mantra, President Obama oversaw a mission in Afghanistan that failed to ensure a U.S. victory. In reality, the United States hadn’t fully committed to a COIN campaign, as clear from the outset when Obama agreed to a compromise strategy somewhere between COIN and a strictly counterterror mission. Competing with increasingly aggressive drone strikes and special operations mission, the lazily implemented COIN portion of the mission in Afghanistan failed to produce anything but a draw between the U.S. and the Taliban. As of 2015 post-withdrawal, 10,000 international troops remained to train the ANSF and conduct special operations mission.
With no promise of a U.S. and Taliban ceasefire, the war in Afghanistan has continued indefinitely, far from what was promised at the beginning of the war.

With the failures of the 2009-2016 Surge withdrawal eras in Afghanistan, it is possible to examine whether the continuance of a hard offensive counterterrorism strategy during the Surge contributed to its failure. In the next section, trends such as U.S. and ISAF troop levels, Afghan civilian casualties, Afghan public opinion, and the rate of terrorism will be evaluated to evaluate the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism results in a failed counterterrorism campaign.

**Afghanistan Surge and Withdrawal Data Trends 2009-2016**

From 2009-2016, the war in Afghanistan entered its Surge phase, and ultimately a withdrawal phase. Though the new era of the war was framed as a COIN mission, the reality is that the strategy was a hybrid between COIN and the narrower aggressive counterterrorism campaign that predated the Surge. Therefore, because of the hard offensive counterterrorism focus, data trends during the Surge should indicate a continued rise in terrorism from the pre-Surge era, and also result in a failed counterterrorism effort. First, troop level trends for both the U.S. and ISAF during the Surge are examined. Second, casualty rates of Afghan civilians are compared to troop level trends. Third, Afghan public opinion is examined to see if there is any correlation between low public opinion and trends in troop levels and civilian casualties. Lastly, trends in troop levels, civilian casualties, and Afghan public opinion are scrutinized to see if the Afghanistan Surge resulted in a high rate of terrorism and a failed counterterrorism campaign.
Afghanistan Troop Levels 2009-2016

From 2009-2016, troop levels for both the U.S. and ISAF increased for most of the Surge era, then declined as troops were gradually withdrawn from the country (as shown in Figure 12). In January 2009, the U.S. and ISAF each had about 32,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan. By 2011, U.S. forces had increased from 32,000 to 99,500, and ISAF had increased to 42,400 at the peak of the Surge. By January 2015, both militaries had drastically reduced their presence to about 10,000 troops apiece to continue training the ANSF and continue counterterrorism operations.

These troop level trends closely mirror political developments in both the U.S. and Europe. When President Obama announced the U.S. Surge of 30,000 combat troops, NATO agreed to up their troop levels by 7,000 soldiers. Just like it had been planned, the Surge introduced temporary increases in the number of boots on the ground, accompanied with strict withdrawal timetables for the U.S and ISAF. The Surge withdrawal timelines were a direct result of both the American and European public political pressure on governments involved in Afghanistan. For example, the pressure from both Congressional Democrats and by the President’s political advisors inside the White House made it clear that Obama’s political tenure would depend on withdrawing the troops. Ultimately, the troop levels had less to do with conditions on the ground and more to do with the political objectives of the United States and its allies.

705 McHugh, “A Tale of Two Surges, II.”
Afghan civilian casualties during the 2009-2016 Surge increased to levels higher than even the initial U.S. invasion of Afghanistan produced (seen in Figure 13). Despite a dip in casualties from 2011-2013, a record number of 3,701 casualties were recorded by the United Nations. Possibly the increasing numbers of civilian casualties are a result of the Obama administration’s increasing use of drone strikes and special operations missions that was occurring parallel to the Surge COIN mission. Despite concerns of “over-reliance on firepower and force protection” tarnishing ISAF’s legitimacy “in the eyes of the Afghan people,” hard offensive counterterrorism missions continued unabated during the Surge period.  

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707 Pape, Cutting the Fuse, 124.
In relation to Surge troop levels, increased levels of troops appear to have contributed to the increase in casualties. Before the troop Surge, civilian casualties were much lower. During the Surge, casualties increased and then continued to increase well after the Surge forces began to withdraw. With the use of rampant hard counterterrorism strategies from 2009-2016, no remarkable reduction in civilian casualties occurred as troops increased.

Figure 15. Yearly Estimated Number of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan 2009-2016

Afghan Public Opinion 2009-2016

Afghan public opinion on the direction of the country and the presence of the United States actually slowly increased after implementation of the Surge from 2009 to 2014, and then dropped as the U.S. and ISAF presence waned into 2006. Unlike the 2001-2008 period, public opinion in Afghanistan became regularly measured phenomena

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with the help of the Asia Foundation. However, the same polling challenges apply. Polling was much easier in areas secured by higher military presence, such as Kabul, but much more dangerous in rural areas under Taliban control. Therefore, despite efforts to control for oversampling of urban regions, it is likely that public opinion may skew towards urban areas where the U.S. presence was much more tolerated by Afghans living there. Despite its limitations, Afghan public opinion polling can provide insight into how they perceived the war, and in effect counterterrorism operations.

In 2009, 42% of Afghans polled believed Afghanistan was headed in the right direction (shown in Figure 16). By 2013, public opinion had peaked at 58% responding that the country was going in a good direction. Conversely, negative public opinion was also gaining ground. In 2009, those that responded that Afghanistan was headed in the wrong direction was polling at 29%, and by 2014 had rose to 40%. And by 2016, the wrong direction respondents became the majority, at 66%. While the majority of Afghans polled had a positive outlook, the rising discontent was likely disconcerting for the U.S., ISAF, and ANSF. With two divergent trends present, it is important to understand trends in other public opinion polling in the country.
Reasons for responses to which direction Afghanistan was headed were very similar to the 2001 to 2008 period (shown in Table 20). Like the pre-surge era, Afghans who responded positively cited good security and reconstruction efforts as two of the highest percentage responses. 44% responded that good security influenced their response in 2009, and about that many responded the same from 2010-2012, before Afghan public opinion in general began trending downward during the Surge withdrawal. Respondents who answered reconstruction as their explanation made up another 30-40% of those polled from 2009 to 2014.

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Table 20. Reasons by Percent Why Afghan Respondents Feel Afghanistan is Headed in Right Direction 2009-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Security</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools for Girls Have Opened</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace/ End of War</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Active ANA and ANP</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Government</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Revival</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy/ Elections</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For negative responses, the reasons were also similar to the 2001-2008 period.

Insecurity, corruption, and economic issues were all prevalent responses for why Afghanistan was headed in the wrong direction (as seen in Table 21). Insecurity trended in the upper-30% to mid-40% from 2009-2015. Corruption, through a combination of two separate response categories regularly made up 20-30% of responses, while a bad economy and unemployment made up another 30-40% of responses during the surge period. Ultimately, the results on concerns of pessimistic Afghans reflect many of the same issues leveled at the U.S. and Afghan government in the first eight years of conflict.

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continued from 2009-2016. For example, over 70% of Afghans polled stated that they felt that corruption was a major problem in Afghanistan as a whole from 2006 to 2016.\textsuperscript{711}

Table 21. Reasons by Percent of Why Afghan Respondents Feel Afghanistan is Headed in Wrong Direction 2009-2015\textsuperscript{712}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Government</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Economy</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Corruption</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Attacks</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Taliban</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the public opinion polling data, there is also reason to believe that the Afghan people were tiring of the Taliban insurgency. From 2009-2016, sympathy (ranging from a little sympathy to a lot of sympathy) for armed opposition groups such as the Taliban fell from about 56% to 16%, whereas those who had no sympathy at all for the groups increased from 36% to 77% (see Figure 17). Afghans were very concerned that as international forces withdrew the Taliban would make a resurgence in the country.

In 2013 and 2014, a Gallup poll revealed that a large percentage of Afghans expected the Taliban presence to increase as U.S. and NATO forces left the country, at 59% and 46% respectively in those years.\textsuperscript{713}

\textbf{Figure 17. Percentage of Afghans Polled on Their Sympathy Towards Armed Opposition Groups 2009-2016}\textsuperscript{714}

With rising concerns of the Taliban re-emerging after the end of the Surge, public opinion showed a general anxiety about international forces leaving, but also positive perceptions and confidence in the transition to ANSF control. When asked how Afghanistan would be after the U.S. and NATO withdrawal in 2014, around 40% of Afghans polled in 2013 and 2014 responded that the country would be worse off after the withdrawal, compared to 17-18% who thought Afghanistan would be better off.\textsuperscript{715}

\textsuperscript{713} Julie Ray, "Many Afghans Expect Life to Be Worse After Troops Leave," \textit{Gallup}, (January 14, 2015), Accessed 7/15/19, https://news.gallup.com/poll/180965/afghans-expect-life-worse-troops-leave.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item &g_content=Many%2520Afghans%2520Expect%2520Life%2520to%2520Be%2520Worse%2520After%2520Troops%2520Leave.


\textsuperscript{715} Ray, \textit{Gallup}.  

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Positive perceptions of the ANSF were also prevalent. For the ANA, around 50% of Afghans from 2009-2016 believed that the army was honest and fair, helps improve security, and protects civilians.\textsuperscript{716} For the ANP, the percentage was about 40% for those that felt the police were honest and fair, and help improve security, but given that police corruption was an endemic issue, this is not surprising.\textsuperscript{717} Confidence in the ANSF also increased from 2009-2013, as 51% of Afghans confident in the military in 2009 jumped to 80% in 2013.\textsuperscript{718} Afghans who didn’t express confidence in the military dropped from 42% in 2009 to 19% in 2013.\textsuperscript{719}

After 2014, an aura of unfinished business permeated Afghan public opinion. Many of the polls that recorded public opinion from 2009 to 2016 recorded a significant drop in positive public opinion in the years following the Surge withdrawal. For example, those who said Afghanistan was headed in the right direction declined significantly, from 55% in 2014 to 29% in 2016.\textsuperscript{720} The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the decline is that Afghans had serious anxiety about the security that the U.S. and ISAF had provided, especially in urban areas like Kabul, being withdrawn. This finding is very similar to observations drawn about the Iraq Surge, where Iraqis supported increased security that international forces brought, but were less supportive of the foreign troops themselves. Though many Afghans were likely ambivalent to continued foreign presence in Afghanistan, they also supported and enjoyed the progress in security.

\textsuperscript{717} Warren et al., 47.
\textsuperscript{718} Mohamed Younis, "Most Afghans Lack Confidence in Elections," Gallup, (April 2, 2014), Accessed 7/16/19. https://news.gallup.com/poll/168200/afghans-lack-confidence-elections.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Most%2520Afghans%2520Lack%2520Confidence%2520in%2520Elections.
\textsuperscript{719} Younis, “Most Afghans Lack Confidence in Elections,” Gallup.
\textsuperscript{720} Akseer, Tabasum et al. “Afghanistan in 2018”, 17.
So, as U.S. and ISAF troop numbers dwindled, it seems that many Afghans were guarded about just how low the gains of the Surge would last in the coming years. With the reduced troop numbers, the U.S. had failed to broker peace and reconciliation with their Taliban adversaries. It is then noticeable that in 2015, that 62.9% of Afghans believed that the peace process could help stabilize the country.\textsuperscript{721} Despite regional variations (less people in Kabul supported the process than in the Taliban heavy southwest regions), a sizeable majority of Afghans most likely felt that a U.S. withdrawal without reconciliation with the Taliban was a mistake.\textsuperscript{722}

In the 2009 to 2016 period, Afghan public opinion had a reverse relationship with troop levels. The higher troop levels were, the more optimistic and positive polling responses were recorded. As the withdrawal entered critical phases, more negative public opinion was prevalent. For civilian casualties however, casualties mounted as foreign troops left in droves. Therefore, it is possible to correlate lowered positive public opinion with increasing civilian casualties but no direct link between troop levels and public opinion, unlike the 2001-2008 period. Likely, the public opinion findings of the 2009-2016 Surge era in Afghanistan point to some gains in public opinion from introducing a renewed focus on COIN instead of relying on hard offensive terrorism. How does this play into the rate of terrorism during the Afghanistan Surge and withdrawal phases of the war?

**The Rate of Afghan Terrorism from 2009-2016**

From 2009-2016, the rate of terrorism in Afghanistan linearly increased (shown in Figure 18). Most dramatically, 503 terrorist attacks were recorded in 2009, which

\textsuperscript{722} Ibid.
increased to 1,619 terrorist attacks in 2016. In the first few years of the Surge, terrorism increased, with the exception being 2011. With the Surge at full strength, U.S. and ISAF were able to dampen the number of terrorist attacks. However, terrorist attacks that year were still fairly high when compared to terrorist attack rates from 2001-2008.

In comparison with troop levels, like previously mentioned, terrorist attacks were lower when more troops were present. With U.S. forces capped at 100,000 troops, terrorist rates were much lower than when troop levels were lower starting in 2012. As the withdrawal was put in place, terrorist attacks skyrocketed. Like in Iraq, the Surge strategy helped to reduce terrorist attacks, but it is possible that the Surge wasn’t in place long enough to do any long term help. Also, as some critics as the Obama administration in Afghanistan point out, a set withdrawal date might have helped to embolden Taliban elements as troops left the country.

The same can be said for civilian casualties. With full implementation of Surge forces, a slight dip in casualty rates occurred, but was then followed by yet another increase. It can be argued that the mild dip in casualties wasn’t that noticeable because of the hard offensive counterterrorism drone strikes and special operations raids that occurred in tandem with the Surge COIN operation. Without widespread use remote bombings and sometimes extralegal special ops raids, the rate of casualties might have decreased further.

In Afghan public opinion, more troops actually resulted in higher positive public opinion towards the direction of Afghanistan and the presence of international forces. This is very similar to findings from the Iraq Surge, where the COIN mission there also increased public opinion. Security was of high importance for both Iraqis and Afghans, as
both countries benefitted from increased security during the Surge eras. As public support and interest from the United States waned towards both wars, so did Afghan public opinion.

While comparing the data of troop levels, civilian casualties, Afghan public opinion, and the rate of terrorism in Afghanistan, a more sustained COIN mission in Afghanistan might have been more successful. In part due to the briefness of the full strength Surge and lingering use of hard offensive counterterrorism, the Surge in Afghanistan didn’t achieve lasting peace. With these findings, it is plausible that hard offensive counterterrorism does indeed result in failure, whereas a softer strategy (with appropriate troop levels) reduces terrorism and is more successful. However, for the withdrawal, a softer strategy combined with fewer troops actually led to counterterrorism failure. For both conclusions, other factors are also at play. For instance, the lack of political commitment to the Surge sent a message to the Taliban that the U.S wasn’t likely to stay in Afghanistan long. After initial Surge success, the Taliban could have become more emboldened as the full withdrawal deadline approached. Therefore, the hypothesis is possible, but not entirely conclusive.
Figure 18. Rate of Terrorism in Afghanistan 2009-2016\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{223} Global Terrorism Database [gtd\_96to13\_0718dist]. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), (2019), Retrieved from http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In this examination of hard offensive counterterrorism, I first lay out a methodology for research based on the existing counterterrorism literature. Four categories of counterterrorism can be distinguished, though hybrids like counterinsurgency exist. Hard offensive counterterrorism utilizes force to pre-empt terrorist activity and include strategies like leadership decapitation and deterrence. I then explain the hypothesis that hard offensive counterterrorism results in the failure of a counterterrorism strategy. Additionally, I lay out variables such as troop levels, civilian casualties, public opinion, and the rate of terrorism, as well as their respective sources of data.

In the following chapter, counterterrorism in Iraq is discussed. In the first section, the history and politics of Iraq from 2003-2006 reveals that the hard offensive counterterrorism strategy of “traditional war” was used, and resulted in increased terrorism, violence, and instability. In the following section, data shows that when hard offensive counterterrorism was paired with increased troops, civilian casualties, lowered public opinion, and terrorism increased. The history and politics of Iraq from 2007-2011 is also examined. The 2007-2011 period included a Surge and a withdrawal, where a counterinsurgency approach to counterterrorism was used. In the Surge era, counterinsurgency and increased troops resulted in lower civilian casualties, higher public opinion, and a lowered rate of terrorism, which resulted in the Surge being a success. In the withdrawal era, troop levels were lowered and indicators from the Surge were reversed, resulting in a counterterrorism failure.
The next chapter looks at the war in Afghanistan. In the first section, the history and politics of the pre-Surge era from 2001-2008 is introduced. In the pre-Surge period, hard offensive counterterrorism resulted increased terrorism from a Taliban insurgency. The data from 2001-2008 shows that terrorism increased as troop levels were raised, as well as high civilian casualties and lowered public opinion. Next, the Surge and withdrawal period in Afghanistan from 2009-2016 is examined. The Surge helped to produce a slight decrease in terrorism and instability when it was at full strength. The data reveals that troop levels were high, the rate of terrorism as well as civilian casualties were reduced, positive public opinion increased, and the Surge was a relative success. It is possible that the brief reduction in terrorism was the result of increasing hard offensive counterterrorism in tandem with a limited counterinsurgency strategy dulled the effectiveness of the Surge in reducing terrorism. In the withdrawal, the indicators once again reversed and resulted in counterterrorism failure.

Therefore, based on findings from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, hard offensive counterterrorism can plausibly lead to a failed counterterrorism campaign. When a softer counterterrorism method is utilized, such as counterinsurgency, reductions in the rate of terrorism can be observed. In addition, the effectiveness of troop levels is changed depending on what category of counterterrorism strategy is used. When hard offensive counterterrorism tactics are combined with higher troop levels, high civilian casualties and lowered public opinion increase, and therefore, terrorism increases as well. In contrast, when counterinsurgency tactics are used with higher troop levels, rates of terrorism are reduced, in addition lower civilian casualties and higher public opinion.
However, as illustrated by the history and politics of both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the result of the counterterrorism strategies are also influenced by a myriad of other variables, so the results of this study are still rather inconclusive. What should be gleaned from both wars is that counterterrorism results are influenced by unique developments in each country. The result in Iraq didn’t necessarily line up with the result in Afghanistan, for reasons such as the rural geography of Afghanistan, the lack of an indigenous Afghan “Awakening” against the Taliban, and the lack of political commitment to counterinsurgency by the Obama administration.

Another finding is that lower troop levels also affected the outcome of a given counterterrorism strategy in the level of civilian casualties and rate of terrorism. As illustrated in Figure 19, Hard offensive counterterrorism was more successful when there were less troops in lowering civilian casualties and terrorism. Conversely, counterinsurgency was less effective when there were fewer troops and led to higher civilian casualties and a high rate of terrorism. It is possible that counterterrorism strategies and troop levels have a converse relationship.

Therefore, the occupation theory presented by Pape that links high levels of troops to higher levels of local resistance, is too simple. The issue of occupation is a lot more complex, and a more nuanced stance should be that the particular counterterrorism strategy utilized also influences the outcome on an occupation. When hard offensive counterterrorism is used, less troops results in less violence and terrorism. Conversely, counterinsurgency with too few troops results in higher violence and terrorism. More research needs to be done in order to further evaluate the different results from hard
offensive counterterrorism and softer means of counterterrorism, such as counterinsurgency.

Figure 19. Relationship Between Counterterrorism Strategies and Troop Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Troop Levels</th>
<th>Low Troop Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Counterterrorism</td>
<td>High Civilian Casualties and High Rate of Terrorism</td>
<td>Low Civilian Casualties and Low Rate of Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Counterterrorism</td>
<td>Low Civilian Casualties and Low Rate of Terrorism</td>
<td>High Civilian Casualties and High Rate of Terrorism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to also note that conclusions drawn from this study into counterterrorism strategies applies mostly to hard offensive counterterrorism and counterinsurgency undertaken by a foreign counterterrorism entity against foreign terrorism. Findings from this study are not sufficiently generalizable without significant testing of domestic counterterrorism strategy and policy. Domestic counterterrorism would benefit from an analysis of its own strategies in future research.

For additional future research, other types of counterinsurgency strategies should be evaluated against hard offensive counterterrorism. This means exploring new case studies in counterterrorism as well as strategies such as hard and soft defensive counterterrorism. By finding new case studies, insights into other areas and different governments can help expand knowledge of counterterrorism. The biggest take away
from research in counterterrorism is that every case study is slightly different. For instance, counterterrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan had varied results that changed depending on the situation inside the country. For Iraq, much of the focus of counterterrorism was on urban areas, especially inside the capital city of Baghdad. For Afghanistan, counterterrorism activities were undertaken in more remote, rural areas. Introducing more case studies to the study of counterterrorism would elucidate more information to infer what commonalities exist between counterterrorism strategies used in different regions.

Future research should also look to undergo public opinion polling specifically tailored to populations that are affected by terrorism. Polling used in this evaluation of hard offensive counterterrorism relies upon public opinion polling more closely related to the U.S. war effort, political reconciliation between groups in Iraq and Afghanistan, and questions of rebuilding and reconstruction. More polling should be done that helps to better understand the underlying mechanisms of alienation and collateral damage in populations that are susceptible to participating in terrorism, and their reasons for doing so.

Ultimately, the research on counterterrorism presented should serve as caution for governments deciding on which counterterrorism strategy to pursue. All options should be thoroughly discussed in order for counterterrorism and policy officials to understand the side effects of a given hard offensive counterterrorism strategy. Governments may not be prepared for a backlash of increased rates of terrorism when they pursue their counterterrorism goals. Within the “War on Terror,” the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had unintended consequences. After withdrawal from Iraq, world governments faced a new
threat from ISIS which continued to carry out terrorist attacks after al-Qaeda had been severely weakened. It is possible that the War on Terror was thought of as a quick entry and exit war, whereas solving the issue of terrorism in the Middle East might require much more patience than typically thought.


## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghan National Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghan National Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSF</td>
<td>Afghan National Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERP</td>
<td>Commander’s Emergency Response Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJTF-7</td>
<td>Combined Joint Task Force 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Coalition Provisional Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOB</td>
<td>Forward operating base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>Grand Old Party (Republican Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTD</td>
<td>Global Terrorism Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised explosive device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGC</td>
<td>Iraqi Governing Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>Inter-Services Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF-I</td>
<td>Multi-National Force-Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEF</td>
<td>Operation Enduring Freedom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ORHA  Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
OSD   Office of the Secretary of Defense
PRT   Province Reconstruction Team
SCIRI Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
UN    United Nations
UNAMA United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
USAID United States Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM United States Central Command
USSR  Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD   Weapon of mass destruction

LIST OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Al-qaeda  The base
Fardh al-qanoon Enforcing the law
Ibnaa al-Iraq Sons of Iraq
Ibn al-balad Son of the soil
Loya jirga Traditional Afghan tribal assembly
Mujahideen Islamic freedom fighters