

Our Seven Wars in Afghanistan: Progress Under the SWORD Model

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Continued reports of corruption, increasing violence, struggles with development, and slow progress with poppy eradication seem to indicate that the situation in Afghanistan is on the decline. This paper will argue that the chances for success in the troubled nation are actually improving – although several adjustments must be made to how the problem is being solved. The ongoing counterinsurgency in Afghanistan will be assessed with respect to the SWORD model’s seven strategic dimensions or ‘wars within the war.’ They are: (1) the legitimacy war; (2) the shooting war; (3) the war to isolate the insurgents from internal support; (4) the war to isolate the insurgents from external support; (5) the war to stay the course and maintain commitment; (6) the intelligence and information war; and (7) the war for unity of effort. A trend-based approach is used whereby the progress or regress with respect to each ‘war’ is assessed using trends that relate to the key elements of that particular war. These trends will be derived from indicators of the situation in Afghanistan as well as the increasing or decreasing adherence of the involved elements of the international community to the dimensions of the SWORD model. Most of the trends are positive, indicating that the wars are being won and overall chances of success in Afghanistan are thus increasing. A few others are negative, indicating regression. The paper will suggest how positive trends can be further improved and how negative trends can be reversed so that the seven wars can be won, focusing on those which can be most easily influenced by the Afghan government and the international community.

“We have been fighting in Afghanistan for six years now. If we don’t change approaches we will be fighting there for another 20 or 30 years.”

-Mikhail Gorbachev¹

INTRODUCTION

The international community has taken on a task of great difficulty and incredible importance in Afghanistan. Its successful accomplishment is vital for the Afghan people and important to the international community as a whole. At the core of this task is a counterinsurgency war against a determined foe as part of a larger effort against global Islamist subversion. Numerous different sources offer their perspective as to our progress with respect to this task or give predictions as to the possible outcome, many are negative.² Among these sources are the media, various military reports, organizations of the international community, academia, and many others. Some reports have looked at

¹ quoted in Douglas A. Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared* (London: Frank Cass, 1999; reprint, London: Frank Cass, 2001), 179 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

² for a short selection of these perspectives and predictions, see Sean M. Maloney, “Afghanistan Four Years On: An Assessment,” *Parameters* (Autumn 2005): 21 n. 1.

increases in violent incidents and made their predictions, some focus on corruption, others have assessed the situation from the military perspective alone. Comparisons with counterinsurgencies from the past have been made as well. The media often employ “simplistic metrics” that give the impression that “the country is on the brink of failure.”³ The narrow approaches of others tend to be insufficient given the scope of the problem. Approaches that are wider in scope are seldom focused on the key elements.

The eventual outcome, be it lasting stability or overall failure, will depend on the successful mastery of a complicated combination of numerous different factors acting at several levels. Some of these factors will inevitably be more important, others will be near inconsequential. Concentrating on the specific combination of factors that will lead to success is critical, but extremely difficult. This focus is best accomplished using the model developed in the Small Wars Operations Research Directorate of the US Southern Command (herein referred to as the SWORD model) by Max G. Manwaring. This paper will use the most recent refinement of this model, published in Max Manwaring and John Fishel’s 2006 *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*.

THE SWORD MODEL

The effectiveness of the SWORD model originates from the empirical approach used to develop and validate it. In the late 1980s, Max G. Manwaring, current General Douglas McArthur Chair of Research at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, studied 43 post-Second World War insurgencies to distill from them the correlates of success.⁴ The end result was a set of seven ‘dimensions’ that could be used to predict the outcome of a counterinsurgency effort. To later test the model, Manwaring partnered with John Fishel and identified 72 variables likely to affect the outcome of an insurgency. He then developed a questionnaire where the importance of each of these variables to the eventual outcome of the insurgency could be rated on a four-point ordinal scale. The questionnaire was given to a number of experts that were directly involved in the conflict or had intensely studied its history. The experts also rated the insurgency as a win or a loss. This data was then statistically combined and used to test the SWORD model against five other models. The SWORD model rated highest, outscoring the closest competitor by 20 per cent.⁵

Such an approach is rare, but vital when attempting to study such a vast collective experience. Most works on counterinsurgency are often based on a single conflict. Other works look at several different counterinsurgencies and the author judges which elements are the most important, often selecting common factors based on their individual merit, rather than their value as part of an integrated whole. Doctrine attempts to overcome this by combining the lessons of great swaths of military experience and the works of numerous different works authors, thus inheriting the faults mentioned above. Military leaders or decision-makers can choose to focus on certain elements of doctrine more than

³ Maloney, 31.

⁴ John T. Fishel, ed., “*The Savage Wars of Peace*”: *Toward a New Paradigm of Peace Operations* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 4.

⁵ Max G. Manwaring and John T. Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Toward a New Analytical Approach” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, (Winter, 1992): 276-279.

others, distorting doctrine while locked in the “wise of previous (and often limited) experience.”⁶

Manwaring did not theorize any of the dimensions of the model. He and John Fishel have indicated that the model is “original only in the way that the dimensions were combined and in how they were derived and tested.”⁷ Those that may be inclined to see the model as too abstract and academic in nature, perhaps proclaiming themselves as more ‘reality-oriented,’ are thus forced to accept that the only academic element was the actual method of refining the collective decades of field experience that form its source data.

At the same time, Manwaring was mindful of the fact that “every conflict is situation-specific” but also contended that no situation is entirely unique.⁸ For the development of the model he therefore focused on the “analytical commonalities”⁹ of counterinsurgencies. In addition, the common elements are often those that are large-scale and most important; the elements that are uncommon between situations are typically small-scale and near-inconsequential.

The SWORD model (or Manwaring Paradigm) has been tested time and time again. Early analysis validated the model, showing it capable of correctly predicting the outcome of a counterinsurgency nine times out of ten,¹⁰ with the tenth usually being some obvious anomaly.¹¹ More than two decades of use have further polished and tested the model since. In the words of the model’s creators: “Although the model has been refined over the years, we have not been able to refute it. And we have certainly tried.”¹²

In short, evidence demonstrates that a challenged government must adhere to the dimensions of the SWORD model if it wishes to defeat a given insurgency. The converse is also true; failure to do so will result in the eventual failure of the challenged government.¹³

APPROACH

This paper will seek to assess the current international involvement in Afghanistan with respect to the seven wars or seven dimensions of the SWORD model.¹⁴ Particular

⁶ John T. Fishel and Max G. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, International and Security Affairs Series, ed. Edwin G. Corr, vol. 2, with a foreword and afterword by Edwin G. Corr (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), xviii.

⁷ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 251.

⁸ Max G. Manwaring, “Toward an Understanding of Insurgency Wars: The Paradigm,” in *Uncomfortable Wars*, ed. Max G. Manwaring (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Manwaring and Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 281.

¹¹ Manwaring and Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 283.

¹² Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 251.

¹³ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 253.

¹⁴ As suggested in Manwaring and Fishel’s *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited* (p. 253), it must also be noted that there is another perspective: that of the relative adherence to the model by the different adversaries in conflict. For example, the Afghan government may well have problems with unity of effort, but challenges with unity of effort among the insurgents may be more severe. This should also be considered by the reader, but such an analysis is the topic of another paper. To see the wider global insurgency from the al Qaeda perspective, readers should consult Kimbra L. Fishel’s “Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda’s Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena,” in *Networks, Terrorism, and Global Insurgency*, ed. Robert J. Bunker (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 115-128.

mistakes, achievements, or snapshots of the overall situation at any particular point, be they past or present, will not be the primary input for the assessment. As the conflict is ongoing, the analysis will instead take a trend-based approach, whereby the progress or regress with respect to each dimension will be assessed using trends that relate to the key elements of that particular dimension. Stated otherwise, each dimension will be considered with a view to determining if the chances of success in the counterinsurgency are increasing or decreasing with respect to that particular dimension. The trends will be derived from both indicators of the situation in Afghanistan as well as the increasing or decreasing adherence of the involved elements of the international community to the strategic dimensions of the SWORD model.

This process will expose areas that need to be improved upon so that we may better adhere to the model and thus increase chances for success. Of these areas for improvement, suggestions will be made with an emphasis on those within the influence of the Afghan government and the international community, rather than on those more difficult to control.

To prevent the oversimplification that would result with the use of solely “al Qaeda” or “Taliban,” I will borrow the term “anti-government forces” (AGF) from Colonel Thomas Hammes’ *The Sling and the Stone* to describe the mélange of actors that we are countering in Afghanistan.¹⁵ The term will be used to describe the full spectrum of al Qaeda, Taliban, warlords and their militias, smugglers, drug dealers and others seeking personal gain, and personnel working covertly for foreign powers. Afghan citizens that have turned to violence out of frustration, revenge, or anger and actors that American General Robert Durbin labels “anti-change forces,” which is to say any other actor wishing to preserve the status quo, are also included.¹⁶

Furthermore, the term “international security forces” will refer to troops of both the NATO ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission and the US-led OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom). The term “Afghan security forces” is used to describe the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, and other elements like the Afghan Border Guards.

OUR SEVEN WARS

The most recent refinement of the SWORD model redefines Manwaring and Fishel’s seven vital strategic dimensions or ‘wars within the war.’¹⁷ With respect to the current situation in Afghanistan, they are: (1) *the legitimacy war* to defend the Afghan government’s ability and moral right to govern; (2) *the shooting war* between the allied Afghan and international security forces and the AGF; (3) *the war to isolate the AGF internally* from their national and local sources of support; (4) *the war to isolate the AGF externally* from their sources of global and regional support; (5) *the war to stay the*

¹⁵ Col. Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, (St. Paul, Minn.: Zenith Press, 2004), 166.

¹⁶ Major General Robert Durbin, Commander, combined security transition Afghanistan, “Major General Robert Durbin (USA) Holds a Defense Department News Briefing on Ongoing Training and Equipping of Afghan Security Forces,” *Congressional Quarterly Inc.*, (Arlington, VA, 13 July 2006).

¹⁷ the terms ‘war’ and dimension will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

course, referring to the resolve of the involved elements of the international community to sustain support for Afghanistan in the long-term; (6) *the intelligence and information war* to win the support of the population and defeat the AGF forces and their operational and leadership structures; and (7) *the war for unity of effort* among the multiple entities of the international community in Afghanistan and the Afghan government itself.¹⁸

ANALYSIS

This segment will assess the seven ‘wars’ or strategic dimensions of the current counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. Each will be analyzed separately, but one must understand that the dimensions act as an integrated whole. Some of the more evident connections between dimensions will be mentioned, but the holistic nature of the dimensions runs much deeper than can be easily pointed out. It is important to keep in mind that the analytical process that generated the SWORD model exposed a *system* of seven dimensions, rather than seven stand-alone dimensions.

The Legitimacy War

The legitimacy war will be won when the Afghan government has a high degree of domestic support, the ability to govern its people, is not perceived by Afghans as corrupt, and political violence is rare, indicating that issues are instead being resolved through the democratic process.¹⁹ Analysis of the SWORD model has firmly established the statistical primacy of this dimension.²⁰ The war that the Afghan government is fighting to preserve and increase its legitimacy is thus the most important of all seven. This is derived from the simple reality that the principal target of the AGF is not the Afghan and international security forces, but the Afghan government’s legitimacy, which is best described as a combination of its moral right and its ability to govern.²¹ Trends observed indicate progress with respect to this dimension.

When assessing the degree of domestic support for the government, the importance of Karzai’s election in October of 2004 (with a voter turnout of 80%) cannot be understated.²² Karzai won with 55% of the vote, far ahead of his nearest competitor, establishing a legitimacy that the transitional government, or any government before it, did not have. Candidates agreed that these elections were free and fair, despite some minor discrepancies of process.²³ Elections held for the National Assembly and provincial council were conducted in September 2005 and continued the momentum. Recalling the early stages after the fall of the Taliban when Afghanistan had virtually no

¹⁸ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 21.

¹⁹ Phil Battaglia, “The Manwaring Paradigm and the Iraqi Insurgency,” *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2004), 44.

²⁰ Max G. Manwaring and John T. Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Toward a New Analytical Approach” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, (Winter, 1992): 281, 285.

²¹ Courtney E. Prisk, “The Umbrella of Legitimacy,” in *Uncomfortable Wars*, ed. Max G. Manwaring (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 69.

²² Maloney, “Afghanistan Four Years On,” 21.

²³ NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2005 General Session – *NATO’s Out-of-Area Operations*, Julio Miranda-Calha, General Rapporteur, <<http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=670>>, accessed 6 June 06.

central government whatsoever, these are crucial steps forward and more will certainly follow.

The legitimacy of the international community's involvement must also be considered as it affects the legitimacy of the Afghan government by association. The international community does not face the same challenges in Afghanistan that the Coalition has encountered in Iraq, where legitimacy has been referred to as the "Achilles heel of the intervening power."²⁴ Externally, much of this is related to the US failing to obtain a UN Security Council resolution for the operation (although the UN is involved with reconstruction in Iraq). In Afghanistan, both OEF and NATO began operations under UN mandates; the two were established under resolutions 1368 and 1386 respectively. Other resolutions followed and the Security Council continues to be actively involved with efforts in Afghanistan. Broad participation on the part of the international community, particularly with respect to the NATO mission,²⁵ also serves to increase the legitimacy of the international involvement in Afghanistan. One major detriment exists that counters all this: OEF's prisoner treatment policies. To win the legitimacy war, international security forces must retain the moral high ground in all aspects of this conflict, regardless of what atrocities the enemy commits.²⁶ Small steps have been taken to improve this, including a limited opening of Guantanamo to outside observers, the commencement of trials, and the recent disclosure of prisoners' names, but much more must be done to bring the policies in line with international norms for treatment of the accused.

The Afghan government has experienced difficulty in developing its ability to govern. Afghanistan has never been centrally-controlled to any great extent and the structures of this governance have therefore not previously existed to any significant degree. Its vast tribal network, harsh terrain, and limited infrastructure quickly explain why. At present, Kabul has a growing presence in most of the provinces, but has experienced some difficulty in the southeastern provinces of the Pashto belt. Major progress has been made in some provinces with the 'lateral promotion' of several warlords into the legitimate government, essentially removing their power so that the government can begin to take control instead.²⁷ The fighters formerly controlled by these warlords are being retrained and then transitioned into civilian occupations or into the Afghan security forces.²⁸ Security forces are increasing in numbers, also having a major effect on Kabul's ability to govern. This area is closely related to the 'shooting war' and much improvement in it will come as the Afghan security forces and other parts of the Afghan government begin to operate on their own. A reduction in the number of internationals in the country will reduce possible perceptions of occupation and replace it

²⁴ Battaglia, "The Manwaring Paradigm and the Iraqi Insurgency".

²⁵ The NATO-led ISAF mission currently includes troops from 26 NATO and 10 partner countries, see NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2006 Spring Session – *Afghanistan and the Future of the Alliance*, Bert Koenders, General Rapporteur, < <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.Asp?SHORTCUT=924>>, accessed 10 June 2006.

²⁶ Melvin R. Laird, "Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2005, database on-line, available from EBSCO Military and Government Collection, accession Number 18680551, accessed 7 July 2006.

²⁷ Maloney, "Afghanistan Four Years On," 26-27.

²⁸ NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *Lessons Learned from NATO's Current Operations*, Julio Miranda-Calha, General Rapporteur, < <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=920>>, accessed 6 June 05.

with a perception that the government is beginning to handle its own problems. Continual improvements to infrastructure are also increasing the influence of central authority. Again, we must recall that the government essentially started from nothing and realize that any control outside Kabul was thus virtually nonexistent at the outset. Given this, the situation today, although far from perfect, is a considerable improvement and the established positive trend is holding its momentum.

Corruption is currently one of the major impediments to the Afghan government's legitimacy²⁹ and is a challenge that any government will face, regardless of the presence or absence of an insurgent force. It is part of human nature and is intensified in this case by the nation's uncertain future and extreme poverty. As these two conditions improve as result of progress in other areas, corruption should decline accordingly. The work of international advisors and their Afghan counterparts to increase public transparency and accountability will have the same effect. Overall, these elements of the legitimacy dimension indicate a positive trend.

Endemic violence is also a major problem in Afghanistan and the trend in this element indicates regression. Data in the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base³⁰ indicates a very clear increase in politically motivated violence. Beginning in 2001 and extrapolating to include 2006 in the analysis, a steady annual rise is observed in both the number of incidents and the number of violence-related deaths and injuries. The increase in the number of violent deaths is most dramatic; if the current trend continues the number of people killed in 2006 will be almost double that of in 2005.³¹ However, it is important to note that this violence is not widespread; roughly half of all incidents in 2006 have occurred in a group of five of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces, all of them in the southeast of the country.³² Despite the steady but relatively localized rise in violence, the other trends are positive and indicate that the overall legitimacy war is being won in Afghanistan.

The Shooting War

This dimension of the counterinsurgency deals primarily with the international and Afghan security forces. The model indicates several key guidelines for both. Considering international security forces, the data indicate that the use of relatively small numbers of foreign troops in primarily a support and training role will win this war. If a large force is deemed necessary, it should only be used at the outset.³³ The SWORD model requires that indigenous security forces be well trained and highly-disciplined,

²⁹ Transparency International listed Afghanistan as having a corruption perception index of 2.5 last year (where 10 is highly clean and 0 is highly corrupt). They did not publish results for 2003 and 2004. Once released, results for 2006 will hopefully indicate a positive trend. See Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2005*, <http://www.transparency.org/layout/set/print/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2005>. Accessed 6 June 2005.

³⁰ the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org) is an on-line database of information on politically motivated violence that incorporates data from the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Databases, the Terrorism Incident Database, and DFI International's research on terrorist organizations.

³¹ using the Terrorism Knowledge Base incident analysis tool, available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>

³² using the Terrorism Knowledge Base mapping tool, available from <http://www.tkb.org/MapModule.jsp>

³³ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 22.

willing to take casualties, and capable of effective small-unit tactics if they are to contribute positively to overall chances of success in the shooting war.³⁴ Trends in this dimension indicate progress in this war, with some exceptions.

With respect to international security forces, the first trend violates the SWORD model and is that of a steady increase in the numbers of foreign troops in Afghanistan. OEF began in 2001 with less than a thousand SOF soldiers supporting and training indigenous forces³⁵ and quickly grew to roughly twenty-two thousand in 2003 after expansion of the US-led OEF and the addition of NATO's ISAF.³⁶ NATO continues to increase its troop commitment at present and although some of this expansion includes US troops that were recently transferred to NATO command, the overall number of foreign troops in theatre is currently more than forty thousand.³⁷ This goes against the recommendations of NATO's own research branch, which after analyzing the Soviet experience indicated that a large foreign military presence may hinder the pursuit of political solutions in Afghanistan as the population has been historically sensitive to outside influence.³⁸ In addition to an overall troop increase, commanders have started concentrating forces in the more troubled areas.³⁹ The SWORD model indicates the chances for failure of a counterinsurgency effort increase as the military actions of intervening powers become more intense and voluminous. The trend is thus negative in this regard and indicates regression, both overall and in certain problem areas. Experience has shown that intervening powers often commit forces in response to a deteriorating situation, with the situation getting worse as a result.⁴⁰ Although reasons for the steady increase in foreign troop presence may exist, among them the need to provide security to allow for reconstruction efforts, the model speaks clearly, with experience indicating that the international security forces must reduce their troop strength – even if critics propose otherwise. This would limit the resources of commanders and would require “subtlety and thought [to] be used instead of brute force” (brute force will not work in Afghanistan anyways).⁴¹

The best solution to the above problem begins with a capable Afghan security force, which is developing slowly but surely. The Afghan National Army (ANA) currently has a total of thirty thousand troops and is growing at a rate of one thousand per month with expectations for the final target of seventy thousand to be attained by 2009.⁴² The ANA, despite some difficulties, including vulnerabilities to insurgent penetration and problems with junior leaders, is faring relatively well as an indigenous force when

³⁴ Manwaring and Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 284.

³⁵ Charles H. Briscoe and others, *Weapon of Choice: U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (CITY: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), 207.

³⁶ Maloney, “Afghanistan Four Years On,” 23.

³⁷ Donald H. Rumsfeld, “Afghanistan: Five Years Later,” *The Washington Post*, 7 October 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 15 October 2006.

³⁸ Col Oleg Kulakov, *Lessons learned from the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan: Implications for Russian Defense Reform* (Rome: NATO Academic Research Branch, NATO Defense College, 2006), 7.

³⁹ Matthew Fisher, “British commander strives for Afghan people's support as he takes control of mission,” *The Edmonton Journal*, 5 June 2006, A4.

⁴⁰ Manwaring and Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 281-282.

⁴¹ Mahoney, 26.

⁴² Major General Robert Durbin, Commander, combined security transition Afghanistan, “Major General Robert Durbin (USA) Holds a Defense Department News Briefing on Ongoing Training and Equipping of Afghan Security Forces,” *Congressional Quarterly Inc.*, (Arlington, VA, 13 July 2006).

compared to those of other countries dealing with Islamist insurgency.⁴³ International security forces have credited them with impressive bravery and resolve.⁴⁴ Such attributes represent considerable progress considering that the forces have been built from almost nothing. Although training is cited as weak,⁴⁵ the expansion of the Afghan National Police (ANP) is also on track, with the force now numbering thirty-seven thousand.⁴⁶ Overall trends in respect to the Afghan security forces include steady increases in the number of trained personnel, the reduction of corruption through wage increases,⁴⁷ a rapidly increasing experience base and continual learning through close relations with professional international security forces. Billions of dollars of new equipment are currently arriving and will be phased in over the next year to year and a half.⁴⁸ With respect to the SWORD model, these trends indicate progress and are likely to maintain their momentum.

The Afghan security forces must now take the place of international security forces. This will surely be a very gradual shift, but the transition is underway. Afghan troops are beginning to take a leading role in major operations. The summer of 2006's Operation Mountain Thrust, the largest operation in country in the last three years, was led by 2,000 Afghans from the ANA and ANP assisted by 2,500 foreign troops.⁴⁹ This is one example of many that demonstrates Afghan security forces are building the capabilities they need to allow a reduction in the foreign troop count. It also indicates a transition of international security forces from a fighting role to more of a support and training role. However, foreign troops are still heavily involved in actions against the AGF and are still highly visible to the Afghan public. More emphasis is thus required if this element is to contribute significantly to overall progress.

On the whole, the shooting war is being won – but by a slim margin. The steady rise in foreign troop numbers combined with their concentration in problem areas goes against the counsel of the SWORD model. Fortunately, this can be reversed if the number of foreign troops involved in Afghanistan is steadily reduced as the Afghan security forces grow.

The War to Isolate the AGF Internally

To win this war, the international community and the Afghan government must isolate the AGF from their national and local sources of support (ideally early on in the conflict) and deny them sanctuary within Afghanistan's borders. The trends in this dimension indicate overall progress in this war.

⁴³ Daniel Byman, *Going to War With the Allies You Have: Allies, Counterinsurgency, and the War on Terrorism*, (Carlisle, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 16.

⁴⁴ Rosie DiMano, "Raw recruits brave death daily to rebuild a land," *Toronto Star*, 8 April 2006, A12.

⁴⁵ "A geographical expression in search of a state – Afghanistan," *The Economist*, 8 July 2006, database online, available from LexisNexis, accessed 24 July 2006.

⁴⁶ Durbin.

⁴⁷ NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2005 Annual Session – *NATO's Out-of-Area Operations*.

⁴⁸ Durbin.

⁴⁹ Christie Blatchford, "Major military operation fails to find Taliban targets," *Globe and Mail*, 15 July 2006, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/Page/document/v4/sub/MarketingPage?user_URL=http://www.theglobeandmail.com%2Fservlet%2Fstory%2FRTGAM.20060715.wblatch0715%2FBNStory%2FNational%2F&ord=1159935355620&brand=theglobeandmail&force_login=true>, accessed 19 July 2006.

The main source of AGF supply and sanctuary is the population of Afghanistan itself and is thus most critical. This element of the war to isolate insurgents internally is closely linked to the information and intelligence wars. If the support of the population can be won in the information war, the AGF will have difficulty gaining sanctuary and support from the population. If the intelligence war is won, security forces will gain information from the population that will allow them to locate insurgents wherever they may hide and find their supply caches, again denying them both sanctuary and sources of supply. At present, the Afghan population is shifting closer and closer to the government side. The only major exception is the southern 'Pashto belt'. In the Pashto belt there has been a recent decline in government control primarily as result of poppy eradication efforts in the area. Poppy fields for the cultivation of illegal opium production have either been destroyed or are threatened with this fate. As a result, the local population has either lost or is at risk of losing what they believe to be their only viable livelihood given the current situation in the troubled country. This has resulted in a resistance to government control followed by an increased acceptance of the AGF who in turn serve to protect crops from government destruction.⁵⁰ This then guarantees support and sanctuary to AGF in these areas. The Pashto belt is most problematic because of an ideological sympathy and the shared ethnicity and religious beliefs between Taliban / al Qaeda and the local tribes of these areas. This may soon change; NATO forces have recently completed a series of major operations, killing over five hundred insurgents in late summer and early fall of 2006. The NATO commander, General David Richards, has claimed that the south has been broadly stabilized and the opportunity now exists to increase reconstruction and development work in an effort to win over the population.⁵¹ When taking over the area from US command this past summer, Gen. Richards stated that he was planning a different approach⁵² – maybe this approach has paid off.

Disarmament is a significant force toward isolating the AGF from their sources of supply as well. Virtually all heavy weapons in Afghanistan have been destroyed or rendered ineffective as part of the heavy weapons cantonment program, although such equipment is of minor importance in an insurgency. Both the numerous ordnance stockpiles and the unexploded ordnance (UXO) that litters Afghanistan are of greater significance as they supply the key components for AGF improvised explosive device (IED) and rocket attacks. Mines are also present throughout the country and can be dug up and used as bulk explosives or left intact and emplaced in new locations by insurgents so as to target security forces. Afghanistan is highly contaminated with explosive hazards like UXO and mines and the sheer volume of ordnance in Afghanistan will take many years to completely eliminate. Disposal of these internal sources of supply has, however, progressed steadily, with over two million pieces of UXO and thirty thousand mines disposed of in 2005 alone.⁵³ Such efforts will continue and will only accelerate as technology improves and as Afghan demining teams become more experienced. As a result, the AGF will increasingly find themselves restricted in their operations.

⁵⁰ Senlis Council, *Afghanistan Insurgency Assessment: The Signs of an Escalating Crisis*, available from <http://www.senliscouncil.net>, accessed 15 August 2006, 5.

⁵¹ Fisnik Abrashi, "General: Afghans May Soon Back Taliban," *Associated Press Online*, 9 October 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 14 October 2006.

⁵² "A geographical expression in search of a state – Afghanistan," *The Economist*.

⁵³ Landmine Monitor, *Afghanistan: Landmine Monitor Report 2006*, available from <http://www.icbl.org/lm/2006/afghanistan.html>, accessed 14 October 2006.

International security forces are also making continual progress by chipping away at internal AGF assets more directly with military raids and other seizures. In a two-week period this past summer, one Canadian infantry company seized \$15 million worth of narcotics, destroyed nine ammunition caches, and dismantled two bomb-making factories.⁵⁴ Police in the Afghan capital, Kabul, have made numerous raids with similar results.⁵⁵ Small successes like these are continuous and will slowly wear away at the internal sources of AGF supply.

The physical geography of Afghanistan is also a problem, although it is one that has been steadily reduced by Coalition troops since early operations in 2001. The sheer vastness and rugged composition of the country represents a major problem in its own right, although modern surveillance technology makes this less of a challenge for current forces than it would have been for the Soviet Army. In addition, Afghanistan's terrain is saturated with both natural and man-made caves and tunnels. Some natural caves are miles long and many man-made caves remain from earlier conflict.⁵⁶ International and Afghan security forces have searched hundreds, disposing of ordnance and closing off entrances.⁵⁷ Although it is difficult to determine how many remain, there is continual progress in this area. In general, continued efforts to monitor the more remote areas of the country continue to reveal AGF positions that can then be eliminated. From a terrain perspective, internal sanctuary and sources of supply will continually be denied, thus increasing chances of success.

In most of the country, government control is expanding slowly or holding steady while physical sanctuary and sources of supply for weapons and explosives are being steadily diminished by the efforts of security forces. This represents a decline in the internal support and sanctuary available to the insurgents. The situation in the Pashto belt is still developing and although NATO claims stability has been achieved, recent combat action and ongoing poppy eradication still make the population there possible supporters of the AGF. At present, the war to isolate the AGF from their sources of internal support is being won.

The War to Isolate the AGF Externally

This war's objective is to isolate the AGF from regional and international sources of support. It will be won when they have limited sanctuary outside Afghanistan and are isolated from their main sources of external support. The overall trend in this dimension is negative.

The primary external source of supply and sanctuary is Pakistan, predominantly in the mountainous border area it shares with Afghanistan. The AGF use the area to evade capture, rest, resupply and traffic narcotics destined for Western consumption, a vital

⁵⁴ Christie Blatchford, "Intense clashes with Taliban temper troops' steely spirit," *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2006.

⁵⁵ "Kabul gates are no longer open for illegal vehicles," *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, interview with Lt Gen Meer Amanullah Gozar Police Chief for Kabul Province, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 14 October 2006.

⁵⁶ Mir Bahmanyar, *Afghanistan Cave Complexes 1979-2004: Mountain strongholds of the Mujahideen, Taliban & Al Qaeda*, Fortress Study Group Series, eds. Marcus Cowper and Nikolai Bogdanovic, no. 26 (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004), 15.

⁵⁷ in Bahmanyar, *Afghanistan Cave Complexes*, 13.

source of funding for the insurgency. The area is divided into seven semi-autonomous 'tribal agencies' that are populated by 6 million Pushtuns who live by a code that includes a duty to provide sanctuary to anyone that requires it. The cooperation of Pakistan in the elimination of this sanctuary had improved significantly in the last few years until just recently declining. Pakistan deployed its troops to these areas for the first time ever in 2002 and until a withdrawal early this fall had more than eighty thousand in just one of the seven tribal agencies alone. Pakistani Government figures claim that hundreds of militants had been killed in the area while fighting what could be considered an insurgency in its own right. The decline came in September as Pakistan's leader, General Pervez Musharraf, folded under domestic pressure and signed a truce with militants in the border region, withdrawing his forces and essentially surrendering influence in the area.⁵⁸ Pakistan aside, US forces have made progress in the area, although mostly within Afghan territory⁵⁹ and are putting forth an increased effort for border security.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, if the Pakistani Army could not close off the border with upwards of one hundred thousand troops, then Afghan and international security forces, more limited in numbers, will not be able to either. When the freedom of action that the AGF and their allies now have in the border regions on the Pakistan side is combined with the porous thousand-mile border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the insurgency has an open supply line of men and materiel and the capacity to cross over into sanctuary as needed. The prevalence of violence in the Pashto belt, which lies along the border with Pakistan, quickly demonstrates the end effect.

Afghanistan's other neighbours play a relatively minor role when compared to Pakistan. In the north, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have cooperated well with efforts to cut off the insurgents from external sources. Their main role relates to the drug trade. In this regard Tajikistan seized over four thousand kilograms of narcotics last year and Turkmenistan seized nearly two thousand in roughly the same time period. Iran shares Afghanistan's western border and has also been helpful in stabilizing the country and fortunately does not offer much sanctuary to the anti-Shia Taliban.⁶¹ The borders will never be completely sealed off, but progress is being made.

For as long as even one opening remains, external support will flow into Afghanistan and fighters will be able to seek sanctuary. The border with Pakistan is the critical opening in this case and firm action from the Pakistani government is required to close it, and unfortunately such efforts have recently come up short. The war to isolate the AGF from their sources of external support is being lost.

The War to Stay the Course

Success in this war is achieved through the sustained support of the intervening powers to the threatened government. Key elements include consistent military support and a high degree of long-term overall commitment. Experience shows that when aid is withdrawn,

⁵⁸ David Rohde, "Al Qaeda finds its center of gravity," *New York Times*, 10 September 2006, database online, available from LexisNexis, accessed 15 October 2006.

⁵⁹ Tim McGirk, "Tracking the ghost of Bin Laden in the land of the Pashtun," *National Geographic*, December 2004, 27.

⁶⁰ MGen Charles H. Jacobi, speech to the 2006 Canada/US Defence Development and Diplomacy Conference, Kingston, Ontario, 22 June 2006.

⁶¹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2006 Spring Session – *Afghanistan and the Future of the Alliance*.

the likelihood of success is greatly reduced.⁶² Trends in this dimension indicate that the chances for success in Afghanistan are increasing.

The main challenge of this dimension is derived from what is best termed as an ‘asymmetry of stakes,’ referring to the fact that winning means everything to the AGF and much, much less to the citizens of the troop contributing nations that are thousands of miles away.⁶³ The most critical element of this dimension is the popularity of the Afghan mission amongst the voting public. The stated goals of terrorism prevention and international security seem to have resisted public scrutiny rather well and are perhaps what keep the political will alive. Without such elements of national interest, the humanitarian appeal of the mission alone would not be enough to maintain the necessary support and tolerance for casualties.⁶⁴ Governments have stressed the terrorism and international security aspects accordingly and must continue to do so. Continued terror attacks in Western countries have kept the perception of threat high and have helped maintain the perceived importance of involvement in Afghanistan. Similarly, the absence of another major attack on the scale of 9/11 can be viewed as proof that the mission is effective in countering terror. Although some of the major troop contributing nations have seen a decline in public support for the operation, there has been no effective opposition. Among these nations are Canada, the UK, and the Netherlands and in most cases the decline comes as a reaction to casualties or from a sense of hopelessness often developed by the media. Many nations involved have stoically accepted what has been a constant stream of dead and wounded and maintained a consistent troop commitment. In fact, the number of nations contributing to NATO’s ISAF mission has not reduced but increased steadily since the outset. As security begins to transfer to the hands of Afghan security forces, troop numbers can be reduced and this will relieve some of the pressure that governments may be experiencing. Nations can also shift their deployed troops to safer advisory and training roles. Such measures will make support more politically sustainable.

Although the SWORD model holds that the outcome any counterinsurgency is not determined primarily by the military battles that are fought,⁶⁵ one aspect of these battles does have a major (albeit indirect) impact on this dimension: the number of casualties. The military success that is important here is not so much the defeat of enemy forces, but survival of our own troops while they attempt to do so. Every ounce of protection, be it vehicle or equipment, every edge, from additional training to good leadership or tactics, will prevent the death and injury of soldiers and thereby enable governments to more easily maintain their commitment in the face of a casualty-averse public. In addition, governments of troop-contributing nations have been forthcoming; ensuring their populations realize that restoring stability to Afghanistan will take not years, but decades. They have also prepared them for the eventual deaths of their soldiers. This shows that the politicians understand that a sustained long-term effort is required and also prepares

⁶² Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 24.

⁶³ the ‘asymmetry of stakes’ concept originally comes from Vietnam experts Jeffrey Record and W. Andrew Terrill, see Melvin R. Laird, “Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2005, database on-line, available from EBSCO Military and Government Collection, accession Number 18680551, accessed 7 July 2006.

⁶⁴ David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 37.

⁶⁵ Manwaring and Fishel, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” 272.

the public for what will surely be a lasting effort. Several militaries, particularly those of NATO nations, have adopted the mission as their principal engagement, accepting Afghanistan and its challenges as the primary point of focus for training, research, and equipment. Many governments have done the same in terms of economic assistance funding. At present, the increasing number of troops in Afghanistan (although negative in some aspects) also demonstrates an increasing level of support.

Support of individual nations will certainly waver in the years to come, but on the whole, the international community appears to have the necessary resolve to sustain that support for the long term. The war to stay the course is being won.

The Intelligence and Information War

The goal of this war is to win the support of the population and also gain intelligence that will lead to the defeat the AGF forces and their operational and leadership structures. In the information war, the security forces must counter the AGF without alienating the local population.⁶⁶ If conducted successfully, the information war will often lead to success in the intelligence war by increasing the likelihood of support from the local population who will be more inclined to provide critical information to security forces. This, in turn, will permit precisely targeted actions to destroy the AGF framework. The trends used to evaluate this dimension indicate overall progress.

In the information war, reconstruction and humanitarian actions balance against the use of force with the latter carrying much more weight. For example, the progress made in winning hearts and minds during several weeks spent building a school can be lost in an instant if a civilian is killed in a nearby operation the next day. This seems to be a source of difficulty in Afghanistan, particularly in the south. Commentaries have described tactics in the area as “heavy-handed”⁶⁷ and journalist descriptions of howitzers ‘pounding’ villages⁶⁸ and 900-kilogram bombs being used on Taliban positions⁶⁹ add credibility to the accusation. A senior Afghan minister summarized the underlying cycle best in stating that “every time there is a bombardment in the south, it affects the credibility of the Afghan government.” The occasional fatal incident adds to this, as several unfortunate examples can attest. Among them are the Kabul highway accident and subsequent shooting where seven were killed this past May, the death of sixteen civilians in an air strike in Azizi⁷⁰, and the shooting of an Uruzgan province lawmaker’s family as they approached a US checkpoint.⁷¹

Some collateral damage will be inevitable, and we must accept this, but refusing to pay for it is an entirely different matter. In a 2005 agreement with the Karzai

⁶⁶ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 23.

⁶⁷ “Taking on the Taliban,” *The Economist*, 9 September 2006. Database on-line, Available from Academic Search Premier, Accession Number 22286136, accessed 15 August 2006.

⁶⁸ Matthew Fisher, “Young Canadian reservist dies in Taliban firefight,” *Canwest News Service*, 9 July 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 10 July 2006.

⁶⁹ Bob Weber, “Canadians fight, take prisoners in Afghanistan at ongoing battle of Panjwai,” *Canadian Press NewsWire*, 26 May 06, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 19 August 06.

⁷⁰ Bob Weber, “Canadians fight, take prisoners in Afghanistan at ongoing battle of Panjwai,” *Canadian Press NewsWire*, 26 May 06, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 19 August 06.

⁷¹ “Troops fire on vehicle carrying relatives of Afghan lawmaker, killing one, lawmaker says,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, July 7, 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 15 July 2006.

government, Canada released itself from any legal responsibility for damages resulting from its operations – leaving Afghans with “no legal leg to stand on.”⁷² Although some time and cost savings will be gained, the detrimental impact to the information war far outweighs the financial or administrative burden.⁷³ Furthermore, eliminating a financial method of recourse cannot possibly be a wise idea in a country where violence has long been viewed as an acceptable means of conflict resolution. Opium crop eradication has also turned segments of the Afghan population away from the government as farmers have no viable option to serve as a comparable replacement for the crop.⁷⁴ What fortunately has not been seen yet is any kind of intentional retaliatory act. With the situation as difficult as it is for the troops on the ground, their ability to remain calm and break the frustration-aggression cycle is to be commended. Nonetheless, further steps must be taken for the information war to be truly won.

Although progress has been somewhat hindered by difficulties in the information war, improvements in the intelligence sector have been made continually since early operations in 2001. At the outset, human intelligence was nearly non-existent⁷⁵ as result of cultural factors which hindered OEF and NATO’s ability to gather the human intelligence so essential in a counterinsurgency.⁷⁶ Progress has been made continually over the last several years and military forces have emphasized the importance of actionable intelligence, particularly from human sources, thus learning to adapt to the counterinsurgency environment. Although considerable gains have been made, armies have not yet had the time to fully evolve cold-war psychological operations and intelligence to the level required for new realities, essentially shifting away from former tech-centric concepts and discarding dreams of “victory through technology.”⁷⁷

Overall, the intelligence and information war is achieving marginal success. Improvements on the intelligence side have been considerable, but gains in the information war have been overshadowed by inevitable accidents and relatively heavy collateral damage.

The War for Unity of Effort

Winning the war for unity of effort requires that parties involved with countering the insurgency cooperate for success. Those involved include the host nation, the intervening powers, a myriad of civilian agencies and the different military elements. All of these

⁷² “Deal waives Canadian liability for civilian casualties; property damage,” *Canadian Press NewsWire* July 10, 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 12 July 2006.

⁷³ it must be noted that not all nations involved avoid paying compensation; in particular, the US Military has proven rather equitable. See “US military to pay US\$112,000 in compensation to victims of Kabul traffic accident,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, 20 July 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 15 October 2006, and “Compensation to be paid to bombed Afghan village,” *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 16 August 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 15 October 2006.

⁷⁴ Senlis Council, 7.

⁷⁵ Jessica Davis, “From Kosovo to Afghanistan: Canada and Information Operations,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Autumn 2005, 38.

⁷⁶ Bakhtiyorjorn Hammidov, “The Fall of the Taliban Regime and its Recovery as an Insurgent Movement in Afghanistan,” Masters Thesis, 1996, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 47.

⁷⁷ His Excellency John Ralston Saul, *A New Era of Irregular Warfare?* (J.D. Young Memorial Lecture given at Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ont. on 4 February 2004).

actors are interconnected in numerous ways. If authority becomes ineffective and fragmented, problems become much more difficult to resolve and failure will likely follow.⁷⁸ Trends indicate that the war for unity of effort is being won.

From a unity of effort perspective, the new realities of globalization and multilateral involvement eliminate any possibility of a straightforward control structure like the one used by the British in the Malayan counterinsurgency several decades ago. In this age, too many parties are involved to allow this – and in Afghanistan, conflicts exist between several of them. The military effort is one example; it ought to be the most rigid and linear, as would be dictated by traditional military ideology. In reality, it is split between two parallel operations, the US Operation Enduring Freedom and the NATO ISAF mission. Greater unity of effort has recently been achieved with the transfer of OEF elements to NATO command, but two separate forces with two separate agendas and two separate chains of command remain. NATO itself has described the missions as overlapping in “both territory and function.”⁷⁹ Another suggestion is that the EU sees ISAF as its balance to ‘US power’ in Afghanistan.⁸⁰ Furthermore, *within* both OEF and ISAF, troops are still subject to limitations imposed by their own nations and operate to meet agendas ranging from humanitarian assistance and development, to counter drug and counter terror. The myriad of PRT structures and rules of engagement under the ISAF mission are a perfect example of this. The simple reality is that neither mission has the ability to tell its volunteer contributors how to spend their money and use their troops. Private military entities are also present in Afghanistan, operating with an entirely separate agenda and further hampering the military unity of effort.

Arguably even more detrimental has been the disunity between the Karzai government and the international military forces in the country. This past June president Karzai spoke out against the deaths of several hundred Afghans at the hands of US-led OEF troops in the previous month, commenting that even Taliban fighters are sons of Afghanistan.⁸¹ NATO relations with the Afghan government have been better, the two recently signing a joint declaration that establishes a framework for enduring cooperation,⁸² although it is difficult to say how well the two entities will synchronize.

Military forces are also at odds with humanitarian organizations from time to time and are deemed to pose a threat to their ever-important neutrality. Some will work with military forces, others refuse outright. NGO-government cooperation is also an issue. In fact, overall friction between NGOs and the Afghan government led to the 2005 resignation of Afghanistan’s planning minister, Dr. Ramazan Bashar Dost. Dost complained that most NGOs spend for their own benefit and donor funds allocated to them should instead be given to the Afghan government, the entity that is actually accountable to the people for how the funds are spent.⁸³ With nearly two thousand

⁷⁸ Manwaring and Fishel, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, 27.

⁷⁹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *Lessons Learned from NATO’s Current Operations*.

⁸⁰ Sean M. Maloney, *Enduring the Freedom: A Rogue Historian in Afghanistan* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac, 2005), 52-3

⁸¹ “Karzai says 600 Afghan deaths ‘not acceptable’,” *Associated Press*, 22 June 2006, database on-line, available from LexisNexis, accessed 30 June 2006..

⁸² “NATO solidifies cooperation with Afghanistan,” *NATO Press*, 6 Sept 06, <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/09-september/e0906a.htm>>.

⁸³ Don D’Cruz, *The Trouble with NGOs in Afghanistan*, TCSDaily on-line, available from <http://www.techcentralstation.com/020605F.html>, 7 February 2005, accessed 21 September 2006.

national and international NGOs operating in Afghanistan, conflicts with military elements and the Afghan government aside, any notion of full unity of effort is near hopeless.

On a more positive note, governments have realized the importance of what is now being called a ‘whole of government’ approach, where a coordinated and focused effort is made to bring about the desired strategic effects, and are working toward this vision, structuring organizations accordingly.⁸⁴ At the present time, their structures are a convoluted network formed of linkages such as ‘liaises with,’ ‘reports back to,’ ‘advises,’ and ‘has obligations to.’ It is important to realize that these newly established groupings are still in the early years and will remain in development for some time. As they evolve unity of effort will improve. Between nations, frameworks like the *Bonn Agreement*, the *Afghanistan Compact* and *Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy* have been developed to serve the same purpose⁸⁵ and are also vital for unity of effort, ensuring that at least the desired end state is clear. Overall, progress in this element combined with the shift of US troops to NATO command and the efforts made to improve cooperation with the Afghan government indicate that the chances for success are improving. Nevertheless, the military forces in Afghanistan must be brought under one chain of command and the various other relations must continue to improve.

MULTICOLLINEARITY

It is at times difficult to determine where one dimension of the SWORD model begins and another ends and under which dimension a certain observation may fall. This is because all dimensions of the SWORD model are intricately related, leading to a high degree of multicollinearity.

Multicollinearity is the phenomenon experienced when the predictor variables of a case of multiple regression are highly correlated. Each of the ‘wars’ or dimensions of the SWORD model is actually a collection of related variables that are grouped together. For the purposes of understanding multicollinearity the dimensions can thus be considered as if they are variables. Specifically, when two variables are highly correlated, they both contribute information which is essentially the same. When this occurs, neither one of them may contribute significantly to the model in an *individual* sense after the other one is included. However, when *both* are included together they contribute a great deal.⁸⁶ This multicollinearity occurs amongst the dimensions of the SWORD model.

Two important conclusions must be drawn from the fact that the SWORD model has a high degree of multicollinearity. First, the SWORD model as a whole is more important than its individual parts and proper application of the model requires a “holistic, balanced, and unified” approach.⁸⁷ Second, correlation between different dimensions of the model indicates that progress or regress in one dimension can affect

⁸⁴ Colonel Mike Capstick, *Strengthening the Weak: The Canadian Forces in Afghanistan* (Modified/updated version of paper presented at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs Conference, March, 2006), 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Dr. Harvey Motulsky, *Multicollinearity in multiple regression*, available from <http://www.graphpad.com/articles/Multicollinearity.htm>, accessed 10 October 2006.

⁸⁷ Max G. Manwaring, correspondence (e-mail) with Nils N. French, 21 July 2007.

another. Expressed in other terms, successes may produce positive results out of proportion to what would normally be expected. On the contrary, weaknesses may produce results more negative than what would have otherwise been expected and even if some things are being done rather well, one may be taking a “well-traveled slippery slope toward failure.”⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

The SWORD model provides a proven framework for the analysis of counterinsurgencies. While on the whole its use has indicated that the chances of success in Afghanistan are increasing, application of the model has revealed several key areas where improvement can be made, thus further increasing chances of success. The required improvements are:

- a. The modification of OEF prisoner policies to bring them in line with international norms must be accelerated.
- b. The number of foreign troops in Afghanistan must be reduced and concentration of foreign troops in trouble areas must be avoided.
- c. Pakistan must be pressured and encouraged to resume its full cooperation in efforts to secure the Afghan border regions.
- d. Collateral damage must be minimized even further and Afghan citizens must be fairly compensated should it occur in the course of operations.
- e. Efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation must be suspended until a viable plan to either replace or legitimize the practice is established.
- f. The parallel OEF and ISAF chains of command must be unified under a single authority.
- g. Mechanisms must be established that will enable closer scrutiny of NGOs and ensure greater unity of effort among them.

Continual improvements are being made in Afghanistan as its own government and the involved elements of the international community work together to build a lasting peace. Although they present considerable challenges, the required improvements are essential to progress in Afghanistan and have the power to be deciding factors in the country's future.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

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