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## Taliban adaptations and innovations<sup>1</sup>

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Since 1978, insurgents in Afghanistan have endured a state of constant conflict, facing two occupying forces that have fielded modernized, highly capable militaries with a multitude of numerical and technological advantages over them. The asymmetry of these conflicts drove a rapid cycle of adaptation and innovation on the part of the insurgents that continues today. The Taliban way of war and approach to governance focuses on turning populations against political weakness and fielding simple and effective governance at the local and provincial levels. The Taliban has proven to be a highly adaptive, innovative, and resilient organization, drawing on tactics from conflicts in Iraq, Pakistan, and their own experience in Afghanistan to fight an effective and enduring defensive jihad. The introduction of improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, and more recently a rising rate of assassinations all demonstrate the Taliban's ability to adapt tactically and innovate at the strategic level. These innovations are even more significant when one considers the cultural, social, and ideological barriers to change and how the Taliban overcame those barriers to include in their arsenal formerly taboo actions, such as suicide bombing. Understanding the innovation shown by insurgents in Afghanistan provides critical insights into the conflict the US-led coalition faces today and how it may be fought tomorrow.

**Keywords:** Taliban; innovations; complex attacks; shadow government; assassinations

### Introduction

Since 1978, Afghanistan has been in a state of constant conflict that has resulted in tremendous social, political, and economic upheavals and dislocations. Although the heavy physical toll from the conflict on Afghanistan's infrastructure is apparent, the deep-rooted disruption and partial destruction of traditional Afghan values, mores, and processes have left an equally damaging scar on society and its government institutions. In the context of Afghanistan's modern history, two occupying forces have attempted to solidify control and bolster feeble regimes through occupation: the Soviets between 1980 and 1989 and the US–NATO alliance between 2001 and 2011, which remains ongoing. Both of these occupying forces faced insurgent organizations that were quick to adapt and

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innovate on the battlefield in the response to the strengths and weaknesses of their adversaries. A common description of both the anti-Soviet *Mujahedin* as well as the Taliban is 'a weaker adversary using unconventional means, stratagems, or niche capabilities to overcome a stronger power'.<sup>2</sup> More often than not, these means, stratagems, and capabilities have been based on adaptive responses to battlefield constraints that often surprise those targeted.

Adaptation and innovation as a scholarly topic is largely focused on large, conventional units. What is lacking is a critical analysis of this phenomenon by asymmetric forces, specifically insurgent organizations in Afghanistan. The purpose of this article is to assess some of the battlefield adaptations and innovations<sup>3</sup> of today's Afghan insurgent<sup>4</sup> specifically the Taliban, in response to the overwhelming military capability of the US and its coalition partners. The article will begin by reviewing the Taliban way of war and their evolving approach to governance. It will then be argued that the Taliban has proven to be a highly innovative organization that has leveraged a variety of tactics and technologies from battlefields across the globe and fielded them in Afghanistan. The fact that Afghans have experienced near constant conflict for the last 35 years against adversaries across the spectrum of capabilities has forced them to employ their limited capabilities in adaptive and innovative ways to fight their enemies. Adaptation and innovation have become a persistent way of life for the Afghan insurgent.<sup>5</sup> While many of these tactics have first emerged on other battlefields, the Taliban has been particularly innovative from an Afghan insurgent perspective in their willingness to apply new tactics for use in Afghanistan. Once a new tactic proves successful, the Taliban moves quickly refining it to fit their unique circumstances and then rapidly fielding the tactic at the operational level resulting in an organizational innovation. A review of existing literature demonstrates examples of Taliban innovation and adaptation across the spectrum of operations from information to economics and ideology. The Taliban have proven capable of both moderating their message and changing the methods in which it is distributed. The Taliban information machine is managed by the Information and Cultural Minister Abdul Sattar Maiwandi who oversees the Taliban's ever growing media outlets.<sup>6</sup> Taliban media efforts now include the Layeha, Ummat Studios, Radio Shariat, and Alemaraweb, which operates as the Taliban's official website and presents information in Dari, Pashtu, Arabic, and English.<sup>7</sup> The evolving Taliban Layeha, which serves as a Taliban guidebook for the insurgency, is now in its third edition as of 2010 and has been analyzed and written on extensively by both Johnson and DuPee and Clark.<sup>8</sup> This code of conduct serves as a field manual for Taliban leaders and describes in detail political processes, governance priorities, Taliban 'rules of war', and the expected conditions of interacting with Afghan citizens, among other tasks and objectives. The Taliban's use of singers, radio broadcast, cassettes, Internet, and the production of DVDs is also discussed by Giustozzi.<sup>9</sup>

Economically the Taliban have made significant progress in developing funding streams and managing the apparent disconnect between their Islamic

ideology and the illicit drug trade. There is little doubt that opium fuels a large part of the Taliban's finances. Farhana Schmidt covers the Taliban's participation and domination of the world opium market in 'From Islamic Warriors to Drug Lords: The Evolution of the Taliban Insurgency', outlining how the Taliban has benefited financially and changed organizationally in an effort to capitalize on the opportunities associated with poppy cultivation.<sup>10</sup> The Taliban have successfully manipulated international prices for heroin to their advantage, ordering farmers to grow, or not grow poppies depending on requirements, and stockpiling thousands of tons of opium to hedge the market and insulate themselves from coalition intervention efforts.<sup>11</sup> The Taliban's income was bracketed in the \$90–160 million a year range as of 2005,<sup>12</sup> and was then used to facilitate operations through paying fighters and procuring weapons and explosives. This influx of money has resulted in the Taliban establishing what Johnson and DuPee refer to as a 'central treasury' which is outlined in the 2009 version of the Layeha, further highlighting the evolving nature of the Taliban organization and the changes it has undergone since the 2006 edition.<sup>13</sup>

In assessing Taliban battlefield tactics this article will analyze how the Taliban has:

- adapted significant shifts in technologies and techniques to improve lethality or other effects of existing capabilities at the tactical level, then shared these capabilities across their organization;
- fielded new tactics which are a marked departure from earlier patterns of behavior by Afghan insurgents, representing organizational innovations.

The article will also attempt to answer questions concerning: the determinants of battlefield innovations' successes and failures, and; the temporal trajectory of Afghan innovations.

### **The Taliban way of war: turning populations against political weakness**

The Taliban way of war is decidedly low-tech and protracted, but this is not to suggest that it lacks sophistication. Outgunned and outmanned on the field, the Taliban is constantly poking at the ultimate weakness of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the US-led coalition: political vulnerability. The Taliban are not as politically vulnerable as their enemies and are often able to employ the simple and historic narrative of 'fighting the invader' to override questions regarding their actions. Utilizing the tactics, techniques, and procedural advantages provided through guerrilla warfare, Afghans have historically fought at the strategic level what Taber has called the 'war of the flea'.<sup>14</sup>

The Taliban, like the *Mujahedin* before them during the anti-Soviet *jihād*, have attempted to hold the battlefield initiative by operating in small units and hitting targets of opportunity such as logistical convoys and outlying posts that are weakly defended and isolated. For example, on 3 October 2009, the Taliban

attacked the Combat Outpost (COP) Keating near the town of Kamdesh, Nuristan. The fighting was so intense that the outpost was essentially overrun, with 8 Americans killed and 22 wounded. This proved to be an exceptional attack rather than an exemplary one. Subsequent large-scale or 'massing' attacks by the Taliban resulted in catastrophic losses of fighters, confirming that the Taliban cannot fight the coalition at the conventional level and reinforcing the use of more successful guerilla operations. After these losses, tactics reverted largely to indirect or harassing fire on combat outposts, and the use of IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and suicide bombers.

The Taliban have attempted to control the operational tempo of the battlefield and force the US and NATO into making mistakes that they can use to their advantage. This is especially the case relative to issues of collateral damage. There are many instances, involving issues such as indirect fire and air support, where the Taliban have consciously attempted to use US and NATO rules of engagement (ROEs) to their advantage. Most NATO countries have opted for ROEs that are restrained by the immediacy of threat to civilian life, justifying it on the basis that it is more important to win 'hearts and minds' by not threatening innocent bystanders than eliminate every potential threat. The Taliban recognize this as a self-imposed limitation on the part of NATO and an opportunity for them to exploit the ROE constraints. One observer has suggested that, 'Militants play civilized nations for fools by forcing them to exercise measures of extreme compliance with international law while they themselves refuse to abide by the Queensbury rules of warfare.'<sup>15</sup> The Taliban are teaching the same lessons of collateral damage to the Americans and ISAF forces that they taught to the Soviets nearly 40 years ago.

While the death of non-combatant civilians has accompanied all wars, the death of Afghan civilians has become a significant aspect of the Afghan insurgency and counterinsurgency. Operations resulting in the death of Afghan civilians have become problematic for the coalition and have sparked angry protests against foreign troops and even calls for President Hamid Karzai's resignation. A favorite strategy of the anti-Soviet Mujahedin in the 1980s was to shell Soviet garrisons and firebases in hopes of provoking the Soviets to respond in kind, attacking population centers and villages where the Mujahedin were hiding, resulting in the deaths and injuries of Afghan civilians. The Mujahedin knew, as the Taliban presently know, that when foreign invaders kill an Afghan civilian, especially a woman and children, that village quickly turns on the perpetrator and becomes an enemy forever. For years it has been argued that mounting civilian casualties from US and NATO air strikes against the Taliban are undermining Kabul's mission, and in turn is helping the insurgents recruit more fighters.<sup>16</sup> The Coalition is keenly aware of this problem, as former US and ISAF commander General McChrystal suggested in 2009, 'we run the risk of strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage.'<sup>17</sup>

Although some Western observers have portrayed the Taliban as mindless fanatics, the facts do not support this assertion. The Taliban have proven to be quite sophisticated and are fighting a dynamic and enduring defensive jihad. Indeed some Western intelligence officials have suggested that a 'new' Taliban has emerged as indicated by:

- regularly seeking safe haven in Pakistani cities such as Karachi;
- routinely 'running circles around the Karzai government' through their rapid-response and effective public relations and information operations;
- bringing the fight to Kabul and NATO through the expanded use of IEDs;
- issuing a 67-article code of conduct for their fighters and ordering them to protect the civilian population;
- establishing 'shadow government institutions' to bring Islamic law to rural areas where government officials are known to be corrupt.<sup>18</sup>

Tactically, the Taliban have learned to avoid at all costs 'symmetrical combat' involving direct unit-to-unit actions. They are well aware that the US and NATO have them out gunned. Instead the Taliban focus on attacking 'soft targets', targeting logistics convoys, conducting ambushes, and emplacing IEDs when they choose to fight the US and NATO. During the recent Helmand campaign, the Taliban quickly recognized how aggressive US Marines were and on several occasions lured Marines into complex ambushes with deadly efficacy.<sup>19</sup> Based on USMC Helmand After Action Reports (AARs), Taliban specific tactics that demonstrate their increasing level of sophistication and competency on the battlefield include:

- *Fire control*: Direct and deliberate use of high casualty producing weapons to initiate ambushes demonstrated by the use of bursts of machine gun fire followed by volleys of RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) onto specific high-value targets. The use of coordinated and disciplined volley fire of RPGs against specific targets with attacks coming from multiple firing positions.
- *Fire discipline*: Engagements have lasted from two to forty hours of continuous combat, demonstrating the Taliban's ability to field, employ, and sustain combat forces through disciplined and controlled application of resources.
- *Interlocking fields of fire*: Fighting positions established in locations where they could mutually support each other once under attack.
- *Combined arms*: Coordinated machine gun fire to suppress targets to enable them to be attacked with RPGs, rockets, and mortars.
- *Fire and maneuver*: RPG and machine gun fire used to fix the enemy in position while fighters maneuver to the flanks.
- *Anti-Armor Tactics*: The use of RPGs to disable and stop armored vehicles with 'mobility kills' as opposed to attempting to penetrate them. When crew members dismount the disabled vehicle, they are then targeted with

small-arms fire. This demonstrates a very detailed understanding of the limitations of their weapon systems and a thorough knowledge of our armor vulnerabilities.

- *Cover and concealment*: The utilization of fighting positions built into ‘Karez’ irrigation ditches which provide excellent cover and concealment to maneuver around the battlefield and attack the Marines. Taliban forces use water to reduce the dust signature around their battle positions making it difficult to locate enemy firing positions in the chaos of battle.
- *Defense in depth*: The Taliban have built defenses with depth and mutual support in mind showing a level of understanding on how US forces will respond once engaged and demonstrating their ability to effectively plan operations.<sup>20</sup>

**The Taliban approach to governance: Shadow government structures**

Another critical aspect of the Taliban’s approach to controlling the battle space is that they utilize detailed local information in the formulation of their plans and strategies. Taliban leadership appoints commissions to oversee a particular province and manage Taliban political appointments at the district level. Local

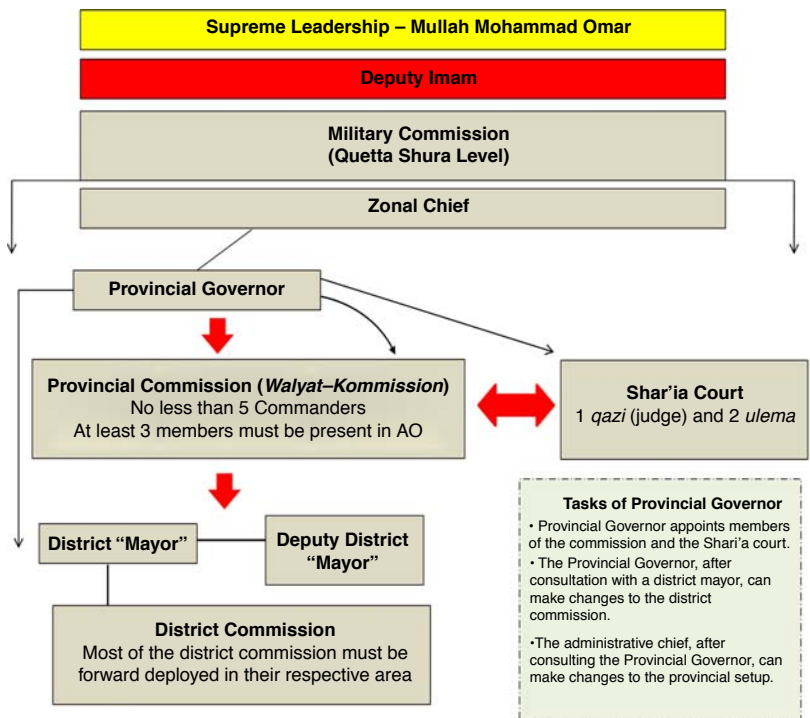


Figure 1. Taliban organizational structure.

Taliban commanders lead a *dilgai* (local cadre) or *mahaz* (front) that usually consists of the commander and approximately 20 local fighters. Focusing at this level allows the Taliban to involve local politics, tribes, and *khels* (clans) in the formulation of their plans, and this is reflected in the Taliban's *layeha* or code of conduct for their followers.<sup>21</sup> The *layeha* describes how the Taliban plan to increase their efficiency and popularity in rural environs and zones of conflict by the creation of *walayats-kommsyon* or so-called 'provincial commissions' that serve as investigative councils to ensure that the interests of the local populations are maintained within the Taliban's provincial force structure. This Taliban organizational structure is presented in Figure 1.

As suggested by Figure 1, the Taliban's vision of a provincial command and control structure is centered around five entities: the provincial governor, the provincial commission, the Shari'a court, the district mayor and his deputy, and finally the district commission. The provincial command and control infrastructure remains loyal to and under the management of the hierarchal leadership of the Taliban Quetta Shura, whose regional military council and *rais-e-thazema* ('zonal chief') relay strategic decisions and requests from Mullah Omar to the provincial leadership.

The Taliban recognition of the importance of local politics has had a direct impact on how they attempt to control territory. The Taliban has established elaborate shadow governments and justice systems that challenge Karzai's beleaguered government by employing their own provincial governors, police chiefs, district administrators and judges.<sup>22</sup> The Taliban's jurisdiction has appeared to grow as the Karzai regime continues to be challenged by inefficiencies and corruption. The first signs of a shadow government appeared as early as 2003, and by 2010 there were 33 provincial Taliban governors and nearly 180 district governors.<sup>23</sup> The only province without an assigned Taliban governor in 2010 was Panshir, which was overseen by the governor of Parwan.<sup>24</sup>

The *layeha* attempts to expand, codify, and reinforce the success the Taliban shadow court system. This effort represents a parallel legal system that is acknowledged by local communities as being legitimate, fair, free of bribery, swift, and enduring. The Taliban shadow justice system is easily one of the *most popular and respected elements* of the Taliban insurgency by local communities, especially in southern Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> The senior author recently witnessed this first-hand in the Panjwayi district of Kandahar where there exists no formal, operable justice system to adjudicate criminal cases or extremely important civil disputes involving water and land rights. The elders' account of how the legal system is organized and how it functions matches the 2010 Taliban code of conduct rules on justice exactly. This demonstrates that the Taliban is making a concerted effort to follow their new written doctrine at the lowest level. The presence of non-local Taliban judges increases their autonomy and effectiveness, removing local influence from the judicial process.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Taliban has reinforced these systems at the institutional level by rotating judges through different areas every one to two years.<sup>27</sup>



Disagreements over land (*mezaka*) and water are presently a serious source of social instability in the district. Such disputes are quite frequent because of a complicated and convoluted system of land ownership and inheritance that has been aggravated by decades of violence and malfeasance by predatory local officials. Attempts to resolve these disputes or claims through the channels of the Afghan government's formal justice system can take years and often require significant monetary bribes. Using Shari'a law, a Taliban *qazi* (judge) can settle a case in a few hours without bribes, delivering an enforceable, authoritative and lasting decision. While this court may not administer the kind of justice preferred by Kabul or the West, it is swift and perceived as just by most that participate in it, most importantly it is viewed as impartial even by those who do not support the Taliban.<sup>28</sup> The shadow court system actually gives a certain degree of legitimacy to the Taliban and strongly enhances their political capital.<sup>29</sup>

### **Recent Taliban battlefield adaptations and innovations**

While there is nothing particularly advanced about many of the tactics presented above, especially when compared to the tactics of modern armies, these observations do suggest that the Taliban have leveraged ideas and technologies from battlefields across the globe for use in Afghanistan. As will be demonstrated, the Taliban have clearly borrowed tactics from the war in Iraq, the Afghan civil war of the 1990s, and from Pakistani and al Qaeda operatives. More recently, it appears they may even be fielding new innovative tactics based on coalition efforts. The introduction of suicide bombers and IEDs are two examples of tactics which were developed or refined in Iraq and adopted by the Taliban for use in Afghanistan. A surge in assassinations of government officials and civil-society leaders has also drawn recent attention. These new Taliban tactics, as will be argued below, have been particularly effective.

In the fall of 2005 a delegation of Iraqi insurgent leaders traveled to the Pakistan FATA to meet with Afghan Taliban leaders.<sup>30</sup> At this meeting, the Taliban were urged to adopt tactics used by the Iraqi insurgents against US and coalition forces in Iraq. Maulvi Mohammad Haqqani, a Taliban official who recruits fighters on both sides of the border, has recounted that around 2004, 'Arab and Iraqi mujahedin began visiting us, transferring the latest IED technology and suicide-bomber tactics they had learned in the Iraqi resistance during combat with U.S. forces.' What the Taliban gained, it seemed, were 'new weapons and techniques: bigger and better IEDs for roadside bombings, and suicide attacks'.<sup>31</sup> Hence, two of the central tactics that the Taliban were encouraged to adopt were the use of suicide bombers and IEDs. As will be demonstrated below, Afghanistan experienced a significant increase in suicide bombings and IED use starting in 2006. Before this time the use of suicide bombers was a tactic unseen on the battlefields of Afghanistan largely because of the cultural aversion of Afghans to suicide.<sup>32</sup>

The expanded use of suicide bombings and IEDs came at a time when the Taliban were also expanding their organization. From 2002, after retreating to

Pakistani soil, through mid 2005, a high percentage of Taliban actions were based on cross-border harassments and long-distance missile attacks. By late 2005 the Taliban had regrouped and began to organize in rural Afghanistan, especially in the border areas of the east and south. Here Taliban vanguard teams and mullahs started to propagandize and intimidate villages through direct involvement and the use of *shabnamah* (night letters) and other propaganda tools.<sup>33</sup> ‘In its simplicity and effectiveness, the reliance on small teams of insurgents to infiltrate villages and weed out pro-Kabul elements was to prove one of the strongest aspects of the Taliban strategy.’<sup>34</sup> These actions not only demonstrated the Taliban’s recognition of the critical role the Afghan rural population would play in their insurgency/*jihad*, it also allowed them to store their weapons near these villages.

***Suicide bombings***

Prior to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, suicide bombings were a tactic unknown to, or at least unused by, Afghan insurgents. Al Qaeda’s use of a suicide bomber to assassinate the Northern Alliance Leader Ahmad Shah Massoud in September of 2001 was the first recorded use of this tactic in Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> In the years that followed, the incidence of this tactic would remain relatively flat in Afghanistan until its widespread use proved effective against coalition forces in Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003. The years 2002 to 2005 saw a total of only four suicide attacks in Afghanistan according to Human Rights Watch data.<sup>36</sup> Immediately after the meeting between Iraqi insurgents and Taliban leadership in

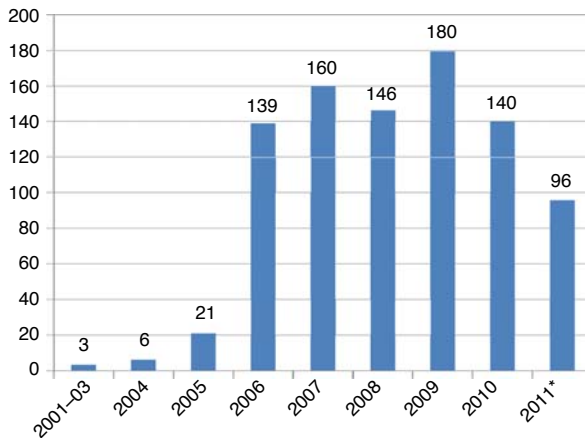


Figure 2. Afghanistan suicide attacks, 2001–2011. Sources: Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost*, 2007, 7; Alston, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions’, 13; Goodenough, ‘Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan, Pakistan have soared in Decade since 9/11’, 1; Livingston and O’Hanlon, ‘Afghanistan Index, 31 July, 2011’, 18; Secretary-General to the Security Council, ‘Report – September 2011’. Note: 2011 Data current as of 31 August 2011.

the fall 2005, referenced above, a drastic increase in suicide bombings was witnessed (see Figure 2). Yet this new focus on suicide bombings was not adopted by the Taliban without internal discussion and dispute. Mullah Omar was originally against the expansion of suicide bombings because of his concern with civilian casualties.<sup>37</sup> In 2005 there were 25 recorded suicide attacks, and by 2006 this number had increased by over 500%, soaring to 139 events in 2006.<sup>38</sup> In 2007 there 160 suicide attacks, and the trend remained elevated with 146, 180, and 140 attacks in the years 2008–2010.<sup>39</sup>

The ultimate ‘purpose of the suicide attacks [are] not to terrorize the population, but to show the Taliban’s commitment and determination in their struggle’<sup>40</sup> and to raise questions about the government’s capacity to protect average Afghans. Suicide attacks, like most of the other actions that the Taliban adopt are pursued, in part, for their propaganda potential. The Taliban are intimately aware of the critical importance of the information war for their insurgency and jihad and seek to reinforce to the population themes such as:

- Taliban victory in this cosmic conflict is inevitable;
- Islam cannot be defeated;
- The Taliban are ‘national heroes’, willing to sacrifice all for Allah;
- Afghans have a long and honorable history of defeating invading foreign infidels;
- Foreign invaders as well as their Afghan puppets are attempting to destroy Afghan religion and traditions; and
- All Afghans have an obligation to join the jihad against the foreigners and apostates.<sup>41</sup>

### *Improvised explosive devices (IEDs)*

The introduction and subsequent widespread use of IEDs in Afghanistan is another battlefield innovation by the Taliban. A major objective of the use of IEDs by the

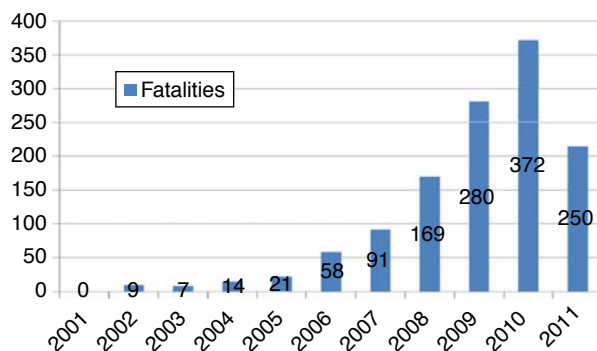


Figure 3. Afghanistan IED fatality trends, 2001–2011. Source: Livingston and O’Hanlon, ‘Afghanistan Index, 31 October 2011’, 12.

Taliban is to limit US and NATO mobility, especially in hinterland areas; the Taliban want to keep the US and NATO out of Afghan villages during this rural insurgency.<sup>42</sup> As suggested above, this tactic was also fielded and honed in Iraq and eventually imported by the Taliban for use in Afghanistan. While IEDs made an earlier and more sustained appearance in Afghanistan than suicide bombings, their numbers and efficacy did not dramatically improve until 2006–2007 (see Figure 3). Casualties remained fairly low from 2002 to 2005 with 9, 7, 14, and 21 fatalities respectively. As suggested by Figure 3, by the end of 2006, the number of coalition fatalities had risen dramatically to 58 and has increased every year through 2010.<sup>43</sup> In general, there has been a continued increase in the prevalence and effectiveness of IEDs in Afghanistan since 2004. In June 2011, there were more than 1800 IED strikes.<sup>44</sup> The Taliban made some 8000 improvised explosive devices last year, an astonishing rate of almost 22 a day.<sup>45</sup>

Shortly after adopting IEDs for use in Afghanistan, the Taliban quickly began to develop new employment techniques. Early Taliban IED adaptations began to appear in 2006 when they started to string antitank mines together in a ‘daisy chain’. Simple triggers such as pressure plates or command wiring detonated the vast majority of their early IEDs, but the next round of adaptations included more sophisticated methods. This was demonstrated by the employment of ‘spider’ detonators – named after their arachnoid pattern of circuitry and wiring – that are activated by mobile phones and the use of radio-controlled IEDs and other sophisticated detonation devices. These early adaptations were quickly consolidated and shared across the organization, an innovation that drove change in coalition technology and tactics. As the cycle continued and countermeasures improved, the Taliban often returned to more primitive IED methods in their attempts to bypass or circumvent US and NATO countermeasures.<sup>46</sup> By 2008, the Taliban had perfected the use of IEDs that were armed and positioned to attack the soft underbelly of tanks and other combat vehicles.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Assassination campaign***

The modus operandi of the Taliban for targeted killings is simple: difficult targets like district governors and police chiefs are often targeted (assassinated) with command detonated IEDs or suicide bombers,<sup>48</sup> mid-level bureaucrats and other public officials who are more exposed are shot by men on the backs of motorcycles and the fate of tribal leaders and clerics is often the same, if not more personal. Hamid Karzai himself has survived four assassination attempts since coming to power in 2002 with the most recent attempts on his life in 2007 and 2008 being credited to the Taliban.<sup>49</sup> Two primary goals of the Taliban assassination campaign in Afghanistan are to reverse security gains in disputed areas in the south and east of the country in an effort to improve their freedom of movement and to undermine civilian confidence in the strength and capacity of the GIROA and its US-led coalition.<sup>50</sup>

It is hypothesized that there are interesting similarities between the US ‘decapitation’ effort of JSOC’s two-pronged ‘kill and capture campaign’ and drone campaign and the Taliban’s assassination efforts. It appears that the Taliban are mirroring a tactic used against them, and applying it back on the fledgling GIRoA and its civil servants, security forces, and the leadership of its fragile civil society targeting tribal elders, religious leaders, shura members, and others. In the last three years, the US has significantly increased its use of night raids and drone strikes, and the Taliban has responded in kind, targeting civilian and tribal leaders among others.<sup>51</sup>

Assassination as a tool of insurgencies is a longstanding tradition. It enables the insurgent to strike out at a stronger government force by targeting the very thing it seeks to discredit and challenge – governance and authority. This is a particularly effective tactic in populated urban centers where the effects of insurgent action gain immediate attention, lead citizens to question the strength of government, and intimidate others from seeking positions of authority. The message it sends is quite clear: the government cannot protect themselves, how are they supposed to protect you? Obtaining a monopoly on the legitimate use of force is critical to any state gaining, establishing, and maintaining its own sovereignty. Challenges to this monopoly can take many forms: assassination is one of the most direct and brutal messages that an insurgent can send. Increasingly, the Taliban has turned to a campaign of assassinations in an effort to reassert their control and challenge the authority of GIRoA. In the Kandahar

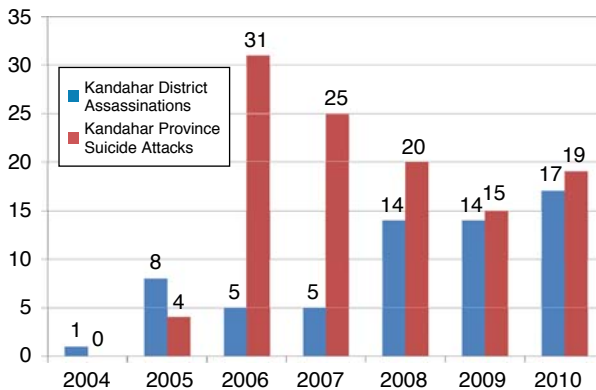


Figure 4. Assassinations vs. suicide attacks. Source: Program for Culture and Conflict Studies, ‘Kandahar Province Assassination Database’, 2011; Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, Kandahar Province Suicide Attack Query. Much temporal data is missing for the assassinations across Kandahar Province making a comparison to suicide bombings difficult. The data set, including dates is much more complete for assassinations within Kandahar District which is why that sample was used for the chart. What is most important is the trend of increasing assassinations.

Province in 2009, for example, the Taliban had more than 10 assassination teams in the Daman District for deployment into Kandahar City.<sup>52</sup>

While the Taliban has conducted assassinations across the country, their efforts are specifically focused in Afghanistan’s southern provinces. In 2010, UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) reported that a total of 214 assassinations – 46% of all assassinations in Afghanistan that year – had occurred in the southern provinces, which include Kandahar, Helmand, Paktika, Uruzgan, Zabul, Nimroz, and Ghazni.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, the eastern region of Afghanistan saw only 18 assassinations, or approximately 4% of the killings. As the US and NATO force presence in Kandahar Province increased after the surge of troops into the south in 2009, the tactics of the Taliban shifted away from a focus on suicide bombings and dramatically increased the number of assassinations. As shown in Figure 4, there were no suicide bombings in Kandahar prior to 2005, which recorded three for the year.<sup>54</sup> In the five years that followed, 2006-2010, suicide attacks occurred at the rate of 31, 25, 20, 15, and 19 respectively.<sup>55</sup> It seems that suicide attacks became the standard assassination tactic.

From 2008 well into 2009, the Taliban stepped up their assassination campaign across the country but most notably in Helmand and Kandahar (see Figure 5). It is interesting to note that the assassinations in Kandahar Province almost always occur in Kandahar City; the hinterlands are spared with the exception of Zhary and Panjwayi.<sup>56</sup> Night letters and other threats were issued to government officials and a number of them were subsequently killed. Assassinations leveled off in the summer of 2009 as many of Kandahar’s parliamentary representatives and other government officials fled the city and took up residence in Kabul.<sup>57</sup> By July 2010, the four-year total for assassinations

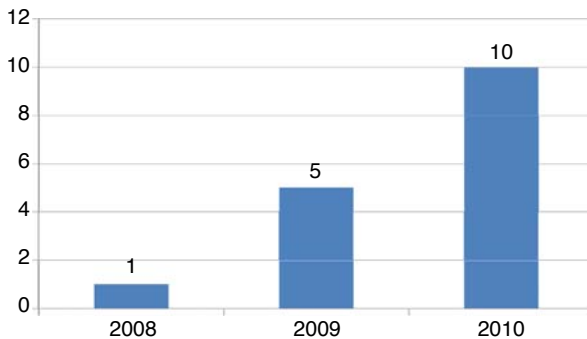


Figure 5. Assassinations per month, Kandahar Province, 2008–2010. Source: Partlow, ‘In Kandahar, the Taliban Targets and Assassinate those Who Support US Efforts’, 2; Livingston and O’Hanlon, ‘Pakistan Index, June 29, 2011’, 10.

in Kandahar Province claimed over 400 victims.<sup>58</sup> In August of 2010, the Kandahar local newspaper *Surghar Daily* published an article stating that the 13 districts of Kandahar Province had seen 515 local leaders assassinated since 2002.<sup>59</sup> At the same time it was reported that the Taliban had compiled a list of 633 Kandahar citizens marked for assassination.<sup>60</sup>

Figure 6 presents data for Kandahar District which includes Kandahar City, concerning the position held by the assassinated individual at the time of death. Clearly, religious leaders have borne the brunt of the assassination efforts in Kandahar City (39%), with government officials (21%) falling into the second most frequently targeted category. The category ‘other’ includes doctors, journalists, educators, and UN and NGO employees.

The data presented in Figure 6 clearly demonstrates the Taliban’s focus on targeting religious leaders, who hold enormous influence over Afghan society as well as individuals associated with GIRoA government, tribal leadership, and those involved in coalition or Afghan efforts to rebuild and stabilize Afghanistan. Afghan *ulema*<sup>61</sup> in southern Afghanistan have been targeted by members of the Taliban on a regular basis.

Scores of members of the official *ulema* council have been killed since 2001, along with dozens of mullahs and other religious figures, including Mawlawi Mohammad Rasoul (killed outside the Qadiri Mosque in Kandahar City), Qari Ahmadullah (killed in his home on 1 March 2009), Mawlawi Abdul Qayyum (shot outside the Red Mosque in Kandahar City), and best-known Mawlawi Fayyaz, the first president of the *ulema* council and son of Mawlawi Darab Akhundzada.<sup>62</sup> Mawlawi Fayyaz famously stripped Mullah Omar of his legendary *Amir ul-Mumineen* status during a public sermon and survived numerous attempts against his life before insurgent gunmen eventually succeeded in assassinating him.<sup>63</sup>

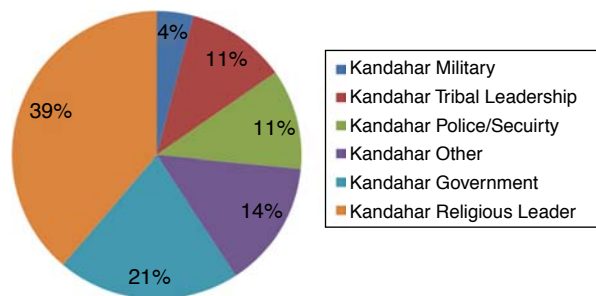


Figure 6. Assassinations by correlated position in Kandahar District, 2003–2010. Source: Naval Postgraduate School’s Program for Culture and Conflict Studies, ‘Kandahar Province Assassination Database’, 2011.

Afghan *ulema* are probably targeted because they offer a legitimate opposition to the radical mobilizations and motivations offered by the Taliban to young madrassa students and the unemployed. This is not to suggest that the insurgency is primarily motivated by ideology or religion. Many *ulema* council members are actively and deliberately provocative towards the Taliban. They write articles, make pronouncements, and issue statements arguing, for example, that suicide bombing is an illegitimate form of jihad.<sup>64</sup> These opinions often place the *ulema* at odds with the Taliban in a battle that is played out in the interpretation of the Koran and how it is translated into actions on the battlefield. The ultimate objective of both parties in this struggle for legitimacy is to gain and maintain the support of the population.

### ***Suicide bombing and assassination innovations***

The Taliban continue to introduce a variety of adaptations into their assassinations and suicide bombings and some of these trends have gained traction, resulting in innovative change across the insurgency. One important innovation has been the Taliban's use of spectacular and complex attacks that grab the media's attention and send the message that the Taliban will attack when and where they want rendering no Afghan safe. It is plainly evident that the Taliban's continued use of complex attacks has plagued Afghanistan recently. Such recent attacks include:

- Serena Hotel, 14 January 2008 (6 killed; 6 injured)
- National day Attack, 27 April 2008 (3 killed; 10 injured)
- Indian Embassy attack, Kabul, 7 July 2008 (58 killed; 141 injured)
- Ministry of Information, Kabul, 30 October 2008 (5 killed)
- Kabul Government Facilities, 11 February 2009 (28 killed; 57 injured)
- Kandahar Police HQ, March 2009
- Indian Embassy attack in Kabul, 8 October 2009 (17 killed; 63 injured)
- Central Kabul attack, 18 January 2010 (12 killed; dozens injured)
- Kabul Bank, Jalalabad, 19 February 2011 (18 killed; 70 wounded)
- Police HQ, Kandahar, 12 February 2011 (19 killed, 49 wounded)
- Intercontinental Hotel, Kabul, 28 June 2011 (7 killed)
- Mayor of Kandahar Attack, 27 July 2011 (Ghulam Haider Hamidi)
- Tirin Kot Attack, Uruzgan, 28 July 2011 (19 killed including 12 children)
- South Helmand Attack, August 2011 (17 killed)
- Parwan Provincial Governor's Residence Attack, August 2011 (19 killed, 37 injured)
- British Council Attacked in the Karte Parwan district of Kabul, 19 August 2011 (9 killed, 22 injured)
- 20-hour gun and grenade attack on US Embassy and ISAF HQ, 13 September 2011 (7 killed, 19 injured)
- Coordinated, simultaneous attacks in Kabul and other major cities spanning three provinces. 15 April 2012 (14 killed).



These complex and daring attacks usually include multiple insurgents, suicide bombers, and small-arms fire and demonstrate the Taliban's ability to penetrate rings of security surrounding urban areas to include Kabul and carry off coordinated attacks at will. 'With these types of attacks the insurgents are able to make the people feel that they cannot trust the government to keep them safe even in the capital.'<sup>65</sup> Many of these complex attacks utilize the so-called '*fadeyeen* attack' where 'an operative arms himself with multiple weapons, perhaps alongside several conspirators to assault a target continuously until the moment when suicide becomes unavoidable.'<sup>66</sup>

The attack on the night of 28 June 2011 carried out against the Intercontinental Hotel in the west of Kabul City is a good example of a recent insurgent complex attack.<sup>67</sup> A team of at least eight insurgents initially attacked hotel security guards with at least one suicide-IED as well as small-arms fire and hand grenades before gaining entry to the hotel's main accommodation building.<sup>68</sup> Guests and hotel staff were targeted until Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) personnel arrived at the scene. The Afghan Ministry of Interior reported that two ANSF personnel, eight Afghan civilians, and at least eight insurgents were killed during the incident. One Spanish civilian was also killed during the attack. Another 10 civilians were wounded. These attacks often prove to be tactically ineffective but strategically important as they draw a great deal of attention from Western media outlets. The last attack in April resulted in 36 of the 37 attackers being killed and yielded a return of just four civilian casualties and the death of eleven ANSF.<sup>69</sup>

Another innovation introduced by the Taliban has been that militants participating in these complex attacks have often been disguised as Afghan National Security Forces; this tactic has allowed the gunmen to blend in easily near fortified Afghan government structures and softer targets.<sup>70</sup> The use of ANSF uniforms by the Taliban first surfaced shortly after a tractor-trailer of ANSF uniforms disappeared in the fall 2006.<sup>71</sup> Recent incidents involving the insurgents' use of ANSF uniforms include:

- On 18 April 2011, insurgents wearing Afghan National Army (ANA) uniforms stormed the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Kabul, killing two soldiers and injuring scores of others.
- On 18 June 2011, three Taliban suicide bombers dressed in ANA uniforms launched an attack against the police station in the 1st *nahiya* (district) in Kabul, near the Finance Ministry, killing nine people.
- On 19 February 2011, in what may be the most savage attack attributed to Taliban militants disguised as Afghan National Security Forces, militants from the Haqqani Network dressed in Afghan Border Police uniforms overran the Kabul Bank location in the eastern city of Jalalabad killing at least 42 people, nearly all of them civilians. Most of the victims were executed at point-blank range as the gunmen corralled them inside the bank building. Over 70 others were injured in the ensuing gunfight and

suicide-bomb detonations.<sup>72</sup> On 1 August 2011, Afghan National Police discovered an illicit, large-scale military uniform-making factory in the Parwane Du area of Kabul. Ministry spokesman Ghulam Seddiq Sadiqi said Afghan police arrested two individuals working at the location and confiscated 222 magazine holsters, garments, and materials used in making military uniforms, eight sewing machines, and other production materials.

A newly emerging Taliban innovation is the merging of two, previously separate tactics. Recently the Taliban have begun to field suicide bombers with smaller explosives targeting specific individuals for assassination. These explosives are concealed in the traditional Afghan headdress – *lungee* or turban enabling the attacker to escape casual detection by avoiding the tell-tale signature of suicide vests. Recent assassinations involving *lungee*-borne bombs include:

- On 14 July 2011 a Taliban suicide bomber detonated his headdress during a funeral ceremony for the slain half-brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, killing four people, including the *ulema* council leader, Maulvi Hikmatullah Hikmat, and another senior religious cleric.
- On 27 July 2011 a suicide bomber killed the mayor of Kandahar City, Ghulam Haidar Hamidi, after he exited a meeting and was speaking on his cellphone in a courtyard. The bomber rigged a small amount of explosives in his *lungee* and approached Hamidi, locking him in a bear hug before detonating the device that killed both of them.<sup>73</sup>

The use of these hidden bombs allows the assassins to penetrate security because Afghan *lungee* are not usually searched due to the intense cultural sensitivity regarding Afghan headdresses. ‘By Aug. 9, President Karzai had met with *ulema* councils from around Afghanistan and urged a collective strategy to help end the use of “turban bombs” before the phenomenon became more widespread. Karzai asked the clerics to launch a public information campaign to “convince militants not to use turbans and other religious attire to carry out suicide bombings, not to target mosques and to make them aware that suicide was un-Islamic”.’<sup>74</sup>

The final innovation involving assassination and suicide bombings introduced by the Taliban that rely upon formerly taboo tactics is the use of women and children in suicide bombings. The use of women or children for such attacks would be unheard of in traditional Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> While the Pakistani Taliban has used female suicide bombers for a number of years, only recently has the Afghan Taliban deployed female suicide bombers, who typically attract little scrutiny from security personnel. Prior to the events listed below, there had only been one other example of the Afghan Taliban using a female bomber.<sup>76</sup>

- On 21 June 2010 a female suicide bomber in the Kunar Province killed two US soldiers and injured approximately eight Afghan civilians.
- On 4 June 2011, the Taliban claimed credit for a suicide attack in the Marawara district in Kunar province using a ‘Mujahida sister’ that killed three interpreters.

- On 26 June 2011, in the Char Chino district in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan, the Taliban used an eight-year-old girl to attack a police outpost, but the explosives detonated before she reached her target.
- On 29 October 2011 a female suicide bomber detonated herself outside of the government offices in the capital of Kunar Province as police began to fire at her as she approached the facility.<sup>77</sup>

While it has been reported that the Pakistan Taliban regularly use children for such attacks, the use of children as suicide bombers is also a relatively recent tactic adopted by the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban recruit madrassa students in part by observing who is 'emotional' or has lost family members to US or Afghan government attacks.<sup>78</sup> Militants take advantage of the fact that young boys are easily impressionable and can be either persuaded to carry out such attacks voluntarily or forced to do so by threats to themselves or their families.<sup>79</sup> The use of children suicide bombers represents a new and dangerous evolution of suicide bombing in Afghanistan.<sup>80</sup> It appears that the Taliban have adopted this tactic in part because children, like women, are easier to infiltrate through security checkpoints. The use of child suicide bombers continues to be pursued by the Taliban as demonstrated by the rescue of 41 Afghan children by Afghan Police in February of 2012 who were being smuggled into Pakistan for training as suicide bombers.<sup>81</sup> Examples of the Taliban's use of child-bombers in 2011 include:<sup>82</sup>

- On 26 June 26, an eight-year-old girl was killed in central Uruzgan province when a bag of explosives that the Taliban had instructed her to carry to a police checkpoint detonated.
- On 20 May, in Nuristan province, a suicide vest strapped to a 12-year-old boy exploded prematurely, killing several suspected insurgents, including the boy.
- In early May, five children, all under age 13, from Logar and Ghazni provinces who had allegedly been trained as suicide bombers were arrested by the National Directorate of Security.
- Around 3 May, a 14-year-old boy who said he had been coerced by the Taliban into carrying a bomb under threat that he would otherwise have his hand cut off surrendered to international troops in Ghazni province.
- On 1 May, a 12-year-old boy blew himself up in a bazaar in the Barmal district of eastern Paktika province, killing four civilians and wounding 12 others.
- On 13 April, in Kunar province, an explosive vest detonated by a 13-year-old boy killed 10 people, including 5 schoolboys.
- On 26 March, 2012 a child suicide bomber targeted an Australian aid worker in Uruzgan Province.<sup>83</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Taliban have largely subordinated their tactics to their overall strategy of removing foreigners from Afghanistan and reestablishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in an effort to broaden their base of support and garner international attention. Despite this, they have remained very deliberate in adapting tactically and fostering innovation at the organizational level to manage a constantly changing environment. As seen above, this adaptation and innovation has been reflected in significant improvements in the Taliban's battlefield technologies and techniques. The arc of Taliban evolution is impressive. These are the same people who learned to reconcile their activities with Islam and manipulated the world's opium trade to help fund their insurgency. In the late 1990s the Taliban banned music and were burning books and smashing television sets in the streets of Kabul because they were considered un-Islamic. Today, they manage an innovative and agile social media network powered by the Internet and cellular phones that encompasses Twitter, Facebook, and a robust propaganda and media machine.

The Taliban have proven that it can adapt and innovate by importing tactics from the world's battlefields and employing them on their own terrain. The Taliban does not limit itself to adopting tactics strictly from other insurgents as demonstrated by the rise in assassinations.

It is reasonable, indeed expected, to see the Taliban continuing to adapt and innovate in the future to include:

- An increased use of RPGs and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS)<sup>84</sup> or shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) for attacks on helicopters. The Chinese Fn-6 'Crossbow' is one system that the Taliban may seek to secure in the future. Expect to especially see an increased focus of such attacks in Regional Command Center East (RC-E) due to elevation in mountainous terrain where it is relatively easy to target airframes coming up the valleys.
- Larger and more lethal IEDs utilizing increased amounts of HME – fertilizer/ammonium nitrate and timed and positioned to focus on front axels/vulnerabilities of mine resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs).
- Continued Taliban focus on information operations where they will attempt to regularly beat the US and NATO to the punch with getting message out upon tactical events.
- An increased use of turban-borne IEDs for assassinations.
- A continued focus on spectacular (media driven) urban attacks where even losses are viewed as strategically successful.
- An increase of the use of female suicide bombers to target both Afghan and coalition forces.

The cycle of rapid adaptation and organizational innovation by the Taliban has lasting effects on the battlefield of tomorrow. As seen with the development of electronic countermeasures and vehicle tactics, innovation on the part of the insurgent drives a tactical, financial, and technological response from the coalition. As soon as processes and procedures are worked out, new innovations emerge. This cycle keeps the counterinsurgent in a reactive mode, leaving the insurgent the opportunity to decide when, where, and how to attack.

## Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered to the St. Andrews Workshop on Innovation in Terrorism, 6–7 October 2011, St. Andrews University, St. Andrews, Scotland.
2. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 97.
3. An ‘adaptation’ will be defined as an instance of individual departure from the standard application of force or capabilities. Adaptations occur at the lowest level and are often spontaneous and unscripted responses to unique circumstances. These adaptations, if adopted and applied at the operational/organizational level as best practices then represent ‘innovations’. An ‘innovation’ will be defined as any strategy, tactic, or organizational method that constitutes a departure from earlier patterns of behavior for a given group. It is assumed that this departure could come about dramatically or gradually, and it may be planned or serendipitous.
4. The term ‘insurgent’ will be used to describe non-state actors who are engaged in open conflict in Afghanistan. Although we believe the best description of the Taliban is ‘insurgents wrapped in the narrative of jihad’. While this article focuses on Taliban innovations and adaptations, the term insurgent may also include members of al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network among others. Insurgents in Afghanistan are unique in that unlike traditional revolutionaries they are committed to an Islamist-Jihadi ideology.
5. Innovation and transformation as they pertain to US forces have recently received significant attention; see Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*.
6. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, ‘Interview with the Administrator of the Islamic Emirate Website’.
7. Afsar et al., ‘The Taliban’. By comparison, ISAF provides access to its website in Dari, English, and Pashto: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/> (accessed 10 December 2011).
8. Johnson and DuPee ‘Analyzing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (*Layeha*)’; Clark, *The Layha: Calling the Taliban to Account*.
9. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 121.
10. Schmidt, ‘From Islamic Warriors to Drug Lords’, 63.
11. *Ibid.*, 64.
12. *Ibid.*, 66 (derived from Senate committee on foreign relations and UNODC, ‘Reveals Devastating Impact of Afghan Opium’).
13. Johnson and DuPee ‘Analyzing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (*Layeha*)’.
14. Taber, *War of the Flea*.
15. King, ‘Killing our Troops Softly with those Rules of Engagement’.
16. For an early statement on this dilemma, see: Loney, ‘Civilian Deaths Undermine West’s Afghan Mission’.
17. McChrystal, *COMISAF Initial Assessment*, 1–2.
18. Gutman, ‘Afghanistan War’.
19. Author interview with USMC Officer involved USMC southern Afghanistan operations, July 2011.

20. <http://www.captainsjournal.com/2009/02/12/marines-taliban-and-tactics-techniques-and-procedures/>.
21. See Johnson and DuPee, 'Analyzing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (*Layeha*)'.
22. See Witte, 'Taliban Shadow Officials Offer Concrete Alternative'; and 'Taliban Shadow Government Pervades Afghanistan'.
23. Giustozzi, 'Hearts, Minds and the Barrel of a Gun', 72.
24. Ibid.
25. In 2009 Abdul Khaliq served as the main Taliban Judge for the Kandahar where he traveled throughout the province to adjudicate cases. (Thomas H. Johnson's Kandahar Field Notes, 6 June 2009).
26. Giustozzi, 'Hearts, Minds and the Barrel of a Gun', 74.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 75.
29. Thomas H. Johnson interviews of Afghan citizenry in Panjwayi, Kandahar, August 2010.
30. Thomas H. Johnson interview with Senior US Intelligence Official, spring 2006, Monterey California.
31. Barker, 'Improvised Explosive Devices in Southern Afghanistan and Western Pakistan, 2002–2009', 14.
32. Witte, 'Suicide Bombers Kill Dozens in Afghanistan'.
33. The Taliban's innovative use of propaganda will be discussed below.
34. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 102.
35. Rashid, *Jihad*, 87; Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, Afghanistan Suicide Attack Query.
36. Human Rights Watch, 'The Human Cost, 2007', 7; Johnson, 'On the Edge of the Big Muddy', 98.
37. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 117.
38. Johnson, 'On the Edge of the Big Muddy', 98; Human Rights Watch, 'The Human Cost, 2007', 7.
39. See Figure 2 and footnote 30 for references.
40. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 109.
41. Johnson and Waheed, 'Analyzing Taliban *Taranas* (Chants)', 32.
42. Thomas H. Johnson's Camp Bastion Field Notes; based on interviews with US Special Forces personnel, Camp Bastion, Helmand, 8 August 2008.
43. Livingston and O'Hanlon, 'Afghanistan Index, October 31, 2011', 12.
44. Gutman, 'Afghanistan War'.
45. Ibid.
46. Barker, 'Improvised Explosive Devices', 10.
47. Thomas H. Johnson's Camp Tombstone Field Notes; based on interviews with US Special Forces personnel, Camp Tombstone, Helmand, 9 August 2008.
48. UNAMA, *Afghanistan: Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 13.
49. Aljazeera, 'Afghanistan's Long Legacy of Assassinations'.
50. Ghanizada, 'Concerns Over Assassination of High Profile Afghan Officials', 1.
51. International Crisis Group, 'The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland', 22.
52. Thomas H. Johnson's Kandahar Field Notes; based on interview with Afghan intelligence analyst, 5 June 2009, Kandahar City.
53. UNAMA, *Afghanistan: Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 5.
54. University of Chicago, 'Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism', <http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php> (accessed 27 August 2011).

55. University of Chicago, 'Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism', <http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php> (accessed 27 November 2011).
56. Thomas H. Johnson's Kandahar Field Notes; based on interviews with Afghan elders, Kandahar City, 6 June 2009.
57. Forsberg, *The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar*, 45.
58. Amoores, 'Taliban Hit Squads Target Village Elders'.
59. Durani, 'Since 2002 Kandahar has Witnessed the Assassinations of More than 515 Tribal Leaders in Only 13 Districts'.
60. Amoores, 'Taliban Hit Squads Target Village Elders', 1.
61. *Ulema* is a collective term for doctors of Islamic studies and graduates of Islamic studies or private studies with a *alim* (one who processes the quality *lim* or knowledge of Islamic law, theology, and traditions).
62. Nadem, 'Religious Scholar Shot Dead in Kandahar'; Nazim, 'Religious Scholar, Four Guards Killed in Kandahar'; and Jamali, 'Taliban Forces Are Now Attacking Sunni Leaders in Afghanistan'.
63. *Ibid.*
64. See Johnson, 'Religious Figures, Insurgency, and Jihad'.
65. Gopal, 'Insurgents Increasingly Employing Complex Attacks in Afghanistan'.
66. Barker, 'Improvised Explosive Devices', 10.
67. See BBC, 'Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel Attacked by Gunmen'.
68. This attack appears to have been the work of the Haqqani Network which operates in Eastern Afghanistan. The Haqqani Network are affiliated with the Taliban, but operate independent of the Quetta Shura and are also closely aligned with al Qaeda ideology.
69. Murphy, 'Afghanistan: Overinterpreting the Kabul Attack'.
70. DuPee, 'Afghan NDS Continues Crackdown on Counterfeit Uniforms'.
71. Thomas H. Johnson's interview with a Senior US Intelligence Analyst, spring 2007, Alexandria, VA.
72. DuPee, 'Afghan Forces Uncover Clandestine "Military Uniform-Making Factory"'.
73. DuPee, '3rd "Turban Bomb" Attack Rocks Southern Helmand Province'.
74. *Ibid.*
75. A well-placed intelligence analyst in Afghanistan believes that the use of women and children in suicide acts is based primarily on psychological reasons to raise concerns and fear with the Afghan public – 'the Americans have failed, nobody is safe.' (Thomas H. Johnson's Bagram Field Notes; Bagram Air Base, 5 August 2008).
76. Roggio, 'Taliban Use Females in Recent Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan'.
77. Associated Press, 'Woman Suicide Bomber Hits Afghan Government Office'.
78. Gutman, 'Afghanistan War'.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Dreazen, 'Allyn: Use of Children in Suicide Attacks Part of "Ruthless" Escalation for Taliban'.
81. Popalzai, 'Afghan Police Intercept Suspected Suicide Bomb Children'.
82. Human Rights Watch, 'Afghanistan: Taliban Should Stop Using Children as Suicide Bombers'.
83. McMeekiin, 'Suicide Bomber Who Wounded Australian Aid Worker Was a Child'.
84. Thousands of MANPADs are reported to have gone missing following the popular uprising in Libya. Ross and Cole, 'Nightmare in Lybia'.

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