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Why The Taliban Have Been Successful In Afghanistan

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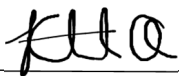
WHY THE TALIBAN HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to attempt to solve why the Taliban have been successful in Afghanistan. In an attempt to solve why, I develop and test a theory on the Taliban's success against the U.S. in Afghanistan. My theory claims that the Taliban have been successful due to U.S. forces committing wrongdoings towards Afghan civilians. These wrongdoings, in turn, pushed civilian support away from the U.S. and its allies in this war. Afghan civilians would side with the Taliban, as they sought protection from the invading forces in their country. As a result of this gain in support, the Taliban were able to bolster the preexisting social ties they had, which allowed them to garner more fighters and resources; the bolstering of their social networks made their success more achievable. I test my theory qualitatively through interviews with American veterans who served in the War in Afghanistan.

Through the process of interviews, no evidence that indicates that U.S. forces mistreating Afghans is conditional for Afghans choosing the Taliban. Interviews instead indicate that Afghans chose the Taliban due to pressure and coercion. Despite the introduction of pressure, coercion, and other new potential factors I ultimately have determined my study to be inconclusive due to limitations that prevented the ability to conduct deeper research; those limitations will be explained in the **Conclusion** section.

Acknowledgments

I would not have been able to complete this study on my own. Thanks to the help of my professors who acted as my Thesis Committee members, this thesis was able to come together.

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A thank you is also necessary to my family and friends. Their interest in my work added value to the things that I find important in life. More so, their interest in my work and the progression of my academic and overall success means the world to me.

Lastly, I want to thank the veterans I spoke to. Their willingness to speak with me and help me with my work is ultimately what made the completion of my thesis possible. All academically-related things aside, I want to thank these men and women for the service and sacrifices they made for this country. In the brief period of time I was able to spend with them, it was easy to see that these individuals are outstanding people. Possessing the bravery to fight in a war is very admirable, but to be able to talk about the experiences one had in war is even more courageous. It was truly a privilege to meet and talk with these individuals.

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Introduction

The War in Afghanistan has most recently hit the twenty year mark since its beginning. As it is well known, the invasion was prompted by Al-Qaeda's attacks against the U.S. on September 11th, 2001, which forced the U.S. to take a more aggressive and offensive stance towards Islamic terrorism. The U.S. chose to topple the Taliban regime protecting Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda terror organization. Done in an almost instantaneous fashion, the Taliban were defeated by the U.S.'s much more superior military forces. The new, post-Taliban era in Afghanistan was short-lived however, because within two years of their disposal the Taliban reorganized as an insurgency and struck back at the U.S. and new Afghan government. While it took only months to oust the Taliban, it has now taken the U.S. and its Afghan and NATO allies twenty years to try and stomp out the Taliban insurgency. With the U.S. in the process of moving away from its fight with the Taliban, the American involvement in Afghanistan seems to be coming to an end. The U.S.'s original mission statements were at first to remove the Taliban regime, eliminate Al-Qaeda, and prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a terrorist sanctuary again. But as the Taliban has raged on, the main mission focus switched to quelling their insurgency. As time will tell, this task has not been easy, nor completed.

My work seeks to answer the question of how the Taliban have been successful in Afghanistan. I theorize that it was wrongdoings towards civilians that hindered a swift U.S. victory in this war. The wrongdoings inflicted upon civilians pushed them away, and toward the Taliban. As a result, the Taliban's social networks were strengthened as they were able to draw in more support from an anti-American population. U.S. wrongdoings in Afghanistan leading to an increase in the Taliban's social networks' strengths is a cause of their success that I believe

has been overlooked. To truly test my theory, I interview U.S. veterans who served in Afghanistan, as they are the group that is most likely to provide the evidence needed to prove or disprove my theory, as they were on the ground, in the villages, and in the thick of America's "forever war". Prior to the **Theory** and **Research Design** sections, my work will consist of the critical analyses of varying works done on insurgency successes, as I want to captivate and bring attention to theories that could provide sound explanations, but do not fully capture the bigger picture of every insurgency situation.

After conducting these interviews, evidence suggests that U.S. forces did not commit violent wrongdoings towards Afghans, thus making it an unconditional factor for Afghans choosing the Taliban. Alternatively, evidence from these interviews express that Afghans might have chosen the Taliban because of pressure and coercion from the Taliban in the form of hard and soft power forms of persuasion. Other potential factors came to light as well during the interviews, but they are not backed by credible evidence, only speculation. Based on the discovery of the two new potential factors, more work should be done in order to truly see if the Taliban's pressure and coercion actually worked/works. I encourage the continuation of research that revolves around the Taliban in Afghanistan; any future research should include more data, as well as the stories of Afghan and Taliban soldiers in order to get different perspectives on this twenty year-long conflict.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Throughout international relations studies, several theories have been developed to try and solve how insurgencies have succeeded against the militaries of great powers. A plethora of explanations have stated that internal and external factors, including societal, military, economic, and governmental variables, contribute or are direct reasons behind why a great power's military cannot succeed against its insurgent foe. Each theory could possibly explain insurgent successes due to the research that was put into the testing of their validity. But I find that each theory presents minor insufficiencies that prevent a deeper understanding of the broader picture that captures the reasons of an insurgency's success, especially under foreign military occupation. Insurgents acting against a foreign presence resonate a deeper, nationalist cause to thwart out and remove the foreign invader of their country. In this literature review, I will analyze a range of those theories that were developed to explain the causes, successes, and drivers of support for insurgencies, and why they are not sufficient enough in their explanations. This literature review will include an analysis of insurgencies, then a more specific analysis of insurgencies under military occupation, followed by an analysis of theories that could specifically explain insurgent success in Afghanistan against the United States.

Work done on states in an inter-conflict affair discusses how certain conditions favor insurgencies in states embroiled in such a predicament, and that these conditions are possible explanations as to how insurgencies are successful. These factors have been identified as political instability, a large population, and rough terrain (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). These conditions might exist across the board for many states, but for states at risk for civil war, or are in a civil war, these factors can be directly applied to. Basing these proven factors off multistage testing, these favoring

factors allow insurgents to relish off a financially and institutionally weak government, recruit bodies for their cause, and move freely throughout the country.

The factor of political instability favoring insurgencies in a civil war draws from the claim that any disorganization, lack of authority, and perceived weakness of the central government allows separatist-adversaries within the state or state's government to grow (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Without a central power strong enough to quell a seceding group of people, those looking to break-off and rebel can easily do so. The characteristics and consequences of political instability also relate to a large population benefiting insurgencies in weak states. A large population requires many levels of institutional bureaucracies to keep overwatch on the state's people. This is hard to do; the number of people in a state who are non-government workers obviously outnumber those working in the government. Maintaining overwatch on a large amount of people is difficult to do, but that combined with central instability creates an even more difficult situation; this also more makes things more beneficial for the insurgency (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). The claim that is stated is that rebellions with less eyes on their operations gives them opportunities to conduct the necessary operations to achieve victory. Regarding rough terrain, such as mountains, this factor allows insurgencies to hide from their enemies easier (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Taken together, it has been theorized that these three factors surely benefit insurgencies fighting in a civil war.

While sound in its findings, this literature could not succinctly explain the insurgency in a country such as Afghanistan, because the War in Afghanistan has a complex make-up to it. Afghanistan, in a nutshell, is a civil war that involves foreign militaries doing the fighting for a new and rather weak government. The insurgent forces there, the Taliban, were once in power and wish to retake control of the country. The insurgent-Taliban forces are tasked with a

multidimensional objective: To reclaim power in their country while fighting and pushing out the foreign occupiers trying to repel them. This work does not at all analyze insurgencies under the military occupation of a foreign power; I believe that works on insurgencies should include, or at least pay notion to, the literatures of insurgencies against foreign adversaries. The factors that benefit insurgencies in a civil war *could* be the same for those under military occupation; or perhaps they are not. Nonetheless, a brief analysis on the issue would have been beneficial to the discussion on insurgencies. Coupled with the insufficiencies of this work, I find that it has become outdated, given that it was published in the early 2000's. It does not answer the questions one might have regarding insurgencies and counterinsurgencies in the more modern era, as the world and everything in it has changed rapidly over the past two decades. In 21st century combat and war, I am confident more factors exist and are being actively created that could possibly explain the successes of an insurgency; especially insurgencies fighting an occupying foreign military.

The transition of insurgencies under a foreign military occupation is crucial to this literature review because now a different type of insurgency is being discussed. By that, I mean that insurgencies under a military occupation are rendered differently, in the sense that the insurgents' desire to retake their country is what drives them to fight.

An example of a modern factor benefiting an insurgency against a foreign occupier is the cellphone. Research on cellphone usage in wars, such as the Iraq War, have found that cellphones to have the ability to possibly alter the course of a war or conflict, while offering a possible explanation as to why insurgencies succeed in contemporary times (Siegel & Shapiro, 2015). In war-time, cellphones can be accessed and used by the insurgency just as easily as they can be accessed by the military actor trying to quell the insurgency (Siegel & Shapiro, 2015). The uses of

cellphones by both actors are quite different. Research has found that military actors use cellphones to track and catch insurgents, while insurgents use them to facilitate more violence through the means of detonating IEDs, setting remote fuses, coordinating attacks, and spotting incoming military troops (Pierskalla & Hollenbach, 2013). In Iraq, all of those listed tactics were used. While strong evidence of cellphones having a strong effect for insurgencies does exist, evidence of its broader effectiveness remains uncertain due to conflicting anecdotes (Siegal & Shapiro, 2013). Due to contradictory evidence found in the research of cellphones, it should not be the sole explanation as to why an insurgent force can/will be successful against a foreign military. More solid and connected measures, perhaps social networks, could potentially better explain insurgent successes against foreign occupiers.

Societal networks can support insurgencies just as much as they can motivate them to preserve the societal framework of their country. Work on social networks found that they can have a positive affect for rebellions when up against a military occupier (Peterson, 2001). When a military occupier flagrantly uses brutal force to put down a rebellion or silence civilian discontentment, strong local roots must be present in order for the rebellion to survive. Community-level resistance has been identified as the backbone of a rebellion, as community structures allow for grouping and strong connections of resentment (Peterson, 2001). Different community structures were found to have different levels of resentment and restraints to rebel; youth groups had more of an inclination to rebel than an economic organization (Peterson, 2001). Despite the varying factors that influenced threshold levels for groups, every community-social network laid the foundation for support, people, and attitudes needed for a rebellion. This theory identifies brutal force as an instigator for rebellion. A specific instance of brutal force triggering a

rebellion was used in this case study; this work discusses Lithuanian citizens' reaction to brutal military force when under Nazi and Soviet occupation (Peterson, 2001). However this specific case is outdated and is far from modern, given the actors that were involved. This case study discusses the actions of a different generation of people, in a much different landscape of war, who are dealing with very unique military forces. A contemporary case study would offer different theoretical predictions and empirical results because the behavior and practice of warfare of modern militaries has improved, as they are no longer in the business of being the bully in a land they occupy. More modern examples of insurgent activity should be discussed. Warfare tactics, while the same at their core, evolve in various fashions as people, society, and the world also evolve. The country of Afghanistan presents the modernity of warfare, in both tactical and insurgent terms. Along with that, it also stands alone in its own bracket with regards to the unique situation that revolves around the cause of the current insurgency there.

The government of Afghanistan is embroiled in a struggle to prevent the Taliban from retaking power. Given that the Afghan government was and still is too weak to fight on its own because of its inexperienced military, it relied predominantly on the U.S. military before their withdraw; other Western- forces were crucially important as well, but the American presence there was the heaviest out of all the NATO countries in Afghanistan. U.S. and coalition forces were there to defend the new Afghan government from Taliban and Islamic terrorists. In doing so, the Afghan government allowed those nations to establish heavy military presences in their country. The Taliban despised the foreign presence in their country and wished to remove them and the Western backed-government.

Research was done on how Afghans' attitudes were affected by victimization they received from the International Security Assistance Forces, or the ISAF. Afghans' support for ISAF forces decreased as a result of harm inflicted by the ISAF. But support, or a lack thereof, for the Taliban was not found to be present at all if harm was committed by the Taliban (Blair, Imai, Lyall, 2013). It was concluded in this study that violent actions dictated the loyalties and support of Afghans, but support for combatants was found to also rely heavily on the biases civilians held in their intergroups. Once harm was inflicted civilians had to decide where to stand in the war, and it was found that they stood with the domestic-insurgent force due to a "home team advantage" and level of forgiveness insurgents somehow possess. Foreign occupiers, in this case the ISAF, are the outsiders and were immediately thought of differently. I find this work to be accurate and applicable in scope, especially to my thesis. This work could be applied to understanding the Taliban's success. However, it falls short of sufficiently explaining the insurgent success in Afghanistan because it fails to analyze the deeper social impacts a military occupier has after they inflict harm and cause violence.

Another case in Afghanistan found that American aid was used to try and "win the hearts and minds" of the populations where they deployed aid to in an effort to bolster their counter-insurgency campaign. Prior work has found that aid given by a military actor in a civil war can be used to try and gain control of contested areas. The case study I am discussing found that Taliban-insurgents actually responded violently and strategically to foreign aid given to populations in contested areas in Afghanistan (Sexton, 2016). Aid given to civilians only reduced insurgent support in non-contested or already government-controlled areas, as the looming or immediate threat of an insurgent strike was nonexistent. The effect that this theory has on insurgency success

is that when civilians receive aid, they are attacked by insurgents, and thus less inclined to side with the military actor, which in this case is the U.S. Referring to the theory previously discussed, civilians are not likely to have their support swayed when attacked by an insurgent force, so support is neither lost nor gained by the insurgents, but support is not gained by the U.S. and ISAF (Blair, Imai, Lyall, 2013). This theory does not analyze the broader picture of insurgency warfare, such as the effect indiscriminate violence has on civilians, as well as social factors that have already decided who a civilian sides with.

I find that these discussed theories, while credible and thorough in their works and scopes, do not fully contextualize the ongoing insurgent conflict in Afghanistan. These theories tell us a lot about insurgencies; however they also leave a lot of room for new factors that could matter as insurgencies evolve. The literatures discussed should instead be coupled in with other theoretical explanations on insurgent success. In my thesis, I will combine theories to explain the success of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. In doing so, I will introduce forms of violence against civilians as well as the networking of insurgents as variables that link the claims that I have identified as the potential causes of success for the Taliban in the War in Afghanistan.

Chapter 2: Theory

In this work, I theorize that the Taliban's successful insurgency in Afghanistan was due to U.S. wrongdoings that pushed civilians towards the Taliban, which increased the effectiveness of their social networks. The theory I am presenting to compete with the work of others' contains an analysis of wrongdoings on behalf of U.S. forces, which is the first relevant factor, as well as the different social factors that benefited the insurgency, the second relevant factor, and the linkages between the causations and results of those factors. The effectiveness of the networking the Taliban holds has been conditional on U.S. wrongdoings; this will be elaborated on in the **Claims** section of my work. These wrongdoings increased the Taliban's ability to retain and establish social ties during the war, because Afghans were motivated to side with and/or tolerate the Taliban out of resentment towards U.S. forces. Acts committed by U.S. forces pushed local populations' support away from them and towards the Taliban, which is why I believe the Taliban have also been able to recruit fighters and make gains in other facets of this conflict. I also believe that these factors, when combined and linked, have been overlooked in previous works about the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Claims

Wrongdoings Committed by the U.S.

Before diving into the claim that U.S. wrongdoings benefited the Taliban, it should be mentioned that the Afghan people originally had positive attitudes about the U.S. presence. The U.S. was welcomed by many following their invasion in 2001, as many Afghans hoped that the oppressive Taliban regime would be removed because of the U.S. invasion (Clarke, 2012). Even the civilian casualties suffered in the October 2001 bombing of Kabul were taken lightly by

Afghans, as it was understood that innocent people could be killed in airstrikes (Clark, 2012). This positive attitude unfortunately turned into a distrustful and disliking sentiment by 2004. Many Afghans grew tired of the presence of foreigners; especially since these foreigners were supporting the new corrupt Afghan government. Internal corruption, the lack of effect that the billions of dollars in aid were having, and the abuse from Afghan security officials had a directly negative effect on Afghans' attitudes (Clark, 2012). Afghans could not understand why the U.S. and other Western nations were turning a blind eye to the corruption in their government, or why civilians were being abused from their foreign liberators (Clark, 2012). On top of that, the U.S. intervention now seemed like a waste to them as the U.S. became pitted in a counterinsurgency campaign against the once ruling Taliban (Clark, 2012). Resentment grew, and the optimistic and patient attitudes of the Afghan people began to fade (Clark, 2012). As the war and the violence it created continued, the harmful effects of war that civilians unfortunately face continued as well, and sometimes regrettably at the hands of U.S. forces.

The poor approach to this insurgency the U.S. had contributed to the wrongdoings against civilians in this war. Occurrences of wrongdoings took place during nighttime raids, when U.S. soldiers would raid the home(s) of a suspected insurgent and/or terrorist suspect in an attempt to catch them off-guard (Farrell, 2018). In actuality, these raids would end up being violent disturbances the Afghan family would experience. These occurrences were a result of poor intelligence provided by Afghan police forces and/or locals, and naivety on the U.S.'s part for believing it was credible intel without fact-checking it (Farrell, 2018). As a result, these raids increased the already brewing resentment, and pushed the Afghan people away from the U.S.

In scholarly work on counterinsurgency, there exists a term called “accidental guerilla”. This term refers to how civilians caught in the middle of an insurgency are drawn into the fight, as opposed to being an already active or willing member of the conflict (Kilcullen, 2009). This collective action of civilians joining the insurgency can be attributed to the actions of the military actor; for instance, U.S. troops conducting wrongful raids on Afghan civilian homes. Known as “insurgent math”, as thought of by U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, for every civilian killed or harmed, a number of insurgents are bred and created as a result of such actions. As casualties and destruction prolong in a counterinsurgency campaign, the more likely civilians are going to side with the insurgents (Kilcullen, 2009). Whether they pick up a gun is up to the individual, but regardless support is swayed away from the military actor and towards the insurgency.

As previously noted, an experiment conducted in Afghanistan found that harm put upon civilians by the U.S. and its allies caused an increase in support for the Taliban (Blair, Imai, Lyall, 2013). Victimization by the ISAF led to clear effect on civilian loyalties. Biases on foreign interventionists and those outside the typical groups of Afghan villages contributed to how Afghans reacted to unnecessary violence inflicted upon civilians; since it was an outsider committing these acts, the locals had little to zero tolerance for them (Lyall, 2010). The sheer presence of American troops upset many Afghans (Lyall, 2010).

A more specific example of violent wrongdoings towards civilians in this war was the Kandahar Massacre. In March 2012, U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales murdered sixteen civilians and hurt several more. He confessed to committing the murders when he admitted to sneaking off early in the morning to commit this horrendous act (BBC, 2012). His motives were said to be fueled by anger that was brought about from personal problems he was dealing with.

Regardless of the motive, the Afghan people he affected were in total dismay, and sought reprisals. In an attempt to win over civilian support, the Taliban issued an order that declared that all U.S. troops would be killed mercilessly in retaliation for this murder spree. Another example of violence against civilians committed by U.S. forces is the story of the 'Kill Team', which was a series of murders committed by a group of a dozen soldiers from the 3rd Platoon of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry and 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. These murders took place from June 2009 to June 2010, and three Afghan civilians were killed in staged murders that these soldiers planned out over late-night talks and lunch (Boal, 2011). Stationed at Forward Operating Base Ramrod in Maiwand, Kandahar province, these men would stage the killings of their victims, one of them being a fifteen year old boy, by placing weapons next to their bodies in order to justify the killing. They would then collect body parts and personal items belonging to their victims, and then take pictures to commemorate their 'trophy kills'. The Afghans who witnessed these atrocities, including the father of the murdered fifteen year-old, pleaded with Army officers stationed in Maiwand and elsewhere in Kandahar to launch an investigation into the issue, but the officers claimed nothing malicious had been done based off the eye-witness accounts of the officers who were present at the murders (Boal, 2011). An investigation was later launched into this after a whistleblower, Private First Class Justin Stoner, reported the murders to his commanding officers. After the Army concluded their investigation of the murders, five of the men who were a part of the 'Kill Team' were charged with war crimes, which included the crimes of premeditated murder, manslaughter, and conspiring to cover up a murder.

Social Ties of the Taliban

Given that the Taliban already have strong social bases, this allowed them to reap the benefits of poor actions committed by the U.S.; if they had no social structures, then people would be less likely to support them. It is important to note that, given its conditional value, U.S. wrongdoings did not have a direct effect on the Taliban's social networks. The Taliban's social networks already existed and were strong due to their historical background and previous rule in the country; these factors gave them ties to the population. Wrongdoings done by U.S. forces only caused *more* support for the Taliban, and the push to the already present social structures that the Taliban have allowed their insurgency to grow.

In the process of their formation and resurgence back into Afghanistan, the social tools that helped the Taliban against the U.S. were developed prior to and after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. But, without the wrongdoings that U.S. forces committed that pushed Afghans away, these social tools would not be as effective in this war. What is theorized to have strengthened these networks was the mass number of Afghans joining the Taliban, with their motivation being angry and distrustful of U.S., Afghan, and coalition forces. This anger and distrust were a result of the killings and/or wounding of innocent civilians during counterinsurgency operations (Jones, 2008).

These "tools" are known as horizontal and vertical networks. By definition, horizontal networks are organizations where people are hierarchically equal to one another for the most part and share a common interest, while vertical networks are linkages formed through the commonality of a vision or goal in mind, with people often in a societal-hierarchy system reaching out in an upward or downward fashion to others for assistance. I would like to mention that the

discussed theory of social networks benefiting insurgencies in the literature review (Peterson, 2001) weighs positively in this claim when trying to understand the difference between insurgencies with good social networks, and those without. To mention again, however, it alone was not adequate enough to explain why insurgencies succeed.

To briefly summarize, the horizontal connection of the Taliban stems from the jihad against the Soviets during the 1980s. Religion is the center of the Taliban and its cause, and religious schooling, the *madrassas*, acted as the jihad's focal point prior to the Taliban's return to Afghanistan in 2003 (Farrell, 2018). In March 2003, the Taliban formed the Quetta Shura in the Pakistani city of Quetta, followed by the formation and appointment of provincial leaders in Helmand and Kandahar. From there, their religious message was spread by Taliban visits to villages, where they connected with those sympathetic to their cause (Farrell, 2018). Taliban emissaries called for gatherings in support of removing U.S. forces, with an anti-American jihad being the driver of their mission. Antonio Giustozzi, an expert on the Taliban, states that these actions performed by the Taliban were done to set the stage for a ground invasion (Farrell, 2018). The Quetta Shura allowed for multiple Taliban fronts to come together. Despite the unifications, disagreements arose between Taliban commanders and the Quetta, leading to the creation of two independent shuras, the Miran Shah Shura and the Peshawar Shura (Farrell, 2018). However, neither front sought to challenge the preeminence of the Quetta Shura due to the common interest of jihad against the foreign forces in their country. With a religious-fueled platform to launch their jihad off, along with respect for the Taliban's leader Mullah Omar, this horizontal network structure proved to be an essential aspect to the Taliban's resurgence into Afghanistan. Along with

establishing their horizontal network, the Taliban also developed a strong network of vertical ties. The vertical linkages the Taliban established were not hard to generate.

After the fall of the Taliban government, the new U.S. backed-Afghan government stepped in and placed exiled officials, former warlords, and anti-Taliban *mujahadeen* commanders in positions of authority (Coll, 2005). These groups were part of an anti-Taliban coalition eager to reinstate stability and less oppressive laws in Afghanistan (Coll, 2005). In the early stages of this new Afghan government, corruption was rampant as resources and money were only transferred to the friends and families of the warlords. People became disgruntled with these instances and sided with the Taliban jihad (Farrell, 2018). The corruption, coupled with U.S. mistakes, essentially did the Taliban's job for them. With open arms, the Taliban accepted all supporters and presented them a common goal that unified the insurgency with the people: Push out the foreign U.S. forces. The Taliban were hugely successful in taking advantage of the grievances many Afghans felt towards the U.S. and its propped-up government. The vertical linkages the Taliban made allowed them to seize more control of people, which then equated to seizing more territory and resources, which in turn contributed to their success.

Scope

I believe my theory can be used to explain and understand other instances of a foreign invaders' harm towards civilians that hindered their success against an insurgency. Dating back to the Cold War, the U.S. military's mistreatment of Southern Vietnamese civilians caused local populations to side with the Viet Cong (Jones, 2008; Avant, 1994; Krepinevich, 1986). Similarly to the U.S., the British military's failure to overcome rebels in Northern Ireland and insurgents in Iraq can be attributed to the wrongdoings their forces committed as well (Kennedy-Pipe, 1997;

Farrell, 2017). The heavy presence the U.S. and Britain had in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and the harm committed towards civilians there after the overthrow of each country's former regime, sparked not only a power vacuum in the country but created a huge cloud of resentment towards the foreign presence in a country that both military actors knew little about (Ricks, 2006). My theory, the success of the Taliban being the combination of an invaders' wrongdoings towards civilians and an insurgency's strong social networks, can analyze the mistakes the foreign invader made that pushed civilian support away. The lessons learned from the U.S.-Taliban conflict should be digested properly by leaders around the world, should another great power find itself in a war against a deadly insurgency.

Chapter 3: Research Design

I have decided to focus specifically on the U.S. counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan because of the stark relevance this war has in current affairs, international relations, and in U.S. society. Only a year after the new millennium, this war essentially began. Aside from the Iraq War, this war has been the pinnacle of overseas American military involvement in contemporary times. This is also the longest war in U.S. history. Thousands of men and women of American nationality, Afghan nationality, and of other coalition nations have been lost or affected by this 20 year-long conflict, and trillions of taxpayers' dollars have been poured into the war effort.

In order to truly test my theory, I conducted interviews, either over the phone or through some webcam-interface (Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, etc.), with veterans who served in Afghanistan. These veterans included men and women who served in different branches of the U.S. armed services, and they were pooled from the University of Central Florida area as there are a number of veterans who are faculty at the school. Through them, I hoped to be connected to other veterans, which is known as sample snowballing, who served in Afghanistan and would be willing to talk about their experiences. These veterans were not compensated and were informed that the interviews would revolve around their experience(s) in Afghanistan. My research was designed in a qualitative-interview fashion that examined the experience each veteran had. The interviews had an observational/in-depth tone to them, and the veterans willing to respond were asked about their experience(s) in Afghanistan. These interviews were key in determining the validity of my theory as I digested the experiences and stories of those who fought in America's "forever war". My interview-format can be seen in the **Appendix B** section of this paper.

I chose to test my theory qualitatively because I was confident it was the best way to understand the issue I am trying to solve. A “most likely” case study design was applied to my research as well. “Most likely” case studies provide the basis that there is a very good chance the desired data will be collected, but there still exists the chance that it will not be collected (George & Bennet 2005; Levy 2007). These veterans were *most likely* to give me the evidence that I need to either prove or disprove my work, as these individuals were more than likely interacting with Afghan civilians, if not were very close to them, during this war. These veterans provided evidence based on their on-the-ground experience(s) in America’s longest war.

What would have either proved or disproved my theory was completely dependent upon the answers of the respondents. The response rates of wrongdoings either having a positive effect for the Taliban or little effect at all was measured against my claim that U.S. wrongdoings towards civilians pushed civilian support towards the Taliban. Should any participant have mentioned during these discussions that several acts of wrongdoings towards civilians were committed by U.S. forces, and if the response rate of similar if not the same answers were high, then my theory’s claim will have been proven correct. The opposite was true should my claim be disproven; if the respondents mentioned little or nothing regarding any violent wrongdoings, wrongdoings they either witnessed or heard of while serving in Afghanistan, or if wrongdoings did not push civilians towards the Taliban, then I used that amount of data to measure my theory’s claim as being incorrect.

Specific questions that I used to measure the effect support had on the Taliban and its social networks were:

- Who did the village elders support in the war?

- How strong was their influence on the village?
- Did any of the Afghans you interacted with have family members or friends who were in the Taliban?
- Did Afghans who supported the Taliban say why they did?
- Was there pressure from the Taliban to force locals to side with them?

The questions that I asked that allowed me to measure the effect U.S. wrongdoings had on the Afghan peoples, and their decision to side with the Taliban, were:

- Did teammates, other soldiers you knew, contractors in Afghanistan, Afghan police, or ANA forces do things they were not supposed to do?
- What sort of wrongdoings were done by these individuals?
- Which Afghans were victims of these wrongdoings?

Responses that supported my theory were along the lines of either clearly stating or indicating that wrongdoings, e.g. potential harm towards a civilian, were committed by U.S. forces. Responses that stated or indicated whether the victims were civilians or not, responses that stated or indicated who the elders supported and if they influenced others to support that same actor, and responses that stated or indicated that the Taliban pressured people into supporting them will be used to supplement how wrongdoings affected the Taliban's social networks' gains. If wrongdoings towards civilians were not committed, then my theory suggesting that it was these types of acts towards civilians that pushed people away towards the Taliban did not stand, and I will have reached the conclusion that it was not U.S. wrongdoings towards civilians that helped the Taliban succeed in this war. I separated the data I received into categories that listed the types

of relationships, whether positive or negative, that existed between U.S. wrongdoings and Taliban social networks. During these interviews I hoped to learn more about what these veterans experienced, which told me more about the relationships I sought to find.

Chapter 4: Results

The veterans I spoke to represent a similar range of individuals, with 85% (6/7) of them having served in the Army, while 15% (1/7) served in the Air Force. I categorized the data that was produced from these interviews into three different response sets: Responses that indicated that U.S. wrongdoings pushed civilians towards the Taliban; responses that indicated other potential reasons for Afghan civilians siding with the Taliban; and responses that indicated no knowledge of why Afghan civilians would switch allegiances.

Throughout the course of conducting these interviews, there was never any anecdotal evidence that indicated U.S. servicemembers committed any harsh actions towards an Afghan civilian. Therefore, there is no evidence to prove that my thesis is correct, and no evidence to place in the data set that indicated U.S. wrongdoings pushed civilians towards the Taliban. The anecdotes told by the participants of this study indicated that there *could* be other factors that caused a push in support for the Taliban. Throughout multiple interviews, the factors of accidents that harmed civilians, corruption, pressure and coercion from the Taliban, and poor rules-of-engagement (R.O.E.s) reoccurred in the conversations I had with numerous participants; these responses were placed into the second data set described above, that other potential factors pushed civilians towards the Taliban. Again, all of these factors, I was told, *could have* had an impact on civilians siding with the Taliban.

In war civilians are unfortunately caught in the crossfire of bullets between the belligerents fighting. In the case of Afghanistan, I was told by participants that it was predominantly airstrikes from fighter jets and drones or other bombing methods that were the biggest cause of accidental civilian deaths and/or injuries. Another form of an accident was

described to me by an interviewee who recalled an event in a village that resulted in the destruction of a villager's home due to human error and negligence: A young rifleman accidentally fired his grenade launcher towards the dwelling of an Afghan. The grenade struck the side of the house, and the house went up in flames. Fortunately, no one was severely hurt, but indeed traumatized. Unlike this event, another event occurred in a different village some years later that resulted in much more severe injuries. A mortar team, as told by the same interviewee, misjudged the location of their target in a village and accidentally hit the home of a villager and not the compound the Taliban were holed up in. The inhabitants inside were hurt badly and demanded full compensation and all medical expenditures taken care of. It was explained to me that the U.S. made it their goal to learn from mistakes such as these and to drastically reduce if not eliminate any sort of negligence. It is still unknown if these accidents drove civilians to the Taliban, as no follow-up reports or intelligence gathering found an increase in allegiance to the Taliban in those villages.

On a much more micro-level, I was told of incidences when U.S. troops threw bottles of their urine or bags of feces at Afghan children when the children would try to steal equipment off the back of Humvees. An engagement like that “could have rendered serious consequences for U.S. troops”, as the children could have ran to their parents and cried to them what the American soldier or marine did to them. When I asked participants about a harmless but unkind act had occurred, or when an accidental civilian death took place, they told me “it was likely that the Taliban spun the narrative to paint the U.S. as brutal, careless invaders”. One participant even took it a step further and said, “It’s the job of any army to make the other side look bad. We performed [psychological] operations to make the Taliban look bad, too. Yeah, we did throw

bottles of piss and [explicit] at kids and accidentally hurt people. But the Taliban gave children guns and bombs, and purposely killed villagers. What we did compared to what they had done seemed almost like nothing to us at the time”.

Regarding the factor of corruption, many civilians were angered by their leaders stealing and hoarding money, as well as resources. One respondent told of a story in which an Afghan police chief had resources (money, intelligence, water, and food) given to him by the U.S. but turned around and distributed all of those resources to local Taliban forces. “The police chief was caught and arrested, but enough damage had already been done to the reputation of the police force in that area,” as stated by the interviewee. It was speculated by the participant who dealt with this issue that this *could have* been a strong reason for many civilians to join or support the Taliban, as they were robbed of the trust and resources needed to live by the police force established to protect them. However, no concrete or observable evidence could be presented by the participant; he was merely speculating.

The Taliban pressured many civilians to pledge their support to them, as well as join them. Accounts given by the interviewees revealed that many village elders shared stories with U.S. personnel that explained the violent reprisals the Taliban would take in order to keep people away from the United States. A story that validates this comes from a participant who sat down with village elders shortly after a series of missions that were conducted to drive the Taliban out of the village. The participant stated that the elders informed him of Taliban soldiers violently interrogating villagers to see if American forces had passed through, and if anyone talked to them. “If we were not cooperative the Taliban would kill or severely hurt our family members,” the elder explained, as quoted to me by the participant.

Coupled with violent acts, the Taliban utilized soft-power tactics to coerce and encourage civilians to move away from the U.S. by offering aid through the forms of jobs, money, protection, and any resources a village needed. An interviewee informed me that in a village he patrolled, the type of 'employment' the Taliban offered to young men involved them being paid to join their ranks or to shoot rifles at U.S. forces from point-blank range. The same interviewee told me that the Taliban fixed and restructured the water supply for this same village as well. But despite the soft-power capabilities of both the Taliban and the U.S., it was reiterated to me again and again that the Afghans the participants interacted with did not really care who protected them or gave them jobs or anything else; they chose a side based off who they thought would keep them alive.

Through violent reprisals for refusal to support them and soft-power tactics the Taliban made sure to have a supporting base, according to participants. Evidence of these actions being observed and heard by the participants strongly indicate that these variables could in fact be the factors that pushed civilian support for the Taliban. However, the need for more data is necessary to prove if these factors are truly causes for the push in civilian support.

Evidence of poor rules-of-engagement (R.O.E.s) was detailed to me by participants. An instance was described to me that involved not American but German troops, who were on patrol near a village. A German armor unit was shot at by an unknown number of individuals in the village, and instead of entering the village to thoroughly investigate and possibly apprehend the suspect(s), the armored vehicle fired into the village recklessly, killing and injuring many Afghans. The specifics of this incidence, such as the location and German troop unit, were withheld from me as the investigation of this event is classified. An incident of poor R.O.E's that

U.S. troops had to contend with was described to me in a way that involved quite the opposite of what occurred with the German unit; American troops did *not* open fire on an enemy combatant, despite how necessary or badly they wanted to. A participant explained the situation to me as such: U.S. troops received fire from an unknown entity in a village but were unable to retaliate because they could not identify the source of the gunfire. This participant explained to me that there were numerous incidences in which a Taliban insurgent would “fire a rifle, drop the rifle, and then run away to prevent themselves being arrested by U.S. forces”. The inability to swiftly snuff out the combatant(s) in these situations hindered a lot of progress that could have been made on patrols, according to the participant.

No responses were placed into the ‘no knowledge of why Afghan civilians would switch allegiances’ dataset. And while all of the factors that were introduced to me opened up new avenues of research to pursue, only one provided hard, observed evidence of the Taliban actually receiving support. The Taliban pressuring civilians to side with them, either through hard or soft-power measures, was the only factor that participants could offer tangible evidence for that *strongly* indicated a push in civilian support for the Taliban. U.S. wrongdoings were not a proven factor for why Afghans sided with the Taliban. Instead, the Taliban pressuring and coercing people to side with them was proven and was corroborated on through anecdotes given by the interviewees. More so, many Afghan villagers did not, and presumably still do not, swear permanent allegiances to either side in the U.S.-Taliban conflict. Regarding civilian deaths possibly pushing noncombatants toward the other side, it is up for question whether Afghan civilians can distinguish between accidental and negligent actions on behalf of U.S. forces. Civilians do not care all too much whether the death of a friend or loved one was due to an

accident or careless mistake; civilians, Afghans in this case, only see who pulls the trigger or dropped the bomb and feel how it negatively affects them.

There was also no evidence that the Taliban's preexisting social networks had any impact or were impacted at all. Participants simply did not know whether or not any Afghan villager had a significant tie to the Taliban. The most impactful tools the Taliban possessed, based off participants' responses, were their uses of brute force and ability to provide for villages. Social networking, preexisting loyalties, and the Taliban's horizontal network-command structure were never mentioned. When participants were asked about any ties that villagers had to the Taliban, the vertical networking, (Question #4 from **Topic 1** of the interview questionnaire) their responses were along the lines of, "... the villagers did not have any [ties]; or at least that's what they told us".

When conversation began to focus on how Taliban pressure and coercion pushed people to their side, participants were also unsure of how the Taliban's vertical-social network was affected by this in a positive way. Therefore, the second half of my theory that the gain in civilian support bolstered the Taliban's preexisting horizontal and vertical-social networks was found unproven due to no supporting evidence. The literature used in the **Claims** subsections of this paper can be concluded as inadequate in both their findings and in the backing of my theory. While at first promising pieces of work that backed my theory, it can be deduced that the articles lacked on-the-ground experiences that would have captured the whole picture in Afghanistan. The eye-witness accounts given to me by U.S. veterans negated the hypothesis that I had about Afghan allegiances being conditional on U.S. violence. While horrible accidents that involved civilians occurred, was dutifully wrong, and was unfortunately committed by U.S. and other

Coalition nations, it was ultimately not the reason for civilians choosing the Taliban. Afghan civilians chose the Taliban because the Taliban forced them to or provided resources and protection in order to coerce villages.

While no evidence was found to prove my theory, and evidence of a new potential theory was found and backed by valid accounts, the result of my study is to be inconclusive due to the lack of data. The sample size of this study turned out to be quite small in number, so more data is needed to prove whether Taliban pressure was/is the real reason for drawing civilians towards them and bolstering their social networks. The lack of data I have in my study stems from two reasons: One, this study was done in a qualitative manner that involved me performing the snowball sampling method of recruiting interviewees. While I talked to a handful of veterans, I believe the ability to talk to more veterans was hindered by the manner in which I had to recruit interviewees. Due to the legal provisions set in place by the university's Institutional Review Board, I was not permitted to ask individuals if they wanted to participate. I had to garner recruits through the assistance of my professors, mentors, and through interviewees who informed their colleagues/friends of my work, thus making me rely on those connections for even more connections. Often times, the channels I would establish with some past and/or potential participants fizzled away, or I was informed that potential interviewees did not wish to speak with me. I also only spoke to one group of veterans from this war; I did not speak to veterans of other NATO countries, veterans from Australia, or veterans of the Afghan army and police. Had I been connected to more veterans and/or decided to expand the study group of this work, then perhaps I would have had a larger sample size and could have possibly found evidence that proved my theory to be true.

The CoVID-19 pandemic stands as another reason being for the lack of data. Due to the CDC guidelines regarding social distancing followed by the university, I was unable to network and become connected with more individuals in and around the university area. I believe the lack of people I was able to speak with affected my sample size as well, which also correlated directly with the lack of data. With more face-to-face interactions, I could have potentially found more data to prove my thesis correct. Or, I could have found that any of the introduced factors were actually the reason(s) for a push toward the Taliban.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the introduction of new potential factors, coupled with the pitfall of snowball sampling and the ramifications of the CoVID-19 pandemic, led me to the inconclusive ending of my research.

While pressure and coercion stand starkly as the two factors in this study that seem to have caused the Taliban to succeed, the answer for what the actual factors are is still up in the air. The sample size for this investigation ended up being very small, so the chances of there being a more credible, evidence-based explanation for the Taliban's success could very well still exist. The factors of pressure and coercion coming in the form of hard and soft power from the Taliban is worth researching further, as they stood out to be the only alternative factor that contained observed and anecdotal data to support it. Interviews that revealed that the Taliban threatened villagers with deadly reprisals, so they did not cooperate with the U.S., stood as the 'hard power' aspect of the Taliban's ability to manipulate the rural, Afghan populous. According to a piece of literature, having control over a civilian population through means of force and coercion is highly effective (Kalyvas, 2006). In the American Revolution, Nicaragua, and Columbia it was observed that force solved the collective action problem of a civilian population wanting to switch sides (Kalyvas, 2006). In Afghanistan this theory was validated because the Taliban did not secure their loyalties through a networking system or through grievances as I originally theorized, but through entering uncontested villages with guns, and threatening to use violence if any dissent was expressed.

On the other side of the same token, the Taliban also practiced 'soft power' through forms of aid, as they provided the basic necessities (running water, sources of income, etc.) that

villages would need in order to survive. Further work should investigate how effective the Taliban's tactics actually are and were. Did violently abusing people opposed to them actually work? Is fear a useful tool, whether it be used in a conventional or unconventional conflict? Did the aid and employment provided by the Taliban actually make peoples' lives better, or did it pull Afghans further into the war?

Based off the evidence that presented new and potential factors, it does not appear that the analyzed works in the **Literature Review** section still do not help explain the Taliban's success. The works which were analyzed in this paper only offered analyses of the effects a military occupier has on a civilian populous during an insurgent conflict. In future studies, pieces of work (like the Kalyvas piece that was just mentioned) that analyze how an insurgent force affects and controls civilians would be better to critique and/or use as supplementary evidence.

The wrongdoings that were discovered in this study turned out to not be the violent, malicious ones I expected them to be. Results instead show that they were unfortunate accidents and crude behavior, as discussed in the **Results** section. While it was comforting to have been told that U.S. forces did not commit any violent acts towards innocent civilians, I am still left to believe that accidents, crude behavior, poor-rules-of-engagement, etc. *could* still have a role in pushing people to the Taliban. Any crude, or overall negatively connotated act committed by a foreigner in a country is interpreted as a threat by the local peoples. As mentioned in the **Literature Review**, the Afghan people viewed the accidental yet harmful actions of the U.S. and ISAF as extremely negative, but yet they gave the Taliban the benefit of the doubt whenever they committed a negative act due to their "home-field advantage" (Blair, Imai, Lyall, 2013). A future study should be done that dives deeper into the factors of accidents, crude behavior, etc., as well

as a study that follows-up on the work done by Blair, Imai, and Lyall to further test their findings.

With the manner in which snowball sampling is done and the CoVID-19 pandemic already being touched on, I will only briefly reiterate how these factors affected my work in an unpredictable way. I did not foresee the path ahead when trying to conduct a study through the snowball method; the study simply took me with it and into the lives of people I could have never imagined meeting. While interesting in its practice, the negative aspect of potentially running into dead ends was to be expected at some point. And regarding CoVID-19, absolutely nobody could predict we would be living in an isolated for nearly a year. The obstacles that were created as a result of CoVID-19's ramifications hindered my ability to test my theory further, as I could not go to public places to connect with potential interviewees.

Nonetheless, this study was successful in determining that the War in Afghanistan is a very complicated conflict. With that being said, Afghanistan should continue to be studied, especially after the United States' final withdraw in the summer of 2021. I highly encourage the continuation of my research. Any future research on the Taliban should contain a larger sample size, as the collection of more data could possibly lead to finding the true answer to the Taliban's success. I was not able to include the perspectives of Afghan and Taliban soldiers in my work, so I also encourage any new research to include their perspectives. Interviews with them would bring different and fresh point-of-views to the table. Maybe after the U.S.'s departure of Afghanistan, the reason that best explains the Taliban's success will come to light.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Institutional Review Board Letter

This investigation and research were approved by the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL FLORIDA

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure establishes the process to obtain informed consent from subjects, the Legally Authorized Representative (LAR) of adults unable to consent, or the parents or guardians of children.
- 1.2 The process begins when an individual identifies a subject as a potential candidate for a research study.
- 1.3 The process ends when a subject or the subject's LAR provides legally effective informed consent or declines to do so.

2 REVISIONS FROM PREVIOUS VERSION

- 2.1 None

3 POLICY

- 3.1 In this procedure "investigator" means a principal investigator or an individual authorized by the principal investigator and approved by the IRB to obtain consent for the specific protocol, such as a co-investigator, research assistant, or coordinator.
- 3.2 In this procedure "subject/representative" means:
 - 3.2.1 The subject when the subject is an adult capable of providing consent.
 - 3.2.2 LAR when the subject is an adult unable to give consent.
 - 3.2.3 One or both biologic or adoptive parents when the subject is a child or in the absence of a parent a person other than a parent authorized under applicable law to consent on behalf of the child to general medical care.
- 3.3 If the subject/representative understands more than one language, whenever possible, conduct the consent process in the preferred language of the subject/representative
- 3.4 If the subject is an adult unable to consent:
 - 3.4.1 The IRB must have specifically approved the protocol to allow the enrollment of adults unable to consent.
 - 3.4.2 Permission is obtained from a LAR.
 - 3.4.3 A LAR must be in the class or persons approved by institutional policy or the IRB. See "SOP: Legally Authorized Representatives, Children, and Guardians (HRP-013)."
- 3.5 If the subject is a child:
 - 3.5.1 The IRB must have specifically approved the protocol to allow the enrollment of children.
 - 3.5.2 Permission is obtained from both parents unless:
 - 3.5.2.1 One parent is deceased, unknown, incompetent, not reasonably available;
 - 3.5.2.2 Only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child; or
 - 3.5.2.3 The IRB has specifically approved the protocol to allow the permission of one parent regardless of the status of a second parent.

- 3.5.3 In the absence of a parent permission may be obtained from an individual authorized to consent under applicable law on behalf of a child to general medical care.
- 3.6 If the subject/representative cannot speak English:
 - 3.6.1 The IRB must have specifically approved the protocol to allow the enrollment of subjects able to speak language that the subject understands.
- 3.7 Conduct all discussions in a private and quiet setting.
- 3.8 Any knowledgeable individual may:
 - 3.8.1 Review the study with subject/representative to determine preliminary interest.
 - 3.8.2 If the subject/representative is interested, notify an investigator.
 - 3.8.3 If the subject/representative is not interested, take no further steps regarding recruitment or enrollment.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 The principal investigator is responsible to ensure these procedures are carried out.

5 PROCEDURE

- 5.1 If the consent process will be documented in writing with the long form of consent documentation:
 - 5.1.1 Obtain the current IRB approved consent form.
 - 5.1.2 Verify that you are using the most current IRB-approved version of the study specific consent form and that the consent form is in language understandable to the subject/representative.
 - 5.1.3 Provide a copy of the consent form to the subject/representative. Whenever possible provide the consent form to the subject/representative in advance of the consent discussion.
 - 5.1.4 If the subject/representative cannot read obtain an impartial witness to be present during the entire consent discussion to attest that the information in the consent form and any other information provided was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the subject/representative, and that consent was freely given. The witness may be a family member or friend. The witness may not be a person involved in the design, conduct, or reporting of the research study.
 - 5.1.5 If the subject/representative cannot speak English, obtain the services of an interpreter fluent in both English and the language understood by the subject/representative. The interpreter may be a member of the research team, a family member, or friend of the subject/representative.
 - 5.1.6 Read the consent document (or have an interpreter read the translated consent document) with the subject/representative. Begin with a concise and focused presentation of key information that is most likely to assist the subject/representative to understand the reasons why one might or might not want to participate in the research. Explain the details in such a way that the subject/representative understands what it would be like to take part in the research study.
- 5.2 If the consent process will be documented in writing with the short form of consent documentation:
 - 5.2.1 Obtain the current IRB approved short consent form and summary (same as the English consent form used for long form of consent documentation).
 - 5.2.2 Verify that you are using the most current IRB-approved version of the study specific short consent form and summary that the short consent form is in language understandable to the subject/representative.
 - 5.2.3 Provide copies to the subject/representative. Whenever possible provide the short consent form and summary to the subject/representative in advance of the consent discussion.

- 5.2.4 Obtain the services of an interpreter fluent in both English and the language understood by the subject/representative. The interpreter may be a member of the research team, family member, or friend of the subject/representative.
- 5.2.5 Obtain the services of an impartial witness who is fluent in both English and the language spoken by the subject/representative to be present during the entire consent discussion to attest that the information in the short consent form, summary, and any other information provided was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the subject/representative, and that consent was freely given. The witness and the interpreter may be the same person. The witness may be a family member or friend. The witness may not be a person involved in the design, conduct, or reporting of the research study.
- 5.2.6 Have the interpreter translate the summary (not the short consent form) to the subject/representative. Begin with a concise and focused presentation of the key information that is most likely to assist the subject/representative to understand the reasons why one might or might not want to participate in the research.
- 5.2.7 Through the interpreter explain the details in such a way that the subject/representative understand what it would be like to take part in the research study. When necessary provide a different or simpler explanation to make the information understandable.
- 5.2.8 Have the subject/representative read the short consent form or have the interpreter read the short consent form to the subject/representative.
- 5.3 If the requirement for written documentation of the consent process has been waived by the IRB:
 - 5.3.1 Obtain the current IRB approved script.
 - 5.3.2 Verify that you are using the most current IRB-approved version of the study specific script and that the script language is understandable to the subject/representative.
 - 5.3.3 When possible provide a copy of the script to the subject/representative.
 - 5.3.4 If the subject/representative cannot speak English, obtain the services of an interpreter fluent in both English and the language understood by the subject/representative. The interpreter may be a member of the research team, a family member, or friend of the subject/representative.
 - 5.3.5 Read the script (or have an interpreter translated the script) with the subject/representative. Begin with a concise and focused presentation of the key information that is most likely to assist the subject/representative to understand the reasons why one might or might not want to participate in the research. Explain the details in such a way that the subject/representative understands what it would be like to take part in the research study.
- 5.4 Invite and answer the subject/representative's questions.
- 5.5 Give the subject/representative time to discuss taking part in the research study with family members, friends and other care providers as appropriate.
- 5.6 Invite and encourage the subject/representative to take the written information home to consider the information and discuss the decision with family members and others before making a decision.
- 5.7 Ask the subject/representative questions to determine whether all of the following are true, and if not, either continue the explanation or determine that the subject/representative is incapable of consent:
 - 5.7.1 The subject/representative understands the information provided.
 - 5.7.2 The subject/representative does not feel pressured by time or other factors to make a decision.
 - 5.7.3 The subject/representative understands that there is a voluntary choice to make.

- 5.7.4 The subject/representative is capable of making and communicating an informed choice.
- 5.8 If the subject/representative has questions about treatments or compensation for injury, provide factual information and avoid statements that imply that compensation or treatment is never available.
- 5.9 Once a subject/representative indicates that he or she does not want to take part in the research study, this process stops.
- 5.10 If the subject/representative agrees to take part in the research study:
 - 5.10.1 If the subject is a child:
 - 5.10.1.1 Whenever possible explain the research to the extent compatible with the child's understanding.
 - 5.10.1.2 Request the assent (affirmative agreement) of the child unless:
 - 5.10.1.2.1 The capability of the child is so limited that the child cannot reasonably be consulted.
 - 5.10.1.2.2 The IRB determined that assent was not a requirement.
 - 5.10.1.3 Once a child indicates that he or she does not want to take part in the research study, this process stops.
 - 5.10.2 If the subject is an adult unable to consent:
 - 5.10.2.1 Whenever possible explain the research to the extent compatible with the adult's understanding.
 - 5.10.2.2 Request the assent (affirmative agreement) of the adult unless:
 - 5.10.2.2.1 The capability of the adult is so limited that the adult cannot reasonably be consulted.
 - 5.10.2.2.2 The IRB determined that assent was not a requirement.
 - 5.10.2.3 Once an adult unable to consent indicates that he or she does not want to take part in the research study, this process stops.
 - 5.10.3 Obtain written documentation of the consent process according to "SOP: Written Documentation of Consent (HRP-091)."

6 MATERIALS

- 6.1 Long form of consent documentation:
 - 6.1.1 Consent form
- 6.2 Short form of consent documentation:
 - 6.2.1 Short consent form
 - 6.2.2 Summary (same information as the English consent form used for long form of consent documentation)
- 6.3 Requirement for written documentation of the consent process has been waived by the IRB:
 - 6.3.1 Consent script (same as consent form used for long form of consent documentation except that signature block is optional)
- 6.4 SOP: Legally Authorized Representatives, Children, and Guardians (HRP-013).
- 6.5 SOP: Written Documentation of Consent (HRP-091)

7 REFERENCES

- 7.1 21 CFR §50.20, 50.25
- 7.2 45 CFR §46.116

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction	<p>Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Donovan Fox, and I am a senior at the University of Central Florida. For my Honors Thesis, I am meeting with veterans who served in the War in Afghanistan. This study is being conducted in an effort on my behalf to better understand the Taliban’s ability to be successful in this war. As a veteran, I would like to talk with you about your experiences while in serving in Afghanistan. The goal of this interview, and of my thesis, is to learn more about the war from the people who served in it, so to better understand it. Unless you give consent, I will treat your answers as confidential; I will not include your name or any other information that could identify you in my work. Your full name and the specific division you served in will not be recorded. All forms of notes, audio recording, meeting dates, etc. will be destroyed. Again, thank you for meeting with me, and thank you for the service you gave to your country. It is a privilege to meet with someone such as yourself.</p> <p>Before we begin, do you have any comments, questions, or concerns about this study? I understand the subject matter might be something very sensitive to revisit and talk about. At any point, you can end the interview and/or have any given information destroyed.</p>
Warm-up questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could you tell me when you joined the military? 2. How long were you in the military for? 3. Do you mind sharing what your reasons were for joining the military? 4. Are you able to tell me the job(s) you had while in the military? 5. When were you deployed to Afghanistan? 6. How did you react when you were told you were being deployed to Afghanistan? 7. How many tours did you serve in Afghanistan? 8. Where in Afghanistan were you stationed?
Topic #1	<p>To start off, I would like to ask you some questions about interactions that you, or your teammates, or people you knew, had with Afghan civilians:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your overall experience with the Afghans you interacted with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Did teammates, ANA/police, contractors, or coalition allies say similar things? ❖ Did teammates, ANA/police, contractors, or coalition allies say contrasting things? 2. Could you describe what the social makeup was of the villages you traveled to (if applicable)? 3. Who did the elders support in the war? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Probe: Why? ❖ How strong was their influence on the village? 4. Did any of the Afghans you interacted with have family members or friends who were in the Taliban? 5. Did you ever meet an Afghan who openly supported the Taliban? 6. Did Afghans who supported the Taliban say why they did? 7. Was there pressure from the Taliban to force locals to side with them? 8. Did some Afghans originally side with the U.S. and then change their mind? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Probe: What caused them to do this? 9. What caused Afghans to change their minds? 10. What was the most common factor you observed that decided who the Afghan people sided with? 11. Did some Afghans remain willing to cooperate and/or tolerate the U.S. presence despite Taliban pressure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Why? 12. Did some Afghans just want to be left alone during the war?

Topic #2	<p>Do you wish to continue? If yes: Now, I would like to ask you about some things you may or may not have seen or heard of while serving in Afghanistan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did teammates, other soldiers you knew, contractors in Afghanistan, Afghan police, or ANA forces do things they were not supposed to do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What sort of wrongdoings were done by these individuals? ❖ Did you ever hear about other instances related to this? ❖ Do you know where any of these instances took place? ❖ Did you ever hear about any wrongdoings committed by British/Australian SAS? 2. Which Afghans were victims of these wrongdoings? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Were they Taliban? ❖ Were they civilians? 3. What were the reactions of Afghans towards these wrongdoings? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What were their reactions towards wrongdoings committed by Afghan government forces? ❖ What were their reactions towards wrongdoings committed by Coalition forces? ❖ What were their reactions towards wrongdoings committed by U.S. forces specifically? 4. What was your reaction(s) to hearing or knowing about any wrongdoings? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Did you ever talk about this with anyone? ❖ What were your teammates' reactions to any wrongdoings? ❖ Would they talk about things they saw or heard? ❖ What were any of your commanders' reactions to any wrongdoings?
Decompression/Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you feel about the U.S.'s decision to pull out of Afghanistan? 2. How do you feel about the future of Afghanistan? 3. What could the U.S. do differently if it were to find itself in a situation similar to the one that developed in Afghanistan? <p>Those were all of the questions I have for you today. Again, I thank you sincerely for meeting with me today. Are there any final remarks and/or questions you have?</p>

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