



SMALL WARS JOURNAL

smallwarsjournal.com

Buying the Enemy: Demobilization Programs in the Midst of Counterinsurgency

Eric Jardine

“The Trouble with our policy in Vietnam has been that we guessed wrong with respect to what the ... Vietnamese reaction would be. We anticipated that they would respond like reasonable people.”

--Paul Warnke, Assistant Secretary of State, 1967-1969

On January 28th, 2010, leaders from 70 nations met in London for a conference on the future of Afghanistan. Among the various topics that were discussed, which included the combat of government corruption and the training of the Afghan National Army, one subject in particular rose to a place of prominence. This was the proposal for a Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund that would facilitate the demobilization and reintegration of Taliban and other insurgent fighters back into Afghan society. As the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, stated in his opening address to the assembled delegates, “We are today establishing an international trust fund to finance this Afghan-led peace and reintegration program to provide an economic alternative to those who have none.”¹ Immediately following the conference, pledges of support were given and the Fund’s revenues swelled to an estimated 500 million dollars.

The basic premise of the Fund is that a properly structured program can provide an incentive for Taliban fighters to renounce violence and to reintegrate into Afghan society. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has endorsed the Fund, while also revealing something of its basic assumption, stating: “We expect that a lot of the foot soldiers on the battlefield will be leaving the Taliban [as a result of the fund] because many of them ... are tired of fighting.”² The fund is intended, therefore, to provide a material incentive for disillusioned guerrillas to quit the battle, particularly those that have chosen violence out of sheer economic necessity. Such a targeting is also liable to be fairly effective, because, according to some U.S. estimates, as many as 80 percent of Taliban insurgents are fighting only out of the need for money and not out of any broader ideological design.³ While the accuracy of this statistical figure could be disputed, the typical seasonal lull in insurgency intensity, which tends to correspond to periods of agricultural

¹ Prime Minister Gordon Brown, cited in, “Time Running out for Taliban Insurgents: Commander,” CBCNEWS (January 28th, 2010), 1.

² Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, cited in, “United States Supports Fund to Reintegrate Some Afghan Taliban,” *America.gov* (January 28th, 2010), 1.

³ Karen De Young, “Britain, Japan to Help Reintegrate Taliban Food Soldiers,” *The Washington Post* (Tuesday, January 26th, 2010), A 07.

demand for laborers, does suggest that if proper incentives could be constructed many individuals might choose to work rather than to fight.

The use of such an incentive program appears to be quite promising and it has won numerous adherents within the United States' mission in Afghanistan. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, for example, rhetorically stated with reference to the fund, that: "The people out there we are talking about are not the ideological leaders. And isn't it a lot better to invite them off the battlefield through a program of jobs, land, [and] integration, than it is to have to try and kill everyone one of them?" Similarly, the top American General in-theatre, Stanley McChrystal, argued that, "A political solution to all conflicts is the inevitable outcome," and "reintegration of fighters can take a lot of energy out of the current levels of insurgency."⁴

Similar programs have, of course, been used in other counterinsurgencies. During the British conduct of counterinsurgency in Malaya 1948-1960, a fund was established to encourage communist guerrillas to turn in their arms and to demobilize in exchange for 350 dollars and a sack of rice. This program failed in many of its objectives, with only an approximate 20 percent of arms and insurgents turning themselves over to the authorities. These rewards were offered during the early stages of the insurgency, when ideological fervor was strongest and the outcome of the struggle was still in question. And so, in this instance, the incentives were too weak to properly induce insurgency fighters to quit the battle.⁵

Yet the incentive structure in the Afghan program is more sophisticated, and there may still be reason to suspect that it could effectively lure insurgents away from the profession of violence. Broadly speaking, the proposed Fund would facilitate three interrelated outcomes. First, it will allocate funds to facilitate the provision of jobs to demobilized insurgents. Second, the Fund will finance the relocation and protection of demobilized insurgents against retaliation by the Taliban, probably through placement in the so-called "Model Villages." Finally, the Fund will remove the names of the insurgents from the U.S. and NATO list of potential, legitimate targets of military operations.⁶ This is a rather tantalizing program and these incentives do appear to have a certain internal coherence, which suggests that many might avail themselves of this opportunity.

However, many factors, such as governmental corruption and tribal rivalries, could limit the effectiveness of the reintegration programs that are introduced, even to the point of rendering them wholly ineffectual. On this basis, many criticisms could certainly be leveled against the Fund and its associated programs, implying that they simply will not work. And, too, many of these challenges to the design and implementation of a reintegration program might be quite probable. Whether the program is effective or not will depend on a variety of circumstances—and only time will tell for sure. But, even if the Fund and its programs are implemented successfully, what are the likely implications for the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan? Would the results really be a steadily diminishing insurgency presence?

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 13.

⁶ Karen De Young, "Britain, Japan to Help Reintegrate Taliban Food Soldiers," *The Washington Post* (Tuesday, January 26th, 2010), A 07.

This paper presumes the effectiveness of the program and then assesses the logically probable effects. I present the case for the numerous negative effects that could follow from the successful implementation of the proposed Fund. The primary difficulty is that the development of this Fund, with its narrow focus on incentives targeted towards Taliban fighters, has, on the face of it, overlooked the possible ramifications that it could have within civilian society as well as the potential response of the insurgency. This range of neglected considerations is the focus of this paper. In particular, I emphasize how the program could possibly swell the ranks of the insurgency, further disillusion Afghan society towards the ISAF effort, waste coalition resources even while the insurgency persists, result in more vicious Taliban tactics, and distribute the insurgency throughout Afghanistan. I conclude with some policy recommendations that call for temperance in actions surrounding this program.

Afghanistan's Poverty and the Growth of the Insurgency

The proposed Fund is explicitly based upon the idea that individuals respond to incentives and that many insurgents within Afghanistan fight because they have little opportunities elsewhere. The first difficulty, however, is that the designers of the Fund have failed to give a proper account of how the remainder of Afghan society might respond to an alteration the incentive structures within the country. If we assume that Taliban insurgents respond to incentives, so will Afghan civilians.

Afghanistan remains an extremely poor country that is almost devoid of truly meaningful economic opportunities. In 2003, over 53 percent of Afghans were below the poverty line, a figure that has not tangibly improved despite substantial International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts. Inflation in Afghanistan has risen from an estimated 13 percent in 2007 to over 26.8 percent in 2008, resulting in a steadily degrading standard of living and purchasing power. Moreover, unemployment has stayed roughly constant at 40 percent from 2005 to 2008.⁷ While there has been measureable improvement in some areas, such as health care provision and the eradication of polio, even these dismal economic figures have only been maintained at an extraordinary cost of 35 billion U.S. dollars over the course of 2002 to 2009.⁸ Redressing such poor economic circumstances is no doubt the purpose of the ISAF coalition members' foreign assistance budgets, but it is difficult to accomplish meaningful economic development in the midst of a battlefield. And so, the economic prospects of most Afghans remain relatively poor. Such a context is ripe for the perverse effects of a program that is designed to induce insurgent fighters away from violence.

Consider, for example, what the Fund really proposes. It offers employment, security from the insurgency, and amnesty from Coalition counter-actions. These appealing incentives will likely induce insurgents away from violence, but, paradoxically, they may also compel civilians towards the insurgency. If we presume that the program is implemented fully and that it has an immediate effect, we can see the workings of the perverse incentives that will result over the long-term. In the short-term, there would be an immediate drop in the number of insurgent fighters, as many guerrillas would likely avail themselves of the program and demobilize. From

⁷ These figures are the estimates provided in the CIA World Factbook – Afghanistan. Available online at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

⁸ See the Afghanistan Ministry of Finance, *Donor Financial Review*, Report 1388(November, 2009).

this initial success there could be a dual result. Initially, the Coalition forces would probably redouble their efforts. Having seen that the program could be effective at diminishing the insurgency, planning staff within the Coalition would then allocate more funds to the programs in an attempt to produce further gains. But, presuming that economic prospects in Afghan society remain fairly dismal, as the program's size and effectiveness grows there also becomes an incentive for civilians to join the insurgency as a means of obtaining economic opportunities. If the economic benefits that are provided to demobilized insurgents are incommensurate with the broader prospects of well-being within Afghan society, then this creates a situation wherein the Fund's programs has effectively incentivized joining the insurgency. In short, when the clearest path to economic well-being is through the insurgency, then that is the route that many people will likely take. While this could seem odd, and while an observer might doubt that civilians would be induced into joining the insurgency and risk death merely to obtain economic benefits after demobilization, one must also bear in mind that the prospect of advancement is a common enough rationale for enrolment in most, if not all, of the World's armies.

After an initial period of short-term gains, the Coalition's increase in resources and focus would begin to be subject to a pattern of increasingly diminished returns to scale. That is, the more financial resources that the Coalition poured into the Fund's programs, the less diminished the insurgency would likely become. Indeed, after a certain point, the effect of additional program funds would even turn towards a negative return to scale as civilians begin to flock to the insurgency for the sheer purpose of demobilizing, thereby swelling its ranks. And so we can see that the program, if carried beyond what Edward Luttwak has called the "cumulative point of victory," will begin to produce the very phenomenon that it was meant to redress.⁹ The successful and complete implementation of the Fund's programs will, therefore, increase the number of insurgents rather than decrease it.

The broader effects in Afghan society would also be multifaceted and tremendous. In some ways, for instance, the program legitimates the violent actions of insurgents. By providing amnesty to demobilized Taliban fighters, the Fund essentially pardons any combat actions taken by the guerrillas during their association with the insurgency. Of necessity, this will also have to include offenses committed by insurgent fighters against the local population as well as Coalition forces. Without such a stipulation the program would be ineffectual, but the perception of this within broader Afghan society could also be profoundly negative. If the violence of the insurgency, particularly towards local Afghans, is treated in a seemingly casual way by the Coalition forces, then there becomes no disincentive for the majority of Afghans to not act in a similar manner.

Additionally, if the Fund's programs are effective at providing economic opportunities to demobilized insurgents, then this success must also be contrasted to the absence of similar accomplishments in the provision of civilian opportunities. As Hubert Blalock, Jr., has noted, private "rewards provided to some members [of society] may also alienate others."¹⁰ Rewarding insurgent fighters could, therefore, push the political allegiance Afghan civilians even farther

⁹ Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 20-28.

¹⁰ Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Power and Conflict: Towards a General Theory* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 1989), 143.

away from the incumbent Afghan government and the Coalition forces. Moreover, if Afghan farmers, traders, workers, and artisans, see that the provision of civilian opportunities is lacking when compared to the chances for a better life that are provided to former guerrillas, they are likely to grow disillusioned with the Afghan government, with the Coalition forces, and with the very prospect of peaceful life. Once again, the likely outcome is that the insurgency's ranks will swell with recruits as the program has successfully incentivized becoming an insurgent.

There is also the potential danger that the Fund's demobilization programs will work to good effect against the Taliban, absorbing the 500 million dollars worth of international contributions, but that this will have little effect on the extent of the insurgency in Afghanistan. The Fund presumes that many of the fighters associated with the Taliban are there out of economic necessity. Accepting that this is the case, it follows that the likelihood of insurrection more generally is also shaped by its financial viability and that it will persist, in one form or another, as long as it is economically viable for a rebel group to take up the fight.¹¹

Afghanistan is, as Figure 1 demonstrates, an eligible source of persistent conflict as a result of rebellion's financial viability due to the sheer extent and profitability of local poppy cultivation. Historically, the drug trade in Afghanistan has been a common enough source of finance for warlords, criminal groups, and insurgents, and this has contributed to the turbulent history of the country.¹²

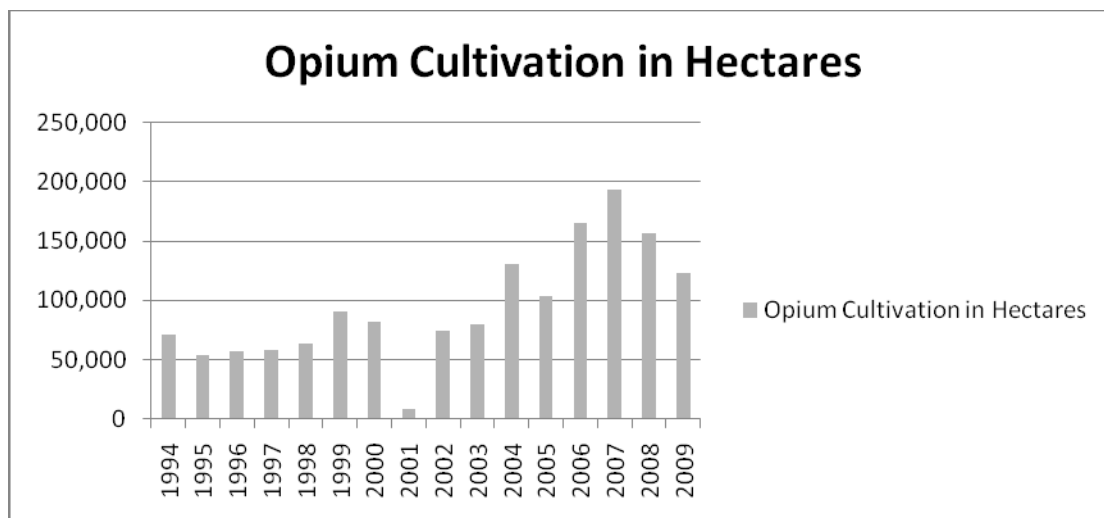


Figure 1: United Nations, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2009 (Kabul: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

The profitability of the opium poppy trade and its ability to finance insurgent groups cannot be over estimated. In 2009, for instance, the illicit cultivation of opium poppies generated revenues at a rate of \$3,562 per hectare, a figure that is down from \$4662 per hectare in 2008.¹³ During

¹¹ Paul Collier, "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," Chester Crocker, *et. al.*, *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008), 197-218.

¹² Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, "Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 34.

¹³ United Nations, Afghan Opium Survey 2009 (Kabul: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009), 1.

2009, then, the extent of poppy cultivation generated roughly 440 million dollars worth of revenue. While this figure is substantially less than the 2007 maximum of around 690 million, the revenue generated through poppy cultivation and the drug trade remains large enough to make continued rebellion economically viable. This means that, even if the Fund's demobilization program is effective at reducing the size of the Taliban, the economically permissive environment will likely see other groups step in to this space and continue the violence.

The full implementation of the Fund's programs could, therefore, shift the local balance of power from the Taliban, who will be weakened by the demobilization of its soldiers, towards other insurgent groups. This shift could be to another local group such as Hezb-i-Islami, which would see the maintenance of Pashtun direction over the insurgency. Yet more troubling, however, it could also see the emergence of a dominance of foreign fighters, loosely assembled under the banner of al-Qaeda. This would radicalize the political purpose of the insurgency in Afghanistan and it would also likely increase the war's regional ramifications. The emergence of al-Qaeda as the dominant insurgent group would also likely result in a heavier tactical emphasis on the use of suicide bombings. The majority of which have been undertaken by foreign fighters.¹⁴ Thus, even if the fund is effective at targeting the Taliban, unless the economic viability of insurgency is also dealt with, the violence is likely to persist. And, indeed, some possible alternatives are less favorable than even the current circumstances.

The Reaction of the Insurgency: Tactical Violence, Civilian Deaths, and Geographic Dispersal

Obviously, something as potentially damaging to an insurrection as the peaceful demobilization of its fighters will not be permitted to proceed without some kind of response from the Taliban, and it is certainly a cardinal error in strategic planning to disregard the possible reactions of one's enemy. Yet the Fund's basic prescriptions make little reference to the possible results of its complete implementation, other than to its immediate effect of luring insurgents away from violence. The possible responses of the Taliban need, nevertheless, to be detailed.

The most obvious response is that the Taliban will target those who attempt to demobilize so as to dissuade others from similarly defecting. In the short-term, this is a likely outcome, as dissuading demobilization effectively renders the proposed Fund and its associated programs ineffectual. But, an exclusive emphasis on the targeting of possible defectors is a highly myopic point of view and a poor analysis of the range of the Taliban's potential responses. Indeed, three other possible courses of action present far more insidious dangers for the Coalition forces.

First, accepting that the Fund's programs could incentivize the joining of the insurgency, a possible Taliban reaction to the program becomes clear. They could use their mass of new recruits in an escalated pattern of violence. The point, here, is not that the insurgency would have more personnel and so be a larger and more dangerous organization. Rather, the Taliban, in recognizing that the sudden influx of new fighters are there only because they wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to simply demobilize, will change their tactics from more indirect forms of warfare that are meant to conserve troops, to more static battles that are meant to retain

¹⁴ Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (RAND: National Defense Research Institute, 2008), 43-44.

territory. That is, the Taliban will choose a series of tactics that are more likely to result in the bloodshed of Taliban, civilians, and Coalition forces.

If we accept the assumption that the ultimate purpose of many new recruits will be to simply demobilize, the Taliban will be suffering a drain on its membership regardless of its actions. For the Taliban, then, a change in tactical direction towards more violent engagements is of little organizational consequence. Yet it will produce tremendously beneficial political results. Their ardent, ideological fighters can still be reserved for more mobile missions, while their new recruits can be thrown haplessly into the fire of battle. Indeed, it is better from the insurgency's perspective to promote violence through the use and likely destruction of its new recruits than it is to take them in and have them demobilize at the first available opportunity. This is especially the case as former recruits that have demobilized can become a wellspring of information to NATO forces, which would be a tremendous benefit for the tactical and operational conduct of the counterinsurgency.¹⁵

The insurgency's use of more static tactics might, initially, also appear to be a boon to the counterinsurgency, as the more conventional battles would be easily won by the Coalition's superior military organizations. There is, however, a severe danger of increased civilian casualties if the insurgency was to attempt to hold ground against the Coalition. While civilian casualties are inevitable in any form of warfare and should not, for that reason alone, be unduly weighted, they must always be measured against what has been gained.

In the proposed circumstances, non-ideological fighters whose real desire is to demobilize and leave the insurgency are thrown into types of battles that are intended to maximize collateral damage: attacks on city centers, raids on development projects, operations against the provincial reconstruction teams, and so forth. The counterinsurgency's inevitable response to these attacks could lead to the death or displacement of civilians and this would have two effects that will directly benefit the insurgency. First, if civilian casualties result from Coalition action, international pressures could mount against the counterinsurgency due to the negative publicity surrounding their actions. This assists the insurgency by potentially weakening the resolve towards action that will underpin the counterinsurgency's future responses. It could also batter the Coalition countries' political commitment to the ISAF mission, making the campaign seem unjust and so unsustainable by contemporary democratic populations.

Second, the reprisals of the counterinsurgency and the inadvertent death of civilians could be viewed by the local people as a form of indiscriminate violence. This perception could increase the local angst towards the Coalition efforts, a process that could be compounded by socio-cultural factors. For example, as Afghan Brigadier Yousef, Afghan Service Bureau Chief, stated: "The Afghan will never turn the other cheek, a killing must be avenged by a killing, and so it goes on from generation to generation."¹⁶ In the more extreme cases, civilian casualties that result from Coalition actions could also overcome the local populations' collective action

¹⁵ The idea that information and intelligence is central to counterinsurgency warfare is found in almost all the literature on the subject. See, for example, The United States Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* No. 3-24 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 41.

¹⁶ Brigadier Yousaf, cited in, H. John Poole, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods*, (Emerald Isles, Posterity Press, 2004), 228.

problem, that is, it could remove the incentive for the local people to remain neutral by having them be affected by violence regardless of the placement of their popular support. If this was the case, it would again compel civilians into the growing ranks of the insurgency.¹⁷ During NATO's recent offensive in Marjah in southern Afghanistan, for example, several civilians have been killed—some were caught in the crossfire between insurgent and coalition forces, while others were killed when approaching NATO columns.¹⁸ Such collateral damage could increase if the tactical methods of the insurgency grew more violent thereby further exacerbating local feelings of disillusionment and prompting further resistance to the Coalition.

While a change in tactical action seems likely, the Taliban could also respond to the complete and effective implementation of the Fund's programs by manipulating its processes to spread the geographic reach of the insurgency. One of the central components of the program is the relocation of demobilized fighters to secure areas. This could mean either relocation to the more stable Northern portions of the country or a placement into the so-called "Model Villages."

Total geographic relocation seems less likely, however, because of the tribal and ethnic distribution of Afghanistan. For example, relocating Pashtuns from the south of the country to the north of the country would likely produce ethnic tensions in the host regions, resulting in an undesirable instability. The more plausible outcome, then, is that the demobilized fighters will be moved to the newly contrasted 'Model Villages,' which are purposefully built so as to emphasize the security of the population.

The construction of the 'Model Villages' in Afghanistan is done in a systematic manner in order to emphasize the provision of security. Ideally, each resident is carefully screened and the size of the population is purposefully corresponded to the number of available security personnel. This sort of new community has been used before in other wars. During the British counterinsurgency in Malaya, the so-called 'New Villages' were quite effective at separating the ethnically located Chinese insurgency from the broader mass of ethnic Malays and Indians, and the program did contribute to the successful resolution of the campaign.¹⁹ Yet a similar program was also attempted twice in Vietnam and both times it was totally ineffectual, if not counterproductive. The French, and later the government of Diem, attempted the *Agroville* program, which failed to obtain security for their residents.²⁰ Later on in the saga of the Vietnam War, the American forces attempted the so-called 'Strategic Hamlet' program, with similarly poor results.²¹ When, as in Vietnam, the only thing that distinguished an insurgent from a civilian was their privately held political ideology and covert action, the various counterinsurgencies were not able to distinguish between Vietcong and non-combatant Vietnamese. Thus the relocation of the Vietnamese simply resulted in the relocation of the Vietcong.

Demographically, the insurgency in Afghanistan more closely resembles Malaya than Vietnam, although in Malaya the ethnically concentrated Communist guerrillas were located in the 38

¹⁷ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 151-160.

¹⁸ CBC NEWS, "NATO Strike Kills Three Civilians," *CBC NEWS Online* (Tuesday, February 16th, 2010).

¹⁹ Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya: 1948-1960* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1975), 295.

²⁰ David W.P. Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975*. Concise edition (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 105.

²¹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: a History* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1997), 273.

percent minority of ethnic Chinese whereas in Afghanistan the ethnically located Taliban is found in the dominant ethnic Pashtuns that account for an estimated 42 percent of Afghanistan's population.²² Regardless, the ethnic concentration of the dominant elements of the insurgency is a demographic feature that could be exploited by the counterinsurgency. Yet the proposed demobilization of former Taliban fighters will not have such an exploitive effect. Careful insurgent leaders could, in fact, use the program to spread the reach of their organization and produce a net-decrease in security.

As was stated, the purpose of the 'Model Villages' is to provide for localized protection of relocated Afghans. When this program is functioning properly, intrusions into these villages are prevented by an abundance of security personnel and the contextual knowledge as to who belongs within the area. Thus, the use of the 'Model Village' concept in conjunction with the proposed demobilization programs could increase security and significantly further the efforts of the counterinsurgency. However, an alternative effect of the proposed Fund's relocation, reintegration, and demobilization of former fighters is that these processes could actually come to insinuate the Taliban into the 'Model Villages' where before they were repelled.

The insurgency could, then, capitalize upon the Coalitions' desire to see fighter leaving the ranks of the Taliban. By sending loyal, ideologically driven fighters to avail themselves of the Fund's programs the Taliban accomplish two ends. First, as was indicated, they could use this program to distribute the insurgency into areas that were previously protected. Second, by using the program for this purpose of geographical redistribution, the insurgency also consumes many of the scarce resources that the Coalition will have allocated to the program. For every ardent, ideological fighter that the Taliban purposefully demobilizes with the intent of spreading the insurgency, another non-committed fighter is excluded from the program's benefits. Thus, if the Taliban chooses to react in calculated way, the very processes of demobilization can be manipulated so as to benefit the insurgency.

In all these possible scenarios, we have seen the potentially insidious dangers that lurk within the successful implementation of the Fund's programs as well as their possible iatrogenic effects. By ignoring the possible incentives that this program provides to Afghan society more broadly, the danger that the insurgency might actually gain in numbers is overlooked. Similarly, by rewarding the violence of the insurgency through immunity, the program ignores the possible perceptions of injustice and exasperation that civilian Afghans might experience. The program also does not make explicit reference to the possible reactions of the Taliban. But, as this paper has demonstrated, several avenues of manipulation exist whereby the insurgency can use the results and the processes of the Fund's programs to further their cause and to hinder the efforts of the counterinsurgency.

Conclusions: Policy Recommendation

This paper has illustrated many potential dangers that lurk within the proposed Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund. While the warnings provide here do not exhaust the possible

²² It is important to note that the figures are from the official survey of the Malayan peninsula. These numbers, then, are not reflective of the total demographic breakdown if Singapore was included in the count. In such a situation, the relative percentage of Chinese actually would have increased to 44 per cent.

outcomes, they do indicate the need for strategists and policy planners within Afghanistan to account not just for the operation of this Fund's programs, but also for the incentives such a program produces in Afghan society more broadly as well as the potential reactions of the Taliban.

In the short term, the program does appear as though it could be quite effective. Its success will depend upon the implementation of the programs and, too, on the general receptivity of insurgent fighters to the incentives to demobilize. Concomitant with the possibility of initial success must be the maintenance of sound judgment that can ward against the desire to pursue quick fixes. Short term successes can lead to disaster if they are merely extended with an abundance of additional resources into the longer term. It takes time for individuals to recognize the emergence of new incentives structures and it will take time for the Taliban leadership to recognize that the program is effective and to move to counter its outcomes and to exploit its processes. Vigilance over the longer term is, therefore, essential.

Several policy recommendations also emerge that could be useful to ensure both the effectiveness of the Fund as well as the chance for the successful erosion of the Taliban's ranks.

First, the program's scale must be tailored to the general extent of economic opportunity within Afghanistan. As this paper argued, if demobilized Taliban receive benefits that are not readily available to ordinary civilians, then the ranks of the insurgency could swell with fresh recruits. The programs that result from this Fund must, therefore, be commensurate with the civilian development programs. Rewarding combatants for their resistance must not be allowed to outpace the rewards provided to civilians for their cooperation.

Second, even if the Fund's demobilization program is successful at targeting the Taliban, thereby resulting in a diminishing of their ranks, this could merely result in a shift in the balance of power toward a different, and a potentially more severe, rebel group. The heart of the matter, here, is that the economic viability of rebellion needs to be redressed before demobilization will have any lasting effects. This includes more intensive poppy eradication strategies and crop diversification programs.

Third, because the Taliban might manipulate the processes of the program in order to gain access to the 'Model Villages,' the demobilized fighters ought to be concentrated into only a few restricted geographical areas. While potentially creating localized pockets of concentrated resistance, this would limit the potential spread of the insurgency. Effectively, such concentration would mitigate the potential for manipulation of the Fund programs of demobilization.

Finally, the Coalition's military forces should steel themselves against the prospect of increasingly violent tactics undertaken by the insurgency, including the prospect of more frequent suicide bombings. This would require an increase in the number of soldiers deployed in static defenses, but it will also require that NATO forces as well as Afghan National Army personnel undertake more frequent offensive operations. By keeping the pressure on the insurgency through a deliberately offensive spirit, the counterinsurgency can compel battle away

from population centers. This will limit civilian casualties, while also redressing the possibility of increased insurgency violence.

Overall, the proposed Fund does have a clear use. It can, if it is effectively established, lure Taliban fighters away from the insurgency. This paper has presumed the Fund's effectiveness and proffered several possible dangers that lurk within its complete implementation. Policy planners, military strategists, and program officers within Afghanistan need to be wary of the types of dangers that this paper has raised and control their optimism over any positive, short-term results. In war, it must always be borne in mind that changing circumstances prompt changes in behavior.

Eric Jardine is a Ph.D. candidate in the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, and a Ph.D. Student Fellow of the Centre for Security and Defence Studies, Carleton University. He has written award-winning essays on civil-military relations and the conduct of counterinsurgency and has published articles in The Journal of Military and Strategic Studies, SITREP, The Canadian Military Journal, and Strategic Datalink. His Doctoral research focuses upon the conduct and the resolution of counterinsurgencies, with a particular focus on Algeria, Indo-China and Vietnam, Malaya, and Afghanistan.

This is a single article excerpt of material published in [Small Wars Journal](#).

Published by and COPYRIGHT © 2010, Small Wars Foundation.

Permission is granted to print single copies for personal, non-commercial use. Select non-commercial use is licensed via a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 license and per our [Terms of Use](#). We are in this together.



No FACTUAL STATEMENT should be relied upon without further investigation on your part sufficient to satisfy you in your independent judgment that it is true.

Contact: comment@smallwarsjournal.com

Visit www.smallwarsjournal.com

Cover Price: Your call. [Support SWJ here.](#)