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Counterinsurgency Scorecard

Afghanistan in Early 2013 Relative to Insurgencies Since World War II

Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan

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Preface

This short paper seeks to replicate and update a similar RAND effort published in 2011, *Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years* (OP-337-OSD). The core of the research involved conducting an expert elicitation exercise (using classic Delphi methods) to complete the counterinsurgency (COIN) scorecard developed as part of another study, the findings from which were published in *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (MG-964-OSD). The scorecard was updated, based on an expanded case set, for the 2013 report *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* (RR-291/1-OSD). The expert elicitation recounted here was completed in April and May 2013.

The goal of this effort was to apply methods developed to examine historical insurgencies to assess the progress and the prospects for success of ongoing COIN efforts in Afghanistan as of early 2013.

This work will be of interest to defense analysts and military planners who are responsible for evaluating current U.S. operations and COIN approaches, particularly in Afghanistan; to military and civilian decisionmakers with responsibility for Afghanistan; to academics and scholars who engage in historical research of COIN, insurgency, and irregular warfare; and to students of contemporary and historic international conflicts.

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Summary

The RAND report *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* used detailed case studies of 71 insurgencies worldwide since World War II to analyze correlates of success in counter-insurgency (COIN). One of the core findings of that effort was that a case's score on a scorecard of 15 good factors or practices minus 11 bad factors or practices perfectly discriminated the outcomes of the 59 core cases in the data.[1] Cases in which COIN forces were able to maximize the presence of good factors and minimize the presence of bad factors resulted in COIN force success. Specifically, cases with a good-minus-bad score of +2 or greater were always won by the government, and cases with a good-minus-bad score of −1 or lower were always won by the insurgents.[2] The research found that all successful COIN forces have a scorecard score of at least +2 *and* that all successful COIN campaigns realized three specific factors: the disruption of tangible support to the insurgents, the demonstration of commitment and motivation on the part of both the government and COIN forces, and flexibility and adaptability on the part of COIN forces.

The current research effort involved developing and conducting an expert elicitation exercise to complete the scorecard for operations in Afghanistan in early 2013. We used an expert elicitation for two reasons. First, much of the available data on contemporary Afghanistan leave something to be desired in terms of reliability and validity. Discussion moving toward consensus among a panel of experts—many of whom have spent time in Afghanistan—is methodologically stronger than claiming certainty based on our own interpretation of tenuous data. Second, assessments of Afghanistan are potentially politically contentious, and an anonymous panel helps shield the analysis from some of that contention.

We asked a panel of 19 experts on Afghanistan to make "worst-case" assessments of the scorecard factors. According to the consensus results for the scorecard, eight good factors and six bad factors were present in early 2013 Afghanistan, for an overall score of +2. This represents an improvement over the score identified through a similar process in early 2011. A total score of +2 is equal to that of the lowest-scoring winning historical COIN forces, and having eight good factors is also consonant with historical success. However, only cases in which the insurgents prevailed had as many as six bad factors. Also concerning is the repeated observation

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[1] The study considered a total of 71 cases, but these included instances of COIN campaigns fought "against the tide of history"—for example, at the end of the colonial period or apartheid—and one case of indeterminate outcome. This left the 59 core cases used for the analyses and as the foundation for the scorecard.

[2] Perfect discrimination of 59 historical cases is by no means a guarantee of perfect prediction across all possible cases. Full details of the historical research can be found in Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-291/1-OSD, 2013.

by participants that many of the positive factors identified in early 2013 Afghanistan would be difficult for the Afghans to maintain after most international forces are withdrawn in 2014.

This report highlights two critical areas for improvement. These factors were assessed as absent in contemporary Afghanistan but found to be essential to success in historical COIN campaigns: (1) disrupting tangible support to the insurgents and (2) a demonstration (and improvement) of commitment and motivation on the part of the Afghan government and Afghan security forces.

Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2013 Relative to Insurgencies Since World War II

Findings from Previous Research on Insurgency[1]

The RAND report *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* (RR-291/1-OSD) used detailed case studies of the 71 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between World War II (WWII) and 2010 to analyze correlates of success in counterinsurgency (COIN).[2] That study produced nine key findings regarding success in COIN in modern history:

- Seventeen of 24 COIN concepts tested receive strong support; one ("crush them") has strong evidence against it.
- Effective COIN practices run in packs, and some practices are always in the pack: tangible support reduction, commitment and motivation, and flexibility and adaptability.
- Every insurgency is unique, but not so much that it matters at this level of analysis; the COIN scorecard discriminates cases into wins and losses.
- Quality is more important than quantity, especially where paramilitaries and irregular forces are concerned.
- Governments supported by external actors win the same way others do.
- The "iron fist" COIN path, focused primarily on eliminating the insurgent threat, is historically less successful.
- COIN takes time, but some COIN practices help end insurgencies sooner, leading to a more durable postconflict peace.
- COIN takes time: After good COIN practices are in place, the average insurgency lasts roughly six more years.
- Poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor ends.

Of particular interest is the second part of the third finding, "the COIN scorecard discriminates cases into wins and losses." The COIN scorecard was originally developed as part of an earlier study, findings from which were published in the 2010 RAND report *Victory*

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[2] Note that while the study includes 71 detailed case studies, only 59 of these cases are considered "core" cases and informed the quantitative and comparative analyses. The excluded cases are those that were "fought against the tide of history"—that is, cases in which the outcome was all but predetermined by exogenous global trends, such as the end of colonialism or the end apartheid. Many of these "tide of history" cases are individually interesting and informative but make poor comparative cases because, often, quite well-designed and -executed COIN campaigns ultimately failed because of inexorable changes in the context of the conflict. Full details can be found in Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-291/1-OSD, 2013.

Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency (MG-964-OSD). That original COIN scorecard was applied to Afghanistan in early 2011.[3] It has since been updated based on new data compiled in support of the *Paths to Victory* study. Extending that work, we focus here on the importance of maximizing good factors and minimizing bad factors in defeating insurgencies, assessing the balance of these factors in Afghanistan in early 2013.

The Counterinsurgency Scorecard

As noted, one of the core findings of the previous effort was that a historical COIN case's score on a scorecard of 15 equally weighted good factors or practices minus 11 equally weighted bad factors or practices perfectly discriminated case outcomes in the data. Table 1 lists these good and the bad factors.

Across the 59 core cases in the *Paths to Victory* analyses, taking the sum of the good minus the bad revealed that cases with a good-minus-bad score of +2 or greater were always won by the government, and cases with a good-minus-bad score of –1 or lower were always won by the insurgents.[4] In other words, scores on the scorecard perfectly discriminated the historical cases into wins and losses.[5] The lesson for current or future counterinsurgents is obvious: Maximizing the presence of good factors and minimizing the presence of bad factors will lead to the best chances for success.

Table 2 lists the 59 core insurgencies from *Paths to Victory*, along with the dates of each conflict, the sum of good factors (of a possible 15), the sum of bad factors (of a possible 11), the net of good-minus-bad factors, and the outcome of the case (either a government loss or a government win).[6] Note that the scorecard score does indeed discriminate the wins from the losses, with all winning COIN forces scoring at least +2 and all losing COIN forces scoring –1 or lower.

Scoring Afghanistan in 2013

In addition to providing an interesting summary of historical results and reflecting historical correlates of success in COIN, the scorecard is meant to be a useful prognostication tool for current and future COIN efforts. Although we do not assert that the scorecard's ability to discriminate wins from losses perfectly since WWII guarantees its ability to predict the outcomes of ongoing or future conflicts, scores for these COIN efforts should offer a good indication

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[3]   See Christopher Paul, *Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-337-OSD, 2011. For background on the scorecard's development, see Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964-OSD, 2010.

[4]   Full details can be found Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan, 2013.

[5]   Note that perfect discrimination in these 59 cases does not guarantee perfect discrimination across all possible future cases. With a larger sample size (additional cases and data), it is possible—even likely—that the estimated model would change slightly. In fact, this occurred when the data set went from 30 cases (*Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*) to 59 cases (*Paths to Victory*).

[6]   For full details on case selection and the process of data collection and factor scoring for each case, see Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan, 2013. Note that "loss" also includes outcomes assessed as "mixed, favoring insurgents," and "win" includes outcomes assessed as "mixed, favoring COIN."

Table 1
Good and Bad COIN Factors and Practices

15 Good COIN Practices	11 Bad COIN Practices
The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors.	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.	There was corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule.
The government realized at least one government legitimacy factor.	Host-nation elites had perverse incentives to continue the conflict.
Government corruption was reduced/good governance increased since the onset of the conflict.	An external professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of the insurgents.
The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.	The host nation was economically dependent on external supporters.
The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas.	Fighting was initiated primarily by the insurgents.
Unity of effort/unity of command was maintained.	The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate application of force.	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents.
The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict.	The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force.	The COIN force or its allies relied on looting for sustainment.
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported or favored the COIN force.	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment.
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.	
Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements that were substantially above the historical baseline.	
The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas that it controlled or claimed to control.	
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control.	

of whether an effort is on a path likely to lead to success or on one that is less likely to do so. Specific factors scored as present or absent should also provide guidance to decisionmakers, strategists, and planners about areas ripe for renewed emphasis.[7]

    With that in mind, we sought to complete the scorecard for ongoing operations in Afghanistan as of early 2013. At the time of this writing, COIN efforts in Afghanistan continued (and continued to evolve) against a backdrop of numerous transitions, with international forces reducing their footprint and numbers and more responsibility being transferred to indigenous institutions and forces. Available data on Afghanistan are often lacking in reli-

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[7] Note that the scorecard is not meant to be a mindless checklist or substitute for a thoughtful and considered COIN strategy. Which factors can be achieved, how difficult they are to achieve, and the interrelationships between the factors all vary with the specific context, and every insurgency must be considered within its own context. The principal value of the scorecard is for diagnostic purposes. If a given COIN strategy is not producing a positive scorecard balance, careful scrutiny of the scorecard can suggest whether the strategy is on the right track (several good factors are likely under the strategy but have not yet been realized) or unlikely to lead to success (unlikely to lead to many good factors, especially those found to be essential to historical COIN wins).

Table 2
59 Core Cases and Scorecard Scores

Country (Insurgency)	Years	Good COIN Practices	Bad COIN Practices	Total Score	Outcome
South Vietnam	1960–1975	0	–11	–11	COIN loss
Somalia	1980–1991	0	–9	–9	COIN loss
Afghanistan (post-Soviet)	1992–1996	0	–9	–9	COIN loss
Kosovo	1996–1999	0	–8	–8	COIN loss
Liberia	1989–1997	1	–9	–8	COIN loss
Cambodia	1967–1975	0	–7	–7	COIN loss
Moldova	1990–1992	1	–8	–7	COIN loss
Georgia/Abkhazia	1992–1994	0	–7	–7	COIN loss
Zaire (anti-Mobutu)	1996–1997	0	–7	–7	COIN loss
Nicaragua (Somoza)	1978–1979	0	–6	–6	COIN loss
Chechnya I	1994–1996	1	–7	–6	COIN loss
Bosnia	1992–1995	0	–6	–6	COIN loss
Laos	1959–1975	2	–7	–5	COIN loss
Nagorno-Karabakh	1992–1994	0	–5	–5	COIN loss
Democratic Republic of the Congo (anti-Kabila)	1998–2003	1	–5	–4	COIN loss
Rwanda	1990–1994	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Bangladesh	1971	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Afghanistan (Taliban)	1996–2001	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Kampuchea	1978–1992	0	–3	–3	COIN loss
Cuba	1956–1959	3	–6	–3	COIN loss
Eritrea	1961–1991	1	–4	–3	COIN loss
Sudan (Sudanese People's Liberation Army [SPLA])	1984–2004	1	–4	–3	COIN loss
Afghanistan (anti-Soviet)	1978–1992	2	–5	–3	COIN loss
Burundi	1993–2003	1	–3	–2	COIN loss
Yemen	1962–1970	1	–3	–2	COIN loss
Lebanese Civil War	1975–1990	5	–7	–2	COIN loss
Tajikistan	1992–1997	2	–4	–2	COIN loss
Nepal	1997–2006	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Indonesia (East Timor)	1975–2000	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Nicaragua (Contras)	1981–1990	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Papua New Guinea	1988–1998	2	–3	–1	COIN loss
Iraqi Kurdistan	1961–1975	4	–2	2	**COIN win**
Western Sahara	1975–1991	4	–2	2	**COIN win**
Argentina	1969–1979	5	–2	3	**COIN win**
Oman (Imamate Uprising)	1957–1959	4	–1	3	**COIN win**
Croatia	1992–1995	5	–2	3	**COIN win**
Guatemala	1960–1996	8	–4	4	**COIN win**
Tibet	1956–1974	7	–3	4	**COIN win**
Sri Lanka	1976–2009	6	–1	5	**COIN win**
Mozambique (Mozambican National Resistance [RENAMO])	1976–1995	8	–3	5	**COIN win**

Table 2—Continued

Country (Insurgency)	Years	Good COIN Practices	Bad COIN Practices	Total Score	Outcome
Turkey (Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK])	1984–1999	8	–2	6	**COIN win**
Indonesia (Aceh)	1976–2005	8	–2	6	**COIN win**
Algeria (Armed Islamic Group [GIA])	1992–2004	6	0	6	**COIN win**
Baluchistan	1973–1978	9	–2	7	**COIN win**
Uganda (Allied Democratic Forces [ADF])	1986–2000	7	0	7	**COIN win**
Northern Ireland	1969–1999	9	–1	8	**COIN win**
Jordan	1970–1971	9	0	9	**COIN win**
Indonesia (Darul Islam)	1958–1962	10	0	10	**COIN win**
Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola [UNITA])	1975–2002	12	–2	10	**COIN win**
Greece	1945–1949	12	–2	10	**COIN win**
Uruguay	1963–1972	10	0	10	**COIN win**
Malaya	1948–1955	13	–2	11	**COIN win**
El Salvador	1979–1992	12	–1	11	**COIN win**
Oman (Dhofar Rebellion)	1965–1975	13	–1	12	**COIN win**
Peru	1980–1992	14	–2	12	**COIN win**
Sierra Leone	1991–2002	14	–1	13	**COIN win**
Senegal	1982–2002	13	0	13	**COIN win**
Philippines (Moro National Liberation Front [MNLF])	1971–1996	14	–1	13	**COIN win**
Philippines (Huk Rebellion)	1946–1956	15	0	15	**COIN win**

ability and validity due to inconsistent collection practices, inconsistent reporting, and genuine ambiguity in many Afghan subcontexts. Because it can be difficult and contentious to identify specific scorecard factors as present or absent, we conducted an expert elicitation exercise with a panel of 19 subject-matter experts who were knowledgeable about ongoing operations in Afghanistan, keeping responses and participants anonymous. Panelists included RAND staff with expertise on Afghanistan or who had deployed to Afghanistan; serving field-grade U.S. military officers with multiple (and recent) deployments to Afghanistan; military veterans who were current on COIN research; civilian defense representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and U.S. Central Command; government civilians with experience in Afghanistan; staff from the U.S. Agency for International Development; university faculty members; journalists; and experts from other prominent think tanks. Full details of the expert elicitation process are provided in the appendix.

In keeping with the approach used in the previous studies to quantify the historical cases and to create and update the scorecard—and consistent with the prescribed use of the scorecard—participants were asked to make *worst-case assessments*. To be considered present, positive factors were required to be present over the preponderance of the area of conflict, not just in isolated locations. Similarly, bad factors were counted as present if they occurred with any frequency greater than isolated incidents. So, good factors needed to be preponderantly present, but bad factors needed only to be routinely present in certain areas or among certain segments of the force. (Further details about the scoring instructions can be found in the appendix.)

The expert elicitation provided scores for the 42 specific factors or subfactors in the score-card necessary to calculate the 15 good and 11 bad factors and practices listed in Table 1.[8] Tables 3 and 4 show all 42 factors or subfactors and how they roll up into the 15 good and 11 bad factors, respectively. Where there was consensus on the presence or absence of a factor, it was scored "1" if present or "0" if absent; where there was not consensus among the panelists, factors were scored "0.5" for neither present nor absent.[9] The detailed scorecard and the consensus assessment of each factor and subfactor are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

The scorecard as completed through expert elicitation indicates that eight good scorecard factors and six bad factors were present in Afghanistan in early 2013. The eight good factors include four half-points and thus represent a range from 6 to 10. The six bad factors include two half-points, thus representing a range between 4 and 8. Subtracting 6 from 8 provides a scorecard net result of +2. (With all the half-points maximized in one direction or the other, this represents a range of –2 to +6, a band of uncertainty that can be interpreted as something similar to a confidence interval.)

Table 3
Good Factors Present in Early 2013 Afghanistan (Total: 8 of 15)

Good Factors	A	B
1. COIN force realizes at three two strategic communication factors (Score 1 if sum of a through e is at least 2)		0
a. COIN force and government actions consistent with messages (delivering on promises) (Score 1 if YES)	0	
b. COIN force maintains credibility with populations in the area of conflict (includes expectation management) (Score 1 if YES)	0	
c. Messages/themes coherent with overall COIN approach (Score 1 if YES)	0.5	
d. COIN force avoids creating unattainable expectations (Score 1 if YES)	0	
e. Themes and messages coordinated for all involved government agencies (Score 1 if YES)	0	
2. COIN force reduces at least three tangible support factors (Score 1 if sum of a through j is at least 3)		0
a. Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased, or remains dramatically reduced, or largely absent (Score 1 if YES)	0	
b. Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced (Score 1 if YES)	0	
c. Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced (Score 1 if YES)	0	
d. Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished (Score 1 if YES)	0	

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[8]   Note that the expert elicitation considered 42 factors rather than 15 + 11 = 26 factors because some are summary factors (such as "COIN force realizes at least two strategic communication factors") that rely on multiple subordinate factors for calculation.

[9]   Consensus, for this exercise, was considered to be agreement among at least 70 percent of panelists. In practice, for most consensus factors, the degree of accord was considerably higher. The raw averages (equivalent to the percentage of panelists in agreement) are listed in Table A.1 in the appendix.

Table 3—Continued

Good Factors	A	B
e. Insurgents unable to maintain or grow force size (Score 1 if YES)	0	
f. COIN force efforts resulting in increased costs for insurgent processes (Score 1 if YES)	1	
g. COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent recruiting (Score 1 if YES)	0	
h. COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent materiel acquisition (Score 1 if YES)	0	
i. COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent intelligence (Score 1 if YES)	0	
j. COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent financing (Score 1 if YES)	0	
3. Government realizes at least one government legitimacy factors (Score 1 if sum of a and b is at least 1)		0
b. Government leaders selected in a manner considered just and fair by majority of population in the area of conflict (Score 1 if YES)	0	
c. Majority of citizens in the area of conflict view government as legitimate (Score 1 if YES)	0	
4. Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict (Score 1 if YES)		0
5. COIN force realizes at least one intelligence factor (Score 1 if sum of a and b is at least 1)		1
a. Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force's terms (Score 1 if YES)	0.5	
b. Intelligence adequate to allow COIN force to disrupt insurgent processes or operations (Score 1 if YES)	1	
6. COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (Score 1 if YES)		1
7. Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (Score 1 if YES)		0
8. COIN force avoids excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force (Score 1 if YES)		1
9. COIN force seeks to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict (Score 1 if YES)		1
10. Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by COIN force (Score 1 if YES)		1
11. Majority of population in area of conflict supports/favors COIN forces (Score 1 if YES)		1
12. COIN force establishes and then expands secure areas (Score 1 if YES)		0.5
13. Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements substantially above historical baseline (Score 1 if YES)		0.5
14. COIN force provides or ensures provision of basic services in areas it controls or claims to control (Score 1 if YES)		0.5
15. Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas COIN force claims to control (Score 1 if YES)		0.5

Table 4
Bad Factors Present in Early 2013 Afghanistan (Total: 6 of 11)

Bad Factors	A	B
1. COIN force uses both collective punishment and escalating repression (Score 1 if sum of a and b is at least 1)		0
a. COIN force employs escalating repression (Score 1 if YES)	0	
b. COIN force employs collective punishment (Score 1 if YES)	0	
2. Government involves corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule (Score 1 if YES)		1
3. Country elites have perverse incentives to continue conflict (Score 1 if YES)		1
4. External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents (Score 1 if YES)		0
5. Host nation is economically dependent on external supporters (Score 1 if YES)		1
6. Fighting primarily initiated by the insurgents (Score 1 if YES)		1
7. COIN force fails to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics (Score 1 if YES)		0
8. COIN force engages in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents (Score 1 if YES)		0
9. Insurgent force individually superior to COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated (Score 1 if YES)		0.5
10. COIN force or allies rely on looting for sustainment (Score 1 if YES)		0.5
11. COIN force and government have different goals/levels of commitment (Score 1 if YES)		1

Table 5 shows where these scores (8 good, 6 bad, +2 net) would fit in among the 59 core insurgencies from *Paths to Victory*. Table 5 lists a subset of the cases in Table 2; it includes only the cases with similar good, bad, and net scores to those found for early 2013 Afghanistan. (See Table 2 for the full list of 59 core cases.) An overall scorecard score of +2 is tied with the lowest historical score for a case won by a COIN force. Having eight good factors puts early 2013 Afghanistan in the middle of the pack of counterinsurgent winners, several points above the floor for COIN wins (four). Even accounting for uncertainty due to half-points, the lower bound for the good factor estimate (six) is consonant with all historical COIN wins. Having six bad factors, however, puts early 2013 Afghanistan two points below the record of the worst-scoring historical COIN winner (Guatemala, at −4) and is much more typical of scores for cases in which governments lost. (Four bad factors is the most optimistic bound for the Delphi estimate for contemporary Afghanistan, discounting half-points.)

Without taking into account specific factors or other findings from the broader research, the scorecard results are sufficient for cautious optimism, particularly because the scoring for the exercise was based on worst-case assessments. The number of good factors present is strong; even considering the lower bound of the uncertainty band due to nonconsensus half-points (a range of 6 to 10), only historical winners had at least six good factors. The total score (good minus bad), +2, is above the historical threshold for a COIN win and is tied with the lowest historical score. The overall band of uncertainty (−2 to +6) does straddle the lowest-

Table 5
Relevant Subset of Cases and Scores with Early 2013 Afghanistan Scores Overlaid

Country (Insurgency)	Years	Good COIN Practices	Bad COIN Practices	Total Score	Outcome
Nicaragua (Somoza)	1978–1979	0	–6	–6	COIN loss
Chechnya I	1994–1996	1	–7	–6	COIN loss
Bosnia	1992–1995	0	–6	–6	COIN loss
Laos	1959–1975	2	–7	–5	COIN loss
Nagorno-Karabakh	1992–1994	0	–5	–5	COIN loss
Democratic Republic of the Congo (anti-Kabila)	1998–2003	1	–5	–4	COIN loss
Rwanda	1990–1994	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Bangladesh	1971	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Afghanistan (Taliban)	1996–2001	2	–6	–4	COIN loss
Kampuchea	1978–1992	0	–3	–3	COIN loss
Cuba	1956–1959	3	–6	–3	COIN loss
Eritrea	1961–1991	1	–4	–3	COIN loss
Sudan (SPLA)	1984–2004	1	–4	–3	COIN loss
Afghanistan (anti-Soviet)	1978–1992	2	–5	–3	COIN loss
Burundi	1993–2003	1	–3	–2	COIN loss
Yemen	1962–1970	1	–3	–2	COIN loss
Lebanese Civil War	1975–1990	5	–7	–2	COIN loss
Tajikistan	1992–1997	2	–4	–2	COIN loss
Nepal	1997–2006	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Indonesia (East Timor)	1975–2000	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Nicaragua (Contras)	1981–1990	3	–4	–1	COIN loss
Papua New Guinea	1988–1998	2	–3	–1	COIN loss
Iraqi Kurdistan	1961–1975	4	–2	2	**COIN win**
Western Sahara	1975–1991	4	–2	2	**COIN win**
Argentina	1968–1979	5	–2	3	**COIN win**
Oman (Imamate Uprising)	1957–1959	4	–1	3	**COIN win**
Croatia	1992–1995	5	–2	3	**COIN win**
Guatemala	1960–1996	8	–4	4	**COIN win**
Tibet	1956–1974	7	–3	4	**COIN win**
Sri Lanka	1976–2009	6	–1	5	**COIN win**
Mozambique (RENAMO)	1976–1995	8	–3	5	**COIN win**
Turkey (PKK)	1984–1999	8	–2	6	**COIN win**
Indonesia (Aceh)	1976–2005	8	–2	6	**COIN win**

NOTE: Shading indicates scores equivalent to Afghanistan's in each category.

scoring historical winners and the highest-scoring historical losses. The fact that the sum of bad factors (six) is greater than the sum of bad factors for any historical winners is a concern, however. From a policy perspective, *these findings recommend seeking further improvements to increase the overall scorecard score, adding critical missing good factors but with a particular focus on diminishing the number bad factors to increase confidence and the likelihood of COIN success in Afghanistan.*

Of course, the findings of the previous RAND studies make this a general recommendation; COIN forces should always seek to maximize good factors and minimize bad factors. The scorecard and elicitation exercise offer additional value in identifying the specific factors that are present or absent. The next section discusses these factors and provides suggestions regarding which factors might be improved upon. By way of preview, critical factors that are absent include a demonstration of commitment and motivation on the part of the Afghan government and Afghan security forces and the interdiction of tangible support to the insurgents (interrupting flows of materiel and other forms of support both from within Afghanistan and across borders).

Detailed Factors in the Current Case

Tables 3 and 4 present all factors and subfactors in the scorecard and the factors scored as present or absent during the expert elicitation exercise. In each row, a "1" indicates that the consensus view was that the factor or practice was deemed to be present in the current conflict; a "0" indicates that the consensus view was that the factor was absent.[10] When reviewing the scores, remember that participants were asked to make worst-case assessments; isolated anecdotes or limited accounts of success in these areas were not considered sufficient grounds to score a factor (be it a bad factor or a good factor) as present. Where the score is "0.5," there was no clear consensus among participants. Consensus was reached for 34 of the 42 factors scored directly by the panel. These factors are discussed in greater detail later. Rows beginning with numbers are primary factors (i.e., the top-level factors listed Table 1); rows beginning with lowercase letters are the subfactors that constitute the primary factors. (All subfactors were directly scored by panelists, as were any primary factors without subfactors.)

Critical Factors

The discussion and findings from the previous research suggest that some of the good factors that the participants identified as absent are particularly concerning.

Early 2013 Afghanistan was scored as having eight of a possible 15 good primary factors present and, thus, seven (actually, five and four half-points) absent. The absent factors and those for which there was not consensus agreement of presence or absence are as follows (with those for which there was not consensus denoted with a 0.5 in parentheses):

- COIN force realizes at least two strategic communication factors.
- COIN force reduces at least three tangible support factors.
- Government realizes at least two government legitimacy factors.
- Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict.
- Unity of effort/unity of command maintained.
- COIN force established and then expanded secure areas (0.5).
- Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements substantially above historical baseline (0.5).

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[10] In all cases, the threshold for consensus was 70-percent agreement among the expert participants. The percentages of respondents indicating each factor as present or absent can be found in Table A.1 in the appendix.

- COIN force provides or ensures provision of basic services in areas it controls or claims to control (0.5).
- Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas COIN force claims to control (0.5).

These absences suggest possible areas for improvement, but one is particularly critical based on the historical results: the interdiction of tangible support to the insurgents. This concerns the extent to which COIN forces have cut flows of support (e.g., materiel, personnel, financing, intelligence) to the insurgents. The expert panel scored only one of the ten tangible support reduction subfactors as present; for the parent factor to be scored "1" on the scorecard, at least three subfactors must be present (and, obviously, even more would be better). This is particularly concerning because, in the 59 core historical cases, all the COIN winners disrupted at least three tangible support factors and none of the losers did. The discussion revealed that the insurgents in Afghanistan meet their tangible support needs from many sources, none of which has been significantly disrupted: supporters across the border in Pakistan (and in other countries), profits from drug trafficking and other criminal activities, and supportive populations (sometimes coerced) inside Afghanistan. Disrupting tangible support would require significant efforts to interrupt support flows from all of these sources, but this may well be necessary for COIN forces to prevail.

Along with the absence of certain critical good factors, the presence of several critical bad factors suggests possible areas for improvement. Five (and two half-points) from the 11 bad factors were scored as present by the expert panel:

- Government involves corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule.
- Country elites have perverse incentives to continue conflict.
- Host nation is economically dependent on external supporters.
- Fighting primarily initiated by the insurgents.
- Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated (0.5).
- COIN force or allies rely on looting for sustainment (0.5).
- COIN force and government have different goals/level of commitment.

Not only is the total number of bad factors present concerning, but so are the factors themselves. Four of the five bad practices present and the two nonconsensus half-points are all in a single category from the previous research: commitment and motivation. The extent to which the government and COIN forces facing the insurgency demonstrate their resolve to defeat that insurgency is one of the strongest predictors of success in the historical cases. In the historical cases, no government with four or more of eight factors indicating low commitment and motivation managed to prevail. The expert panel agreed that Afghanistan has too many of these factors present.[11] This suggests that the Afghan insurgency will be defeated only if the Afghan government and security forces are able to establish and demonstrate their commitment to doing so.

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[11] Of the eight commitment and motivation factors referenced, only six are included in the scorecard. The expert panel agreed that four of those six were present, and consensus was not reached on two others (half-points).

Notes on Factors for Which Consensus Was Lacking

Although the participants in the expert elicitation had or achieved consensus on most factors (34 of 42), some factors remained sources of disagreement throughout the exercise. Several of them merit specific mention.

One such contentious factor was "Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements with insurgents on COIN force's terms." There were several layers of disagreement. First, there were disagreements about the quality of intelligence available and to whom. A contrast was drawn between the kind of intelligence that drives raids by special operations forces (SOF), which is certainly sufficient for those missions, and the kind of intelligence available for conventional formations. As one panelist contended, "The average conventional unit (at the tactical level—battalion or brigade) conducts patrols and operations that amount to movement to contact, as opposed to deliberate operations against a targeted or identified insurgent. Actionable intelligence is usually only present at the strategic level or, at least, for strategic-level SOF assets." Others disagreed. A second point of contention surrounded what should be considered "adequate." For example, while many panelists accepted that intelligence was indeed sufficient to fuel targeted raids by SOF, one panelist asserted that this was not the case, asking, "Where is Mullah Omar? Haqqani? Hekmatyar? Even second-tier leaders remain at large." Finally, some panelists questioned the Afghans' ability to perform the intelligence function that has, to date, been overseen by coalition forces, contending that whatever the characterization of current intelligence effectiveness, it would decline considerably as coalition forces withdraw.

Another disputed factor was "COIN force establishes and then expands secure areas." Panelists agreed that COIN forces had done this and had historically done so successfully during the conflict, but they were split on whether it was still taking place in early 2013. While some noted recent reports contending continued progress in extending government territorial control, others disagreed. One panelist argued, "The retrograde affects this significantly: Secure areas are actually shrinking since ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] is pulling back to major bases, and ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] are focusing on metropolitan areas and the Ring Road." Although the panel could not agree on whether secure areas were growing or shrinking, the discussion revealed a broadly shared concern about the ability of Afghan security forces to do this on their own. Summarized one panelist, "The expansion of secure areas has required enormous international resources, which will be difficult to sustain as international forces roll up. ANSF will have to take a different approach to the insurgency, which, in effect, will concede large areas that are already de facto under Taliban control."

Related was disagreement on "Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas COIN force claims to control." Several panelists reported progress on this factor, noting surveys indicating that perceptions of security were "trending positive." Others pointed out significant regional differences in the perception of security, accepting that there is a strong perception of security in some parts of the country, but "in contested areas, not so much." Panelists could not agree on the scope of perceptions of security (such as where in the country such perceptions were present and where they were absent), nor on what level of perception was required, with some panelists contending that a lower-threshold ("Afghan good-enough") perception of security had been broadly established.

"COIN force provides or ensures provision of basic services in areas it controls or claims to control" was another factor on which the panel could not reach consensus. Under dispute were both the definition of a basic service and the extent to which basic services were provided. Some panelists were content to leave "basic services" unspecified, some defined services

by their absence (e.g. "water, electricity, and dispute resolution"), and some listed them more exhaustively (health, education, vocational training, potable water/sanitation, energy, infrastructure/roads, irrigation, and social protection). There was agreement that most basic services were being provided in major cities, but there was disagreement about the extent of service provision outside the cities and the adequacy of the services provided. This was another factor for which panelists—whether opining that services were being broadly provided or not—anticipated future deterioration in provision with decreased international support and participation.

Interestingly, the panel disputed the factor "Insurgent force individually superior to COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated," one of the 11 bad factors. The panelists did not disagree about the relative superiority of NATO and U.S. troops over the insurgents, but there was some disagreement about the relative merits of the insurgents and the Afghan security forces. While there was broad agreement that most of the Afghan security forces (particularly the army and the national police) were better trained and equipped than the insurgents (and thus more professional), views on the strength of their motivation differed. Several panelists asserted that the insurgents were, on average, more motivated than the Afghan security forces and that made them, on average, individually superior. The majority disagreed, but the minority was sufficiently large to preclude consensus.

The final contentious factor was also from among the 11 bad factors, "COIN force or allies rely on looting for sustainment." None of the participants asserted that members of ISAF were engaged in looting, but many asserted that there has been looting, graft, theft, and bribery on the part of various Afghan security forces. The dispute, then, involved two issues: whether this behavior was sufficiently widespread to count as present and whether the looting was "for sustainment." Consensus was not reached.

It is interesting to note several common themes that were prevalent in the discussion and bridged numerous factors and topics, despite disagreement on the scoring of the factors themselves. One such theme was the uncertainty regarding the long-term situation in the country following U.S. withdrawal. That this uncertainty was mentioned extensively in the panelists' comments indicates potential uncertainty in the relevance of current scores to the future situation in Afghanistan. This issue is discussed further in the next section.

A second theme was the distinction between various COIN activities in rural areas versus population centers and a distinction in the degree to which the population in each area is receptive to COIN forces. Because participants were asked to make worst-case assessments across the entire country in scoring each factor (with good factors having to be predominantly present and bad factors having only to be routinely present to be scored as such), we assume for the sake of the scorecard analysis that these regional distinctions are irrelevant. However, the extent to which this issue was raised in the discussion indicates that it may have particular bearing in the context of the conflict in Afghanistan and should be considered when looking for ways to improve COIN efforts there. This is particularly so with regard to some of the scorecard's more population-focused factors, such as creating or maintaining the perception of security among the population and the COIN force's provision of basic services in areas it control or claim to control. One of the major barriers to consensus on these two factors was an observed variation by region and differences in COIN force and government activities between rural areas and major population centers. These disputes highlight not only the real differences between COIN efforts in population centers versus rural areas in 2013 Afghanistan but also

the broader historical fact that the detailed application and progress of various COIN efforts can vary considerably across the different regions of a country facing an insurgency.

Notes on Factors Present or Absent in 2013 but Tenuous in the Future

As noted earlier, the discussion during the expert elicitation exercise often highlighted factors that might become precarious in the future as international forces and support draw down, regardless of whether one or more panelists asserted these factors as favorably present or absent in Afghanistan in early 2013. The following factors received at least some mention of future concerns about their sustainability in the face of ISAF retrograde:

- Themes and messages coordinated for all involved government agencies (consensus absent).
- Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished (consensus absent).
- COIN force efforts resulting in increased costs for insurgent processes (consensus present).
- COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent recruiting (consensus absent).
- Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements with insurgents on COIN force's terms (no consensus).
- COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (consensus present).
- Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (consensus absent).
- Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by COIN force (consensus present).
- COIN force establishes and then expands secure areas (no consensus).
- Government/COIN reconstruction/development efforts sought/achieved improvements substantially above historical baseline (no consensus).
- COIN force provides or ensures provision of basic services in areas it controls or claims to control (no consensus).
- Insurgent force individually superior to COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated (no consensus).

This finding is concerning because the current scorecard balance of eight good factors, six bad factors, and an overall score of +2, with attendant bands of uncertainty, indicates a need for further improvement. These expressed concerns cast significant doubt on prospects for further improvement once ISAF withdraws and, in fact, imply a significant threat of sliding backward toward even less optimistic scores.

Afghanistan in Comparison to Specific Historical Cases

The analysis thus far has compared Afghanistan in early 2013 with patterns of data observed in the 59 historical cases or with those cases in the aggregate. Is Afghanistan significantly similar to any specific historical case? The short answer: not really.

The case of Afghanistan in early 2013 is not particularly similar in its specific details to any of the 59 historical cases. In terms of its good-and-bad-factor summary (see Table 5), Afghanistan (8 – 6 = 2) is not especially similar to any case. Two cases have total scores of +2,

Iraqi Kurdistan (4 − 2 = 2) and Western Sahara (4 − 2 = 2). While four cases have a total of eight good factors present, they have fewer bad factors. All of the cases with six bad factors have three of fewer good factors and negative overall scores, and they were COIN losses. The single case with the greatest degree of similarity at the scorecard level is Guatemala (8 − 4 = 4), though it is not at all similar in the specific pattern of detailed scorecard factors present or absent or in its case narrative.

Considering all phases of all cases,[12] and examining the extent to which the 34 consensus factors and subfactors for Afghanistan's scorecard match up, is a better way to assess the similarity between the historical cases and the current Afghanistan case.[13] Following this procedure reveals a range of similarity. The least similar phase of all of the historical cases matched on 11 of 34 scored factors (far below the 17 one would expect by random chance on binary variables), and the closest match was 26 of 34 points in common. Afghanistan in early 2013 was not particularly like any of the phases of previous Afghanistan cases by this metric. (Phases of previous insurgencies in Afghanistan scored 17, 20, 21, 21, 21, 22, 23, 23, and 23.) This is, perhaps, good news, as both previous insurgencies in Afghanistan were won by the insurgents, so one would hope that this case differs!

Even considering cases with a greater degree of similarity (phases of cases matching on as many as 26 of the 34 scored factors) in specific scorecard scores does not provide a comparison that is more than passingly similar in its narrative. Thus, we make no specific comparison between Afghanistan and any individual case, but we do compare Afghanistan on what all 59 core historical cases shared, the scorecard.

2013 Results Compared with 2011 Results

As noted, this report repeats an earlier effort to complete the COIN scorecard for Afghanistan, findings from which were published in *Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years* and based on research reported in *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*.[14] The results of this exercise are different from those of the original, both because two years have passed and conditions have changed in Afghanistan and because the scorecard itself has been updated to account for a larger number of cases and longer period of history. While the two sets of scorecard results cannot be directly compared, they can be compared obliquely. After all, both versions of the scorecard perfectly discriminate the sets of historical cases on which they were based into wins and losses, and both have an observed "empirical gap" separating the highest-scoring win from the lowest-scoring loss—a gap of uncertainty between the outcomes actually observed.

In the 2011 Afghanistan scoring, the scorecard result was found to be in that gap between historical wins and losses. In the 2013 scoring reported here, the result has crossed that gap and now, at +2, is among the historical COIN winners (though equal to the lowest-scoring winners and with a band of uncertainty due to nonconsensus half-point scores, from −2 to +6,

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[12] In *Paths to Victory*, each case was divided into between two and five phases, for a total of 205 phases. In the context of this study, data for each case refer to the decisive (and usually terminal) phase.

[13] Although the panel was asked to score 42 individual factors as present or absent, consensus was reached for only 34. The eight factors on which there was not consensus cannot be assessed as like or unlike the scores for historical cases.

[14] Paul 2011; Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010.

covering both the lowest-scoring historical wins and the highest-scoring historical losses). This is consonant with the general feedback from expert panelists in the 2013 exercise: Participants conveyed that several important areas had seen improvement since the 2010–2011 time frame.

The 2011 report highlighted three critical areas for improvement: (1) the competency, legitimacy, and popular support of the Afghan government; (2) security; and (3) disrupting tangible support to the insurgents. The current report highlights only two critical areas for improvement, one of which matches the previous study: (1) disrupting tangible support to the insurgents, and (2) demonstration of commitment and motivation on the part of the Afghan government and security forces. Compared with the 2011 report, this report is much more cognizant of the impending departure of the majority of coalition forces and the corresponding challenges to prospects for maintaining the good practices that were in place at the time of this study.

Scorecard and Duration of Conflict

This comparison—this transition from within the uncertainty gap to among the historical winners between 2011 and 2013—becomes very interesting in light of other findings concerning the scorecard from *Paths to Victory*. When we briefed results from the original *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* scorecard, we would often be asked something like, "How long does the COIN force need to keep a strong scorecard balance before it wins?" We were unable to answer this question with data from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*, but we could do so with the new data collected for *Paths to Victory*. The answer is, on average (median), 5.75 years. That is, in the 28 insurgencies won by governments since WWII, all had scorecard balances of +2 or greater by the end of the conflict, and, on average, the conflict ended 5.75 years after achieving a scorecard balance of +2 or greater. There was considerable variation in this average, with some cases having a positive scorecard balance for only a short time before a decisive outcome and others having a positive scorecard balance for the entirety of a conflict running 12 years or more. But the average was 5.75 years.

This has important implications for Afghanistan. If we impute the 2011 results as falling short of the needed threshold and consider the 2013 results as finally being a minimally sufficient scorecard balance, then history suggests that a positive scorecard balance would need to be sustained for several more years (5.75 on average, but perhaps much longer) before a conclusion favoring the government. While this does suggest that COIN efforts in Afghanistan are on the right path, the concerns raised about the ability of the Afghan government and security forces to sustain some of the good practices after the departure of the majority of international forces call into question whether the Afghans can maintain a positive scorecard balance by themselves and ultimately prevail over the insurgency.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Comparing Afghanistan in early 2013 with Afghanistan in early 2011 and with the historical insurgency cases since WWII offers some support for optimism, but it also raises some significant concerns. When using a scorecard of 15 good factors and 11 bad factors based on the historical record, Afghanistan's current balance of +2 places it among the historical winners. Further, Afghanistan's current score of eight of 15 positive factors is strong relative to other historical winners.

However, on the concerning side, the band of uncertainty around the total score includes both historical wins and historical losses, and the current score of six bad factors is larger than the number of negative factors possessed by any of the winners. Furthermore, although we can currently count eight good factors as present, two factors that were present in all historical wins are missing: the disruption of insurgents' tangible support and a clear demonstration of commitment and motivation on the part of the host-nation government and indigenous security forces. Two final concerns raised by the experts who participated in the scoring were that the Afghans may not be able to maintain several of the good practices by themselves once the coalition of international supporters withdraws the preponderance of its forces and that several good COIN practices appear to be present in certain (densely populated or uncontested) regions of the country and absent in others.

Thus, this report highlights two critical areas for improvement: (1) the disruption of tangible support to the insurgents and (2) a demonstration (and improvement) of commitment and motivation on the part of the Afghan government and Afghan security forces.

Details of the Expert Elicitation

The Delphi Method

The Delphi method was developed at RAND in the 1960s. While the technique has been refined over the years,[1] the fundamental premise remains the same. Experts individually make assessments or provide input and then offer written justification for those assessments. These experts are then given the opportunity to privately review the justifications offered by other participants and revise their assessments based on lines of reasoning that they had failed to include in their own initial calculations. The result is a consensual set of expert assessments based on more information than any single expert initially considered. Because participants work in private and remain anonymous to each other, final evaluations are reached without any of the psychological pitfalls of committee work, such as "specious persuasion, the unwillingness to abandon publicly expressed opinions, and the bandwagon effect of majority opinion."[2]

A simplified example of a Delphi exercise demonstrates this logic. Imagine that a Delphi exercise is convened to assure victory in a carnival game: The investigators wish to know how many peanuts are contained in a large glass pig. A panel of experts is assembled, including (among others) a physicist, a mathematician, a material scientist, a statistician, and an expert in the history of mountebanks. Each performs his or her calculations and generates an estimate of the peanut content of the pig. Then, each is asked to justify his or her response, explaining the calculations involved. One participant might begin with the formula for the volume of an ellipsoid and then assume a volume for peanuts and proceed. Another might begin with the volume of an ellipsoid and then add a clever correction factor for the additional volume represented by the pig's feet and head. Yet another might simply use the volume of a sphere but add an innovative adjustment for the stochastic nature of the space between peanuts as they do or do not nest well with each other. The expert on mountebanks may not able to articulate his or her volume calculation well at all but may make two critical observations about the kinds of tricks that carnival operators are likely to pull to make such estimation difficult—say, inconsistent thickness of the glass of the pig or the use of peanuts of different sizes. As the experts review the justifications and calculations made by the others, they may recognize factors that they failed to include in their own calculations or come to understand that they have over- or underestimate some critical quantity. The revised estimates are likely to be based on more

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[1] See, for example, Carolyn Wong, *How Will the e-Explosion Affect How We Do Research? Phase I: The E-DEL+I Proof-of-Concept Exercise*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, DB-399-RC, 2003.

[2] Bernice B. Brown, *Delphi Process: A Methodology Used for the Elicitation of Opinions of Experts*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-3925, 1968, p. 2.

complex calculations, be better calculations, and be closer to each other than were the initial individual expert estimates.

The RAND Afghanistan Delphi Exercise

The RAND Afghanistan Delphi exercise was an iterative Delphi exercise based on the classic model. It was completed via iterative email exchange between April 16 and May 20, 2013. This section details the process used.

By definition, an expert elicitation is only as good as the experts elicited. An initial list of candidate participants was generated in consultation with senior RAND managers and based on participants in the previous exercise, documented in *Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years* (OP-337-OSD).[3] This list was expanded in consultation with the project sponsor and based on interactions in early briefings of draft results from *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* (RR-291/1-OSD).[4] An initial list of 26 candidates emerged from this process. Of this group, 21 initially agreed to participate. Of those 21, 20 completed the first round of the exercise, with one declining to participate when the details of the exercise became clearer. Of the 20 initial participants, 19 completed the entire exercise, with one further withdrawal due to time constraints. Participants included RAND staff with expertise on Afghanistan or who had deployed to Afghanistan; serving field-grade U.S. military officers with multiple (and recent) deployments to Afghanistan; military veterans who were current on COIN research; defense civilian representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and U.S. Central Command; government civilians with experience in Afghanistan; staff from the U.S. Agency for International Development; university faculty members; journalists; and experts from other prominent think tanks.

A summary set of instructions defined each factor more extensively and gave general guidance regarding the exercise. This guidance included the following text:

> Please evaluate each factor as present (1) or absent (0) in contemporary Afghanistan. All questions pertain to the area of conflict unless otherwise specified. If the answer is "well, it depends on where specifically you consider—that factor is present in part of the country but absent in another part," *please make "worst-case" assessments*. That is, if something is going well in RC [Regional Command] South but poorly in RC East, make your scoring based on RC East.

> A caveat: While we want "worst-case" assessments, we do not want assessments driven by isolated events. If a positive factor is present over the vast majority of the area of conflict, score it as present even if there are one or two isolated incidents where the factor was not present.

The iterative Delphi exercise included four scoring rounds with two phases in each round. Because it was clear that positions had become entrenched, and out of respect for participants' time, the second (discussion-only) phase of the third round was canceled by the moderator, progressing the exercise directly to the final phase. This resulted in a total of six phases. In the

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[3] Paul, 2011.

[4] Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan, 2013.

first phase of each round, participants provided scores for each factor, indicating whether they believed it was present ("1") or absent ("0") in Afghanistan. In the second phase of each round, participants were shown their scores relative to the mean scores of all participants. In all phases save the very first and the very last, participants were asked to justify their minority positions (factors on which they deviated from the group mean by 0.4 or more) and contribute to the ongoing discussion about the presence or absence of the factors.

In each phase save the first (nothing to discuss yet) and the last (discussion concluded), participants were asked to contribute to the discussion. In a traditional Delphi exercise, scorers are asked to justify all their ratings or calculations in the first round. However, because this exercise included 42 individual factors and because all participants volunteered their time, participants were asked to provide justification only for minority positions, lest a great quantity of volunteered time be consumed generating justifications for positions about which the entire panel was in complete agreement. In the second phase of each round, participants whose score on a factor differed from the group mean by 0.4 or more were informed that theirs was a minority position and asked to justify it. In this way, the discussion remained focused on factors that were actually contentious, rather than being diluted with justifications of factors about which there was already significant concordance. Scores that became minority positions in subsequent rounds (due to either changed scores or movement of the mean) were flagged as newly minority positions, indicating that a new justification was required from the participant.

After responding to requests for justification of their minority positions, participants were asked to weigh in on any of the ongoing discussion of any of the factors. Space was made available for written rebuttals, counterarguments, endorsements, and so on, aimed at initial minority defenses or at discussion ensuing from them. No limit was placed on the volume or character of the discussion, though participants were encouraged to be concise. Instructions invited participants to refer to studies, data sets, personal experiences, or other evidence that they felt supported their positions or otherwise accounted for their reasoning or logic. The discussion was considerable, spanning more than 60 single-spaced pages in aggregate.

Raw Delphi Scores

Table A.1 presents the average score for each factor across the 19 participants who ultimately completed the exercise. Because the scoring was binary (0 or 1), the raw average can be accurately interpreted as the proportion of participants who indicated that a factor was present in their final scoring. For example, the first factor is "COIN force and government actions consistent with messages (delivering on promises)." The raw average is 0.16, which indicates that 16 percent of participants indicated that the factor was present (scored it as "1") in their final scoring.

For reference, Table A.1 also presents the consensus results (in the "Rounded Result" column) used in the main body of this report. Recall that 70-percent agreement was the threshold specified for consensus. This means that raw average scores of 0.7 or higher were considered to indicate consensus on presence and were rounded to "1" accordingly. Inversely, scores of 0.3 or lower were rounded to consensus absence, or "0." Scores between 0.3 and 0.7 were left as contentious scores and rounded to 0.5, indicating a lack of agreement and neither presence nor absence.

Table A.1
Raw Average Scores from RAND Afghanistan Delphi Exercise and Rounded Consensus Results

Factor	Raw Average	Rounded Result
COIN force and government actions consistent with messages (delivering on promises)	0.16	0
Forces of order maintains credibility with populations in the area of conflict (includes expectation management)	0.16	0
Messages/themes coherent with overall COIN approach	0.58	0.5
Forces of order avoids creating unattainable expectations	0.21	0
Themes and messages coordinated for all involved government agencies	0.26	0
Flow of cross-border insurgent support across significantly decreased, remains dramatically reduced, or largely absent	0	0
Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced	0	0
Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced	0.21	0
Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminishedI	0.11	0
Insurgents unable to maintain or grow force size	0.26	0
COIN force efforts resulting in increased costs for insurgent processes	0.95	1
COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent recruiting	0.16	0
COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent materiel acquisition	0.21	0
COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent intelligence	0.11	0
COIN forces effectively disrupt insurgent financing	0.16	0
Government leaders selected in a manner considered just and fair by majority of population in the area of conflict	0.11	0
Majority of citizens in the area of conflict view government as legitimate	0.11	0
Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict	0	0
Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force's terms	0.63	0.5
Intelligence adequate to allow COIN force to disrupt insurgent processes or operations	0.89	1
COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas	0.89	1
Unity of effort/unity of command maintained	0.26	0
COIN force avoids excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force	0.74	1
COIN force seeks to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict	0.89	1
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by COIN force	0.95	1
Majority of population in area of conflict supports/favors COIN forces	0.89	1
COIN force establishes and then expands secure areas	0.37	0.5
Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements substantially above historical baseline	0.63	0.5
COIN force provides or ensures provision of basic services in areas it controls or claims to control	0.37	0.5
Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas COIN force claims to control	0.53	0.5
COIN force employs escalating repression	0	0
COIN force employs collective punishment	0	0
Government involves corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule	1	1

Table A.1—Continued

Factor	Raw Average	Rounded Result
Country elites have perverse incentives to continue conflict	0.89	1
External professional military forces are engaged in fighting on behalf of the insurgents	0.11	0
Host nation is economically dependent on external supporters	1	1
Fighting is primarily initiated by the insurgents	0.79	1
COIN force fails to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics	0.16	0
COIN force engages in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents	0	0
Insurgent force individually superior to COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated	0.32	0.5
Forces of order or allies rely on looting for sustainment	0.32	0.5
COIN force and government have different goals/levels of commitment	1	1

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The RAND report *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* added 41 new cases to a previously studied set of 30 insurgencies, examining the 71 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between World War II and 2008 to analyze correlates of success in counterinsurgency (COIN). A key finding of this research was that a case's score on a scorecard of 15 equally weighted good and 11 equally weighted bad COIN factors and practices perfectly discriminated the outcomes of the cases analyzed. That is, the balance of good and bad factors and practices correlated with either a COIN win (insurgency loss) or a COIN loss (insurgency win) in the overall case. Using the scorecard approach as its foundation, a RAND study sought to apply the findings to the case of Afghanistan in early 2013. The effort involved an expert elicitation, or Delphi exercise, in which experts were asked to make "worst-case" assessments of the factors to complete the scorecard for ongoing operations in Afghanistan. The consensus results revealed that early 2013 Afghanistan ranks among the historical COIN winners, but its score is equal to those of the lowest-scoring historical wins. This tenuous position points to several areas in need of improvement, but particularly the need to disrupt the flow of insurgent support and the need for the Afghan government and Afghan security forces to better demonstrate their commitment and motivation. Afghanistan in early 2011 scored in the middle of the historical record in terms of COIN wins and losses, suggesting an overall improvement in COIN progress in that conflict by early 2013. However, conditions may change as coalition forces prepare to hand over responsibility for the country's security to the Afghan government and Afghan security forces in 2014.

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