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# Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism

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Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

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*Cover photo: Protesters shout slogans as they march on a street in the southern Yemeni town of Radfan on December 19, 2009, to denounce a government military operation that the authorities said killed about 30 al-Qa'ida militants. (Reuters)*

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# Summary

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## Overview

This monograph presents, assesses, and improves a conceptual model dealing with public support of insurgency and terrorism. It builds on an earlier RAND study that reviewed social science for counterterrorism and introduced conceptual “factor tree” models to integrate knowledge, improve coherence of discussion, and take a modest step toward relatively general theory. The present study extends the scope to insurgency and incorporates insights stimulated by social movement theory, which add a dynamic dimension relating to the purposeful methods, i.e., stratagems, by which insurgents stimulate and maintain support.

Much of the monograph describes lessons learned from assessing the validity of early versions of our model against empirical information from Afghanistan, Turkey, Nepal, and the cross-national aspects of al-Qa’ida. Broad features of the initial model held up well, but the empirical work motivated refinements. As expected, the salience of the conceptual model’s various factors varied markedly with case. That is, the conceptual model is intended to be rather general, identifying *possible* specific factors for and causal pathways to public support. In applications to a particular context, such as our cases, the conceptual model is merely a starting point indicating what to look for. Only some of the general factors will be salient, which allows useful narrowing—albeit with recognition that which factors are important may change with time as the result of insurgent and counterinsurgent strategy, as well as changes of circumstances.

The last part of our study uses a generic model of “persuasive communication,” based on a rich scholarly literature, to relate our con-

ceptual model of public support for insurgency and terrorism to broad suggestions about strategy in overlapping domains referred to variously as “public diplomacy,” “strategic communication,” and “influence operations.”

## Approach

We began our study by constructing a static factor tree conceptual model that built on the previous counterterrorism work, and by adding insights stimulated by social movement theory. The resulting combination was the initial hypothesis base for evaluation. The evaluation was largely qualitative and somewhat subjective because the phenomena being studied are complex, with no laboratory in which to control and measure variables rigorously. Nonetheless, we could use the empirical information to see (1) whether the factors of our theory showed up in the cases studied, (2) whether the cases revealed additional factors that had been omitted (a kind of falsification of the original theory), (3) whether the cases suggested better ways to relate the factors to each other (i.e., better depictions of causal pathways), and (4) whether (as expected) there were sharp differences in the relative salience of factors from one context to another.

The intent in all this was not just “testing,” but also iterative theory refinement in the spirit of qualitative case studies as pioneered by Alexander George. Entangling theory development and testing was appropriate given the embryonic state of integrative knowledge. Correspondingly, we took an opportunistic, adaptive approach rather than, say, fixing the hypotheses and methods, selecting a representative set of cases, and proceeding linearly and rigorously to test the hypotheses. Our initial empirical work was for the Taliban in Afghanistan and included experimenting with quantitative methods. We also did substantial qualitative research on al-Qa’ida, illustrating the explanatory value of the factors suggested by social movement theory. We then extended our research, exploiting the opportunity to have doctoral fellows from Turkey and Nepal do case studies on insurgencies in their native countries. These studies were purely qualitative and used differ-

ent types of data than in earlier phases. As we neared completion of the study, another opportunity arose: We obtained specialized public-opinion data on Afghanistan that allowed us to supplement the earlier analysis. The study, then, evolved in nonlinear fashion, with diverse methods and data types.

## **Data**

We drew on extensive primary- and secondary-source material. The Afghan work reflects press accounts, with testimonials and quotations from local sources in the largely Pashtun areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan. These came from two English-language Pakistani newspapers, as well as the *New York Times* and *Asia Times Online* and translated versions of Afghan-language material. We supplemented the press-account data with information from surveys conducted in Afghanistan. Results were largely consistent, but the survey data highlighted additional factors and clarified some issues. The material on al-Qa'ida consisted largely of original-Arabic or translated statements of al-Qa'ida leaders and other significant figures debating matters of ideology and strategy. The material on Turkey came from Turkish-language newspapers and English- and Turkish-language government reports, books, and articles about the Kurdish PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). The Nepalese case depended primarily on the work of Nepalese scholars writing in English, the website of the United Communist party of Nepal, and the work of some other scholars.

## **The Conceptual Model**

### **Initial Hypothesis, Evaluation, and Revision**

As noted above, our initial hypothesis base consisted of (1) a factor tree based on combining trees from past work and (2) insights motivated by social movement theory that we treated as constituting a second, supplementary lens. We then evaluated the cases using this combination of lenses.

The higher-level aspects of the factor-tree model held up very well in the empirical testing, and nearly all of the lower-level factors showed

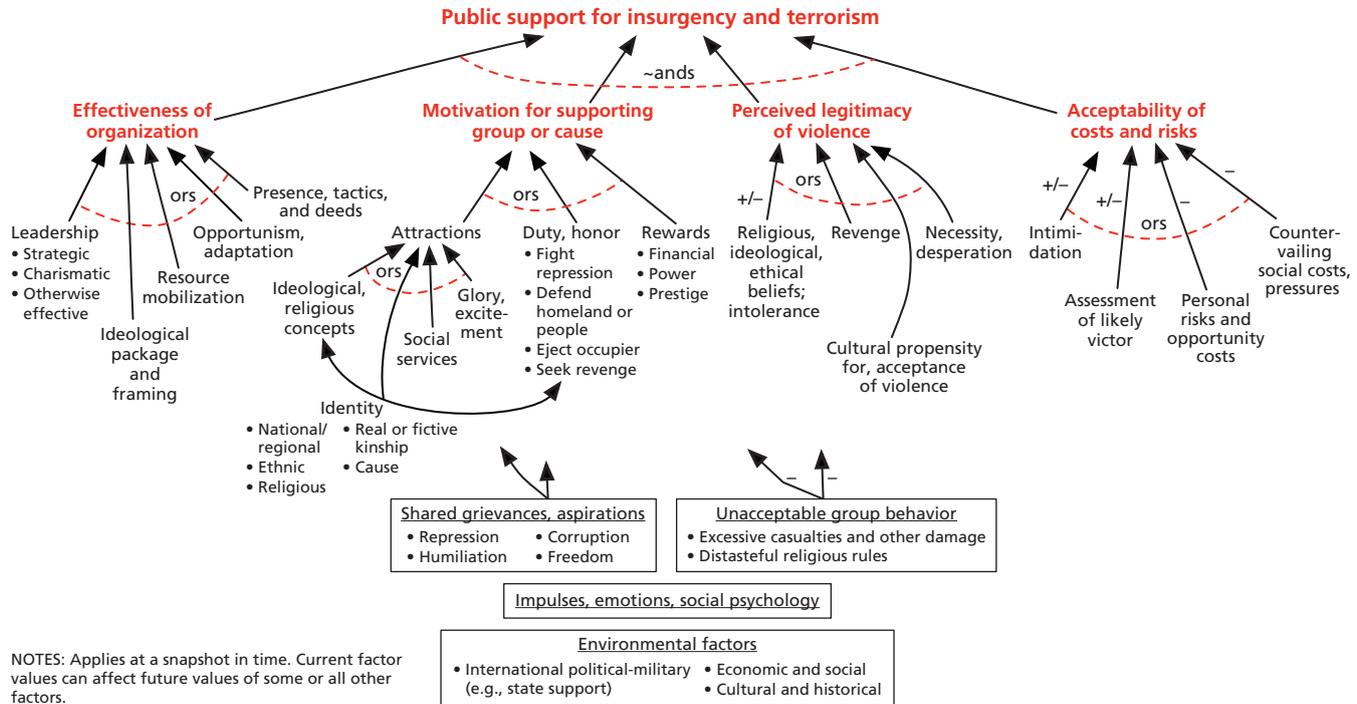
up as important in at least one of the cases studied. Further, very few factors arising in the data had previously been omitted. Nonetheless, experience with the new cases stimulated *many* refinements. Also, they and reviews of the draft monograph caused us to integrate the two “lenses” into a single integrated factor tree, shown in Figure S.1.

The conceptual model of Figure S.1 is actually quite simple if only the top layer of factors is considered (the items in red), but understanding phenomena typically requires considering some of the more specific lower-level factors. A positive or unmarked arrow means that more of the first factor tends to cause more of the second factor (the actual effect depends on the other factors influencing the higher-level factor). A negative arrow means that more of the first factor tends to cause a reduction of the second factor. Where +/- appears, the direction of the effect is ambiguous—perhaps because it varies with population segment or because of hidden variables. Where factors are connected by “-and” (as at the top level in Figure S.1), it means that the effect (public support, in this case) depends in a first approximation on *all* of the connected factors being present. Where factors are connected by “or,” it means that the higher-level effect may occur as the result of any one of the factors or a combination. The lower-level factors indicate alternative causal pathways, such as different motivations, rather than decomposition. In a particular country at a particular time, only some of the lower-level factors shown may be important.

The boxes at the bottom of Figure S.1 show cross-cutting factors affecting several or all of the higher-level factors.

In interpreting the model, it is crucial to understand that “the public” consists of many subpopulations. Which factors of Figure S.1 are important varies not only with country, but also across those subpopulations. For example, the portion of the public that is already sympathetic to a violent organization may have an enduring resonance with the organization’s allegedly high-minded ideology. Another portion may be uninterested in or hostile to the ideology but nevertheless animated by the organization’s efforts to protest long-held grievances or recent actions by a despised government. In a similar manner, the factors may have different effects on different classes of insurgency sup-

**Figure S.1**  
**Factors Underlying Public Support for Terrorism or Insurgency**



porter (e.g., those offering indirect financial support rather than safe havens).

### The Narrative

**Top-Level Factors.** The narrative that goes with Figure S.1 is that public support for insurgency and terrorism depends on four top-level factors: effectiveness of the organization, motivation, perceived legitimacy, and acceptability of costs and risks.

**Effectiveness of the Organization.** Public support for an insurgent or terrorist organization requires that the organization exist and have some level of effectiveness. Grievances, identity, and many other individual-level factors are ubiquitous; only sometimes, however, does public support for insurgency build to significant levels. The insurgent organization's effectiveness, then, is crucial and may be seen as the result of leadership, ideological package and related framing, the mobilization of resources, opportunism and adaptation to circumstances, and presence, tactics, and deeds. This effectiveness is a prerequisite for—and, over time, a cause of—the other factors.

**Motivation.** Most people who support insurgency and terrorism believe that they are doing something positive, such as contributing to a worthy cause, fulfilling a duty, or maintaining honor. Some attractions are rooted in religion or other ideology, a sense of identity, appreciation of social services provided by the violent organization, the glory and excitement of the cause or activity, or some combination. Referring again to the issue of identity, people may feel a sense of duty or honor to support the insurgency because of nationalism (e.g., when dealing with an occupier) or their connection with a particular ethnic group, tribe, religion, or cause. Other motivations may involve financial payments or gaining power or prestige.

**Sense of Legitimacy.** Violence may be perceived as legitimate for any or a combination of many reasons. The reasons may be religious, otherwise ideological, or ethical; they may be due to intolerance rooted in unthinking ethnic prejudices and ignorance that denigrate “others”; they may be rooted in a sense of legitimate personal revenge or, in a culture with endemic violence, a belief that legitimacy is a non-issue. And, even if violence is seen as deplorable, it may be seen as necessary.

It should also be remembered that “good” revolutionaries are often insurgents and that only sometimes do they have the luxury of taking a peaceful approach, as in Gandhi’s India or in the Egypt of 2011’s Arab Spring. A public may deplore (or come to deplore) terrorism but approve other forms of violence as necessary for the cause.

**Acceptability of Costs and Risks.** The fourth branch is expressed as acceptability of costs and risks (given motivations), because the behaviors in question are often not the result solely of sober cost-benefit calculations but also of emotions, such as the excitement of revolution or the horror of having witnessed slaughter. Responding to intimidation is less a matter of calculation than of being frightened by the government, insurgent group, or both. For those cross-pressured by both, a calculation may indeed occur: Who will be the likely victor and, thus, with whom is it most important to cooperate? There may also be personal-level risks and opportunities to consider, and a variety of countervailing social and culture pressures against support.

All of the top-level factors affect the others over time. Additional cross-cutting factors are indicated at the bottom of Figure S.1. These include shared grievances and aspirations, unacceptable behavior by the insurgent organization (which can undercut public support), various psychological and emotional factors, and such environmental factors as international relations, economics, instability, and culture.

## Lessons from the Case Histories

Our case studies dealt with al-Qa’ida, the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Kurdish PKK separatist movement in Turkey, and the Maoists of Nepal.

**Al-Qa’ida.** We drew on past research to construct a specialized factor tree for public support of al-Qa’ida in the large, i.e., of al-Qa’ida as a transnational, global Salafi-jihadi organization. That is, we did not consider al-Qa’ida affiliates, for which public opinion is often driven by local considerations, or to rank-and-file participants, who are sometimes more like a “bunch of guys” than those attracted strongly to the tenets of al-Qa’ida. Our empirical work on al-Qa’ida in this study was

primarily to assess the value of the additions to our model from social movement theory. The result, Figure S.2, stems from the general factor tree (Figure S.1), but uses thickened arrows and bold font to show factors that we see as noteworthy for the al-Qa'ida case.

Al-Qa'ida's organizational effectiveness has been due in part to the late Usama bin Ladin and to Ayman Zawahiri, who between them brought a combination of charisma, strategic thinking, and organizational skills. Al-Qa'ida's framing of issues has been extremely important, especially the notion that violent jihad is an obligation of good Muslims, on behalf of brother Muslims worldwide (not in a single country).

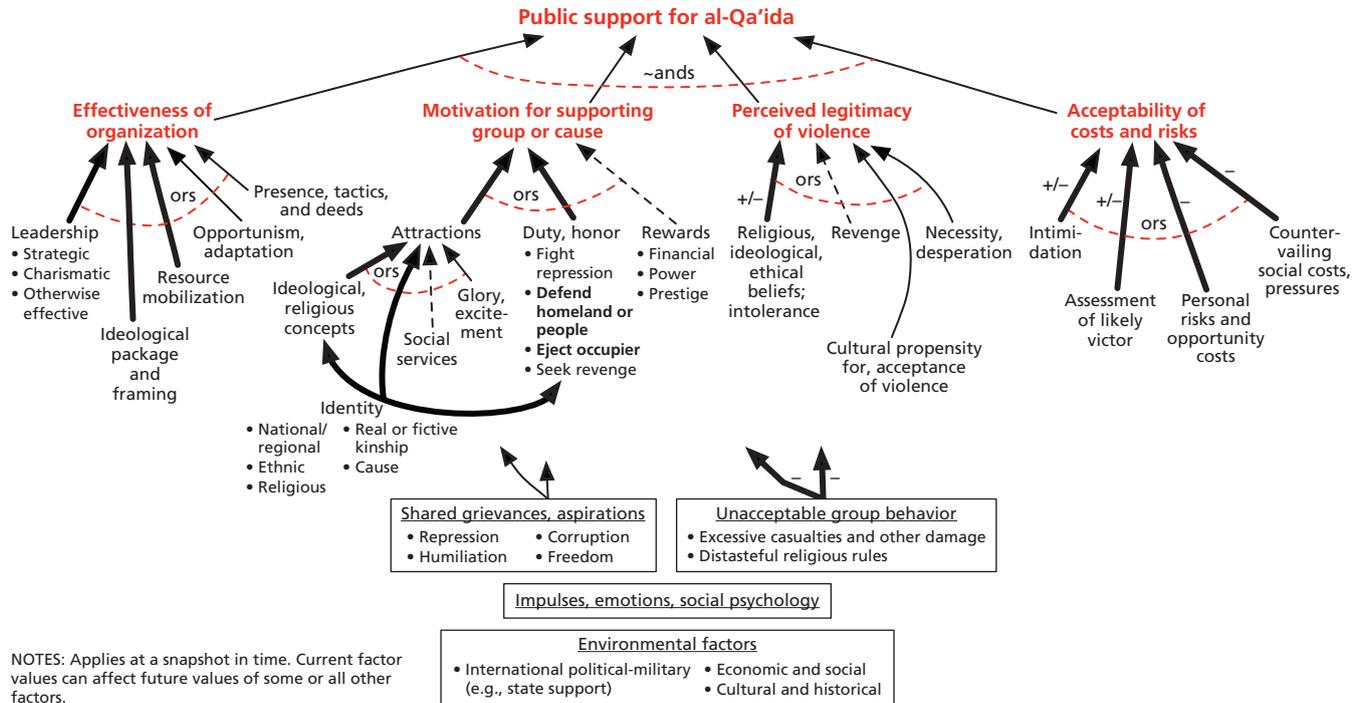
The motivations for public support stem from religious beliefs (a violent-extremist version of Salifism), an ideology stressing identity within the universal brotherhood of Muslims, and a duty to defend Muslims, who are seen as under attack worldwide. All of this is supported by shared grievances related to an accumulated but inchoate sense of humiliation in the Muslim world and by widespread repression and corruption by the governments of Muslim countries. The perceived glory and excitement of supporting a cause that seeks to redress these problems is also a factor.

Religious and brotherhood-of-Muslim beliefs are also major factors in the perceived legitimacy of violence against Westerners, unbelievers, and even Muslims who do not agree with Salafi-jihad interpretations. However, religious and cultural beliefs also operate in the opposite direction (hence the +/- in Figure S.2), with many in the Muslim world disapproving of the extreme violence of al-Qa'ida.

As for the acceptability of costs and risks, the most notable point is the strength of factors *against* support (negative effects in Figure S.2). The scale and ferocity of anti-al-Qa'ida activities worldwide (as well as religious and cultural values) have spawned broad countervailing pressures that discourage would-be supporters for pragmatic reasons, perhaps in part because it seems unlikely that al-Qa'ida will emerge as the victor.

Notably absent in Figure S.2 is an emphasis on social services, e.g., health and sanitation (al-Qa'ida does not provide such services, as do some insurgent organizations); the search for financial, power,

**Figure S.2**  
**Salient Factors in Public Support for al-Qa'ida**

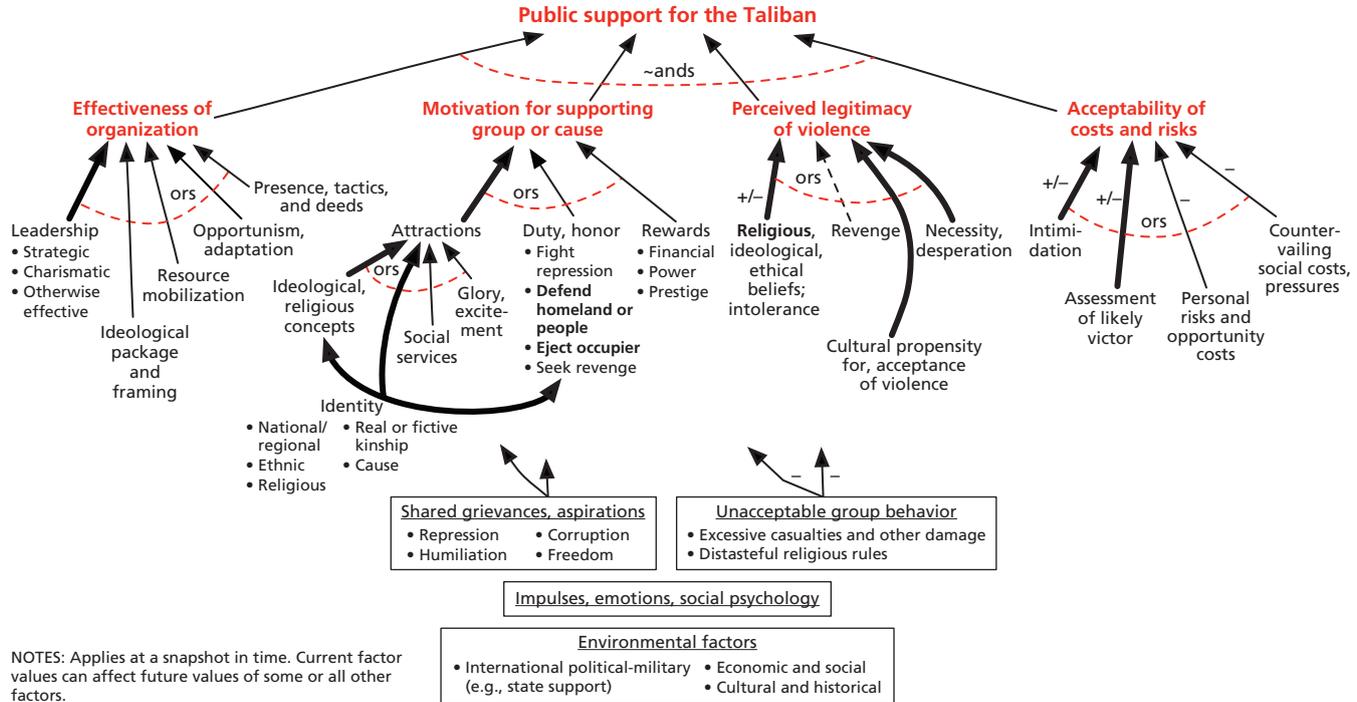


or prestige rewards; personal revenge; and calculation of personal risks and opportunity costs. Such factors almost surely play a role but are not prominent in the data. To be sure, some active participants and supporters of al-Qa'ida engage also in criminal activities, which can bring personal benefits. These, however, do not characterize what drives such public support as al-Qa'ida enjoys.

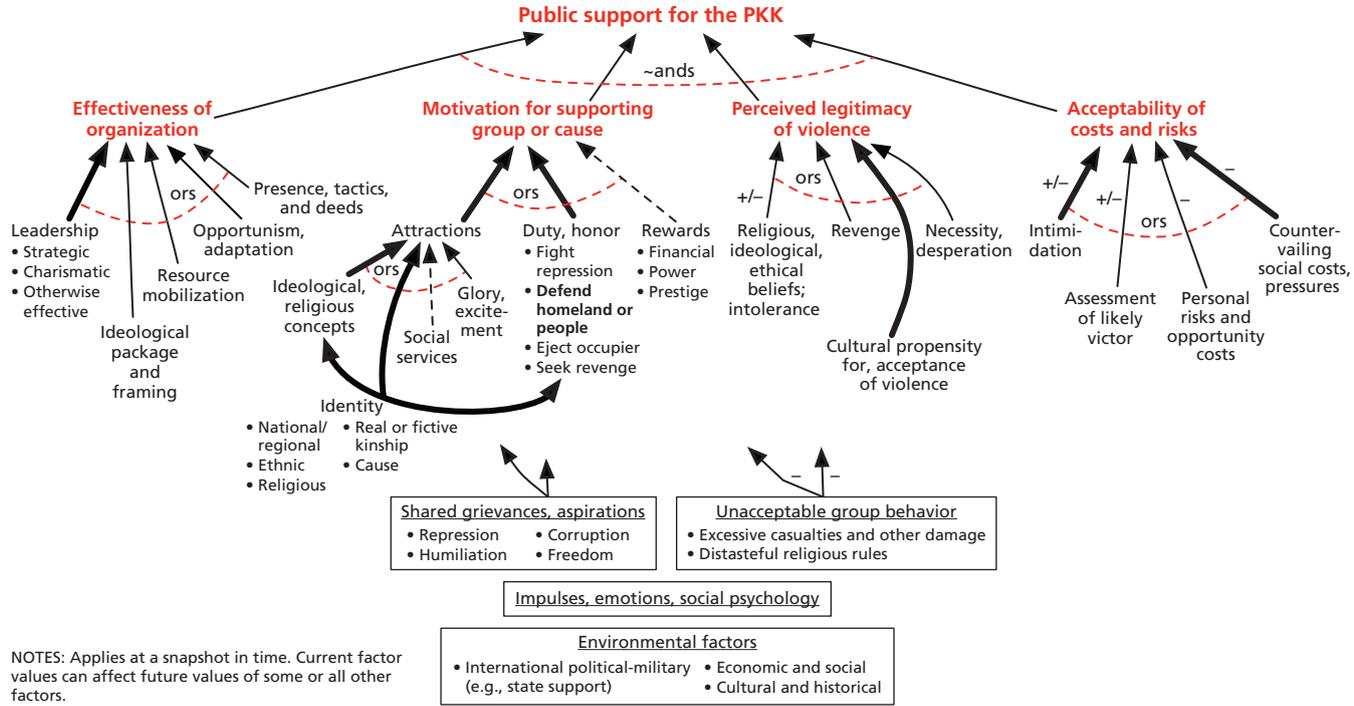
**The Taliban in Afghanistan.** The Taliban, although not a tightly unified organization, has also benefited from strong leadership, a narrative that taps into cultural points of reference, and adaptations in response to changing circumstances (see Figure S.3). A subset of the Afghan population supports the religiously extreme views of the Taliban. Another major factor in popular support is a broad sense of duty and honor in repelling the occupier (whether Alexander the Great, the Soviet Union, or the United States). Decades of nonstop violence in Afghanistan have also created a culture in which violence is part of the norm. Intimidation by the Taliban is an especially powerful factor, with “support” often being a matter of acquiescence to the less-bad option—cooperation with the side most present and most feared. And, finally, there is the strong sense of identity among Pashtuns, who live in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and distrust of what they see as a Tajik-dominated central government (even though President Karzai is a Pashtun). The cross-border bonds among Pashtuns are strong enough that many observers over the years have regretted failure, in the 19th century, to have drawn borders creating a separate Pashtunistan.

**The PKK in Turkey.** Public support for the PKK in Turkey (Figure S.4) has been motivated overwhelmingly by a sense of Kurdish identity and Abdullah Öcalan's charisma. Other notable factors include widespread intimidation by the PKK within portions of Kurdish Turkey, as well as various cultural aspects, such as acceptance of violence in the poorly developed Kurdish areas. Considerations such as revenge have also played a role at times. Legitimacy of violence arising from perceived necessity is another consideration, but with an unusual twist. For those who embrace Kurdish nationalism, the PKK was long a unique outlet, because in earlier years the PKK largely eliminated what might have been less violent competitors. The state of Turkey has become much more accommodating about Kurdish identity in recent

**Figure S.3**  
**Salient Factors in Public Support of the Taliban in Afghanistan**



**Figure S.4**  
**Salient Factors in Public Support for the PKK**



times, but support for the PKK continues. For those who become involved with the PKK, ideology is very important, but—aside from the core issue of Kurdish identity—the “ideology” has been inconsistent and incoherent over time, the product of a single individual who has played a dominant role despite having been in prison for more than a decade.

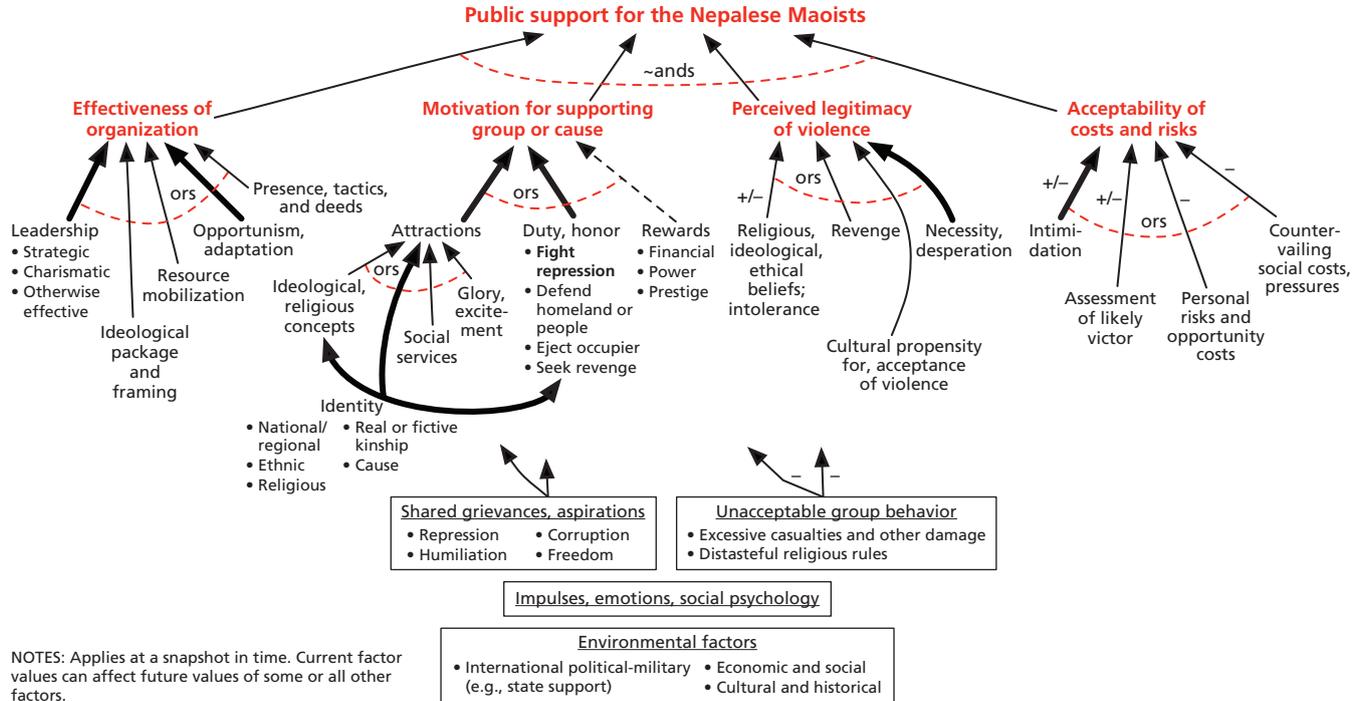
**The Maoists in Nepal.** The noteworthy factors in Nepal (Figure S.5) are different because the problems that led to the Maoist insurgency included government incompetence, corruption, inequality (e.g., separation by castes), and a vacuum of government at critical times. The movement has had a single leader from the beginning. Ideology has played a role (including Maoist thinking with strains of Marxist-Leninist thinking), but the most powerful strand has been that of a “people’s movement” in response to many grievances—i.e., the *cause* was more important than particular political ideological concepts. Despite their name, the self-described Maoists support a pluralistic republic, participate in elections, hold a substantial number of seats in parliament, and have struck compromises with other political actors. During the bloodiest period of the insurgency, however, they employed intimidation effectively, appealed to identification themes, and used other methods expected by social movement theory.

**Comparisons.** Table S.1 summarizes the differences across cases subjectively, in a manner consistent with the highlighting in Figures S.2–S.5. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 indicate, respectively, that the factors were seldom observed, were present, or were present and seemed to us noteworthy by virtue of unusualness or significance. All top-level factors are rated 2 (and not shown in the table) because all are seen as necessary. We also used 2’s where coding was uncertain, in part because data sources varied across our cases studies. Some factors were certainly significant even though we did not see them as noteworthy for purposes of discussion.

Table S.1 shows the results. The primary observations are as follows:

- Organizational effectiveness (the factors motivated by social movement theory) were noteworthy in all cases. *How* these fac-

**Figure S.5**  
**Salient Factors in Public Support for the Nepalese Maoists**



tors were triggered, however, varied across case, as indicated in Table S.2.

- Attractions, duty and honor, and intimidation were noteworthy in all cases.
- Identity was noteworthy in all cases, manifesting itself through both attractions and perceived legitimacy of violence.
- In these particular cases, public support seems *not* to have been strongly affected by purely personal motives, such as gaining great wealth, or by exogenous events.

Table S.2 elaborates on *how* factors that were triggered varied and uses the subfactors under “Effectiveness of the organization.”

**Leadership.** Charismatic leadership appears to have been more closely associated with the PKK, al-Qa’ida, and the Taliban than with the Nepalese Maoists (which has had effective although not especially charismatic leadership).

**Ideology and Framing.** Ideology of one sort or another was important in all cases: Salafi-jihadism for al-Qa’ida, nationalist hardline Deobandism for the Afghan Taliban, Kurdish nationalism and socialism for the PKK, and anti-feudalism and Maoism for the Nepalese insurgents. All groups, however, tended to pragmatism in accenting or downplaying aspects of ideology at various times depending on circumstances. This has been least so for al-Qa’ida, since its extremist religious ideology is so central to its identity. In its framing, al-Qa’ida has emphasized pan-Islamic global-Muslim-identity, religious duty, and grievances. Taliban support has primarily been based on Pashtun identity and Afghan nationalism with respect to outsiders. The PKK has focused on building support from within the Kurdish community. The Nepalese Maoists exploited state repression while differentiating among subpopulations (e.g., nationalists, ethnic and caste groups, women, and students), creating a “big tent” movement and providing a political framework for meeting various ethnic demands. In addition, al-Qa’ida and the PKK appear to have done more to use intellectuals in mobilizing support.

**Resource Mobilization.** The Taliban’s principal organizational resource appears to have been the hardline madrassas out of which the

**Table S.1**  
**Noteworthiness of Factors in the Case Studies**

Structure from Initial Factor Tree			Al-Qa'ida	The Taliban in Afghanistan	The PKK in Turkey	The Maoists in Nepal
Top-Level Factor	Second-Level Factor	Third-Level Factor				
Effectiveness of organization	Leadership		3	3	3	3
	Ideological package and framing		3	2	2	2
	Resource mobilization		3	2	2	2
	Opportunism and adaption		2	2	2	3
	Presence, tactics, and deeds		2	2	2	2
Motivation for support	Attractions		3	3	3	3
		Ideological, religious	3	3	2	2
		Identity	3	3	3	3
		Social services	1	2	1	1
		Glory, excitement	2	2	2	2
	Duty and honor		3	3	3	3
		Fight repression	2	2	2	3
		Defend homeland, people . . .	3	3	3	2
		Identity	3	3	3	3
	Rewards	Financial, power, prestige . . .	1	2	1	1

**Table S.1—Continued**

Structure from Initial Factor Tree			Al-Qa’ida	The Taliban in Afghanistan	The PKK in Turkey	The Maoists in Nepal
Top-Level Factor	Second-Level Factor	Third-Level Factor				
Perceived legitimacy of violence	Religious, ideological ethical (+/-)		3	3	2	2
	Intolerance		3	1	1	1
	Personal revenge		1	2	2	2
	Cultural propensity for violence		2	3	3	1
	Necessity or desperation		2	3	2	3
Acceptability of costs and risks	Intimidation (+/-)		3	3	3	3
	Assessment of likely victor (+/-)		3	3	2	2
	Personal risks, opportunity costs (-)		3	2	2	2
	Countervailing pressures (-)		3	2	3	2
“Global”	Shared grievances		2	2	2	3
	Unacceptable group behavior (-)		3	2	2	2
	Other (impulses, actions . . .)		2	2	2	2

NOTES: 1 = “not present”; 2 = “present”; 3 = “present and noteworthy.” Where coding was uncertain, 2 was used.

core of the organization arose, whereas al-Qa'ida, the PKK, and the Nepalese Maoists have built their organizations over time—sometimes incorporating the splinters of prior organizations.

**Adaptation to Political Opportunities.** Over the years, al-Qa'ida has exploited local political circumstances to gain safer havens for operation and shelter (e.g., in Pakistan and Yemen), but has exhibited no intent to negotiate or moderate on core matters. The Afghan Taliban has many different elements but is, at best, in the embryonic stages of negotiations with the Afghan national government. In contrast, both the PKK and Nepalese Maoists took a page from the socialist play-book in emphasizing political-front organizations to build mass support and position their organizations for elections. Somewhat uniquely, the Nepalese Maoists engaged in peace negotiations and were able to secure an election victory.

**Presence, Tactics, and Deeds.** Across all of the cases, violence against civilians (terrorism) sometimes resulted in growing disaffection. In the case of al-Qa'ida, the killing of fellow Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere appears to have diminished support, which has sometimes caused leadership to advise caution on such matters. The Taliban has sought to mute the impact of civilian deaths resulting from its actions by periodically releasing updated guidance on rules of engagement for its commanders. In the case of the Nepalese Maoists, the 2001 Royal Family Massacre created shock and bereavement among the Nepalese due to the public's strong affection for King Birendra, which necessitated a toning-down of demands for a republic. In the case of the PKK, intimidation and coercive violence have undercut some of its popularity, but the PKK has nonetheless ruthlessly used both to enforce discipline and build support within the Kurdish community.

## Implications for Strategy

Although our study was primarily focused on the interface between science and policy analysis, we also considered implications for strategy—working at the general level rather than for a specific context, such as Afghanistan. Our primary observations relate to “persuasive commu-

**Table S.2**  
**Case Comparison for Factors Motivated by Social Movement Theory**

Factor	Al-Qa'ida	Taliban	PKK	Nepalese Maoists
Leadership	Charisma, strategic thinking, and organizational talent	Charisma rooted in religious authority	Charisma of leader seen as at core of the movement	Effective leadership
Ideology	Religion as core element	Nationalism, religion, ethnic identity <sup>a</sup>	Kurdish nationalism with varied political concepts	The cause of overturning government to redress grievances
Framing	Muslim identity, grievances, religious duty, global jihad	Expulsion of occupier, identity, religious duty, preservation of traditions, restoration of sharia	Kurdish identity and grievances	Support of cause and need to fill vacuum of governance
Resource mobilization	Decentralization, effective unifying propaganda	Roots in madrasas, with later evolution	Developed over time	Developed over time
Dealing with political opportunities and constraints	Many adaptations, to extent permitted by core ideology	Tactical adaptations, reinvigoration	Numerous adaptations as Turkish government has evolved and Soviet socialism has lost sheen	Substantial adaptation leading to full participation in mainstream political processes
Presence, tactics, and deeds	High-visibility attacks as well as smaller ones; many have proved counterproductive	Daring attacks (e.g., to liberate prisoners) with consistent presence and intimidation	Small-scale attacks, intimidation, ubiquitous presence, political monopoly (in early years)	Helped topple government

<sup>a</sup> Portions of the Taliban are more religiously radicalized along Salafi-jihadi lines than others, and also more transnational in outlook due in part to al-Qa'ida influence.

nications” relating to aspects of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and influence operations.

### **Persuasive Communications**

It is a big step to move from the research conclusions above to recommendations on how to issue persuasive messages and otherwise influence attitudes. It is useful to keep several points in mind:

- “The public” consists of numerous discrete groups with different prior beliefs, psychologies, and circumstances. These are the battleground for competition as actors seek to recognize and influence the different target audiences—pushing hot buttons of some and avoiding hot buttons of others. *Each actor tries to affect all the relevant factors of our conceptual model.*
- The sources of influence include real-world events and actions, which often speak louder than words, but can affect segments of the public quite differently.
- Influences are received through a variety of channels (e.g., direct experiences, mass media, or personal networks). Receptivity to the information, and the way it is interpreted, depends heavily on details, such as how information is presented.

We concluded from our analysis that it is useful to think explicitly about three *levels* of strategy, which can be called macro, meso (faction-level), and micro.

**Macro Level.** The macro level of strategy can be seen as akin to a broad-spectrum antibiotic in enhancing a population’s overall resistance to insurgent and terrorist group appeals. Messages need to be informed by an understanding of real-world events and the larger framing contests between government and insurgent or terrorist groups; the frames and themes within the mass media and both social and personal networks; and the extent to which target populations are aware of, resonate with, and react to the various events, actions, and messages.

Many of these matters can be monitored and analyzed. For example, content analysis, citation analysis, and network analysis can be integrated to map the public and private discourse of an insurgent or

terrorist group, as well as the commentary of critics. Analysis can provide insights into the changing level of intra-movement contention, specific wedge issues and fault lines, the leading voices associated with competing positions, and vulnerabilities to external criticism. Most publicly available polls, however, do not have the richness necessary for this purpose. More could be done to connect survey and focus-group efforts with theory.

Many generic options exist for reducing macro-level support for an insurgent or terrorist group. These include weakening the resonance of the group's narrative, exploiting or disrupting its propaganda networks, exploiting or creating divisions, and strengthening the resonance of counter-narratives.

**The Meso Level of Factions.** The meso level concentrates on the various factions, stakeholder, and subpopulation groups engaged in framing contests. Each has its own preferences on both proximate and underlying issues (e.g., whether to support the insurgents and whether the final power structure should be centralized or decentralized). Each has its own political, economic, and/or military capabilities. The eventual outcome will frequently be achieved when one side accumulates the cooperation of enough factions and segments to tilt the balance. As a result, understanding relationships among factions is crucial to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, as is being able to anticipate what is feasible.

Fortunately, there exists a class of models, called agent-based rational choice stakeholder models, which have been used for about 25 years to simulate the bargaining and other interactions among stakeholders and to forecast outcomes of insurgencies and many other issues. The models have been surprisingly good at this, with moderate data requirements that can be provided by subject-matter experts. Recent developments (including at RAND) have broadened the power of these methods.

**Micro Level.** If macro-level actions are like broad-spectrum antibiotics, then we also need micro options for special strains of "disease" (e.g., influence of special issues on special segments of the public). Corresponding options require additional knowledge, such as the ability to detect and interrupt the pipelines, networks, and processes that radi-

calize and mobilize individuals. This has been seen as in the domains of intelligence and law enforcement.

In addition to traditional security activities, a number of other micro-level actions could be fruitful. These would operate “left of the boom,” preemptively addressing potential problems rather than reacting to actions, such as terrorist attacks. As radicalization and recruitment are most likely to take place at the fringes of at-risk communities, the most interesting opportunities may lie in community-based efforts to strengthen resistance to extremist appeals, and improving detection of radicalizing individuals or cells. Community policing, for example, can increase the willingness of the community to assist police in identifying at-risk individuals, members of insurgent or terrorist recruitment networks, and radical voices. More broadly, community outreach can provide training, tools, and resources to combat extremism at a local level. Engagement with local religious, business, and other community leaders can improve a community’s ability to police itself and steer at-risk individuals away from harm. Community-based programs led by former insurgents or terrorists can, as with anti-gang programs, help to divert youth away from an extremist path; events featuring credible voices, such as former adherents, popular athletes, or musicians, can help to draw youth into these programs. Intervention programs—supported by law enforcement—can help protect members of the community against predation by insurgent and terrorist groups. Although we could discuss such matters in this monograph only briefly, evidence is accumulating on the effects of community-based outreach methods, and also about outreach methods in prisons.

A problem, of course, is that *doing something* along these lines calls for whole-of-government(s) activities (not just effort by defense and intelligence agencies), especially since so much intervention must occur at the state and local level, and most of it in foreign countries. In many cases, the current governments would have little credibility in related efforts.

### **Suggestions for Applied Analysis of Strategy in a Context**

Finally, we offer some summary suggestions about counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies. For the given context in which a

commander or civilian policymaker is developing strategy, we suggest the following:

1. Review the applicable “whole of government” strategy to have it firmly in mind, seeing the public-support issue as part of that much larger context. Coordinate accordingly.
2. Identify the entities in competition (e.g., internal factions, government, alliance assisting in counterinsurgency, other foreign governments).
3. Characterize the insurgent’s strategy, in part by characterizing how it addresses each of the elements of organizational effectiveness identified by the social-movement-theory portion of this study.
4. Develop specialized factor trees for each subpopulation so as to appreciate where potential actions could have both intended and counterproductive effects, depending on subpopulation and targeting. Plan efforts accordingly.
5. Focus on possible actions that are feasible, for which there can be congruence between reality and messages, and for which bad side effects (also called second- and third-order effects) are either unlikely or subject to mitigation.
6. Observe, assess, and adapt—reinforcing successes and adjusting where actions prove ineffective or counterproductive.