

INSURGENCY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR STRATEGIC OFFENCE:  
A CENTURY OF PASHTUN HISTORY.

(ABSTRACT OF ARGUMENTS PUBLISHED ON WWW.CLEMMESSEN.ORG)



... and so what? ...

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This can only be a very short introduction to the arguments of an article so far only published in full length of my webpage [www.clemmesen.org](http://www.clemmesen.org).

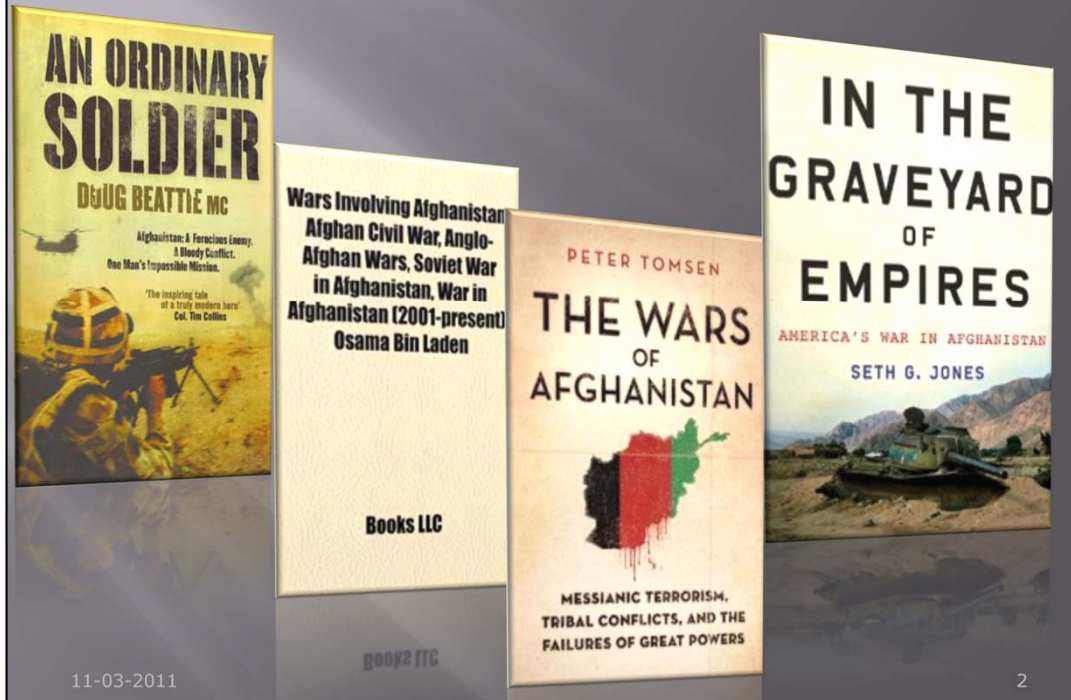
The point I make in the paper is that *the widespread popular – and governmental - understanding is basically faulty*. Its foundation is a simple stereotypic picture of the Pathan or Pashtun, devoid of any basis in historical or other evidence except at the level of the home based Western journalist. This has led to a tunnelvision that ignores the interest and policies that have fed and the developing disaster for the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, for the rest of the Afghan and Pakistani peoples, and potentially for the rest of the world.

Most of the roots of our present trouble rest on a combination of views locked in stereotypes and failure to perceive and accept the character of the global rebellion that John Mackinlay talks about today. It applies both to what happens in the area covered by this presentation and the event these days in the Maghreb and Middle

East.

I have learned lately that any new and revisionist presentation of history is irrelevant if the historian cannot answer the question: So what? I shall do so at the end.

## The supreme, incorrigible, noble savage



To illustrate the common understanding of the roots of the problem you only need to pick a random sample of the latest books about the conflict in an Amazon literature search. Let me do it for you, making a pick of six different titles:

1. *"An Ordinary Soldier: Afghanistan: A Ferocious Enemy. A Bloody Conflict. One Man's Impossible Mission"*
2. *"Wars Involving Afghanistan, Wars Involving Afghanistan: Afghan Civil War, Anglo-Afghan Wars, Soviet War in Afghanistan, Afghan Civil War, Anglo-Afghan Wars"*
3. *"Afghanistan: Land of Conflict and Beauty: A History of Conflict"*
4. *"Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban"*
5. *"In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan"*
6. *"The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers"*

The understanding of the problem presented by the titles is *firstly*

*the almost complete focus on Afghanistan within its international borders and secondly, implicitly, that any attempt to civilise and pacify the Afghans is doomed to failure.* It has been tried in vain before by so many empires. Without making this clear, the reason for failure is understood to be the character of the average Pashtun man. He is presented and respected as the supreme, incorrigible, noble savage: an unalterably wild, primitive, independent minded, automatically xenophobic, conservative, fanatically religious warrior - somebody fundamentally different from us. The difference makes a civilising project both futile and arrogant. The view is legitimised and confirmed by uncritical use of the British experiences of 1842 and 1878 to state that nothing has changed.

The only problem with this picture is that it contradicts

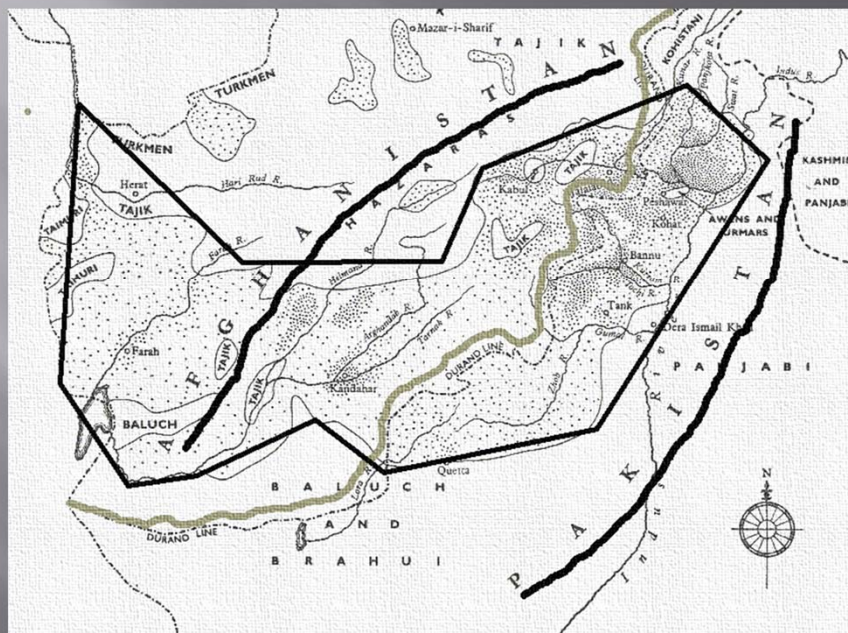
- The historical evidence from British administrators involved in the development of the tribal areas in the Interwar Period
- The current evidence of soldiers and reconstructions workers on the ground, and
- The scrutiny of the best contemporary analysts: outsiders like David Loyn as well as insiders like Ahmed Rashid and Imtiaz Gul.

According to all credible evidence there is nothing that indicates that the tribal Pashtun in Afghanistan and Pakistan are fundamentally different from the majority of other humans that seek improved opportunities for their children, better healthcare, improved infrastructure, better opportunities for employment and fair and just treatment from the local representatives of the rulers. At the same time as they combine their aspirations with a sound, sceptical, "*conservative*", attitude to change and with a natural wish to be able to influence local development.

The only likely difference is that Pashtun experience with local and central rulers will tend to make them both rightly extra sceptical and grateful for even small convincing and stable improvements.

Rejecting this superficially convincing understanding of the situation, I shall move on to my correction.

## The Pashtun Core Land



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The map on the slide shows the main Pashtun areas in both Afghanistan and Pakistan with the black dots indicating the population density. The grey line is placed north of the Durand line border, the two black ones the ambitious limits of the "Pashtoonistan" vision.

Outside the map area we have large concentrations of Pashtuns in the big Pakistani cities.

From there onwards in the Middle East, Europe, North America and Australia clusters of Pashtuns as partly separate groups in the Pakistani diaspora.

1. This border zone was never really controlled by any empire or regional ruler. Neither by the Sikhs, the British, the Russians, the Soviets nor the weak Pakistani governments. None of them ever tried in a serious – and thus patient - way to control and integrate the land by the development of the area's economy and by covering it by a fair and effective administration of resources and law.
2. Therefore its population never saw any real, lasting benefits of modernisation. Until 1973 the wise Afghani king had promoted

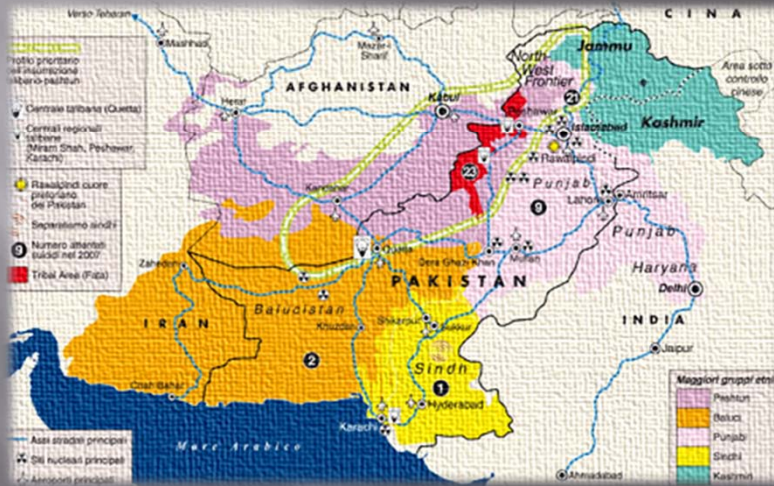
gradual reforms, but they came too slowly to satisfy the impatient, arrogant and increasingly brutal intellectuals educated in the West or the Soviet Union. From the mid-1970's the development in the Pashtun core areas pushed by Kabul was made unacceptable in its impatience and arrogance. What little economic investment that came from Islamabad to the Pakistani Pashtun areas was guided by the military rulers' needs to buy support with privileges.

3. The resulting pitiless survival economy led to the waves of large scale emigration to Pakistan's big cities and onwards towards the West in search for jobs and a future already mentioned.
4. The desperate situation in the tribal areas on both sides of the Durand Line has led to a century of deliberate use of the hopeless conditions by regional and outside powers for their strategic purposes.
5. Such active use by outsiders of a population from a depressed and basically lawless area creates nearly impossible problems for the World. Even when nobody else drives and supports the mayhem, the international community finds it exceedingly difficult dealing effectively with the political, legal and military complications of having large, unhappy, dynamic ethnic groups – de facto nations - like the Pashtuns and Kurds divided by borders between formally sovereign states.



## Cradle of Offensive Regional Insurgency

*“... In your cutting away from me these frontier tribes, who are people of my nationality and my religion, you will injure my prestige in the eyes of my subjects, and will make me weak and my weakness is injurious to your Government.”*



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The quotation is the Afghan Emir's warning against the negative effects of the planned Durand Line border

The combination of lack of control and development created and kept alive a cradle for regional mayhem that could be used by those powers with influence among the Pashtuns.

The map shows the Pashtun border zone dominating Afghanistan, overlapping with the "Azad Kashmir" part of Kashmir and Jammu State, hovering over the Pakistani Punjabi Core Land (and the Pakistani nuclear facilities) and indirectly influencing Sindh through the large diaspora in Karachi.

## Cradle of Offensive Regional Insurgency Whole Pashtun Border Zone 1880–1908



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Firstly by the British as a potential guerrilla against a Russian forward move.



Cradle of Offensive Regional Insurgency  
Afghanistan and FATA into North-West  
Frontier Province 1896-97 and 1908



*"Nothing is ever forgotten, and very few debts are left unpaid ... The life of the Pathan is thus full of interest ..."*

Winston Churchill in 'My Early Life'

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Secondly by the Emir against the British, employing religious activism then (1897) as later when pressed (1908) or tempted (1919).

## Cradle of Offensive Regional Insurgency Afghanistan into British India 1914-18

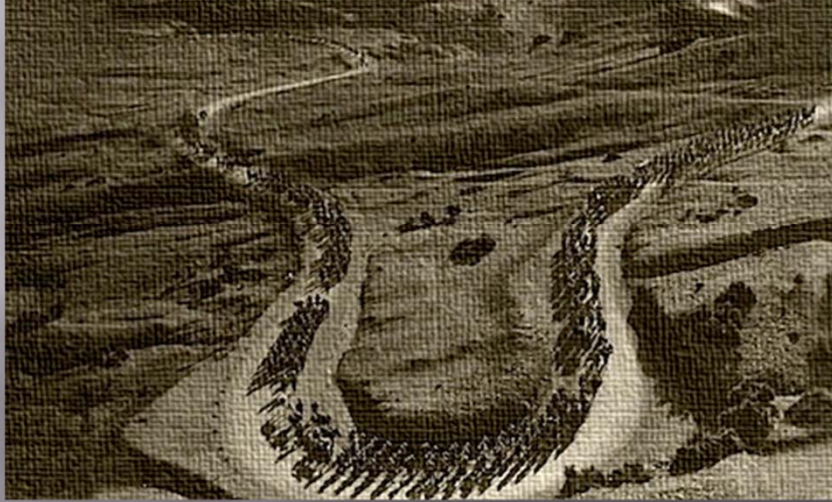


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Thirdly by the Germans trying - without success – to use the Jihad declared by Turkey in World War I in an attempt to destabilise British India from Afghanistan.

## Cradle of Offensive Regional Insurgency Afghanistan and FATA into North-West Frontier Province 1919-20 and 1936-1939



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Then again by first the Emir in 1919-20 and thereafter also by the Indian Congress Party against British control.

## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency FATA into Kashmir 1947



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Fifthly by the Pakistanis in a failed coup attempt to gain full control of Kashmir.



## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency Afghanistan into Northern and Western Pakistan 1973-75



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Thereafter again from 1973 by the leader Mohammed Daoud of the new republican Afghanistan against a Pakistan divided and weakened after the defeat and loss of East Pakistan in 1971 to legitimise his hold on power.

## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency FATA and Northern Baluchistan into Afghanistan 1979-88



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Thereafter by the Pakistani military leaders with massive U.S. and Saudi support against the Soviet invaders, a support that the Pakistani military challenged in a way that supported its control.

The Pakistani Army leadership consolidated its domestic hold on power by a deliberate alliance with the radical Islamic forces in Pakistan and among the Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line.



## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency FATA and Northern Baluchistan into Afghanistan 1992-96



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Seventhly – after the withdrawal of Soviets - the Pakistani security elite employed the now available resources to seek a subservient regime in Kabul for the “Great Game” against India, an effort that succeeded with the Taliban victory of 1996.

## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency FATA into Kashmir 1987-2004



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Thereafter the same Pakistani security elite used the training bases in the Pashtun Borderland to develop and support of the insurgency in Kashmir that culminated in the open war between the two nuclear powers in upper Kashmir in 1999.

## Base for Offensive Regional Insurgency FATA and Northern Baluchistan into Afghanistan 2002–2011



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After 2001 the same group of Pakistani officials continued the same “Great Game” - in parallel with and actually undermining their country’s official support for U.S. and other Western operations to pacify and rebuild Afghanistan.

Now they opportunistically exploited the additional insurgency centre in the Taliban core area around Quetta to keep Helmand and Kandahar destabilised.

On top of these externally inspired and supported insurgencies we have seen independent Pashtun rebellions from the Border Zone, often centred on Waziristan, operations that have employed the donated tools for their own purposes:

- Against the British in the 1930’s.
- Against the other Afghani groupings in the Afghan Civil War in the 1990’s.
- Against the Government of Pakistan now, temporarily weakened by the floods.

## Autonomous Base for Regional Insurgency Whole of Pakistan 2007–2011



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Nothing really changed until a couple of years back when the Islamic insurgency turned against part of their Pakistani elite supporters and Western interests in the large cities, where terrorist cells could operate from their “emigrant” labour Pashtun communities. The centre of the insurgency now shifting to the Pakistani Core in Punjab, but with the Western focus on getting out of Afghanistan, this must deliberately be ignored.



## Nourishing a Pakistani Base for a Global Insurgency?



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London 2005, Mombay 2008

## Another story – so what?



- The West never had a chance to succeed in its objectives in Afghanistan, because ignoring the total problem, it never sought a strategy, it only adjusted organisation and inter-agency doctrine within its peace-time modi operandi a little to improve attacking symptoms.
- The little Dutch boy learned to run a little faster to plug the holes in the dike and to ignore the rising sea.

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Danish troops and the suicide bomb attack against the Islamabad Embassy