

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN VIETNAM, AFGHANISTAN, AND IRAQ:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE CAPSTONE

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Counterinsurgency, in theory and practice, has been a popular topic in the defense community for the past several years. Historians like Mark Moyar and Andrew Krepinevich, Jr. have spent their careers writing about counterinsurgency operations during the Vietnam War, and advocating and promoting specific interpretations based on the lessons learned during that conflict to the Global War on Terror. The recent revival of counterinsurgency strategy and tactics has raised a number of significant questions. For example, under what circumstances should counterinsurgency operations be conducted? Should counter-guerilla operations have a permanent place in the training of the United States military? Are counterinsurgency operations ethical? This paper will seek to define counterinsurgency, and to analyze the application of counterinsurgency to the modern battlefield.

PREFACE

This capstone project is the culmination, not just of my time at Rutgers as a graduate student, but also of my adult education. I have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since September 11th, 2011. I read some of the works listed in the bibliography of this Capstone Project while mobilizing through Fort Bliss, Texas; I read some in my downtime at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. I read while waiting for flights into and out of Balad, Iraq, and Ali Al Salim in Kuwait. My copy of Thomas Ricks' *Fiasco* is stained with rainwater that was leaking in to the "break room" of the checkpoint I was working when I read it on lunch breaks.

I have seen the efforts of the United States Military result in many good things. I have also seen wasted effort and resources.

As a Noncommissioned Officer in the New Jersey Army National Guard and the United States Army, my function is to execute the orders of the officers appointed over me. My military education and my counterinsurgency training as an enlisted person stressed interaction with the local population and basic language skills. I had the distinct privilege of working with partners from the Department of State, the US Agency for International Development, and the

United States Army Judge Advocate General Corps. I also worked with many Afghan attorneys on rule of law initiatives. I got to see the Commander's Emergency Response Program in action, and to literally use Money as a Weapon System. This Capstone project is too brief to reflect all of those experiences; it is also a great privilege for a junior noncommissioned officer to have had the opportunity to work in the Graduate Liberal Studies program.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my wife, Alison, and my sons, Lucis and Jacob. They provided the motivation and inspiration for completing this work.

Ali, another step is done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Counterinsurgency in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq: A
Critical Analysis

Introduction.....	1
Counterinsurgency Defined.....	2
Counterinsurgency in Modern Conflicts.....	14
Counter-Counterinsurgency.....	22
Analysis.....	37
Conclusion.....	39
Bibliography.....	42

Counterinsurgency in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq: A Critical Analysis

"The US Army's Organizational culture, for example, led it only haltingly and grudgingly to implement President John F. Kennedy's instructions to focus on counterinsurgency in the early 1960s."

--John A. Nagl, Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife

Introduction

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror, counterinsurgency has been a prominent topic among defense officials, both civilian and military. After the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, uprisings brought the country to the brink of civil war, renewing interest in the subject of counter-guerilla warfare. For many years after the Vietnam War, the topic of counterinsurgency was neglected, with many military officers and defense executives avoiding the issue, instead focusing on major set piece engagements. Counterinsurgency has never been a comfortable topic for the United States military; when instructed to train in counter-guerilla tactics prior to the commitment of American service members to Vietnam, the Army in particular avoided developing an understanding of small wars, choosing instead to focus on air mobility. When counterinsurgency became a focus during the wars in

Iraq and Afghanistan, American defense officials initially rejected the idea that US forces were engaged in efforts to counter the activities of rebels; however, under the leadership of such students of counterinsurgency as General David Petraeus, the military eventually embraced the concept. The purpose of this paper is to examine counterinsurgency doctrine and to analyze its application to the modern battlefield. The paper seeks to answer several questions, such as: When is it appropriate to engage in counterinsurgency operations? Are counterinsurgency tactics relevant or applicable during military operations where war has not been declared? The answer to these questions, as will be illustrated below, is that counterinsurgency is not an appropriate activity for the United States military, as population-centric COIN is non-kinetic and creates a number of philosophical dilemmas.

Counterinsurgency Defined

In order to fully understand counterinsurgency, it must first be defined. The modern definition of counterinsurgency, included in the Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency), is borrowed from Joint Publication 1-02; counterinsurgency is defined as "Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to

defeat insurgency."¹ The Army's understanding of counterinsurgency warfare has evolved since the Vietnam War. Modern counterinsurgency theorists such as General (Retired) David Petraeus were heavily influenced by the thoughts of one author in particular. David Galula, a Lieutenant Colonel in the French army, wrote extensively on the topic after serving in North Africa, Italy, and France in World War II. Galula sought to create a set of guidelines for understanding insurgency and conducting counterinsurgency operations.

According to Galula, insurgencies are essentially a part of revolutionary warfare, which the author defines as "primarily an internal conflict, although external influences seldom fail to bear upon it."² The goals of insurgencies are fundamentally political - the conflict results from the action of the insurgent aiming to seize power - or at splitting off from the existing country... and from the counterinsurgent aiming to keep his power.³

Galula defines an insurgency as "a protracted struggle, conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the

¹ *Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Army, 2006), Glossary-5.

² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 1.

³ Ibid.

overthrow of the existing order."⁴ All of the momentum is with the insurgent; "Since the insurgent alone can initiate the conflict... strategic initiative is his by definition."⁵ Insurgencies are slow due to the initial lack of resources by the insurgent.

The protracted nature of a revolutionary war does not result from a design by either side; it is imposed on the insurgent by his initial weakness.⁶

Like Nagl, below, Galula cites Carl von Clausewitz and Mao Tse Tung regarding theory. He discusses multiple 20th century insurgencies, including Vietnam.

Other counterinsurgency experts build on Galula's definition. In his book *The Army and Vietnam*, Andrew Krepinevich, Jr., adopts Galula's definition, breaking insurgencies down into three phases: contention, equilibrium, and counteroffensive. Phase I centers around "the creation of a party,"⁷ during phase II "the insurgent expands his base of support,"⁸ and in phase III, the insurgency begins "open warfare with government troops."⁹ Krepinevich argues that, when ordered by the President to prepare for counterinsurgency operations, the leadership of

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (JHU Press, 2009), 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 8.

the United States Army failed, if not refused, to do so. As the situation in Vietnam escalated, the Army continued unsuccessfully to try to make counterinsurgency operations fit into the framework of "the Army Concept."¹⁰ Krepinevich, an officer himself, sets up the framework of his argument in the first chapter. The author defines insurgency and establishes the circumstances surrounding an insurgency; he then develops the proper way to conduct counterinsurgency operations. Krepinevich then defines the "Army Concept," the theory by which the Army achieved victory in World War II and Korea, but which was incompatible with counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam. The main problem faced by the Army was that it attempted to engage in a conventional war; according to Krepinevich:

Should government forces attempt to defeat the insurgency through the destruction of guerilla forces in quasi-conventional battles, they will play into the hands of the insurgent forces.¹¹

Thus the Army's focus on "finding, fixing, fighting, and finishing"¹² the enemy was not applicable in counterinsurgency warfare. The correct thing for the counterinsurgent to do is to establish the legitimacy of the government.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 11

¹² Ibid., 57.

As a result of these circumstances, the conventional forces of the government's army must be reoriented away from destroying enemy forces toward asserting government control over the population and winning its support.¹³

The government must secure and protect the population, not focus on destroying the insurgent forces.

Upon taking office, President Kennedy took an interest in preparing the Army for low-intensity conflict. He directed his staff to make adequate preparations. The Army War College and the Command and General Staff College failed to adequately incorporate counterinsurgency operations into their curriculums, as did the lower level schools for junior officers. Krepinevich points out that some senior officers seemed to have no understanding of what defined successful counterinsurgency operations, opting instead to attempt to fight guerillas with tanks or artillery. The non-kinetic nature of counterinsurgency operations was in direct opposition to the Army Concept. The Army fought against the establishment of the Special Forces and the leadership in Vietnam worked against the Combined Action Platoons; when they began to perform successfully in Vietnam, the commander reoriented them from the counterinsurgency mission and put them into fruitless offensive operations, attempting to create a kinetic battle

¹³ Ibid.

space from a non-kinetic, COIN environment.

After his experience as an armor officer during the first gulf war, as part of which he directly engaged in kinetic operations, Former Army Officer John Nagl began to study counterinsurgency in depth. His work focused on the Malayan insurgency, where the British army engaged in COIN operations, and contrasted the success of the British army with the failure of the US Army in Vietnam. Nagl examined the theories of Clausewitz in terms of people's wars in his book *Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. Clausewitz' *On War* is described as "important for our purposes both because it places guerilla warfare in the context of conventional warfare and because it has exerted considerable influence on Western armies attempting to defeat insurgency."¹⁴ Clausewitz believed that war was an alternative way of conducting political business; "Armies acted as the instruments of state power for national leaders who often personally led them into battle."¹⁵ Jomini wrote of strategy in his book *A Summary of the Art of War*; he stressed the importance of set-piece battles and total

¹⁴ John A. Nagl, *Learning to eat soup with a knife: counterinsurgency lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

defeat of an enemy: "it maintained his emphasis on scientific principles of warfare and on massive battles of annihilation."¹⁶ This principle of annihilation is what separates Jomini from Clausewitz. Nagl points out that Clausewitz addresses the issue of small wars, though not realizing that insurgency would become "a strategically offensive form of warfare in its own right";¹⁷ Jomini's idea of "annihilation of the enemy's forces" is inapplicable to counterinsurgency. These principles are incompatible, as if the counterinsurgent focuses on finding, fixing, fighting, and finishing the insurgents, he is unable to achieve the non-kinetic goal of securing and protecting the population.

Nagl moves from a discussion of Clausewitz and Jomini to a discussion of Mao Tse-Tung, whose leadership was responsible for the success of the communist revolution in China. Mao utilized the Chinese people's historical memory and political symbols to mobilize them into support for the communist party.

The Chinese Communist Party took advantage of the corruption and inefficiency of the government to recruit the proletariat for membership in the trade unions.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

Mao was able to mobilize the people against the nationalists, and later, against the Japanese; "The people in and of themselves were the greatest weapon the Communists possessed."¹⁹ Mao's insurgents were governed by three rules and eight remarks; the conduct of Mao's communists worked to endear them to the people more than the nationalists. The Nationalist Government was unable to secure the population and protect them from the influence of the Chinese Communists.

Counterinsurgency Leadership

The issue of how to properly lead counterinsurgency operations has become a prominent topic in the military and diplomatic communities in recent years. Mark Moyar recently analyzed the military's response to the counterinsurgent environment in his book *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*; he perceives the issue with the US response to insurgency to be one of leadership, not of doctrine; Moyar believes that it takes a certain type of military leader to successfully conduct counterinsurgency warfare. The initial failures of the political leadership of the United States, the Department of Defense, and the Army leadership to recognize and address the rise of the insurgency in Iraq were the

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

results of failures in leadership. The characteristics of a counterinsurgency leader in the field are the subject of Moyar's work.

In the first chapter of *A Question of Command*, Moyar elaborates upon the characteristics a counterinsurgency leader needs in order to succeed. He discusses the idea of "Leader-Centric Warfare,"²⁰ breaking down the key attributes of a counterinsurgency leader to ten fundamental characteristics. In order to deal effectively with insurgencies, the services need to expand upon their traditional values; the successful counterinsurgency leader needs to posses initiative, flexibility, creativity, judgment, empathy, charisma, sociability, dedication, integrity, and organization. Initiative, in this context, is a two-part trait, "the ability to act without specific guidance"²¹ and "the propensity to act energetically and aggressively."²² Creativity is necessary when "counterinsurgents regularly encounter new problems of such diversity and unpredictability as to render them immune to textbook solutions."²³ Each unique situation calls for its

²⁰ Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 3.

²¹ Ibid., 8.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 9.

own solution; the counterinsurgent leader cannot refer back to a textbook for answers. Likewise, the counterinsurgent leader cannot lead from behind a desk. In this context, expanding the Army's counterinsurgency doctrine was not an adequate solution to the situations on the battlefield.

Judgment "enables commanders to discern which methods and actions will work against the particular insurgents they face."²⁴ Empathy "enables leaders to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of others,"²⁵ allowing them to anticipate the consequences of a situation. Charisma and sociability come into play when leading soldiers or civilian personnel, and in dealing with local national leaders and civilians. Charisma, or the lack thereof, can make working with other agencies and branches difficult. Further, the counterinsurgent leader must be sociable; in the context of today's battlefield, the local national populations do business much more slowly than westerners. When dealing with Iraqis or Afghans, the counterinsurgent leader should be prepared to drink plenty of tea.²⁶

Dedication and integrity, both traditional military values, come into play when dealing with the long hours, hazards, and hard work encompassed by counterinsurgency

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 10.

²⁶ Ibid., 10.

leadership. Long hours go into planning events and programs, some of which might end with disappointing results. Integrity is an issue when dealing with the large quantities of emergency aid and funding available to the counterinsurgency leader. Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds, Operation and Maintenance (O & M) funds, Field Operating Officer (FOO) funds, and all of the other fiscal resources available can tempt the counterinsurgent leader, even at the lowest echelons.

Moyar then proceeds to analyze several examples of counterinsurgency, beginning with the civil war, finishing with the Iraq campaign. *A Question of Command* reaches beyond analyzing the tactics of the campaigns it examines, focusing also on the personalities of commanders both successful and unsuccessful. The author addresses both successful and unsuccessful leaders; with both, he analyzes their successes and failures to determine why they achieved or did not achieve their stated objectives. Figures that are currently prominent in the CENTCOM theater of operations appear: General Mattis, General David Petraeus, and General Casey are discussed; their tactics and strategies are addressed as well.

In his conclusion, "How to Win", Moyar revisits the qualities necessary in counterinsurgency leaders in order

for them to be successful. He then makes suggestions on how the military can find the personality types that prove most successful in counterinsurgency commands. Using the standard Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, one can identify the types of personalities best suited for counterinsurgent leadership. The two types best suited, according to Moyar, are the INTJ (nicknamed Mastermind) and ENTJ (Field Marshal) types, supplemented by INTP (Architect) and ENTP (Inventor) types.²⁷ Highly structured and regimented organizations like the military services tend to attract more "sensing-judging" personality types, like INTJ (Inspector) and ESTJ (Supervisor).²⁸ Whereas these personality types might be ideal for leaders on the conventional battlefield, the counterrevolutionary operational environment calls for a more complex type of leader. This argument is supported by theorists like Nagl, Krepinevich, and Peter Mansoor, who claim that counterinsurgency operations are the "graduate level of warfare," but refuted by theorists like Douglas Porch and military officers such as Gian Gentile. These authors argue that population-centric counterinsurgency operations are, at best, a return to colonialism and its tactics of

²⁷ Ibid., 263.

²⁸ Ibid.

maintaining control of the population, or, at worst, an unnecessary, non-kinetic distraction that weakens the military's ability to annihilate the enemy.

Counterinsurgency in Modern Conflicts

The victory on the conventional battlefield in Iraq was swift and by the book. Technology, followed by a fast invasion by ground troops, quickly toppled the existing regime. The war in Iraq was not supposed to descend into counterinsurgency warfare. The administration of President George W. Bush anticipated a swift victory, followed by a swift exit after the Saddam Hussein regime was replaced. The counterinsurgency war and the surge have been extensively debated since the war began; proponents of COIN argue that the leadership of General Petraeus and the surge of American troops into Iraq contributed to the eventual reduction in violence, while critics claim that Petraeus broke the Army, reducing conventional combat arms branches to irrelevance and leaving the military unprepared for a future conventional war.

Recently, a number of books have been published which detail the development of the counterinsurgency doctrine and the implementation of the counterinsurgency strategy in the Global War on Terror. In his book *The Insurgents*, Fred Kaplan details how General David Petraeus and several of

his colleagues rewrote the Army Field Manual on Counterinsurgency, implemented the 2007 troop surge in Iraq, and tried a similar strategy in Afghanistan in 2010.

The author details the careers of several of the leading minds in the field of counterinsurgency. Petraeus' career is examined in detail; John Nagl also appears as a key player. Kaplan begins his narrative during the Gulf War, when it occurs to Nagl that the key instruments of future wars will not be tanks, but light infantrymen engaged in small wars. The author also demonstrates Petraeus' evolution into a counterinsurgency general; through the influence of General John Galvin, who Petraeus served as aide-de-camp, and through his reading of Galula and several other counterinsurgency experts, Petraeus anticipated the insurgency in Iraq and mentally prepared a strategy he believed would lead to victory. Particularly interesting is Kaplan's insight into General Raymond Odierno; Odierno began his involvement in the Iraq war using conventional tactics, and suffering losses for his efforts. He eventually became involved with the key minds producing counterinsurgency and became an integral part of the troop surge. The involvement of many other familiar theorists is documented; Andrew Krepinevich, Jr.'s hand is seen in the formulation of counterinsurgency doctrine.

Kaplan's narrative begins long before the first shots were fired in Iraq or Afghanistan. He discusses the Army's pre-Iraq treatment of small wars, first referring to them as low-intensity conflicts, then as Military Operations Other Than War, or "MOOTWAH," derisively pronounced "Moot-wah." He also discusses the technological developments on the battlefield that brought the conventional phase of the Iraq war to such a swift close, including the JDAM, or Joint Direct Attack Munition.

One JDAM cost just \$20,000, less than one tenth the price (of the older laser guided munitions). Finally, the JDAM was a kit, consisting of a GPS receiver and other electronic gear, which could be attached to the tail of almost any bomb in the US military's inventory.²⁹

These types of advances in military technology led theorists to believe that the size of an invasion could be drastically reduced as the invasion would rely much more on technology than on infantry tactics. As a related topic, Kaplan also discusses the military concept of AirLand Battle, first addressed in the mid-80s revision of the Army's field manual on operations.³⁰ In this revision, Colonel Huba Wass de Czege "stressed the importance of

²⁹ Fred Kaplan, *The insurgents: David Petraeus and the plot to change the American way of war* (Simon and Schuster, 2014), 54.

³⁰ Ibid., 57.

surprise, shock, and maneuver on the battlefield.”³¹ The army continued to focus on kinetic operation, using joint means to find, fix, fight, and finish the enemy. The author stresses that these concepts contributed significantly to the conventional victory in Iraq, but that the military had no plan for what is referred to as Phase IV: post conflict operations.³²

Kaplan is among those historians who celebrate Petraeus’ success in Mosul after the initial invasion of Iraq; “From his experiences and studies over the years, Petraeus knew what had to be done.”³³ Petraeus’ early education and career, to include his exposure to General Marcel Bigeard and *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* by David Galula, are the topic of the second chapter of Kaplan’s book. Kaplan also writes extensively of General George Casey’s command of the forces in Iraq; Casey is portrayed as a bumbling yes-man shackled to doctrine and unable to think beyond the orders of his equally incompetent superiors.

Kaplan writes about counterinsurgency without the overtones that permeate much of the recent criticism; his book does not explicitly support the Army’s move towards

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 71.

³³ Ibid., 72.

counterinsurgency, and he does not venerate Petraeus in the way that many other authors do. However, his book is not anti-counterinsurgency, either; Kaplan is fair in his portrayal of the war in the years leading up to and during the publication of the counterinsurgency field manual and the surge. Kaplan provides a narrative for the period without the harsh criticism of Porch or the praise given by Moyar.

Another recent history, *Surge* by career Army officer and historian Peter Mansoor, makes the argument that the improvement of combat conditions in Iraq in 2007 and 2008 was a direct result of the leadership of General David Petraeus, his adoption of counterinsurgency strategy, and his call for a surge of forces into the country. Mansoor is a capable writer and historian; however, there is very little criticism of General David Petraeus, the Surge, or counterinsurgency in his book. The virtues of Petraeus' leadership are extolled early in the book.

In some areas, such as northern Iraq (an area under the command of Major General David Petraeus and the 101st Airborne Division), reconstruction and other activities aimed at putting the Iraqi people back to work and improving their lives took top priority.³⁴

³⁴ Peter Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (Yale University Press, 2013), 10.

Mansoor is extremely critical of the handling of the Iraq war after the initial invasion, and of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and of Coalition Provision Authority head L. Paul Bremer, on whom he blames the rise of the insurgency. He places much of the blame for the failures on Bremer; "according to Mark Moyar, Bremer and other leaders who made these decisions "lacked empathy and judgment, as well as historical knowledge."³⁵ The CPA demonstrated incompetence when dealing with the Iraqi tribes, which eventually were "a major part of the solution to stemming the insurgency and destroying al-Qaeda in Iraq when all seemed lost in 2006;"³⁶

CPA's policy toward Iraqi tribes showed its lack of cultural awareness and understanding of the complex relationships that existed in Iraqi society. Iraqi tribes represented civil society in the Arabic tradition, yet for nearly a year CPA ignored the tribes as an anachronism in Iraq's modern political future.³⁷

As the military attempted to gain cultural awareness of indigenous populations, they received criticism from the opposite direction: anthropologists and social scientists criticized the effort as unethical and a return to the tactics of colonial armies. It was the involvement of the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 11.

³⁷ Ibid., 11.

tribes during the "Sunni Awakening" that led to the formation of the militia units known as the "Sons of Iraq."

The author directly addresses the administration's denial that the American military was involved in counterinsurgency. The president attempted to deny that the military was engaging in counterinsurgency operations.

The administration refused to acknowledge reality. 'I don't want to read in The New York Times that we are facing an insurgency,' President Bush announced in a meeting of the National Security Council on November 11, 2003. 'I don't want anyone in the cabinet to say it is an insurgency. I don't think we are there yet.'³⁸

Mansoor also acknowledges that the Army was inadequately prepared to engage in counterinsurgency warfare. Years of focus on AirLand Battle and finding, fixing, fighting, and finishing the enemy had trumped training in non-kinetic COIN operations.

Their preparation and training, however, had not prepared them to fight a counterinsurgency war. US military doctrine in the decade leading up to the Iraq War stressed rapid, decisive operations and quick victories by high-tech warfighting forces.³⁹

The author is here referring to the military theories behind AirLand Battle, the Revolution in Military Affairs, and Transformation. These programs and theories sought to

³⁸ Ibid., 12.

³⁹ Ibid., 13.

establish a technology driven force with a light footprint that could quickly obtain an objective and just as quickly withdraw from the battlefield.

Mansoor served under Petraeus in a number of capacities prior to the troop Surge; after Petraeus assumed command of MNF-I, Mansoor served as his executive officer. His book is a memoir, but he had access to email, documents, briefings, and drafts of the field manual. He also cites the memoirs of key leaders published before his; he cites the memoirs of President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Vice President Dick Cheney. Mansoor also demonstrates the perspective of a leader who served in Iraq before the surge; he had direct knowledge of how the war was mismanaged prior to the surge. The book is not critical of Petraeus, of counterinsurgency, or of the surge; rather, in the mind of the author, everyone mismanaged the war in the years leading up to the surge (with the exceptions of few others, such as Petraeus and COL H.R. McMaster). Only after Petraeus was tapped to rewrite the field manual and lead the surge did America stand a chance of victory in Iraq.

The conventional war in Iraq ended quickly in accordance with existing Army doctrine. The technology advanced through ideas like the "Revolution in Military

Affairs" and "Transformation," combined with fast invasion by ground troops, quickly ended the Hussein regime. The war in Iraq was not supposed to become a war against an insurgency. The Bush administration anticipated a swift victory, followed by a swift exit after the Saddam Hussein regime was replaced.

Counter-Counterinsurgency

Modern counterinsurgency doctrine is based on colonial war fighting and idealism. Most recently, the United States' military has been engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. These operations have raised questions of the ethics of counterinsurgency: is "nation building" in the interest of the United States, or is it something that should not be a part of the Army's mission? The Human Terrain System has been of particular concern. A number of anthropologists have spoken out against the HTS, claiming that it is little more than cultural manipulation by the United States of the countries it has occupied since September 11th. The Human Terrain System

employs civilian social scientists with backgrounds in linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and regional studies to provide military commanders with clearer insights into the local population and culture in the regions

in which they are deployed.⁴⁰

Several members of the academic community have spoken out against HTS. The Human Terrain System, and by association, the Human Terrain Teams that conduct operations under the program, are inherently unethical. Roberto Gonzalez is an outspoken social scientist critic of the Human Terrain System; Gonzalez' monograph is critical of counterinsurgency in general and the human terrain system in particular. The author sees counterinsurgency operations as little more than modern examples of imperialist occupations, and the human terrain system as an abuse of the work of the anthropologists who participate in the program. Gonzalez sees the ideas behind the human terrain system as being more than just a "hearts and minds" way of conducting warfare; "the emphasis lies primarily on recognizing and exploiting "tribal," political, religious, and psychological dynamics."⁴¹ Gonzalez finds something sinister and manipulative in the concept.

Human Terrain means not only identifying or manufacturing social differences, but a willingness to manipulate them as well, to attack

⁴⁰ Norman Nigh, *An Operator's Guide to Human Terrain Teams*, (Newport, RI: US Naval War College, Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups, 2012), iii.

⁴¹ Roberto Jesus Gonzalez, *American counterinsurgency: Human science and the human terrain*, Vol. 34, (Prickly Paradigm, 2009), 26.

indigenous practices of coexistence and mutual respect if necessary.⁴²

The very language of human terrain is offensive; it "portrays people as geographic space to be conquered - human beings as territory to be captured, flesh and blood *terra nullius* or vacant lands."⁴³

The anthropological community is involved in a substantial debate concerning the Human Terrain System (HTS) and Human Terrain Teams (HTT). The US government's use of social scientists generally, and anthropologists in particular, has become the topic of an ethical discussion between anthropologists. This discussion has inspired further thought on how, and if, anthropologists should contribute to the war effort. Two anthropologists in particular have taken a strong stance against the involvement of social scientists in the military industrial complex. Professor of Anthropology Robert Albro thoroughly considers the implications of the involvement of anthropologists in the combat zone in his article "Anthropology and the Military: AFRICOM, 'culture', and future of Human Terrain Analysis"; Professor of Anthropology Catherine Lutz speaks against the practice and calls for a reconsideration of ethics in anthropology in

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

her article "Anthropology in an Era of Permanent War."

These two articles would be evidence from within the social sciences community that the involvement of anthropologists in the furthering of the military and foreign policy goals of the United States is questionable at best, if not unethical.

Robert Albro thoroughly examines the role of social scientists on the battlefield in his article "Anthropology and the Military: AFRICOM, 'culture', and future of Human Terrain Analysis." In particular, he considers the role of HTS and HTTs in the newly established AFRICOM

The potential alignment of HTS with AFRICOM presents a new set of questions for the discipline of anthropology to consider. We should be thinking beyond the HTS programme per se and working towards a balanced assessment of what future HTS-like arrangements will look like, as these raise new questions of ethics, method and analysis.⁴⁴

The author examines the use of Human Terrain Systems in Iraq and Afghanistan, and anticipates their use in the AFRICOM theater of operations in the future. He also outlines how HTS is outgrowing its initial definition; "'human terrain' is now increasingly synonymous with the accelerating work of human, social, culture and behaviour

⁴⁴ Robert Albro, "Anthropology and the Military: AFRICOM, 'culture' and future of Human Terrain Analysis," *Anthropology Today*, 26 (2010): 23.

modelling (HSCB)." ⁴⁵ Albro argues that, as anthropology is incorporated into more of the military's 21st century missions, the discipline needs to evolve accordingly, giving thought to what this means; "Anthropology should be giving more consideration to the implications of these longer-term developments." ⁴⁶ The author cites the example of AFRICOM,

which has been promoted as less about establishing a US military presence on the continent and more about inter-agency facilitation of non-military operations in collaboration with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Department of State, with a large civilian component, and aimed at building a stable security environment. ⁴⁷

Goals for AFRICOM include combating HIV, establishing the rule of law, and fighting poverty. Albro borrows a phrase from AFRICOM's former commander William "Kip" Ward when he calls the strategy 3-D, referring to defense, diplomacy, and development.

The author then begins to examine the ethics of the use of anthropologists and other social scientists in military missions;

But what are the ethics of anthropological practice with respect to such programmes of cultural modelling, where contexts of data collection and of analysis - of elicitation,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

interpretation and use - are potentially so thoroughly dissociated from one another in terms of space, time and the people involved?

It is time for the discipline of anthropology to give more attention to the methods and ethics of such policy-centred forms of knowledge production as typically performed by varieties of 'analysts' (rather than just ethnography).⁴⁸

What Albro finally anticipates is a systems approach to solving the problems of different cultures, shaping the environment to favor US foreign policy goals. The author again calls for an update to the ethics by which anthropologists conduct their research.

Albro's argument is solid; the author cites a number of scholarly articles, as well as the Army's Counterinsurgency Manual (FM 3-24). He is supported in his argument by Anthropologist Catherine Lutz, whose paper "Anthropology in an Era of Permanent War" is not only critical of the involvement of anthropologists in the conduct of the Global War on Terror, but of the United States' foreign policy and military conduct since World War II.

Lutz' main argument is that the entanglement of anthropological knowledge and military power should be set in context of the monumental growth and size and the imperial deployment of the U.S. military. There has been a

⁴⁸ Ibid.

striking absence of work in anthropology around the question of U.S. military power during the six decades of its permanent mobilization. This paper distinguishes between anthropology of and anthropology for the military, and proposes research foci that might help our discipline understand militarization, its effects and the routes to its reversal.⁴⁹

Lutz begins her article by questioning the mobilization of the US military, not just since September 11th, 2001, but since just after the end of WWII in 1947 (with the passage of the National Security Act, which created the National Security Council, the National Security Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency).⁵⁰ She notes that, in recent years, the US has increasing tried to recruit social scientists into its service under the guise of "Cultural Awareness Training", then later, into the Human Terrain System. She also draws attention to the Minerva Initiative, wherein the DoD has contributed funds to university social science programs, "including and especially anthropology."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Catherine Lutz, "Anthropology in an Era of Permanent War," *Anthropologica*, 51 (2009): 367.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 368.

⁵¹ Ibid., 367.

Lutz addresses the large numbers of anthropologists in the employ of the United States during World War II;

95% of all U.S. anthropologists working in the early 1940s (Wax 2008:89–90). They produced the ethnographies-at-a-distance of the Japanese and later the Soviets meant for use in besting U.S. enemies and they put together cultural compendia of areas targeted for influence or acquisition.⁵²

Lutz' conclusion calls for a re-examination of the community of social scientist's relationship with the military industrial complex.

We need to do an anthropology of the cultural supports for militarization if we are going to be able to understand the cultural assumptions that prevent us from asking the right questions or being heard when we do. Those include the idea that war is the health of the nation and that more bombs equal more security.⁵³

As with Albro's article, Lutz cites a number of scholarly articles that are a reaction against the human terrain teams, as well as military documents, to include budgetary reports.

Historians have also made the argument that counterinsurgency operations are unethical. In his book Counterinsurgency, Douglas Porch reduces counterinsurgency operations to little more than attempts at establishing the United States as a neo-colonial power. The author explicates several examples from history in order

⁵² Ibid., 370.

⁵³ Ibid., 376.

demonstrate that counterinsurgency, and its subordinate disciplines, have failed in the past and will continue to fail. The author is reluctant to perceive COIN as a separate type of warfare; "the claim that COIN constitutes a separate category of warfare, one made at least since the 1840s by generations of small wars enthusiasts, is contentious at best."⁵⁴ Porch examines several instances of counterinsurgency warfare, and explicates the failure of counterinsurgency, debunking the myth of generals like Petraeus and McChrystal as saviors of the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The author argues that counterinsurgency warfare is based in Jominian, not Clausewitzian, theory of warfare. Clausewitz "saw insurgents as non-professional warriors whose methods were both ineffective and uncivilized."⁵⁵ In analyzing 19th century counterinsurgency efforts, Porch states, "Small wars prosecuted in the absence of a viable political end state acceptable to the governed was not a long-term remedy."⁵⁶ The author ties the goals of early counterinsurgency to modern counterinsurgent operations; "this small wars tradition is continued by FM 3-24, that

⁵⁴ Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 318.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 25

views insurgents as beneath the respect accorded by combatants by the laws of war.⁵⁷ He also explicates the colonial mindset of the Human Terrain System and Human Terrain Teams in terms of their 19th century forebears; Porch states, "the small wars habit of viewing the population as a topographical obstacle persists in the aptly named Human Terrain Teams deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan."⁵⁸ He references the Army's Vietnam mission when he states that these teams

meddle in local politics and "find, fix, and finish the enemy" rather than understand indigenous culture and values, minimize collateral damage, and so win over popular support.⁵⁹

The book offers analysis of counterinsurgency campaigns throughout history, demonstrating what he perceives as the racism and xenophobia of colonial wars. The author develops the key ideas early in his narrative, but illustrates how these same ideas are renamed, rebranded, and reattempted by imperial powers – and then by the expeditionary forces of the United States. Porch dissects the work of Galula, Krepinevich, and Nagl, and offers scathing critiques of their work in support of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 330.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

counterinsurgency theory. The last two chapters of Porch's book offer a scathing review of the Iraq War.

Porch's bibliography is extensive. Among the sources that he analyzes are Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife*, Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, McNamara's *Dereliction of Duty* and Krepinevich's *The Army and Vietnam*. The author examines primary sources from each conflict, concluding that counterinsurgency warfare is inherently imperialistic and flawed strategy.

In terms of this paper, Porch's book validates the theses of Roberto Gonzalez and Gian Gentile. Porch argues that COIN is flawed, failed policy; that the involvement of anthropologists on the battlefield is unethical, and that the surges of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan were not responsible in any part for successes in those conflicts. Porch's language is, at times, too coarse and informal for academic writing.

Colonel Gian Gentile makes the argument that the United States Army, which has historically been capable of "improvisation and practicality," has forsaken strategy in lieu of counterinsurgency tactics. Gentile begins his article by outlining counterinsurgency as a "method, nothing more and nothing less." Like other critics of COIN, he outlines the bullet-point goals of the method. He

also references the perception of Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare* as a "how-to" text,⁶⁰ and makes the argument that, in adopting the tactics of COIN in the Global War on Terror, the Army has lost its ability to think strategically.⁶¹ He notes that Krepinevich's critique of the army has been turned into a textbook as well;

Krepinevich's strategy of tactics argument for Vietnam was that the American Army was so conventionally minded and hidebound that it was unable to see a better way of population-centric COIN.⁶²

As the author is the former commander of a cavalry squadron, Gentile's observation about the Army's current capabilities is particularly noteworthy: "The Army is so tactically oriented toward population-centric counterinsurgency that it cannot think of doing anything else."⁶³ He further develops this statement later in the article; "With the new American way of war as population-centric counterinsurgency, the Army has lost track of what has happened to its conventional warfighting skills."⁶⁴ The non-light infantry units have not practiced their craft in the past decade;

⁶⁰ Gian Gentile, "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army," *Parameters*, Winter (2011): 1-12.

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

after seven years of conducting almost nothing but population-centric counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army's field artillery branch had lost its ability to fight and become a 'dead branch walking.'⁶⁵

Those units which should ideally be tasked with the annihilation of enemy forces no longer maintain the skill and experience required to apply firepower to enemy targets. They have been engaged in non-kinetic operations for so long that they have lost the ability to find, fix, fight, and finish the enemy.

Gentile cites or paraphrases the Army's FM on counterinsurgency, articles in Military Review, and the work of Douglas Porch. Like Porch and Moyar, Gentile looks to history to defend his claims. He specifically mentions the French Army's "failure in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871" as well as the "British Army's experience in the early months of the Second Boer war."⁶⁶

Perhaps the most relevant perspective on The COIN-surge in Afghanistan comes from Karl Eikenberry, former US Army general officer and US Ambassador to Afghanistan. In his article "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan" Eikenberry writes that the COIN surge was based on three assumptions:

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9.

that the COIN goal of protecting the population was clear and attainable and would prove decisive, that higher levels of foreign assistance and support would substantially increase the Afghan government's capacity and legitimacy, and that a COIN approach by the United States would be consistent with the political-military approach preferred by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.⁶⁷

These assumptions were wrong; the surge, and COIN failed.

Eikenberry writes from the perspectives of senior military officer and diplomat; he served as a combatant commander in Afghanistan and as US ambassador. He begins his article by stating that, while the goal of turning Afghanistan into a "state inhospitable to terrorist organizations" has been clear enough, the "attainment has been vexing."⁶⁸ The author mentions the COIN renaissance that took place after 2006.

Rediscovered by the US Military during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, counterinsurgency was updated and codified in 2006 in Field Manual 3-24, jointly published by the US Army and the Marines.⁶⁹

The surge of US forces in 2009 was the "most ambitious and expensive"⁷⁰ strategy employed by the US. Eikenberry states the goals of counterinsurgency operations early, in a

⁶⁷ Karl Eikenberry, "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan: The Other Side of the COIN," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October (2013): 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

summary which hearkens back to the writings of David Galula;

modern COIN doctrine stresses the need to protect civilian populations, eliminate insurgent leaders and infrastructure, and help establish a legitimate and accountable host-nation government able to deliver essential human services.⁷¹

The author examines these goals in terms of fundamentals: what should the population be protected from? He discusses a number of instances of corruption in Afghan society at the tribal, governmental, and criminal levels that would seem to be outside of the scope of COIN doctrine.

Eikenberry cites Galula in defining the role of the counterinsurgent; they must be "a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout."⁷² Eikenberry tellingly adds Galula's caveat: "But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians."⁷³ Herein lies the problem: the United States government ran up enormous expenses in Afghanistan, while creating a culture of dependency on US aid and assistance; "The US government spends about \$1 million per year per soldier deployed in Afghanistan... \$100 billion annually."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 3.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Analysis

This paper has briefly discussed three military conflicts wherein the United States military has reluctantly engaged in counterinsurgency warfare. Analysis of the conduct of operations in these conflicts leads to the conclusions below.

Counterinsurgency operations are inherently non-kinetic. Population-centric COIN requires large numbers of forces to engage in the protection of the population from insurgents. The Army is designed for kinetic operations, namely, finding, fixing, fighting, and finishing the enemies on the battlefield. Population-centric COIN is diametrically opposed to the Army Concept.

Counterinsurgency requires the deployment of a great number of troops for an extended period of time. The United States military is ill equipped to maintain large numbers of forces required by counterinsurgency operations. If the military is maintained as an all-volunteer force, at or near current troop levels, repeated deployments create a strain. The current force is shrinking, not growing. Defense budgets are shrinking as well; a military with a small footprint, designed to rapidly deploy, engage, and

destroy the enemies of the United States and then rapidly redeploy is incongruous with non-kinetic COIN operations.

Counterinsurgency operations are expensive. In addition to the million dollars it costs the US to train and field each service member for a one-year tour, there are potentially millions of dollars that will be expended on reconstruction and aid projects. Power grids, schools, and roads cost money.

Counterinsurgency is not a separate type of warfare. Its tactics should be part of Army Doctrine, but it should not be the defining doctrine behind the training of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of the US armed forces. The US military is not a colonial occupation force.

The United States Military Should Not Engage in Counterinsurgency Warfare (unless absolutely necessary). Counterinsurgency conflicts retain too much of the flavor of the European colonial wars; it is too easy for enemies of the United States to associate American counterinsurgency operations with imperial ambitions. Further, where it is in the interest of US national security to assist foreign governments to stabilize, it is not feasible for the United States to attempt to sow the

seeds of democracy. Nation building is not the business of the US military.

Conclusion

Since 2001, there has been increased interest in counterinsurgency warfare in the military and defense civilian communities. Prominent leaders like General David Petraeus eventually created the programs to combat the insurgency in Iraq; Generals such as Ray Odierno and Stanley McChrystal attempted to put Petraeus' theories into practice. These officers were later called in to change the tempo of the war in Afghanistan as well; Odierno eventually rose to the position of Army Chief of Staff. With the initial success of operations under their command, counterinsurgency was again acceptable; though there are elements of the military and defense civilian communities that remain uncomfortable with the topic, defense experts predict that the battlefield of the future will be a hybrid of conventional actions and counterinsurgency operations. Rather than relying on alternative operations, such as air mobility or air assault operations, the military has attempted to incorporate these tools into counterinsurgency operations. It is more difficult to answer the question of whether or not counterinsurgency operations are ethical; in fact many scholars argue that modern counterinsurgency

doctrine is little more than a rehashing of imperial, colonial operations. Within the social sciences, especially within the community of anthropologists, there is a vocal group that argues that counterinsurgency operations and the human terrain system are unethical and manipulative. There are also the issues of budgets and manpower; as the Department of Defense budget is cut, and as the number of service members is reduced, manpower and cost-intensive counterinsurgency operations become increasingly impractical. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Andrew Krepinevich, Jr., stated, "as defense budgets are declining, the price of projecting and sustaining military power is increasing and the range of interests requiring protection is expanding."⁷⁵ Douglas Porch is of a similar opinion; the United States military should refrain from engaging in counterinsurgency operations "if for no other reason than that the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost far too much in lives, money, and time amid a global financial crisis."⁷⁶ As the military downsizes, COIN is again receding from Army doctrine - though not entirely. The US military

⁷⁵ Andrew Krepinevich, "Strategy in a Time of Austerity," *Foreign Affairs*, November 1, 2012. Accessed March 24, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138362/andrew-f-krepinevich-jr/strategy-in-a-time-of-austerity>.

⁷⁶ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 338.

leadership, and particularly Army Chief of Staff Raymond Odierno, foresees future engagements taking place on a hybrid battlefield, with "hybrid threats - combinations of regular, irregular, terrorist, and criminal groups."⁷⁷ Even after thirteen years of conflict, the Army is still attempting to somehow incorporate counterinsurgency operations with the mission to find, fix, fight, and finish the enemy.

⁷⁷ Walter Pincus, "Odierno: Recent war lessons will aid future," *Washington Post*, Washington, DC, July 25, 2011.

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