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Insights from the U.S. Army Experiences in Iraq

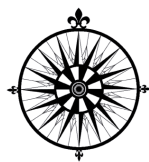
MARINA MIRON



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Counterinsurgency Operations in the 21st Century

Insights from the U.S. Army Experiences in Iraq



KING'S
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Ethics



**ESCUELA MILITAR
DE CADETES**
"General José María Córdova"

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Marina Miron

King's College London
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Marina Miron

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Preface

The present work, “Counterinsurgency Operations in the 21st Century: Insights from the United States Army Experiences in Iraq”, makes an important contribution to the understanding of the operational and tactical thought prevalent in the United States. While the focal point of the book is on the operational level, it discusses many important aspects, including military ethical, strategic and political, in relations to the US counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. This provides a more profound understanding of the current US Army/Marine Corps perspective on the conduct of wars of irregular character, contrasting it with both the earlier practices and the international experience, namely, the British.

This book, therefore, provides theoretical insights and comparative analyses which present a valuable point of reference for decision-making at the strategic level as well as understanding of the peculiarities and difficulties the commander is faced with at the operational and tactical levels.

This academic work was evaluated by a double-blind peer-review process and came to being through a joint effort and academic collaboration between the Centre for Military Ethics, King’s College London, Great Britain, and the Research Group in Military Science of the Colombian Army Military Academy (Escuela Militar de Cadetes “General José María Córdova”), registered under the following code in Colciencias COL0082556.

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Prologue

This book, titled “Counterinsurgency Operations in the 21st Century: Insights from the United States Army Experiences in Iraq”, offers both the context and the theoretical foundation for a more profound understanding of the specifics of the United States Army / Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency, with a great emphasis on its implementation in Iraq in 2006 and the consequences thereof.

The motivation for producing this academic work lies in the fact that it was necessary—given the contemporary character of war defined by armed non-state actors—to analyse and understand some of the what can be considered epitomic approaches to counterinsurgency. These approaches would include that adopted by the United States and Great Britain. A comparative analysis offered by this work provides a unique angle which helps understand how the force be used in order to maximise its utility in a complex operational context. This is of great importance not only for military commanders but also for decision makers who choose to employ the instrument of force. Apart from a detailed operational analysis, this work throws a critical glance of some of the common fallacies in the domain of military ethics that are often committed in counterinsurgency operations, thereby seeking to serve as a warning sign for those who opt for embarking on such dangerous, labour-intensive and costly ventures, especially in an expeditionary role.

To conclude, the present book presents a good study from which important lessons can be derived in terms of what should be done and in what

context as well as what should be avoided at all cost—in both political, grand strategic and military strategic terms—in order to ensure one’s strict adherence to the widely accepted international norms and legal frameworks, including, but not limited to, the International Humanitarian Law.

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Introduction

Irregular warfare and the road to ‘new’ counterinsurgency manual

The end of the Cold War brought a rather stable bipolar world to an end; however, this was clearly not “the end of history,” as Francis Fukuyama wrote, whereby the triumph of liberal democracies would lead to peace and stability. Yet, in the absence of a great enemy, the role of conventional armies seemed on its way to decline, especially because of prevailing defence budget cuts in the United States, starting in the early 1990s and lasting through till 1998.

With the main rival gone, the decade of the 1990s saw a tremendous amount of small-scale, intra-state wars (e.g., Rwanda 1993-94) and conflicts resulting from the pursuit of autonomy (e.g., Kosovo 1995-99). Thus, the focus shifted towards peacekeeping missions and fighting irregular adversaries (e.g., in Afghanistan and Iraq). Irregular warfare¹ has existed for centuries² (Gray, 2007a, p. 36); for instance, the First Punic War from 264 to 241 BC contained elements of guerrilla warfare. However, only at the beginning of the 21st century has it become a more prominent topic among American policymakers when these faced growing insurgencies both in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, according to the Irregular Warfare Special Study, in 2006 the term “Irregular Warfare” (IW) was still absent from major US federal documents including, but not limited to, the National Security Strategy (NSS), the

1 Irregular warfare refers to “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population”, whereby IW “favors indirect and asymmetric approaches” in addition to conventional ones (US Air Force Doctrine Document, 2007, p. 1).

2 Several academics (Martin van Creveld, Mary Kaldor and James Keegan) argue that irregular warfare of the 21st century is a new type of war.

National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism and the National Defence Strategy (USJFCOM JWC, 2006, p. II-1).

Essentially, the US experiences in Vietnam, and subsequent ‘Vietnam syndrome’—a great aversion to casualties—left US policymakers reluctant to engage in similar conflicts. The topic of counterinsurgency vanished from American minds, instead the main attention was directed towards the conventional type of wars, that is, wars fought between two (or more) states. This focus was underpinned by rapid operational successes, in particular in the Gulf War and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, enabled through technological advantages (Voelkel, 2007, p. 515).

Recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that Western nations, most notably the United States and NATO Coalition forces, despite their technological and material assets, military prowess, and early triumphs (in both cases) were clearly not ready to counter unforeseen insurgencies successfully and, less so, ethically, resulting in protracted quagmires.

These incidents led the US government to reconsider its actual strategy tailored to ‘regular’ wars³ (Echevarria, 2004; Biddle, 2005). In 2006, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) emphasized the shift from conventional style operations towards “multiple irregular, asymmetric operations” (QDR, 2006, p. vii). Furthermore, these events served as an impetus for creation of a new field manual for counterinsurgency (COIN) operations written by a number of military officials and academics, including, but not limited to, General David Petraeus (Crane, 2010).

COIN and normative underpinnings of FM 3-24

The following section will briefly discuss selected works from the 20th and 21st century in order to demonstrate theoretical underpinnings of the US Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency (FM 3-24 hereafter). Further, it will highlight existing tensions in the COIN debate about the manual’s utility and its population-centric emphasis.

3 ‘Regular’ wars are wars fought against a state adversary, rather than a non-state actor.

One of the most famous works on COIN, which exerted quite a heavy influence upon FM 3-24, is David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964). The work deals with counterinsurgency techniques established by Galula based on his experiences in the French Algerian war. Galula (2006, pp. 1-9) extensively described revolutionary warfare, emphasizing the enemy's asymmetry, that is, in his terms, enemy's weakness in material capabilities and lack of legitimacy vis-à-vis conventional forces. Thus, Galula's central point was that there can be no military victory in counterinsurgency (or revolutionary) warfare, whereby "[a] revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political" (Galula, 2006, p. 63). In other words, wars against irregular adversaries are won in the political realm, making tactical successes less relevant.

Rather than annihilating the enemy, control of the population should take priority (Galula, 2006, pp. 81-85). Insurgents are destined to fail when cut off from popular support. Most importantly, Galula (2006, p. 10) emphasized the need for higher commanders to be acquainted with "cultural anthropology, economics, political science, international relations, and languages in addition to conventional warfare." Subsequently, the population becomes the focal point of counterinsurgent forces. FM 3-24 makes this specific point clear, shifting its focus away from kinetic operations to population-centric endeavours.

This population-centric approach, emphasizing cultural awareness and restrained use of force, was revived in David Kilcullen's *28 Articles*⁴ (2006a). Kilcullen's aphorisms were so influential that they were added as an annex to FM 3-24. Kilcullen (2006a; 2010) stresses the importance of paying attention to the population and gathering valuable intelligence, which was collected in the wrong manner in the initial stages of the Iraq war.

While Kilcullen's statements might follow the Maoist vision, which purports that the whole strength, or "centre of gravity," of an insurgent group is its popular support, it remains to be seen whether the recommendations as offered in his *28 Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency*

⁴ David Kilcullen's *28 Articles* are an expansion of T.E. Lawrence's "27 Articles" (cf. T.E. Lawrence (1917) "Twenty-Seven Articles", *The Arab Bulletin*).

could yield results once implemented. For instance, Edward Luttwak (2007) strongly disagrees with Kilcullen's position and the depicted in FM 3-24 DRAFT. In his article in *Harper's Magazine* Luttwak (2007) attacks the manual's focus on establishing legitimacy in order to gain popular support, arguing that it is sufficient to have popular obedience (such as in Cuba and North Korea). Further, Luttwak (2007) contends that there is no need for specially trained forces, as FM 3-24 suggests, since "[p]erfectly ordinary regular armed forces, with no counterinsurgency doctrine or training whatever, have in the past regularly defeated insurgents, by using a number of well-proven methods." However, he acknowledges that democratic countries would have difficulties resorting to such methods.

Inevitably, the current trend in literature seems to promote what is called a "population-centric COIN" approach. A population-centric approach implies a focus on the population when countering an insurgency and is derived from the French Revolutionary School of Thought (Galula, 2006; FM 3-24). Thus, FM 3-24's origins are beholden to the French and British experiences in colonial counterinsurgencies. However, it is important to remember that Galula's experiences were based on countering "revolutionary Communist insurgencies and rebellions" (Gentile, 2008). Notwithstanding their importance, the question is whether these lessons are applicable to insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Needless to say, historical accounts of past COIN campaigns can often be skewed, which demands a closer and more thorough analysis. Andrew Mumford (2011), for instance, concludes in his monograph, dealing with the British COIN campaigns in Malaya, that there are vast misunderstandings regarding British COIN practices, which are often associated with a focus on 'winning hearts and minds.' Instead, these consisted of controlling the population by placing it into strategic hamlets and conducting curfews. Rather than drawing on Malaya or Northern Ireland, Mumford (2011) argues that one should derive lessons from Basra; this underscores the prevailing importance of currently gathered experiences over those accumulated in earlier campaigns limited to a specific context and environment.

Other experts, such as Karl Hack (2009; 2011), also acknowledge, that in Malayan case, the 'hearts and minds' campaign (which can hardly be called

that way, due to resettlement of population, curfews, etc.) would not have sufficed unless one had “broken up the larger insurgent groups, disrupted their main bases, and achieved a modicum of spatial dominance and of security for the population in the area concerned” (Hack, 2011). More so, it is necessary to realize that every insurgency has different phases demanding different actions.

In light of this background, it becomes clear that there is a strong disagreement between those who favour a purely population-centric approach epitomized in the new manual, and those, who believe that one needs to look at both ancient history and newly gained experiences, in order to tackle the problem of insurgencies.

Thus, despite its arguable successes, i.e., in Iraq after 2007, the current COIN approach does not seem to be delivering the expected results in dealing with persisting violence. In 2008, General Petraeus (2008) admitted that success in Iraq remained “fragile and reversible.” Therefore, this book will aim to assess not only the utility of the new manual but also its utility as a general (universal) guidance for countering insurgents. Such scrutiny of FM 3-24 will not only help to illustrate that the core of the manual is indebted to operations which took place in a different historical and strategic context, making the manual far from an ideal tool to use against contemporary insurgencies (cf. Gentile, 2008; 2009a).

Secondly, the manual’s role in generating success in Iraq was, as will be demonstrated, rather marginal given other important events (i.e., the Anbar Awakening and Sons of Iraq) that preceded the manual’s implementation (Metz, 2010). Therefore, the manual should not be seen as a panacea to COIN, being transplanted into other battle theatres (i.e., Afghanistan).

Thirdly, the population-centric emphasis of the manual marginalizes other important instruments such as airpower (cf. Dunlap, 2008), which can prove crucial for conducting counterinsurgency operations.

Outline

In order to conduct such an assessment, firstly, it is important to examine American strategic thinking and, subsequently, the “American Way of War,”

especially prior to the attacks of 9/11. Chapter I will outline the way the US sought to conduct wars after the end of the Cold War and contrast it with the strategic shift, which took place in 2006 and 2007 in the context of growing insurgencies in Iraq. Looking at US strategic and military cultures will help explain this particular way of war that the US has (mistakenly) chosen. Further, the chapter will emphasize the importance of strategy, which is, as Colin S. Gray (2012) argues, absent from the US approach to wars (whereby political efforts end when wars begin creating a void which in ideal cases a sound strategy should fill).

Chapter II presents the case study of Iraqi insurgencies and the Surge of 2007. The main aim will be to look at factors that contributed to the reduction of violence in Iraq after 2007, which occurred when the Bush administration announced a strategic shift by adding 30.000 additional troops. The troop-surge was coupled with the implementation of the new manual, thus, making it necessary to examine the degree of impact it had upon the positive shift of events.

As a logical progression to the case study will be a closer examination of FM 3-24; this will be the subject of Chapter III. It will deal with the central tenets of FM 3-24 and contrast them with previous approaches—i.e., previous manuals—to counterinsurgency. Notably, the author will look at whether a population-centric approach provides a sound basis for COIN.

Finally, Chapter IV will discuss specific sections of the manual in detail, e.g., the unity of effort and support to host nation. The reason behind such scrutiny is the changing operational environment and the presence of multiple states and non-state actors (i.e., NGOs), which take part in present-day conflicts.

Lastly, Chapter V will draw conclusion from previously discussed analytical debates, and discuss the issues of implementation of the manual, emphasizing the importance of strategy over tactics.

Methodological Approach

The following thesis seeks to critically assess the validity of FM 3-24 by employing both primary and secondary materials. In order to create a balanced

argument, the author will closely look at publications by the US military staff, who directly participated either in Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, and, thus, can provide useful insights about the situation on the battlefield. While secondary sources, including academic journal articles and academic literature, constitute an important part of the thesis by providing theoretical evaluation, first-hand experiences remain invaluable in light of the assessment of a document, which was specifically designed for utilization on a battlefield.

Further, the author intends to use earlier publications by prominent military personnel and scholars on counterinsurgency warfare. These include David Galula, book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964), which was based upon officer Galula's experiences in the French-Algerian War from 1956-1958, and Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (1964) based upon Trinquier's experiences in Indochina and Algeria. Especially important will be an earlier manual published by the United States Army, e.g., *Small Wars Manual* of 1941.

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CHAPTER 1.

THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR AND IRREGULAR WARFARE

THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR AND IRREGULAR WARFARE

1

“[W]ar is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.”

Carl von Clausewitz (1976, p. 252)

Abstract. This chapter deals with the importance of strategy, irregular warfare, and the “American Way of War” in order to gain a better understanding of the strategic settings in which FM 3-24 was created. Firstly, the author will explain what strategy is and why it is needed when conducting wars, using Carl von Clausewitz’s theory of war. Secondly, the author will explain common misunderstandings regarding a variety of neologisms that are used to describe ‘irregular warfare,’ adopting a working definition of the term. Finally, there will be an assessment of the impact of irregular warfare upon US strategic thinking, especially focusing on the US strategy before and after 9/11.¹

Keywords. Clausewitz; Insurgency; Irregular Warfare; Field Manual 3-24; Strategy; Counterinsurgency

1.1. Clausewitz’s Theory of War

In his opus magnum, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz (1976, p. 27; 252), the famous Prussian General, wrote that war is an instrument of policy or the continuation of such by other means. What this inevitably means, is that policy does not end, when war begins; rather, war is used as an instrument to achieve political aims. Clausewitz (1976, p. 25) argued that *all* wars are matters of the same nature. For him, a war could have a *subjective* (character) and an

¹ While the US faced irregular adversaries in Afghanistan, too, it is beyond the limits of this study to scrutinize both cases.

objective nature (or just nature).² The character of war consists of specific characteristics such as war theatre, armed forces, war doctrines, etc. (Clausewitz, 1976, pp. 26-27; Echevarria, 2003, p. v); therefore, they are subject to change depending on temporal and spatial factors. The nature of war is, however, immutable. It is underpinned by what Clausewitz termed as ‘Wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit,’ or *wonderous trinity*, consisting of passion, chance, and reason (Clausewitz, 1976, pp. 30-31). While some theorists confine these attributes solely to state-level (cf. Van Crefeld, 2001), these are present in all wars regardless of their character, making the trinity a universal quality (Echevarria, 2004; Daase, 2007). Insurgents in Iraq, despite lacking a legal combatant status, namely, civilians engaged in an armed conflict,³ are driven by reason (political purpose), whereby the factor of chance is present in clashes with the coalition and indigenous forces and passion derives from insurgents’ supporters.

Having clarified the term ‘war’ and its broader connection to politics, the question arises about strategy and its nature. Colin Gray (2012a) describes strategy as a bridge between policy and war. In other words, strategy aims to find ways to utilize the available means (e.g., war and diplomacy to achieve a specific end (determined by policy)). Failure to do so will result in a disharmony between means and ends, whereby, as the German Field Marshall Graf von Moltke said, strategic demands are silenced in the face of tactical victories (Gray, 2007b). Yet, if history is any guide, such reasoning did not result in any strategic victories for Germany nor for adherents of similar logic, like the US in Vietnam, the British in Aden or the French in Algeria.

While recently, especially after 9/11, strategy became more in vogue, the understanding of its essence and importance remains somewhat un-trivially blurred in the minds of US policymakers (Gray, 2006a). To illustrate why strategy is indeed so important to the conduct of wars, let us briefly consider the case of Vietnam. Regardless of the indisputable fact that the US had ‘lost Vietnam,’ what remains paradoxical is the US’s lack of a military

2 For purpose of clarity *subjective* nature will be referred to as ‘character’, while *objective* – simply as nature.

3 Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949, Chapter I, Art. 4. Grants certain rights to organized militias which should fulfill the criteria stipulated in Art. 4, yet, in case of Iraq insurgents did not meet the criteria. See also, <http://www.cfr.org/international-law/enemy-combatants/p5312>. <http://www.juridicainternational.eu/index.php?id=12632>

defeat. Instead, the US lost the war in the political realm (cf. Nagl, 2008). The reason for this is an astrategic and ahistorical approach, lacking any cultural sensitivity, and hence, failing to utilize the means the US had to achieve its political ends. The mission, especially under General Westmoreland in 1963, consisted of kinetically oriented, aggressive attacks to kill as many guerrillas as possible (Nagl, 2008, p. 137). Politically, however, the US failed to acquire the necessary popular support for the Government of South Vietnam (GVN). Especially, from the bottom layers of the population, as the Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) study report of 1966 concluded. The whole US policy was flawed, whereby the main aim was to equip the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) with heavy weaponry and to conduct “search and destroy” missions (Nagl, 2008, pp. 140-141). While the forces were successful at killing insurgents, these military victories did not yield desired strategic effects, subsequently failing to achieve political ends (Echevarria, 2004; Gray, 2012a). This leads us back to Galula’s aforementioned statement dealing with the conduct of counterinsurgency being 80 percent political and 20 percent military.

1.2. Irregular Warfare: What is at stake?

The recent academic literature has been overwhelmed with new concepts, such as ‘new wars,’ guerrilla warfare, 4th generation warfare, and hybrid wars, to name but a few, leading to confusion rather than helping to understand the problem (Gray, 2012a). Therefore, it is important to debunk some of the obscurities related to irregular warfare (that included insurgencies, COIN, and terrorism (Kiras, 2011)). In a similar fashion, there has been little agreement among various departments on how to define this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon.

After the turmoil in Vietnam, which was undoubtedly a classic example of IW in the form of a Communist insurgency underpinned by Mao Tse-Tung’s three-stage theory,⁴ the US tried to erase its failures in counterinsurgency

⁴ Mao’s three-stage theory is comprised of a) strategic defense, b) strategic offense, and finally c) facing the adversary in a conventional battle. Most notably, this theory is not a linear evolution. Insurgents can go back from stage to stage. (cf. Mao Tse-Tung 2000).

given that, on a strategic level, COIN was given only ‘marginal’ attention. It was merely reduced to a tactical level (Celeski, 2006, p. 35). However, early successes in Afghanistan and Iraq proved to be quite deceptive, leading to the development of vicious insurgencies. These unfortunate events triggered increased attention to the term ‘irregular warfare’ among both the military and various departments (i.e., Department of Defence). The Quadrennial Defense Reviews (QDR) remain the best illustration thereof.

While the issues in the 2001 QDR dealt with the possibility of facing “adversaries who possess a wide range of capabilities, including asymmetric approaches to warfare” (QDR, 2001, p. 3), the 2001 QDR did not contain any explicit references to IW or COIN.⁵ In contrast, the 2006 QDR concentrated unequivocally on IW, recognizing the need to address “non-traditional, asymmetric challenges” posed by non-state actors through the use of “unconventional and indirect approaches” (QDR, 2006, pp. 2-3). The term IW, thus, gained significant popularity among various departments, and in the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy (each offering an individual definition). In 2007, for instance, the Department of Defense (DoD) produced an Irregular Warfare-Joint Operating Concept confining IW to a “struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population” (DoD, 2007, p. 1). In 2008, DoD Directive 3000.07 unambiguously stated that due to IW’s increasing strategic importance, the US needed to expand its capabilities in order to address both regular and irregular threats (DoD, 2008, p. 2, para 4(a), (c)).

Albeit not perfect, the DoD’s definition of IW is useful for two reasons: firstly, it does not imply that the struggle between the two parties is solely a military one; and secondly, it underscores an important point, that the struggle is for legitimacy and influence of the population in question. What is important in the second point is the shift of understanding of an end-state (or victory). While in regular wars, victory would imply the destruction of the enemy’s army, thus, making the enemy do one’s own will, to paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz; in IW, victory means the effective control of the population,

5 2001 QDR was revised after the 9/11 attacks to include possible ‘asymmetric’ threats.

rather than the complete annihilation of insurgents (Angstrom, 2005; Gray, 2012a).

Possibly, the most useful classification of IW appeared in FM 3-24 released in December 2006. Rather than focusing on IW, it looks at actors and their means. Thus, an insurgency is “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict [...] an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.” (FM 3-24, 1-1, para 1-2). Subsequently, COIN refers to the utilization of all available means, i.e., military, political, and psychological undertaken by governments to eliminate insurgencies (FM 3-24, 1-2, para 1-2). Most crucially, political power remains the central element of COIN, implying the importance of political defeat, rather than a purely military one.

From a purely legal perspective, IW refers to a conflict between one state's armed forces and a non-state belligerent (Gray, 2006b), such as the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, or Sunni and Shia insurgents in Iraq. In the earlier case, the Mujahedeen formed a resistance group as the result of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, which sought to install a pro-Soviet protégé (Nojumi, 2002). In such cases, the irregular adversary is asymmetrically disadvantaged⁶ vis-à-vis his regular enemy (Metz, 2010); this implies that such a non-state actor will be significantly weaker in both his military and technological capabilities, especially due to the size of his forces. Owing to existing asymmetries, the irregular adversary will avoid facing his enemy in a conventional battle, resorting to guerrilla tactics, i.e., ambushes, terrorism, and hit-and-run attacks (Gray, 2006b; 2007a). This was precisely the case with the Soviets in Afghanistan, who failed to counter the Mujahedeen since the Afghan government lacked both popular support and resources to counter the insurgency. Seeking a limited commitment securing key-strategic facilities, the Soviets presented easy targets for the Mujahedeen, who despite their tech-

⁶ The author wishes to point out that the concept of ‘asymmetry’ can be rather problematic, for all wars by nature are asymmetric, in a sense, that one adversary will always be weaker be it military, technological or any other realm (cf. Gray 2006b).

nological disadvantage could exploit the scarce dispersion of the Red Army employing their traditional manoeuvres, i.e., ambushes, and retreat tactics, once successfully implemented against the “Red Rule” from 1991 to 1933 (Grau, 1996, p. 197; Schultz Jr., Dew, 2006, p. 180).

Insurgents, therefore, utilize an “indirect strategy,” namely, one that is designed to destroy the enemy’s will to fight, pitting their weaknesses into strengths while exploiting the enemy’s vulnerabilities (Arreguin-Toft, 2005, p. 105). In contrast to their irregular opponent, regular forces lack political will (Mack, 2008); this signifies the insurgents’ ability to outlast their adversary due to their prevailing positive asymmetry of interest (in winning a given conflict). Simply put, their stakes are higher than those of counterinsurgents, especially if counterinsurgents are outsiders to the conflict, e.g., in Iraq.

It is also important to note, that despite different definitions of terrorism, which is sometimes seen separately from IW, terrorism,⁷ namely “violence – or, equally important, a threat of violence – used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim” (Hoffman, 2006, pp. 2-3), is a mode of IW and will be treated as such for the purpose of this thesis. This means that insurgents employ terrorism as part of their broader strategy. However, terrorism used only on its own is not likely to lead to desired strategic outcomes (Gray, 2006b; Mackinely, Al-Baddawy, 2008).

Finally, notwithstanding the emergence of alluring neologisms that debatably try to capture the changing nature of war, it would be more accurate to refer to its changing character. Needless to say, IW is not a novelty, no matter how much one tries to repackage the term. As mentioned earlier, irregular warfare dates back to antiquity. Fabius Maximus used guerrilla tactics reminiscent of IW against Hannibal’s army during the Second Punic War (218-202BC) (Schatzman, 2001, pp. 36-56).

From a strategic point of view, new concepts provide not only little guidance, but can actually hamper the conduct of strategy by distorting one’s perception of ‘events,’ thereby affecting one’s behaviour (Gray, 2012a, pp. 6-13; 45-47). Essentially, for the conduct of strategy, there is little differ-

⁷ Various definitions of terrorism are as conflicting as those of IW. See f.e. Laqueur (2009), Hoffman (2006) and Kiras (2011) for a more extensive discussion.

ence whether the conflict is regular or irregular (Gray, 2006a, p. 13). All wars contain both elements, making such a binary distinction superfluous (Gray, 2006a; 2012a, p. 47). An illustration thereof are the Special Operations Forces (SOF), which represent an irregular element in a regular one that is capable of using guerrilla tactics (Gray, 2006a; 2006b). Conclusively, regardless of the degree of (ir)regularity, all wars are underpinned by the wondrous trinity (cf. Daase, 2010; Gray, 2012a).

1.3. Irregular Warfare and the American Way of War

Having explored the main concepts that will concern us throughout the book it is important to examine the profound effect irregular warfare, or better-said, irregular adversaries exerted upon the US strategic thinking and the American Way of War. The analysis will be confined to the case of Iraq.

After the end of the Cold war, the US remained focused on conventional warfare, facilitated by its technological prowess, especially, in light of its aversion to casualties triggered by the Vietnam war and subsequent engagement in Somalia, which led to the withdrawal of the US forces following a massacre of several US soldiers; and its successes exemplified in Operation Desert Storm and later Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001 and Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003. Professor Gray (2012a) captures the American Way of War quite accurately by exploring several characteristics, both positive and negative, making the American Way of War astrategic, apolitical, ahistorical, technologically oriented, culturally insensitive, firepower-intensive, and impatient. These caveats restrict the US to the conduct of a specific type of warfare, ultimately, impeding the achievement of its goals (Gray, 2006a, pp. 30-49).

The rationale behind this *way* is largely shaped, on the one hand, by American strategic and military cultures and, on the other, the absence of a clear dialogue between civilian leaders and their military counterparts (Echevarria, 2004; Metz, 2010; Gray, 2012a). Regardless of a clear understanding of how to conduct COIN, the main problem remains its implementation (Gray, 2006a). COIN is a tool, which must match the character of war to generate a (desired) strategic effect (Gray, 2006a, p. 11).⁸ Lacking both strategic plan-

⁸ COIN per se will trigger strategic effects; however, these can be either positive or negative.

ning and clear understanding of the kind of war one is embarking upon, as Clausewitz (1976, p. 30) warned,⁹ leads to strategic blunders, whereby the character is mistaken for something alien. Yet, as current experiences from Iraq illustrate, COIN has become a “strategy of tactics” (Gentile, 2009, p. 7; 15). Subsequently, the tactical realm guides strategy, thereby turning Clausewitz’s pyramid on its head. For this reason, Antulio Echevarria (2004, p. 7) speaks of the American “way of *battle*,” rather than of “war.” Notwithstanding the shift to a more aggressive approach triggered by 9/11 attacks, whereby the US was willing to risk American troops to take retribution, tactical victories remained the guiding principle of the American approach to war conduct (Echevarria, 2004, pp. 9-10).

However, the realization that this approach is flawed in addressing persistent problems in Afghanistan and Iraq showed evident impact only in 2006 and 2007, when President Bush Jr. implemented a new strategy (Metz, 2010), which will be the subject of discussion of the next chapter. For now, it will suffice to say that the Surge and the implementation of FM 3-24 in 2007 was a clear departure from the earlier practices on the ground.

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9 For a full elaboration, see Clausewitz’s *On War*, Book I, para 27.

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CHAPTER 2.

FM 3-24 AND THE SURGE OF 2007

“We’re no longer staring into the abyss of defeat, and we can now look ahead to the genuine prospect of success.”

John McCain during General David Petraeus’ testimony before Congress on the military “surge” strategy in Iraq. April 8, 2008.

Abstract. This chapter focuses on the case study of Iraq to assess whether the success of the ‘surge’ and the implementation of FM 3-24 are the real reasons behind the violence decline in 2008. It will be vital to estimate whether the manual in its present form can be used in other battle theatres with the same degree of success, especially if it is not accompanied by a troop surge. To this end, it is important to examine the evolution of the insurgencies in Iraq from 2003 to 2006/7 and other influencing factors. The main line of argument of this chapter is to demonstrate that FM 3-24 alone cannot be held accountable for positive changes in the situation on the ground.

Keywords. Battle Theatres; Insurgencies; Iraq; FM 3-24; Irregular Warfare; Operation Iraqi Freedom

2.1. Analysis of the Operation Iraqi Freedom

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), in 2003, serves as a quintessential example of the “American Way of Battle.” Its swiftness resulted in tremendous success, i.e., the toppling of the Saddam regime. Three weeks after its commencement, the population of Baghdad witnessed the fall of Saddam’s statue, marking the end of a decade-long dictatorship (“Saddam Statue Toppled,” 2003).¹ Regarding themselves as liberators, the Americans expected to easily win Iraqi “hearts and minds” given the despotic rule of Saddam,

¹ The Ba’ath party headed by a Sunni minority ruled in Iraq from 1968 to 2003 (cf. Tripp 2007: 193-199).

famous for his horrendous human rights records, such as the use of mustard gas against the Kurds in 1988, which not only caused casualties and displacements (Katzman, 2010, p. 1) but also marginalized different ethnicities (Marsh Arabs and Shias). Yet, their hopes were rather short-lived due to the unsuitable policy objectives.

Firstly, the coordination of Phase IV,² or reconstruction phase, was relatively ineffective. While some argue that it was due to lack of planning (Aylwin-Foster, 2005; Voelkel, 2007, p. 544), in reality, US policymakers were fully aware of the implications of a regime change, namely, the requirement of a large-scale and long-term deployment of manpower engaging in labour-intensive activities; however, they failed to implement these plans into action (Benson, 2006). Instead, they aimed at leaving a 'light footprint,' that is, to 'win' the war militarily and quickly redeploy the troops (Echevarria, 2004, p. 14). Such lack of willingness is underpinned by former presidential candidate Bush's statement: "[...] our troops ought to be used for what's called *nation-building* (emphasis added)" ("Bush-Gore Debate," 2009).³ Due to misbalanced civil-military relations, whereby the earlier retained the upper hand, the military failed to convince its civilian counterparts of the necessity of a long-term commitment (Echevarria, 2004, pp. 14-15). With the end-state remaining unclear, the quick return of US troops was the main goal, given the nature of the US strategic culture (Gray, 2012a), and unfulfilled expectations of receiving international support for reconstruction from the UN member-states (Echevarria, 2004, p. 15).

Secondly, having created a power-vacuum, the appearance of different factions of ethnically fragmented Iraqi population driven by their long-accumulated antagonisms based on ethnosectarian differences rising to struggle for power was all but short of surprising.⁴ Further, the absence of law and order, indebted to large-scale looting was mistakenly accredited to regime 'dead-

2 Phase IV operations refer to stability operations, peace-keeping, nation-building, and reconstruction of the area of operations (AO), being to a large extent non-kinetic.

3 In his debate with Al Gore, who welcomed nation building, Bush attributed the failure in Somalia precisely to the attempt to do nation building.

4 Instead of attempting to understand the evolving conflict, the US troops tried to eliminate ex-Baathist figures. Only a few units, e.g. the 101st Airborne Division in Ninewah province, followed a different (population-centric) approach.

enders' and criminals (Hashim, 2003, pp. 1-4; Burton, Nagl, 2008, p. 304). As both Galula and Thomspson suggest, law and order are crucial and should be upheld by counterinsurgents. However, these attempts only led to further the alienation of civilians⁵ that the Coalition Forces were supposed to liberate and protect. The Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse in 2004, which turned into an international scandal, and the killing of four Blackwater employees⁶ in Fallujah, a highly kinetic and disproportionate use of force motivated by US Marine Corps feelings of retribution, not only called for a new strategic approach (Burton, Nagl 2008, p. 306) but also led to an even greater detachment of Iraqis.

Thirdly, the 'ahistorical' approach to Phase IV, i.e., the disregard of Iraq's historical background, namely the asymmetrical power-relations between Sunnis (the ruling minority) and Shias (the subordinate majority), triggered the neglect of possible tensions. Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) did not think that democracy would require the actual consent of Iraqi people (Anderson, Stansfield, 2004, p. 189). Instead of holding elections, his policies, e.g., the creation and appointment of a *non-sovereign* advisory body, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which was considered as an American attempt to influence Iraq's political affairs, resulted in the loss of trust of the Iraqi populace (Katzman, 2010, p. 7). Both the passivity and inability to provide security, reflected in CPA's, IGC's and Iraqi Interim Government's (IIG) behaviour, further exacerbated sectarian tensions, especially among the Sunni factions, who lacking political power, greatly contributed to the violence increase in 2004 and 2005 (Malkasian, 2006, p. 370; 2008). Moreover, other factors such as the absence of a joint effort between the CPA and the Combined Joint Task Force Seven (CJTF-7), the mentioned abuses of prisoners, and the excessive use of firepower worsened the situation (Burton, Nagl, 2008, p. 304).

Fourthly, the elimination of ex-Baathists⁷ and Saddam's loyalists – one of so-called 'de-Baathification' measures – illustrated the lack of understanding

5 Iraqi civilians sought protection from insurgent squads, such as the Mahdy Army.

6 Blackwater, presently known as Academy, is a private military company hired by the US government for auxiliary tasks.

7 Ex-Ba'athist Shias and Kurds were employed the government of Iraq unlike their Sunni counterparts; thus, de-Baathification was in a way 'de-Sunnification' (Al Jabouri, Jensen, 2010).

of the situation guided by flawed policies. CPA order No. 2, for instance, dissolved all security institutions, military and paramilitary organizations associated with Saddam, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Information, the Iraqi Intelligence Services, the Army, the Navy, and the Airforce, etc. (CPA/ORD/23, May 2003/02). The seriousness of this measure was braced by the creation of the Iraqi de-Baathification Council (CPA/ORD/25, May 2003/05). Unfortunately, these actions led to tremendous unemployment amounting to at least 400.000, and the emergence of multiple insurgent groups (Hashim, 2003, p. 7; Tripp, 2007, pp. 281-291; Cordesman, 2007; Kiras, 2011, pp. 273-274). Finally, the overall strategy was hampered by the rotation of senior military leadership, which was replaced with people lacking both knowledge and experience (Kiras, 2011, p. 274).

The unfulfilled hopes of the democratic process, marginalization of the Sunni minority, disbandment of the state security apparatus, and the deteriorating security situation all led to the emergence of vicious insurgencies that left the Coalition Forces unprepared for what would follow. While the importance of legitimacy and security are but one of the main focal points at the beginning of the FM 3-24 (1-21, para 1.113-1.120), this was precisely the missing element in post-invasion Iraq.

Operationally and tactically, there was no unity of effort due to the absence of an overarching strategy. Moreover, the existing doctrinal gap in COIN conduct left the “boots on the ground” with no clear guidance (Voelkel, 2007, p. 513). Most operations consisted of the famous “search & destroy” missions (e.g., in respect to ex-Baathists).

Only some divisions, e.g., the Marines and the 101st Airborne Division operating in Ninewah province under General Petraeus’ command used population-centric tactics; in other words, troops were stationed in outposts across the operational area interacting with the local population (Malkasian, 2008; Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012). Reflecting future wisdom incorporated in the FM 3-24, the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, Mattis, stressed that “the main effort was to diminish support to the insurgency [by] promoting governance, economic development, essential services, and the supporting effort was to neutralize the bad actors” (2009, p. 24).

2.2. 2006 Civil War, the Surge and the way to success

With the rapid rise of civilian casualties, the situation in Iraq in 2006 was escalating towards a civil war (cf. Iraqi Body Count; icasualties.org). Ethno-sectarian hostilities between the Sunni and the Shia intensified after the Al-Askari Mosque bombing⁸, which was instigated by Abu-Musab Al-Zarqawi, leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), who sought to exploit the existing schisms in Islam⁹ (Fischman, 2006). Other ongoing terrorist attacks, which served the same purpose, aggravated the situation even further (Malkasian, 2008; Kiras, 2011).

These events perpetuated the need for a new strategy. However, due to political conditions, namely, the forthcoming elections, the need to secure domestic support, and disagreements between President Bush and the military staff delayed the creation of a new strategy. While the President favoured a troop increase, the Democratic majority, occupying both Houses, and the military regarded the US presence as the main barrier to a peaceful settlement, thus preferring a troop drawn down (Metz, 2010, pp. 15-20; 25-27).

Many academics supported a troop redeployment regarding it as a possible way out of the quagmire. Edward Luttwak (2005) suggested to withdraw the US troops and to employ diplomatic efforts for conducting negotiations with various factions simultaneously. These would add a degree of leverage for the US since each of these groups would have something at stake from withdrawal; therefore, these actions would not harm the US national interest. Yet, the President, having a binary vision of victory and defeat, did not consider withdrawal (Metz, 2010, pp. 25-27).

Signifying the need for a strategic transformation, the QDR 2006 (2006, p. 1) stated the requirement “to adopt unconventional and indirect approaches,” and recognized that firepower could not be the sole solution (2006, p. 4). This reasoning resonated with the ideas advocated in the forth-

8 Al-Askari Mosque was a holy Shiite place.

9 Al-Zarqawi sought to pit the Sunni against the Shia to create more chaos on the ground; however, his strategy was at odds with what the actual Al Qaeda leadership was envisioning. In 2005 Al-Zawahiri criticised Al-Zarqawi's actions calling for a need to focus on the so-called ‘far enemy’, the US and coalition troops, rather than creating more tensions among Sunni and Shia (Masters, Bruno, 2012).

coming of FM 3-24 (2006, 1-3, para 1.14). Yet, the QDR did not envision a drawdown of forces, but rather a change in their utilization.

For better or worse the die has been cast. In 2007, President Bush announced his decision to deploy 30,000 combat troops, marking a strategic shift (Metz, 2010). While some argued that additional means were crucial, neglecting the ways in which they were used and to which ends, others—referring to *the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq of 2005*—posited that the means for achievement of new political goals were insufficient, remaining doubtful about adequate ways of application (Kiras, 2011, p. 278).

2.2.1. Al Qaeda in Iraq and Al-Anbar Awakening

Given the violence decrease by 2008, after the implementation of the new strategy coupled with a trial run of FM 3-24, it is crucial to look at all the factors, which shaped the ground for this ‘success.’ These factors will be examined in their historical order beginning with Al-Zarqawi’s strategic mishaps, Al-Anbar Awakening, change of command, implementation of the manual, and the troop surge.

The purpose of the following section is to demonstrate that both the demise of AQI and subsequent popular uprisings were paramount for the success of the new strategy.

Headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, AQI—a Sunni extremist group—emerged as a result of the 2003 invasion. The growing insurgencies, resulting from the 2003 invasion, presented the organization with fertile soil (Masters, Bruno, 2012). AQI spread like ‘virus’; to use Kilcullen’s (2009, p. 35, Figure 1.1.) analogy, among the Sunni, making the Anbar province one of the most lethal places in Iraq (Malkasian, 2008). Subsequently, the Anbar inhabitants suffered from the *accidental guerrilla syndrome* having no choice but to support AQI (cf. Kilcullen, 2009, p. 35).

Zarqawi’s vision of *jihad* and subsequent strategy was heavily influenced by an extreme Salafist ideology, which created ideological rifts between AQI and Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri, respectively. Sharing an overarching vision of creating an Islamic caliphate, the two groups placed their centres of gravity quite differently. While the Jordanian sought to focus on the ‘near enemy,’ the

Shiites, Al Zawahiri and Bin Laden prioritized targeting the ‘far enemy,’ i.e., the United States (Fishman, 2006, p. 20; Kiras, 2011, p. 277).

The *Al-Anbar Awakening* took place in 2006, before the actual implementation of FM 3-24. At the heart of the event was the realignment of the Sunni population, which initially supported Al Qaeda in Iraq, which abandoned its hostile position and cooperated with the Coalition forces to expel AQI (Malkasian, 2008; Al Jabouri, Jensen, 2010). The Awakening exerted a strong influence upon the events which followed. This realignment, nonetheless, was not a product of the US COIN efforts (Al Jabouri, Jensen, 2010). It should be noted that similar realignment attempts were made by tribal leaders in 2004 and 2005. But they failed because the Coalition forces could not provide enough security due to their “unwillingness to deploy outside their home districts” and, most notably, the Sunni tribes’ “inability to withstand counterattack”¹⁰ (Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012, pp. 11-13).

AQI committed grave mistakes by violating the customs of intermarriage of Iraqi tribes;¹¹ this resulted in the failure to cement itself in the area. Violent attempts to impose AQI’s alien interpretation of Islam, suspected ties of AQI to Iran, and the civil war between the Sunni and the Shia, instigated by AQI, only perpetuated the reversal of the *accidental guerrilla syndrome* (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 171-173; Kiras, 2011, p. 277). Local tribes cooperated with the Coalition forces to remove AQI from their provinces. Thus, the process of slow reconciliation between the ‘outsiders’/ ‘occupiers’ and the local started taking place. The uprising spread from the Al-Anbar Province to neighbouring provinces, affecting approximately 40 percent of all Iraq, just as M-2, the Iraqi Intelligence, predicted it (Kilcullen 2009, p. 171; 2010, p. 142). In this respect, it is useful to recall the central tenet of FM 3-24 (2006, p. 1-29), which emphasizes the foremost importance of the population (or popular support). While it is certainly true that popular cooperation was vital in this

¹⁰ Even during the Anbar Awakening Sons of Iraq were under constant reprisals from AQI (Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro, 2012, p. 14).

¹¹ Intermarriage was strictly limited to one tribe and only in rare exceptions would women be married to someone from a different tribe; however, AQI punished marriage refusals by killing one of tribal sheiks (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 172).

particular case, the reason why the tribes realigned can be attributed to AQI's mistakes and the desire for a secure environment.

Yet, AQI's strategic blunders were just one part of the reason for its demise. The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)¹², led by General Stanley McChrystal, succeeded in the assassination of AQI's head, Zarqawi, whose personality was crucial for AQI in strategic terms (Al Jabouri, Jensen, 2010; "Top Secret America," 2011). Further, the Anbar uprising was able to exploit the paralysis of leaderless AQI by increasing their attacks and regaining their hope and morale (Al Jabouri, Jensen 2010).

More so, intelligence gained through interrogations and the use of airpower, which role is marginalized in the new manual (Dunlap Jr., 2009), led to the success of the operation (Kiras, 2011, p. 277). Thus, the SOF played a crucial role in eliminating AQI's instigator-in-chief. Most importantly, these steps were not 'hearts and minds' campaigns, but rather a combination of AQI's strategic errors, good intelligence, and the right employment of firepower.

2.2.2. The Surge

The troop surge began in 2007 with the addition of roughly 30.000 combat troops to the most volatile areas of Baghdad and Anbar province. The number of 'surged' troops constituted roughly 15% of the total number of troops, whereby by the end of the year the troops would be reduced to their normal, pre-surge, levels if not more (Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012). FM 3-24 (para 1-67), however, requires a minimum of 20 counterinsurgents per 1000 civilians. This means that the number of troops was hardly sufficient for the kind of counterinsurgency operations undertaken (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 147). Additionally, given the publication of the manual in December 2006, there was virtually no time to turn the US Army into all-around-counterinsur-

¹² JSOC is a secret unit consisting of "Army's Delta Force, the Navy's SEAL Team 6, the Air Force's 24th Special Tactics Squadron, and the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment and 75th Ranger Regiment". It receives command directly from the President and/or Secretary of Defense, and is controlled by a military chain command. Its actions resemble covert operations of the CIA. JSOC was active in Afghanistan and Iraq, conducting lethal attacks on high value targets ("Top Secret America," 2011).

gents (Dunlap Jr., 2008, pp. 54-55). Had the surge failed, Iraqis would have been left in a worse situation, with levels of violence similar to those of 2006.

Thus, only due to force concentration in selected areas, the preceding Awakening, and the ISF, which synergistically worked with US troops to protect Shiites (making the Jaish-Al-Mahdi (JAM) militias step down and initiate cease-fires), the Surge yielded the desired effect (O'Hanlon, Biddle, Pollack, 2008).

2.2.3. Charismatic Leadership

Another important—yet insufficient—element was the selection of General David Petraeus, one of the masterminds behind FM 3-24, as the commanding general of Multi-National-Force-Iraq (MNF-I) (from 2007 to 2008) (Crane, 2010; Kiras, 2011, p. 278). During his time at the Combined Arms Centre (CAC), Petraeus started updating the temporary manual (Field Manual Interim FMI 3-07.22) to fill the existing doctrinal gap, since prior to the creation of FM 3-24 there was a lack of proper tactical guidance for COIN (Voelkel, 2007, p. 513). Getting a lot of experienced military figures (e.g., Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane) and academics (e.g., David Kilcullen) on board, the new manual was created in December of 2006 and implemented theatre wide in 2007 (Crane, 2010). Together with the second-in-command, General Odierno, General Petraeus was tasked with the development of the new strategy (Sky, 2011). While much has been attributed to the fact that General Petraeus's charisma, like Ramon Magsaysay's or General Sir Gerald Templer's, helped to reduce the violence due to his population-centric approach, this is but another myth. Joshua Rovner (2012) explicitly looks at "Heroes of COIN" contending that the "Petraeus" story strongly resembles other historical cases such as in Malaya and Vietnam; nonetheless, it would be historically incorrect to make a single person accountable for dramatic changes. As in the case of Magsaysay and Templer, the earlier policies continued to take place. Undoubtedly, personalities matter, but they might be necessary conditions, rather than sufficient ones. Such *heroes* depend on those who initiated the 'dirty' work, making the new *heroes* reap all the benefits (Rovner, 2012). Thus, a purely population-centric approach, while certainly not of marginal

importance, would not have sufficed. As Metz (2010) posits, the implementation of the new strategy was a result of the confluence of different factors, which would not have worked in 2005.

2.2.4. Utilizing the Force

The implementation of the new approach becomes evident upon one of the components of the surge marking a departure from the previous approach, namely, targeting insurgents and then pulling out¹³ to leave the still inadequate ISF to hold the area. Instead, US troops would be sent into population centres for the protection of civilians, thereby showing their willingness to abandon their bases. Most notably, these were deployed to the Anbar Province in order to help the resistance withstand AQI (Sky, 2011; Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012). The U.S. Army Lieutenant, Colonel James R. Crider (2009, pp. 81-84), former commander of 1-4 Cavalry serving in Baghdad, describes how the basic tenets of Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare* (included in FM 3-24) were successfully employed by his team, working on close engagement with the population to break the alienation barrier and gain effective control of the population through permanent curfews. This demonstrates the successful application of population-centric COIN. However, the question remains whether this strategy would have worked if the equation did not include realignment and the Sons of Iraq (SOI).

2.3. Sons of Iraq (SOI)

The aforementioned Anbar Awakening played a critical role in the future reduction of violence, yet alone, it was not sufficient. One of the most important aspects resulting from the Awakening was the "Sons of Iraq" (SOI), small brigades of ex-insurgents, who would cooperate with the coalition forces to flush out remaining insurgents, especially AQI. Despite the different degrees of success in each province, with additional troop deployments the SOI—since

¹³ Quick redeployment of troops would insure their safety. This is one of the problems discussed by Sir Rupert Smith (2006) in his book *The Utility of Force*.

their membership plummeted after the Surge—could withstand counterattacks by AQI elements (Andrade, 2010, pp. 209-242; Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012).¹⁴ Rather than being epiphenomenal, the SOI not only provided vital intelligence on remaining insurgents and their tactics but also contributed to the emergence of nation-wide cease-fires. Their influence contributed to the improvement of the conditions in Baghdad itself and made the Shiite militias stand down.

The SOI were especially important for ceasefires with Shiite militias, such as JAM and the Badr Brigade. Due to the waning danger of the Sunni threat, Shiite militias lost their popularity and, subsequently, their purpose in the eyes of the Shiites, who unlike the Sunnis counted on the Shiite-dominated ISF. Acting as a force-multiplier, the SOI freed the US troops enabling the latter to focus on more critical areas in Baghdad and Anbar (Biddle, 2008).

2.4. Outcomes

Firstly, given the perceived success of the Surge, coupled with the implementation of FM 3-24, it remains questionable whether a political settlement, namely reconciliation, can be reached. Despite the alleviation of sectarian tensions¹⁵ the Surge has not yielded the desired strategic effect. David Gardner (2010) explicitly addresses the issue of a political settlement:

[...] Much less could it [the surge] conjure up a shared national narrative for political leaders, whose lives and politics have been twisted by dictatorship and sectarian strife and who do not appear ready or able to reconcile. [...]

By 2010, Iraqis still could not agree on a new government. The envisioned reconciliation, for which the surge had been created in the first place, has not, as of 2010, taken place (Gardner, 2010).

Secondly, while Iraqi insurgencies could be regarded as a *sui generis* event of national character, these are but a part of a greater global insurgency

¹⁴ While the SOI phenomenon preceded the Surge, they became widespread after additional troop deployments in April 2007.

¹⁵ This can be seen on graphs produced by an independent organization, Iraqi Body Count. Despite possible inaccuracies, what is important, are the trends of decline of casualties by 2008.

nurtured by Al Qaeda (cf. Kilcullen, 2009); thus, operational methods, i.e., *clear, hold, and build*, which might work in Iraqi backwoods, are inadequate to address the persisting problem. A new, more intricate strategy is required for such purpose (Jones, Smith, 2010, pp. 440-441), which extends beyond the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

More attention needs to be on Western countries, especially the UK, where radicalization of Muslims takes place (Jones, Smith, 2010, pp. 441-443). By emphasizing cultural aspects and trying to invent a uniform theory of counterinsurgency, Nagl and Burton commit a great fallacy.

Lastly, while the nature of all wars is the same, each war has its unique character that should be the focal point (Jones, Smith, 2010, p. 444). In other words, war remains war and making up a distinct category thereof only complicates the task muddying the waters even further.

Conclusively, FM 3-24 is but one factor of many which led to improvement of the situation on the ground. While there are differences of opinion as to whether it was the Anbar Awakening or the Surge or the sectarian cleansing making the success possible, the 'sectarian cleansing'¹⁶ thesis lacks explanatory power. Yet, both the Awakening and the Surge, complementing one another, were crucial for the demise of casualties (Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro, 2012). However, political reconciliation has not taken place, as desired. Thus, to successfully counter an insurgency, a solely tactical guidance, no matter how well written, cannot fill the strategic gap, nor can it fix a flawed strategy.

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¹⁶ Sectarian cleansing took place within Baghdad, when the Shia militias tried to remove Sunnis from Baghdad's neighborhoods, replacing these with Shiite squatters. However, the violence was moving from neighborhood to neighborhood, despite ethnic separation; therefore, the assertion that sectarian violence in Baghdad ended due to separation along the ethnic lines suffers from shortcomings (Biddle, Friedman, Shapiro 2012: 7-10).

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CHAPTER 3.

ARMY/MARINE CORPS FIELD MANUAL (FM) 3-24, COUNTERINSURGENCY

ARMY/MARINE CORPS FIELD MANUAL (FM) 3-24, COUNTERINSURGENCY

3

“...as the subsequent experiences in Afghanistan have shown, FM 3-24’s prescriptions are not transferable to all other situations. We need different techniques for that war, and it would be best to develop those solutions sooner rather than later.”

Dan G. Cox and Thomas Bruscino (2011). Introduction. In D. G. Cox and T. Bruscino (Eds). *Population-Centric COIN: A False Idol?* Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 6.

Abstract. This chapter looks at some of the central tenets of FM 3-24 in order to contrast them with previous practices including earlier COIN doctrines, such as the Small Wars Manual (SWM) of 1940 and the British Army Field Manual 2001, on the one hand, and to assess the effectiveness of new changes and their emphasis upon population. Such assessment remains crucial because in Iraq FM 3-24 played only a negligible role in violence decline, and its implementation failed to achieve the desired strategic effect.

Keywords. Doctrine; Counterinsurgency; Insurgency; FM 3-24; Small Wars; British Army; Small Wars Manual 1940

3.1. Basic tenets of FM 3-24

The new Field Manual was published in December of 2006. It drew upon newly gained experiences from Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as other maxims found in the 20th century COIN literature, most notably in studies of the French and British counterinsurgency practices written by prominent soldier-scholars like David Galula, Frank Kitson, Sir Robert Thompson, and Roger Trinquier (Crane, 2010, pp. 60-62).¹ Not only was the new manual

¹ Also see Galula’s (1964/2006). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*; Thompson’s (1966). *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*; Trinquier’s. (2006) *Modern Warfare*; and Kitson’s (1971) *Low intensity operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping*.

written to fill the doctrinal void of COIN operations, but also to “prepare Army and Marine Corps leaders to conduct COIN operations *anywhere in the world* (emphasis added)” (FM 3-24, p. xi). It is noteworthy that the manual implies a certain degree of universality, i.e., being applicable “anywhere in the world,” despite recognizing that each war theatre is different (FM 3-24, p. xi). Nowhere is it more evident than in Afghanistan and Iraq, where within one geographical unit there is a tapestry of different ethnicities and religions, making it difficult to apply the same techniques in different cities, let alone provinces. To this end, FM 3-24 (para 1-150) requires a large number of troops, i.e., 20 counterinsurgents per 1000 citizens,² equipped with cultural knowledge and social skills to win over the population’s *hearts and minds*.

3.1.1. Two sides of the COIN: Strategy or tactics or ‘strategy of tactics’?

After discussing the issues of strategy and tactics in Chapter I, and providing a working definition of counterinsurgency, it is important to add, that one of the biggest perils with COIN is the conceptual disagreement. COIN, however, is “an acronymic descriptor of a basket of diverse activities intended to counter an insurgency” (Gray, 2012b, pp. 17-18). It is neither a strategy, nor a concept, but rather an instrument. Thus, to speak about COIN as “a basket of operational and tactical ways and means” is a great fallacy unless it is considered in its historical and political contexts (Gray, 2012b, p. 25). Being confronted with the work being an amalgamation of ‘wisdom’ from the mid-20th-century colonial wars,³ i.e., French involvement in Algeria, the question arises whether those ‘generalizations’ can work in specific environments, given different strategic and political settings.

2 This point will be addressed in Chapter IV, evaluating whether it is possible to use such large numbers of troops given the lack of domestic appetite for US casualties and the fact that the US was engaged in two conflicts simultaneously, having its capabilities overstretched.

3 See FM 3-24 and Crane (2010) for a more detailed account of creation of the manual.

3.1.2. The Primacy of Politics: previous manual versus FM 3-24

Earlier approaches to counterinsurgency, e.g., in Iraq, after 2003, exemplify the basic assumptions of the American Way of War and its high emphasis on firepower. Despite the existence of stabilization operations, such as FM 31-23, *Stability Operations: U.S. Army Doctrine* (1967), which emphasized the importance of popular support reinforced by social and economic activities, playing only a marginal role, whereby destruction of the enemy remains an integral part of the doctrinal, educational, training, and cultural spheres (Ucko, 2009, pp. 290-291). FMFRP 12-15, *Small Wars Manual* of 1940, includes a five-phase plan, which deals solely with subversion of the enemy without regards to population:

1. Initial Demonstration or landing and action of vanguard,
2. Arrival of reinforcements and general military operations in the field,
3. Assumption of control of executive agencies and cooperation with the legislative and judicial agencies,
4. Routine police functions,
5. Withdrawal from the Theatre of Operations (SWM, 1940, p. 5).

Put differently, enemy-centric kinetic operations, e.g., ‘search and destroy’ (S&D) missions, such as Operation Meade River (1968) in Vietnam, were the main operational and tactical approaches to COIN, which John Nagl (2007) attributes to, among other things, a lack of a proper counterinsurgency doctrine and the Army’s lack of understanding of the conflict.

Field Manual 90-8 (1986) shares more similarities with FM 3-24 given that it recognizes the need not only for kinetic operations, i.e., counterinsurgency actions underpinned by the AirLand Battle Doctrine (later superseded by *Full Spectrum Operations*)⁴ (FM 90-8, 1-15),⁵ but also the importance of winning

⁴ Full Spectrum Stability Operations include the following: offensive, defensive, stability and support operations, and are designed for military operations other than war (MOOTW). See Field Manual 3-0 (2001, 1-15).

⁵ AirLand Battle is an operational combat concept based upon coordinated use of air and ground capabilities reinforced by the following principles: the unity of effort, concentration of combat

popular support, using ‘minimum force’⁶ (FM 90-8, 1-4), and providing legitimacy to the host government, while acting in such a way as not to undermine the US forces’ legitimacy in both host nation’s and domestic views (FM 90-8, 1-6, para 1-14). In this respect, FM 90-8 addressed the fundamental ethical dilemma of counterinsurgency operations, namely, the need to maintain ethical conduct *even if* the insurgents defy the laws of war (see Ramsey 1968, p. 428-434; Schulzke 2019, p. 56).⁷ It, thus, presented a more refined version of FM 27-10, Laws of Land Warfare (1956). However, in contrast to FM 3-24, the focal point of operations remains the enemy force, which is especially the case with SWM (1940) and to a slightly lesser degree FM 90-8.

FM 3-24 departs from the earlier doctrines since it sees the political realm as paramount for countering an insurgency. It states:

Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate. Insurgents use all available tools – political (including diplomatic), informational (including appeals to religious, ethnic or ideological beliefs), military and economic – to overthrow the existing authority. (FM 3-24, 1-1, para 1-4)

This logic resonates with Galula’s ideas, namely, that COIN is 80 percent political, or in his own words: “*Politics becomes an active instrument of operation* (emphasis in original)” (Galula, 2006, p. 5). Subsequently, the novelty of the new approach outlined in FM 3-24 presents an arguably radical shift in thinking from earlier practices, and the American Way of War in general, with its emphasis upon the population (thus, the new term “population-centric COIN”). Counterinsurgent forces use firepower selectively and in a discriminate manner in line with the exigencies of *jus in bello* (see Fotion, 1990, p. 27-29), e.g., for fighting insurgents for popular support and subsequent reas-

power against enemy’s vulnerabilities and anticipate events on the battlefield. See Field Manual 100-5 (1993). This framework was successfully employed in Operation Desert Storm.

6 This point strongly resembles the British COIN doctrine.

7 Paul Ramsey’s (1968) primary concern was the ethical conduct of counterinsurgents faced with a foe who has no respect for ethics. Principally, Ramsey (1968, p. 434) condemned the notion of mirroring insurgents’ tactics which would make the act *mala in se* or wrong in itself. His contention revolved around the fact that counterinsurgents need to be discriminate in their use of force, namely, target only insurgents. FM 90-8, as evident, follows Ramsey’s thinking.

sertion of legitimacy (of the host government) (FM 3-24, 1-1, para 1-3, 1-4; Cohen, Horvath, Nagl, 2006, pp. 51-52).⁸ This inevitably means that the primary goal of population-centric and intelligence-driven COIN is to use force in order to foster governmental legitimacy and protect the population, creating favourable conditions for long-term economic development.⁹ Such a limited role of firepower, as Gentile (2010) contends, is called for due to the belief that increased numbers of civilian casualties lead to expansion of insurgencies. Especially democracies, as opposed to dictatorships,¹⁰ have greater restraints on the use of force, which drives their inability to defeat insurgencies successfully (cf. Merom, 2003).

The reasoning advocated in FM 3-24, however, transforms the very nature of war, as advocated by Clausewitz and his adherents. Recalling Clausewitz's dictums, the changes in war's character do not imply any changes in the nature of war. Regardless of the actors (state actors or non-state actors), war remains an instrument of politics (cf. Clausewitz, 1976; Gray, 2012b). Subsequently, "[w]hile insurgency remains a highly political form of warfare, its character, not its nature, has changed" (Alderson, 2008a, p. 35).

Owing to the conceptual confusion related to counterinsurgency, the first camp, which influenced FM 3-42, holds that an insurgency "has to be countered predominantly by a political grand strategy," in order to win over the population through demonstrating government's legitimacy (Nagl, 2010; Gray, 2012b, pp. 22). The other camp has a diametrically opposed view. It claims that insurgency presents a military challenge, whereby military defeat of an insurgency would lead to favourable political conditions which ipso facto would help to secure popular support (cf. Peters, 2007; Luttwak, 2007; Gentile, 2008). In *SWM*, for instance, the population plays a smaller, yet distinct role. It has to be disarmed. Chapter XI of the manual discusses the 'nuts and bolts' of such procedures, e.g., by issuing decrees and conducting

8 This tenet is reminiscent of Galula's (2006: 4) assertion for battle for and control of the population (Objective: Population).

9 While similar notions are made in FM 90-8 (1-14), FM 3-24 completely shifts the focus to the population, thus, sidelining 'counterguerrilla' operations included in the earlier manual. Further, FM 3-24 suggests to use all means available, i.e. political, economic, etc. to achieve success.

10 During the Ba'ath rule Saddam Hussein used violent repression against groups opposing the government, such as the Kurds and Shiites.

both voluntary and ‘involuntary’ disarmament methods (SWM, 1940, 11-1; 11-2). FM 90-8 (1986, 1-15; 1-16), too, emphasizes the importance of offensive military operations against insurgents, especially through the employment of AirLand Battle framework; however, it offers a more balanced approach with respect to kinetic and non-kinetic operations. It shows that the inclusion of kinetic does not necessarily mean indiscriminate or in violation of international humanitarian law, as noted above.

Regardless of the conceptual shortcomings, the enemy-centric (second) view is supported by a longstanding historical record in counterinsurgent warfare (Peters, 2007; Gray, 2012b, pp. 22-23). In other words, the utilization of the military has long proven to be a successful way of defeating insurgents (Leites, Wolf, 1970; Luttwak, 2007; Peters, 2007). In essence, the population-centric versus enemy-centric debate presents a dichotomy, driven by the fact that FM 3-24 suggests solely one way to COIN that is *winning hearts and minds*, explicitly excluding other possible solutions.

3.1.3. New and old Centres of Gravity

High emphasis upon (host nation’s) population inevitably means that it is regarded as the most crucial variable in the new COIN-equation. A centre of gravity (CoG) is “the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends”, being located “where the mass is concentrated most densely” (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 610). In conventional warfare, this would *usually* be the enemy force (Echevarria, 2003a; 2003b).¹¹ While it seems like Clausewitz had already solved the problem of CoG determination, this is, alas, an illusion. In fact, the CoG concept is rather dynamic, and the problem of CoG determination continues to attract both scholars and practitioners, such as Phillip

11 A CoG is a center of balance, which once struck with sufficient and precise amount of force (not necessarily destroyed); will destroy one’s opponent’s equilibrium leading to their paralysis. Echevarria extensively discusses the concept of CoGs explaining that CoGs are neither enemy’s weaknesses, nor strengths, but rather a point of equilibrium. See Echevarria (2003a; 2003b).

Over the past century at least a dozen of possible CoG candidates were discovered and tested, e.g. during WWII, the CoG was enemy’s population. See Giulio Douhet’s works, and John Warden’s (1997) “Enemy as a System”.

S. Meilinger (1997) and Antulio Echevarria (2003a; 2003b).¹² By shifting the focus to population-centric operations, FM 3-24 makes the *population* a static CoG (Gentile, 2008a). However, current war-theatres demonstrate that the *population*, whose “hearts and minds” the counterinsurgent has to win, is rather fragmented with different insurgencies taking place within one theatre, e.g., in Iraq (Gentile, 2008a).¹³

Furthermore, relocating the very CoG to the population turns war into something alien to its nature (Gentile, 2008b, pp. 39). Clausewitz (1976, p. 13) wrote that “war is [...] a duel on a larger scale.” Following this logic, one’s opponent plays an integral part in the Clausewitzian concept of war. Certainly, protecting the population in order to undermine an insurgent movement might be a viable option; however, it is rather supplementary, whereby the focus on the enemy should not go astray. The fact that insurgent movements are spearheaded by non-state actors should not blur the general concept of war. The *wonderous trinity* (discussed in Chapter I) is equally applicable to both state and non-state actors. From this perspective, the population remains a part of the equation, albeit not a CoG. Clausewitz himself was fully aware of both the existence and importance of the so-called *people’s wars* (cf. Clausewitz, 1976, pp. 184).¹⁴

Lastly, given the definition of CoGs, it is unclear whether the population can be a CoG at all, especially in light of existing international legal norms, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols. At the beginning of the 20th century, Italian airpower theorist, Giulio Douhet, considered population as a CoG, albeit from a different perspective. The reason for this is that force *has to be applied* to enemy’s CoG. Douhet believed that targeting the enemy’s population would break the enemy’s morale rendering him incapable of fighting (Mets, 1999, pp. 11-19). In the present case, popular allegiance has to be *won over by non-kinetic means*. This reasoning removes the enemy from the centre stage and brushes aside the very reality that war is a

¹² Meilinger offers a method of dynamic CoG determination, showing that CoGs are not static and need to be selected according to enemy’s response. See, for instance, Meilinger (1997, pp. 51-80).

¹³ Consult Chapter II.

¹⁴ In the chapter “People in Arms” Clausewitz discusses small wars in Tyrol, Vandee and Spain. For a discussion of applicability of Clausewitz’s trinity to intra-state wars, see Daase (2007).

bloody enterprise, ergo “to introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity.” (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 14).

3.2. Past lessons in a wrong context?

Despite the insight provided by earlier COIN campaigns, the use of pre-selected historical works can be more than detrimental to the present environment. Jones and Smith (2010, pp. 439-440) point out the use of Galula’s work, which builds upon “a tradition of rationalist military guides,” solely divides the war into simple blocks supported by concise maxims “of operational wisdom,” resembling a cookbook. The manual also omits an array of successful COIN campaigns that preceded Algeria and Malaya, and in which indiscriminate force (e.g., oppression) was employed to suppress insurgencies (Peters, 2007, Gentile, 2008a). Instead, FM 3-24 is built upon lessons from a failed campaign, i.e., Algeria, rather than looking at other historically significant counterinsurgency successes, such as the ancient Romans, who ‘de-bellicized’ opponents of the Roman rule,¹⁵ or the Germans, who suppressed resistance during World War II (Luttwak, 2007; Gentile, 2008a). This implies that the only way to defeat an insurgency is through the ‘soft power’ approach, namely, winning hearts and minds (although this precise wording appears only once in Appendix A (A-5) of FM 3-24). Thus, the makers of FM 3-24 chose to adhere to Galula, rather than his counterpart, Roger Trinquier, who had gained identical experiences to Galula, but whose work, however, differs in some key aspects.¹⁶

While the manual acknowledges the uniqueness of each environment, stating that “all insurgencies are different,” they “often pass through similar phases of development,” using similar tactics (FM 3-24, lii; para I-91). Needless to say, such observation is made on the level of operational art. Yet, this is not a way of *battle*, but a way of war, which demands any operational

¹⁵ Both the ancient Romans and, more recently, the Germans used coercive methods, to ‘out terrorize’ the population.

¹⁶ See Appendix for a review of Trinquier’s work.

art to remain in coordination with a greater strategic purpose. The dichotomy of the uniqueness of each insurgency requiring a cultural understanding and universal application (i.e., all insurgencies follow a similar pattern) of the manual undermines its validity by confusing “struggles to preserve traditions with those that re-invent traditions” (Peters, 2007). In short, what worked in Anbar will most likely not work in Qandahar.

By acknowledging that historically specific tactics used against insurgents are prone to failure (FM 3-24, ix), the manual commits the fallacy of throwing together isolated “best practices” from various campaigns from the era of decolonization, when insurgent movements could be characterized as “Maoist.” Nevertheless, *Maoist* insurgencies are essentially different in their character from the present threat of global insurgent movement. Geographically delimited, these predominantly peasant-led insurgencies had a local objective (Hoffman, 2006, p. 71), as opposed to insurgent movements such as AQ, simultaneously operating in different theatres not confined to the Middle East and Southwest Asia (Kilcullen, 2010). *Post-Maoist* insurgencies, which emerged in the wake of the 21st century, strongly differ from the earlier type. More specifically, they have a decentralized network-structure, which enables for operational flexibility across a territorially unrestricted battle theatre, pursuing an overarching strategic objective compromised of variety of small local goals, and a global appeal, i.e., to Muslim populations worldwide (Hoffman, 2006; Kilcullen, 2011). In the case of Iraq, Zarqawi recruited AQI’s jihadist sympathizers from abroad in order to fight the *far enemy*, namely, the Coalition forces (cf. Fishman, 2006; Malkasian, 2008). In Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban or TTP) was fighting along the Afghan Taliban (cf. Giustozzi, 2009).

Further, these insurgencies enjoy a high degree of external support and have the ability to self-fund (e.g., the Taliban in Afghanistan or the AQI in Iraq), which erodes the vital importance of popular support in present-day settings. This external support presents one of the three pillars—the other two are time and popular support—upon which the ‘life’ of an insurgent movement depends.

One of the prominent reasons why states fail to defeat insurgent movements remains, as Record (2007, p. x) denotes, the state’s inability to break the

nexus between the insurgency and their external supporters, such as was the case in Vietnam, whereby Viet Cong was supported not only by the Chinese but also by the Soviets.¹⁷ Certainly, while external support does not guarantee insurgent success, most successful insurgencies relied upon a certain degree of such support. In the present case (Iraq), AQI received support from Iran (Masters, Bruno, 2012; Jones, 2012).

External support can also be in the form of sanctuaries (e.g., North Waziristan serves as a sanctuary for the Afghan Taliban). Both Galula and Thomson stressed the importance of population control for movement restriction (Alderson 2008b, p. 18). Sanctuaries add an invaluable advantage to insurgents, who, while being asymmetrically weaker, have the chance to regenerate and regroup, further exploiting the factor of time, which the counterinsurgents do not have much. Such was the case with the Taliban after their defeat in 2001. They moved to Pakistani sanctuaries to restore and enhance their capabilities (i.e., employing explosive devices or IEDs) and recruit new fighters (cf. Guistozzi, 2009).¹⁸ While FM 3-24 (1-28, Table 1-1) acknowledges the need for the isolation of insurgents from their cause and support, it provides little guidance on physical barriers (i.e., border control) to achieve the goal. However, physical barriers can provide great means of controlling the population within a physical space, isolating insurgents from both their cause and their support (Alderson, 2008b, pp. 19-22).¹⁹

Finally, most importantly, when dealing with an adversary, regardless of their status under international law, it is vital, as both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz stressed, to know one's enemy. This, in turn, demands a clear understanding of one's adversary's *wonderous trinity* and their goals in order to formulate a

17 Record (2007) also explains that the reason for failure could be the lack of political will coupled with lack of an efficient war strategy. This view combines two competing these advocated by Andrew Mack (1977) and Ivan Arreguin-Toft (2005). Mack (1977) defends the 'political will'-proposition or rather 'lack of interest' on part of the counterinsurgent, while Arreguin-Toft (2005) consents that wrong choice of strategy, i.e. direct versus indirect, leads to defeat of counterinsurgents.

18 During the Soviet-Afghan War, the Mujahideen also enjoyed a great degree of support from the Pakistani ISI and the CIA, having their sanctuaries in North Waziristan.

19 Alderson examines four cases in which physical barriers were employed: Algeria, Rhodesia, Vietnam and the United States concluding that Iraq would benefit from border barriers to stop influx of insurgents from neighboring countries such as Syria. This in turn would improve Iraqi internal stability and security. See, for instance, Alderson (2008).

coherent counter-strategy before even deciding which tools to employ. To take the discussion one step further, the intervening power, i.e., the United States, requires an ability to decide whether it is strategically viable to intervene in specific cases (see Gray, 2012b).

That said, this problem requires to be understood within the broader “War on Terror” context, as stated in Chapter II. Recognition of the Iraqi insurgencies as isolated movements, such as in Malaya, needs one strategic approach. Yet, if one chooses to adhere to Kilcullen’s idea of a *globalized insurgency* (rather than a War on Terror), the Iraqi case would present a completely different strategic challenge. Tactical success, despite its undeniable importance, does not always lead to the achievement of strategic goals.

Combating insurgencies in isolated parts of the world, i.e., failed or failing states, presents a fraction of the greater issue solely. As noted in the previous chapter, a simple ‘clear, hold and build’ might be sufficient to tackle a local insurgency, however, given the fact that new insurgencies present an intricate network of a larger whole with global ambitions, one has to understand that “[i]t is not the Middle East or the Afghan-Pakistan border where the main problem resides: it is in the inner city of London, Paris, New York, Hamburg, Sydney [...]” (Jones, Smith 2010, pp. 441-442).²⁰

3.3. British COIN doctrine as a template for success

The British COIN doctrine was based partially on the same writings (Thomson and Kitson) that shape the fundamentals of FM 3-24. To further illustrate this point, let us take a closer look at the British Army Field Manual of 2001. Chapter III of the Army Field Manual accentuates, quoting General Sir Frank Kitson, that “there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity,” thus implying the importance of political primacy, i.e., a need for a political solution to any conflict (Kitson as cited in Army Field Manual, 2001, B-3-1). Further, “British doctrine adheres strictly to the additional mandatory guidelines of

²⁰ Studies confirm that hub of jihadists were identified in cities like London (cf. Jones, Smith, 2010).

minimum necessary force and legitimacy” (Army Field Manual, 2001, B-3-2). In this respect, it mirrors the ethical principles—discrimination and proportionality—evident in the likes of FM 90-8 and FM 3-24. Popular support should be the focal point of COIN operations designed to separate insurgents from the population and neutralize them. Great attention is devoted to a coherently developed strategy and efficient intelligence network that enables counterinsurgents to eliminate their adversary and implement a post-conflict reconstruction (Army Field Manual, 2001, B-3-2).

Below is the overview of six points, which serve as guidelines for a British COIN strategy:

- a. Political Primacy and Political Aim.
- b. Coordinated Government Machinery.
- c. Intelligence and Information.
- d. Separating the Insurgent from his Support.
- e. Neutralising the Insurgent.
- f. Longer Term Post-Insurgency Planning.

(Army Field Manual, 2001, B-3-2)

While the earlier British doctrine approximates to the key ingredients of FM 3-24, especially points a, c, d, and f, it is noteworthy that the British doctrine has never been implemented in Iraq, and while the doctrine itself might be adequate, still it remains vacillating to what extent it can be implemented in other environments (Chin, 2008, p. 133).

Let us take a glance at the British COIN successes. To use Malaya as a classical instance of successful COIN and derive lessons from it might be more of a curse than a blessing. The actual practices in Malaya accurately resemble Trinquier’s idea of “strategic hamlets,” whereby the population was kept under control through resettlement, permanent curfews, and detentions (see Mumford 2011, p. 17). Mumford’s (2011) study of British COIN experiences illustrates that there are many myths surrounding the so-called ‘success’ of winning hearts and minds. For instance, the British used various torture methods, e.g., on IRA suspects between 1971 and 1975. These atrocities were not limited to Northern Ireland alone but equally occurred in Kenya during the suppression of the Mau Mau insurgency (Cohen 2010, p. 78; Mumford

2011, pp. 12-13), standing, thereby, in stark contrast with the ethically sound doctrine of the 21st century.²¹ Ironically, it is evident how Trinquier's ideas resonate with past acts of British COIN efforts.

Despite the existing belief that the British are more exemplary and discriminate at conducting COIN than their US counterparts, Warren Chin (2008, 121-122) demonstrates that the implementation of British COIN efforts was inadequate in Iraq. The British were operating in MND(SE) (Basra), which turned from a peaceful environment into a vicious insurgent hotbed. As previously discussed, the actions undertaken by the CPA, beyond British control, contributed to the increase of violence. Nonetheless, the British failed to alleviate the conditions, and by 2006, it was questionable whether they should be left responsible for MND(SE).²²

In his book, *Eating Soup with a Knife*, John Nagl (2002, p. xiv) posits that the success of the British was indebted to their army's ability both to learn *and* implement a successful COIN doctrine, which was not the case of the US in Vietnam given the difference of organizational cultures or the lack of a learning institution in the latter case. Yet, it took the British two years to implement the Briggs plan,²³ whereby their earlier efforts were underpinned by a lack of strategic and operational achievements. Additionally, the Malayan insurgents were both ethnically different from the rest of the population and their geographical position (the peninsula) offered an easy way of separating them from the population (Kahl, 2007).

After 9/11, the British had to relearn COIN, which did not result in an anticipated success, but quite the opposite thereof (Chin, 2008, p. 133). The lesson-learning ability of the British was not a historical continuity, but rather an instantaneous process. Only due to the employment of personnel who had experience in earlier COIN campaigns and whose knowledge was at best outdated has such transfer of lessons taken place (Mumford, 2011, pp. 2-3; 5-7). Therefore, to assume that the British are better equipped for COIN

21 For a full account of the Mau Rebellion, see Alao (2006, pp. 51-61).

22 For more details on what contributed to the British failure, see Warren Chin (2008, pp. 130-131).

23 The Briggs plan stressed the importance of separating the population from the insurgents (cf. Mumford, 2011, p. 16).

than the Americans would be erroneous, given both the historical record of the British experience and their recent performance in Iraq. Precautions should be taken before institutionalizing British lessons into the US COIN Manual. Each environment requires an exclusive set of operational guidelines, rather than a “one-size-fits-all” COIN approach. Most importantly, there should be a dynamic interplay between one’s own forces and those of one’s adversary, supported by flexibility and speedy response/reaction in order to exploit the enemy’s weakness, rather than performing COIN by the book.

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CHAPTER 4.

DECONSTRUCTING THE US ARMY/ MARINE CORPS COUNTERINSURGENCY MANUAL, FM 3-24

DECONSTRUCTING THE US ARMY/MARINE CORPS COUNTERINSURGENCY MANUAL, *FM 3-24*

4

“The pertinent question, therefore, is ‘Can that traditional way of war adapt so as to be effective against irregular enemies?’”

Colin S. Gray (2006). *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, vii.

Abstract. This chapter focuses on specific, more technical tenets such as the importance of leadership, unity of effort, and support to host nation forces. The author has chosen to examine elements, which differ from earlier practices due to the contemporary operational environment and the role of the US as a foreign occupying force, rather than a colonial power.

Keywords. Doctrine; Counterinsurgency; Insurgency; Leadership; FM 3-24; US Army; US Marine Corps

4.1. Importance of Leadership

Another crucial point about FM 3-24 is its emphasis on leadership. Certainly, leadership is important. Clausewitz (1976, pp. 67-68) acknowledged the need for an experienced general who could make decisions in a pulse-beat, whereby “an eminent commander needs more than experience and a strong will” (68) to lessen the effect of *friction*. But, is leadership a sufficient or necessary condition for a campaign to succeed?

Successful, charismatic leaders were present in the Philippines during the Huk Rebellion (Ramon Magsaysay), in Malaya (Sir Gerald Templer), Vietnam (General Creighton Abrams), and finally in Iraq (General David Petraeus) (Rovner, 2012). Adherents of the leader-centric theory go even as far as to

suggest that the success or failure of counterinsurgents depend on leadership quality vis-à-vis their adversary (Moyar, 2009, pp. 4-6). Thus, IW is not about a struggle for the population but rather a struggle between two elites: the government and the insurgent leadership.

Yet, Rovner (2012, pp. 221-222) invalidates the claim about the paramount significance of charismatic leadership in subjugating insurgencies. In reality, before the arrival of Templer, who set forth earlier policies started by Briggs, the insurgency had started to diminish (Cohen, 2010, p. 79). Moreover, as Rovner (2012, p. 223) argues, “some sequence of coercion and conciliation might be required to establish political order, depending on the circumstance of any given conflict.” This view is also supported by Karl Hack, who, commenting on the Malayan case, underlines the need to break up insurgent groups, e.g., with kinetic means, before implementing ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns (Rovner, 2012, p. 223). Analogously, Edward Luttwak (2007) stresses the need to “out-terrorize the insurgents” to prevent the population from supporting them.

This inevitably suggests that (indiscriminate) violence, as mentioned above, has been used in even the most quintessential COIN campaigns. While leadership or ‘agency,’ spoken in broader International Relations terms, remains a valuable asset, it can be neither substitute for a missing strategy, nor a fix a wrong one. Such emphasis on ‘agency’ ignores broader structural elements, i.e., nature of insurgency, popular support for the COIN mission, etc., which have overall a greater impact upon the success of COIN missions. In Iraq, General David Petraeus, despite his influential position, was implementing President Bush’s new strategy, which led to a reduction of violence not just because of Gen Petraeus and Gen Mattis but also owing to other factors of no lesser importance.¹

¹ See Chapter II on evaluation of the Surge and the contributing factors for reduction of violence.

4.2. Unity of Effort

One of the central tenets of FM 3-24 remains a not a novel (cf. Luttwak, 2007), but a vital concept: *unity of effort*. Available at all levels of command, the concept deals with the integration of civil and military activities (FM 3-24: p. 2-3; para 2-13). In the words of General David Petraeus (2008, p. 210):

Coordinate operations and initiatives with our embassy and interagency partners, our Iraqi counterparts, local governmental leaders, and non-governmental organizations to ensure all are working to achieve a common purpose.

In order to achieve *unity of effort* FM 3-24 stresses the need for cooperation with leaders of non-military agencies. Three mechanisms facilitate such a liaison:

- At DoD level, Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs) provide interagency support of plans, operations, and contingencies to commanders (para 2-47);
- At the HN (Host Nation) level, Country Teams are in-country coordinating and supervising bodies (para 2-48);
- Civil-Military Coordination Centres (CMOCs) are coordinating structures at each sub political level of the HN government, established by military and civilian leaders (para 2-49).

The importance of these mechanisms is best explained by the presence of different actors extending the classical friendly and enemy forces. FM 3-24 (pp. 2-1 – 2-4) identifies the following (possible) participants:

1. U.S. military forces
2. Multinational (including HN) forces
3. U.S. Government agencies
4. Other government agencies
5. NGOs
6. IGOs
7. Other multinational corporations
8. HN civil and military authorities (including local leaders) (FM 3-24, p. 2-4, para 2-17).

Therefore, the realization of *unity of effort* should be considered because present counterinsurgency campaigns are waged to a large extent by coalitions, rather than by a single state. Each state's military possesses their own field manuals based on their *individual* experiences and best practices because their armed forces are not trained to fight in a coalition a priori; this raises the question: Is it still necessary to release individual manuals given the fact that countries operate as a coalition?

Given the complexity of today's operational environment, where the number of actors is not limited to insurgents and counterinsurgents but extends to aforementioned actors operating under the same framework—non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private military and security companies (PMSCs)—achieving a unity of effort is quite a complicated task.² Despite the recognition that multinational (including HN) forces are vital for the conduct of COIN due to their different experiences and cultural backgrounds, such operations remain problematic owing to the “rules of engagement, home-country policies and sensitivities” (FM 3-24, p. 2-6, paras 2-24/25). Military leaders are expected to possess cultural and political awareness of their partners; yet, the solution to this issue remains rather ambiguous.

In particular, in Afghanistan, NGOs, PMSCs and contingents from various countries, which form the ISAF, carry responsibilities for different provinces. However, they remain restrained by their home governments because of different RoE, policies, and, especially, a lack of a common objective, which undermines the overall mission by delaying decision-making processes (i.e., for theatre-commanders) (Thruelsen, Ringsmose, 2010; Kiras, 2011, pp. 270-271).³ Subsequently, agreements between states regarding the conduct of operations are often reached upon the lowest common denominator, which impairs both the unity of effort and achievement of strategic objectives. Additionally, lost time plays right into the hands of insurgents because time remains one of their key weapons (as well as popular support

² While it is beyond the limits of this thesis, it is important to consider the fact that each actor their own interests, pursuit of which will not necessarily contribute to achievement of common goals.

³ ISAF forces, tasked with reconstruction, were divided over matters concerning conduct of combat missions, due to restraint exercised by home governments. This prevented them from operating efficiently.

and external support). Insurgents use protracted warfare to exhaust counterinsurgents. Divergent RoEs and bureaucratic procedures of counterinsurgents' home governments only facilitate such protraction.

Further, employing the Clausewitzian trinity, in the case of insurgents, provides some clarity regarding their goals, these, however, remain blurred when looking at other non-state actors. For instance, PMSCs are businesses,⁴ which have different motivations, i.e., financial gains. Needless to say, PMSCs lack accountability for violations of International Humanitarian Law and/or criminal offenses under domestic (HN's) law. Though quite attractive for employment, both in terms of costs and domestic support since they are employed on a contract basis and are not embedded into the armed forces (thus not increasing the number of troops), PMSCs carry many caveats, especially in the legal grey area in which they operate (White, McLeod, 2008).

The case of the Abu Ghraib scandal elucidates the failure to hold involved persons accountable for committed atrocities. CPA Order 17 stipulated that private contractors shall remain immune from prosecution by Iraqi authorities; instead, this responsibility is transferred to the sending states. Nevertheless, because of the difficulties to prove their accountability (Maogoto, Sheehy, 2009)⁵ and an existing legal deficit, no judicial proceedings have been undertaken against CACI and Titan contractors involved in the aforementioned scandal (Kinsey, 2006, p. 101; Schaller, 2007, pp. 358-359). Legal implications aside, the transgression—in the form of violation of laws of war—has undermined both international and domestic support for the war and alienated the Iraqi population from the 'occupying' forces.

Another necessary component in a multi-actor environment is *unity of command*. Having the right individual taking charge of various military services, and synchronizing efforts of non-military agencies, while ensuring a

4 While Private Military & Security Companies encompass a wide range of tasks (intelligence, training of indigenous forces, technical and logistical support, consultation, etc.), it remains beyond the limits of this thesis to consider each in detail. For a more detailed account of PMSC activities and their implications, see Kinsey (2006).

5 The only way to make PMSCs accountable for violation of the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, is to use the 'chain of command' reasoning, whereby in Abu Ghraib case private contractors were assimilated into the US military remaining no longer under status of 'private actors', therefore, they acted as direct agents of the United States (Maogoto, Sheehy, 2009, pp. 125-128).

unity of effort to pursue strategic/political aims remains paramount (however, this does not ensure the correctness of the policy) (Meilinger, 2008).

Yet, the experience of nation-building both in Iraq and Afghanistan illustrates that “the degree of civil-military, multinational, and cross-sectoral planning, preparation, and coordination” required to accomplish the task is far beyond the current capacity of the United States (Kahl, 2007), especially given the large numbers of counterinsurgents required to perform such a task, let alone their degree of education and cultural skills.

Consequently, achieving unity of effort in the present environment, while not impossible, remains a challenging task, which adds to the counterinsurgents’ disadvantages. Unless the bureaucratic inertia (e.g., different RoE) is overcome, and specific legislation regulating accountability of PSMCs is introduced, success in COIN will be significantly thwarted.

4.3. Support to Host Nation and Training of Security Forces

Support of and cooperation with a Host Nation (HN) and training of HN forces remain vital elements of FM 3-24. Firstly, the HN government has to obtain legitimacy in order to gain popular support, after addressing popular grievances. Secondly, an effective security apparatus⁶ will help to protect the population and contribute to both internal and external security once the ‘outside’ forces have departed. Thirdly, the outside forces should play an augmenting role, while the HN forces have to take the main initiative (FM 3-24: p. 1-26, para 1-147; p. 6-22, para 6-107). This reasoning is derived from the French experience in Algeria and employment of the French *Spéciale Administration Section* (Special Administration Section) in Algeria.⁷ Embedding advisors, familiarizing themselves with the HN’s military’s strengths and weaknesses and offering support to indigenous forces proved to

⁶ It is better if HN force performs a task bad, rather than letting outside forces perform it good, FM 3-24 denotes.

⁷ SAS, divided in small units, performed activities across the whole military and civil spectrum ranging from administrative reforms on governmental and civic level, training of security and police forces, agricultural activities, medical support, etc. (cf. Martin, Keiger, 2002, pp. 5-57).

be quite helpful in both Iraq and Afghanistan (cf. FM 3-24: p. 6-4; Vick et al, 2006, p. 98).

Yet, such reasoning is based on a hypothesis that the population could side either with the government or with the insurgents (cf. Galula, 2006, pp. 74-86). In *Maoist* types of ideologically driven insurgencies, this could well be the case (Biddle, 2008, p. 248). This rationalization disregards the HN's (possible) ethnic and sectarian composition, which remains a decisive determinant for the popular perception of the government (Biddle, 2008, p. 348). Centuries-old wisdom stipulates that one has to know one's enemy (and oneself). Regardless of the emphasis on cultural awareness of FM 3-24, Iraq—the test laboratory for the manual—hardly reflects the aforementioned dichotomy of choice. An additional caveat arising from this logic is the possibility that the interests of the intervening state will not coincide with the HN's government, weakening the allied military forces on all levels: strategic, operational, and tactical (Byman, 2006). Resolving this conundrum remains important for successful COIN conduct. However, addressing this issue is beyond the scope of FM 3-24. Especially in today's operational environment with the US acting as an 'outsider,' as the manual rightly denotes, begs the question whether it is strategically feasible to intervene in a conflict in which there is no interest alignment between the HN and the *outsider(s)*. One of such examples is President Karzai's recently (2011) announced abolishment request of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are tasked with reforming the security sector and local governance, and the development of compromising logical lines of operation (LLOs) and counterinsurgency in combat-heavy areas (Katzman, 2011, pp. 40-41).

Further, the provision of governmental services can strengthen existing sectarian antagonisms. While the training and indoctrination of indigenous forces remains a vital task for counterinsurgents (Corum, 2006), given that HN forces will be regarded as legitimate (Byman, 2006) and that they must be capable of sustaining a secure environment once the allied forces have departed (FM 3-24: p. 6-6, 6-29), this task remains challenging. In Iraq, the build-up of predominantly Shiite indigenous forces, accompanied with the inefficiency of the Iraqi security apparatus, have clearly led to a backlash, further

marginalizing the Sunni minority and exacerbating sectarian violence (Burton, Nagl, 2008, p. 305). Ethnically mixed forces hardly offer a better solution to creating a possibility of intra-force tensions (Biddle, 2008, p. 348). The Anbar Awakening and following cooperation with the Coalition forces demonstrates Sunni's persisting fear of ISF and their distrust towards Al Maliki government.⁸ Afghanistan's culturally and ethnically dissimilar population and the limited power projection capabilities of the Afghan government, which do not extend the borders of Kabul (Nojumi, 2002), demonstrate a similar problem.⁹ Also, the national composition of ANA being predominantly non-Pashtun, raised concerns among the Pashtun population (Marston, 2010, p. 236)

The manual (FM 3-24: 6-2; para 6-8 – 6-11), despite acknowledging problems such as corruption and patronage within higher ranks, lacks clear guidelines and possible solutions remain highly narrative. However, such methodological guidance is crucial considering the shift in training and education of indigenous forces to the core competencies of regular units (while this was the domain of SOF earlier).

Presently, training and education of indigenous forces shifted to the core competencies of regular units (as opposed to US SOF). Unfortunately, FM 3-24 does not provide sufficient methodological guidance. In Afghanistan, the mission of educating the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) was divided between different contingents, each of which pursued their own methodological approach. For instance, the development of the ANA and ANP were underfunded from the very beginning, leading to under-training and corruption, thus enabling the Taliban to exploit the inadequacies of the Afghan security apparatus and expand their sphere of influence (see Giustozzi, 2009, p. 174; Cordesman, Mausner, Kasten, 2009, pp. 44-52; Katzman, 2011, pp. 35-37).

Undoubtedly, development of and cooperation with indigenous forces constitutes a vital part of COIN endeavour, extending the COIN competen-

⁸ It will suffice to say that the Sunni tribes cooperated with the US forces, due to their fear of the Iraqi Security Forces. See Chapter II for more details.

⁹ Throughout Afghan history, as Nojumi (2002) points out, the Afghan government has never been able to reassert its full authority over the Afghan tribes. The best approach to cooperation was made by Daoud in the 1970s which consisted of agreements with tribal leaders.

cies of HN forces (Vick et al, 2006, p. 96). Nonetheless, there needs to be a common methodological framework to deal with the aforementioned issues, on the one hand, and sufficient allocation of (financial) resources, on the other.

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CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIVE THOUGHTS ON THE US COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE

CONCLUSIVE THOUGHTS ON THE US COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE

5

“If terrorists will be defeated only when the world is populated by civil societies worthy of the name by American standards, then truly we are in for a very long war.”

Colin S. Gray (2006). Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Sceptical View. *Parameters*, 36(2), 9.

Abstract. The chapter draws conclusions from previous analyses and briefly discusses what the implementation of the new manual means for the future of the U.S. Army. Previous chapters have discussed both normative and technical elements of FM 3-24, most notably, its departure from the earlier doctrines and practices. Having shown that FM 3-24 substantially differs from the so-called American Way of War, the impact of the manual needs to be examined not only in the theatre of operations but also domestically.

Keywords. Doctrine; Counterinsurgency; Insurgency; Leadership; FM 3-24; US Army; US Marine Corps; Future Wars

5.1. FM 3-24 and the Future of the US Armed Forces

The US Army’s poor performance in counterinsurgency operations has sparked a great debate about the Army’s transformation. In 2005, Donald Rumsfeld shook up the envisioning of a transformation “into a lighter, nimbler force better able to take advantage of new technology and respond to new threats” (Boot, 2005). Experiences in Iraq, later reinforced by the creation of FM 3-24, served as the main impetus for the transformation of the US military by shifting the focus from conventional style operations to COIN as its primary mission. The National Training Centre, for instance, replaced its focus

on conventional war with COIN (Gordon, 2006). Due to its population-centric nature, FM 3-24 urges counterinsurgents to develop cultural awareness, social and lingual skills. This inevitably means that conducting COIN (by *the book*) requires a different training approach of the US forces. The belief that future conflicts will resemble those in Afghanistan and Iraq further reinforces the need to remake the US Army to enhance its capacity to conduct population-centric COIN. Proponents of such approach include most notably General Petraeus, John Nagl, and Peter Mansoor among others.

Further, while the ability to learn and adapt remains an important prerequisite for engaging in any type of conflict, the US Army has been criticized of lacking precisely this ability (Nagl, 2007). Such thinking neglects the fact that despite the absence of a clear strategic end state, the US Army managed to adjust to circumstances in Iraq within one year (2003) switching from combat to full-spectrum operations to counterinsurgency. The Army's ability to fight is the key reason for its ability to *learn and adapt*. Thus, the main emphasis should remain upon the core competencies of combined arms warfare, namely, coordination of artillery, air support, and intelligence for maximum effects (Gentile, Rid, Rotman, Tohn and Wharton, 2009, p. 191).

The claim that the US Army failed to adapt to COIN operations precisely *because of its conventional capabilities* is based upon false reasoning. Rather, the army trained to conduct COIN would have greater difficulties in switching to conventional style kinetic operations (Gentile, Rid, Rotman, Tohn and Wharton, 2009, p. 192). To illustrate the logic of this claim, it is enough to recall that a soldier is expected to become "a social worker, a civil engineer, a school teacher, a nurse, a boy scout" (Galula as quoted in FM 3-24, p. 2-9; para 2-42). While the ethical component of the manual is a laudable effort, the above tasks do not and should not fall within the range of the Army's responsibilities. Such *socialization* has already caused a manifestation of atrophy of the Army's fighting skills (see Gentile, 2008). The Israeli Defence Force's (IDF) experience in Lebanon in 2006 demonstrates precisely how dangerous such *socialization* can be (Biddle, Friedman, 2008; Johnson, 2010; 2011).¹

1 Due to Hezbollah's conventional approach to defense against the Israeli invasion, IDF, having focused on irregular style warfare, had tremendous difficulties to accomplish their mission (Johnson 2010; 2011).

Finally, the transformation of the Army would require more than just changes in training and doctrine. Instead, the whole interagency structure would have to be adjusted accordingly, at a great expense (Biddle, Friedman, 2008, p. 6).

5.2. What does the future hold?

Most importantly, despite the success of the Surge, the domestic populace has lost any patience for Iraq-style operations anywhere else in the world (cf. Dunlap Jr., 2009). This begs the question: is it viable to transform the US Army into ‘boy scouts’? Just because the US chose to get involved in two wars simultaneously (consistent with its 1990’s ‘Base Force’ Doctrine), it does not necessarily mean that future conflicts will be ‘irregular.’ War remains war regardless of its ever-changing character, namely, the use of force to further one’s political ends. It follows that the army must retain its ability to be this force, namely, to “be ready to fight effectively at all levels of command” (Gentile, 2011). Ralph Peters (2007) rightly notes that military solutions have always been, according to historical record, “*the only effective tool* in defeating insurgencies [emphasis added].”

Clausewitz has shown, that war is a violent enterprise and the *social* skills of counterinsurgents will hardly change this fact. While the author does not wish to imply that excessive violence is a necessity, it is, however, impossible to simply eschew violence, given that it is a defining feature of war. What is important to stress is the fact that proportionate and discriminate use of violence is still a use of violence that will manifest itself in every instance of war.

Finally, a tactical handbook cannot fill the strategic deficit. Bad performance on the ground is an indicator of either a complete absence of strategy or a poorly crafted one. Strategy remains the central determinant for the conduct of war; in other words, for operational and tactical levels. However, FM 3-24 tries to turn the pyramid on its head by trying to dictate strategy. In Gentile’s (2009) words, FM 3-24 became a “strategy of tactics.”

5.3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Firstly, the thesis has illustrated that FM 3-24 has not only had a very marginal effect on the positive changes in Iraq because of the presence of other factors, i.e., the Al-Anbar Awakening, Sons of Iraq, and kinetic operations but it also failed to deliver the strategic end state envisioned by the Bush administration.

Secondly, the wisdoms of FM 3-24 are by no means new. While certainly valuable, especially in an ethical sense, these were crafted for other strategic environments and other military capabilities, thus, making their general applicability questionable, especially due to the character of present-day insurgencies that constitute a part of an intricate global network. Moreover, the United States operates as an intervening state (in coalition with NATO members) to augment host governments of countries plagued by insurgencies.

Further, high emphasis upon agency, i.e., individual leaders, rather than structure, i.e., nature of insurgent groups is very misleading. Both sets of factors need to be taken into consideration.

Lastly, FM 3-24 endangers the Army's capability to conduct kinetic operations, while marginalizing other assets, e.g., airpower. The premise for this is a false belief that future wars will be solely irregular.

That said, what remains missing is not so much a *field* manual, but rather a coherent strategy. The formulation of strategy should be the starting point to resolve the COIN issue. The rift between ends and means and the inability to understand the character of a war a state is engaging in are the factors leading to defeat, not an absence of a field manual.

Thus, there should be a well-established dialogue between the policy-makers and their military counterparts to coordinate their efforts better. Failure to do so will (most likely) result in defeat on the battlefield. Further, a well-crafted strategy should make use of all available assets, without side-lining other tools, i.e., airpower (which occupy only a small section of FM 3-24), which can serve as force multipliers and increase the asymmetry in favour of counterinsurgents.

In conclusion, while the question of victory in COIN remains on the agenda of both academia and military alike, FM 3-24, regardless of its valuable insights from previous eras of COIN, does not embody a universal solution. It

should be read and implemented with care, while newly gained lessons from present-day environments should be paid more attention to. Regardless of the extensive attention paid to irregular warfare, it should not be forgotten that war, regardless of its character, remains subordinate to policy, to paraphrase Clausewitz. Therefore, the main attention needs to be paid to both policy and strategic planning.

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APPENDIX

Review of Roger Trinquier's *La Guerre Modern*

The following review of Roger Trinquier's book should give the reader more insight into COIN literature of the past century. Especially interesting is this review when contrasted with Galula's work, which is epitomized in FM 3-24. Despite the fact that Trinquier's book, *La Guerre Modern* (1963), or *Modern Warfare*, was based upon Trinquier's experiences in Indochina and Algeria, the author (Trinquier, 2006, pp. 6-7) placed emphasis upon the destruction of the enemy, whereby support of the population could be achieved through terrorism. In essence, it is not necessary to win popular support in order to rule the population, instead, there is a need for the "right organization," namely, the formation of "strategic hamlets," areas secured through barbed wire to keep the population secure from insurgents (Trinquier, 2006, p. 4; 63-69). Given the character of the *modern warfare* and adversary's "*armed clandestine organization* whose essential role is to impose its will upon the population (emphasis in original)" victory can be achieved only through the complete destruction of the enemy (Trinquier, 2006, p. 7). Possibly due to this advocacy of violent repression, Trinquier's work is both less known and less appealing, yet, not unimportant for its military value. Certainly, in the age when wars (or armed interventions) are waged under the banner of protecting human rights (e.g., in Rwanda, Kosovo, etc.) Trinquier's suggestions, which would violate the very basic principles of the UN Charter, would find little sympathy in the international community.

Airpower in Counterinsurgency Operations

The role of airpower in FM 3-24 has been strongly marginalized. The discussion of the employment of airpower for COIN operations is solely limited to Appendix E of the manual, following the logic of using limited firepower. The manual states (E-1) that due to the nature of COIN operations, the main employment of airpower will be for non-kinetic operations (i.e., transportation and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)). Despite the recognition that precision strikes can be of great value to elim-

inate specific insurgent leaders, in sum, this should be used with care and to a limited extent only (FM 3-24, E-5; E-6). This aspect is closely linked to possible collateral damage, which would play into the hands of insurgents. Earlier studies of employment of aerial bombing in Vietnam suggest that indiscriminate violence toward civilians hampered popular pacification, undermining the COIN campaign (Kocher, Pepinsky, Kalyvas, 2011). Indeed, civilian casualties remain a great concern for human rights groups who see 500 and 2000-pound munitions as a threat to civilians (Washington Post January 17th, 2008).¹

Non-kinetic missions for the employment of airpower would include a collection of intelligence (SIGNINT) and its active interaction with human intelligence (HUMINT), patrolling borders, transportation, information operations, etc. (FM 3-24, E-7 – E-23). Thus, by enabling counterinsurgents to operate more efficiently, airpower gives them an asymmetric advantage over their adversaries.

Apart from being a force multiplier for the troops on the ground, airpower's psychological utility is often overlooked (cf. Kahl, 2007). In Iraq, airpower contributed to violence reduction serving a two-fold purpose: to break the morale of the enemy troops and to foster the morale of the population (whose recognition one tries to win). This was precisely the case with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, which stood down following US airstrikes conducted upon Sadr's strongholds in Baghdad² (Dunlap Jr, 2008, pp. 58-59). While the ability to strike the enemy's CoG is clearly more difficult in the case of a non-state adversary and its decentralized organizational structure, airpower offers asymmetric advantages such as precision strikes, the conduct of information operations, ISR capabilities, and global mobility (Peck, 2007).

Nevertheless, airpower can play a significant role in COIN operations. While reliance upon technology alone is not a panacea, technological advance-

1 United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) estimated more than 200 civilian deaths caused by U.S. airstrikes in Iraq from April 2007 to the end of the year, when the increase of US strikes took place simultaneously with the surge of troops (Washington Post, January 17th 2008).

2 The author does not wish to imply that airstrikes were the only reason for the ceasefire; rather, the emphasis is upon the fact that offensive airstrikes were one of the contributing factors. See Chapter II for more details.

ment, especially in the refinement of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) should not be easily brushed aside. PGMs offer a two-fold advantage. On the one hand, they reduce the number of sorties, usually to a single aircraft, to neutralize a specific target, which requires less personnel to maintain the aircraft, less fuel, and less spare parts. On the other hand, PGMs offer high precision, thus minimizing the risk of collateral damage (Meilinger, 2003, pp. 114-121; 2009).³ Also, small diameter bombs (SDB) designed for urban targets offer high precision to reduce collateral damage and are well suited for close-air-support missions (Lieutenant General North quoted in Dunlap Jr., 2008, p. 57). Thus, SDBs are extremely well suited for employment in COIN operations. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), such as Predator, are not equipped with laser designating and kinetic capabilities extending their earlier surveillance function. Airborne platforms are another innovation that enables not only electronic protection to ground troops but also eliminates insurgent communications associated with triggering improved explosive devices (IEDs). Capabilities of such platforms remain unrestricted by terrain or “artificial boundaries between units” (Peck, 2007). Clearly, these technological innovations do not suggest that there will be no civilian casualties. Two things are important to mention at this point:

Firstly, in every war there is an element of friction, which cannot be wished away even at the disposal of a high-end technological arsenal. However, one should not forget the fact that insurgents both in Iraq and Afghanistan use a ‘target hugging’ technique, i.e., employ civilians as human shields (cf. Cordesman, 2007, pp. 1-2; Kahl, 2007, pp. 13-14) making it difficult for counterinsurgents to avoid civilian deaths. Secondly, while the marginal role of airpower is caused by fear of collateral damage, which would, in turn, lead to the alienation of the very population one is fighting for. It should be noted that the US made efforts to adhere to the norm of non-combatant immunity, underpinned by principles of “military necessity, humanity, distinction, and

3 “[T]he ability of aircraft to project force in a discriminate manner so as to minimize civilian casualties and collateral damage has continued to increase over the past two decades.” (Meilinger, 2003, p. 120).

proportionality” (Kahl, 2007, pp. 9).⁴ This inevitably means that non-combatants should not be targeted under any circumstances, even if the military necessity arises. This was achieved by making “no-strike” lists (schools, mosques, etc.) prior to the commencement of OIF, as well as demands placed upon troops to pay more attention, strict RoEs, and finally, altered education and training of troops (Kahl, 2007, p. 16; 27-28).⁵

What is more, airpower is vital to leaving a light footprint. Logistically, it can be quite a challenge to sustain a large force, especially in light of the new COIN FM 3-24 requirements. Hypothetically speaking, such a force would need to be mobile while operating in small units in challenging terrains like in Afghanistan or Iraq. To this end, the forces can be sustained from the air, given the fact that due to its asymmetric advantage in air assets (cf. Peck, 2007; Meilinger, 2009), the US can easily gain air superiority over the hostile territory (e.g., Operation Enduring Freedom is a great example of how airpower can be employed for both close air support (CAS),⁶ IRS, and logistical and transportation purposes (cf. Finn, 2002; Lambeth, 2005).

Lastly, airpower is essential in advisory and assistance roles, i.e., Foreign Internal Defence (FID) and Building Partner Capacity (Vick et al, 2006; Peck, 2007). Thus, both FID and BPC form an integral part of COIN efforts, especially in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. In both, technology and infrastructure was lacking; thus, the US Air Force played an integral part providing air support to both US forces and partner nations (Hock, 2010, p. 60). The US should not try to build a microcosm of the US Air Force, but rather ensure obtainment aircraft in accord with the host nation’s [security] needs, and suitable for COIN operations, namely low-cost rotary and fixed-wing types

⁴ The norm of noncombatant immunity is rooted in the ‘Just War’ tradition and institutionalized as part of the Law of War, which in turn was codified in a number of conventions, e.g. the Hague Convention of 1907, the Geneva Conventions 1949 and Additional Protocols to Geneva Conventions 1977. Despite the fact that the US has not ratified the Additional Protocols, it still recognizes them as a part of Law of War and adheres to them. In Vietnam War, where civilians were targeted deliberately, civilian casualties were much higher. This confirms the US adherence to the noncombatant immunity norm (cf. Kahl, 2007, pp. 9-10; 13-14). For an opposing view, see Pape (1996) and Grosscup (2006).

⁵ There have been instances, in which the US could not strictly adhere to the norm leading to civilian casualties, i.e. when air strikes were initiated as a result of dubious human intelligence (cf. Kahl, 2007, pp. 23-24).

⁶ In March 2002 air support to ground forces was essential to the successful outcome of *Operation Anaconda* in Paktia Province of Afghanistan.

with short take-off and landing (STOL) capabilities. Further, US aviation advisors can offer invaluable education to the host nation's forces in regards to conducting COIN operations (Vick et al, 2006, p. 98; Hock, 2010, pp. 60-61). Yet, only the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) had the capability to perform IW and BPC simultaneously. Therefore, both of these aspects need to be overall strengthened. Most notably, the Air Force has to depart from its conventional thinking (Hock, 2010, p. 58).

Conclusively, while kinetic operations should play an integral part of an overall COIN effort, regardless of the air assets employed, they alone, as stressed in Chapter I, cannot secure terrains or stop insurgent activities (cf. Meilinger, 2003, pp. 120-121; Smyth, 2011, p. 117).⁷ Rather, airpower should be used in conjunction with land forces in order to achieve *strategic* objectives. What needs to be understood is that airpower remains yet another tool in counterinsurgents' toolkit, and given its lethal power, it needs to be employed proportionally and with great accuracy as not to undermine the overall effort. What is more, marginalization of airpower from various manuals, e.g., UK JDP 3-40, FM 3-24, indicates a need for a new air doctrine for the present operational environment (Smyth, 2011, p. 124).

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Counterinsurgency Operations in the 21st Century

Insights from the U.S. Army Experiences in Iraq

Too often states have faced internal threats from violent non-state actors seeking to overthrow the government and replace it with their own. Too often have states' efforts fallen short in overcoming such an internal menace. This begs the question: is successful counterinsurgency possible? This question took the centre stage in light of the United States' involvement in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Quickly it became evident that superior military strength did not translate into military success. The American way of war could not mitigate the escalating situation on the ground. The descent into chaos in Iraq has perpetuated the need for a new approach to counter the insurgents. This approach came to be known as "population-centric" counterinsurgency. By 2006, it appeared in the form of the US Army/Marine Corps joint publication entitled Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency. The new manual offered an arguably new way of addressing insurgencies, shifting the focus from the enemy to the key population. For the US Army and Marine Corps, this 'new' thinking presented a radical departure from previous practices. However, was the initial success in Iraq, indeed, indebted to the implementation of the manual? And how 'new' was this new approach the manual laid out? In this book, the author closely examines the situation in Iraq and assesses in how far the new manual could be said to have contributed to the reduction of violence in Iraq in 2007. In addition, the core elements are examined in detail and contrasted with previous manuals in order to highlight that the 'new' thinking might not have been that new after all.



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