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Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice

From Early Renaissance to Present Day

Marina Miron



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From Early Renaissance to Present Day



ESCUELA MILITAR DE CADETES

“General José María Córdova”

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Marina Miron

King's College London



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Preface

The present work, “Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice from Early Renaissance to Present Day: A Critical Overview”, provides a very thorough review and critical appraisal of counterinsurgency practice, with the 18th century as its point of departure. In addition to illuminating what our forefathers thought about the conduct of such operations both domestically and abroad, the book considers the perspectives of those elements of society who choose to take up arms to pursue their political goals. This critical reflection into the past offers the contemporary practitioner a number of normative insights which underpin contemporary military doctrines related to the topic, most notably the US and the British.

This work illustrates how different thinking evolved in different parts of the world and how this thinking was incorporated into practice and with what degree of success. Inevitably, as the work demonstrates, what has been very remiss of both policy makers and practitioners is the strategy that should guide operations and tactics. Only select thinkers such as Carl von Clausewitz and Charles E. Callwell were able to make an important link between the political, strategic and operational/tactical. Therefore, correct appreciation of strategy should serve as an important reminder to both political decision-makers and military practitioners when deciding which methods should be used and when—given that the problems faced by those from previous centuries are evidently similar to those we face nowadays.

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, United Kingdom, 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, entitled “Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice from Early Renaissance to Present Day: A Critical Overview”, presents a rich and comprehensive account of counterinsurgency—in modern parlance—accounts, derived from original sources in Spanish, French, German and English languages. What is notable is the fact that the discussed thinkers and practitioners arrived at similar insights from which contemporary military forces can derive valuable lessons for writing doctrines and designing operations.

Given that counterinsurgency practice remains a conundrum for many countries with a very low statistical record of those States which managed to conduct successful counterinsurgency, this work was written to shed some light on the lessons learnt from different geographical contexts. Against this background, not only does it provide a much more thorough understanding of the subject, covering both counterinsurgent and insurgent perspectives, but also points out several critical aspects that a counterinsurgent force should pay attention to. Moreover, the book frames the subject of counterinsurgency into a strategic perspective, stressing that the actual methods will depend on the political objective pursued. This is an important point that should be remembered when not only by military personnel involved in operational-level planning but also, most notably, by policy makers who set the tone for an overall objective and strategy to employ.

Overall, this book offers a very interesting review, not only from a historical perspective but also from an analytical one. It covers works of important

thinkers which are often eschewed from the debate on counterinsurgency. The main aim of this book is thus to guide the reader to look well beyond the operational and tactical levels which, more often than not, can make one's vision more myopic in regards the nature of broader problem at stake.

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Introduction

The central theme of this book will focus on counterinsurgency and its theoretical manifestations throughout history that apprised the current Western counterinsurgency theory emerging as a result of quagmires in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) as well as its practical expression, enshrined in the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Field *Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (2006; 2014), which is prevalent in contemporary times.

As far as theory is concerned, it is worth recalling what Robert Cox (1981) famously said, namely, that “[t]heory is always for someone and for some purpose.” By the same token, counterinsurgency theory is always for *someone* and for *some purpose*. The writers of *FM 3-24*, however, seemed to have dismissed this valuable insight by having approached the historical text in a very textualist fashion. That is to say; they sought to uncover some universal truths in the hope of finding an answer to the ‘perennial question’ (cf. Bell, 2002, p. 328)—how to successfully counter an insurgency. What the textualist approach implies is that these earlier writings are taken at face value. Rather than looking at both the contextual environment and historical continuities of the work in question, the practitioners of such an approach treat historical texts autonomously, as if they were written in contemporary times and held the key to its own meaning (Jahn, 2006, pp. 8-9). This is precisely the approach that the authors of *FM 3-24* used when they extracted ‘lessons’ from earlier writings. Their method can be arguably highly flawed because it ignores the broader context and purpose of one of the so-called epitomic works on counterinsurgency, namely, French Lt. Colonel David Galula’s (2006) *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Thus, instead of proper contextualization, the prevalent technique is to focus on ‘rediscoveries’ of

past practices to suit the challenge of the hour (Gray 2007). In the preface to the new counterinsurgency manual (*FM 3-24*), no less a figure than General (r.) David Petraeus wrote that “[o]f the many books that were influential in the writing of Field Manual 3-24, perhaps none was as important as David Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*” (*FM 3-24*, p. xix). However, Galula was hardly a representative of the so-called French counterinsurgency school, as will be explored in more detail in the upcoming chapters. Given the manual’s cardinal reliance upon such past theoretical works, the bulk of these chapters will revisit the key writings on insurgency and counterinsurgency, respectively, to highlight the strategic and operational aspects of earlier approaches and contextualize them accordingly, while emphasizing aspects that were adopted in *FM 3-24*, as well as pointing out those dismissed.

The principal aim of this book, thus—serving a sequel to its less theoretical counterpart, *Counterinsurgency Operations in the 21st Century: Insights from the United States Army Experiences in Iraq* (Miron, 2019b)—is to examine the vast history of the writings on counterinsurgency in order to demonstrate the schisms that have existed for centuries between the dominant approaches, i.e., enemy-centric and population-centric (cf. Miron, 2019a). Further, the book will revisit the writings of the key figures upon which *FM 3-24* is based in order to bring to light the fallacies of historical selectivity as well as decontextualization (Gray, 2012; Gentile, 2013; Ward Gventer, 2018, p. 223) and to present a more rounded set of writings which, albeit their outdated nature, offer some important insights that should not be dismissed as irreverent and that could be potentially useful in expanding the existing set of practices related to counterinsurgency.

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CHAPTER 1.

SMALL WARS IN THE 18TH AND THE 19TH CENTURIES

SMALL WARS IN THE 18TH AND THE 19TH CENTURIES

1

Abstract. This chapter analyses the very first writings on counterinsurgency, starting with the 15th century and ending with the 19th century. It focuses specifically on thinkers and practitioners who have made some valuable contribution to the thought and practice of counterinsurgency in contemporary times. As demonstrated throughout the chapter, no writings are novel per se with respective thinkers sharing specific ideas regardless of the time of writing or their geographic location.

Keywords. Santa Cruz de Marcenado; Rebellion; Small Wars; Clausewitz; Callwell; Pacification; Counterinsurgency; People in Arms; Bugeaud; *Tache d'Huile* Approach; Imperial Policing;

The early history of counterinsurgency

Much ink has been spilled in addressing the phenomenon of insurgencies (or guerrilla warfare or small wars or rebellions).¹ An even greater amount of blood has been spilled in various parts of the world attempting to incorporate some of the most high-profile counterinsurgency approaches; alas, with little if any success. Thus, it is crucial to examine the earlier writings on counterinsurgency to see the continuities and differences of various principles that have survived to this day, which would help us understand what the current U.S.

¹ While there is a common understanding of the phenomenon of what today is called 'an insurgency' earlier writers did not have any agreed-upon terminology to refer to the event. Hence, there is a large set of different terms, such as popular uprisings, small wars, rebellions, insurrections, etc., that describe the same phenomenon. Here, for the sake of simplicity, the author will refer to such an event merely as 'insurgency,' lest the reader get confused.

doctrine is based on, and where those principles were derived. Further, such an examination will help clarify the roots of the enemy-centric and population-centric schools and how and why their underlying principles have stood the test of time.

There is a large body of writings on how to deal with rebellious populations, i.e., insurgents, stretching back to antiquity (cf. Heuser, 2010a) and it is beyond the reach of this book to analyse it all with due attention. The review, therefore, starts with the most important approaches that still have resonance in the present day.

Counterinsurgency—the Spanish approach

Among the earliest relevant writings are those from the 18th century included in *Reflexiones Militares* (Military Reflections) written by a Spaniard in 1727, Álvaro Navia Ossorio y Vigil, the third Marques Santa Cruz de Marcenado (Marzenado).² Santa Cruz's work offered not only general advice on generalship but also on how to deal with 'rebellions'³ or insurgencies – to use the contemporary term (Santa Cruz de Marcenado/Marzenado, 1727; Heuser, 2010b, pp. 126-127). His suggestions are rather lenient compared to those (e.g., Thomas Robert Bugeaud) writing a century later. Santa Cruz advised, first, to try to win over the revolt-prone population (Book VIII, Chapter XXVII) before a real insurgency would erupt. This could be done, for instance, through the resettlement of the dissatisfied segments of the population to other parts of the country, disarming (of suspected rebels) (Book VIII, Chapter XXXIX, pp. 152-157) or enlistment of potential rebels into the army (Book VIII, Chapter XXXII; XXXIII). In the latter cases, this would separate potential aggressors from the villages susceptible to rebellion. Rebel leaders should be arrested, only if there was no hope for conciliation. If that proved unsuccessful, once the insurrection had started, contended Santa Cruz, efforts should be made to ensure it from spreading to other provinces, and

² There are two different versions of the name, depending on the year of printing.

³ The Spanish words Santa Cruz uses are 'rebelión,' 'sublevación' (uprising, revolt), 'amotinados' (riot, rebellious, revolting), and 'motín' (rebellion, riot).

to attempt capturing some of the insurgents and punishing them publically (cf. Book VIII, Chapter XXXI, 114pp) to eliminate the driving force of the uprising and deter the population from supporting the cause. As the reasoning went, if a counterinsurgent is too weak, he should win time by forcing negotiations and use deception to conceal his weaknesses (Santa Cruz de Marcenado/Marzenado 1727: Book VIII, Chapter XVI; Chapter XVII, pp. 325-332; Chapter XXXI; Chapter XXXV).⁴

In other words, overall, the resort to violence would take place only when more peaceful means of conciliation have been exhausted (and only when the counterinsurgent is sure to secure victory and has a probability of success). Santa Cruz's line of thinking is very similar to that of another, even earlier, Spanish military theorist, Bernardino de Mendoza, who wrote in his *Theorica y Practica de Guerra* (Theory and Practice of War) (1596) that while insurgencies had to be eradicated as soon as possible, any pacification campaigns of the lands should be approached with both justice and clemency.

Santa Cruz's suggestions on dealing with an occupied population closely resembled the maxims, such as respect for local customs, etc., which strategic thinkers like Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh would arrive at during the 20th century, with their writing, however, from the insurgents' perspective (Heuser, 2010a, p. 430). Santa Cruz's emphasis on the need to operate within the rule of law and his focus upon humane treatment of both the population and the insurgents alike sows, arguably, the first seeds of the so-called 'hearts and minds' approach to be found centuries later in the works of military theorists like Sir Robert Thompson (1966)⁵ and related to the current era's Afghan and Iraqi quagmires.

What is notable is that Santa Cruz's approach is grand strategic—fit not only for a commander but also for a political ruler—in that it combines both military and diplomatic means to suppress insurrections, denoting the a priori

⁴ English translation available in Heuser (2010b, pp. 138-140). This assumption is made once the insurrection has started. However, Santa Cruz de Marcenado discusses different methods of detecting rebellious villages and how to treat them before they can start an insurrection. For instance, he suggests recruiting the men under suspicion into the army or disarming and resettling them, thus robbing the villages of their main impetus (cf. Vol. III, Book VIII, Chapter XXXIII-Chapter XXXV).

⁵ Operating within the rule of law is one of Thompson's core principles.

assumption that the government should always act benevolently, ensuring the satisfaction of its subjects through, for example, economic means (cf. Book VIII, Chapter XIV, XV). While the majority of Santa Cruz's recommendations for averting an insurrection are largely concentrated on the operational level, what is far more central to his *oeuvre* is the implicit focus on the population, indicating the author's humanist inclination and preference for strategies of accommodation. Despite the extensive discussions and guidelines contained in his work, Santa Cruz's writings are mostly forgotten due to their availability in only a few languages (Spanish, French, German and Italian) (Heuser, 2010b). The English translation of his work first appeared in 1737, entitled *Reflections, Military and Political: Interspersed with Moral and Historical Observations*, according to Fernández García (2015, pp. 82-83; 91).

The Roots of French Counterinsurgency Thought and Practice

The 19th century also saw numerous so-called small—by this time, expeditionary—wars during, most notably, the French and British attempts to pacify indigenous populations in various parts of their empires. From 1830 to 1852, for instance, the French were embroiled in a vicious insurgency in Algeria. Military theorists such as Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud pursued a combination of direct coercion, mostly through *razzias* (or raids),⁶ and population control measures, such as the *Bureaux Arabes*. These were organizations created to address socioeconomic needs and understand the local political terrain (Sullivan, 1985, pp. 151-154; Rid, 2009, pp. 618-619; 621-624; 2010, pp. 731-743; Porch, 1986, pp. 380-381; 2013, pp. 16-29).⁷ Bugeaud sought to elevate 'petty war' into its own category of warfare (Porch, 2013, pp.

⁶ *Razzia* refers to a tactic used in mobile desert warfare consisting of a swift and overwhelming surprise-raid to seize livestock and other goods whereby there would be only minimal (if any) loss of life. The origin of this word comes from the Arab word *ghaziya*. This tactic is known to have been employed by the Bedouin tribesmen (Rid, 2009, pp. 618-619).

⁷ The *Bureaux Arabes* served as organizational structures facilitating the task of 'getting to know the enemy.' These were used to collect information about the population, listen to their grievances, problems, etc. (Rid, 2009, pp. 625-626).

18-19), something that, as noted, the British Major, General Callwell, would try to achieve half a century later. For Bugeaud, the most important aspects in conducting colonial warfare were “mobility, morale, leadership and firepower” (Porch, 2013, p. 20; Rid, 2009, p. 624). Speed and flexibility of small formations with less reliance upon conventional manoeuvres designed for the continental theatre were paramount for countering the rebels. Because the enemy had neither capital cities nor tangible assets, it was important to destroy, in the *razzias*, what he valued most, i.e., his crops and villages, depriving him of food and resources (cf. Sullivan, 1985, p. 151; Rid, 2009). This approach could be denoted as a strategy of ‘scorched earth.’⁸ This kind of brutality was hardly imaginable to take place on the European continent; however, Bugeaud’s ‘petty war’ warriors considered their enemy to be uncivilized savages and fought them in a correspondent manner (Porch, 2013, p. 21). This depiction of the enemy has some echoes in the contemporary COIN doctrine enshrined in *FM 3-24*, which regards insurgents as “elusive, unethical, and indiscriminate foes” (*FM 3-24*, p. 7-11; Porch, 2013, p. 26).

As a complement to such an offensive approach, Bugeaud used the *Bureaux Arabes* to ensure that overall military operations were conducted under the local context. These *bureaux* served to collect intelligence about the enemy that would help carry out further *razzias*, and to serve as a primitive mechanism of law enforcement: punishing those who supported the rebels, terrorizing the neutral segment of the population and rewarding supporters of the French army in Algeria—*armée d’Afrique*. Tribal warriors commanded by French officers were used as a supplement to conduct *razzias* to implement the ‘divide and conquer’ principle to disrupt, in particular, the Muslim solidarity of the various tribes (Rid, 2009, pp. 621-623; De Durand, 2010, pp. 12-13; Porch, 2013, p. 31). In short, the two outlined mechanisms were supplementing one another, although the enemy-centric *razzias* were of primary importance. In sum, Bugeaud understood the importance of operations underpinned by intelligence and conducted by the mobile French small warriors as well as the indigenous forces. In strategic military terms, Bugeaud

8 Military history is replete with examples of this strategy, beginning with antiquity and stretching as far as into the 20th century.

relied on offensive enemy-centric surprise raids resembling those used by the Bedouin tribes and supported by vital intelligence gained through the *bureaux* mechanism.

These doctrinal adaptations, especially Bugeaud's contribution, are reminiscent of the later British *Small Wars* (1896) written by Callwell, who drew upon the British experiences together with those by other powers. He embraced the (military) strategy of 'butcher and bolt'—retributive raids by counterinsurgent forces that would burn villages and crops, targeting the enemy's supply chain. This strategy, given its moral effect, was seen by Callwell as the best way to win over the local population (Whittingham, 2012, pp. 592-593).

Bugeaud and Callwell may be said to represent the extreme end of the COIN spectrum in regards to their arguably harsh treatment of the indigenous population. Later, however, there was a 'radical' turn in thinking about counterinsurgency, which may be said to have come at the end of the 19th century. French counterinsurgency doctrine was refined by Marshals Joseph Galliéni (1849-1916) and Hubert Lyautey (1854-1925), following their experiences in Madagascar, which resulted in a more humane—that is, population-centric—doctrine (cf. Frémeaux, 2012, p. 51). This was also later to be adopted by David Galula in the late 1950s (Rid, 2010). Galliéni and Lyautey created an approach that is similar to what, in contemporary parlance, is known as the 'clear, hold, build' approach adopted in *FM 3-24*. The French called it '*tache d'huile*,' or oil-spot, which, unlike its predecessors, called for the co-option of indigenous populations instead of their violent repression (Porch, 1986, pp. 388-395; Griffin, 2009, pp. 14-16; Frémeaux, 2012, p. 52; Finch, 2013).

Galliéni and his disciple Lyautey built upon Bugeaud's methods, further refining them to make them less harsh. After his experiences in Tonkin and Madagascar, Galliéni stated that his aim in operations was to pacify the population and gain its confidence. In other words, the main focus shifted away from the enemy towards the population (which did not mean, however, that the enemy would be completely ignored). Galliéni, as the mastermind behind the *tache d'huile* method (Rid, 2010; Finch, 2013), employed the use of a 'gridding' technique in the first phase of pacification, whereby the 'infected' region would be divided into various sectors, in each of these the army would

construct a network of strong outposts. Mobile columns could stream out from the outposts to hunt down the insurgents. Simultaneously, the army would advance as an ‘organization on the march’ and spread infrastructural and socio-economic development to those regions besieged by insurgents in order to win over the native population. Additionally, the army would interact with indigenous populations to gain a better understanding of their ethnic and religious identities—a practice reminiscent of Bugeaud’s *Bureaux Arabes*. Later, tribesmen from these populations would be recruited to form armed units⁹ and engage in intelligence gathering. The authority of the colonial power would spread across the region—from pacified regions to rebellious ones—like an oil spot, until the insurgency was eradicated completely (Galliéni, 1908, pp. 45, 47; 324-327; Ellis, 1985, pp. 125-147; De Durand, 2010, pp. 13-14; Sitaraman, 2013, p. 168). This approach was to be resurrected almost a century later by David Galula, becoming one of the major strands of the French counterinsurgency (or counter-subversion) school (cf. Reis, 2014, p. 54). In his *Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar*, Lyautey described the oil-spot method not as a mere operational approach, but as a political-military manoeuvre, hence contending that a colonial conquest—in contrast to a pure military conquest—would fit into what can be seen as a (grand) strategic framework of pacification. In other words, such pacification rested upon the idea that there should be a sustained combination of *coercion* and *consent*, namely, both political support and social and administrative efforts at the local level would ensure lasting stability and success at the tactical level. Such reasoning, thus, marked a departure from a purely military strategic approach, whereby a purely military conquest would result in political concessions (De Durand, 2010, pp. 13-14).

Notwithstanding the success of Lyautey’s pacification methods in places such as Tonkin and Madagascar, its origins were rooted in dubious assumptions. There existed a, perhaps, questionable belief among the two marshals that the insurgents could be convinced—through coercion, if necessary—to accept the authority of the colonial power and to partake in the socio-economic progress it offered (Porch, 1986, p. 393). Moreover, the success of these more

9 In 20th century COIN campaigns, such as in Malaya and Vietnam, these would equate to village defense programs.

refined oil-spot and “organization on the march” methods proved to be transient, failing, for instance, during the conquest of Morocco, and thus making Lyautey return to the old and tried method of Bugeaud’s *razzia* (Scham, 1970; Hoisington, 1995; Bimberg, 1999, pp. 1-26; De Durand, 2010, p. 15; Porch, 1986, pp. 397-398; 2013, p. 53). Paraphrased, the success of the more population-centric approach, as espoused by Galliéni and Lyautey, was rather short-lived, culminating in Lyautey’s request to use poison gas against his ‘erstwhile collaborators’ during the Rif Rebellion in 1925 (Porch, 2011, p. 245).

Clausewitz and ‘Kleine Kriege’

Of course, during the 19th century, there were writers who did not think that ‘small wars’ needed to be thought of as requiring special methods to ensure success. Some saw them merely as a subset of conventional wars. However, despite assertions existing about the fact that 19th century strategists sought to eschew the topic of small wars, this actually represents a misconception of the literature (Daase, 2007; Heuser, 2010c; Kaempf, 2011; Scheipers, 2018). Military practitioners such as Carl von Clausewitz and Baron Antoine-Henri Jomini dealt with the subject of popular uprisings (insurgencies) in their writings.

Clausewitz showed his attention to insurrections in his ‘Lectures on Small War’ presented at the Berliner Kriegsschule in 1811-1812 and in his *Bekanntnisdenschrift* [‘Confession Memorandum’] (1812) (Kaempf, 2011). The underlying motivation behind Clausewitz’s attention to this type of war resulted from what he saw as the dire situation in Prussia at the time. It was actually through guerrilla warfare that Clausewitz hoped to liberate his country from French rule (Hahlweg, 1986, p. 128). Subsequently, his works included an analysis of several uprisings, including the Vendée uprising of 1793-1796 in France and, against the French occupiers, the Tyrolean uprising of 1809 and, most notably, the Spanish insurrection of 1808 (Daase, 2007, p. 183). In his lectures on *Kleine Kriege* (Small Wars), Clausewitz discussed the ‘tactical-organizational’ dimension of guerrilla warfare, i.e., how to fight as guerrillas, not against them. This, he defined as “the use of small troop units in the

field” (Clausewitz¹⁰ quoted in Hahlweg, 1986, p. 128), thus steering clear of any strategic dimension. However, it was in his *Bekenntnisdenschrift* (1812) that one could uncover a more comprehensive analysis of the aforementioned phenomenon (Kaempf, 2011, p. 556). Clausewitz developed a more thorough understanding of small wars as wars of national resistance or liberation. He went beyond the mere technical matters and suggested that the Prussians could emulate the Spanish resistance in order to rid the state of Napoleonic rule after the actual Prussian armies had been defeated (Hahlweg, 1986, p. 129). It was the success of the Spanish guerrillas in wearing down the French troops that provoked this line of thought (Kaempf, 2011, p. 556).

In his opus magnum *On War*, Clausewitz included a chapter in Book VI on small wars entitled ‘People in Arms,’ in which he explores various aspects and uses of popular uprisings. Clausewitz’s conceptualization of guerrillas is evocative of what T. E. Lawrence—a British military officer who helped engineer the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Turks in 1916-18 (Freedman, 2013, pp. 181-182)—would claim almost a century later. Clausewitz asserted that guerrillas were “nebulous and elusive” and their resistance “should never materialize as a concrete body” since the enemy could easily crush it taking many prisoners (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 187), ultimately undermining people’s will to resist. A popular resistance, nonetheless, should have several points of concentration, located “on the flanks of the enemy’s theatre of operations” to develop better organized, larger units, emulating a regular army and allowing them to undertake large-scale operations (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 187). The main rationale behind such formations would be the potential to strike the enemy at its most vulnerable spot, namely the rear, and to harass the enemy’s units, thus instilling “uneasiness and fear, and deepen[ing] the psychological effect of the insurrection as a whole” (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 187). Such an insurrection would be shaped and accompanied by small regular units that would give it courage. However, as Clausewitz (1976, p. 188) warned, these guerrillas should avoid direct confrontation (e.g., decisive battles), for too many could

10 See “Meine Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg, gehalten auf der Kriegs-Schule 1810 und 1811”, in Werner Hahlweg (Ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz, Schriften-Aufsätze-Studien-Briefe*, Vol. 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, pp. 205-588.

be killed; instead, they should disperse and continue surprise attacks on the enemy. Clausewitz maintained that an uprising could not survive unless it avoided such confrontations, regardless of the degree of its will and passion.

The purpose of the use of such insurrections was two-fold, according to Clausewitz (1976: 188-190). It was not to bring about decisive victory in contrast to Lawrence, who played with the thought that guerrilla forces could actually do this (Lawrence, 1920; Freedman, 2013, pp. 181-183). For Clausewitz, guerrillas could be used as a last resort once the state's forces had been defeated, broadening the theatre of operations to include difficult terrains such as mountains. Second, he saw guerrillas making up an auxiliary force before the decisive battle;¹¹ this would assist the purpose of wearing down the enemy. From this, it follows that Clausewitz had not envisaged an insurrection as a stand-alone tool to achieve political objectives, but rather as an auxiliary force, which would operate alongside the regular army as a part of a strategy of exhaustion. Despite their defensive strengths, small wars, however, did not constitute a decisive element for victory for Clausewitz (Daase, 2007, p. 186).

It was no coincidence that Clausewitz integrated his notions about small wars in his *Defence* section. Unlike in interstate wars, he reasoned that in small wars the relationship between offense and defence on the tactical, strategic and political levels is inverted. Non-state actors, unlike their state counterparts, given their asymmetric disadvantage, favoured conducting their wars in strategic defensive terms, while remaining tactically offensive (Kaempf, 2011, p. 557).

This inclusion of small wars in Clausewitz's general theory of war is often overlooked and understudied. However, the importance of this most eminent strategist's recognition should point to the fact that, despite their subordinate role, small wars present a viable adjunct to measures aimed at morally exhausting the enemy. However, it is fair to say that Clausewitz remained silent on the notion of *countering* such popular uprisings, perhaps given the fact that his general theory of war would also be applicable in such a scenario. Rather, he chose to preoccupy himself with the question of how such insur-

11 This train of thought reflected the ideas purported by the French theorist, Jean Frédéric Auguste Le Mièrre de Corvey, who concluded, based on his experiences of partisan warfare in the Vendée, Spain, Germany, and Belgium that guerrillas would play an important role once the regular armies were destroyed (Laqueur, 2009, pp. 113-114).

rections could work in favour of the state. Arguably, of course, it is easier to stage a revolt than to counter it, as the subsequent analysis of T.E. Lawrence's oeuvre shall demonstrate. In the next section, it is necessary to discuss how these uprisings were to be countered by looking at, arguably, one of the central thinkers/practitioners from the British tradition of the 19th century, namely, Major General Charles Callwell who was the first to create a separate category for the mentioned insurrections.

On Callwell and *Small Wars*: The British tradition

One who also thought of insurgencies as merely being smaller variants of conventional wars—but who did approach them in terms of looking for counters—was Callwell. He, the founder of the so-called 'small wars school,' was one of the most renowned contributors to counterinsurgency theories in general, and *small wars* in particular (1896; 1906; 1914/1996). In 1896, he conceived a distinct category of warfare—namely *small wars*—altering the previously uncontested supremacy of conventional warfare (Porch, 2013, pp. 4-5). Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* is regarded by many analysts, including some prominent scholars of irregular warfare, such as Ian Beckett, as a starting point for the British history of counterinsurgency thinking (Whittingham, 2014, p. 18). Callwell's thought laid the ground for future writings on the subject, such as Charles Gwynn's *Notes on Imperial Policing* (1934) and General John Dill's *Notes on the Tactical Lessons of the Palestine Rebellion* (1936), all part of the British tradition of counterinsurgency (Jones, Smith, 2013, p. 438). Similarly, Callwell's ideas resonated on the other side of the Atlantic, finding their expression, as noted, in the U.S. Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual* (1940).

It is not surprising, of course, that conventional wars in the European theatre in the 18th and 19th centuries, including the Napoleonic Wars, were receiving the most analytical attention, while conflicts such as those in the Vendée or remote colonies remained on the margins of military interest. Callwell (1996, p. 21), however, was the first theorist-cum-practitioner to offer a detailed study of small wars, which he described "as operations of regular

armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular, forces.” His study encompassed political, strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Callwell’s work offers an overview of the 19th century counterinsurgency campaigns, including those practiced by other countries such as France and Russia. Thus, it is anything but a mere coincidence that, in his introduction to Callwell’s *Small Wars* edition of 1996, Douglas Porch described him as “the Clausewitz of colonial warfare.” Callwell applied “a rational Clausewitzian paradigm” in that he advised to “set clear goals, and do a thorough assessment of the enemy’s and your own capabilities before devising *strategies* to achieve those goals” (emphasis added) (Porch, 1996, p. xii).

Classification of small wars

First and foremost, Callwell (1996, pp. 25-29) classified small wars into three broad categories: conquest, pacification, and expediency.¹² Similarly, he created seven categories of opponent, namely, “opponents with a form of regular organization”; “highly disciplined but badly armed opponents”; “fanatics”; “guerrillas, civilized and savage”; “armies of savages in the bush”; “the Boers”; and “enemies who fight mounted” (Callwell, 1996, pp. 29-32). Such classifications would help the commander decide which approach would be appropriate for any given case. Thus, unlike his predecessors, Callwell understood two things. The first was the importance of the nature of the campaign (which would determine the end state) and which would thus provide logic to war proper, to use Clausewitz’s terms. The second was the importance of understanding the enemy so as to be able to make a sound assessment of one’s own capabilities vis-à-vis that of one’s opponent. This point reflects the fact that Callwell’s thinking went far beyond the operational and tactical realms. Indeed, one can recognize elements of Sun Tzu’s and Clausewitz’s ideas in application. Categorization of campaigns would help craft the appropriate

12 Campaigns of conquest or annexation took place on “foreign soil” against some form of government (Callwell, 1996, p. 25). Campaigns of pacification would be those directed at the subjugation of an uprising in previously annexed lands (Callwell, 1996, pp. 26-27). Finally, campaigns of expediency are those aimed at “punish[ing] an insult” or “chastis[ing] a people who have inflicted some injury” (Callwell, 1996, p. 27) and are to be conducted on foreign soil, too.

military strategies depending on the nature of the campaign (i.e., pacification, conquest) to achieve the overarching the grand strategic objectives.

This leads us to another significant element of Callwell's work. His study of earlier conducted campaigns of similar character gave his *Small Wars* not only depth, but also breadth. Each chapter would include historical examples. As Whittingham (2014, p. 29) suggests, Callwell formulated a coherent strategic theory that made his *Small Wars* stand out amongst the plethora of merely prescriptive tactical manuals existent in his times. Callwell was well aware of the centrality of understanding the nature of war and the nature of the enemy in order to formulate an appropriate *strategy* that would ensure success in such encounters (Whittingham, 2014, p. 31).

Given its 'completeness' (cf. Porch, 1996), Callwell's work influenced not only the British, when his *Small Wars* was included in the required reading list at the Staff College, but also abroad. It was Callwell's work, as noted, which impacted upon the development of U.S. Marine Corps doctrine during the 1920s and 1930s, leading up to the formulation of the *Small Wars Manual* of 1940. Even the contemporary U.S. and British doctrines demonstrate a high degree of influence of Callwell's thought (Whittingham, 2014, p. 30).

Some of the principles of Small Wars

Callwell was also clear about the significance of prestige in warfare (Callwell, 1996, p. 79), meaning that there should always be a display of force to win, if not the hearts, at least minds of local populations. Essentially, Callwell was a great proponent of the strategic offensive in small wars. The regular force had to "force its way into the enemy's country and seek him out" (Callwell, 2014, p. 75). Such determination would thus produce a moral effect upon the enemy, ensuring, among other goals, that any of the insurgents' sympathizers would be less likely to join the enemy ranks. "A bold plan of campaign," he wrote, "tends to reduce the hostile forces to the lowest limits" (Callwell, 1996, p. 76). Many other British military theorists and commanders were later to follow his thinking in the numerous COIN campaigns (e.g., North and East Africa and the Middle East) that the British were later to fight (cf. Anglim, 2008, p. 594; Hughes, 2009; DeVore, 2012). For instance,

Julian Paget (1967) in his noteworthy book, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, stressed the need for the government to convince the population of its strength and determination to defeat the insurgents.

However, Callwell was not focusing only on offensive operations. In this, he bears some similarities to earlier thinkers like Bugeaud, whom Callwell (1996, pp. 128-129) regarded as an exemplary leader. Callwell also champions the idea that the stick—the coercive instrument—should be employed where necessary (Kane & Lonsdale, 2012, pp. 249-250). Callwell emphasized the need for an accurate balance between the stick and the carrot (“a happy combination of clemency with firmness”) noting that “the regular troops are forced to resort to cattle lifting and village burning and that war assumes an aspect which may shock the humanitarian” (Callwell, 1996, p. 40). The underlying assumption was based on the premise that this approach should help hurt the enemy who shuns a direct confrontation with the counterinsurgent at all costs and, thus, could not be hurt in this way. This logic is very reminiscent of Bugeaud’s *razzias*. However, Callwell took this thought a step further, beyond the merely operational dimension and into the strategic dimension, by recognizing that such destruction had its limits, since the main aim was not “a temporary cessation of hostility” but “a lasting peace” (Callwell, 1996, pp. 41-42) that echoes Lyautey’s goal of *pacification*. “Therefore,” he continues, “in choosing the objective, the overawing and not the exasperation of the enemy is the end to keep in view” (Callwell, 1996, p. 42). This inevitably suggests that Callwell was not—as some regard him—a trigger-happy theorist but someone who understood both the need for and the limits of the coercive method within the overall political and strategic aims in mind.

In operational terms, and continuing Bugeaud’s tradition of using mobile and flexible forces, Callwell (1996, pp. 8-14; 135-136; 140; 290-291) dedicated considerable time to discussing the importance of column strength and organization, such as in the concept of ‘flying columns,’ which would be used for specific types of terrain and enemies. Columns, in his view, were useful, not only operationally and tactically, to make use of the disadvantages of the counterinsurgent,¹³ but also to yield strategic results. Such columns would also

13 Callwell (1996, pp. 52-53) discusses the advantages of the enemy such as intelligence and knowledge of the theatre of war coupled with organizational flexibility and absence of strategic laws applicable to regular troops.

rely on “a very efficient and watchful secret service,” which would represent “a trustworthy corps of spies...with a capable intelligence department controlling the whole” (Callwell, 1996, pp. 142-143).

The final aspect that links Callwell to Bugeaud is the territory dimension. While the speed and flexibility of the columns would be important for defeating the irregulars, Callwell (1996, pp. 131-132) stressed that this would not suffice. In this sense, there was a need for “an elaborate strategical organization.” To this end, Callwell, yet again, returned to Bugeaud’s methods, suggesting careful sub-division of the theatre of operations into sections—grids—“each of which has its own military force.”¹⁴ These sub-divisions would have defensive posts and depots of supply. From time to time, the areas would be cleared of supplies either through devastation or limited seizure to prevent the enemy from taking advantage of the supplies.

Overall, Callwell’s insight about operational demands was anything but unique. However, he managed to assemble and distil the most important lessons from previous campaigns and link them to the grand strategic dimension—that is, dealing with the type of campaign and enemy upon which both the grand strategic objectives and military strategies to be employed would depend—which was largely missing from Bugeaud’s ‘system’ regardless of its operational and tactical brilliance (Porch, 2013).

Callwell did, in fact, lay the groundwork for the better conduct of small wars at the tactical, operational and *strategic* levels, despite his belief that the only way to win ‘hearts and minds’ was actually through the employment of coercive methods (such as ‘butcher and bolt’) (Whittingham, 2012, p. 604). While his tactical and operational insights were partially indebted to Callwell’s French counterparts, it was his recognition of the importance of grand strategy in small wars that added a distinctive significance to his work. Arguably, Callwell’s ideas could be regarded as the most accomplished on the subject (along with Mao’s, discussed in the next chapter). However, it is Callwell’s explicit language, i.e., his descriptions of the enemy and his advocacy of coercion, that makes his views rather unpopular in the present-day

¹⁴ In the 20th century this technique, i.e., ‘gridding,’ would be used by Roger Trinquier (1963/2005).

COIN milieu (for it would ‘shock the humanitarian’ too much, to paraphrase Callwell himself).

Concluding thoughts

Having looked at the most influential 18th and 19th writings on how to conduct counterinsurgency warfare, it is clear that their ideas exhibit strong resemblances on the tactical and operational levels (with the exception of the works of Clausewitz and Jomini).

Notwithstanding these writers, who might be considered to be at the commanding heights of early COIN thinking, there is only marginal attention paid to the (military) strategic dimension. These thinkers (Clausewitz and Jomini) who were dedicating much thought and space to (grand and military) strategy were side-lining the discussion of small wars (insurgencies) and gave them only negligible importance. Only Charles E. Callwell has offered the most complete account of how best to conduct small wars; he has addressed not only the operational and tactical dimensions but also the political and strategic in some detail. Subsequently, of course, his works did have an impact on the U.S. (Marine Corps) doctrine of 1940.

Additionally, what is clear from this brief review is that coercive methods have played an important part in all cases despite the attempts, such as those by Santa Cruz, Galliéni, and Lyautey, to introduce more humane measures into counterinsurgency campaigns; this stands in stark contrast with the 20th century writings, which will be explored in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 2.

THINKING IN THE 20TH CENTURY ON SMALL WARS AND INSURGENCIES

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2

Abstract. This chapter, in a similar fashion to its predecessor, focuses on the 20th century writings on counterinsurgency, contrasting them with what has been written on this topic by their forefathers. Moreover, it looks at some exceptions, i.e., writings by military theorists who dedicated their time to devising theories on how to stage a successful insurgency. These are important to consider given that they, too, have contributed to the present perception of what constitutes an insurgency and how to counter it. Lastly, this chapter is of special importance as it debunks some existing myths about the influence of certain writers who, against the grain of the historical record, have found their prominent place in present-day thinking.

Keywords. Arab Revolt; Counter-Guerrilla Warfare; Counterinsurgency; French Revolutionary School of Thought; Population-centric Counterinsurgency; Psychological Warfare; British Counterinsurgency; Kitson; Thompson; Galula; Mao Tse-Tung

Lawrence of Arabia and Sir Basil Liddell Hart: The ‘indirect approach’

For much of the 20th century, the topic of counterinsurgency was pushed into the background due to the two World Wars (cf. Serrano Alvarez 2018),¹ which occupied the centre-stage of academic and military debate, and the various debates over the advent of nuclear weapons during the Cold War.

¹ For a more detailed of the evolution of the paradigm of war during the first part of the 20th century, see, for instance, Serrano Alvarez (2018, pp. 32-35).

This section begins with an emphasis on another leading thinker on the issue of COIN warfare, the British archaeologist and amateur soldier—Thomas Edward Lawrence—also known as Lawrence of Arabia. He fought as an insurgent during the First World War while augmenting a rebellious Arab force during the Arab Revolt of 1916-18 against Ottoman rule (cf. Arquilla, 2011a, pp. 159-160). He developed a set of principles for guerrilla warfare in his memoir of the campaign entitled *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1920).

In his memoir, Lawrence made some important insights about the nature of a guerrilla force and its strategic goals. These are not related to the destruction of the enemy, but rather to his moral exhaustion. On a strategic level, i.e., the aim in war, Lawrence (2008, pp. 246-247) recognized three types of variables: algebraic, biological, and psychological.² The first refers to the theatre of operations (in a very Jominian fashion)³; the second, to the idea of humanity in battle and the so-called ‘breaking point’—reminiscent of Clausewitz’s centre of gravity and the genius of generalship; and, finally, the third refers to the psychological element in terms of the tenor of the minds both of one’s own troops and those of the enemy. It was this psychological element which had no limits (unlike the material ones), and which should be exploited to its fullest given the type of war being fought. Lawrence (2008, pp. 246-247), for instance, considered the printing press (for the sake of propaganda) to be a very powerful tool.

Tactically, Lawrence’s ideas resonated with those of Clausewitz (1976, p. 186) when the latter contended that “[t]hey [militia bands and armed civilians] are not supposed to pulverize the core but to nibble at the shell and around the edges.” Lawrence’s (1920, Chapter XXXIII; 2008, p. 247) idea of guerrilla warfare was, therefore, based upon “wars of detachment,” i.e., on the avoidance of direct battle and denial of targets to the enemy force. For, he reasoned, the contest was not physical, but moral. The nature of the Arab force

2 Unlike contemporary strategic writers such as Colin Gray, T.E. Lawrence saw strategy as the ultimate aim in war rather than the alignment of ways and means to a political end. In a similar vein, he regarded tactics as ‘steps of the staircase’ (strategic end) (Lawrence, 2008, p. 246).

3 For Baron Henri Jomini (1862, p. 69; see also Jomini, 1977), strategy consisted in “... the art of making war upon the map, and comprehends the whole theater of operations.” For Lawrence, the operational theatre was one of the central pillars of strategy in line with Jomini.

he fought alongside is best captured in his description that it was “an influence, an idea, and a thing intangible, invulnerable, without front or back, drifting about like a gas” (Lawrence, 2008, p. 246). It would be used to ‘wear and tear’ the superior force by using ‘perfect “intelligence”’ (Lawrence, 2008, p. 247). Counterinsurgent troops would have had such a hard time seeking out such irregular counterparts to destroy them in a decisive battle (in line with the thinking of the likes of Bugeaud, Lyautey and, especially, Callwell).

Overall, Lawrence, acknowledging that being in charge of a smaller, disorganized force, inferior in comparison to the enemy in terms of materiel and tangible assets, required a mature thesis for the conduct of guerrilla warfare. He advised that “Rebellion must have an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it” (Lawrence, 2008, p. 251). Such a base would be not only a physical location (e.g., the Red Sea ports) but also a certain determination in the minds of guerrillas. In his summary, Lawrence (2008, p. 251) recognized that apart from the ‘shapelessness’ of the force and secure bases, there also had to be a local population who would support them and not betray them to the authorities. Thus, and with such support, the reasoning went that only 2 percent of the striking force—fast, endurable, flexible, and independent (of lines of supply) was required to stage a rebellion. The core ideas of Lawrence are best summed up in fifty words:

Granted mobility, security (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for the algebraic factors are in the end decisive, and against them perfections of means and spirits struggle quite in vain. (Lawrence, 2008, p. 251)

Divorced from its metaphoric language and narrative tendencies, Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1920) is not a mere account of the Arab Revolt but a significant contribution to guerrilla warfare that would influence revolutionary-minded thinkers such as Mao Tse-Tung in other parts of the world. Unlike Clausewitz, Lawrence believed that insurgents on their own could indeed wear down an enemy force to achieve a victory, despite their asymmetric disadvantages. For him, they were not a supplement to the main army, but rather a stand-alone force. In military strategic terms, his plan can

be described as the strategy of exhaustion designed at eroding the enemy's psychological capacity to resist. In Lawrence's particular case, his strategic thought was based on the idea of a "war of detachment" (rather than contact) (Leach, 2006, pp. 338-339). In this, there lies another clear parallel between Clausewitz and Lawrence, namely, the enemy-centric emphasis of the strategy designed to compel the enemy to do one's will even if this strategy does not include the adversary's full annihilation. Lawrence's thought later influenced another British thinker and strategist, Sir Basil Liddell Hart,⁴ in his creation of the strategic concept of the *indirect approach* (cf. Liddell Hart, 1934; English, 1987; Freedman, 2013, p. 183), despite the fact that Lawrence's actual role in the Arab Revolt remains debated (cf. Hill, 2006).

Basil Liddell Hart and the 'indirect approach'

Liddell Hart was a British military theorist who wrote on a broad range of strategic matters. His writings are of importance to the current review given his development—largely inspired by T.E. Lawrence, and von Clausewitz himself—of the strategic 'indirect approach.' The crux of this approach was—similar to Sun Tzu's thinking—that destructive battles should be avoided and that the aim should merely be "to subdue the enemy's will to resist, with the least possible human and economic loss to itself" (Bond, 1977; Liddell Hart, 2004, p. 154; Freedman, 2013, pp. 135-137). Liddell Hart (1954, p. 5) was concerned with a strategy that was wider than the *manoeuvre sur les derrières*—manoeuvre in the rear—that defined Napoleon's operations. It was, he said, the matter of psychological undermining of opponents that should concern the theorist more than time, space, or communications. In contrast to the direct approach, i.e., an armed confrontation, the indirect approach was aimed at diminishing the enemy's possibility of resistance, with the main impact being psychological rather than physical. Thus, it was important to anticipate the factors that would disrupt the enemy's psychological equilibrium and diminish his will to resist. The element of surprise would be the key component in such an enterprise (Freedman, 2013, p. 137). The influence of Lawrence upon

⁴ Liddell Hart dedicated an entire book to T.E. Lawrence.

such thinking is more than clear; he stressed the importance of psychological factors, as well as the need to strike the enemy where he would least expect it:

Our tactics should be tip and run: not pushes, but strokes. We should never try to improve an advantage. We should use the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place (Lawrence, 1920, Chapter LIX; 2008, p. 246).

Similar thinking is present in Mao Tse Tung's *On Guerrilla Warfare* (1989):

In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attack from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws (46).

Needless to say, Liddell Hart's approach was quite appealing to insurgents of the 20th century as well as those in more contemporary times; it reinforced the thinking of Lawrence. Yet, as Lawrence Freedman (2013, p. 138) notes, a question emerges related to "the practical problems of coordination, and the impact of chance and friction" when both sides adopt this indirect approach.⁵ It is precisely this approach combined with the tactics described by Lawrence of Arabia that created so many maladies on the battlefield and concerned contemporary military theorists. It is, however, imperative to understand that Liddell Hart's contribution was not designed for guerrilla fighters, but rather for conventional forces; this is evident from his numerous examples from ancient warfare (e.g., the Greeks against the Persians) (cf. Liddell Hart, 1954). In sum, Liddell Hart was not too concerned with guerrilla warfare. Rather, he sought to emulate Lawrence's approach by advancing a strategy of dislocation based on surprise and manoeuvre (Liddell Hart, 1942, pp. 160-163). By using such strategy, Liddell Hart was advocating the idea of a *limited war*—in contrast to total annihilation—which he described in his *Memoirs* as follows:

⁵ A good example of such phenomenon would be the Thai employment of irregular militias—*Thaban Phran*—which were used against the communist insurgency (1965-1985), which was quite successful, as Jeffrey Moore (2013, p. 366) suggests.

...it is wiser to choose and combine which-ever are the most suitable, most penetrative, and most conservative of effort—i.e. which would subdue the opposing will at the lowest war-cost and minimum injury to the post-war prospect. For the most decisive victory is of no value if a nation is bled white in gaining it.” (Liddell Hart, 1965, p. 241)

In other words, the most important contribution of Liddell Hart’s strategy of *indirect approach* was to supplant the firepower with manoeuvre and surprise.

Mao Tse-Tung and People’s War

The next thinker who has made, arguably, the most complete contribution to writings on irregular warfare and strategy is the Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong). His *On Guerrilla Warfare* (1937/1989) and *On Protracted War* (1938) offer an absolute strategic and tactical guide on how to stage a revolutionary war. The utility of his writings was underpinned by the victory of the Chinese communists over the nationalist Kuomintang rule in 1949 (Freedman, 2013, p. 183).

Although Mao occupied himself with the nature of revolutionary war from the insurgent perspective, his works marked a turning point in writings on counterinsurgency (and insurgency alike); this is especially so given the political climate in which he wrote and the soon-to-begin ideological struggle between Capitalism and Communism. His teachings, along with others like him, exacerbated the problem of rebellious populations for the colonial powers. Especially in France and Britain, COIN practitioners such as David Galula, Sir Frank Kitson, and Sir Robert Thompson (see below) began to face a little more than just an exercise in “imperial policing”—to borrow Charles Gwynn’s (1934) title. After the end of the Second World War, numerous outbreaks of communist-inspired insurgencies took place in various parts of the globe. Mao’s writings not only offered a counterbalance to the existing theory on ‘counterinsurgency’ (although it was not the official term at that time) by composing an analysis of and a guide—on all levels of strategy, operations, and tactics— of the conduct of people’s war. Mao not only offered a glimpse

into the organization and coordination of revolutionary warfare but also, and perhaps more importantly, helped understand the cardinal logic upon which counterinsurgency theories by the mentioned theorists were premised (Gentile, 2009b, p. 25). These theories (e.g., by the likes of David Galula and Robert Thompson) would have a strong impact on the current US counterinsurgency doctrine, as discussed below.

Mao in theory

Mao was a devoted disciple of Clausewitz, and he appreciated his understanding of the primacy of politics in all war (cf. Katzenbach & Hanrahan, 1995, p. 323; Handel, 2001, p. 16; 94; Freedman, 2013, p. 185). Mao thus wrote, echoing Clausewitz, that “war is politics and war itself is a political action; since ancient times there has never been a war that did not have a political character” (Mao, 1965b, p. 162). As we shall see, most of Mao’s ideas resemble Clausewitz’s thinking more than those of more contemporary strategic thinkers (cf. Handel, 2001, pp. 30-38; 39-56). Evidently, military thinkers who wrote about the conduct of insurgency were more occupied with the political and strategic dimensions of this mode of warfare than were those who focused on conventional warfare.

Unlike his predecessors, such as Lawrence, in terms of analysing guerrilla warfare, Mao never considered such warfare as a sole way to victory. His thinking—albeit dominated by a Marxist-Leninist inclination—was more in line with Clausewitz’s idea of a guerrilla force being merely supplementary to a regular army. For Mao, a revolutionary war would be a protracted war which, given its duration, would help guerrilla forces to overcome their asymmetric disadvantage. In particular, it would allow for them to turn into a regular army over time, and thus be able to face the state’s army in an open battle (Mao, 1989, pp. 20-26; Freedman, 2013, p. 187; 227). Essentially, the underlying idea was to trade space for time to wear down the enemy physically and psychologically and to bring him beyond the culminating point of his attack (cf. Clausewitz, 1976, p. 198; Katzenbach & Hanrahan, 1995, pp. 324-326; Howard, 2002, pp. 57-58).⁶

⁶ According to Clausewitz, ‘the culminating point’ refers to the period of time in which the attacker has reached his weakest point and when the defender has gathered enough strength to launch a

Mao's (1965a, pp. 205-268) actual strategy was threefold, consisting of *strategic defensive* (stage I – 1927-1937),⁷ *strategic stalemate* (stage II – 1938-1947), and *strategic offensive* (stage III – 1948-1949). Mao was thus very much geared to gaining *strategically*. Mao emphasized the dialectics of each phase, i.e., the interaction between the two belligerents. In stage I, the revolutionaries are on the defensive, aiming to survive the enemy offensive (Mao, 1965a, p. 223). This phase is, thus, marked by tactical offensives while being defensive in strategic terms. In tactical terms, Mao (1989, p. 97; 1965b, p. 88) emphasized operations underpinned by speed, flexibility, and mobility, which can generate the core attribute of surprise—elements stressed in Clausewitz's *On War*, as well as in Lawrence's and Liddell Hart's writings.

The stalemate phase is characterized by a weakened enemy and a stronger revolutionary movement with a growing number of strongholds across the country and amongst the population. The insurgents shift from military operations to building a revolutionary government to increase legitimacy for the movement and gain control of resources by capturing supplies and weapons. A strong propaganda element underpinned these operations. Like Clausewitz, Mao believed that defence was the stronger form of war. Given the war's protracted character, even 'encirclement and suppression' would not lead to the defeat of his People's Red Army, even if it lost most of its bases. It would just be a partial defeat until his forces could recover and launch a counter-campaign (Mao, 1965a, p. 202). Paraphrased, this phase is less military and more governance (state-building) oriented (Mao, 1965a, pp. 214-223) thereby encompassing the grand strategic/political dimension.

Finally, during the strategic offensive phase, the People's Red Army would come to be on a par with the enemy; this would allow for a counter-campaign to be launched by Mao's forces (Mao, 1965a, pp. 204-205; 1965b, p. 134; 1989, p. 97). For Mao, a strategic victory would be—like for Clausewitz—the destruction of the enemy forces in a decisive battle. But this is only possible once the People's Red Army attains 'regular' capabilities (Mao, 1965a, p. 224).

counteroffensive. This is precisely when the defender in Mao's model changes from the strategic defense to stalemate and later to the strategic offense.

7 Strategic defence is another parallel to Clausewitz (1976, p. 166).

Overall, Mao's military strategy consisted of using "the opponent's gross weight and power ... against him [the opponent] to throw him to the ground," as John Mackinley and Alison Al-Baddawy (2008, p. 10) describe it.

Mao's Influence: Vo Nguyen Giap's triumph against the US in Vietnam

In Vietnam, Vo Nguyen Giap adopted several ideas of Mao, such as the strategy he laid out before the Communist party consisting of dispersing and regrouping, ambushes and surprise attacks (equivalent to Mao's defensive strategy) (Giap, 1970, p. 124; Heuser, 2010a, p. 401; Freedman 2013, p. 186). Similar to Lawrence of Arabia and Mao, Giap placed a great emphasis on secure bases (the rear) that were dependent upon sympathetic population, whereby the most important rear area for liberating South Vietnam would be the socialist North (Heuser, 2010a, p. 402). However, unlike Lawrence and Liddell Hart, Giap was following a more kinetic approach with one of his strategic aims being to kill as many enemies as possible (Giap, 1970, p. 62; Heuser, 2010a, p. 404). The notion of the annihilation of the enemy was shared with Mao (1965a, p. 248) for whom "[...] popular support, favourable terrain, a vulnerable enemy force and the advantage of surprise" were the prerequisite for annihilation.⁸

Mao in a contemporary context

Mao's writings would come to have a lasting influence upon insurgents and counterinsurgents alike. For instance, in Peter Paret's (ed.) seminal book, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, John Shy and Thomas W. Collier (1986, pp. 815-862) dedicated a whole chapter to revolutionary war, basing their views on a Maoist-type insurgency and talking in-depth about Mao.

To name a more recent example, Mao's prescriptions for revolution have also had a profound impact on the current U.S. COIN doctrine, both directly and indirectly. *FM 3-24* makes many references to Mao's theory of protracted war, accepting the fact that all insurgencies aim to dominate a geographically

⁸ See Mao Tse-Tung (1965a, pp. 214-15) on conditions for the strategic offensive.

delineated area (Jones & Smith, 2014, p. 91); this will be discussed in more detail, later in the final sections. Moreover, given the fact that Galula—as we shall see—was influenced by Mao and that the work of the French officer was one of the most influential pieces that shaped *FM 3-24*, the influence of the Chinese thinker is only amplified. Moreover, counterinsurgency experts such as David Kilcullen (2006a), who based his *Twenty-Eight Articles*⁹ on Maoist assumptions related to the crucial importance of popular support. Kilcullen's 'articles' were eventually added to the annex of *FM 3-24*. What remains paradoxical, however, is that for Mao (drawing on Clausewitz), not all wars would follow his three-stage theory pattern since all wars would be different (i.e., of the same nature, but of a different character) (Heuser, 2010a, p. 409).

French Counterinsurgency: David Galula and Roger Trinquier

David Galula's Counterinsurgency Warfare

David Galula is probably one of the most influential writers to discuss in this book, in light of his influence on the US COIN doctrine. Galula was a French officer (an Army Major, promoted to Major in 1958) who entered the war in Algeria in 1956 (until 1958) as a captain, but remained, nonetheless, on the margins of the French Colonial Army throughout his career (Malowe, 2010, p. 44; Cohen, 2012, p. xvi; 6).¹⁰

As previously noted, General David Petraeus was one of the first figures to rediscover the work of David Galula in his *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (cf. *FM 3-24*, p. xix) published in 1964 in English by the RAND Corporation (cf. Nagl, 2012, pp. x-xi). Both General Petraeus and his co-writer Lt. Colonel John Nagl elevated the French warrior-scholar to the status of what General David Petraeus and Lt. Colonel John Nagl describe as the 'Clausewitz of counterinsurgency' (Cohen, 2012, p. xviii; Reis, 2014,

9 David Kilcullen's "Twenty-Eight Articles" are an expansion of T.E. Lawrence's "Twenty-Seven Articles" (1917).

10 For a more detailed background on Galula's life and his upbringing, which arguably came to shape his views on counterinsurgency, see Marlowe (2010, pp. 21-46) and Cohen (2012).

p. 35). Paradoxically, however, despite Galula's French descent, his aforementioned book appeared in French only in 2008—almost half a century after its initial publication. In other words, Galula's theory had almost no impact upon the French operations in Algeria (1945-1959) against the *Front de Libération National* (FLN).

As De Durand (2010) and Reis (2014) demonstrate, Galula was not a part of the French counterinsurgency school, given that he was a mid-ranking officer with little influence over the campaigns on the ground.¹¹ It was his peer, the more hardline Roger Trinquier, with works such as *La Guerre Moderne* (1961), who was able to influence the doctrinal underpinnings of the French COIN, given his close relationship to General Raoul Albin Louis Salan, the Director of the Colonial Army, later appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in Algeria in 1956 (Reis, 2014, p. 40). Thus, Galula's advocacy of a more humane approach to COIN and his marginal influence on the (disastrous) course of the war in Algeria made his writings more appealing and acceptable to the US COIN community (Reis, 2014, p. 59). Yet, some academics and practitioners questioned the choice to base the US doctrine on Galula's writings, given that Galula's theory did not work in Algeria (Gentile, 2013, p. 26). Others contend that Galula's writings were 'sanitized' in order to fit them into the current US doctrine (Porch, 2014). Perhaps more importantly, what was adopted from Galula's theory applied only to operational and tactical levels;¹² however, on a strategic level, the lessons to be learned from the French in Algeria were largely ignored (De Durand 2010: 25; Porch 2014: 174). So, what then is Galula's theory all about, given that it has caused so much debate amongst analysts?

11 The actual 'French school' of COIN, as espoused by Roger Trinquier and Charles Lacheroy, stands in stark contrast to the counterinsurgency mantra purported by Galula. Firstly, it was highly anti-communist, emphasizing *control* over the population rather than gaining its consent; thus, it relied on highly coercive methods. Lt. Colonel Lacheroy would thus be the real founding figure of the school, while Trinquier played a very influential role. Secondly, the French never had expressions such as 'insurgents' or 'counterinsurgency' in their lexicon. Rather, it was common to talk about 'rebels' and 'subversive' or 'revolutionary warfare.' The French used their *Doctrine de la guerre révolutionnaire* (ca. 1954), which was dominant throughout the Algerian war (De Durand, 2010, p. 16; Villatoux & Villatoux, 2012; Dieu, 2016, p. 3).

12 The French COIN, during Galula's time, consisted of tried methods including *ratonades* (army sweeps of Muslim areas), segmenting of Kasbah, population curfews, and heavy psychological operations. Especially, the *ratonades* were techniques employed by Galula himself (Porch, 2014, pp. 137-138).

David Galula's *Pacification in Algeria* (1963/2006a) (which was classified until 2006 (Marlowe, 2010, p. 9) and *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964/2006b) were his main contributions to the theory of counterinsurgency.

Galula had evidently occupied himself with the works of Mao (cf. Galula, 2006a, p. 14; 2006b, pp. 14-28) and was also influenced by the 19th century French counterinsurgency thinkers such as Galliéni and Lyautey, as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, what this French warrior-scholar devised as principles of COIN were no novelties, but derived from experience accumulated by the French in Algeria in the previous century, on the one hand (Rid, 2010, pp. 729-730), and on an indirect response to Mao's three-stage theory of protracted war, on the other. In other words, Galula's work is a mixture of the 19th century thinking with a counter-Maoist twist.¹³

His *Pacification in Algeria* (1963/2006a)—a detailed account of his own service in Algeria—forms the basis of his theory in which he offers extensive criticism of the military practices of the French in Algeria. In essence, Galula (2006b) argues that waging counterrevolutionary warfare implies embracing the fact that all warfare is political—as Mao (and earlier Clausewitz) had also pointed out. For Galula (2006b, p. 66), “[a] revolutionary war [was] 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political.” In other words, he recognized that political purpose should be the main driver of military action. However, at the grand strategic level, there should be more tools employed than the military alone (Galula, 2006b, p. 66). “[P]olitics becomes an active instrument of operation (italics in the original),” asserted Galula (2006b, p. 5). Everything the counterinsurgent does militarily has political implications and vice versa. Therefore, “[the] essence [of a counterrevolutionary war] can be summed up in a single sentence: Build (or rebuild) a political machine from the population upward” (Galula, 2006b, p. 95). In other words, Galula was an advocate of a bottom-up approach to counterinsurgency (Reis, 2014, pp. 49-53). This approach would later be reflected in *FM 3-24* (Alderson, 2007, p. 38).

13 For instance, Galula (2006b, p. 62) demands that the military undertake civilian roles; he writes: “[t]he soldier must then be prepared to become a propagandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a school teacher, a nurse.” This idea is, however, not original to Galula, as we have seen in Bugead's *bureaux arabes*.

However, despite the recognition that of the primacy of politics and political effects created by operational and tactical actions, Galula's focus largely remains on the operational and tactical levels, eschewing the strategic. As M.L.R. Smith and David Jones (2015, p. 22) argue, the "political action," which Galula stressed was perceived as an alternative non-violent measure to combat insurgencies rather than a guiding principle "that lead actors to do what they do." In turn, Galula's operational and tactical suggestions proved to be highly prescriptive.¹⁴

Since in a Maoist insurgency the insurgent has to rely on the population in his strategic defensive phase, the counterinsurgent, noted Galula, has to focus on population control (not necessarily on territorial control) as his primary goal (Galula, 2006b, pp. 11-12). Popular support, however, is rarely spontaneous (Galula, 2006a, p. 69). For Galula (2006a, p. 70), there were three categories of population: an active minority supporting the insurgent, a neutral majority, and a minority against the insurgent cause. The main question was how to deprive the insurgent of its supporters or at least prevent the population (i.e., the neutral majority) from supporting the insurgent cause if winning over the population was not itself possible.

Galula's answer was the aforementioned 19th century 'oil-spot' approach—or what came to be known as 'clear, hold, and build' in David Petraeus' *FM 3-24*. This method was reflected in Galula's (2006b, p. 55) fourth law of counterinsurgency, i.e., "Intensity of Effort and Vastness of Means are Essential." In this, the main strategy—or what Galula considered to be a 'strategy'—would be to move from area to area with a concentration of troops having 'cleared' one area from the insurgents, then 'holding' that area to prevent the insurgent coming back. Then there is the 'build' phase in which, simultaneously, contact is established with the locals in order to control them and prevent them from backing the insurgents, while destroying the insurgent's political organizations and replacing it with the counterinsurgent's (e.g., by running elections, appointing new local governing authorities, etc.). 'Self-defence' units are also

14 Had Galula perceived politics in the Clausewitzian manner, he would have allowed for much more flexibility in terms of operational and tactical approaches which would depend on the policy and strategy in question. It is a crucial point that, for instance, Callwell knew to appreciate.

organized, alongside educating the population and measures to win over the remaining insurgents (Galula 2006b: 56).

Once executed in one area, the counterinsurgent can then proceed to the areas where the insurgency has transitioned into a strategic stalemate (Maoist stage II). It is important to note that Galula was not opposed to kinetic operations; however, he saw them secondary to the main aim of winning over the population. The underlying logic of this approach was to prevent the insurgent from shifting into stage III of Mao's theory, i.e., from turning into a regular army (cf. Galula, 2006b, p. 57). Overall, Galula's theory exploits the vulnerabilities of Mao's first two stages by denying the insurgents the ability to launch a strategic offensive (Maoist stage III).

It would, however, be erroneous to view Galula as a complete 'hearts and minds' advocate. In reality, what Galula's theory implies is *population control* (cf. Porch, 2014), reminiscent of Bugeaud's methods. Forced resettlement, curfews, etc. would be among the measures to achieve such control. Like Roger Trinquier, Galula also understood the importance of intelligence (Reis 2014) and how to extract it, i.e., by conducting torture, which he saw no problem with (Porch, 2014, p. 179).

Finally, while Galula's work might be coherent, if viewed as a response to Mao's theory of insurgency, it really addresses only one 'centre of gravity,' i.e., the population, ignoring other possible CoGs, such as external support, cross-border sanctuaries, and insurgent leadership. Nonetheless, as we shall discuss in more detail at a later point, Galula's work shaped much of contemporary thinking on counterinsurgency, albeit on the operational and tactical levels, despite the fact that Galula considered his approach as strategic. That is not to say that Galula's theory is void of importance; rather, it is necessary to contextualize it instead of accepting it at face value.

Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare*

The following section discusses the work of Roger Trinquier. Trinquier was a French Colonel¹⁵ who had counterinsurgency experience in Indochina

¹⁵ Trinquier was promoted to Lt. Colonel in 1955, he would enter Algeria with this rank.

prior to his deployment to Algeria in 1957 (Tomes, 2004, p. 17; Cohen, 2006, pp. vii-viii). This experience was influential in the French Algerian theatre but less so in terms of future US COIN thinking, in contrast to Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. However, Trinquier's writings are important since certain aspects of them are actually reflected in *FM 3-24*, although without any explicit reference made to Trinquier.

In his book *La Guerre Moderne* (Modern Warfare: A View of French Counterinsurgency) (1961/2006)—deliberately named as a response to his own criticism of colonial wars—Trinquier lays out a theory of counterinsurgency that actually shares much of Galula's thinking. Yet, unlike Galula's, Trinquier's ideas, tested in Algeria (later to become theory), were far more influential during the French campaign in Algeria, given the latter's superior rank (Lieutenant Colonel) and the fact that he had a close relationship with the aforementioned General Salan (Reis, 2014, pp. 38-40; De Durand, 2009).

As noted, Trinquier's theory was not very different from Galula's, although the latter, in particular, was less inclined to the use of torture, as Reis (2014, p. 53) asserts.¹⁶ There were many points on which both military thinkers converged, such as the necessity of contact with the population, the vital role of intelligence, and the use of martial law to aid operations (Reis, 2014, p. 46ff).

Trinquier (2006, p. 5) stressed that after the end of the Second World War, the dominant form of warfare became "*subversive warfare or revolutionary warfare* (italics in original)," which encompasses political, economic, psychological, and military dimensions rather than the simple aim of the annihilation of the enemy on the battlefield. Therefore, the goal was no longer the destruction of the enemy army, but rather "the *overthrow of the established political authority in a country and its replacement by another regime*" (Trinquier, 2006, p. 5). This statement highlights the fact that Trinquier, similar to Galula, was well aware of the primacy of politics guiding grand and military strategic action. The desired end state towards which all military and non-military efforts should be directed was for Trinquier the destruction of *the political authority*,

¹⁶ As discussed earlier, this view is contested by Porch (2014).

for the adversary's actions—in line with the idea of Clausewitz's *wondrous trinity* consisting of the government (or political leadership), the armed forces, and the population—would be primarily guided by that political leadership.

Subsequently, and given this premise, Trinquier—following Mao's paradigm—posited that the insurgent would exploit any internal tensions within the country in question (regardless of their nature, e.g., ideological, religious, etc.) with a direct influence upon the population. The enemy was an “*armed clandestine organization* (italics in the original)” (Trinquier, 2006, p. 7), which the counterinsurgent, of course, still had to destroy (Trinquier, 2006, p. 57). Such an organization would use terrorism to control the population and employ guerrilla warfare that would prepare the ground for the insurgents to convert themselves into a regular army—in accordance with Mao's theory (Trinquier, 2006, pp. 15-18; 45; 53).

From this perspective, contact with, protection, and control of the population would be of vital importance for Trinquier—a point on which he converged with Galula (Trinquier, 2006, p. 27; 83; Reis 2014, p. 46). Trinquier's main way of establishing such control would necessitate a few prior steps like identification of the enemy based on an intelligence-driven approach (Trinquier, 2006, pp. 23-24; Reis, 2014, p. 47). This was possible by extracting vital intelligence from captured insurgents enabling the army to conduct targeted sweeps, based on the newly gained information (Trinquier, 2006, p. 77).¹⁷

In the cities, which are the most critical locations given their population density, police operations (under the auspices of the army),¹⁸ propaganda, and social programs would be used to win over the population and identify insurgents among them, as well as to alleviate social grievances (Trinquier, 2006, pp. 37-39). The population would also be a source of vital intelligence to identify the insurgents (especially, their leaders). Peacetime laws, he notes, benefit the insurgent; therefore, martial law needs to be declared because, for Trinquier

¹⁷ For Trinquier, this task should be undertaken by the army, not the police (in contrast to Galula's contentions) (Reis, 2014, p. 53). For a contrasting opinion, see Douglas Porch (2013; 2014).

¹⁸ As Trinquier (2006, pp. 40-44) explained, police were not enough to conduct operations in populated centers.

(2006, p. 5; 40), it is a war rather than a law enforcement matter. The counterinsurgent also has to pay attention to the territory insurgents hold (in Mao's terms 'rear bases'). Like Galula, Trinquier (2006, pp. 54-55) recommended clearing and holding areas with the same underlying idea of preventing the insurgents from evolving into the 'regular' phase.

According to Trinquier (2006, p. 60), *the most vital task* for the counterinsurgent was, in the *strategic* realm, destroying the enemy's politico-military organization in towns in order to draw guerrillas into so-called "refuge areas," depriving them of their support and information. This is what Trinquier (2006, p. 60) described as "counter guerrilla strategy."¹⁹ Tactically, this would be achieved through creating defensive grids to be able to use all the military capabilities and the use of "strategic hamlets"²⁰ to separate the insurgents from the population (Trinquier, 2006, pp. 61-64; Tames, 2004, p. 20).

Although Trinquier is not explicitly mentioned in *FM 3-24*, his influences are quite pronounced (Kane & Lonsdale, 2012, p. 245). For instance, Trinquier (2006, pp. 27-28) has offered a detailed discussion on how the counterinsurgent controls the population, e.g., through creating a grid pattern where, having gained military control, state agents can enter into direct contact with the population and establish civilian control—very similar to the 19th century *bureaux arabes*. These recommendations were reflected in *FM 3-24*, e.g., in the use of ID cards and checkpoints (FM 3-24, p. 3-63). However, while his influences may be apparent, the main reason why Trinquier has never been mentioned in the current US COIN doctrine is his advocacy of torture. As Reis (2014, p. 52; 58) argues, Trinquier was willing to accept a certain degree of torture in interrogations in order to increase military efficiency. This was a matter that would make him quite unpopular, especially among the later British and American advocates of the population-centric approach (cf.

19 Similar to Galula's case, Trinquier's strategy resembles an operational approach. Under the heading of "counterguerrilla strategy," he stated, for instance, "...Such an operation will lead us back to the town organization and also provide us with the channel essential to reaching the bands in the refuge areas." (emphasis added) (Trinquier, 2006, p. 60).

20 Trinquier (2006, p. 61) stated, "[w]e then organize not just the defense of a sole military post, but that of the entire village and its inhabitants, making it a strategic hamlet. A tight, impassable perimeter is created (of barbed-wire, underbrush, various other materials), protected by a few armed blockhouses, manned with automatic weapons and capable of covering the whole perimeter."

Gentile, 2009b, p. 27). Indeed, such practices would be in strong violation of the *Geneva Conventions* of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977.²¹

This section has discussed the main contributions of the French thinkers to the present day (doctrinal) writings on US counterinsurgency. However, as we can see, both of these French warrior-scholars were not representative of the French counterinsurgency school, neither did they offer any far-reaching strategic insights. Both Galula and Trinquier understood the primacy of the political realm that should provide the overarching grand strategic framework. There was a clear recognition that the military alone could not bring about the victory sought. However, neither Galula nor Trinquier made any explicit mentions when it came to military strategic designs. Their understanding of *military* strategy is arguably conflated with operations. Both express that the strategic aim is not the *annihilation* of the enemy but what it is precisely, remains unclear. Thus, only their operational approaches were adopted, partly because, as history shows, the French lost both strategically and politically in Algeria. In the next section, we shall look at the British thinkers to get a fuller picture of the ideas that populate the current debate on how to conduct COIN.

British Counterinsurgency: Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson

Thompson and the legacy of Malaya

One of the most influential figures in the so-called British tradition of counterinsurgency is Robert Thompson. As a civil servant, he gained first-hand COIN experience in the Malayan Emergency (1948-60) and helped to draft the Briggs Plan before writing his notable book titled *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (1966/2005). Arguably, it was Thompson who gave the most prominence to the strategic dimension of insurgency despite his acceptance of Mao's premises of the three-stage theory,

²¹ See, for instance, Art. 12 (I & II Convention), Art. 17 (III Convention), and Art. 32 (IV Convention).

which is understandable given the context in which his book was written. The significance of Thompson's thinking was recognized not only immediately after the publication of his work, but as in the case of Galula, would also much later impress many scholars and practitioners in both Britain and the US, especially during the recent imbroglios in Afghanistan and Iraq. For instance, prominent counterinsurgency scholars, such as Andrew Mumford (2012, p. 20), argue that Thompson's principles were as valid in the 1960s as they are today in Afghanistan and Iraq. Also, since the Malayan campaign is seen as the epitome of how to conduct counterinsurgency, it is crucial to get acquainted with Thompson's theories.

Thompson's (2005) *Defeating Communist Insurgency* has become a cornerstone in contemporary counterinsurgency literature. Thompson had extensive experience in counterinsurgency, especially in Malaya where he co-authored the Briggs Plan and achieved the position of Secretary of Defence in Malaya. Thompson's advisory role to President Richard Nixon on the US involvement in Vietnam further strengthened these COIN experiences (cf. Fitzgerald, 2014, pp. 999-1000).

Thompson's ideas—as those of Galula, Trinquier, and later Frank Kitson (see below)—were rooted in the countering of Mao's three-phase theory. Perhaps the most innovative and important contribution to counterinsurgency practice awaits the reader in the fourth chapter of Thompson's book, namely, his five principles of counterinsurgency. These principles, enshrined in the politico-strategic dimension, required that the counterinsurgent government produce a 'clear political aim,' operating within a legal framework at all times. This would involve an overarching plan, i.e., a sound strategy, to set primary focus on destroying the political subversion—or the armed clandestine organization, in Trinquier's parlance—and to secure the base areas when the insurgency is still in the guerrilla mode; that is, in Mao's phase II (Thompson, 2005, pp. 51-58).

Thompson's observations and stress upon the primacy of politics is a clear reflection of Mao's (and thereby Clausewitz's) views, elements evident in other thinkers, albeit in a less pronounced fashion. While operational and tactical elements might be of specific importance, it is the political and grand

and military strategic dimensions, which deserve perhaps primary attention in Thompson's work. There needs to be "a reasonably efficient government machine," otherwise all efforts in COIN will be rendered useless, asserted Thompson (2005, p. 51). This government machine would have to clarify the political aim—what the counterinsurgent wants to achieve—and come up with a plan—how to achieve that aim given the available resources; this includes both military measures as well as political, economic and police, and other bodies with clearly defined roles. Evidently, Thompson's reasoning reflects Clausewitz's strategic theory and Galula's (2006b) insight about counterinsurgency being eighty percent political (see the previous section). Thompson takes Galula's ideas a step further, stressing the need for the government to be proactive rather than reactive. This proactive behaviour should be guided by a plan at all times, lest the government "find itself in the position ... [from which] it is not easy to recover" (Thompson, 2005, p. 55).

Thompson (2005, p. 52) suggested that it is important for the government to resist any attempts to use extra-legal measures to tackle the insurgents. Doing otherwise would undermine the very effort to establish or restore a state of law, and possibly lead to the collapse of the government structures. In other words, Thompson was opposed to the use of indiscriminate violence or torture of captured insurgents.

Like Callwell, Galula, and Trinquier (and also Gwynn,²² Richard Clutterbuck²³ and later, Kitson, Kilcullen and John Mackinley,²⁴ to name but a few), Thompson (2005, p. 56) acknowledges the need for good intelligence that would help to find and destroy the insurgents, thus undermining the political subversion totally. To this end, the indigenous population needs to be contacted; this would help win 'hearts and minds' and separate the insurgents from their base of support—reasoning that should be familiar to the reader

22 See Gwynn (1934, p. 5). Gwynn (1934) wrote his book analyzing ten campaigns between 1919 and 1931 to underscore what can be achieved by using 'minimum force.' That is, using no more force than absolutely necessary. This idea of 'minimum force' came to dominate British doctrinal thinking in relation to COIN (cf. Alderson, 2010, pp. 33-34).

23 Clutterbuck (2005) provides a detailed account of the British campaign in Malaya from a practitioner perspective. See Clutterbuck (2005).

24 Kilcullen (2005; 2009) and Mackinley (2009) wrote in the contemporary setting of the 'global insurgency,' drawing on their first-hand military experiences, especially with the Maoist type in Mackinley's case in North Borneo in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as their theoretical knowledge to offer a perspective on the present-day (post-9/11) situation. Mackinley traces the evolution of insurgencies from 1920 onward in order to provide overall contextual understanding, as well as methods to counter it.

by now. This task should fall within the responsibilities of the police force (as opposed to the military), according to Thompson (Thompson, 2005, pp. 85-86). His idea is not innovative given that Mao had already recommended doing the same, only in reverse—with his stressing of the insurgents' reliance upon the population.

Finally, Thompson (2005, pp. 111-119) addresses the second phase of the Maoist insurgency by focusing on the establishing of base areas and utilizing the operational concept of “clear, hold, winning and won” (111). These base areas would be government strongholds, which would spread out, indeed, like Galliéni's (and later Lyautey's and Galula's) oil-spot. The process should start in population-dense and developed areas, i.e., urban areas—a point made by Trinquier. By expanding its base areas, the government pushes the insurgents back into the defensive phase, thus preventing them from transitioning into Maoist phase III.

Despite Thompson's greater emphasis upon the political dimension, we can see much continuity between his ideas and those of his French counterparts. This is not to say that Thompson's insights are irrelevant, rather what is evident is that his ideas are far short of being distinctive. Notwithstanding the striking similarities between the ‘classics’ of 20th century counterinsurgency thinkers, these principles—namely, the primacy of destroying the political subversion through intelligence-driven operations—have proved to have a long shelf life, extending well into the 21st century. The current US Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual (FM 3-24) makes a number of direct references, such as his influence, to the work of Thompson (cf. FM 3-24, p. 5-26).

Paradoxically, however, the British COIN record, despite influential thinkers in the COIN tradition, remains mixed at best (Porch, 2013). The British campaigns in Aden (1964-1967) and in Basra, Iraq (2004-2007), for instance, yielded less than optimal outcomes.

Frank Kitson and his intelligence-centric approach

Frank Kitson was the most important warrior-scholar in British tradition. He built upon his service experiences in Kenya, Malaya, Oman, Cyprus,

and Northern Ireland and published a number of important works: *Gangs and Counter-gangs* (1960), *Low Intensity Operations* (1971), *Bunch of Five* (1977) and *Warfare as a Whole* (1987) (cf. Thornton, 2007, p. 96; Mumford, 2012, pp. 111-113; Bennett & Cormac, 2014, pp. 105-106; Cormac, 2014). Given this rich experience, Kitson could readily reflect upon his experiences in counterinsurgency and then actually implement them in practice in Northern Ireland (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 106).

Kitson's influence is reflected not only in the British Army, which readily accepted the premise that intelligence was the most important tool in countering an insurgency but also in the recent COIN doctrine in the United States (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 117; FM 3-24, p. 392). Moreover, Kitson had a broader influence upon the academic community including leading on scholars such as Stathis Kalyvas, Frank Hoffman, and David Kilcullen (2006a; 2006b; 2009) (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 118). Notwithstanding his impact on the doctrinal level that stretched into the new century, the actual practicality of Kitson's theories remains rather questionable. For instance, in Oman, Kitson's ideas that worked in Kenya were not applicable to the Omani plains (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 119).

In his *Low Intensity Operations*, Kitson (1971/1991) does not narrow his focus onto communist (Maoist) type of insurgencies (even though they were the most prevalent form at the time of his writing). He goes beyond it to examine different political motivations as driving factors. Notwithstanding this, his conceptualization of a three-phase insurgency model remained rooted in the Maoist theory (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 106). The crux of Kitson's theory is that—in line with the earlier French writers—successful counterinsurgency requires a number of means, i.e., political, economic, psychological, and military, thereby recognizing the need to employ the broader set of statecraft tools.

In line with Thompson's thinking, Kitson talks about subversion and insurgency, which are seen as two different stages of his theoretical model. In 'subversion,' the aim is to seek to "overthrow those governing the country" by "the use of political and economic pressure, strikes, protest, marches, and propaganda, and ... the use of small-scale violence," as well as by coercing the

population to support their cause (Kitson, 1991, p. 3). In ‘insurgency,’ actual armed force will also be used against the government for this purpose (Kitson, 1991, p. 3).

Subversion and insurgency both, says Kitson, consist of three phases reminiscent of Maoist-type insurgents. In the first phase, the enemy tries to spread his cause, and the counterinsurgent has to make efforts to penetrate the insurgent organization through the employment of its intelligence organization (Kitson, 1991, pp. 71-72). At the same time, the army should launch psychological operations, e.g., propaganda campaigns using media such as television and radio, to try and deny the insurgent popular support and to win over the population. Like Galula and Trinquier, Kitson puts an emphasis on contact with the population during this phase in order to “remove sources of grievances” (Kitson, 1991, p. 79). In other words, the counterinsurgent has to exploit the insurgent’s military weakness and dependence upon the population. This stage is fully compatible with Mao’s strategic defensive phase (i.e., stage I).

During Kitson’s second phase, the enemy’s actions are more pressing and manifested through marches, strikes, and mass meetings aimed at trying to persuade the population to support the cause. This is when Kitson (1991) suggests using political means, i.e., “judicious promise of concessions” (87) and government forces to control the situation and impress on the population the power of the state. “Every effort should be made,” he wrote, “to retain the respect and awe of the civilian community” (90). At this stage, the troops should have a psychological impact on the population, displaying the determination and power of the government. An important element evident throughout the book is Kitson’s emphasis on intelligence, which he regards as “an essential requisite for making the best use of a limited number of soldiers...” (Kitson, 1991, p. 91). In this, Kitson is similar to his French counterparts, namely, Galula and Trinquier (Tome, 2004, p. 25; Duyvesteyn, 2011, pp. 453-454).

Finally, the armed insurgency takes place in the third phase (and where Kitson makes an explicit reference to Mao’s third stage), making it necessary for the army to find and destroy the enemy. To do this, Kitson (1991, pp. 95-131) once again stresses the importance of vital information to guide military operations. Dedicated intelligence organizations would not be enough

for putting the troops in contact with the enemy; thus, intelligence collection would fall into the army's domain of responsibility (becoming the primacy of the commander). This raised the question of the impartiality of assessment as well as the primacy of the military (Bennett & Cormac, 2014, p. 2010). Background information would also be needed, Kitson (1991, p. 96) asserts, in terms of directing the policy and sometimes for putting boots on the ground if it is related to "enemy locations and intentions."²⁵ Additionally, he noted, use could be made of the questioning of the population by concealed informers—or so-called 'pseudo-gangs' of insurgents—these 'gangs' consisted of captured (Mau Mau) insurgents who were used for both training and fighting alongside the British African troops and for informing on their former comrades to gain information that would be developed into contact information (Kitson, 1960, pp. 76-77; 126-127; Dillon, 1990, pp. 25-26; Cline, 2005, pp. 5-6; Arquilla, 2011b, pp. 218-219).²⁶ These pseudo-gangs were used widely during the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya (1952-1964) (Kitson, 1991, p. 100; Jones & Smith, 2013, p. 442; Mumford, 2011). Kitson goes to great lengths to describe how to extract such information, especially in urban areas (Kitson, 1991, p. 127).²⁷ For the military to be able to carry out such tasks, Kitson (1991, pp. 165-181) stressed the need for the special education of soldiers before commencing counter-subversion and counterinsurgency operations.

In sum, Kitson's approach, i.e., a focus on intelligence—and creating of an intelligence organization—and winning over the population, is highly *operational* in nature. While he understands the important aspects of insurgency, i.e., its political nature, he gets drawn into operational and tactical matters. In terms of his approach, he offers no new insights for those familiar with the French warrior-scholars and the work of Robert Thompson.

25 Kitson (1991, pp. 72-74) differentiates between "political" and "operational" types of intelligence with the former being collected "before, during and after the subversion rises and falls" and information pertaining directly to the fighting (Tomes, 2004, p. 25).

26 Some academics question, however, the ethicality of interrogations used by Kitson (cf. Dillon, 1990).

27 Kitson's approach is highly information/intelligence-driven, which makes his work very evocative of Trinquier's, Galulá's, and Thompson's theories.

Conclusive thoughts on the classical COIN theory in the 20th century

Having looked at the classical COIN theorists in France and Britain of the 20th century (Galula, Trinquier, Thompson, and Kitson) we can see that, fundamentally, all of their ideas share a high degree of uniformity. All of them are a direct response to Mao's three-stage model. All the theorists, despite minor differences, have emphasized the importance of the population. That is to say, control of the population occupies a central part in what we may look upon as classical COIN approaches, coupled with good intelligence and in some cases governance (i.e., Galula and Thompson). Their theories are, of course, partially based on the 19th and early 20th century counterinsurgency models, especially when it comes to the use of the 'oil spot' approach. As will be discussed later, all of these ideas had a significant impact on the current doctrinal approaches to COIN, both in the US and the UK. What is notable about this later adaptation of the earlier approaches *is the fact that operational/tactical concepts have overshadowed the strategic dimension*. Indeed, some academics and practitioners (e.g., Gray, 2012a and Gentile, 2013) have gone as far as to claim that the current COIN is anything but strategic.

Other writings on counterinsurgency

The latter part of the 20th century witnessed a high number of writings dedicated to counterinsurgency (or guerrilla warfare). It would, of course, be beyond the limits of this book to discuss them all. One, though, deserves some attention, namely Andrew Mack's (1975) essay titled "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict."

Mack's (1975) analyses—as its title implies—the paradox of asymmetric conflict, i.e., why large nations with superior capabilities often lose against an inferior opponent. Although Mack does not explicitly talk about strategy, his recognition of political versus operational/tactical victory is vital. He argues that, notwithstanding tactical losses, insurgents (or guerrillas, as he calls them) win "from the progressive attrition of their opponent's *political* capability to wage war (*italics in the original*)" (Mack, 1975, p. 177). Once the opponent

(the counterinsurgent, in this case) loses his political will to fight, his military capabilities—no matter how great—also lose their importance (Mack, 1975, p. 179). Analysing the conflicts in Algeria and Vietnam, Mack (1975) concludes that if both parties are fighting for survival, it is justifiable to mobilize all national resources to the required end (survival). However, in asymmetric conflicts (to use Mack's terminology), there is just one side fighting for survival, that is, the insurgent. Paraphrased, a nation engaging in an asymmetric conflict—and here it is important to note that it is usually the case of an expeditionary insurgency—will always perceive the conflict as 'limited' as opposed to 'all-out war' (Mack, 1975, p. 183).

Concluding thoughts

The second half of the 20th century witnessed the rise of wars of decolonization, which generated a good deal of thinking on how to handle counterrevolutionary wars in various parts of the world. The most prominent writings on the subject came from the French and British theorists and practitioners who built upon the 19th century works and those of one of their main opponents, Mao. Although Mao focused on how to stage a revolutionary war, he helped ignite the renewed interest in COIN and served as a point of departure for most of the COIN theorists both in the 20th and, indeed, in the 21st centuries, as we will see in the subsequent chapter. It is worth noting, that while varied in nature, the majority of the writings reviewed here (because of the influence that they had on FM 3-24) focused predominantly on the operational and tactical levels. Some of the thinkers, though, such as T.E. Lawrence, Basil Liddell-Hart, and Mao allocated some considerable space to the idea of generating a better *strategy*.

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CHAPTER 3.

21ST CENTURY WRITINGS ON COUNTERINSURGENCY

Abstract. This chapter concludes the vignette of writings on counterinsurgency by looking at the recent vintage available on the subject, namely, those writings produced at the beginning of the 21st century. The aim here is to draw comparisons between the new theories on counterinsurgency and those of their predecessors to show that, essentially, the current theoretical discourse, with some exceptions, is mostly a ‘rediscovery’ of what has long been written and practiced. Finally, the chapter, and herewith the book, concludes with an examination of the current counterinsurgency doctrine to show that the principles on which it is based are both limited and perhaps not ideally suitable to the contemporary environment.

Keywords. COIN; Counterinsurgency; FM 3-24; Population-Centric COIN; Kilcullen; Nagl; Learning Organization; Global Insurgency

Introduction

The new century has been marked by an increased interest in insurgencies in light of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The amount of literature dedicated to the subject has soared in comparison to the period of decolonization (Rosenau, 2006). A number of influential works have appeared on the topic of Afghanistan and Iraq, most prominently Thomas X. Hammes’ *The Sling and the Stone* (2004); Thomas E. Rick’s *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003-2005* (2006) and *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq* (2009); Ahmed Hashim’s *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (2006); David Kilcullen’s *Accidental Guerrilla* (2009) and *Out of the Mountains* (2013); Antonio Giustozzi’s *Koran, Kalashnikov and*

Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan 2002-2007 (2008); Thomas Mahnken's and Thomas Keaney's *War in Iraq* (2007); Mark Moyer's *The Question of Command* (2010); David H. Ucko's *The New Counterinsurgency Era* (2009); Emile Simpson's *War From The Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (2012); Gian Gentile's *Wrong Turn* (2013), to name but a few. In addition, another category of writings appeared. It came to include examinations of earlier campaigns and more contemporary campaigns (other than Afghanistan and Iraq). such as John Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup with A Knife* (2002); Andrew Mumford's *The Counter-Insurgency Myth* (2012); Douglas Porch's *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (2013); Ahmed Hashim's *When Counterinsurgency Wins: The Case of Sri Lanka* (2013); and, Jeffrey Moore's *The Thai Way of Counterinsurgency* (2014).

Along with detailed case studies (or comparative studies), a number of works emerged seeking to understand why insurgencies are, indeed, successful and how counterinsurgents should operate in the present-day environment. These include the *Victory has a Thousand Fathers* study by Christopher Paul et al. (2010) from the RAND Corporation; Gil Merom's *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* (2003); Ivan Arreguín-Toft's *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (2005), and Jeffrey Record's *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgents Win* (2007). Most of these writings, however, eschew the analysis of the strategic dimension—with the exception of Arreguín-Toft—in favour of more tactical approaches.

Unlike the writings from the 1960s, the contemporary works above offer a more thorough analysis of the subject of COIN, rather than containing merely prescriptive notions. In terms of the effect these contemporary works have had on the eventual production of the US Army/Marine Corps Field Manual (FM 3-24), *Counterinsurgency* (2006), only the most influential will—for reasons of space—be included in the last section of this chapter.

John Nagl's Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife

In his seminal study, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Lessons from Malaya to Vietnam* (2002), the US Army officer, John Nagl, who extensively

contributed to the formulation of *FM 3-24*, examines at length two cases: first, the British in the Malayan Emergency (1948-60) and second, the US in Vietnam (1963-72). He compares the organizational learning abilities in each of the cases. This comparison would help Nagl understand why the British were successful in their COIN campaign while the American counterparts failed. The major determinant, reasons Nagl (2002), was that the British military was flexible and demonstrated an ability to learn; this led them to success.

Examining the contrasting organizational cultures, Nagl (2002, pp. 5-7) points out that different cultures play an important role in the way these organizations respond to the environment. Further, he notes that it is the organizational culture of the militaries that prevents learning, i.e., doctrinal changes, from taking place unless perpetuated by an “unpleasant or unproductive event” (Nagl, 2002, p. 8).

Given these tendencies in organizational learning, the British army converted into a “learning institution,” facilitating the conversion of lessons learned during the Malayan Emergency into a proper doctrine highlighting minimum force, civil-military relations, and tactical flexibility unlike the case of the US army in Vietnam (Nagl, 2002, p. 11; 42-43). The US army failed to learn altogether and to produce a relevant doctrine. It focused on what Nagl (2002, p. 27) calls “the direct method,” i.e., annihilation of the enemy or what could be said to be an enemy-centric approach, rather than on its counterpart—“indirect method”—defined by the erosion of popular support for the insurgents, à la Galula. The latter approach, which focused on the population, can be said to conform to the ‘population-centric approach’—the term used initially by Kilcullen in 2006. In the case of the US, organizational learning, said Nagl, was crippled through the fact that those who understood counterinsurgency were challenged by their superiors and advisers in the field who had little to no cultural or linguistic skills. This ‘indirect method’ was not implemented (Nagl, 2002, pp. 140-142). Such a doctrine did not begin to be developed until the 1960s and in the United States itself, rather than in the Vietnam theatre (Nagl 2002, p. 142).

The conclusion of Nagl’s thesis is that states will respond to similar circumstances and inputs in dissimilar ways given their military organizational

culture, which can be resistant to state pressure (Nagl, 2002, pp. 214-215). Accordingly, not only did the US military fail to learn and institutionalize the lessons from Vietnam but it also failed to accept the fact that ‘revolutionary warfare’ required a different approach (as opposed to conventional warfare) (Nagl, 2002, p. 205). Therefore, the US military’s organizational culture served as an obstacle to the recognition of the ineffectiveness of its approaches to the conflict in Vietnam (Nagl, 2002, p. 217).

What is, perhaps, more crucial is Nagl’s (2002, p. 223) conviction that the world would witness more ‘little dirty wars’ in the future, requiring a ‘nation-building’ approach in which political and military tasks intertwine, rather than a ‘direct method.’ Hence, the US Army would benefit from the ability to learn and adapt to this new challenge, or, in words of Nagl (2002, p. 223) quoting Lawrence, to ‘learn how to eat soup with a knife.’

While Nagl’s study made a significant contribution to existing writings on COIN, his book is dedicated exclusively to organizational culture and its ability to learn and implement battlefield lessons. However, as important as this might be, Nagl’s comparison of the two campaigns has its drawbacks. First, the context of the contrasting campaigns is very different. Malaya was a decolonization campaign against a minimal number of insurgents that lacked internal popular and external international support while Vietnam was a more extensive campaign involving a high number of insurgents that had considerable popular and external support (cf. Dunn, 2011, p. 92). Therefore, the suitability for comparison of the two is questionable at best. Second, Nagl discusses but one of the aspects that could help counter an insurgency. Third, his study completely avoids the discussion of strategy. Instead, Nagl looks at different operational approaches to COIN—approaches that were also covered by the warrior-scholars in the 1960s.

David Kilcullen’s *The Accidental Guerrilla* (2009)

The next warrior-scholar examined in this chapter of 21st-century thinkers on irregular warfare is perhaps one of the most influential, David Kilcullen. Kilcullen is a former officer in the Australian infantry who later

occupied the positions of chief counterterrorism strategist to the US State Department and senior counterinsurgency adviser to General David Petraeus during the Surge in Iraq, in 2007. He was also an extensive contributor to the Quadrennial Defence Review of 2005. His most important contributions to the topic of irregular warfare include his 'Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency' (2006a), 'Counterinsurgency Redux' (2006b), *The Accidental Guerrilla* (2009), and *Out of the Mountains* (2013). Especially his earlier works exerted a cardinal influence upon the current US doctrine enshrined in *FM 3-24*. Kilcullen's (2006a) 'Twenty-Eight Articles,' for instance, found their way into the new manual.

In his later published books, Kilcullen developed his thinking further, basing his ideas on his field experiences. In *The Accidental Guerrilla*, Kilcullen (2009) seeks to gain an understanding of the nature of the contemporary conflict by paying close attention to the Iraqi and Afghan theatres.

In the first chapter of the book, Kilcullen (2009, pp. 7-8) accessed various explanatory models of the threat environment, such as *Globalization Backlash*, the *Global Insurgency* model, the *Islamic Civil War* theory, and the *Asymmetric Warfare* model.¹ These models, taken as a whole, help determine the causes of the 'irregular' conflicts that break out. In addition, Kilcullen (2009, p. 28) proposes his paradigm titled the 'Accidental Guerrilla' to augment the explanatory power of the above theoretical constructs. In essence, the 'Accidental Guerrilla' syndrome is a four-stage process (infection, contagion, intervention, and rejection), whereby groups like Al Qaeda (AQ) 'infect' a region by redefining a pre-existing leadership structure to exert their influence and spread it as a 'contagion,' using means such as media. Thus, once the Western powers 'intervene' in these 'infected' areas, they receive a 'rejection' response because

1 Each of these models looked at the security environment through a particular lens. The first one posits that the outbreak of insurgencies was a backlash against the on-going process of horizontal and vertical globalization. The second one is based upon the belief that insurgencies in isolated parts of the world are actually a part of one 'globalized' insurgency and consider Al Qaeda as an insurgent group which, among other methods, uses terrorism to achieve its ends. The third model suggests that the current quagmires in the Muslim world are a result of internal tensions, such as corrupt governments and the Sunni and Shia divide. The final model is more focused on the military aspect and claims that the emergence of 21st century irregular warfare was the result of underlying power asymmetry between the US and the rest of the world (Kilcullen, 2009, pp. 8-28).

they are seen as outsiders, which enhances the support for AQ (Kilcullen, 2009, pp. 35-38).

In subsequent chapters, Kilcullen (2009) applies his framework to the theatres in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other parts of the world, including Western Europe. His paradigm is a direct response to what he saw as the flawed view that the US was engaging in a so-called *Global War on Terror*. Kilcullen thus suggests a way forward to respond to what he called (with some prescience) 'this new hybrid form of warfare' (Kilcullen, 2009, pp. 294-299). His response consists of five steps: developing a new lexicon; focusing on a grand strategy; having balanced capabilities; developing strategic services, and utilizing strategic information warfare.

A new lexicon, according to Kilcullen (2009, pp. 295-296), would capture the nature of the new threat. There is a need to develop new models—in Clausewitz's terms, one needs to know what kind of war one is engaging in and create a capability to counter such threats. Most importantly, Kilcullen (2009, pp. 296-297) recognizes the need for a sound grand-strategic approach, rather than just a tactical one, marking a departure from his earlier works that were less strategic and more operational and tactical. The rest of the points (i.e., "a new lexicon, grand strategy, balanced capability, strategic services, and strategic information warfare" (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 299))² are intricately linked to the most persistent grand strategic issue, i.e., the need to determine a strategic goal and align the ways (e.g., strategic information warfare) with the means (e.g., strategic services and capabilities).

Notwithstanding Kilcullen's view of the 21st century's 'irregular' conflicts as part of one globalized insurgency—an idea adopted from John Mackinley (2002)—and his skilful use of linguistic tools, his theory, upon closer examination, could be argued to reveal little that is novel. His 'accidental guerrillas'³ are the crucial population upon which the insurgent hinges for survival. The

2 Kilcullen describes strategic services as "analysis, intelligence, anthropology, special operations, information, psychological operations, and technology capabilities" (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 299). Balanced capabilities refer to the balance between military and non-military capacity, whereby there is a clear imbalance in favor of the former, argues Kilcullen (2009, p. 298) about the US.

3 Kilcullen (2009, p. xiv) describes these as "the local fighter" who fights "us because we are in his space, not because he wishes to invade ours" (emphasis in the original).

methods used by AQ are no different from those employed by the FLN during the Algerian War (1954-1962). Similarly, the rejection response is what the French Army faced when trying to win over the indigenous Muslim population in Algeria. Fundamentally, Kilcullen also accepts Mao's assumption that the population or control thereof is essential for success. Despite the fact that Kilcullen stresses the unconventional and new nature of the threat environment that requires 'a new lexicon' his basic idea is very reminiscent of the 20th century COIN theorists. Paradoxically, in his earlier articles, Kilcullen (2006b) argued that the modern-day insurgencies are different from classical, i.e., Maoist. This begs the question: why then does this counterinsurgency theorist heavily rely on the classical approaches to COIN, basing his views on no lesser figure than Mao himself?

Further, Kilcullen's (2009, pp. 296-297) assertive call for a strategic approach; that is, the need for an approach of "how best to interweave all strands of national power, including the private sector and the wider community," should not sound unfamiliar to any reader versed in the history of strategic thought. Kilcullen's emphasis on the political dimension resonates with assertions made by Mao, Galula, and Thompson, to name but a few.

Some academics point out, with some justification, that Kilcullen had left large gaps in his body of work, namely the religious motivations of present-day insurgencies leading to the fact that Kilcullen fails to address the very root causes of the conflict (Mumford, 2014, pp. 126-127). Notwithstanding, Kilcullen remains the most cited author in the current *FM 3-24*, with his works being highly recommended in the manual's annotated bibliography (Mumford, 2014, p. 138).

The US Army/Marine Corps Field Manual (FM) 3-24 Counterinsurgency

The final and perhaps most important work written on counterinsurgency is the often-mentioned *FM 3-24*. Events on the ground drove the writing of this new doctrine, especially, the escalating violence in Iraq (starting in 2004) and the dire need to understand the situation, i.e., to view it through

the counterinsurgency lens (Burton, Nagl, 2008, p. 306; Ucko, 2009, p. 103). The manual is closely associated with the US 'strategic' shift in Iraq (2006-2007), that is, the government's decision to add 30,000 troops on the ground (cf. Metz, 2010, pp. 15-20; 25-27) and the success of its implementation, coupled with the Surge (late 2006), or so the narrative goes (cf. Gentile, 2013). Regardless of its nature, i.e., being merely a field manual, the document has received an unprecedented degree of notice among the military and the relevant civilian community alike (for instance, copies of *FM 3-24* have been sold in bookstores and on Amazon). Even the press received the manual, as Richard Schulz Jr. and Andrea Dew (2006) reflected in their *New York Times* article "Counterinsurgency, by the Book."

General David Petraeus (US Army) and General James Mattis (US Marines) oversaw the creation of the manual. A large number of prominent scholars and practitioners (as mentioned earlier) also provided input, as well as several civilian and non-governmental agencies. The result was a doctrine with a 'population-centric' emphasis (i.e., the protection of the key population became paramount) that was diametrically opposed to earlier practices (the Army's traditional enemy-centric focus and the US's abhorrence of nation-building exercises).⁴ Once published, the first draft of the manual (2006) could be readily implemented in the Iraqi theatre in unison with the Surge (late 2006), i.e., the influx of more than 20,000 US troops, especially to the Baghdad region. The launch of Operation *Fardh al-Qanoon* (2007) was 'the manual in action' whereby the troops took it as their priority to protect the population, rather than to hunt down the enemy (Ucko, 2008, p. 293; Petraeus, 2013, p. x). The perceived success of the Surge, i.e., reduction of violence late in 2007, has only reinforced the acceptance of *FM 3-24* as a remedy to the insurgent malady (US Fed News Service, 2008; Fitzgerald 2013, p. 179).

FM 3-24 and its claims

FM 3-24 was not the most original publication. Having looked at the works of the 19th and 20th century theorists, it becomes evident that the

⁴ For the first time in their history, the US Army and Marine Corps were employing a common doctrine (cf. Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 157-181).

manual presents a distillation of thinkers like Galula, Trinquier, Thompson, and Kitson (cf. Crane, 2010, pp. 60-62). As discussed earlier, Galula was inspired by Lyautey and Mao. Thus, the population-centric logic of *FM 3-24* has quite a long heritage, in insurgency terms. Needless to say, the manual does make explicit references to these figures. Perhaps ironically, while the main rationale for the manual's publication appears to rest upon the belief that Iraq and Afghanistan presented something novel, the bulk of the manual merely reiterates earlier wisdoms; but not, of course, without the inclusion of contemporary thinking on the subject, as purported by theorists like Kilcullen (cf. *FM 3-24*, pp. 47-51).

Without delving too deeply into the manual's technical detail, its overall instruction can be summed up in what we have already seen in Galli  ni's, Lyautey's, Galula's, and Trinquier's 'strategies' on gaining population control, namely, the 'clear, hold, and build' concept. This notion will be expanded in the following section.

How does FM 3-24 look at strategy?

First and foremost, *FM 3-24* was designed to "prepare Army and Marine Corps leaders to conduct COIN operations *anywhere in the world* (emphasis added)" (*FM 3-24*, p. li). However, this is an onerous task and, given that insurgencies differ across space and time,⁵ such a claim to universality is somewhat questionable. The previous is especially so bearing in mind the manual's actual operational and tactical mission. Both Afghanistan and Iraq exemplify that conflict dynamics in one area can be very different from another. If we were to adopt Bard O'Neill's (2006) typologies of insurgencies, each would require an individually tailored (operational) approach.⁶

5 This links back to Clausewitz's postulate about every instance of war being a unique phenomenon with its context-specific character.

6 As mentioned in the introductory chapters, O'Neill (2006, pp. 19-29) has published a seminal study that identifies nine typologies of insurgencies: anarchist, egalitarian, traditionalist, apocalyptic-utopian, pluralist, secessionist, reformist, preservationist, and commercialist. The underlying idea for this framework is to categorize insurgent groups according to their goals. While it is not necessary to stretch the concept of insurgency to such a degree, it is vital to understand that a universal operational and tactical approach might seem an absurdity in light of the diversity of threats.

From the very onset, the manual (FM 3-24, p. 3-4) stresses the need to protect the population by deploying a large number of troops; it is population-centric in tone (cf. Miron 2019). Undoubtedly, we can see that this notion is based upon the Maoist understanding of revolutionary warfare and the importance of popular support. Once again, we can see the suggestions of the 20th century COIN thinkers reflected in the manual. It was designed, though, with the Iraqi quagmire in mind. However, given the situation in Iraq and the complex tapestry of different warring factions (Sunni, Shia, Kurds, and AQI, among others), the manual commits the fallacy of looking at the population as a homogenous body that would either support the insurgents, the counterinsurgents, or remain neutral. As Biddle (2008, p. 348) argues, in identity wars, it will be the (host) government's ethnic or sectarian composition that will serve as the main determinant of its perceived 'hostility' or 'friendliness,' unlike in ideologically motivated wars such as in Malaya and Vietnam.⁷ Additionally, the relocation of the centre of gravity from the enemy to the population triggers more profound issues, namely, the implicit notion that the centre of gravity is singular and static.

Given that COIN, according to *FM 3-24* (and in with Galula's, Kitson's, and Thompson's assumptions), is primarily a political matter, some prominent COIN theorists (cf. Ucko, 2014, p. 149; Smith & Jones, 2015) argue that politics is actually present in all wars and that the reasoning of *FM 3-24* misunderstands the key strategic relationships, i.e., those between the policy objectives and military force. In *FM 3-24*, the military force tends to be morphed into a social workforce ("a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout") (FM 3-24, p. 68) in which true military and coercive actions are side-lined,⁸ disregarding that an act of force is inevitably a political act. Consequently, COIN is not a mere contest in governance; rather, it is a political contest in authority (not popularity) between the COIN forces and the insurgent (Kane & Lonsdale, 2012, pp. 245-246). The British strategist,

⁷ In Iraq, it is logical that the Sunni minority, which has ruled Iraq since its creation, will not accept a Shia-dominated government.

⁸ In chapter 1, *FM 3-24* tells us that "some of the best weapons for counterinsurgents don't shoot" (49).

Sir Julian Paget (1967, p. 246), rightly reminded us that the government has to show determination and the ability to *defeat the insurgents* to win over the population. This unavoidably implies that while the population-centric focus is not necessarily wrong, it is somewhat limited in its scope. A large number of historical studies of the most exemplary campaigns, such as Malaya (cf. Hack, 2009a; 2009b; 2011; 2012; Mumford, 2012), demonstrates that it was the enemy-centric and coercive approaches that prevailed, not the accepted population-centric narrative.

Moreover, it remains highly questionable whether this artificially carved out category of ‘insurgency’ can be applied to the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan at all (Gray, 2007; Gventer, Smith, Jones, 2014; Smith & Jones, 2015). In other words, applying counterinsurgency operations implies that there is a uniform agreement that the problem is an *insurgency*. However, is it an insurgency? To paraphrase Abraham H. Maslow’s (2004) famous aphorism, if the only tool one has is a COIN manual, everything starts looking like an insurgency. Yet, the wrong identification of the problem at stake is a recipe for failure, as Clausewitz has warned us.

As far as the troop numbers are concerned, it is again a problematic matter. *FM 3-24* (p. 23) recommends a troop density of *at least* twenty counterinsurgents per 1000 residents because population-centric COIN is a labour and manpower-intensive exercise. What might have been viable for the likes of the French in Algeria will not be possible in a contemporary context. From a strategic point of view, it is not always the case that the political stake (in Mack’s reasoning)⁹ is worth such a commitment (in Iraq, even the minimum recommended troop ratios were unfulfilled even when counting various contingents, including the Iraqi forces). More so, one runs the danger of provoking what Kilcullen (2009, pp. 34-38) calls ‘the accidental guerrilla’ syndrome.¹⁰ This term refers to extremist insurgent groups infiltrating vulnerable areas (such as the Anbar Province in Iraq or FATA in Pakistan) and coercively turning the population against the outsiders (especially, expeditionary forces, implying the

9 Mack (1975) argues that states (‘big nations’) loose ‘small wars’ due to lack of political will.

10 Quite surprisingly, Kilcullen was not opposed to the increase of troops, the Surge.

further alienation of the population.¹¹ Last, but not least, studies confirm that the way that troops are employed and in what context is of far more important than their actual numbers (Friedman, 2011, p. 588). General Sir Rupert Smith (2005) stresses precisely the importance of how the force is employed in ‘wars amongst the people.’ Often, for example, it is more viable, both politically and strategically, to employ expeditionary forces for advisory roles, as in the case of Colombia (cf. Ucko, 2014, p. 156).

The core tenets of *FM 3-24*

Possibly the most important part of the manual is its operational design (described in Chapter 5, titled ‘The Nature of Counterinsurgency Operations’) (FM 3-24, pp. 151-182). In this chapter, *FM 3-24* (p. 5-1; para 5-1; 5-2) calls for the “synchronized application of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civil actions”; this assumes the involvement of “civil agencies” and the U.S. and host nation’s military forces. The overall success of COIN operations hinges on an overall plan devised by the expeditionary military forces and the host-nation government in order to attack “the insurgents’ strategy” and to “bolster government legitimacy” (FM 3-24, p. 5-1; para 5-2). In essence, the recommendations present a mixture of ideas drawn primarily from Thompson and Galula. Most notably, the ‘clear-hold-build’ approach (FM 3-24, p. 174) is a virtual carbon copy of Galula’s counterrevolutionary strategy. This is the framework that Galula deduced from his French predecessors (oil spot) to counter insurgents in Maoist phases I and II.

There are, however, several issues with this method. First, the force requirements to hold an area (depending on the size of the territory involved) are, in most cases, unrealistic. This was certainly the case in *Operation Panther’s Claw* in Helmand Province (Afghanistan), in 2009. After the withdrawal of the British and NATO forces back to their bases, the Taliban re-entered the cleared areas. Second, there is an issue with the ‘building’ phase. What exactly is supposed to be built? This question was less problematic for the French in Algeria since the country was under French rule; however, is a *second-party*

¹¹ This is what was happening in Iraq between 2004-2006 (cf. Burton & Nagl, 2008, pp. 182-183).

(i.e., expeditionary) actor able to determine *what* to build and *how* much to build in an area that may be under their *de facto* control but not under their *de jure* control? That is, the COIN actor may be a foreign, second-party, interloper. Whether or not it is strategically viable to invest in such building is perhaps another big question. Also, how would this building be a part of the actual ‘nation-building’? The issue here is that *FM 3-24* tends to blur the bloody enterprise of war with nation-building, both of which are two distinct activities. The latter, as Gentile (2009a, p. 6) argues, should not be viewed as a strategy, but rather as an operational approach. Moreover, as far as a strategy, in its true sense, is concerned, there is arguably no need for a novel strategic approach. Irregular warfare (albeit its differences) is not different from so-called ‘regular warfare,’ whereby the greater bulk of writings on strategy by prominent thinkers like Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz still apply (Gray, 2006a, pp. 4-5).

***FM 3-24* in relation to earlier practices**

FM 3-24 is keen to stress the involvement of various non-military organizations and their integration within the military enterprise. A whole chapter is dedicated to this (Chapter 2, titled ‘Unity of Effort’). Following Galula’s prescriptions, the manual tells us that

Military efforts are necessary and important to counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts, but they are only effective when integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power (FM 3-24, p. 53).

While this might be correct, the task of designing and adopting such a strategy lies not with those implementing the manual, but rather with the policymakers and strategists who would then decide whether or not to employ the tool they have at hand, namely, the COIN manual. Nonetheless, the manual proceeds to tell the reader how the military efforts should be coordinated with civilian agencies, thus touching upon a domain out of control reach. Put differently, Gian Gentile (2009a, pp. 6-7) was not entirely wrong to call the doctrine a ‘strategy of tactics’—one that determines a political and strategic aim despite being a *field manual* (cf. Smith & Jones, 2015)—becoming

a defining feature of the new American Way of War, “otherwise called population-centric counterinsurgency.”

Concluding thoughts

Despite some of the addressed shortcomings of this US COIN manual, in the military sphere, it remains the preferred tool in terms of direction for dealing with today’s insurgency threats. It undoubtedly contains many valuable insights for commanders operating in contemporary irregular warfare environments. It is perhaps not so much the content of the manual, but its overall influence which can be considered problematic. It is for a specific context. What the emergence of *FM 3-24* seems to have done is to dictate what should be done in terms of operational and tactical approaches that should be applied, without taking the *context* into account. Of course, and on a positive note, the manual has created more awareness of the need to tackle irregular opponents in complex operational environments, which in turn has promoted a plethora of academic writings on the subject, especially those focused on the centres of gravity in COIN.¹² However, what remains largely overlooked is the role that strategy plays in these arguably new irregular conflicts, for the employment of a doctrine such as *FM 3-24* should be a (military) strategic choice (based on prior strategic assessment and the political) rather than a panacea.

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CONCLUSION

This book has looked at a collection of writings dealing with the phenomenon of insurgency and how to counter it. While each of the authors discussed herein focused on their particular context, overall, it can be said that there has been more continuity than change in terms of operational and tactical aspects as far as counterinsurgency theory and practice is concerned. Each generation of theorists-cum-practitioners seemed to ‘rediscover’ what their predecessors had devised, partially borrowing from their wisdom. While, as noted, most writings focused on operational and tactical levels, a few went well beyond, such as Clausewitz and Callwell both of whom understood the primacy of the political end state in determining the *strategic* and, subsequently, the operational and tactical approaches. However, these important insights seem to have been lost in the face of newer works such as those by Galula that have been romanticized and epitomized by counterinsurgency theorists of the 21st century. Of course, while writers such as Callwell might have suggested methods that would be ethically and legally unacceptable in today’s operational environment, this does not necessarily mean that they have lost their overall value. As stated in the introduction, reading historical texts in a decontextualized manner can lead to serious ramifications both in a theoretical and, in this particular case, a practical sense. That is to say, rather than focusing on finding concrete answers to the challenges *du jour*, more consideration is needed to extract valuable and generalizable lessons. However, extracting such generalizable content is difficult in the absence of a clear understanding of *why* and *to what end* these methods were implemented.

What should be recapitulated is the current predilection for operational and tactical levels that marginalize the subjects of strategy, military, or otherwise. As stated, the study of strategies forms an integral part of the mentioned *context*, which provides us with more understanding of why specific methods were used and to what end; this is perhaps the most important contention to make here.

On this note, it is worth reiterating that much of the criticism concerning the selection of theories and cases for the present incarnation of the population-centric approach continues to be rather limited, if not dubious. As demonstrated, there is a plethora of writings on the subject, as well as an assortment

of successful counterinsurgency cases, such as Oman (1963-1976), Colombia (1964-2016),¹ Peru (1982-1993), Turkey (1984-1999), and Sri Lanka (1983-2009), that remain understudied to a great extent. Thus, despite the existence of valuable works in the 21st century, a more refined view at the existing literature and a thorough analysis of successfully cases, beyond the operational and tactical levels, would help exact the current quest for the best practices in counterinsurgency. It would also shift the angle from the specific to the more general and, therefore, generalizable aspects of counterinsurgency campaigns.

1 Despite the signing of the Peace Accord in 2016, there is still ongoing war in several parts of the country. See, for instance, Torrijos Rivera and Abella Osorio (2018); Fernandez-Osorio (2018); and Fernandez-Osorio and Pachon Pinzon (2019).



Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice

From Early Renaissance to Present Day

Recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq served as an impetus to create a new doctrinal approach suited to conduct expeditionary counterinsurgency operations in accordance with the exigencies of the contemporary operational environment. These arguably new tenets for operational design—enshrined in the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency—are, as demonstrated, carbon copies of the intellectual products of earlier thinkers and practitioners. This book, therefore, seeks to illuminate the canon of thought and practice on counterinsurgency that stretches back to the 18th century, critically assessing writings from different parts of the world, including Spain, France, Great Britain, present-day Germany, the United States and China, to name but a few. The purpose of this intellectual exercise is two-fold. The first aim is to show that counterinsurgency thinking and practice are cyclical. Theorists and practitioners such as those of the 20th century and onwards have only repeated what their predecessors had already discovered. The second is to provide a rational understanding of how and why different practices came about and in what context. Finally, the review throws a critical glance at the contemporary publications, arguing that much of the effort dedicated to devising the ultimate guide to counterinsurgency remains trapped on the operational level, sidelining not only other hierarchically superior levels such as that of policy and strategy but also some critical works such as those written by Carl von Clausewitz and Charles E. Callwell which could both expand and enrich the current understanding of what is perceived as an insurgency.



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