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ADAPTING COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE TO POLICY-MAKING
REALITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN AMERICAN APPROACH

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ADAPTING COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE TO POLICY-MAKING
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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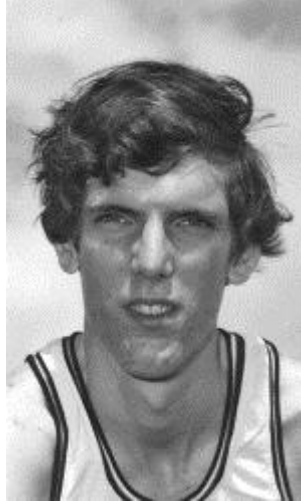
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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Lonnie Boeckman, a scholar-athlete and true lifelong friend who was a perpetual source of philosophical wisdom, encouragement, and inspiration throughout my life.

Rest in peace, my brother.



Lonnie J. Boeckman

1955-2013

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Abstract

U. S. Army Counterinsurgency (COIN) Doctrine, as outlined in Army Field Manual 3-24, is based upon the theoretical precept that the center of gravity in a war of insurgency is the local population, and that by winning the "hearts and minds" of the people, one can "win" the war. This precept, when taken in the context of 21st century insurgency, is flawed. The nature of insurgency has changed since the theory behind the population centric approach was developed as the way to counter revolutionary guerrillas. Today's type of insurgency is transnational, non-territorial, and global in scope. In response, President Obama is revising U.S. counterinsurgency practices, moving toward a series of targeted strikes against key individuals in order to disrupt insurgent operations. This dissertation examines COIN Theory and U.S. COIN Doctrine in a contemporary context and argues the population-centric approach to classic counterinsurgency is no longer applicable. Rather, this dissertation calls for a U.S. shift toward surgical strikes against high value targets within the insurgent group organization. Referred to as "organizational amputation strikes," these strikes are specifically designed to address the centers of gravity in both current

and future transnational and non-territorial insurgencies that are global in scope. This dissertation proposes a new theoretical approach that incorporates organizational amputation strikes a viable part of an updated modern counterinsurgency doctrine.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Politics and war intersect at major and multiple points. The decision to go to war is one of the gravest and most consequential decisions a political leader can make. The resources, number of troops, and length of time a nation can and will invest in war are factors determined, or at least constrained, by political realities. But what strategic doctrine should a nation's military follow in a specific war, and to what extent is that a political decision or a military decision? In a conventional war, the American traditions of an elected civilian official serving as Commander-in-Chief leading an ostensibly apolitical military have generally worked well, but this has not been the case with unconventional wars -- often called guerrilla wars or insurgencies -- which are inherently political and differ from conventional wars in profound and fundamental ways.

The political and military leaders of the United States have had an exceedingly difficult and contentious experience in developing military doctrine for successful counterinsurgency (COIN). This dissertation reviews that

experience in three cases: Vietnam, El Salvador, and the 2003-2011 war in Iraq. In examining the third case, the emphasis is on the supposed revival of effective COIN doctrine under the leadership of General David Petraeus and U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, which the U.S. has attempted to apply in Iraq and Afghanistan in the first decade of the 21st century. This dissertation then asks the following questions:

- a) How have these three American experiences in combating insurgency influenced the development of counterinsurgency doctrine on the part of the U.S. military? Has an institutional preference for conventional warfare made the U.S. military very slow in recognizing insurgency and acknowledging a need for effective counterinsurgency?

- b) To what extent has a new type of insurgency appeared in the twenty-first century, and in what ways is it different from earlier insurgencies, which are referred to in this writing as *classical* or *national* insurgencies?

c) To what extent has the COIN doctrine advocated by Petraeus and FM 3-24 (and based upon the work by classic counterinsurgency theorist David Galula) been formulated in response to this earlier type of insurgency? Is a counterinsurgency doctrine based upon classic counterinsurgency theory less relevant and useful to the new types of insurgency which have appeared in recent years?

d) If the COIN doctrine developed by Petraeus and FM 3-24 is not fully relevant and useful in fighting these new types of insurgencies, then what would a newly formulated COIN doctrine look like, especially one consistent with American policy-making realities of the 21st century?

As the war in Iraq raged during 2003-2006, scholars of military history, military policy-makers in Washington, and military officers who had experienced Iraq first-hand struggled to better understand counterinsurgency. Historical cases of wars of insurgency and revolution were studied in an attempt to best learn the "lessons" of

previous attempts at counterinsurgency. Leading this charge in the U.S. was a group of warrior-scholars working primarily out the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College who sought to glean the best practices of counterinsurgency and codify these in a way that would revolutionize Army doctrine. Although the impetus for the new doctrine was a chaotic and deteriorating situation in Iraq, the ultimate goal of the project was to not only provide a recipe for victory in Iraq, but ultimately provide a guide that would enable the U.S. military to better fight the wars of both today and tomorrow. The result of this massive effort was U.S. Army-Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 (FM 3-24), which has revolutionized the way the U.S. Army thinks about and conducts warfare. Like all good doctrine, FM 3-24 is based on theory. But, what if the theory that underlies the document is flawed? What if the basic precepts upon which FM 3-24 was built are incorrect? These are the fundamental questions from which this dissertation has grown. To paraphrase a recent quote by political scientist Robert Jervis: "Without a [proper and applicable] theory, we're just lost ... we just have all these random phenomena we can't make any sense of."¹

¹ Douglas Martin, "Kenneth Waltz, Foreign-Relations Expert, Dies at 88," *New York Times*, 19 May 2013, A20.

This dissertation argues that the underlying theory of counterinsurgency upon which U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine is based is no longer the proper theory to apply toward the contemporary counterinsurgency environment. The danger underlying the application of the wrong theory to explain any phenomena is that it will lead to incorrect understandings and, in the case of U.S. military policy, the development of incorrect doctrine and the application of incorrect strategies.

U. S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine, as outlined in FM 3-24, is based upon the classic theoretical writings of French counterinsurgent David Galula, and is steeped in the theory that by winning "hearts and minds" of the local population, one can "win" a war of insurgency. This winning of "hearts and minds" is made possible by what is commonly referred to as an "oil spot strategy," in which vast numbers of troops occupy the territory and deny the insurgent access to the local population. Once security has been established, most contemporary scholars and practitioners of counterinsurgency advocate the use of a so-called "whole of government" approach and a shift to stability operations, although in practice the U.S.

military has been responsible for the overwhelming majority of post-conflict operations. This dissertation asserts that this classic approach to counterinsurgency is, from a U.S. perspective, outdated.

The Obama Administration's ending of the war in Iraq and ordering the raid that killed Osama bin Laden signaled a compression of former President Bush's expansive "Global War on Terror" into a very narrow series of surgical strikes against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Through the expanded use of special operations commandos and the growing use of unmanned drone strikes, the Obama Administration is re-vamping U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, moving away from the population-centric approach advocated by the so-called Petraeus Doctrine to a series of targeted strikes against key individuals in order to disrupt al Qaeda and Taliban operations. The President has also expanded the use of targeted strikes into places like Yemen and Somalia. This approach, most often referred to as "targeted killings" or "leadership decapitation" in the literature, has been highly criticized. Yet, most experts expect the U.S. to expand its use of targeted strikes in the future as military

technology improves and budget concerns deter large-scale military interventions.

Given the context of global insurgency, the U.S. will undoubtedly find itself conducting counterinsurgency again in the future. As a result of decisions made by elected officials to use the armed forces as a part of American foreign policy, the U.S. military will continue to find itself ordered to conduct COIN campaigns. Yet, the classic, population-centric approach to counterinsurgency which is the hallmark of U.S. military COIN doctrine is no longer applicable. What is applicable is a strategy bent upon keeping the transnational, non-territorial, global insurgent who is focused on war against the so called "far enemy"² off balance so that his organization is dysfunctional and his attacks against the U.S. and its interests are inefficient.

This dissertation argues that given the current strategic environment, the type of hard yet surgical approach to counterinsurgency that targeted strikes afford is more effective and practical for the U.S. military to

² The term "far enemy" was originally coined by Fawaz Gerges, and refers to radical Islam's war against non-Muslim foreign powers such as the U.S. Conversely, the "near enemy" are the corrupt, apostate Muslim regimes such as Saudi Arabia. See Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005). 12-15.

use. These selectively targeted, surgical strikes focus on the organizational infrastructure of the insurgent group by amputating key nodes within the organization. These strikes encompass both leadership decapitation as well as elimination of key individuals within the organization through either killing or capture. While their use has been ignored by counterinsurgency theorists, organizational amputation strikes are a viable part of the modern counterinsurgency landscape and should be incorporated as the key part of a new counterinsurgency theory specifically designed to address both current and future global insurgencies.

The Relevance of Counterinsurgency Theory Today

During the past decade, as the U.S. found itself engaged in its first so-called "long war" involving large numbers of U.S. troops since Vietnam, scholars, warriors, and policymakers have increasingly focused their time and attention on all things counterinsurgency. In the aftermath of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and the steady winding down of its military commitments in Afghanistan, it is time to begin the long process of debating the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. military's

interpretation of counterinsurgency's so-called "best practices."

While conventional wisdom asserts that there is little doubt the counterinsurgency methods the U.S. employed in Iraq in 2007 played a role in reversing the tide of the war, the long-term outcome of that war will probably not be known for several more years. Given that a classic campaign of counterinsurgency is focused on an overall goal of winning the hearts and minds of the local population rather than vanquishing an enemy army, it is hard to determine, at present, whether the U.S. intervention into Iraq will achieve the kind of success it sought on the eve of the 2003 invasion. Harder still is the determination of whether or not the counterinsurgency doctrine outlined in FM 3-24 can be successfully applied in future U.S. counterinsurgency efforts, particularly against insurgencies that are global in scope.

The fact that the final outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan are yet to be fully determined has not stopped numerous comparisons of these wars to U.S. efforts in Vietnam. Indeed, the Vietnam debate continues with regard to how the U.S. could have achieved military victory by winning all of the battles, yet failed to achieve strategic or "political" victory, thus losing the war.

Identifying the reason the U.S. "lost" the Vietnam War (whether that be because the military failed to bring overwhelming force to bear, or because it failed to fully embrace classic counterinsurgency theory, or because the political leadership failed to provide a clear definition of victory, or because the effort lost the support of the electorate) is not of critical importance in a discussion of counterinsurgency theory in the twenty-first century. What is of critical importance is that both civilian and military leaders never lose sight of the Clausewitzian dictum that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means."³ The important point is that "political intercourse" in a counterinsurgency campaign waged by a democracy on behalf of an ally must surely include domestic politics within the intervening state. Thus, any theory of counterinsurgency used by the U.S. that focuses on operational and tactical aspects such as intelligence, culture, and security, and considers political aspects within the zone of conflict, yet fails to consider the impact of the intervening power's domestic political arena

³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* [Vom Kriege] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976). 605.

as an independent variable, is more likely to result in a failure to achieve complete strategic victory.

Difficulties Inherent in Counterinsurgency

Insurgency is an irregular form of warfare that is as old as conflict itself. Rebellious wars of insurgency have been a large and important part of military conflict since the dawn of recorded history. Esteemed insurgency research scholar Ian F. W. Beckett has noted that "the first documented reference to what is recognizably guerrilla warfare occurs in the *Anastas*, a Hittite parchment dating from the fifteenth century BC."⁴ Yet, despite the fact that history is awash with these types of wars, conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign remains inherently difficult. This is because wars of insurgency are unconventional in nature. Further, the strategy and methods used by the insurgent are constantly evolving, resulting in the fact that no two insurgencies are ever alike. Indeed, insurgency is not one monolithic phenomenon, but rather a multi-faceted, diverse, and ever-changing form of violent rebellion. Insurgents learn from

⁴ Ian F. W. Beckett, *Encyclopedia of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001). xi.

studying previous insurrections and adapt those lessons to their particular situation. Sam Sarkesian, using the then-common term "revolutions" rather than the contemporary term "insurgencies," put it best some forty years ago when he wrote:

Any one-dimensional explanation of revolutions would presuppose unambiguous and clearly differentiated political, social, and economic systems, hardly a realistic expectation. The substantive issues of revolutions are often themselves difficult enough to identify precisely. As an initial step, however, revolutions can be usefully viewed as struggles at points on a continuum.."⁵

In short, insurgency can take on many forms. Given the individual dynamics of each insurgent uprising, it is thus impossible to develop a single, all inclusive, and unchanging theory of counterinsurgency which can be applied in every situation. The Vietnam War produced a generation of U.S. Army officers who had experienced a determined insurgency and understood Sarkesian's analysis all too well. These officers learned through experience under fire the same lesson that T. E. Lawrence, the famed "Lawrence of Arabia," had learned during World War I --

⁵ Sam C. Sarkesian, ed. *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare* (Chicago, IL: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1975), 2.

that insurgencies are slow, messy, and fluid.⁶ Meanwhile, conventional armies are rigid. Conventional armies follow codified "standard operating procedures." They are risk averse, and are much more adept at following Clausewitz's *Principles of Warfare*⁷ than they are at winning hearts and minds. As a result of the Vietnam experience, a military doctrine was developed that would prevent, or at least constrain, political leadership from using the U.S. military in a way that would lead to heavy involvement in another long-term *quagmire* like Vietnam. In short, decisions regarding where and how to go to war were to be based on specific guidelines. American national interests had to be vital, the political objectives had to be achievable, national will (the support of the American people) had to be clearly recognized, and the level of force brought to bear had to be overwhelming.⁸ Thus, a key purpose of this doctrine, which would later become known as the *Powell Doctrine* was to provide a codified means of making it "hard for civilian policy makers to use war as

⁶ T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph: The Complete 1922 Text* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2011). 136.

⁷ The Department of Defense has boiled down Clausewitz's work in *Principles of Warfare* and *On War* into a set of 9 easily teachable and generally accepted "truths" of warfare. These are: Mass, Objective, Offensive, Security, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Surprise, and Simplicity. Source: Author's personal notes taken while a student at the Naval Postgraduate School.

⁸ Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013). 24-25.

an offhanded extension of politics.”⁹ In other words, the purpose of the Powell Doctrine was to ultimately avoid future engagement in lengthy and often unsuccessful counterinsurgency campaigns. The Powell Doctrine dominated the Pentagon’s approach to warfare from the end of Vietnam until the end of the Cold War. However, the changing nature of the post-Cold War world weakened the firm grip the Powell Doctrine had held on U.S. military strategy.

The Post-Cold War Environment

After the Cold War, the international relations arena became less structured and predictable. Writers such as Robert D. Kaplan and Samuel Huntington warned of a looming global anarchy¹⁰ that would lead to a “clash of civilizations.”¹¹ Then, on 9/11, the U.S. discovered that the transnational, non-territorial insurgent had a very long and deadly reach. A decade-plus later, the U.S. military clearly understands that it will most likely need to wage counterinsurgency campaigns in the future. Yet,

⁹ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006). 91.

¹⁰ Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet," *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2 (1994).

¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1996). 20.

how should the U.S. military wage the next counterinsurgency? What underlying theory of counterinsurgency should be used in the future? How should past experience, including the Iraq war, inform these questions? Exactly how these questions are answered will undoubtedly be debated for years to come, and rightfully so, because the decisions regarding how a war will be fought have enormous impact on not only the U.S. military, but on the nation as a whole. When mistakes in warfare are made, the costs are enormous. It is in this regard that ideas matter. Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy moved away from its foreign policy pragmatism toward an idealism built around what has been called "a world crusade of free-market nation-building."¹² This policy shift was made possible, in part, because those who held this view believed that the U.S. possessed the perfect tool through which this vision could become a reality. This tool was, of course, the United States military. As a result, the military began to explore how it would engage in so-called 'operations other than war' while still maintaining the type of focus and capabilities called for by the Powell Doctrine. Yet, ideas and

¹² Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*: 6.

understandings will always eventually drive doctrine, as the 2009 U.S. Army Capstone Concept attests:

*Ideas matter. Emerging from specific human, historical, and technological contexts, ideas affect understanding and influence behavior. Ideas can serve as the driving force behind significant institutional change. Because the need for change will always be with us, the exchange of ideas and conceptual development must be among our top priorities.*¹³

Relevance of This Research

Ideas can sometimes have an autonomous yet powerful force of their own. In other words, they can gain enough traction to cause immense debate and even profound change within a particular field of study. As Thomas Kuhn states, a new idea that is "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity" may be strong enough to cause a shifting toward a new "paradigm."¹⁴ For those that are a part of the professional military, academic, and policy-making circles that are involved in the field of counterinsurgency, a shift of this type may have taken place. The recent evolution of American military

¹³ Martin E. Dempsey, *Operational Adaptability: Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict 2016-2028*, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp525-3-0.pdf>. i.

¹⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970). 10.

doctrine, with its overarching emphasis on small wars and counterinsurgency, has indeed attracted what may prove to be an enduring group of adherents away from the traditional view of the so-called "American Way of War" and its emphasis on the Clausewitzian "Principles of War." This shift has brought to the fore a debate between fervent admirers of the new doctrine and a smaller number of passionate detractors.

This dissertation attempts to add to this debate by exploring the American military aspect of counterinsurgency from a theoretical and historical perspective. The scope of this particular dissertation is very narrow, and will evaluate counterinsurgency theory only in a contemporary U.S. military context. This dissertation approaches the issue from a pragmatic realist perspective -- focusing not on the normative argument of whether or not the U.S. should or should not engage in counterinsurgency -- but focusing on questions regarding effectiveness and the best application of U.S. military capabilities in conducting COIN. This dissertation argues that, given the recent evolution in the types of insurgencies that the U.S. is *most likely* to encounter in the future, the traditional large military footprint,

open-ended model of counterinsurgency used in Iraq and Afghanistan will most often no longer be applicable. This is due to the undeniable fact that in wars of insurgency, political and military tasks are interwoven in a way that has inevitably led to large-scale and multi-dimensional nation-building rather than closing with and destroying an enemy force. The slow, messy, and fluid nature of a war of insurgency is something that the American people are unlikely to tolerate for an extended period of time. Yet, the very nature of the way counterinsurgency campaigns have historically been waged has consistently led to prolonged engagement. Keeping in mind the Clausewitzian notion that the military is an instrument of policy, it is important to remember that it is only one of several relevant instruments the U.S. can bring to bear in a counterinsurgency campaign. Other non-military instruments include diplomacy, economic carrots or sticks, or humanitarian aid. However, all too often the military has been used as a "one stop shop" for all things counterinsurgency¹⁵ and, usually, with less than optimal

¹⁵ The most recent historical example of the military arm of the government handling all aspects of counterinsurgency can be found in the Bush Administration's decision to give the Pentagon control over post-war planning for Iraq, which ultimately led to the collapse of the State Department's "Future of Iraq Project" and an almost non-existent role for that Department in post-war Iraq. See Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*

results. In fact, the failure of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy to achieve American goals may hinder rather than enhance the reputation of the United States. Leading foreign policy scholars have argued that America's disengagement from recent counterinsurgency campaigns "without victory contributes to a related impression [among foreign countries] that America's unquestioned military superiority isn't worth much in terms of achieving policy objectives on the ground."¹⁶

Given America's past failings in counterinsurgency, it is time to reexamine the theoretical constructs behind the way the U.S. military conducts its part in response to the timeless challenges these slow, messy, and fluid wars bring to the fore.

(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007). 97; George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005). 124; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). 81, 102.

¹⁶ Leslie H. Gelb and Dimitri K. Simes, "A New Anti-American Axis?," *New York Times*, 07 July 2013, SR5.

CHAPTER 2

The Impact of the Iraq War on US Army Doctrine

The End of a War, But Not of Uncertainty

On December 19, 2011, the last vehicle convoy of American troops and equipment withdrew from Iraq to Kuwait, and brought an end to almost nine years of war. As promised by President Obama in the fall of 2011, all U.S. soldiers were home by Christmas.¹⁷

In contrast to the return of the troops from the region twenty years earlier following the First Gulf War, there would be no huge, nationally organized and televised ticker-tape parades in New York City or over-the-top fanfare in the U.S. for returning combat veterans.¹⁸ In fact, the last departing soldiers didn't even have "time for goodbyes to Iraqis with whom they had become acquainted" as the details of the departure convoy were kept secret in order to minimize the likelihood of an attack from either Iraqi insurgents or "Iraqi security officers aligned with the militias."¹⁹

¹⁷ Mark Landler, "Iraq, a War Obama Didn't Want, Shaped His Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, 18 December 2011, 294.

¹⁸ Jerry Gray, "A Gulf Parade with Six Tons of Ticker Tape," *New York Times*, 06 June 1991.

¹⁹ Tim Arango and Michael S. Schmidt, "Last Convoy of American Troops Leaves Iraq, Marking War's End," *New York Times*, 19 December 2011, A6.

Thus, by 2013, U.S. combat troops returned home from Iraq; yet the U.S. is still engaged in Afghanistan. However, this war will also be ending soon. According to a strategic partnership agreement signed by President Obama and Afghan President Hamid Karzai,²⁰ U.S. forces are currently scheduled to continue drawing down "at a steady pace" until the U.S. hands over all security responsibilities to the Afghan leadership in 2014.²¹ Indeed, given the Obama Administration's frustrations with the government of Afghan President Karzai, the U.S. may wind up pulling out its forces by the summer of 2014.²² The decision for a rapid drawdown has drawn criticism and is faster than many prominent figures -- including retired Army general and former CIA Director David Petraeus,²³ U.S. Senator John McCain,²⁴ and General Joseph F. Dunford, the commander of the American and allied forces in Afghanistan in 2013²⁵ -- wished to see. However, given setbacks in

²⁰ Mark Landler, "Obama Signs Pact in Kabul, Turning Page in Long War," *New York Times*, 02 May 2012, A1.

²¹ Barak Obama, "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan on 22 June," Speech, *White House Press Release: Speeches & Remarks* (2011), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>.

²² Mark Mazzetti and Matthew Rosenberg, "U.S. Considers Faster Pullout In Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 09 July 2013, A1.

²³ Mark Landler and Helene Cooper, "Obama Will Speed Pullout From War in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 23 June 2011, A1.

²⁴ John McCain, "Statement by Senator John McCain on Afghanistan," (Official Website of U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona 2012).

²⁵ Matthew Rosenberg, "Despite Gains, Leader of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan Says Troops Must Stay," *New York Times*, 30 July 2013, A7.

Afghanistan, such as the 11 March, 2012 execution-style killings of Afghan civilians, the violence touched off earlier in that same year by the video of U.S. Marines urinating on the corpses of dead Taliban militants, and the accidental burning of Korans the following month, pressure mounted to accelerate the timeline for U.S. withdrawal.²⁶ Additionally, polling data published during 2012 described a war-weary American public that had become disillusioned with the situation in Afghanistan. Several polls, including those conducted by the New York Times/CBS, Pew Research Center, and Washington Post/ABC -- all showed a drop in support for the war in Afghanistan. The polls also reported increasingly negative impressions of the war have grown among both Democrats and Republicans.²⁷ Under mounting pressure from Congress and from the electorate, the President announced in May 2012 that "the U.S. and other NATO forces would move into a support role" in Afghanistan by the summer of 2013 whether or not the Afghan military is able to secure the country²⁸ and promised in his 2013 State of the Union Address that "by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be

²⁶ Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, "Officials in U.S. Debate Speeding Afghan Pullout," *New York Times*, 13 March 2012.

²⁷ Elisabeth Bumiller and Allison Kopicki, "New Poll finds Drop in Support for Afghan War," *New York Times*, 27 March 2012, A1.

²⁸ David E. Sanger, "Charting Obama's Journey to a Shift on Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 20 May 2012, A1.

over."²⁹ The President then limited the war's objective by moving away from the Bush Administration's broad and far-reaching goal of remaking Afghanistan toward one that was much more narrow, stating that the U.S. goals in Afghanistan were to "defeat the core of al Qaeda"³⁰ and to ensure that "no safe haven from which al Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against [the U.S.] homeland or [its] allies," ...is... "achievable."³¹ The President also stated, given the huge cost of the wars in terms of both blood and treasure during a period of rising debt and hard economic times that "it is time to focus on nation building here at home."³² The President pointed out that the desired end state in Afghanistan is "not to build a country in America's image, nor to eradicate every vestige of the Taliban [as] these objectives would require many more years, many more dollars, and many more American lives" than his administration is willing to expend.³³ No doubt the focus of U.S. political leadership has shifted toward domestic politics, as attested to by the proposed 9.4% reduction in defense spending mandated by the Budget

²⁹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address," (2013), http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-12/politics/37059380_1_applause-task-free-enterprise.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Obama, "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan on 22 June".

³² Ibid.

³³ Landler, "Obama Signs Pact in Kabul, Turning Page in Long War," Al.

Control Act of July 2011.³⁴ In the meantime, as the U.S. steadily draws down its military presence in Afghanistan, "some of the hardest won gains of the war [are now] at risk of being lost."³⁵

While predicting accurately what the future holds for both Iraq and Afghanistan is difficult, there are indications that both countries will face increasing difficulties with internal security once U.S. forces are fully withdrawn. In Iraq, the final exodus of American forces coincided with a political crisis in Baghdad, as "a large group of mostly Sunni lawmakers" boycotted the Iraqi Parliament³⁶ following a surge of arrests by the Shiite-dominated government that had systematically "rounded up hundreds of former Ba'ath Party members, aides of Sunni lawmakers, and security guards."³⁷ Following the pullout of the last of U.S. combat forces, the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, after "preparing a case against Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-

³⁴ Jonathan Weisman, "White House details potential Effects If Automatic Budget Cuts Go Through," *New York Times*, 15 September 2012, A17.

³⁵ Matthew Rosenberg, "U.S. Faces Fire As It Pulls Out of Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 16 February 2013, A1.

³⁶ Arango and Schmidt, "Last Convoy of American Troops Leaves Iraq, Marking War's End."

³⁷ Jack Healy, Tim Arango, and Michael S. Schmidt, "Premier's Actions in Iraq Raise U.S. Concerns," *New York Times*, 12 December 2011.

Hashimi on terrorism charges,"³⁸ ordered the arrest of the Sunni lawmaker and leader of the Iraqiya Party, leading to speculation that Iraq's leaders had begun to use "the very institutions America has spent millions of dollars trying to strengthen—the police, the courts, the media—as a cudgel to batter their political enemies and consolidate power."³⁹ Less than a week after the exit of the final U.S. combat units, a series of explosive blasts rocked Baghdad. These explosions were a harbinger of an ever "deepening political and sectarian crisis."⁴⁰ Indeed, the sectarian violence is steadily growing worse, as indicated by the ever increasing number of bombings in early 2013.⁴¹ The deteriorating situation was punctuated by a series of bombs which exploded in Shi'ite neighborhoods in and around Baghdad on the tenth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The bombs were thought to have been planted by Sunni insurgents and left at least 57 people

³⁸ Arango and Schmidt, "Last Convoy of American Troops Leaves Iraq, Marking War's End."

³⁹ Jack Healy, "Arrest Warrant for Sunni Leader Spurs Iraq Crisis," *New York Times*, 20 December 2011.

⁴⁰ "Blasts Rock Baghdad as Political Crisis Deepens," *New York Times*, 23 December 2011.

⁴¹ Associated-Press, "Iraq: bomber Kills at Least 22," (2013), <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/world/middleeast/suicide-bomber-kills-members-of-a-militia-in-iraq.html>; "Another Wave of Bombings Across Iraq," (2012), <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/01/world/middleeast/another-wave-of-bombings-across-iraq.html>; Duraid Adnan, "Bombings in Iraq Kill More Than 20 and Are Seen as Political," *New York Times*, 17 January 2013, A9; "Bombing at a Funeral in Northern Iraq Kills at Least 35," *New York Times*, 24 January 2013, A12; "Iraq: Bombs Kill at Least 26 People," *New York Times*, 09 February 2013, A6.

dead, and some 190 wounded. Among those killed on that day was an Iraqi Finance Ministry official.⁴²

Additionally, in the wake of increasing sectarian violence, Iraq's Parliament passed a law in early 2013 intended to prevent Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki from seeking a third term.⁴³ This move threatens Mr. Maliki's hold on power and reflects the rising tension that is playing out in the streets, leading to more uncertainty regarding what the future holds for Iraq.

Further still, the terrorist Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri has sworn to "conduct 100 attacks in Iraq" to avenge the death of former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, leading some senior U.S. officials to express concern that the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq may spur a resurgence of al Qaeda in Iraq.⁴⁴

According to press reports of increasing violence, current conditions on the streets may be indicating that al-Badri is trying to carry out his threat. Recently, Efan al-Essawi, a member of the Iraqi Parliament and leader of a local council of the *Awakening Movement* (a

⁴² Tim Arango, "Iraqis' pain Never Abates as Attacks Kill Dozens," *New York Times*, 20 March 2013, A10.

⁴³ Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango, "Lawmakers Aim to Thwart Iraq's Leader," *New York Times*, 27 January 2013, A9.

⁴⁴ Michael S. Schmidt and Eric Schmitt, "Leaving Iraq, U.S. Fears New Surge of Qaeda Terror," *New York Times*, 06 November 2011.

group of Sunni militias backed by General Petraeus during the surge who switched sides to fight al-Qaeda in Iraq along-side U.S. forces), was killed in a suicide bomb attack.⁴⁵ Sectarian and ethnic bloodlettings,⁴⁶ as well as attacks against Iraqi security forces,⁴⁷ are all on the rise. These events have led to speculation that Iraq is "unraveling" and, according to former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, may be returning to "the conditions of 2006 and 2007, when Iraq plunged into civil-war like violence."⁴⁸

There are also concerns being voiced regarding the U.S. troop pullout in Afghanistan. In addition to a larger troop presence, a huge part of the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy has been the assumption that plentiful aid and higher incomes for local Afghans would foster security, thus helping defeat the Taliban.⁴⁹ However, the World Bank issued a gloomy report arguing that the pullout of U.S. and NATO troops in 2014 would most-likely plunge the country into an economic recession

⁴⁵ Adnan, "Bombings in Iraq Kill More Than 20 and Are Seen as Political," A9.

⁴⁶ Michael Knights, "Yes, Iraq is Unraveling: And It's About to Become Obama's Problem All Over Again," *Foreign Policy* (2013), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/05/15/yes_iraq_is_unraveling.

⁴⁷ Associated-Press, "Iraq: bomber Kills at Least 22".

⁴⁸ Knights, "Yes, Iraq is Unraveling: And It's About to Become Obama's Problem All Over Again".

⁴⁹ Alissa J. Rubin, "World Bank Issues Alert on Afghanistan Economy," *New York Times*, 23 November 2011, A6.

that would, in turn, worsen the security situation and could lead to a complete collapse of the country as it currently receives most of its revenue "from American military and civilian spending."⁵⁰ Indeed, the instability of Afghanistan was on display in May, 2012, mere hours after President Obama left the country following the signing of the strategic partnership agreement, as at least two explosions took place near a compound used by United Nations workers. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombings, that killed seven people.⁵¹ More recently, U.S. forces in Afghanistan have seen an intensified wave of insider attacks by Afghan security forces, raising concerns regarding the integrity of the Afghan forces that the U.S. expects to secure the country after U.S. and NATO troops withdraw in 2014.⁵² It also appears that the level of distrust of U.S. motives in Afghanistan is at a very high state, as epitomized by Afghan President Hamid Karzai's recent comments that "the Americans and the Taliban had a common goal in destabilizing his country" in order to "justify a

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Landler, "Obama Signs Pact in Kabul, Turning Page in Long War," A1.

⁵² James Dao and Andrew W. Lehren, "In Toll of 2,000, New Portrait of Afghan War," *New York Times*, 22 August 2012, A1.

continued American military presence."⁵³ Soon after Mr. Karzai made these comments, General Joseph F. Dunford, the top American commander in Afghanistan, grew concerned that Karzai's comments "had put Western troops at greater risk of attack both from rogue Afghan security forces and from militants" and ordered his forces to intensify security measures.⁵⁴ The General's fears for troop safety seemed to be confirmed a few days later when a young Afghan teenager fatally stabbed an American soldier in the neck as the soldier was engaged in one of the most basic types of hearts and minds winning activities - the soldier was playing with Afghan children.⁵⁵ In short, the situation in Afghanistan not only looks dire to the majority of the American people but to other outside observers as well. Indeed, Pakistani journalist and author Ahmed Rashid has described the dysfunctional government of Afghanistan as "in free fall,"⁵⁶ and this on the eve of the pull-out of the majority of U.S. combat forces.

⁵³ Alissa J. Rubin and Thom Shanker, "Afghan Leader Says U.S. Abets Taliban's Goal," *New York Times*, 10 March 2013, A1.

⁵⁴ Alissa J. Rubin and Rod Nordland, "U.S. General Puts Troops on Security Alert After Karzai Remarks," *New York Times*, 14 March 2013, A4.

⁵⁵ Kim Gamel, "Afghan Teenage Fatally Stabs U.S. Soldier," *Associated Press* (2013), <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/afghan-teenager-fatally-stabs-us-soldier>.

⁵⁶ Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan* (New York: Viking Press, 2012). 187.

Thus, the future of both Iraq and Afghanistan are anything but certain. As the war in Iraq has ended, and the war in Afghanistan is on a set timetable leading to its end in 2014, it is important to assess the U.S. military counterinsurgency intervention following 9/11, which, as one writer put it in referring to the Iraq case, could be seen moving along a continuum "from hope to barbarity, from swaggering invasion to quiet departure."⁵⁷ One of the main goals of this dissertation is to structure that assessment by focusing on the military doctrine that was transformed completely as a result of what was primarily the stubborn Iraq insurgency. The violent insurgency followed a victory speech given by then President George W. Bush only weeks after U.S. forces commenced hostilities in Iraq. In his speech, President Bush declared, under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."⁵⁸ Tragically, yet ironically, the war in Iraq would drag on for over eight more years.

A Doctrinal Shift

⁵⁷ Scott Wilson, "U.S. and Iraq: A Two-Way Legacy," *Washington Post*, 14 December 2011.

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President from the USS Abraham Lincoln," Speech, (2003), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html>.

With the benefit of hindsight, one might be tempted to conclude that President Bush, at the time he gave his victory speech, was completely out of touch with realities on the ground. However, it is critically important to note that, when viewing the Iraq war up to that particular point through the lens of *conventional warfare* and Army doctrine, the *mission* had indeed been *accomplished*. This is because the objective, as had been outlined by President Bush to the American people in a nationally-televised speech a mere forty two days earlier, was to "disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger."⁵⁹ Further, in the same speech, the President assured the American people that the U.S. had "no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people" and that U.S. forces "would be coming home as soon as their work [was] done."⁶⁰ When these words are taken in the context of the 1991 Gulf War, it is easy to see why the expectations among many at the time were that Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 would follow along similar lines.

⁵⁹ "President Bush Addresses the Nation 19 March," ed. Speech to the American People, Speech, (2003), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The military's run from Kuwait into Baghdad in the first days of Operation Iraqi Freedom had taken place with "stunning" swiftness,⁶¹ using an unprecedented speed of heavy armored maneuver as a "force multiplier"⁶² and with "skill, precision...[and with] a minimum of casualties."⁶³ When Baghdad fell and the Iraqi government fled, "the mission, as defined for the military as getting rid of the [Saddam Hussein] regime, had indeed been accomplished."⁶⁴ Yet, while America celebrated a "Mission Accomplished," there were signs that an insurgency was beginning to brew.⁶⁵ This insurgency, which would rapidly gain momentum, would be something that the leadership of the U.S. Army, steeped in the doctrines of conventional warfare and having embraced the concept of transformational air-land battle, would be either slow, or unwilling, to recognize.⁶⁶

The level of violence in Iraq grew over the summer of 2003 and, by the fall, many outside the top levels of the

⁶¹ John F. Burns, "Cheers, Tears, and Looting in Capital's Streets," *New York Times*, 10 April 2003, A1.

⁶² Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), Biography. 368.

⁶³ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), Autobiography. 469.

⁶⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 135.

⁶⁵ Judith Miller, "Smoking Gun Still Proves To Be Elusive for Searchers," *New York Times*, 02 April 2003.

⁶⁶ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 58-59.

Pentagon hierarchy were making comparisons with the last insurgency in which the U.S. had fought -- Vietnam.⁶⁷ Yet, the situation in Iraq was not simply another Vietnam. In Vietnam, the U.S. faced a determined and unified guerrilla force supported by the North Vietnamese Army. The U.S. forces on the ground in Iraq were facing a combination of insurgent attacks, sectarian violence, and terrorist attacks from foreign jihadist fighters.

As the violence in Iraq grew worse during 2004-2006, a group of officers assigned to the Doctrine Division of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, began to rewrite a much outdated doctrine for counterinsurgency. Led by then Lieutenant General David Petraeus, who had achieved notoriety during his first tour in Iraq as commander of the 101st Airborne Division as a result of his successful implementation of classic counterinsurgency tactics in Mosul,⁶⁸ the group included current and former military practitioners of counterinsurgency, as well as journalists, human rights advocates, and academics.⁶⁹ Amazingly, the new doctrine

⁶⁷ Craig R. Whitney, "Tunnel Vision; Watching Iraq, Seeing Vietnam," *New York Times*, 9 November 2003, WK1.

⁶⁸ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 73.

⁶⁹ David Petraeus and James F. Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24*,

was written in a mere thirteen months and was released to the field in late 2006, just as President Bush ordered a "surge" of 20,000 additional troops to deploy to the Iraq Theater of Operations and named General Petraeus to lead the effort.

If one were to judge success or failure of the new doctrine in Iraq based only on levels of violence, then it can be safely stated that the apparent impact of the new doctrine was huge. Before the surge and the implementation of the new counterinsurgency (referred to in military circles by the acronym COIN) doctrine, the levels of violence in Iraq were staggering relative to the levels of violence twelve months after Petraeus took command (see Figure 2.1). Even though Iraq's religious and political factions remained "murderously divided,"⁷⁰ by late 2008 the level of violence and U.S. deaths was at its lowest level of the entire war.

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007). xvi.

⁷⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009). 294.

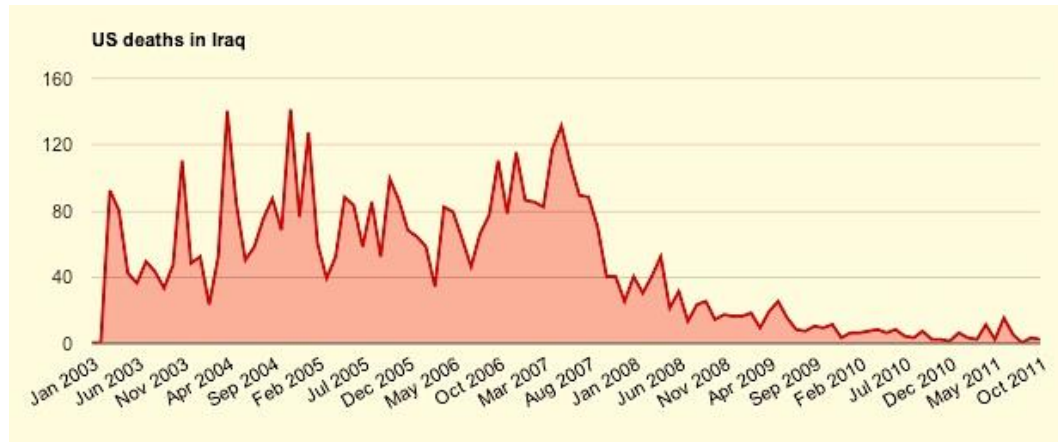


Figure 2.1

Source: <http://short-sharp-shock.blogspot.com/2011/10/home-for-holidays-barack-obama-ends.html>

By the time Petraeus left Iraq, the battlefield had been transformed from a bloody quagmire to a much more secure and stable area. While questions regarding the long-term direction of Iraq remain unanswered, the 2007 surge has often been credited with providing the U.S. military with enough troops to provide security for the Iraqi people, which in turn is seen as the key causal factor in a shift of Iraqi popular support away from the insurgents and in favor of the U.S.⁷¹ Conventional wisdom thus credits the Army's use of its new population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine as resulting, by late 2008, in "Kebab stands and coffee shops [reopening] across the

⁷¹ Christopher Durquette, "Myths and Troop Surges," *The Washington Times* (2009), <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/dec/21/myths-and-troop-surges/>.

city, and many ordinary Iraqis [feeling] safe enough to venture out of their homes at night.”⁷²

While the new COIN doctrine had a huge impact on the security situation in Iraq, U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24 (FM 3-24), now often referred to as the “Petraeus Doctrine,”⁷³ has had a bigger impact on the U.S. military as a whole, and arguably will be longer-lasting.

Referring to the doctrine as “radical,” the introduction to the University of Chicago Press edition of the Manual boldly proclaims that FM 3-24 “challenges much of what is holy about the American way of war” and that it “demands significant change and sacrifice to fight today’s enemies *honorably*” [emphasis added].⁷⁴ The manual is equally ambitious as it is bold, delineating its purpose “to help prepare Army and Marine Corps leaders *to conduct COIN operations anywhere in the world*” [emphasis added].⁷⁵ In other words, the manual purports to be a guide to all things counterinsurgency. For this reason, FM 3-24

⁷² Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 294.

⁷³ Andrew J. Bacevich, “The Petraeus Doctrine,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 302, no. 3 (2008): 17.

⁷⁴ Sarah Sewall, “A Radical Field Manual: Introduction to University of Chicago Press Edition of FM 3-24,” in *U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xxi.

⁷⁵ Petraeus and Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*: li.

quickly became the cornerstone in what is now simply referred to in Defense Department circles as "the long war," suggesting that COIN, as a primary doctrine of military operations, is here to stay. Indeed, if one were to look at the number of articles focused on COIN written by military officers for the professional journals such as *Joint Forces Quarterly*, *Parameters*, or *Military Review*, or the seeming focus on COIN in the training curriculum developed by the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, then it certainly seems like the doctrine espoused by General Petraeus has superseded all others. For example, the Joint Readiness Training Center webpage⁷⁶ states the following:

JRTC scenarios allow complete integration of Air Force and other military services as well as host nation and civilian role players. The exercise scenarios replicate many of the unique situations and challenges a unit may face to include host national officials and citizens, insurgents and terrorists, news media coverage, and non-governmental organizations.

For clarity, all ground Army combat units are required to go through a JRTC rotation prior to deploying. The focus in training outlined above is vastly different

⁷⁶ <http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/AboutJRTC.htm>

from the "Air-Land Battle" focus of JRTC just a dozen years ago, when the Army followed what was then commonly referred to as the *Powell Doctrine*, named after former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, who presided over the 1991 Gulf War.

The Powell Doctrine grew from the Army's self-examination following the less than desired outcome of the Vietnam War. In struggling to discover how the U.S. military could have "won all of the battles but lost the war,"⁷⁷ the Army turned to the U.S. Army War College and, in particular, Colonel Harry G. Summers. Summers spearheaded a research effort that used Clausewitzian theory and the classic principles of war to examine critically the U.S. failure in Vietnam. Summers concluded that the Clausewitzian trinity of government, the people, and the military had been dysfunctional during Vietnam. In brief, the war did not have the full support of the American people; the civilian government failed to establish clear strategic goals; and the Army failed to employ the proper military strategy to ensure victory. Summers' work, published as *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, provided the foundation for a

⁷⁷ DeWitt C. Smith, "Forward to On Strategy," in *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 1981), vii.

transformation in Army doctrine in the years between Vietnam and the 1991 Gulf War.

In its most basic form, the Powell Doctrine was derived as a way to make sure that America didn't repeat the mistakes of Vietnam. According to Powell, the U.S. should weigh certain criteria before entering into a war. These criteria were: (1) that all other options short of war to resolve the conflict had been exhausted, (2) that the resolution of the conflict was of vital national interest to the U.S., (3) that a clearly defined and militarily-achievable political objective had been selected, (4) that the option of going to war had the full support of the American people and their elected representatives, (5) that the U.S. military would apply the use of overwhelming force, and (6) that a well thought out and executable exit strategy had been planned and determined.⁷⁸ The Powell Doctrine was on full display during the 1991 Gulf War, and the latest revision of the doctrine was outlined in detail in the June 2001 publication of U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 (FM 3-0), *Operations*.

⁷⁸ Colin L. Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5 (1992): 38-40.

In sum, FM 3-0, *Operations* and FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* are very different. More importantly, FM 3-24 moves the Army away from a doctrine focused on state vs. state warfare and toward a focus on small wars and insurgencies. Table 2.1 on the following page highlights the major differences between the two doctrines.

FM-3 Operations and FM 3-24: A Side by Side Comparison

	FM 3-0 Operations	FM 3-24 COIN
Most Recent Date Published	June 2001	December 2006
Foundational Theorist	Carl von Clausewitz	David Galula
Focus	Enemy Center of Gravity	Population centric: winning hearts & minds
Priority	Offensive Operations	Establishing secure environment for the local population
Purpose	Total Domination of Enemy Force	Fostering economic and political stability
Scope	Full Spectrum Joint Military Operations	Balance between combat and interagency coordination based on local situation
Primary Tactic	Violence of Action Speed of Maneuver Armor / Air-Land Battle	Employment of a mix of familiar combat tasks with skills more often associated with nonmilitary agencies
Strategy	Force Projection	Oil Spot Strategy: Establishing security in one area then moving to secure the next
Primary Threat	Enemy Army	Insurgents & Terrorists
Size of Troop Footprint	Large	Small
Use of Force	Overwhelming: Collateral Damage Acceptable	Minimize civilian casualties; Limit collateral damage
Risk	To be minimized to the maximum extent possible	Short-Term risk is an operational necessity
Desired Outcome	Defeat of enemy army	Defeat of insurgent leading to a stable and secure society
Memorable Contextual Quote	"First we are going to cut its head off, then we're going to kill it." -General Colin Powell, U.S. Army	"No better friend. No worse enemy. First, do no harm." -General James Mattis, USMC

Table 2.1

It is important to note that both doctrines are driven by their own varying theoretical foundations. If one were to point to one theorist who probably had the most influence on the Powell Doctrine, that theorist would most likely be Carl von Clausewitz, the nineteenth century Prussian army officer whose classic, *On War*, has been read and dissected by countless American military officers during their tours as War College students since the end of the Vietnam War. The influence of this singular text on the U.S. military has been great. By the 1990s, "Clausewitz studies [had] become something of a cottage industry for military intellectuals."⁷⁹ Indeed, up until the last five years or so, the ideas of this particular warrior-philosopher lay beneath most modern American military thought. Originally published in 1832, *On War* has been translated numerous times and virtually countless books and papers have been written on this one treatise. Phrases pulled from the text have become commonplace when military officers discuss strategy and tactics: *mass*, *maneuver*, *friction*, *centers of gravity*, *economy of force*, *strategic defensive*, and probably the most famous, *war as an instrument of policy*.

⁷⁹ Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). 3.

While Clausewitz provided much of the theoretical framework for the Powell Doctrine, the theoretical precepts which guided development of the Petraeus Doctrine can be found in the writings of David Galula (1919-1967), a French Army officer whose first-hand experiences in wars of insurgency range from the Mao's revolution in China to the colonial war in Algeria. Indeed, one need only to look at FM 3-24's *Acknowledgments* to discover the high regard with which the authors of the doctrine held Galula's work. John Nagl, one of the key contributing authors of FM 3-24, writes in the foreword to the University of Chicago Press edition: "Of 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*." Yet, for all of the familiarity military officers had with Clausewitz, knowledge of Galula's work among this same group of professionals (prior to the publication of FM 3-24) was considerably less. For example, when this writer was a graduate student at the Naval Postgraduate School in 1994-1995 studying in the *Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict* academic curriculum, Galula's work was not assigned as part of the curriculum reading list. It is likely that Galula's treatise may still not be as well-

known as that of Clausewitz. In fact, had it not been for the fact that the U.S. found itself embroiled in an insurgency in Iraq, Galula may still not be on the required reading list for military officers. I, for one, was not exposed to *Counterinsurgency Warfare* until 2004, when a retired Air Force colonel and faculty member at the Joint Special Operations University emailed me a scanned version of an old and worn copy of the then out of print text with a note that I needed to read the book ASAP. Since many outside military circles may still not be familiar with Galula's thesis, it is useful to summarize the highlights of this important theoretical work. The next section of this dissertation will outline the main points of Galula's work and attempt to place his theory in the context of the post-9/11, post-Iraq environment.

CHAPTER 3

The Sage of Original COIN Theory

Summarizing Galula and His Theory of Counterinsurgency

Even upon first consideration, Galula's work appears to be vastly different from that of Clausewitz. Clausewitz's *On War* is over 850 pages. In contrast, Galula's work is a mere 143. Nonetheless, Galula's concise treatise has had a profound impact on the U.S. military in the years since 2006.

The only biographic detail available on Galula's life can be found in a 2010 monograph published by the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. This short study is insightful in that it points out that Galula's theory of counterinsurgency grew out of his decade long experience in China during Mao Zedong's self-styled "People's War," which was Mao's term for the Chinese nationalist insurgency he led against the government of the Republic of China led by the Kuomintang. For Mao, the first fundamental step in a revolutionary movement is to "arouse and organize the people" because "guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them... [and] it can neither exist nor flourish if it

separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation.”⁸⁰ Galula was able to observe the war first-hand while stationed in China and apparently became so “immersed” in the conflict that at one point he was captured by Mao’s Communist guerrillas and spent a week in captivity.⁸¹ Galula was highly impressed with the Chinese Communist guerrillas’ focus on indoctrinating and befriending the local people,⁸² and it seems clear, as hypothesized by Galula biographer Ann Marlowe, that his theory of counterinsurgency was developed as a rejoinder to Mao’s theory of revolutionary guerrilla war.⁸³

The Influence of Mao

Galula’s respect for the teachings of Mao is certainly evident when one reads *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. Galula begins the introduction of his text with a quote from Mao. He points out that the purpose of his writing is to “define the laws of counterrevolutionary warfare, to deduce from them its principles, and to

⁸⁰ Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare: Translated from the Chinese with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith II*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith II (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois press, 1961). 44-45.

⁸¹ Ann Marlowe, *David Galula: His Life and Intellectual Content*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1016>. iii, 26.

⁸² Ibid., 27.

⁸³ Ibid., iii.

outline the corresponding strategy and tactics."⁸⁴ In other words, Galula was attempting to overcome the "vacuum of studies" in the area of "concrete courses of action" for those engaged in "counterrevolutionary" operations.⁸⁵ In short, Galula was drafting a doctrinal guide for a specific type of "protracted"⁸⁶ and "internal conflict"⁸⁷ known as "colonial" warfare.⁸⁸ Galula points out that the "problem" of colonial warfare is concentrated mainly in the "underdeveloped" regions of the world, stating that this particular type of warfare "is not acute in the developed parts of the world."⁸⁹ In Galula's time of writing, his home country of France was attempting to maintain control of its colonies. Thus, Galula was speaking to a specific type of situation, which was an indigenous uprising against a colonial power, which is, for all practical purposes, a very uncommon situation in the world today. This is an important point that this dissertation will return to later.

For Galula, a revolutionary war is not a conventional war, but a political war whose primary objective is to win

⁸⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 2005). xiii.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

the support of the population.⁹⁰ He warns that whoever is able to control the population physically and gets its active support will win the war. This is because the "exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population."⁹¹ Success for the counterinsurgent in this endeavor, Galula warns, is very costly. He even speculates that the ratio of expenses between the counterinsurgent and the insurgent "may be ten or twenty to one, or higher."⁹²

The outline of insurgency doctrine Galula uses in his work also reflects the influence Mao had on his theory. Mao, who had analyzed revolutionary guerrilla warfare in his 1938 treatise, *On Protracted War*, postulated that protracted war would pass through three distinct phases. The first of these phases would begin with what Mao termed the *Strategic Defensive*. During this phase, the nascent insurgent movement concentrated on building political strength among the people. As the insurgents grew stronger, they would begin moving to the second phase, which Mao called the *Strategic Stalemate*, a phase in which the guerrilla forces would increase their strength, consolidate their control of their territorial base areas

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁹¹ Ibid., 8.

⁹² Ibid., 11.

of operation, and begin and continually increase the level and intensity of guerrilla attacks on the government's infrastructure and forces along its main lines of communication. By using guerrilla warfare tactics such as ambush, sabotage, and hit and run operations, the insurgents would weaken the government and its forces while the insurgents built a large, conventional army. Once the insurgents had created a large and capable conventional army, they would begin the third phase of the protracted insurgent war, which Mao called the *Strategic Offensive*, a phase in which the insurgents would make their final drive against the government, culminating in its overthrow.⁹³

Knowing the basic tenets of Mao's theory, one can readily see the influence of Mao on Galula's thinking as he outlines what he terms the "orthodox pattern" of *Communist* revolution.⁹⁴ Galula's primary concern was to outline a theory of counterinsurgency that would be effective in a war of insurgency against Communist or anti-colonial revolutionaries. As a result, Galula's reinterpretation of Mao's three phases of revolutionary

⁹³ Mao Tse-Tung, "On Protracted War," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: People's Republic of China Foreign Language Press, 1972), 210-212.

⁹⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 44.

war is expanded into five steps for the purposes of clarity. These steps are: (1) creation of a party, which is the "basic instrument for the entire revolutionary process;" (2) the recruitment of other anti-government groups as allies to present a "united front" of the people against the government which then aids in gaining support of the people; (3) the commencement of a protracted guerrilla warfare campaign against the capitalist or imperialist government and the establishment of operating bases about the country to allow for the maintaining of links with the population; (4) the creation of an "insurgent regular army" to allow for conventional "movement warfare" against the government's forces, which then gives the insurgent the ability to capitalize upon his ability to move about quickly, his superior intelligence gathering apparatus, and his "simple but effective cross-country logistical facilities afforded by the organized population;" (5) the launching of an annihilation campaign against the government forces and political structure, is undertaken once the insurgent forces are strong enough.⁹⁵

While Galula emphasizes the protracted model of guerrilla warfare, he notes a different model was used by

⁹⁵ Ibid., 44-58.

the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in Algeria. He terms this model of guerrilla insurgency the "Bourgeois-Nationalist" pattern. In this much more brutal model, better suited for operations in an urban environment, Galula sees only two steps. These are (1) the use of concentrated, coordinated, and synchronized waves of seemingly random, yet spectacular bombings as a way to gain publicity for the insurgent movement and its cause, and (2) the use of "selective terrorism" or targeted killings of "some of the low-ranking government officials who work most closely with the population."⁹⁶

Galula's Four Laws of Counterinsurgency

To counter both models of insurgency, Galula offers four laws of counterinsurgency. These laws of counterinsurgency highlight Galula's focus on the population as the center of gravity in a war of revolutionary insurgency. His *first law* is that the support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as it is for the insurgent. Galula sees the population as being divided into 3 groups. These are an active minority that supports the insurgent cause, an

⁹⁶ Ibid., 58-59.

active minority that supports the government, and an inactive and neutral majority. In short, Galula argues that the counterinsurgent forces must focus their efforts on winning the support of the neutral majority. For Galula, "the technique of power consists in relying on the favorable minority in order to *rally the neutral majority* and to neutralize or eliminate the hostile minority" [emphasis added].⁹⁷ Galula's *second law of counterinsurgency* is that support for the government is gained and held through the active minority that supports that government.⁹⁸ This then leads into Galula's *third law of counterinsurgency*—that the support of the population for either the insurgent or the counterinsurgent is conditional. This *third law* posits that the portion of the local population that Galula classifies as the *neutral majority* will support that force which is seen as stronger. He argues that the counterinsurgent must communicate through its actions that it has the will, the means, and the ability to win.⁹⁹ In order to clearly communicate commitment and determination to win, Galula offers his *fourth law of counterinsurgency*, which stipulates that the counterinsurgent must display an

⁹⁷ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 78.

"intensity of effort," a "vastness of means," and a willingness to see the conflict through its "long duration."¹⁰⁰ These, Galula argues, are needed both to relieve the local population from the threat presented by insurgent forces, and to convince it that victory for the counterinsurgent is inevitable. According to Galula, this display of concentrated efforts, massive resources, and vast personnel should be demonstrated "as early as possible."¹⁰¹ When it comes to counterinsurgent strength, Galula advocates a "ratio of force of ten or twenty to one between the counterinsurgent and the insurgent," and argues that this "is not uncommon when the insurgency develops into guerrilla warfare."¹⁰² These statements lead the reader to surmise that, in an optimal scenario, this display of concentrated effort, massive resources, and vast numbers of personnel should occur early in the counterinsurgency campaign during the period Mao refers to as the *strategic defensive* phase, or what contemporary scholars of insurgency and counterinsurgency would term "proto-insurgency."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 32.

¹⁰³ Daniel Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*, Paper #3 ed., RAND Counterinsurgency Study (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2007).

Galula's *Four Laws of Counterinsurgency* have been described as an "oil spot" strategy for winning a war of insurgency. In short, it has been argued that successful counterinsurgency campaigns can be "compared to an oil drop that upon striking a cloth gradually seeps outward."¹⁰⁴ As the counterinsurgent forces clear one area of insurgent activity and establish a "base area," they then "gradually seep outward to pacify more regions and transform them into secure, government-controlled areas."¹⁰⁵ Galula's eight-step strategy for conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign in each "selected area" is outlined below:

1. *Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.*
2. *Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives.*
3. *Establish contact with the population; control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.*
4. *Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.*
5. *Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities.*
6. *Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents; give*

¹⁰⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

- full support to the active leaders.
Organize self-defense units.*
- 7. Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.*
 - 8. Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants.¹⁰⁶*

The Impact of Galula's Theory on FM 3-24

The influence of Galula's theory of counterinsurgency and its population-centered approach is easily seen when one reads FM 3-24 and observes that, according to this doctrine, "COIN requires Soldiers and Marines to be ready both to fight and to build," through the use of a "combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations."¹⁰⁷ The desired goal of the counterinsurgency campaign, according to FM 3-24, is to create a situation where the local government is "accepted as legitimate by most of [the] uncommitted middle [of the local population]."¹⁰⁸ This can only be accomplished when the local population believes it is "secure from insurgent intimidation."¹⁰⁹ Once security for the local population is established and maintained, the population can then be

¹⁰⁶ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 80.

¹⁰⁷ Petraeus and Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*: 34-35.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

stabilized by meeting the essential needs (food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical treatment) of the people. This provision of "essential services" is critical in any counterinsurgency campaign because "if the HN (host nation) government provides reliable, essential services, the population is more likely to support it."¹¹⁰

Establishing security and providing essential services is, according to FM 3-24, a "manpower intensive" endeavor.¹¹¹ While Galula's recommendations for manpower focused on countering the number of insurgents, and recommended 10-20 counterinsurgents per single insurgent fighter,¹¹² FM 3-24 takes into consideration the difficulty of identifying the exact number of insurgent fighters and thus recommends a ratio of 20-25 counterinsurgents for every 1000 residents in an area of operations.¹¹³

According to both Galula's counterinsurgency theory and FM 3-24's counterinsurgency doctrine, using a population centric approach will allow the counterinsurgent the opportunity for achieving success. While Galula defines success as the "permanent isolation

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 98.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 23, 263.

¹¹² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 32.

¹¹³ Petraeus and Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*: 23.

of the insurgent from the population" that is maintained not by military force alone but rather "by and with the [willing cooperation of] the population,"¹¹⁴ FM 3-24 similarly defines a successful COIN campaign as one that "depends on the people taking charge of their own affairs and consenting to the government's rule."¹¹⁵ Yet, in the post-9/11 environment, the insurgent is often no longer a group organized for nationalist goals. Rather, the insurgent group which poses the greatest challenge to the U.S. is a collection of stateless fighters who are waging a global insurgency for non-local, non-nationalist, and thematic reasons such as the overthrow of the global order. When viewed in the context of events that occurred in the decade following 9/11 and projected global trends, does the type of manpower intensive *population-centric* approach to counterinsurgency continue to be the correct tactic for the U.S. given the global environment of the twenty-first century? Will the American application of *intensity of effort and vastness of means* lead to the type of counterinsurgency success envisioned by FM 3-24? Does American success in counterinsurgency mean the same thing as *victory* in conventional war? Is victory even

¹¹⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 77.

¹¹⁵ Petraeus and Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*: 32.

achievable? Given the current fiscal constraints on Western industrialized democracies, is the application of current counterinsurgency doctrine even possible? These are the crucial questions the next section of this dissertation will examine.

CHAPTER 4

FM 3-24 and Galula's Counterinsurgency Doctrine in a Twenty-First Century Context

One of the most important of Galula's four *Laws of Counterinsurgency* is the fourth law, which states that "intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential."¹¹⁶ When attempting to examine American counterinsurgency doctrine in light of the post 9/11, post Iraqi Freedom context, it is important to consider three key issues: (1) "vastness of means" in terms of the large numbers of troops required to successfully execute the oil spot strategy; (2) the huge cost in financial and human resources of waging a prolonged war of counterinsurgency, and its impact on national will; and (3) the meaning of victory in a war of insurgency.

On Troop Strength

By January 2007, the insurgency in Iraq appeared to have spiraled completely out of control. A November 2006 analysis by the CIA had described the situation as one

¹¹⁶ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 79.

resembling "anarchy and civil war."¹¹⁷ In response to the deteriorated situation, President Bush ordered a surge of an additional 20,000 troops deployed to Iraq to "bring security to the people of Baghdad."¹¹⁸ In a nationally televised speech, the President stated that the increase in force levels was needed to "hold the areas that [had] been cleared."¹¹⁹ Mincing no words, the President explained that, in previous security sweep operations, when U.S. forces had cleared an area of insurgents and had "moved on to other targets, the killers returned."¹²⁰ The goals of the surge were simply to improve the daily lives of Iraqi citizens so that their confidence in their leaders would increase, thus giving the Iraqi government the "breathing space" it needed to allow it to "make progress in other areas."¹²¹

The speech signaled a shift in strategy toward one built around the classic population centric counterinsurgency theory of Galula, and focused the American military upon the mission of protecting the Iraqi

¹¹⁷ Michael R. Gordon, "Troop 'Surge' in Iraq Took Place Amid Doubt and Intense Debate," *New York Times*, 31 August 2008.

¹¹⁸ George W. Bush, January 10 2007.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

people.¹²² While the surge seemed to achieve *tactical* success in the form of a de-escalation of violence and improved overall security, it remained unclear even six years later whether or not the fundamental social and political problems in Iraq that lay beneath the insurgent violence had been eliminated. Why is this? How is it that after six years of U.S providing training and support, as well as conducting U.S.-Iraqi combined military operations, the future of Iraq still appears so uncertain?

One answer may be found in the surge itself. In a recent report by the RAND Corporation, the concept of large-scale foreign military interventions used as part of a counterinsurgency strategy was brought into question.

The report states:

History provides no basis for expecting large-scale foreign military intervention to make COIN victorious. Rather, there is a correlation between large-scale foreign military intervention and unsuccessful COIN. The larger the foreign troop presence—France in Algeria, France and the United States in Indochina, the USSR

¹²² Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 9.

*in Afghanistan—the worse the outcome tends to be.*¹²³

Findings of the RAND study run directly counter to the classic counterinsurgency theory of Galula, and to the doctrine highlighted in FM 3-24. The view that a large foreign force on the ground is detrimental is also held by David Kilcullen, a modern-day Galula who has written extensively on contemporary insurgency. Kilcullen argues that a very different global-type of insurgency faces the West today, and that it does not fit the classic model of insurgency. He argues that this different type of insurgency is better seen as what he terms "hybrid warfare."¹²⁴ Kilcullen argues that, in the context of global insurgency, the West is not facing the traditional insurgent who holds a specific nationalistic goal such as the overthrow of the local government or the expulsion of a colonial power. Rather, the global insurgency is composed of two classes of enemy -- the *local* guerrilla whose concerns are focused on the local situation, and the *transnational, non-territorial* terrorist who holds a much

¹²³ David C. Gompert and John Gordon, "War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency," in *RAND Counterinsurgency Study - Final Report*, ed. RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, 2008), xlviii.

¹²⁴ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). 5.

more "global outlook."¹²⁵ The members of the local population, who may possess a "strong dose of anti-colonialism," and may oppose "the impact of modernity in its westernized, American-dominated form,"¹²⁶ are then spurred to join an insurgency for primarily defensive or conservative reasons when they observe large numbers of foreign troops and perceive them to be an occupying force. Indeed, the very presence of foreign forces in a country serves to stimulate group cohesion among the local population.¹²⁷ Kilcullen writes:

The local fighter is therefore an accidental guerrilla – fighting us because we are in his space, not because he wishes to invade ours. He follows folk-ways of tribal warfare that are mediated by traditional cultural norms, values, and perceptual lenses; he is engaged (from his point of view) in "resistance rather than insurgency and fights principally to be left alone."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., xxvii.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ William R. Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007). xiv.

¹²⁸ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*: xiv.

In addition to the local and accidental guerrillas outlined by Kilcullen, the presence of the transnational and non-territorial insurgent complicates the problem for the counterinsurgent. As is pointed out by Paul Staniland, models of national insurgencies that guide policymakers, military planners, and scholars of COIN doctrine "generally assume that insurgents are drawn solely from the native population," and by winning hearts and minds and obtaining the loyalty of the local population, the insurgency can be defeated.¹²⁹ However, "the flaw in this approach is that the transnational aspect of insurgent conflict introduces actors who are not permanently embedded in the local population" and who can enter the country for short periods of time to conduct operations against the government.¹³⁰ Thus, "as long as the insurgent group maintains minimal support within the country for the purpose of logistics, it can undermine traditional domestic counterinsurgency strategies" such as the nation-building hearts and minds approach.¹³¹ A recent and well known example of an outside and foreign interventionist participating in an insurgency is the case

¹²⁹ Paul Staniland, "Defeating Transnational Insurgencies: The Best Offense Is a Good Fence," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 31-32.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian national whose activities inside Iraq during the first years following the U.S. invasion made him "the most hunted terrorist on the planet" prior to his death in June, 2006.¹³² Known as "the godfather of sectarian killing and terrorism in Iraq,"¹³³ one of the goals of Zarqawi's activities during his brief reign in Iraq was to "foment bloody sectarian strife between his fellow Sunni Muslims and members of Iraq's Shiite majority."¹³⁴ This was highly disruptive to the U.S. counterinsurgency effort, leading to his being labeled as America's "public enemy number two"¹³⁵ and the focus of an intensive man-hunt, complete with the U.S. offering a \$25 million reward for his capture.¹³⁶

If the RAND study's findings and Kilcullen's thesis concerning the accidental guerrilla are correct, then it would lead one to conclude that the degree of "numerical

¹³² Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: The Other Press, LLC, 2005). 96.

¹³³ Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, "Insurgent Leader Al-Zarqawi Killed in Iraq," *The Washington Post* (2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800114.html>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Peter Chambers, "Abu Musab Al Zarqawi: The Making and Unmaking of an American Monster," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 37, no. 1 (2012).

¹³⁶ Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: How a Video-Store Clerk and Small-Time Crook Reinvented Himself as America's Nemesis in Iraq," *The Atlantic Monthly* (2006), <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>.

strength,"¹³⁷ one of the cornerstones of Galula's theory of counterinsurgency and of FM 3-24,¹³⁸ may not contribute to the achievement of victory when applied against this new type of global insurgency in a non-colonial and 21st century context. Indeed, it has been argued that, in the case where alien forces are present among indigenous peoples, "even the kindest acts [made by the alien soldier] can be used against him by [via] the native adversary's psychological warfare."¹³⁹ Thus, one could surmise that the Iraq surge of forces in 2007 may have achieved temporary gains that were visible only as long as U.S. forces remained in place. Sometimes the ones closest to the situation have the clearest view and can provide the best assessments, and for at least some of the soldiers who participated in the surge, their predictions weren't very optimistic. One example comes from Army Staff Sergeant Jose Benavides of Miami, FL, who deployed to Baghdad as part of the surge and witnessed firsthand the decrease in the levels of sectarian and terrorist violence. His simple yet pessimistic assessment was as follows: "If the Americans leave, the sectarian violence

¹³⁷ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 32.

¹³⁸ Petraeus and Amos, *The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*: 23.

¹³⁹ Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1961). 16.

will flare up."¹⁴⁰ Now that U.S. combat forces have withdrawn, time will determine the accuracy of Sergeant Benavides' prediction. However, early indicators, such as the spate of bombings throughout 2013,¹⁴¹ may prove Benavides correct.

On Fiscal Costs

As of this writing, both Americans and their elected leaders are heavily focused on domestic fiscal and budgetary matters, such as the size of the national debt and deficit spending. Now that combat troops have left Iraq and are scheduled to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, the heavily indebted U.S. is rethinking its defense strategy for what will likely be "an age of austerity."¹⁴² Washington is looking for ways to cut the federal budget, and many Americans across the political spectrum, from the so-called "Tea-Party Republicans" to "Occupy Wall Street Democrats," are looking for a large portion of those cuts

¹⁴⁰ Sam Dagher, "A 'Surge' unit sees change, but questions its permanence," Online Newspaper, *Christian Science Monitor* 100, no. 54 (2008), www.csmonitor.com/world/middle-east/2008/0703/p01s04-wome.html.

¹⁴¹ Adnan, "Bombings in Iraq Kill More Than 20 and Are Seen as Political."; "Bombing at a Funeral in Northern Iraq Kills at Least 35."; "Iraq: Bombs Kill at Least 26 People."; "Blasts Kill Dozens of Iraqis as Sectarian Tensions Boil," *New York Times*, 18 May 2013.

¹⁴² David W. Barno, Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, "Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity," in *Responsible Defense Series* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2011), 5.

to come from defense spending. Indeed, the largest portion of the mandated budget cuts, as outlined in the Budget Control Act of 2011, came from the budget of the Department of Defense.¹⁴³

Wars are expensive, particularly prolonged campaigns such as Iraq and Afghanistan with large numbers of troops on the ground not only fighting insurgents and providing security to the general population, but also involved in endeavors that are commonly referred to as "nation building." Indeed, General Petraeus has observed that, in a counterinsurgency campaign, money can often be more important than ammunition.¹⁴⁴ Consider, however, that a significant percentage of the money allocated for stabilization and reconstruction operations, a necessary element of winning hearts and minds, is often criticized as having been wasted. For example, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction reported that of the \$60 billion in American aid that was spent just on reconstruction projects in Iraq, some \$8 billion are determined to have been "wasted," primarily because they

¹⁴³ Dylan Matthews to Washington Post Wonk Blog, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/02/20/the-sequester-absolutely-everything-you-could-possibly-need-to-know-in-one-faq/>.

¹⁴⁴ David Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq," *Military Review* 86, no. 1 (2006): 4.

did not attain the "actual intended results."¹⁴⁵

Additionally, many of the reconstruction projects failed to obtain "genuine Iraqi buy-in."¹⁴⁶ These findings by the Special Inspector General could leave the counterinsurgency scholar to question the overall, long-term impact of reconstruction programs or even question whether their effective implementation is achievable. In the judgment of James F. Jeffrey, the American ambassador in Iraq from 2010-2012, "too much money was spent with too few results."¹⁴⁷

While the above examples are only centered on reconstruction projects, much has been written regarding the *total* costs of fighting these wars, and some argue that the costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan counterinsurgency campaigns are at least partially responsible for the global financial crisis which began in 2008.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, as one way to help bolster popular support for a two-front war effort, the Bush Administration cut taxes as the U.S. went to war, which

¹⁴⁵ Stuart W. Bowen, "Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), 18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, "The True Cost of the Iraq War: 3 Trillion and Beyond," *Washington Post*, 05 September 2010, B04.

“added substantially to the federal debt.”¹⁴⁹ According to some, these war-related fiscal decisions may have contributed to the U.S. economy suffering a downgrade from a “Triple-A” credit rating to a “Double-A Plus” in 2011 due to “concerns about the government’s budget deficit and rising debt burden.”¹⁵⁰ Both economists and international relations scholars have concluded that, when the total costs to the U.S. of the Iraq war alone are tallied, they will easily exceed three trillion dollars.¹⁵¹ This figure includes those future costs (such as providing health care for returning war veterans) which will continue to escalate even after the last of the combat troops have been withdrawn.

As late as five years after the economic downturn, the state of the U.S. economy remained a primary concern of the American electorate,¹⁵² as the U.S. continued to face “high unemployment, a growing deficit, a shrinking

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Walter Brandimarte and Daniel Bases, “United States loses prized AAA credit rating from S&P,” Report, *Reuters*(2011), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/06/us-usa-debt-downgrade-idUSTRE7746VF20110806>.

¹⁵¹ Joseph Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). x; Stephen M. Walt, “The End of the American Era,” *National Interest*, no. 116 (2011): 10.

¹⁵² Caroline May, “Gallup: Americans Not Very Concerned about Gun Violence, Immigration Reform,” *The Daily Caller*(2013), <http://dailycaller.com/2013/05/08/gallup-americans-not-very-concerned-about-gun-violence-immigration-reform/>.

middle class, and a sluggish housing crisis."¹⁵³ Some scholars are highly skeptical that the U.S. will return to vigorous growth any time soon.¹⁵⁴

Beginning in the 1980s, defense budgets faced only modest cuts during times of fiscal belt-tightening compared to the defense cuts following World War II and Vietnam. For example, President Eisenhower slashed defense spending by twenty seven percent after the armistice that ended the Korean War. Similarly, defense spending was cut by twenty nine percent following Vietnam. Conversely, George H.W. Bush only cut defense spending by about seventeen percent during the years following the Reagan military buildup, and President Clinton's largest defense spending cut was fourteen percent spread out over a five year period.¹⁵⁵ In the defense budget battles of late, the loudest calls for defense spending cuts have usually been made by those leaning toward the left. Not so this time around, as more than fifty percent of the Republican freshmen lawmakers in the 212th Congress voted

¹⁵³ Toni Johnson, "In Iowa Polls, Eyeing Economic Signals," *Council on Foreign Relations* (2012), www.cfr.org/us-election-2012/iowa-polls-eyeing-economic-signals.

¹⁵⁴ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 12.

¹⁵⁵ Lawrence J. Korb, Laura Conley, and Alex Rothman, "A Historical Perspective on Defense Budgets: What We can Learn from Past Presidents About Reducing Spending," (2011), http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/07/historical_defense_budget.html.

in favor of proposals to cut defense spending.¹⁵⁶ It has been reported that defense budget cuts required by the Budget Control Act of 2011 will reach as high as forty two percent of the cumulative cuts for the entire government.¹⁵⁷ Spread over the next five years, the cuts would drop the total defense budget from its current level of \$700 billion to \$522.5 billion.¹⁵⁸ Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, under intense political pressure to cut spending, went on record advocating a "smaller, lighter, more agile, flexible joint force" rather than "maintaining a ground force large enough to conduct a long, bloody war and then [follow-on] stability operations."¹⁵⁹ This sentiment is shared by current Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who acknowledged in his Senate confirmation hearing that meeting defense needs in the post-Iraq/Afghanistan era would "require smart and strategic budget decisions."¹⁶⁰ In other words, in the face of fiscal belt-tightening, the U.S. is most likely to reduce troop levels and restructure the force in a way

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Drew, "House Votes to End Alternate Jet Engine Program," *New York Times*, 17 February 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Matthews Title of Weblog.

¹⁵⁸ Thom Shanker and Elisabeth Bumiller, "Panetta Weighs Pentagon Cuts Once Off Limits," *New York Times* 2011.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Chuck Hagel, "Official Transcript of Hagel's Remarks at his Defense Secretary Confirmation Hearing," *Stars and Stripes* (2013), <http://www.stripes.com/official-transcript-of-hagel-s-remarks-at-his-defense-secretary-confirmation-hearing-1.205956>.

that will make it even more difficult to field the numbers of troops called for by both the classic counterinsurgency theory of Galula and the doctrine outlined in FM 3-24. Indeed, the Pentagon's focus on reducing the size of the force to something smaller and more agile has the full support of President Obama.¹⁶¹

The impact, according to former Senator David Boren, co-chairman of President Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board, is that the U.S. is "going to have to reprioritize what we have to do."¹⁶² The reduced number of ground troops, according to Benjamin Friedman of the CATO Institute, "encourages policymakers to employ the armed services less promiscuously, keeping American troops -- and the country at large -- out of needless trouble."¹⁶³ Friedman's value judgments aside, the final troop levels after the budget cuts may make it very clear to even the most hawkish of policymakers that the U.S. *will no longer be able* to carry out another protracted campaign of counterinsurgency using the so-called "oil spot principle"

¹⁶¹ Laura Macinnis and David Alexander, "Obama Plans to Cut Tens of Thousands of Ground Troops," Report, *Reuters* (2013), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/04/us-usa-military-obama-idUSTRE8031Z020120104>.

¹⁶² Peter Baker, "Panetta's Pentagon, Without the Blank Check," *New York Times*, 24 October 2011, A1.

¹⁶³ Benjamin Friedman, "How Cutting Pentagon Spending Will Fix U.S. Defense Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* (2011), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136637/benjamin-friedman/how-cutting-pentagon-spending-will-fix-us-defense-strategy>.

like those ordered for Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, more and more scholars and policymakers are calling for retrenchment¹⁶⁴ and are arguing that the U.S. needs to "shift its [overseas] commitments and resources from peripheral to core interests" and "use the resulting 'retrenchment dividend' to foster recovery at home."¹⁶⁵ Thus, the call for the U.S. to "eschew its present fascination with nation-building and counterinsurgency" has begun.¹⁶⁶ In all likelihood, the U.S. will continue to face the problems presented by a huge national debt and a sluggish economy into the foreseeable future, making Americans less and less willing to tolerate another long counterinsurgency campaign.

Galula's *First Law of Counterinsurgency*, that "support of the population is as important for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent"¹⁶⁷ can also be applied to the domestic population at home. Long, expensive wars wear away the level of support the domestic population provides for the counterinsurgent. This loss of domestic support can contribute to defeat for the

¹⁶⁴ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 12; Joseph M. Parent and Paul K. MacDonal, "The Wisdom of Rentrenchment: America Must Cut Back to Move Forward," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2011): 32.

¹⁶⁵ "The Wisdom of Rentrenchment: America Must Cut Back to Move Forward," 42.

¹⁶⁶ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 13.

¹⁶⁷ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 74.

counterinsurgent as quickly as anything else. This is certainly one of the conclusions reached by Harry Summers in his analysis of the Vietnam War, when he wrote that the failure to acquire *national will* or support of the American people "was one of the major strategic failures."¹⁶⁸ What Colonel Summers' generation of officers learned in Vietnam is that the American electorate does not have sustained tolerance for "slow, messy, and fluid" wars of insurgency. It may be safe to say that when it comes to protracted wars of insurgency, the attitudes of every-day Americans have not changed since 1986, when a young Major David Petraeus wrote:¹⁶⁹

...the military has drawn from Vietnam a reminder of the finite limits of American public support for U.S. involvement in a protracted conflict. ... For those in the military, Vietnam was an extremely painful reaffirmation that when it comes to intervention, time and patience are not American virtues in abundant supply.

¹⁶⁸ Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1995). 19.

¹⁶⁹ David H. Petraeus, "Lessons of History and Lessons of Vietnam," *U.S. Army Parameters* XVI, no. 3 (1986): 45.

On Victory

When it comes to winning and losing, Americans simply hate to lose. The legendary Vince Lombardi, who is probably the most celebrated football coach of all time, famously said: "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing."¹⁷⁰ While there are some Americans who would likely disagree with Coach Lombardi's extreme view of the importance of winning an athletic contest, very few would disagree with his view of winning when applied to warfare. This attitude that winning is the only option available in war has been espoused throughout American history by both its generals and its presidents. A most recent example was given by President George W. Bush in March of 2003. Speaking to the nation from the Oval Office the night the U.S. launched its invasion of Iraq, President Bush vowed that "this will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory."¹⁷¹

In the U.S., the focus on achieving victory in a war is critical to maintaining public support for that war. Wars are costly, both in terms of blood and treasure, and that cost is borne by both those who serve in the armed

¹⁷⁰ Vince Lombardi, *What It Takes to be #1: Vince Lombardi on Leadership* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001). 45.

¹⁷¹ Bush, "President Bush Addresses the Nation 19 March".

forces and those at home who pay taxes and provide political support for the war effort. For this reason, it is important that the costly and bloody effort is perceived by the American people as worthwhile. Thus, one of the most critical factors in determining whether or not the war was won begins first with a clearly articulated definition of victory. In instances where victory "is not clearly articulated or achieved, a depressing sense of futility can ensue,"¹⁷² leading to a loss of public support for the war effort. Further, "from the viewpoint of political leaders, an inadequate understanding of the complexities surrounding victory can result in decision-making paralysis, embarrassment, and loss of internal and external support, escalating postwar violence, pyrrhic triumphs, and ultimately foreign policy failure."¹⁷³ For America, the principal "way of war" has historically been a conventional war, waged via a strategy of annihilation using conventional forces.¹⁷⁴ In an orthodox conventional war between nation-states, victory can thus be seen as the annihilation of a nation's military forces and a follow-on unconditional surrender by the defeated government, at

¹⁷² Robert Mandel, *The Meaning of Military Victory* (Ann Arbor, MI: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006). 1.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, Wars of the United States Series (Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 1973). xxii.

which point the victorious nation-state "gets to use its power to hurt coercively" the other side and thus gain concessions,¹⁷⁵ such as the exploitation of the defeated nation-state's natural resources. In other words, wars were traditionally the application of military force so that political objectives could be realized. For the American people, this type of victory is easily defined and easy to see once it is realized. Those who fought and won World War II, the most recent war of this definition, have been labeled America's "greatest generation."¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Americans could easily see what they perceived as victory following the 1991 Gulf War, where the stated objective of removing the Iraqi army from Kuwait was achieved. Americans celebrated their country's victory by welcoming their triumphant troops home with a tremendous amount of fanfare, including a nationally televised ticker-tape parade in New York City.¹⁷⁷

If this then is how the majority of Americans view victory in warfare, can this type of victory be achieved in a war of insurgency? Further, given that "being

¹⁷⁵ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966). 30.

¹⁷⁶ Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

¹⁷⁷ James Barron, "New York Salutes; Craning and Scrambling for a Glimpse of History," *New York Times* 11 June (1991), <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/11/nyregion/new-york-salutes-craning-and-scrambling-for-a-glimpse-of-history.html>.

successful [in warfare] is most likely if complete clarity exists about the meaning of success" and that "without a clear strategy with clear goals in war, there is no good way to gauge progress,"¹⁷⁸ *is victory even possible* in a war using a population-centric counterinsurgency approach with a vague and immeasurable goal of winning hearts and minds?

In his recent study of the meaning of victory in warfare, Robert Mandel has argued that the meaning of military victory has changed since the Cold War. Rather than define military victory in overarching terms as in generations past, Mandel posits that wars are fought on two levels, which he refers to as "phases." He refers to these as the military phase and the strategic phase. He refers to these two phases as *military victory* and *strategic victory*. He states:

*Specifically, war is won, or lost, in two phases—military outcomes on the field of battle, and the battle to win the peace through reconstruction and reconciliation afterward; what is won on the battlefield can be lost entirely thereafter if the countries attacked are not turned into better and safer places.*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Mandel, *The Meaning of Military Victory*: 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

In other words, tactical military victory on the battlefield can be won, yet the war can be lost from a strategic political standpoint. In wars against insurgents waged by the U.S., it is apparent to both friend and foe that the American troops will eventually pull out. The U.S. displayed this proclivity in Vietnam and in Iraq, and will soon depart Afghanistan. This, however, was not the case when Galula developed his theory of counterinsurgency. Galula participated in and wrote about colonial wars of insurgency, usually against Communist guerrillas bent upon overthrowing the colonial ruler and establishing an indigenous government. In this regard, a counterinsurgency strategy using the "oil stain principle" or the "oil spot strategy" makes perfect sense. In the colonial wars of insurgency fought during the Cold War, the colonial power had no intention of leaving the area, as it viewed the territory and its resources as part of its colonial empire. Indeed, at the time of Galula's writing, "the longest, most numerous, and most important guerrilla wars were fought in response to European colonial expansion in Asia and Africa."¹⁸⁰ In the case of America as a counterinsurgent in today's global political

¹⁸⁰ Gérard Chaliand, ed. *Guerrilla Strategies: An Historical Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 3.

environment, American political leaders, military leaders, and the public all know, going in, that in the end the U.S. will conduct a complete withdrawal of combat forces and the territory will be left to its indigenous leaders. Indeed, should the U.S. have an unlimited amount of time and resources to secure an entire territory (as Galula posits in his counterinsurgency general strategy step number two, "sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength"¹⁸¹) both military and strategic victory might be attained. However, the U.S. is not a colonial power, and unlimited resources and an unlimited amount of time to conduct a protracted campaign are not available. Resources and the patience of the American public are finite, and this has consequences for counterinsurgency doctrine.

There is and will always be a chance that the gains secured by tactical military victory during a war against insurgents can be lost following the departure of U.S. forces. Since in a war against insurgents no enemy army is annihilated and no ground is taken and held, it is entirely possible in every counterinsurgency campaign that the counterinsurgent can win all of the battles yet lose the war. This was certainly the U.S. experience in

¹⁸¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 80.

Vietnam. As emphasized earlier, given the destabilizing events that have taken place in Iraq since the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces, we may be witnessing another case of America winning a temporary military victory, only to suffer a lasting strategic defeat.

Over the next several years, the events in Iraq and Afghanistan will be of interest to students of counterinsurgency. Much will be written and debated on the impact of these wars on American military thought. If the well-documented history of the repeated failures of major counterinsurgency campaigns waged by industrial powers since World War II is any indicator,¹⁸² then one could easily predict that the end result in both the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts will indeed be the achievement of tactical military victory followed by a costly strategic defeat. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, classical counterinsurgency doctrine, which evolved as a response to national insurgencies of the 20th century, appears to have been less effective against the new and global form of insurgency of the 21st century.

¹⁸² Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 175; Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 8; Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2007). vii; Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc, 2002). 179.

But, what exactly are the characteristics of global insurgency? How is it different from classical insurgency? The next chapter of this dissertation will highlight and bring forth the differences between the national and localized insurgencies Galula's day, and the globalized, non-territorial, transnational type of insurgency seen in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 5

Traditional National vs. Global Insurgency: Understanding the Difference

As the U.S. leaves Iraq after waging war for over eight years, and prepares to leave Afghanistan after what will be a thirteen year war, the type of classic, vastness of means, population-centric counterinsurgency campaign as advocated by counterinsurgency theorist David Galula and by FM 3-24 is no longer applicable. Following U.S. Army counterinsurgency doctrine, which is primarily based on this classic counterinsurgency theory, the counterinsurgent should use the oil spot strategy. In other words, the counterinsurgent should secure an area using a force with the proper ratio of troops to local population. Then, once security is firmly established and the area completely under control of the counterinsurgent, the process is continually repeated in other areas until the insurgents are isolated from the local population and are no longer a threat. Yet, vastness of means with regard to troop levels is often perceived by the local population as an occupying force and can create accidental guerrillas, thereby making the situation worse. Indeed, as William R. Polk has argued, "opposition to foreigners" is the single commonality found in almost all

insurgencies, regardless of form, duration, and intensity.¹⁸³ Further, because the U.S., acting as the primary counterinsurgent force, does not intend keep its troops deployed in the counterinsurgency campaign indefinitely, and does not intend to strip the territory under its control of natural resources, a classic counterinsurgency campaign can inflict tremendous fiscal strain on the counterinsurgent and still not succeed. The prolonged loss of blood and treasure can result in a loss of support for the counterinsurgency campaign by the counterinsurgent's domestic population, resulting in a loss of national will. As Gil Merom points out, the reason "democracies are prone to fail in protracted small wars"¹⁸⁴ is due primarily to a loss of domestic support back home.¹⁸⁵ Stephen Walt's stark summary of the U.S. counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq provides support for Merom's argument:

¹⁸³ Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq*: xiii.

¹⁸⁴ Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*: 15.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

*If victory is defined as achieving your main objectives and ending a war with your security and prosperity enhanced, then both of these conflicts [Iraq and Afghanistan] must be counted as expensive defeats.*¹⁸⁶

This dissertation argues that classic counterinsurgency theory is no longer applicable because the type of insurgency that will be a threat to the U.S. in the foreseeable future is not the same type of insurgency that was a threat to Western powers in Galula's day. As stated earlier, the insurgencies of Galula's day were basically nationalist rebellions against a colonial power or a government controlled by imperialist powers. The overarching COIN goal was to put down the rebellion as quickly and efficiently as possible so that the colonial power could get on with the business of exploiting the colony's labor and raw materials and developing a protected market for its merchandise. The insurgencies of today that are a threat to U.S. interests are world-wide in scope, and many identify them as "global insurgencies."¹⁸⁷ These "global insurgencies" differ from

¹⁸⁶ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 11.

¹⁸⁷ James R. Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009); Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*; John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy, "Rethinking Counterinsurgency," in *RAND Counterinsurgency Study*, ed. RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research

a traditional form of insurgency in five specific ways. These differences include group goals, the insurgency's center of gravity, group organizational structures, group tactics, and group motivations. Each of these will be discussed in detail in the sections below.

Differences in Insurgent Goals

Bard O'Neill, a long-time scholar of small wars and distinguished professor at the National War College in Washington, D.C., argues that any insurgency is "essentially a political-legitimacy crisis of some kind."¹⁸⁸ That being the case, the task of the scholar is to first determine exactly what the long-term goals of the insurgent are and the relationship of that goal to the political community, political system, political authorities, and the current governmental policies in place.¹⁸⁹ O'Neill has developed an analytical framework based upon insurgent goals that identifies the following

Institute, 2008); Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc, 2005); Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*; Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, Inc. , 2004); Stephen Sloan and Sebastian L. V. Gorka, "Contextualizing Counterinsurgency," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. Spring (2009), <http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2009/16/sloan&gorka.php>.

¹⁸⁸ O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*: 19.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

nine types of insurgencies: *Anarchist, Egalitarian, Traditionalist, Apocalyptic-Utopian, Pluralist, Seccessionist, Reformist, Commericalist, and Preservationist*.¹⁹⁰ While O'Neill's framework of analysis is highly useful, the nine types of insurgencies he identifies are all essentially state-focused and territorially-based. These territorially-based insurgents all have the goal of either "overthrowing or opposing a state or regime by force of arms" [emphasis added].¹⁹¹ Thus, the overarching goal of the national insurgent is highly specific and tends to be directed in some way at the local power structure.

Conversely, the goal of the global insurgent is very different in that it is much less localized and much "more grandiose and ethereal" in scope.¹⁹² The goal of the global insurgent is much more thematic in nature than that of the national insurgent, such as to overthrow or oppose the Westphalian system of nation-states. For example, a primary goal of the group al Qaeda, which has been described as waging a global insurgency against the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 19-29.

¹⁹¹ Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2004). 1.

¹⁹² Gompert and Gordon, "War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency," xxxi.

West,¹⁹³ is to upset relations between the nation-states of the West and the nation-states populated with large concentrations of Muslims,¹⁹⁴ primarily to disrupt the international system and to ultimately topple the current governments of these Muslim societies and to restore a truly Islamic *ummah*.¹⁹⁵ It is this new type of global insurgency that is the biggest threat to U.S. vital interests in the 21st century, and it is this type of insurgency for which a revised counterinsurgency doctrine must be formulated.

Centers of Gravity

The second major difference between the global, transnational, non-territorial insurgent and the national, territorially-based insurgent is found in the determination of each insurgent movement's "center of gravity."

In his classic study of warfare, Clausewitz argued that in any enemy force, whether that force be large or

¹⁹³ Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*: x.

¹⁹⁴ Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*: 14.

¹⁹⁵ Osama bin Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, trans. Bruce Lawrence (London, UK: Verso, 2005). 4-12.

small, a single center of gravity could be identified.¹⁹⁶ He defined "center of gravity" as "that which is always found where the mass is concentrated most densely," and reasoned that it presented "the most effective target for a blow."¹⁹⁷ In short, Clausewitz was referring to the enemy's center of power and sustainability.¹⁹⁸

Clausewitz believed that in warfare the most decisive blows were those that effectively struck the enemy's center of gravity. He ascertained that a military commander should constantly seek out his enemy's center of gravity, and that by doing so one would "really defeat the enemy."¹⁹⁹ Yet, Clausewitz also cautioned that a country's center of gravity was not always its army. He wrote:

For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was their army. If the army had been destroyed, they would have gone down in history as failures. In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital. In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually the army of their protector. Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest, and in popular uprisings it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is

¹⁹⁶ Clausewitz, *On War*: 487.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 485.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 596.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

*against these that our energies should be directed.*²⁰⁰

In attempting to apply Clausewitz and determine the center of gravity for both the national and the global insurgent, one must be guided, as suggested by O'Neill, by examining the goals of each.²⁰¹

Since they have differing goals, as outlined above, a national insurgency campaign is much more territorial and centralized in scope, and is focused on gaining the support of some specific local population. As Mao so succinctly stated, "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people."²⁰² The national insurgent's targets are maintained within territorial boundaries so that he might display the weakness of the local government. Thus, for Mao, the center of gravity in a war of insurgency is the people, who are caught in a battle between the government and the insurgent group for their loyalty, or their hearts and minds. Mao's view on the center of gravity in an insurgency is the basis for the population-centric focus in Galula's counterinsurgency

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*: 19.

²⁰² Tse-Tung, "On Protracted War," 260.

theory, and the population-centric focus of FM 3-24, which Galula's work influenced so greatly.

The global insurgent, however, is transnational and is non-territorial. As we have seen, he can strike U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in one coordinated attack, and strike urban mass transportation systems in London or Madrid in another. The global insurgent does not need to win the battle for the hearts and minds of a specific local population, but rather needs to gain the financial support or operational services of ideologically like-minded individuals from anywhere in the world. Thus, the centers of gravity for the global insurgent are his finances, his communications network, his members who possess unique and critical skills, and especially his visionary leadership. Recruits are drawn to the cause by a well-framed message put forth by one or a small few of the type of dynamic leaders who can convince large numbers of rational people to put themselves at a high level of personal risk in order to support the cause. Max Weber wrote that there are "certain quality" individuals who are "set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with

supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”²⁰³ He wrote:

*These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. In primitive circumstances this peculiar kind of deference is paid to prophets, to people with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, to leaders in the hunt, and heroes in war. It is very often thought of as resting on magical powers. How the quality in question would be ultimately judged from any ethical, aesthetic, or other such point of view is naturally entirely indifferent for purposes of definition. What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his 'followers' or 'disciples.'*²⁰⁴

Leadership of the group is maintained as a result of the qualities Weber describes.²⁰⁵ Strong leaders set the organization's goals and objectives, are the source of group cohesion and motivation, and influence group norms.²⁰⁶ No doubt, it takes an exceptional person to convince others to not only put themselves at risk for the

²⁰³ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). 358.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 358-359.

²⁰⁵ Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): 726.

²⁰⁶ William Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1985). 11.

cause, but as in the case of the 9/11 hijackers or the attackers of the USS Cole, to conduct a suicide mission. It is said that the early members of al Qaeda each took an oath of loyalty to Osama bin Laden,²⁰⁷ which would indicate that the man who led global insurgency against the U.S. was the type of charismatic leader to whom Weber referred. Part of what makes a leader charismatic is his ability to communicate group grievances and goals in a clear and motivational way. This is referred to as framing. In short, framing "addresses how individual participants conceptualize themselves as a collectivity; how potential participants are actually convinced to participate; and the ways in which meaning is produced, articulated, and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes."²⁰⁸ Thus, framing can best be described as "the bumper-sticker version of how issues get interpreted within a certain ideological context. By simply (or simplistically) framing issues, potential recruits need

²⁰⁷ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). 121.

²⁰⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 15.

not understand the full ideology of the movement as the leading cadres do.”²⁰⁹

The concept of framing and its importance has been highlighted as one of the key aspects of Social Movement Theory (SMT). Given that an insurgency, regardless of scope, is an attempt to mobilize people toward participation against a ruling power, SMT can be a useful tool in analyzing the aspects of an insurgency that enable the insurgent leadership to turn a group of individuals into a full-blown insurgent movement. In addition to the framing of issues, SMT posits that there must be an organizational structure that provides the group the wherewithal to mobilize public strife toward action. Additionally, the organizational structure must have political space in which to operate toward collective action. Political space is much more prevalent in, for example, a free democratic society or via the World Wide Web than it is under an authoritarian regime.²¹⁰ These three variables -- framing, organizational structure, and political space -- must be present in order for an insurgent leader to use an idea to build an organization

²⁰⁹ Glenn E. Robinson, " Hamas as Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 116.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

that can become a movement. A message must be framed, an efficient mobilizing organization must exist, and the group must have enough political space to operate effectively. If any of these fail to materialize, are hindered, or are effectively removed by an outside entity, the movement will fail. Like a three-legged stool, the seat (movement) can only be sustained if all three legs (variables) are present and functioning well enough to support it.

It is clear that it takes a visionary and dynamic insurgent leadership cadre to organize the group toward successful mobilization and to develop a simplistically framed issue that will resonate strongly with potential recruits. Galula argued that "the first basic need for an insurgent who aims at more than simply making trouble is an attractive cause" because the insurgent needs to persuade a large following which would provide his support base.²¹¹ Thus, organizational leadership is one key "center of gravity" for the new global insurgency. While academic studies of insurgent leadership in counterinsurgency operations are scant, studies of state leadership can serve as a guide for such research.

²¹¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 18.

Scholars of international relations such as Zaryab Iqbal and Christopher Zorn have written of the importance of leadership and internal political stability of an organization.²¹² Scott Stewart has argued that leadership characteristics of inspirational charisma, vision, daring, innovation, and initiative become increasingly important in smaller, younger organizations.²¹³ Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans have focused on individual state leaders as a primary unit of analysis and posit that a focus on leadership "has the potential to provide new insights on important questions" regarding decisions to engage in conflict.²¹⁴

In researching whether or not assassinations of leadership can change the course of events, Benjamin F. Jones and Benjamin A. Olken found that "assassinations of autocrats produce substantial changes in the country's institutions"²¹⁵ due to the fact that "individual autocrats

²¹² Zaryab Iqbal and Christopher Zorn, "The Political Consequences of Assassination," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 3 (2008): 386.

²¹³ Scott Stewart, "Terrorism and the Exceptional Individual," *STRATFOR Security Weekly* (2012), <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/terrorism-and-exceptional-individual>.

²¹⁴ Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still *Ex Post* Inefficient?," *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (2004): 604.

²¹⁵ Benjamin F. Jones and Benjamin A. Olken, "Hit or Miss? The Effect of Assassinations on Institutions and War," *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 1, no. 2 (2009): 56.

are cornerstones of national institutions."²¹⁶ Kent Wayne Oots has addressed the importance of leadership on terrorist groups, stating that "political leadership does more than administer the group...it is the political leadership that gives the group its political focus and directs its behavior toward specific goals."²¹⁷

In sum, while most of the prevalent research on leadership tends to focus on the state level, important lessons can be gleaned and applied to the study of insurgency. The insurgent group's battle for popular support begins with a visionary and charismatic leader who is able to articulate the group's cause in a way that will resonate with the people. Dynamic leaders of insurgencies such as Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and Osama bin Laden are exceptional people. Not just anyone can rally the masses toward revolution. It has been pointed out that "although on the surface it might seem like a simple task to find a leader for a militant group, in practice, effective militant leaders are hard to come by" because of the vast skill set required to communicate, recruit, fund-raise, organize,

²¹⁶ Ibid., 85.

²¹⁷ Kent Wayne Oots, "Organizational Perspectives on the Formation and Disintegration of Terrorist Groups," *Terrorism* 12, no. 3 (1989): 142.

train, plan, and execute a successful insurgency.²¹⁸ Given the nature of the global, non-territorial insurgencies the U.S. is facing in the 21st century, dynamic leadership of the insurgent group becomes even more important as the key center of gravity.

Organizational Structures

Another way in which the non-territorial global insurgent group differs from the national insurgent group is the way each is organized. Mao argued that the national, territorially-based insurgent group is organized in a top-down, pyramidal hierarchy. He states that the guerrilla organization must be formed in a way such that individual companies or battalions are designed to correspond with certain geographic areas in the rear. Each geographic area, in turn, has a military commander and political commissioners appointed to it by the top echelons of insurgent leadership. Mao describes a military headquarters in each region, complete with staff, aides, supply officers and medical personnel, who are controlled by the Chief of Staff who then reports to his military commander. Mao describes a very similar

²¹⁸ Stewart, "Terrorism and the Exceptional Individual".

organizational structure for the regional political headquarters.²¹⁹ In his book *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Mao even provided a hierarchical organizational chart of his view of a properly organized guerrilla army.²²⁰

The advocacy for the employment of hierarchical organization for the insurgent movement is also found in the writings of Che Guevara. In his 1961 classic *Guerrilla Warfare*, Guevara devotes an entire chapter to all organizational aspects affecting "the structure of the army of a revolutionary movement."²²¹ In this particular chapter of his book, Guevara details organizational requirements and structures for logistic support, civil organization, medical support, industrial manufacturing of war equipment, intelligence collection and analysis, training and indoctrination, and propaganda. He even discusses how women should be organized and used in support of the cause. Like Mao, Guevara advocates a traditional, top-down pyramid structure headed by the Comandante, or commander-in-chief, who oversees the regional or zone commanders.²²²

²¹⁹ Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare: Translated from the Chinese with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith II*: 77.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

²²¹ Ernesto Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). 80-114.

²²² *Ibid.*, 112.

In contrast, technological advances in communications allow today's global insurgent to operate within part of a flat, globally networked form of organization,²²³ the opposite of the traditional group-based pyramidal hierarchy favored by national, territorially-based insurgents. This type of structure allows the global, non-territorial insurgent to operate as highly autonomous cells ranging from a single individual to a small collection of individuals such as the nineteen hijackers that were responsible for executing the events of 9/11. The use of a network organizational design consisting of somewhat autonomous small groups finds its origins in the writings of Carlos Marighella, who in his 1969 *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla* urged that "unconnected revolutionaries"²²⁴ from various urban parts of the country, who shared ideological and theoretical identities with the larger rural guerrilla movement, should take initiative and "play a tactical role in support of the rural guerrilla."²²⁵ However, Marighella was very clear in his view that the urban struggle should always play a

²²³ John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism," in *Countering the New Terrorism*, ed. Ian O. Lesser (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1999), 39.

²²⁴ Carlos Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla* (Montreal, QC: Abraham Guillen Press, 2002). 42.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

subordinate role and act "as a complement to the rural struggle."²²⁶ Indeed, Marighella viewed the urban struggle as merely part of the tactical area, while the rural area was the area of "decisive" and "strategic" importance.²²⁷ Hence, Marighella still adhered to the concept that an insurgent movement should be organized along the lines of hierarchical command. In keeping with this, he issued a stern warning that all urban guerrilla operations should be focused on tactical military operations against the state apparatus vice trying to focus on urban political education and mobilization of the masses. He writes:

*If by some mistake, urban guerrilla warfare were to be conducted as the decisive struggle, the strategic conflict in the rural area of the peasantry would become relegated to the secondary level. Noting the weak or non-existent participation of the peasantry in the struggle, the bourgeoisie would take advantage of such circumstances to suborn and isolate the revolution; it will try to maneuver the proletariat which, lacking the support of its fundamentally ally, the peasantry, will try to preserve untouched the bureaucratic-military apparatus of the state.*²²⁸

²²⁶ Ibid., 39.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

In sum, the classic writings of the practitioners of national guerrilla insurgency all adhere to the concept that the best organizational structure was the traditional hierarchy. This foundational organizing philosophy differs profoundly from that of the contemporary, non-territorial, global insurgent, who favors the employment of a much more loosely organized, almost fully autonomous interconnecting network of cellular organizations.

This networked organizational structure preferred by the global insurgent presents the U.S. military with new and profound difficulties. Specifically, the U.S. conventional armed forces, despite their overwhelming capabilities, have had great trouble finding and fighting the small, dispersed, but coordinated bands of global insurgents.²²⁹ As John Arquilla points out, the "war on terror" is the "first protracted conflict between nations on one side and networks on the other."²³⁰

Another scholar who has written extensively on the organizational structure of the non-territorial global insurgent is Marc Sageman. Sageman argues that today's global insurgent, is really part a global insurgency

²²⁹ John Arquilla, *Worst Enemy: The Reluctant Transformation of the American Military* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2008). 3-4.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

"movement."²³¹ Analyzing the organizational structure of the global insurgent through the lens of social networks, Sageman shows that global insurgent nodes are linked through a complex web of "direct or mediated exchanges."²³² These nodes are of varying degrees of strength and levels of connectivity. Naturally, the stronger, better financed, high-connectivity nodes are also more operationally active. Those with higher operational tempo are the more influential and, according to Sageman, more important. He refers to these as "hubs."²³³ In actuality, the highly influential "hubs" and the more isolated "nodes" are inter-connected individuals. In his study of al Qaeda's global terrorist networks, Sageman sees the organization as one that has evolved from a first wave of those who held an international view of global jihad, who came from upper and middle class Arab society, and who fought in the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980s. This old guard was followed by a second wave comprised of the old guard plus an influx of mostly middle-class Muslims who joined the movement in the 1990s, who shared the vision of focusing on a global jihad against the far enemy, and who

²³¹ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*: 1.

²³² *Ibid.*, 137.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 139.

had pledged an oath of loyalty to bin Laden himself.²³⁴ It was under the leadership of a core of first wavers, such as bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri that the foot-soldiers of the second wave were able to carry out the devastating attacks against the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the attack against the USS Cole, and the attacks of 9/11. It was also the organization and capabilities of this second wave that constituted the greatest threat to the U.S. According to Sageman, the second wave ended with the allied military invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11, which destroyed the training camps and eliminated the shelter for the group there. In addition, governments attacked and eliminated much of the sources of funding for al Qaeda, increased the security at international borders, making it harder for members of al Qaeda to move about the globe, and increased the ability to monitor and track al Qaeda communications. In short, "there was a worldwide open season on global Islamist terrorists."²³⁵

Sageman points out that the post 9/11, post Afghanistan al Qaeda of today consists of "a few highly connected hubs which dominate the architecture" of the

²³⁴ *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). 48-49.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

network.²³⁶ Often, the interconnectivity between the hubs and nodes are maintained via the Internet, giving rise to an organization that, at the tactical level, appears "leaderless." In this type of organization, a "hub" often has a limited amount of physical contact with the various nodes, and thus might not know who all of his individual followers actually are.²³⁷ If needed, "chains" or "spokes" can be set up to connect both hubs and nodes for logistical purposes...i.e., the moving of "people, money, and arms."²³⁸ As stated, the global, non-territorial insurgent group is best represented by the al Qaeda organization, a graphic representation of which is presented below as Figure 5.1. This graphic was as developed by Sageman and other scholars as part of a 2004 symposium on intelligence and security informatics.²³⁹ Note that in the reproduction of the graphic below, Osama bin Laden is the hub inside the solid circle in the center. Note too, the non-linear makeup of the organization.

²³⁶ *Understanding Terror Networks*: 137.

²³⁷ *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*: 120.

²³⁸ Arquilla, *Worst Enemy: The Reluctant Transformation of the American Military*: 156.

²³⁹ Edna Reid et al., "Terrorism Knowledge Discovery Project: A Knowledge Discovery Approach to Addressing the Threats of Terrorism," in *Intelligence and Security Informatics: Second Symposium on Intelligence and Security Informatics, ISI, 2004, Tucson, AZ, USA, June 10-11, 2004, Proceedings*, ed. Reagan Moore, Daniel D. Zeng, and John Leavitt (Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2004), 39.

Global Salafi Jihad

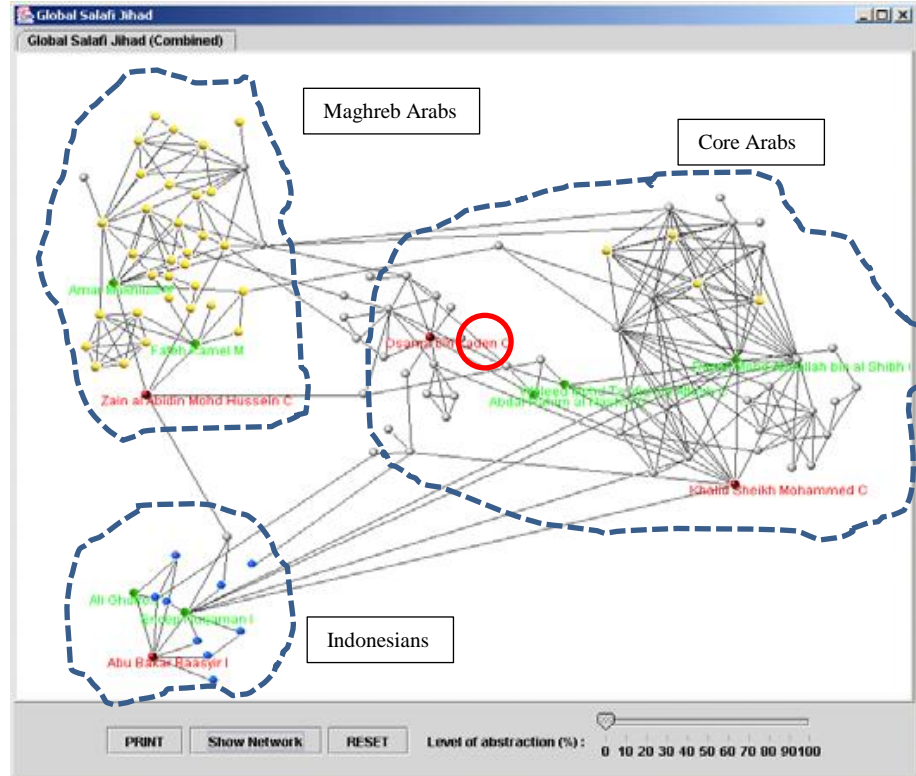


Figure 5.1

The key point to keep in mind is that, as noted by Arquilla, this type of flat, dispersed organizational structure makes the insurgents “harder to find and destroy while at the same time allowing them the opportunity to mount swarming attacks in many different places.”²⁴⁰ Indeed this type of organization allows the global non-territorial insurgent to function at a much higher level of autonomy than that of the national insurgent who is more closely bound to the traditional hierarchical

²⁴⁰ Arquilla, *Worst Enemy: The Reluctant Transformation of the American Military*: 157.

organization and to a territorial base. However, it is most important to note that there is a distinct difference between the tactical and operational level "hub" and a strategic "hub" such as Osama bin Laden. This is because a dynamic leader such as bin Laden provides the framing of the group's cause as well as orchestrating the necessary logistic and training support that needed to turn an individual from an angry individual to an empowered global insurgent. Additionally, as pointed out above, it is the strategic hub such as the 1990s second wave al Qaeda, that is the biggest threat to the U.S. While it is hard to say what will become of al Qaeda now that bin Laden is dead, it appears as though the internationalism and global reach of the group has been greatly diminished, at least for some time.

Strategy and Tactics

The strategy and tactics of the national insurgent also differ from that of the global insurgent. To understand this, it is important to clearly define these terms.

The U.S. military defines *strategy* as "a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives."²⁴¹ Bard O'Neill of the National War College tailors this definition to the insurgent, defining the strategy of insurgency as "the systematic, integrated, and orchestrated use of various means (diplomatic, informational, economic, and military instruments of power) available to achieve goals."²⁴² These two definitions of strategy can be merged and modified; hence, this dissertation defines insurgent strategy as follows:

An insurgent strategy is a set of ideas for employing the instruments of power available to the insurgent, be they diplomatic instruments, economic instruments, instruments of violence or sabotage, or instruments of propaganda, in a way that enables the insurgent to strive toward the attainment of his overarching or strategic goals.

²⁴¹ William E. Gortney, *Joint Pub 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, 2010), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jpl_02.pdf. 313.

²⁴² O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*: 45.

Thus, a strategy is a plan or roadmap that leads one to the big goal or goals. Tactics differ from strategy in that tactics are focused more on the techniques and procedures for carrying out not only the attacks but also the individual, day to day operations that keep the insurgent in line with the strategy. In other words, tactics should be aligned with and guided by the strategy.

Historically speaking, insurgent warfare or "small wars" received very little attention from the master European writers of military strategy, such as Clausewitz or Jomini, until after World War I. Though Clausewitz did give small wars a modicum of attention, his focus was in their relation to indigenous resistance to a foreign aggressor, and looking at "people in arms" as playing, at best, a minor role in warfare which should be used to support the regular army.²⁴³ In the theoretical world of military strategy, this overarching view would change with the writings of Mao, who considered guerrilla operations as playing a much more important role in a grand strategy than that of merely secondary support for the conventional army.

²⁴³ Clausewitz, *On War*: 479-482.

Mao was the first practitioner of warfare who both executed a successful guerrilla insurgency and then penned and published his experiences as a theoretically based framework for understanding. As "the first to treat guerrilla battle-craft as a proper subject of military science," it has been stated that "nobody has made a greater contribution to the understanding of guerrilla strategy" than Mao.²⁴⁴ Mao's writings provided a framework for not only planning and implementing revolution, but also as a guide to understanding how and why "People's War" could be successful against a stronger and better equipped power. Strategically speaking, Mao saw the process of creating revolution as one that was based upon the power of the peasantry working from a rural base area and led by a strong political party organization. For Mao, the political party was key, and every guerrilla soldier needed to "have a precise conception of the political goal of the struggle and the political organization to be used in attaining that goal."²⁴⁵ Thus,

²⁴⁴ Otto Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1962). 40.

²⁴⁵ Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare: Translated from the Chinese with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith II*: 88.

Mao saw military affairs and political affairs as
"impossible to isolate from one another."²⁴⁶

Mao believed that a people's war could be won by beginning with a mixture of political organization, peasant support, and guerrilla warfare tactics. Mao's strategy for success dictated that guerrilla operations would gradually spread, enveloping towns and cities from rural bases.²⁴⁷ Tactically, the insurgent fighter was to disperse throughout the countryside so that he was in a position to constantly harass the stronger enemy through relentless acts of hit and run, sabotage, and ambush. A nice summation of Mao's strategy is quoted from his writings below:

The tactics we have derived from the struggle of the past three years are indeed different from any other tactics, ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign. With our tactics, the masses can be aroused for struggle on an ever-broadening scale, and no enemy, however powerful, can cope with us. Ours are guerrilla tactics. They consist mainly of the following points:

- 1. Divide our forces to arouse the masses; concentrate our forces to deal with the enemy*

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 89.

²⁴⁷ "The Present Situation and Our Tasks (December 25, 1947)," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse Tung* (Peking, People's Republic of China: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 345.

2. *The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue.*
3. *To extend stable base areas, employ the policy of advancing in waves; when pursued by a powerful enemy, employ the policy of circling around.*
4. *Arouse the largest numbers of the masses in the shortest possible time and by the best possible methods.*²⁴⁸

For Mao, guerrilla tactics were but one phase of a war of insurgency.²⁴⁹ They were a way to wear down the enemy while the insurgency gained strength, increased peasant support, and spread throughout the countryside.

Eventually, according to Mao's theory, the three phased struggle, which was discussed previously, would evolve from a guerrilla campaign into a conventional military offensive. Mao certainly did not believe that a war of insurgency could be won using a military strategy composed only of guerrilla warfare tactics.²⁵⁰

Thus, Mao's revolution in China serves as an exemplary case in a study of classical, national

²⁴⁸ "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire (January 5, 1930)," (Peking, People's Republic of China: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 72.

²⁴⁹ *On Guerrilla Warfare: Translated from the Chinese with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith II*: 66.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

insurgency. The Chinese case teaches us that the traditional, territorially based insurgent relies on the establishment of a political party, a strategy of attrition warfare, and a focus on gaining the support of the masses through a clearly articulated, yet narrowly defined goal that has been perceived by the people as achievable. The vision is that of supplanting the governmental structures and institutions of the current regime and introducing a new system that is promised to redress the grievances of the liberated people. Militarily, the classic transnational insurgent relies on sabotage and guerrilla warfare until a large people's army can be raised and fielded. This is exactly the type of insurgent campaign Galula's theory of counterinsurgency warfare was designed to counter.

On the other hand, the global, transnational and non-territorial insurgent relies primarily on a strategy of terrorist attacks designed to incur large numbers of fatalities. While the national insurgent "seeks to aggravate such social and political dissension as exists and to raise the level of political consciousness and of revolutionary will among the people,"²⁵¹ the global

²⁵¹ Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*: 19.

insurgent seeks to inflict as many casualties as possible to its perceived enemy population. This is because the global insurgent, using "the strategy of a thousand cuts"²⁵² simply wishes to inflict as much physical, psychological, and economic pain as possible on the powerful states of the global order²⁵³ in order to achieve "relative strategic balance"²⁵⁴ or to force the powerful states to change their policies.²⁵⁵

Motivational Factors

In identifying the differences between national and global insurgencies, motivational factors driving insurgents must also be examined and understood. Many scholars have explored both the real and the perceived grievances of individuals and groups who chose to either engage in violence directly or to support an insurgency in other ways. Scholars' explanations of motivation are both numerous and varied. This is because the types of violence national and global insurgents engage in are

²⁵² 'Abd Al-'Aziz Al-Muqrin, *Al-Qa'ida's Doctrine for Insurgency* [A Practical Course for Guerrilla War], trans. Norman Cigar (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc, 2009). 97.

²⁵³ Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*: 111-112.

²⁵⁴ Al-Muqrin, *Al-Qa'ida's Doctrine for Insurgency*: 97.

²⁵⁵ Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*: xviii.

different. In short, global, non-territorial insurgents will be much more likely to rely solely on the use of the tactic of terrorism than will the traditional territorial insurgent. For this reason, the literature on terrorist motivation should be examined as it is useful in identifying the factors that motivate the contemporary global insurgent, as distinguished from national insurgents.

As discussed in more detail earlier, one motivational factor brought to light recently by Kilcullen is the perception by the insurgent of occupation by a foreign force, which can create an "accidental guerrilla" phenomenon.²⁵⁶ Kilcullen's thesis is supported by the examination of writings of terrorist and insurgent groups. For a global, religious-based insurgency, the counterinsurgents are not simply outsiders, but apostates and non-believers.

Kilcullen's argument is also supported by many of the authors who have written about the U.S. war in Iraq. In many of these writings, the argument has been made that the Iraqi insurgency was fueled by the occupation of Iraq

²⁵⁶ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*.

by U.S.-led forces.²⁵⁷ Even General Petraeus has written that "in a situation like Iraq, the liberating force must act quickly, because every army of liberation has a half-life beyond which it turns into an army of occupation."²⁵⁸ Petraeus argues that the length of time that an army moves from being perceived as an army of liberation to being perceived as an army of occupation is directly tied to the overall impact of the liberating force's activities. Given the context of contemporary international relations, Petraeus sees a liberating force in a "race against the clock" from the very moment that force enters a country.²⁵⁹ During the time of Galula, concerns about whether or not a force was perceived as an occupier was of little importance. After all, Galula's theory was based upon combating an anti-colonial insurgency, and the colonial power was there to stay and was not engaged in a race against the clock in the way Petraeus describes.

Another and probably more well-known explanation of insurgent violence is the idea that insurgents have a

²⁵⁷ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); Peter R. Mansoor, *Baghdad at Sunrise: a Brigade Commander's war in Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*; Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*.

²⁵⁸ Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq," 4.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

strong sense of being deprived of basic needs by those in power. This concept, known as "relative deprivation," is based on the work of Ted Robert Gurr, who posits that political violence within the state is the result of an outraged reaction to exploitation by the elite.²⁶⁰ In other words, the local population holds grievance against those in power based on their perception that they receive an unequal portion of the economic wealth relative to others at the top of the socioeconomic ladder. As a result, the expectations of the local population become unequal with their material gains, and the likelihood of conflict with the state's elites is increased. This view has long been supported by scholars and policy makers focused on the traditional form of insurgency. For example, in his 1965 classic study *The War of the Flea*, Robert Taber argued that insurgencies were confrontations between the "haves" and the "have-nots."²⁶¹ Along similar lines, James C. Davies argued that:

²⁶⁰ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

²⁶¹ Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*: 3.

*Revolution is most likely to take place when a prolonged period of rising expectations and rising gratifications is followed by a short period of sharp reversal, during which the gap between expectations and gratifications quickly widens and becomes intolerable. The frustration that develops, when it is intense and widespread in society, seeks outlets in violent action.*²⁶²

These views regarding causes and motivations were shared by revolutionary leaders and intellectuals as well. In 1848, Karl Marx wrote that "society as a whole [was] splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."²⁶³ In 1910 Emma Goldman wrote of "the tremendous, revolutionizing effect on human character exerted by social iniquities."²⁶⁴ In 1928 Mao wrote of the subjugation of the working class and the peasantry to "ruthless economic exploitation and political oppression."²⁶⁵ In a 1964 speech before the United Nations

²⁶² James C. Davies, "The J-Curve of Rising and Declining Satisfaction as a Cause of Some Great Revolutions and a Contained Rebellion," in *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare*, ed. Sam C. Sarkesian (Chicago, IL: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1975), 117.

²⁶³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (New York: Penguin Books, 1987). 80.

²⁶⁴ Emma Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence," in *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings and Manuals of Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Other Terrorists from Around the World and Throughout the Ages*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc, 2004), 184.

²⁶⁵ Mao Tse-Tung, "Why is it that Red Political Power can Exist in China? (October 5, 1928)," in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse Tung* (Peking, China: People's Foreign Language Press, 1972).

General Assembly, Ernesto "Che" Guevara railed against "colonial and imperial exploitation" of Latin America by the West,²⁶⁶ and described the Latin American continent as a land where the law was "the tool of a few powerful interests."²⁶⁷ Additionally, contemporary scholars such as Allen Hammond and Karin von Hippel have argued that economic problems in various parts of the world could result in increased terrorism and political violence.²⁶⁸ Thoughts that poverty has a strong correlation with terrorist activity were echoed by President George W. Bush, who in 2008 stated, "The extremists find their most fertile recruiting grounds in societies trapped in chaos and despair, places where people see no prospect of a better life. In the shadows of hopelessness, radicalism thrives. . . . Overcoming helplessness requires addressing its causes: poverty, disease, and ignorance."²⁶⁹

On the surface, the concept of economic deprivation as a motivation for insurgents seems intuitive. Indeed,

²⁶⁶ Ernesto Guevara, "The Philosophy of Plunder Must Cease," in *Che Guevara Reader*, ed. David Deutschmann (New York: Ocean Press, 2003), 305.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 307.

²⁶⁸ Allen Hammond, "Economic Distress Motivates Terrorists," in *Terrorism: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Laura K. Egendorf (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 77; Karin von Hippel, "The Role of Poverty in Radicalization and Terrorism," in *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts, and Responses*, ed. Stuart Gottlieb (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 52.

²⁶⁹ "The Role of Poverty in Radicalization and Terrorism," 52.

Gurr's analysis shows a strong causal link between violence and socioeconomic deprivation in the realm of classic national insurgency. However, when analyzing contemporary global insurgency, the concept of relative deprivation as a causal variable seems questionable. Increasingly empirical academic studies are finding very little correlation between poverty and the type of terrorist violence engaged by the global insurgent. For example, Walter Laqueur, Claude Berrebi, James Piazza, and Alan Kreuger have all argued that in fact those participating in terrorist activity are more likely to be higher educated and have a higher standard of living above the poverty line.²⁷⁰

Given that the use of terrorist violence is the tactic used almost exclusively by the global insurgent, these findings need to be considered when trying to explain his motivations.

²⁷⁰ Claude Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 13, no. 1 (2007), http://public-policy.huji.ac.il/upload/Berrebi_PEPSPP-200712.pdf; Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). 2; Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2003). 15; James A. Piazza, "Poverty and Terrorism: A Hypothesis in Search of Evidence," in *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts, and Responses*, ed. Stuart Gottlieb (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 50.

While both Relative Deprivation and the Accidental Guerrilla Syndrome explain the motivational factors driving the classical nationalist insurgent, Jessica Stern's framework of grievances provides a way of understanding factors other than poverty and relative deprivation that drive the non-territorial global insurgent. Essentially, Stern argues there are several fundamental grievances which, held individually or in various combinations, can lead individuals to commit to the type of terrorist violence that distinguishes today's global insurgency. These are alienation, humiliation, demographic shifts and historical wrongs.²⁷¹ Robert Leiken adds support to Stern's thesis by arguing that cultural and social alienation and a resulting humiliation is felt by many of Europe's second and third generation Muslim immigrants. These feelings are a result of the failure of their host countries to integrate them in European society, which then leads many of these "angry Muslims" to join the global insurgency "to slaughter Westerners."²⁷²

To summarize, there are fundamental differences between the classic, territorially based national

²⁷¹ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). 6.

²⁷² Robert S. Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2005): 122, 125, 127.

insurgency of the type Galula experienced during the 1950s and 1960s, and the type of global, non-territorial insurgency of the twenty-first century, as epitomized by the al Qaeda movement. Table 5.1 was developed to juxtapose these differences and is presented below:

National vs. Global Insurgency: A Side by Side Comparison

	National Insurgency	Global Insurgency
Goals of Insurgent	State Focused and Highly Specific such as the overthrow of the local government	Globally Focused and Thematic—such as the overthrow of the global order
Center of Gravity	Local Population	Group Organizational Structure
Organizational Structure	Hierarchical	Flatter; Networked and Internetted
Insurgent's Primary Tactic	Localized Guerrilla Warfare; Sabotage; Terrorism	International Terrorism; Hybrid Warfare
Source of Insurgent Motivation	Sense of Deprivation; Perceived Occupation by Foreigners	Strong Sense of Grievance

Table 5.1

Thus classical, national insurgency is fundamentally different from contemporary global insurgency of the type being waged by al Qaeda. It follows that classical counterinsurgency doctrine, with its emphasis on a

population-centric approach to the development of a counterinsurgency campaign, will not lead to successful outcomes when confronting contemporary global insurgency. Yet, it is this same Cold War era population-centric model of counterinsurgency that forms the foundation for U.S. Army counterinsurgency doctrine. Thus, what is needed is a new theoretical lens through which to view contemporary global insurgency.

There is a saying among those in military circles that "we always fight the last war." The institutionalized military traditionally focuses on the lessons learned from the most recent campaign and spends the period of time between wars updating equipment, updating doctrine, and updating training so that the mistakes of the previous war won't be made when the next war comes. Of course, the flaw in this approach manifests itself in the fact that no two wars are ever alike, and that focusing on past enemy behavior can very easily lead to completely misjudging a future enemy's capabilities, strategy, and tactics. The French learned this as they took the lessons from World War I and sat behind the Maginot Line preparing for the inevitable German invasion. Meanwhile, Germany's Panzer Divisions rolled around the

fortified positions of the French Army and into Paris. In Vietnam, the U.S. learned that the strategy of annihilation and the tactics of firepower and maneuver that brought victory during World War II did not succeed in defeating the classical insurgency led by Ho Chi Minh.

In response to the failure in Vietnam, the U.S. Army initially evoked the Powell Doctrine, which in essence said to fight conventional wars in which America's overwhelming strength would be decisive, and to avoid trying to fight insurgencies. When the U.S. found itself inadvertently confronting an insurgency in Iraq in 2006, Petraeus and FM 3-24 turned to a counterinsurgency doctrine developed from the lessons of Vietnam and the lessons of the British experience in Malaya without recognizing that there was a new type of insurgency.

As the U.S. leaves Iraq and Afghanistan, it appears, at least based on JRTC training curriculum, that the Army will continue to operate under the Petraeus Doctrine and will continue to prepare for the next territorially based counterinsurgency campaign. One goal of this dissertation is to support an alternative to the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency, in hopes that it will add

to the literature in a way that spurs discussion and debate over military policy.

In the realm of counterinsurgency studies, the bulk of the literature falls into one of two general types. The first are historical descriptions of insurgency, and the second are the studies that are based more on academic social science and much more theoretical. For example, *Street Without Joy*, Bernard B. Fall's 1961 classic study of the French-Indochina War, is primarily an historical narrative. On the other hand, classics such as Ted Robert Gurr's *Why Men Rebel*, published in 1970, or Robert Taber's *The War of the Flea* (1965), are social science studies that are much more focused on developing explanatory theory. More recent studies, particularly those published since 9/11, such as T. X. Hammes' *The Sling and the Stone* (2004) or John Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (2002), have pushed to combine theory with historical description. In many ways, these more recent studies are more useful than those relying on straight narrative or those that are theoretical but without a firm grounding in the empirical record, given the vast disparities among the many insurgencies throughout history.

The next chapters of this dissertation will employ historical case studies of three protracted counterinsurgency campaigns in which the U.S. military has been involved since World War II. These are Vietnam, El Salvador, and Iraq. Afganistan has been omitted from this discussion because, at the time this dissertation was submitted, the war was still on-going. The focus of the case studies will be to bring to the fore any elements of U.S. counterinsurgency practices that proved themselves to be successful, whether that success be on a tactical or on a strategic level.

The case studies used in this dissertation are intended to provide background and context, and demonstrate an evolution of U.S. COIN doctrine necessitated by tactical and political realities both at home and within the host-nation. In short, the counterinsurgency approaches in each case were, at least at times, pragmatically tailored to fit America's needs and those of the host-nation.

CHAPTER 6

Learning From History: Vietnam

A Qualitative Case Study of Counterinsurgency in Vietnam and the Phoenix Program

The Vietnam War still continues to impact the way Americans think about war and insurgency. For many, its legacy remains a painful subject, and American students of warfare still struggle to understand the lessons from a war that ended almost 30 years ago.

The U.S. was involved in the Vietnam conflict for 21 years. This involvement began, for all practical purposes, with support to the French war in Vietnam prior to their loss at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and ultimate withdrawal from the region. U.S. intervention in Vietnam was driven primarily by a "firm belief among American leaders that they were engaged in a worldwide struggle with Soviet-directed communism."²⁷³ Seeing the countries within each geographic region as a set of dominoes, U.S. leaders believed that "the loss of even a single Southeast Asian country would lead to a relatively swift submission to or an alignment with communism" by not

²⁷³ Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War*, Second ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990). 406.

only the rest of the countries in Southeast Asia, but also "India, and in the longer term, the Middle East."²⁷⁴ In the war in Vietnam, the U.S. faced what has been described as "the most complex, effective, lethal insurgency in history."²⁷⁵

The roots of U.S. intervention in Vietnam "were planned and nurtured" in "America's concept of its own moralistic 'exceptionalism.'"²⁷⁶ This sense of exceptionalism helped create the pervasive sentiment in the U.S. during the Cold War that America was engaged in a religious battle against an atheistic and expansionistic foe, "rather than a political battle with a collectivist answer to capitalism."²⁷⁷ This helped fuel U.S. determination to stop the spread of what was often referred to as "godless communism" throughout the world.

²⁷⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). 627.

²⁷⁵ Dale Q. Andrade and James H. Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," *Military Review* 86, no. 2 (2006): 9.

²⁷⁶ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983). 11.

²⁷⁷ Thomas Aiello, "Constructing 'Godless Communism': Religion, Politics, and Popular Culture, 1954-1960," *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture 1900-Present* 4, no. 1 (2005), http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2005/aieello.htm.

Overview of the Vietnam War and U.S. Counterinsurgency

America's commitment to Vietnam began when the administration of President Harry Truman decided that, in the interest of preventing the expansion of Chinese Communism into Southeast Asia, it was in the national interest of the U.S. to assist the French in retaining their hold over Indochina. After the French military was soundly defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and as part of the peace negotiation at Geneva, Vietnam was partitioned along the Seventeenth Parallel, with the northern portion under control of the Communist government of Ho Chi Minh, and the southern portion to remain under anti-communist control. The country was "to be reunified by elections scheduled for the summer of 1956."²⁷⁸ While the French government and the Vietminh signed the Geneva Accords, neither the U.S. nor South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem did.²⁷⁹ The U.S. immediately increased its support for South Vietnam as Diem consolidated his control over the South by forcefully smashing some 90 percent of the communist Vietminh cells in the Mekong delta.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*, Second ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1986). 41.

²⁷⁹ James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*, Second ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). 50.

²⁸⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 227.

The Communists, however, had been fighting for years against colonialism and would accept nothing short of a unified Vietnam. Thus, when Diem refused to allow elections to go forward for fear of a victory for Ho Chi Minh, the communist guerrillas, now known as the Viet Cong, began a insurgency campaign against the Diem regime.²⁸¹ In return, the U.S. "poured more than \$1 billion in economic and military assistance into South Vietnam" between 1956 and 1961, as well as sending some 1,500 American advisors to assist the South Vietnamese government and the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN).²⁸² The U.S. expected that should war break out, the North Vietnamese Army would invade South Vietnam, As a result, the training programs that the U.S. set up for the ARVN mirrored the conventional warfare training American soldiers received in the U.S. and "generally ignored instruction on counterinsurgency operations."²⁸³ In the meantime, the invasion from the Communist North did not materialize, and the Viet Cong guerrillas grew stronger and better organized. The number of assassinations and kidnappings against South Vietnamese government officials

²⁸¹ Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 68.

²⁸² Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*: 57.

²⁸³ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 23.

increased, as did attacks against government offices, military bases, military transport convoys, and hotels and bars that catered to American and ARVN servicemen.²⁸⁴ Thus, despite the increased flow of American aid and assistance to South Vietnam, the South Vietnamese government authority continued to erode in the eyes of the South Vietnamese people.²⁸⁵

Prompted by President John F. Kennedy and his administration's emphasis on counterinsurgency, the U.S. Army increased the numbers of its Special Forces units and developed counterinsurgency and special warfare orientation courses. However, the upper echelons of the Army remained focused on conventional warfare and the courses were too general in nature to be of much use to conventional military personnel. Further, the focus toward counterinsurgency which President Kennedy advocated for the U.S. military would be quietly shelved after the president's assassination in 1963.²⁸⁶

One early attempt at counterinsurgency in Vietnam was what would be called the "Strategic Hamlet" program. This, in short, was an attempt to separate the Viet Cong

²⁸⁴ Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 71-72.

²⁸⁵ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*: 186-187.

²⁸⁶ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 48.

guerrillas from the people and was based on the British Malaya model. It involved the physical relocation of some 200 thousand Vietnamese villagers to secure centers and protected by a rather corrupt and incompetent South Vietnamese Civil Guard.²⁸⁷

From a "winning hearts and minds" perspective, the Strategic Hamlet program was disaster. It forced rural villagers to not only relocate against their wishes, but also forced them to provide the labor to build the hamlets. Further, the South Vietnamese government then razed their now empty ancestral village to the ground. The result was not only increased resentment of the South Vietnamese government, but many of the young men affected by the relocation left to join the Viet Cong guerrillas.²⁸⁸

Despite the training efforts of the ARVN by U.S. forces, the Strategic Hamlets, and ever increasing financial and material aid to South Vietnam, which during the Kennedy administration grew to include American military air power,²⁸⁹ the political situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The political unrest

²⁸⁷ Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq*: 178.

²⁸⁸ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*: 188.

²⁸⁹ Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 97.

was epitomized by a growing and highly publicized protest against the Diem regime by Buddhist monks.²⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the Viet Cong guerrillas grew stronger as they acquired new recruits and received uninterrupted supplies from North Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. 1963 was a watershed year as a heavily equipped ARVN battalion suffered a decisive and highly publicized loss to a small band of some 350 well-organized Viet Cong at the Battle of Ap Bac,²⁹¹ President Diem was overthrown and then assassinated in a military coup, and President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.²⁹²

Thus, President Lyndon Johnson inherited a rapidly deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong increased offensive operations, expanding their control of the countryside. Yet, with the 1964 presidential election on the near horizon, Johnson attempted to appear firm but not too hawkish by proclaiming continued, yet moderate, support for the government of South Vietnam. Hoping that personnel changes would turn things around in South Vietnam, Johnson appointed William Westmoreland as the Commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

²⁹⁰ Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*: 75.

²⁹¹ Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988). 262.

²⁹² Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 277-278.

(COMUSMACV), and appointed retired U.S. Army General Maxwell Taylor as the U.S. ambassador to Saigon.²⁹³ Privately, Johnson and his key aides believed that "the only way to stem the tide [in South Vietnam] was to send regular American ground forces to Vietnam."²⁹⁴ Just before the election, the events in the Tonkin Gulf would provide Johnson the political cover he needed to escalate U.S. involvement, and he capitalized on "the sense of urgency created by this incident to seek a congressional resolution authorizing him to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."²⁹⁵

After winning the White House in a landslide victory, President Johnson ordered Operation ROLLING THUNDER, an aerial bombing offensive aimed at North Vietnam, the purpose of which was to force the North to stop supporting the Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam. Additionally, he ordered the deployment of two combat Marine battalions to protect the military air base at Da Nang, where the shore-based aircraft used in ROLLING THUNDER would operate

²⁹³ Brian Van DeMark, *Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995). 16-18.

²⁹⁴ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*.

²⁹⁵ DeMark, *Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*: 18.

from. These decisions would prove to be the first step in a growing Americanization of the Vietnam War. By the end of the 1965 there would be almost 250 thousand U.S. troops deployed to South Vietnam.²⁹⁶ These troops arrived in South Vietnam knowing little about Vietnamese society, little about guerrilla warfare, "and the army's policy of one-year tours of duty ensured that lessons learned at great cost had to be learned again and again."²⁹⁷

In May, a mere two months after U.S. Marines had "waded ashore in full battle gear [as if] they were restaging the Iwo Jima invasion,"²⁹⁸ the Viet Cong proved their formidability as more than a thousand Viet Cong troops overran Song Be, the capital of Phuoc Long province and a mere 50 miles from Saigon. This success was followed by Viet Cong victories in Quangngai and Dong Xoai, where an American Special Forces camp was overrun.²⁹⁹ These events, coupled with the growing realization that the ROLLING THUNDER airstrikes were not achieving their desired impact, increased pressure within the Johnson

²⁹⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 415.

²⁹⁷ Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2000). 235.

²⁹⁸ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*: 195.

²⁹⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 421.

administration to escalate the war.³⁰⁰ Westmoreland's response to the Viet Cong victories was in keeping with much of what Johnson was hearing, he asked the President for another 150 thousand troops, arguing that the South Vietnamese army couldn't stand up to the Viet Cong "without substantial U.S. combat support on the ground."³⁰¹ Westmoreland's request equated to a 250 percent increase in the size of the U.S. combat footprint.³⁰² The President "made an open-ended commitment to employ American military forces as the situation demanded" as well as authorizing Westmoreland to "commit U.S. troops to combat independent of or in conjunction with GVN [Government of Vietnam] forces in any situation when ... their use is necessary to strengthen the relative position of GVN forces."³⁰³

The strategy Westmoreland employed was quintessentially American. Believing that the biggest threat facing South Vietnam was an invasion of the North Vietnamese regular army, his first move was to deploy the troops to protect U.S. air and supply bases around Saigon and along the coast. At the same time, he ordered U.S.

³⁰⁰ DeMark, *Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*: 151.

³⁰¹ Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 136.

³⁰² DeMark, *Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*: 153.

³⁰³ Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*: 139.

forces into the South Vietnam's central highlands area in order to block an invasion from North Vietnam's regular army. Lastly, he launched a series of "search and destroy" missions in which superior U.S. firepower and maneuverability could be brought to bear.³⁰⁴ Although this strategy was described by Westmoreland as a war of attrition, in reality it was a classic conventional war strategy of annihilation, designed to find the enemy and eliminate him.³⁰⁵

Westmoreland's intensification of the war effort ultimately created a refugee crisis as "U.S. bombing, shelling, and defoliation of rural areas drove peasants from their hamlets," creating a situation where approximately 4 million Vietnamese fled the countryside, eventually landing in Saigon to try to scratch out a living in any way possible.³⁰⁶

Westmoreland's strategy seemed, on the surface at least, to be positively reinforced by two major engagements in late 1965. The first of these was the battle of Van Tuong, the first major engagement between conventional U.S. ground combat troops and the Viet Cong.

³⁰⁴ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 435.

³⁰⁵ Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History, 1946-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). 350, 352.

³⁰⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 439.

Having been tipped off by a Viet Cong deserter, the Americans learned that an attack against a U.S. Marine enclave at Chu Lai was imminent. The U.S. responded with an amphibious assault against the 1st Viet Cong Regiment. In the end, the Viet Cong were soundly defeated, suffering over ten times as many battle deaths as the U.S. However, the U.S. was surprised by the fierce resistance and the degree of tenacity the Viet Cong showed.³⁰⁷

The second major battle occurred three months after Van Tuong, in November, 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley. For several weeks prior to the major battle, the North Vietnamese regular army (NVA) had been attacking, along with the Viet Cong, isolated Special Forces camps in the area. In an attempt to seize the initiative from the NVA, the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division launched a major offensive.³⁰⁸ In the ensuing engagement, the U.S. faced an enemy force comprised of both Viet Cong and units of the North Vietnamese regular army. Although the fighting was at times desperate for the U.S., in the end Westmoreland declared the battle of Ia Drang to be an unprecedented

³⁰⁷ Warren Wilkins, *Grab Their Belts To Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big-Unit War Against the U.S. 1965-1966* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011). 64-65, 76.

³⁰⁸ Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History, 1946-1975*: 360.

victory.³⁰⁹ The U.S. learned a key lesson from both the Ia Drang and Van Tuong battles that would reinforce Westmoreland's military strategy of attrition. The lesson was related to the number of casualties. While the U.S. suffered 240 battlefield deaths at Ia Drang, the enemy lost nearly half a division, or some 1,849 men. Thus, as a result of the disparate number of casualties, "the body count rose to become the dominant indicator for success in the minds of many [U.S. military] officers."³¹⁰ The emphasis on body counts as a measure of success in a war zone without clear front lines would continue throughout the remaining years of the war. Ia Drang led to the perception that standard, conventional operations were working. As a result, "no alternative strategies [needed to] be explored. No more feedback was required for MACV save the body counts that measured the attrition strategy's progress."³¹¹ Yet, what Van Tuong and Ia Drang also showed was that the Vietnamese were willing to fight fiercely in large engagements, regardless of the cost in casualties. This trait echoed the ominous warning Ho Chi Minh had given the French in 1946 when he said "You can

³⁰⁹ David H. Hackworth, *About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989). 487.

³¹⁰ Gregory A. Daddis, *No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 83.

³¹¹ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 169.

kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours, yet even at those odds, you will lose and I will win.”³¹² Yet, believing he had indications that his attrition strategy was working and that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) was the center of gravity in the war, Westmoreland asked President Johnson for another 41,500 troops to offset “unexpectedly high NVA infiltration.”³¹³

On the other hand, the lesson learned by the Viet Cong and NVA leadership was that, because of the incredible advantage in mobility U.S. helicopters gave the Americans, the Vietnamese path to victory lay not in a major conventional engagement, but in grabbing the American “by his belt,” to get so close to him that his heavy artillery and air power were rendered useless, then fight ferociously and terminate the engagement quickly and withdraw.³¹⁴ Additionally, the Vietnamese leadership would strive to ensure that the people, the Viet Cong, and the North Vietnamese regular forces were inseparable.³¹⁵ As General Vo Nguyen Giap would later state: “Our war was a

³¹² Stanley Karnow, “Ho Chi Minh,” *Time Magazine* (1998), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988162,00.html>.

³¹³ Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*: 579.

³¹⁴ Wilkins, *Grab Their Belts To Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big-Unit War Against the U.S. 1965-1966*: 21-22.

³¹⁵ Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*, *The Warriors* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc, 1997). 257-258.

people's war, waged by the entire people. Our battlefield was everywhere, or nowhere, and the choice was ours."³¹⁶ Thus, the stage was set for applications of the strategies the U.S. and the NVA/Viet Cong would use unquestioningly until the Tet Offensive in January, 1968. Until then, MACV would focus on search and destroy missions to flush out the major Viet Cong and NVA units operating in South Vietnam. Counterinsurgency, or "pacification" as it was called, would be left largely to the South Vietnamese government.³¹⁷

Throughout 1966-1967, the U.S. strategy also employed a heavy reliance on air power and artillery against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese base areas.³¹⁸ U.S ground forces made several major sweeps in attempts to deliver a fatal blow to the enemy. Some of these, such as OPERATION CRIMP, employed huge numbers of U.S. troops. Some 10 thousand allied troops took part in OPERATION CRIMP, which was designed to disrupt Vietcong/NVA operations in what was considered an enemy stronghold northwest of Saigon.³¹⁹ While the operation uncovered a vast enemy tunnel network,

³¹⁶ Ibid., 258.

³¹⁷ Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History, 1946-1975*: 353.

³¹⁸ Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*: 151.

³¹⁹ Charles Mohr, "U.S. and Australian Troops Kill 21 in Light Fighting Northwest of Saigon," *New York Times*, 09 January 1966, 1.

it was empty. The final number of enemy casualties, the yardstick by which the U.S. was measuring success, totaled a mere 150.³²⁰

OPERATION CRIMP epitomized the general nature of the U.S. clashes with the enemy during 1966-1967. The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong proved themselves to be astonishingly elusive during these years. Generally speaking, they were able to avoid contact whenever necessary or desired. As a result, the U.S. found itself embroiled in a stalemate, where "each American blow was like a sledgehammer on a floating cork."³²¹ In the meantime, "the decision to Americanize and militarize the conflict in Vietnam jump-started the anti-war movement in the U.S." The military draft, the rising number of U.S. casualties, and the seeming lack of any real progress toward bringing the war to an end, an increase in the number of members of Congress who criticized the war effort, and an increasing level of critical press coverage led to a growing body of Americans during 1966-1967 who were opposed to the war.³²²

³²⁰ Special to the *New York Times*, "Saigon's Forces Plan a Cease-Fire Shorter Than Foe's " *New York Times*, 15 January 1966, 2.

³²¹ Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950-1975*: 154-156.

³²² Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 150-152.

January, 1968 would see the turning point in the Vietnam War. After two and a half years of guerrilla warfare, the North Vietnamese leadership was ready to launch the general war phase of their Mao-influenced "people's war." In an attempt to replicate the success of Dien Bien Phu, General Vo Nguyen Giap ordered a massive offensive during the Vietnamese Tet holiday. The offensive surprised the American military intelligence community, which had not recognized that a large-scale offensive was looming. Viet Cong and NVA units suddenly and simultaneously attacked 41 of 44 provincial capitals in South Vietnam and five of South Vietnam's six largest cities.³²³ At the same time, the Communist political cadre tried to incite massive popular uprising. The goal of the offensive was to cause a collapse of the South Vietnamese government and the subsequent withdrawal of American forces.³²⁴

While the offensive initially set the U.S. back on its heels, the Army responded quickly. Tet provided the U.S. the "long-awaited opportunity to destroy large numbers of enemy forces," and provided the Army with its

³²³ Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*: 266-268.

³²⁴ Wilkins, *Grab Their Belts To Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big-Unit War Against the U.S. 1965-1966*: 210.

greatest success to date." The Viet Cong and NVA suffered devastating casualties. In all some 37,000 of the enemy were killed with another some 6,000 captured,³²⁵ with some estimates reaching as high as 50,000 dead.³²⁶

From a purely military perspective, the Tet Offensive was a "grave tactical defeat" for the Communists and the North Vietnamese Army.³²⁷ However, from a political perspective, it has been argued that "it was the master stroke that won the war."³²⁸ The Tet offensive, which played out on TV every night in America as part of the evening news, "shattered what confidence many people had left in American power to win a military victory in Vietnam."³²⁹ The American public now saw Vietnam as "a complete debacle" as Tet "shattered their confidence in official statements regarding the war's progress."³³⁰ The ripple effect of Tet was felt all the way to the White House, as less than three months after the Communist offensive, President Johnson announced that he would not

³²⁵ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 239.

³²⁶ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*: 212.

³²⁷ Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*: 270.

³²⁸ Polk, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, from the American Revolution to Iraq*: 180.

³²⁹ Robert J. O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician & Strategist* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969). 198.

³³⁰ Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*: 212.

seek reelection.³³¹ The following month, Johnson replaced General Westmoreland with General Creighton W. Abrams.³³²

The appointment of General Abrams brought with it a change in strategy in Vietnam. Under Abrams, the U.S. would focus less on defeating the Vietcong and NVA militarily and focus more on transferring responsibility for the war to the South Vietnamese government and on altering the search and destroy tactics.³³³ What would follow under Abrams was the first serious attempt at focusing more on pacification, or counterinsurgency.

In practice, the new approach toward pacification still took a back seat to the Army's traditional mission of closing with and destroying the enemy's main force units. However, gains were made in the area of counterinsurgency in the post-Tet era of the Vietnam War. Of note were the efforts directed by the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development or CORDS program.³³⁴ It is this particular aspect of the Vietnam War, with particular emphasis on a program known as Phoenix, a sub-program

³³¹ Tom Wicker, "Johnson Says He Won't Run," *New York Times*, 31 March 1968, 1.

³³² Max Frankel, "Gen. Abrams Gets Top Vietnam Post; Deputy is Named," *New York Times*, 10 April 1968, 1.

³³³ Bernard Weinraub, "Abrams for Westmoreland--A Sharp Contrast," *New York Times*, 16 June 1968, E3.

³³⁴ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 252, 257.

within the CORDS program, which will be examined in the following section.

U.S. Military Involvement in the Phoenix Program

This section will focus on the portion of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort which sought to achieve selective targeting of high value insurgents. This effort was directed by the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (CORDS) program. For the purposes of this study, it is important to examine the strengths, weaknesses, and overall impacts of the CORDS Phoenix program toward that effort.

From the perspective of the North Vietnamese Communists, the war in Vietnam against the U.S. and the South Vietnamese government was simply a follow-on phase of a people's war that had begun against the French following World War II.³³⁵ Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh saw the war as a national struggle for independence against Western domination, and was determined that all of Vietnam should be united under one

³³⁵ Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of Vo Nguyen Giap*, ed. Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970). 101.

government.³³⁶ Ho and General Vo Nguyen Giap promulgated a strategy based on Mao's theory of revolutionary war,³³⁷ and thus rightfully saw, for the achievement of their strategic goals, the conflict's center of gravity was a struggle for the control of the political allegiance of the Vietnamese people rather than a struggle to gain physical control over territory.

What the U.S. faced in Vietnam was a foe that was a combination of conventional military units in the North and a well-organized and skillful political cadre coupled with fierce bands of highly organized guerrillas in the South. The Vietnamese had stood toe-to-toe with the French and had prevailed, and they were capable of standing toe-to-toe with the U.S. as well. In short, "the enemy was no rag-tag band lurking in the jungle."³³⁸

By the time the U.S. deployed ground forces to Vietnam in 1965, the Communist infrastructure in the countryside of South Vietnam had been in place since General Giap had ordered the southern Viet Minh (later referred to as Viet Cong) guerrillas following the battle

³³⁶ Ho Chi Minh, "U.S. Imperialists, Get Out of South Viet-Nam!," in *Ho Chi Minh On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard B. Fall (London, UK: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 361.

³³⁷ O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician & Strategist*: 62.

³³⁸ Andrade and Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 9.

at Dien Bien Phu to "establish proper political attitudes and behavior among the rural population of the South."³³⁹ Establishing proper political attitudes and behavior was accomplished by using a two-pronged strategy of brutally eliminating pro-government villagers and South Vietnamese government officials³⁴⁰ while simultaneously working alongside the villagers "planting and harvesting crops, delivering rice to markets, improving community buildings and homes, [and] providing drugs and basic medical care."³⁴¹ This support to the peasants, along with an intense Communist propaganda campaign and the heavy handed response methods used by the American-backed South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem to quell any hint of political opposition, allowed the Communists to exploit the political space available and build "solid support for their cause among peasants working the land."³⁴² By relentlessly striving to "force the South Vietnamese governmental apparatus -- officials, militiamen, informants, and teachers -- from the villages and to take

³³⁹ Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*: 233.

³⁴⁰ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1966). 247, 250.

³⁴¹ Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*: 233.

³⁴² O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician & Strategist*: 182.

its place,"³⁴³ the Communists were able to eliminate the South Vietnamese governmental apparatus in many of the villages.³⁴⁴ By 1961, the armed opponents of the Diem regime controlled the "mountainous areas of Quang Ngai province, the U Minh Forest in Kien Giang and An Xuyen provinces, the Plain of Reeds along the Cambodian border, and large portions of the swamps of the southeast."³⁴⁵ Maintaining a constant presence in the villages in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) was made up of civilian members of the Communist Party who, while maintaining a clandestine presence among the people, created a shadow local government at the village level. The goal of the VCI was to completely undermine and render ineffective the government of South Vietnam.³⁴⁶ Historian Dale Andrade writes:

"This infrastructure allowed the Viet Cong to maintain a presence in all of South Vietnam's approximately 250 districts, even if the main-force guerrilla units were destroyed by American firepower. And as long as

³⁴³ Mark Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*, Bison Books ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). 366.

³⁴⁴ Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*: 250.

³⁴⁵ Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*: 235.

³⁴⁶ Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*, ed. Neil C. Livingstone, *Issues in Low-Intensity Conflict* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990). 1.

the VCI remained in the villages, few people would be foolhardy enough to cooperate with the [South Vietnamese] government."³⁴⁷

Thus, by the time U.S. troops landed in Da Nang in 1965, the Communists had developed a well-organized and highly sophisticated VCI throughout the countryside, supported by the government of Communist North Vietnam and supplied via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Indeed, The Viet Cong became "so strong in some areas that they could easily ambush and annihilate small government units."³⁴⁸ With hindsight, this infrastructure was obviously a key Communist center of gravity. Yet, the U.S. saw the center of gravity as the North Vietnamese Army, and General Westmoreland thus sought to fight a war of attrition through the exercise of the traditional American military strengths -- superior firepower and mobility. The U.S. military goal was to destroy Communist military forces at a rate that outpaced their ability to reinforce their troop levels.³⁴⁹

However, by late 1967, it was becoming apparent to many military planners in South Vietnam and many civilian

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 369.

³⁴⁹ Richard A. Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995). 33.

policy-makers in Washington that large numbers of American troops and massive firepower alone were unable to stop the Communists in North Vietnam from supporting and promoting a guerrilla war in South Vietnam. The involvement of the VCI shadow government had been identified as a primary source of Communist strength in the countryside villages of the South. However, "any serious attempt to regain control of the contested countryside required intelligence information that just was not available."³⁵⁰ Phoenix was born in an attempt to overcome these intelligence shortfalls. In the words of one historian, "the Phoenix program sought to rejuvenate life from a dying effort."³⁵¹ The "dying effort" was, of course, the U.S. military's pursuit of victory through a strategy of attrition.

Initially called ICEX (Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation), the Phoenix program was developed as a highly classified program in 1967 by the CIA. The goal of the program was to consolidate and bring some semblance of order and organization to the poorly coordinated intelligence efforts of the U.S., South Vietnamese

³⁵⁰ Thomas K. Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998). 133.

³⁵¹ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: ix.

government, and South Vietnamese Army.³⁵² This was to be accomplished by way of oversight of the District and Provincial Intelligence Operations Coordinating Committees (DIOCCs and PIOCCs).³⁵³ Further, the program was envisioned to be a "rifle shot" rather than a "shotgun" approach, which had been in effect prior to Phoenix. By "rifle shot," the program worked toward a state where the South Vietnamese and the Americans gained enough intelligence on a VCI cadre to surgically target that individual person. This approach was vastly different from the "shotgun" approaches used in the past, such as cordon and search operations, in which large numbers of villagers were apprehended in hopes of capturing a few guerrillas or VCI cadre.³⁵⁴ In short, "Phoenix was merely a central clearinghouse for intelligence collation and targeting information."³⁵⁵ Historically, the South Vietnamese government intelligence services had been the ones responsible for "uprooting Viet Cong agents, [which] were typically a tangle of rival groups competing with

³⁵² Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*: 133.

³⁵³ Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*: 228.

³⁵⁴ Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 371.

³⁵⁵ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 147.

each other for power and graft."³⁵⁶ The idea was that by centralizing these factions under sound management, the apparatus on which the Viet Cong guerrillas relied for food, money, intelligence, logistical support, recruits, asylum, and military supplies could be destroyed.³⁵⁷

However, the South Vietnamese government's initial reception of the concept of anti-infrastructure operations was lukewarm at best. The South Vietnamese consistently failed to take the concept of targeting of the VCI seriously.³⁵⁸ While MACV under Westmoreland viewed these types of "pacification" operations as responsibility of the South Vietnamese government, the South Vietnamese military viewed their war against communism as a big war and, like their American military counterparts, preferred to focus on conventional military, big unit engagements as the path to victory. However, the Tet Offensive of January 1968 brought to light "just how crucial the VCI was to the insurgency, for it was the covert cadres who paved the way for the guerrillas and ensured that supplies and replacements were available to sustain the [Tet]

³⁵⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 601.

³⁵⁷ Terence Smith, "C.I.A. Planned Drive on Officials of Viet Cong is Said to be Failing," *New York Times*, 19 August 1969, A12.

³⁵⁸ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 62.

Offensive."³⁵⁹ In July, 1968 the South Vietnamese government "officially endorsed the Phoenix program with a presidential decree and work began in earnest."³⁶⁰

In essence, Phoenix was the intelligence coordination and management apparatus which oversaw the prosecution of a strategy of direct attacks against the individual VCI cadre. Prior to Phoenix, U.S. and South Vietnamese governmental initiatives against the VCI below the 17th parallel "had been sporadic and consisted of intermittent, uncoordinated police and secret service arrests of suspects, often in the wake of military 'sweep-and-clear' operations."³⁶¹ To this end, the District Intelligence Operations Coordinating Committee (DIOCC) was the cornerstone of Phoenix's operational structure which focused on targeting the VCI. Acting as a central intelligence and operational hub, the DIOCC was led by a South Vietnamese senior member of Phung Hoang,³⁶² which was

³⁵⁹ Andrade and Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 18.

³⁶⁰ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 72.

³⁶¹ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*: 132.

³⁶² The Phung Hoang is the mythical Vietnamese bird that represents conjugal love and who appears in times of peace. The Phung Hoang represents virtue, grace, and harmony. Phung Hoang was the name chosen by the South Vietnamese for their anti-VCI program. Phung Hoang ran parallel to the U.S. Phoenix program. In fact, ICEX, the acronym the U.S. originally used for its anti-VCI program, was changed to Phoenix, which was the closest English translation of Phung Hoang

simply the South Vietnamese government's indigenous version of Phoenix. Each DIOCC Chief was assisted and aided by an American Phoenix advisor. The U.S. adviser, per instruction, had no authority to order operations. His role was simply to advise the DIOCC Chief and organize U.S. military support. The DIOCC Chief, meanwhile, answered to the Vietnamese District Chief -- not the U.S. The DIOCC's task was to compile intelligence on the VCI operating within that particular district and create a list of individuals deemed as high value targets. The DIOCC then tracked these individuals and planned operations to eliminate him or, in some cases, her. The priority of these operations was to first convince that person to defect, or to *Chieu Hoi*.³⁶³ If this effort failed, then attempts to capture were undertaken. If capture also failed, then the VCI cadre member was targeted for killing. Once the target either became a *Hoi*

available, so that the two programs would be referred to by the same (more or less) name.

³⁶³ Those members of the VCI or Viet Cong guerrilla units who wished to defect could do so through the *Chieu Hoi* (literally "open arms") amnesty program. Individuals who chose to defect were interrogated by the South Vietnamese Government in hopes of discovering intelligence information such as Viet Cong methods of operation or the identification of other specific VCI cadre. Once an individual had asked for amnesty through *Chieu Hoi*, that person was indoctrinated and became a *Hoi Chanh*. Many *Hoi Chanh*s subsequently went to work for the South Vietnamese government.

*Chanh*³⁶⁴ or was captured, he or she was taken to the DIOCC and interrogated, then sent to the Province Headquarters for further interrogation and trial.³⁶⁵

So, to reiterate, the strategy of Phoenix was for the U.S. to assist and advise the South Vietnamese government in locating, identifying, and neutralizing high value VCI. Neutralization of VCI cadre was accomplished by either coercing them into defecting from the Communist Party, or to risk being targeted by special operations military and/or paramilitary units for capture or killing.³⁶⁶ The theoretical rationale beneath the Phoenix program was based on a realization by the U.S. that the war could not be won as long as the VCI continued to be allowed to roam freely and unmolested throughout the countryside. Thus, the goal of Phoenix was to close the political space being used by the VCI, and to render the Communist Party's local organizational structures off balance, dysfunctional, and completely ineffective in the same way that the Communists had crippled the South Vietnamese government's local apparatus years before. "If successful, the Phoenix

³⁶⁴ A *Hoi Chanh* referred to a communist who had defected through the *Chieu Hoi* program and had been granted amnesty.

³⁶⁵ Andrade and Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 18-19.

³⁶⁶ Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*, Authors Guild Backinprint.com ed. (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2000). 13.

program would thus have made it possible to break the endless cycle by which revolutionary main-force [i.e. guerrilla] units were ground down time after time only to be rebuilt through the efforts of the [Communist] Party apparatus working among the population."³⁶⁷

VCI targeting missions were carried out by what some would call two of the most effective,³⁶⁸ yet others would argue notoriously corrupt and immoral,³⁶⁹ action arms within the Phoenix program. These were the South Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Units and the U.S. Navy SEALs.

As stated above, the Phoenix program was simply an information coordination structure whose purpose was "to bring together all the collection assets in South Vietnam to identify and neutralize the VCI in South Vietnam."³⁷⁰ Yet, it was the so-called "neutralization" piece that would ultimately become the source of tremendous controversy.

³⁶⁷ Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972). 237.

³⁶⁸ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 185.

³⁶⁹ Tom Buckley, "Phoenix: To Get Their Man, Dead or Alive," *New York Times*, no. 22 February (1970), <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10B14FF395C117688DDAB0A94DA405B808BF1D3>.

³⁷⁰ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*: 135.

For all practical purposes, the words "Phoenix program" came to refer to a wide host of anti-VCI activities lumped together in the CORDS pacification program, "some relatively successful and some hapless."³⁷¹ The primary organizations that focused on anti-infrastructure operations were the South Vietnamese National Police (NP) -- specifically the paramilitary National Police Field Force (NPF) and the intelligence-gathering Police Special Branch (PSB) -- and the Provisional Reconnaissance Units (PRUs). The NP and NPF wore uniforms and were advised by U.S. AID personnel.³⁷² The PRUs, on the other hand, were advised and managed by the CIA.³⁷³ Even though the CIA would, by the end of 1968, begin reducing direct involvement in Phoenix while the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) took greater control, the CIA continued to be heavily involved with the PRUs until the fall of Saigon in 1975.³⁷⁴ The PRUs were small, elite units of Vietnamese men who were under the direct command authority of the Americans, something unique in all of the Vietnamese-led pacification programs.

³⁷¹ Joe P. Dunn, "Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The C.I.A.'s Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong," *Infantry* 89, no. 1 (1999): 50.

³⁷² Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 147.

³⁷³ Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*: 117.

³⁷⁴ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 12, 123; Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 55.

The CIA reasoned that "an unconventional enemy called for unconventional methods, and thus developed the PRUs to "fight like the Viet Cong."³⁷⁵ Fueled by hatred of the Communists, many members of the PRUs had lost families or had suffered some other grievous misfortune at the hands of the Viet Cong.³⁷⁶ Forgoing the strict chain of command, rigid structure and discipline of a military unit, the PRUs often used brutal guerrilla tactics against the Viet Cong. Unlike conventional South Vietnamese and American forces, the PRUs usually operated in small units at night. The PRUs collected intelligence on the VCI and then infiltrated Viet Cong controlled areas to capture or kill them.³⁷⁷

While the efficacy of the PRU's varied from province to province, the well-led PRUs were highly effective against the VCI.³⁷⁸ At the height of Phoenix operations in 1968, some 4,205 PRU agents were operating in South Vietnam, and the ratio of Viet Cong neutralizations to PRU killed was an amazing 75:1.³⁷⁹ The PRUs were able to inflict enormous damage on the VCI, and have been referred

³⁷⁵ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 173.

³⁷⁶ Moyer, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 384-385.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁷⁸ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 185.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

to by historians as the most effective counterinsurgency force in the entire war.³⁸⁰ However, the "total war" attitude of the hardened PRU agents affected their approach to operations against the VCI.³⁸¹ Their often brutal methods, coupled with the fact that they were a CIA-run program and did not have the same oversight as a regular military unit, quickly garnered them the reputation as assassins, torturers, extortionists and murderers.³⁸² While a part of this reputation was undoubtedly deserved, it tended to not only overshadow the effectiveness of the PRUs against the VCI, but tended to cast a shadow over the entire Phoenix program. The continuing bad publicity, coupled with the My Lai massacre in 1968, led to a military review of Phoenix,³⁸³ which ultimately led to the program being downsized after 1970.

As stated above, the neutralization of the VCI cadre was primarily a function of the South Vietnamese themselves, under advisement from U.S. personnel, many of which were uniformed military. One U.S. military unit, however, routinely operated beyond the roles of advisors

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 185; Moyer, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 384.

³⁸¹ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 175.

³⁸² Buckley, "Phoenix: To Get Their Man, Dead or Alive".

³⁸³ Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*: 297.

and planners and actually led anti-infrastructure combat missions.³⁸⁴ These were Naval Special Warfare elements consisting of Sea Air Land (SEAL) platoons operating in and around the waterways throughout the Mekong Delta.

Specializing in infiltrating deep into Viet Cong territory at night and capturing high value VCI, these "snatch" operations were the hallmark of SEAL participation in Phoenix.³⁸⁵ Unlike most U.S. military units, the SEALs were given considerable autonomy by both the Navy and MACV,³⁸⁶ which allowed them to respond very quickly to timely indigenous intelligence received via self-developed networks in the SEALs' respective areas of operations. Many times, intelligence would come directly from the Special Police Branch or the CIA.³⁸⁷

Between the years of 1968 and 1970, when MACV approval for active SEAL combat missions was withdrawn, the SEALs had become so proficient at capturing high value VCI that many Viet Cong had come to feel unsafe even deep in their most secure areas.³⁸⁸ To the Viet Cong, SEALs

³⁸⁴ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 193.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 195.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 193.

³⁸⁷ Timothy J. Bosiljevac, *SEALs: UDT/SEAL Operations in Vietnam* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990). 111.

³⁸⁸ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 196.

were the "men with green faces" whom they believed had spiritual powers.³⁸⁹ The SEALs earned this reputation despite having small numbers of operators deployed at any one time. At the height of SEAL operations in Vietnam, only about 250 SEALs were ever in-country at the same time, yet because their missions emphasized anti-infrastructure operations, by 1968 they were averaging some 800 VCI neutralizations per month and were credited with "dislodging the Communists' hold on many parts of the Mekong Delta."³⁹⁰

In the overall outcome of the war, Phoenix failed to rejuvenate the life into a dying effort as was originally hoped. The program was developed to alter the course of the war, and in that regard it failed to do so. However, recent historical reexaminations of the Phoenix program suggest that it may have been much more successful than originally thought. The next section of this paper will look at the overall impacts of the program in the context of whether or not it was able to disrupt VCI operations on a significant level at the district and province levels.

³⁸⁹ Darryl Young, *The Element of Surprise: Navy SEALs in Vietnam* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990). 37.

³⁹⁰ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 194.

The Phoenix Program: Impacts and Analysis

The Vietnam War is the most prominent historical example of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts. The war was extremely complex and controversial, and this short case study can in no way fully explore all aspects of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam. However, an examination of the employment of South Vietnamese paramilitary and U.S. special operations in support of the Phoenix program can provide useful insights into the potential impacts of targeting an organization's high value individuals.

Before any serious analysis of the Phoenix program can be undertaken, the program's legitimacy must be examined, because by 1969, the program had acquired a reputation as a counter-terror program in which VCI members and their families were routinely murdered as a means of terrorizing the village to submit to the government of South Vietnam.³⁹¹ Therefore, the source of Phoenix's extremely negative reputation must first be examined. While in effect, Phoenix quickly developed a reprehensible reputation as an inefficient and ill-run U.S. government-sponsored assassination program that was

³⁹¹ Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*: 141; Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*: 13.

riddled with corrupt officials³⁹² who routinely used torture against captured suspects as part of the interrogation process.³⁹³

Given the undeniable fact that most of those within the VCI were civilians and thus not part of a military organization, the Phoenix program represents a shade of warfare that most Americans at that time would probably rather have not thought about.³⁹⁴ Yet, as has been pointed out, without a well-organized and efficient VCI the communist insurgency in the South would probably not have ever gained enough traction to have been successful. In addition, while the VCI were not part of an official military unit, they were not "non-combatants".³⁹⁵ Vietnam War historian Mark Moyar writes:

They [high ranking VCI cadre] visited the villages only in the company of Communist armed forces. In most cases they [the VCI cadre] carried weapons themselves. Thus, the cadres could not normally be neutralized

³⁹² Iver Peterson, "This 'Phoenix' is a Bird of Death," *New York Times*, 25 July 1971, E2.

³⁹³ Bernard Gwertzman, "House Panel Criticizes Pentagon on Political Killings in Vietnam," *New York Times* (1973), <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0913FE3F5A137A93C6A9178BD95F468785F9>.

³⁹⁴ During the 1960s and 1970s, many Americans viewed covert operations against civilians not assigned to a military unit as a form of "dirty" and "immoral" war. However, the argument can be made that since 9/11 and the Boston Marathon Bombings, fewer Americans would hold this view.

³⁹⁵ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: x.

*independently of Communist armed forces, and collecting intelligence on the Viet Cong shadow government was largely indistinguishable from collecting intelligence on the Communist armed forces.*³⁹⁶

Not only did targeting what many perceived to be non-combatant VCI cadre hurt the reputation of Phoenix, but so too did many of the stories of assassination, torture, murder, and other forms of extreme brutality that allegedly permeated the program. Ultimately, this nefarious reputation, particularly as it was reported to a war-weary American electorate, played a significant role in the perception that Phoenix was an illegitimate program. These factors culminated in the eventual demise of the Phoenix program beginning in 1970.³⁹⁷ However, post-Vietnam era research has revealed that much of this negative reputation may have been the result of exaggerated, distorted and unsubstantiated stories. Vietnam War historians Dale Andrade and Mark Moyar, each through their own research into Phoenix, reached the same conclusions – that all of the individuals who purported to be a part of Phoenix, and who had first-hand knowledge of

³⁹⁶ Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 371.

³⁹⁷ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 283.

horrific war crimes and atrocities, were frauds.³⁹⁸ Moyar has gone so far as to write that "in the torture and killing of [VCI] prisoners, they [Phoenix operatives] differed little from the Vietnamese Communists and, indeed, from many other armed forces in history. These killings [of VCI cadre taken prisoner] were not the result of the Phoenix program, and they were almost always used [by South Vietnamese] against known hard-core Communist cadres and soldiers rather than civilians of uncertain loyalties."³⁹⁹ Moyar also states that "American Advisers rarely participated in the torture or execution of prisoners."⁴⁰⁰

Given these insights, the argument can be made that U.S. operation of Phoenix may not have been perfect, but it also was not an illegitimate program that the U.S. was operating outside the Geneva Conventions and the Law of War. Phoenix was carried out primarily by the South Vietnamese, and the program's success was dependent upon a competent DIOCC. In this regard, adherence to U.S. policies and overall program effectiveness was not

³⁹⁸ Ibid.; Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 375.

³⁹⁹ *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 375.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

uniform, and performance and effectiveness varied from district to district and from province to province."⁴⁰¹

One of the advantages of the Phoenix program is that it relied heavily on the South Vietnamese government to do the bulk of the work, or what could be called the *heavy lifting*. The role of the U.S. was to provide advisement and support to the PIOCCs and the DIOCCs. Tactically, the U.S.'s primary military role, with the exception of the SEAL units operating in-country, was to serve as advisers to the South Vietnamese units engaged in VCI neutralization. One positive aspect of having the pro-South Vietnamese who were working in Phoenix do the heavy lifting was that they were more effective than American forces because they had a better understanding of the familial, cultural, and kinship ties within the villages and hamlets. This enabled them to be highly effective at identifying VCI cadre operating in and among the population.⁴⁰²

However, while there were many positive aspects to having the Vietnamese 'run the show,' the rigid and hierarchical way Phung Hoang (the Vietnamese portion of

⁴⁰¹ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 129.

⁴⁰² Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 369.

the program) was structured at the district and province level allowed for corruption and inefficiency. For example, in each district and each province, a single individual served as the head. Thus, "a single man often held the key to failure or success in the fight against the Communists."⁴⁰³ Phoenix, when operating in the many areas which were well organized and run at the district and provincial levels, saw high levels of success. However, in other areas corrupt chiefs used the Phoenix program for personal financial gain or falsely identified political enemies as VCI in order to have them eliminated.⁴⁰⁴ Sometimes, innocent people were jailed, while at the same time real VCI were released because the District Chief had been paid off.⁴⁰⁵ Veterans of the Phoenix program have stated that uncommitted civilians were identified as VCI simply because someone held a grudge against them. Unfortunately, South Vietnam's deep ethnic divisions and resulting strife allowed for "considerable potential for individuals to misidentify their enemies as Communists [as a way to seek revenge for some perceived grievance by bringing] the government [of

⁴⁰³ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 50.

⁴⁰⁴ Peterson, "This 'Phoenix' is a Bird of Death," E2.

⁴⁰⁵ Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*: 742.

South Vietnam] smashing down on them."⁴⁰⁶ This corruption of Phoenix was only made easier because the high quota requirement for captured or killed VCI, as demanded by CORDS as evidence of progress,⁴⁰⁷ which drove many who may have objected to these tactics to look the other way because the district's numbers needed to be high.⁴⁰⁸ Thus, the program's flexibility created oversight gaps which allowed for the imprisonment of a suspected VCI without hard evidence. These gaps were exploited by some malicious Vietnamese at the district and province levels.⁴⁰⁹

Phoenix was never a very large program, and so its footprint was relatively small. For example, the action forces which were identified with Phoenix "amounted to less than five percent of the armed strength existing within the [Long An] province in 1968."⁴¹⁰ The small but highly trained units operating out of the well-run districts were able to react to incoming actionable intelligence exceedingly quickly, which resulted in a huge

⁴⁰⁶ Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*: 377.

⁴⁰⁷ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 69-70.

⁴⁰⁸ Olson and Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945-1995*: 197.

⁴⁰⁹ Peterson, "This 'Phoenix' is a Bird of Death," E2.

⁴¹⁰ Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province*: 238.

number of target eliminations relative to the size of the Phoenix units. Much of the actionable intelligence came to Phoenix PIOCCs and DIOCCs through the *Chieu Hoi* amnesty program, which has been credited with being "the single largest producer of Phoenix intelligence."⁴¹¹ As Phoenix became more efficient at operations, pressure was increased on the VCI which led to an increasing number of *Hoi Chanhs*, leading to even more quality intelligence and increasing target neutralizations.⁴¹²

By viewing the VCI as the center of gravity and thus targeting individual cadre, the Phoenix program had a significant impact upon the ability of the VCI to conduct its operations. The work of Vietnam War correspondent Stanley Karnow, who interviewed numerous former VCI after the fall of Saigon, sheds light on exactly how much trouble Phoenix caused the VCI. Many prominent Communist Party figures are quoted as stating that the Southern Communist political organization was "badly battered" by the "extremely destructive Phoenix program"⁴¹³ and that by causing the loss of "thousands of our cadres" many of the Communist bases were "wiped out" which compelled large

⁴¹¹ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 132.

⁴¹² Ibid., 132-138.

⁴¹³ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*: 534.

numbers of Viet Cong guerrillas and high ranking VCI to retreat to sanctuaries in Cambodia.⁴¹⁴

In the end, despite its shortfalls, Phoenix was a success in the districts that were well-run by competent South Vietnamese district and province chiefs. However, just as the program had the VCI on the run in many districts and provinces, and PIOC and DIOC efficiency was growing, the U.S. commitment to the program was winding down as President Nixon's policy of "Vietnamization" began to be implemented, and the U.S. began looking for a way out of Vietnam.⁴¹⁵

Phoenix arrived on the scene much too late because by the time the program was enacted, a large portion of the American public had turned against the war. However, the Phoenix program's targeting of the correct center of gravity, its small footprint of highly trained and dedicated forces, its ability to remain flexible and make timely adjustments to incoming intelligence, and the fact that it was a program run by the Vietnamese and aided by the Americans, enabled the U.S. and its Vietnamese allies to regain the upper hand in many rural areas where the

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 602.

⁴¹⁵ Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War--Cover for Assassination or Effective Counterinsurgency?*: 145-146.

Communist Party "had extended its influence to the lowest levels of South Vietnamese society."⁴¹⁶ True to Galula's second law of counterinsurgency, that the majority of the population is basically neutral and will side with whoever appears stronger, increasing numbers of lower level VCI had begun to defect through the *chieu hoi* amnesty program. Ranking VCI were forced to move to safer areas, thereby removing themselves from Mao's 'sea of people,' making the Communists' task of winning the people much more difficult and complicated.⁴¹⁷ In short, the Communists were knocked off balance by Phoenix because the vital link between the people in the hamlets and villages and the Communist Party was severed. One could consider that, in areas where Phoenix was properly implemented, the VCI suffered severe disruption of its organizational structure at a rate of one hamlet and one village at a time. Thus, by disrupting the Communist organizational structure, Phoenix closed down the political space in which the VCI had operated freely. This leads one to ask the hypothetical counterfactual question: What would have happened if Phoenix had been put into place at the beginning of the

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁴¹⁷ Andrade and Willbanks, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 21.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and had also been implemented on a wider scale?

In the end, Vietnam left its mark on the American psyche. As the military struggled for answers as to how it had won all of the battles and yet lost the war, an aversion to large-scale military interventions took hold of both the Pentagon and Capitol Hill. This aversion would have a significant impact upon America's next attempt at conducting counterinsurgency, which would take place less than a decade after the fall of Saigon. Just as the Domino Theory had driven the U.S. to intervene in Vietnam, so too did the fear of falling dominoes in Latin America drive U.S. intervention in El Salvador in 1979. The next chapter of this dissertation will examine the American military's second major attempt at counterinsurgency following World War II – the campaign against the Communist inspired Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, or FMLN.

CHAPTER 7

Learning From History: El Salvador

A Qualitative Case Study of U.S. Counterinsurgency Support in El Salvador

America's counterinsurgency campaign in El Salvador has been little studied by the post-9/11 generation of counterinsurgency scholars. Indeed, despite the fact that the U.S. effort in El Salvador was the most robust and longest intervention applying counterinsurgency since World War II, it is not mentioned at all in FM 3-24. This may be due to unique characteristics of the endeavor that didn't fit the Galula model of counterinsurgency. This makes it that much more important that it be examined carefully in the context of this dissertation.

Background of the FMLN Insurgency

The U.S. has historically been heavily involved in Central and South America almost since the beginning of the Republic. Indeed, many of the nation's Founding Fathers believed "that Manifest Destiny required the booming new nation to swoop down over Mexico and Central

America" and even "the regions beyond."⁴¹⁸ Yet, despite a long history of involvement in the region, "El Salvador was the one Central American republic that remained free of U.S. military intervention," at least until the 1980s.⁴¹⁹

El Salvador illustrated many of the factors common to Central American countries as a whole in the 1980s.⁴²⁰ It had an economy dependent upon commodity exports subject to price fluctuations, and the distribution of land and wealth were very highly skewed toward a small group of elites known as the "Fourteen Families."⁴²¹ Also, it had a highly repressive and corrupt authoritarian government, and was a state under the control of a military establishment that regarded itself as the final arbiter of political power.⁴²² These factors provided "fertile soil for the seeds of discontent."⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983). 19.

⁴¹⁹ Saul Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). 66.

⁴²⁰ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 259.

⁴²¹ Todd Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008). 76.

⁴²² Anrew J. Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," (McLean, VA: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1988), 3.

⁴²³ John R. Galvin, "The Campaign for Democracy: A Campaign for the Americas," in *Guerrilla Warfare & Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World*, ed. Richard H. Shultz, et al. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 115.

El Salvador had experienced discontent and internal unrest earlier in its history. In 1932 and again in 1961, Communist revolutionaries had risen up against the status quo, only to be brutally put down by the Salvadoran military and its support of the Fourteen Families.⁴²⁴ Thus, 'terror from above' by the hand of its own military was, historically speaking, a way of life for everyday Salvadorans. This over-reliance on state violence grew from *La Matanza* (the Slaughter), which took place in 1932 when the Salvadoran armed forces suppressed a communist rebellion by a bloodletting that left at least 10,000 peasant rebels dead.⁴²⁵ The brutal suppression had a huge impact upon Salvadoran political culture. "For the oligarchy, the growth of even moderate opposition always raised the specter of 1932," where "a strong current belief persisted [that] the threat of revolution could only be effectively met by bloody suppression."⁴²⁶ Indeed, *La Matanza* was just the beginning, as "tens of thousands

⁴²⁴ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 259.

⁴²⁵ Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: The 1932 "Slaughter" That Traumatized a Nation, Shaping U.S.-Salvadoran Policy to This Day*, 2nd ed. (Willimatic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1992). 176.

⁴²⁶ William M. LeoGrande, *In Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998). 35.

of Salvadorans had been killed during periods of violent repression throughout the twentieth century."⁴²⁷

When it came to political repression, the standard mode of operation in El Salvador was relatively simple. The status quo was maintained for the benefit of the Fourteen Families via the physical presence of the security forces, and the threat of violent force of action. The state's intelligence networks were used to identify so-called "subversives," who were systematically eliminated. Rather than a protector of the state from foreign enemies, the role of the Armed Forces of El Salvador was that of a large repressive apparatus aimed at the Salvadoran population.⁴²⁸ El Salvador political history was rife with military officers who had risen to the presidency, only to continue running the government for the benefit of the landed elite.⁴²⁹ The result of this systematic use of state-directed terror was quite effective, as El Salvador remained relatively "politically quiescent,"⁴³⁰ with the exception of the failed uprising

⁴²⁷ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 66.

⁴²⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 76.

⁴²⁹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 71.

⁴³⁰ Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolutions in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). 219.

noted above. This situation would begin to change in the 1970s.

During the latter half of the 1970s, the levels of conflict and political instability throughout many of the countries of Central America escalated into major crises. Adding to this regional instability was Cuba's Fidel Castro, who was a recipient of support from the Soviet Union. Castro had been promoting and supporting Marxist-Leninist insurrection throughout Latin America.⁴³¹ Castro's successful revolution in Cuba, which occurred "under the very nose and against the resistance of *yanqui* imperialism" reshaped the perception of what was possible for would-be revolutionaries throughout Central and South America.⁴³² The rhetoric of the Castro regime, along with the almost mythical status of Ché Guevara as a revolutionary icon to the Latin American people, galvanized the left all over Central and South America.⁴³³ However, despite Cuba's leadership role in the inspiration of revolutionary fervor throughout the region, its limited economic strength prevented it from supporting significant

⁴³¹ Richard H. Shultz, "The Soviet Union and Central America," in *Guerrilla Warfare & Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World*, ed. Richard H. Shultz, et al. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 375.

⁴³² Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolutions in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*: 32.

⁴³³ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 259.

military operations, leaving the Soviet Union as the "only possible sustained source for foreign exchange, arms, and transportation" for leftist insurrection.⁴³⁴

By 1977, the majority of Salvadorans had voted in favor of democracy in several consecutive elections. However, each time, "the Fourteen Families and the military answered by nominating generals who stole the elections."⁴³⁵ As unrest among the Salvadoran people continued to build following the latest stolen election, the military government enacted a law that "effectively made it illegal to oppose the government in any fashion whatsoever."⁴³⁶ The Salvadoran military, security forces, and right wing "Death Squads" began assassinating teachers, priests, and political leaders who leaned toward the left.⁴³⁷ The Death Squads were groups "composed of soldiers and militant citizens dressed in civilian garb" who indiscriminately killed, on a massive scale, not only

⁴³⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 41.

⁴³⁵ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 74-75.

⁴³⁶ Leogrande, *In Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*: 39.

⁴³⁷ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 80.

those suspected of being leftist insurgents, but insurgent supporters as well.⁴³⁸

As the level of violence escalated, President Jimmy Carter, whose approach to foreign policy included a strong promotion of human rights, tried to pressure the Salvadoran government to reduce its reign of violence against its citizenry. Rather than submitting to the Carter Administration's "scrutiny on human rights practices," the Salvadoran government preempted Washington's inevitable withdrawal of military aid by "refusing to accept military assistance" in 1977.⁴³⁹ For the U.S., this move was highly unusual, since the U.S. had provided military support to anti-Communist dictators in Latin America for decades without any type of human rights conditionalities.⁴⁴⁰ In the meantime, El Salvador exploded in violence.

As the Carter Administration continued to withhold aid from El Salvador and other Central American states with which it had concerns regarding human rights

⁴³⁸ Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). 172.

⁴³⁹ William M. LeoGrande et al., "Grappling With Central America: From Carter to Reagan," in *Confronting Revolution: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America*, ed. Morris J. Blachman, William M. LeoGrande, and Kenneth E. Sharpe (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 298.

⁴⁴⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 74.

violations, the leftist Frente Sandinista de Liberación, or Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua overthrew the pro-U.S. government in 1979 and immediately identified itself with Fidel Castro's Cuba.⁴⁴¹ The victory of the Sandinistas over the U.S. allied Somoza regime was the first successful leftist revolution in Latin America since Fidel Castro's guerrillas overthrew the regime of U.S. ally Fulgencio Batista in Cuba over two decades earlier.⁴⁴² The fall of Somoza brought forth a fear of falling dominoes in Central and South America among U.S. policy-making elites, and "prompted a major review of U.S. policy toward the region."⁴⁴³ Determined not to lose another Central American country to what they perceived as the Communists, the Carter Administration pulled back from its concern over human rights violations⁴⁴⁴ and, in the interest of containing communism, returned toward a more traditional Realist perspective and reinstated military aid to El Salvador.⁴⁴⁵ In short, national security and the containment objectives of the

⁴⁴¹ Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1994). 1080.

⁴⁴² Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 43.

⁴⁴³ Leogrande et al., "Grappling With Central America: From Carter to Reagan," 302.

⁴⁴⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 80.

⁴⁴⁵ Leogrande, *In Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*: 70.

Cold War trumped the more idealistic support of human rights principles which had led the Carter Administration to distance the U.S. from repressive regimes.⁴⁴⁶

The successful revolution in Nicaragua had a huge impact on neighboring El Salvador, and the growth of Salvadoran guerrilla groups escalated.⁴⁴⁷ Just a few months after the overthrow of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, Fidel Castro called the various leaders of Salvadoran revolutionary groups to Havana for the purposes of organizing the Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), a loose alliance that would soon muster some 12,000 - 14,000 guerrilla fighters.⁴⁴⁸ The purpose of the FMLN was to provide an umbrella organization and unify the various guerrilla groups in El Salvador.⁴⁴⁹

Given the context of the Cold War, the commonly held view of Soviet foreign policy by most Americans was that of an irrational, totalitarian, centralized and ruthless state committed to unlimited expansion of Marxist-Leninist

⁴⁴⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 80.

⁴⁴⁷ Jose Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1995). 3.

⁴⁴⁸ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*: 4.

ideology through world revolution.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, when Cuba began to supply arms to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador,⁴⁵¹ the Carter Administration felt that, in the name of national security, "the United States must help the Salvadoran government overcome the challenge from an insurgency that was clearly Communist-controlled."⁴⁵² After all, some two-thirds of U.S. foreign trade and petroleum passed through the Panama Canal and the Caribbean. National Security hawks believed that, should El Salvador follow Nicaragua and fall to communism, the proximity of Soviet-backed Cuba and Nicaragua to critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) would give the Soviet Union naval access to ports in the Eastern Pacific. This access would have extended Soviet ballistic missile on-station time and thus extended the operational range of Soviet hunter-killer submarines. Increasingly, those within U.S. government policy-making circles saw a looming threat to an area viewed as being of critical importance to the continued prosperity and security of the United States.⁴⁵³ Adding to this feeling of tension and uneasiness were other world events such as the recent fall

⁴⁵⁰ Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War*: 10, 30-35.

⁴⁵¹ Shultz, "The Soviet Union and Central America," 380.

⁴⁵² Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 262.

⁴⁵³ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 23, 26-27.

of Saigon, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the slaughter in Cambodia at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, and Cuban troops fighting in Angola.⁴⁵⁴ Further, many policy-makers were convinced that the Salvadoran guerrillas were receiving outside support from Nicaragua, Cuba, North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union.⁴⁵⁵ All told, these factors created a climate in which U.S. policy-makers felt increasing pressure to intervene in El Salvador.⁴⁵⁶

What occurred in El Salvador between 1979 and 1981 has been referred to by the local people as the *tiempos de locura*, or "season of madness," a period when the country disintegrated into violence and instability. Opposition to the Salvadoran government spread throughout the country. Centers for organizing demands for change sprung up among labor unions, peasant organizations, universities, and political parties, were joined by a large number of primarily Jesuit Catholic priests and catechists. The number of demonstrations increased and the Salvadoran government cracked down hard. Those

⁴⁵⁴ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 262.

⁴⁵⁵ Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, "A Strategic View of Insurgencies: Insights From El Salvador," in *McNair Papers*, ed. The Institute for National Strategic Studies (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1990), 10.

⁴⁵⁶ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 262.

labeled as 'subversives' by the government were also accused of either being Communists themselves or of being Communist sympathizers. The government's Death Squads and Security Forces arrested and often murdered anyone who even appeared to be a threat to stability.⁴⁵⁷ Realizing that the Salvadoran government had chosen to use repression rather than reform, the FMLN guerrillas responded by stepping up their own attacks against the state, and the level of bloodshed rose tremendously.⁴⁵⁸

Feeling the winds of revolution at its back and following the edicts of Mao's theory of Peoples' War, the FMLN launched its so-called "Final Offensive" in January 1981. However, the revolutionary organizations throughout El Salvador had been decimated by the state directed terror campaign of the Death Squads and the Security Forces. In short, there were not enough survivors to lead the general uprising as Salvadoran *terror from above* had driven the majority of the elements of the population that might have supported the FMLN away in fear. State repression was working, and within days of the Final Offensive, the FMLN guerrillas had withdrawn from most of

⁴⁵⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 77-78.

⁴⁵⁸ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*: 249.

El Salvador's urban centers, and the war entered into what Mao refers to as the guerrilla phase,⁴⁵⁹ which the FMLN referred to as the Prolonged Popular War, a concept borrowed directly from Vietnamese revolutionary thought.⁴⁶⁰ Given the FMLN losses and the damage sustained to its infrastructure, the FMLN strategy shifted toward one of attrition and economic sabotage against the Salvadoran government while it rebuilt guerrilla strength.⁴⁶¹

Using hit and run tactics, the FMLN guerrillas began inflicting major blows on the Salvadoran military units, causing casualties that, by 1983, had totaled one-fifth of the force structure. This brought the Salvadoran military "to its nadir."⁴⁶² It began to look to the U.S. as if the Salvadoran military was on the verge of collapse.⁴⁶³

Beginning in 1983, the impact of U.S. aid and assistance to the government of El Salvador began to be felt at a significant enough level to turn the initiative away from the FMLN and back toward the Salvadoran government. As the Salvadoran armed forces began to

⁴⁵⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 90-94.

⁴⁶⁰ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*: 13.

⁴⁶¹ Shultz, "The Soviet Union and Central America," 380.

⁴⁶² Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 95.

⁴⁶³ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 262.

successfully close down the political space available for the operations of the FMLN, the latter shifted its emphasis away from attacking the Salvadoran government toward protecting the FMLN command structure and creating a 'strategic rearguard' organizational structure.⁴⁶⁴ This rearguard structure was constructed along the lines of the Vietnamese model developed by General Giap in South Vietnam.⁴⁶⁵ Realizing that without a command and logistics structure the FMLN would be unable to function, the protection of these two key elements was placed at a higher priority level than the safety of its guerrilla units or its civilian supporters. This was because the FMLN saw the rebuilding of its command and logistics structures as a more difficult problem than recruiting new guerrillas or recruiting new supporters to replace those lost through Salvadoran military sweeps.⁴⁶⁶

Thus, in areas controlled by the FMLN, there grew to exist an infrastructure that included civilian government, health and education facilities, and supply and training

⁴⁶⁴ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*: 47.

⁴⁶⁵ Mario Lungo Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution* [El Savador en los 80: contrainsurgencia y revolucion], trans. Amelia F. Shogan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996). 49.

⁴⁶⁶ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*: 47.

operations all within a defensive perimeter.⁴⁶⁷ These structures were repeated in various areas throughout El Salvador, and were referred to as "popular communities,"⁴⁶⁸ in which the boundaries were not fixed and definitive. The advantage for the FMLN leadership was that although the FMLN did hold certain important zones of concentration, it did not hold either a permanently fixed central point or even various fixed points. Thus, the FMLN leadership command had no fixed and permanent base of operations and could quickly move out of the area if Salvadoran military probes were on the verge of sweeping them up.⁴⁶⁹ Yet, at the same time, the FMLN maintained an offensive capability which allowed guerrilla units to go on the offensive and to attack vulnerable Salvadoran army outposts or to stage ambushes of Salvadoran army units that went out on patrol in search of FMLN guerrillas.⁴⁷⁰

The Salvadoran military launched several offensives into the zones of FMLN guerrilla control. However, the creation of the FMLN infrastructure not only kept the masses involved and active, but the existence of the rear

⁴⁶⁷ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 102.

⁴⁶⁸ Jon Lee Anderson, *Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). 47.

⁴⁶⁹ Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*: 54, 61.

⁴⁷⁰ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 102.

guard enabled areas of relative economic self-sufficiency to remain independent of the Salvadoran government and El Salvador's urban centers. Thus, the FMLN was able to maintain a pretty strong resistance in the face of Salvadoran military probes.⁴⁷¹

In response to stiff FMLN resistance, the increasingly robust Salvadoran military took advantage of U.S. aid and training and altered its overall strategic plan to that of cutting off supplies to the FMLN armed units and subjecting them to constant attrition by attacking the civilian population that served as the FMLN base of domestic support.⁴⁷² In the cities, the Salvadoran Security Forces and Death Squads had successfully closed down political space and had all but eliminated open opposition to the Salvadoran government. Thus, the Salvadoran military decided the best approach to the FMLN threat in the countryside would be to close political space by attacking and cutting off the villages, from which the guerrillas gained their food, supplies, and recruits.⁴⁷³ The war in the Salvadoran countryside ground to a stalemate, where it remained for the next five years.

⁴⁷¹ Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*: 52.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁷³ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 103.

During the period from 1985 through 1989, neither side was able to gain and maintain the upper hand.⁴⁷⁴

The Salvadoran military's campaign of attrition did take its toll, and soon reports that entire villages sympathetic to the FMLN had been massacred began to filter in from the countryside. These reports helped create a huge refugee problem in cities like San Salvador. Further, heavy use of newly acquired air power forced the guerrillas into constant movement, further depleted their population base of support, and killed large numbers of guerrillas and FMLN sympathizers.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, despite a nearly constant inflow of weapons, and a move toward forced conscription of peasants into FMLN guerrilla units, FMLN numbers steadily declined "without hope of reversal from its high numbers in the early 1980s."⁴⁷⁶ The increasing pressures caused FMLN unity to begin to unravel, and it responded to Salvadoran government sponsored brutality with its own brand of bloodletting. The FMLN increased its use of bombings (which caused indiscriminate collateral damage) and the planting of land

⁴⁷⁴ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 95.

⁴⁷⁵ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 102, 125.

⁴⁷⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*.

mines (which were often stepped upon by women and children). The FMLN also targeted anyone perceived as being supportive of the Salvadoran government. This led to a worsening of the FMLN's image and denunciations of its bloody tactics by some of its own supporters.⁴⁷⁷

Yet, the Salvadoran government was unable to completely dislodge the FMLN from the countryside. Faced with a situation of dwindling support, the FMLN attempted a second Final Offensive in 1989. It too, like the first Final Offensive in 1981, failed. At this point, "both sides effectively acknowledged that there would be no visible military solution and, in exhaustion, began the 3-year long termination phase dominated by the search for a negotiated solution."⁴⁷⁸ By 1993 the FMLN had "transformed itself from a guerrilla party into a political party" as the Salvadoran government "began to reduce the size of its [notorious] security forces and allow some of the former rebels to begin the process of joining the system."⁴⁷⁹

In sum, the war was dominated by sheer brutality against civilians. Aid flowing in on both sides of the

⁴⁷⁷ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 134.

⁴⁷⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 95.

⁴⁷⁹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 146.

conflict helped ensure that neither side was able to get the upper hand despite 10 years of warfare. In the end, the conflict was influenced by changing events outside El Salvador, such as the looming collapse of the Soviet Union and its withdrawal of much of the financial support for Marxist-Leninist causes. This certainly reduced the ability of the FMLN to continue the fight.

Along a similar vein, the drawdown of the Soviet Union gave the U.S. reason to shift its focus to other priorities, leaving the Salvadoran government without its primary benefactor and its own motivation to see the war end. However, despite the lack of a clear military victory for the Salvadoran government, it seems plausible that U.S. intervention did provide for the containment of communism in Central America, which was the primary U.S. goal. What was the role of the U.S. military in this conflict? In what way was U.S. COIN doctrine of the U.S. military in El Salvador influenced by the long struggle in Vietnam? What lessons can be drawn from the U.S. military's COIN campaign in El Salvador that may shed light on practices that may be considered for future conflicts? The next sections of this chapter will explore these questions.

Summary of U.S. Support for Counterinsurgency in El Salvador

The U.S. military entered the war in El Salvador with the cloud of the Vietnam quagmire hanging over its head. U.S. policy-makers wanted very much to steer clear of another Vietnam, and this ultimately meant that a large-scale deployment of U.S. troops into El Salvador would be avoided if at all possible. As a result, the U.S. was forced to find an alternative to the large-footprint, population-centric version of COIN that had been attempted somewhat sporadically in Vietnam. Pressure for restraint was applied to incoming President Ronald Reagan from the outset, as he kept being asked if El Salvador was going to become another Vietnam for the U.S. Even though there was counter-pressure from such administration hawks as Secretary of State Alexander Haig to escalate military involvement, the so-called *Vietnam Syndrome* significantly decreased the likelihood of troop deployments.⁴⁸⁰

With the constraints brought on by the ghosts of Vietnam in place, the U.S. approach to El Salvador was an

⁴⁸⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 5, 33-34.

attempt at formulating a new approach to counterinsurgency outside of the Galula model. In this new approach, the U.S. set out "to provide a besieged ally with weapons, ammunition, and other equipment; economic aid; intelligence support; strategic counsel and tactical training – while preserving the principle that the war remain[ed] ultimately [the Salvadorans'] to win or lose."⁴⁸¹

Soon after his inauguration, President Reagan authorized the deployment to El Salvador of a small number of military advisers, who were referred to as "trainers" to avoid any correlation to the Vietnam conflict and the Phoenix program. This was followed in January 1982 with conducting courses in counterinsurgency techniques at Fort Bragg, NC for Salvadoran junior army officers.⁴⁸²

Early in the war, the Congress imposed a 55-man limit on American trainers in El Salvador, to which the Reagan Administration acquiesced. However, in practice, the number of trainers/advisers in-country at one time gradually began to exceed the 55 troop limit. By 1987, the total number of trainers regularly in-country exceeded

⁴⁸¹ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," v.

⁴⁸² Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 263.

150.⁴⁸³ However, with the exception of Special Operations Forces personnel, few of the U.S. trainers deployed to El Salvador were schooled in the art of fighting unconventional small wars.⁴⁸⁴ As a result, much of the advice given to the Salvadoran military was related to conventional warfighting.

What is more, unlike the Phoenix program, where U.S. Special Operations Forces acting as advisers accompanied the PRU on missions, in the case of El Salvador, U.S. personnel were restricted from carrying weapons or accompanying Salvadoran troops in the field.⁴⁸⁵ As a result, those Americans charged with overseeing and improving the tactical effectiveness of Salvadoran military units in counterinsurgency techniques were not allowed to accompany the units they had trained when those units departed on missions. This made assessing the effectiveness of Salvadoran troops and revising the training curriculum to overcome shortfalls highly problematic.

⁴⁸³ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 5.

⁴⁸⁴ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 104, 113.

⁴⁸⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 98.

Further, the U.S. trainers/advisers were not allowed to participate in any action that might result in an immediate disadvantage to FMLN guerrillas. The U.S. was only allowed to work with the Salvadoran military, and forbidden from working with the National Police, the National Guard, the Treasury Police, or the self-defense units, "organizations that needed help even more than the army because they were repositories for the roughest and cruelest men of the rural townships and were reportedly the primary suppliers of death squad members."⁴⁸⁶ In short, when it came to U.S. advisory support to the Salvadorans, the preeminent goal was to avoid American casualties. The mission of helping the Salvadoran military win the war against the FMLN became secondary.⁴⁸⁷ This practice hindered the Salvadoran counterinsurgency campaign in a way that never applied to U.S. efforts in Vietnam.

However, avoiding American casualties was not the only objective for the U.S. As highlighted in the previous section, the U.S. entered the war in El Salvador after having taken up the mantle of support for human

⁴⁸⁶ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 174.

⁴⁸⁷ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 10.

rights principles. This too presented the U.S. military with a dilemma: how to defeat the FMLN guerrillas and contain the spread of Communism in Central America, maintain the U.S. government's stance against human rights abuses (which were obviously occurring in El Salvador), and minimize U.S. casualties while at the same time avoiding the possibility of Americanizing the war in a way that would result in a Vietnam-style war effort. To meet these objectives, the U.S. tried to seek a "clean counterinsurgency war," by prodding the Salvadoran military to throttle back on its human rights abuses.⁴⁸⁸ Given the lack of involvement by U.S. forces on the tactical end, the only real tool of leverage for these purposes was the threat of withholding funding unless U.S. conditionalities were met.

Ending human rights violations by the Salvadoran military against its people would prove to be extremely difficult. Although U.S. officers constantly implored Salvadoran officers to put a stop to human rights abuses and to sever ties with the Death Squads while arguing that the moral high ground needed to be held by the Salvadoran government, the Salvadorans found the Americans' argument

⁴⁸⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 80, 97-98.

unconvincing and maintained a proclivity toward their old habits.⁴⁸⁹ The Salvadoran governmental "culture of violence" was one which "permeated" the Salvadoran military officer corps.⁴⁹⁰ It has been cited as a "salient feature of national life" which predated the 1979-1992 war against the FMLN.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, the entire Salvadoran political-military system has been described as one "built on corruption, privilege, and cruelty."⁴⁹² Military officers as well as officers for all three internal security forces (the National Police, the National Guard, and the Treasury Police) all attended the Captain General Gerardo Barrios Military Academy, the Salvadoran equivalent to the U.S. service academies.⁴⁹³ During training, cadets were taught to disdain everyday Salvadorans and held the view that they were "decadent, amoral, and corrupt."⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, this attitude began "with the day the cadet entered the academy where an armed force

⁴⁸⁹ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 176.

⁴⁹⁰ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 142.

⁴⁹¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 75-76.

⁴⁹² Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*: 94.

⁴⁹³ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 170.

⁴⁹⁴ Joel Millman, "El Salvador's Army: A Force Unto Itself," *New York Times Magazine* (1989), <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/10/magazine/el-salvador-s-army-a-force-unto-itself.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

was trained not to defend the country against external enemies, but against its own people."⁴⁹⁵

On one level, America's attempt at coercion through threats of withholding aid did have some positive impacts on Salvadoran human rights abuses, along with the added pressure resulting from scrutiny of the Salvadoran government by human-rights investigators, church officials and journalists.⁴⁹⁶ The Salvadoran army did reduce the numbers of murders and mass killings against the Salvadoran people, as the number of political murders dropped and the Salvadoran armed forces began to regularly take suspected FMLN guerrillas and rearguard cadre members prisoner rather than simply killing them.⁴⁹⁷ There is a disagreement about the magnitude of the change. It has been reported that by the mid 1980s, the political killings had declined 90 percent from their high point in 1981.⁴⁹⁸ However, it should be noted that a 1985 CIA report stated that there had only been "modest success" in reining in the Death Squad murders.⁴⁹⁹ It also should be

⁴⁹⁵ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 142.

⁴⁹⁶ Anderson, *Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World*: 47.

⁴⁹⁷ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 25.

⁴⁹⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 107.

⁴⁹⁹ Leogrande, *In Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*: 261.

noted that during the FMLN's second offensive in 1989, the Salvadoran military used its newly acquired U.S. aircraft to conduct airstrikes against certain Salvadoran barrios suspected of supporting the FMLN, so the gains were by no means an indication of a permanent change in Salvadoran military culture.⁵⁰⁰

Part of the reason for the compliance that was achieved lay in the fact that many corrupt Salvadoran military officers were profiting heavily on the inflow of U.S. military aid, and thus had a motivation to comply, which would keep the aid coming so that it could continue to be diverted for personal gain.⁵⁰¹ Examples of the corrupt profiting schemes rampant throughout the Salvadoran military structure included selling goods provided through U.S. military aid, or receiving payments for nonexistent soldiers assigned to their units. Such corruption also likely contributed to the prolonged nature of the war, as many Salvadoran officers knew that pushing hard to bring the war to an end would also mean the end of U.S. aid and their easy profits.⁵⁰² One supporting example of the lack of commitment to victory by many within the

⁵⁰⁰ Millman, "El Salvador's Army: A Force Unto Itself".

⁵⁰¹ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 121.

⁵⁰² Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*: 263.

Salvadoran officer corps can be found in the unwillingness to accompany units on patrol into guerrilla-held territories, leading to a situation where not only were U.S. trainers not going into the field, but neither were the Salvadoran officers who had been trained by the U.S.⁵⁰³ Further still, Salvadoran units avoided night missions, preferring instead to spend evenings and weekends at home with their families. These actions by Salvadoran officers lead many U.S. trainers to deride the Salvadoran army for fighting a 'nine-to-five war.'⁵⁰⁴ Thus, in many cases, instead of fostering significant reform, the American money was absorbed into a network of corruption and patronage that had been in existence within the Salvadoran military for decades.⁵⁰⁵

Despite the shortfalls mentioned above, there is no doubt that U.S. intervention helped turn the tide back toward the Salvadoran government. Beginning around 1983, as U.S. security assistance began to kick in, the Salvadoran armed forces made use of increased firepower, air mobility, and the addition of counterinsurgency tactics to begin to develop into a more effective and

⁵⁰³ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 121.

⁵⁰⁴ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 174.

⁵⁰⁵ Millman, "El Salvador's Army: A Force Unto Itself".

robust force, resulting in a shift in initiative in a way that favored the Salvadoran government.⁵⁰⁶ Evidence supporting the argument that the Salvadoran military benefitted from U.S. arms and training is available. For example, although early on, the FMLN had the Salvadoran military on its heels, once U.S. aid kicked-in, the Salvadorans soon began to hold their own against the FMLN guerrillas.⁵⁰⁷ The U.S. also provided the Salvadoran Air Forces with bombers, gunships, and reconnaissance aircraft, which were employed with tremendous effect by the Salvadorans.⁵⁰⁸ Air power, relatively non-existent prior to U.S. intervention, gave the Salvadoran military "the capability to react to and disperse large concentrations" of guerrilla forces, forcing them "to operate in smaller units"⁵⁰⁹ and to start relying heavily on land mines and the use of explosives.⁵¹⁰ By the late 1980s, FMLN guerrilla strength had been reduced by approximately 50 percent.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁶ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 95.

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⁵⁰⁸ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 125.

⁵⁰⁹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 90.

⁵¹⁰ Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*: 67.

⁵¹¹ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 5.

The U.S. dollars also helped Salvadoran military recruitment. Early in the war, the FMLN's rate of growth outpaced that of the Salvadoran military. However, this situation was reversed by 1983,⁵¹² and by 1987, the membership of the Salvadoran armed forces had quintupled over its 1979 levels.⁵¹³ As the Salvadoran army increased the size of its attack units, they began to inflict serious damage upon the guerrillas and began to wear away at their effectiveness. In fact, as an early sign of encroaching desperation, in 1984 the FMLN was forced to do away with relying on ideologically like-minded volunteers and began conscripting young Salvadorans to fight against the Salvadoran military.⁵¹⁴ This resulted in a loss of support for the FMLN.

Small changes were also taking place at the lower levels of the Salvadoran military officer corps that impacted FMLN support. Toward the later 1980s, as more Salvadoran junior officers graduated from U.S. military training schools, greater numbers of junior officers were becoming more willing to respect human rights⁵¹⁵ and to

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*: 69.

⁵¹⁴ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 128-129.

⁵¹⁵ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 176.

accompany their troops in the field.⁵¹⁶ Although the Salvadoran military became somewhat more professional and definitely more proficient at combating guerrillas, the secondary goal of transforming the Salvadoran military into a truly professional unit based on the U.S. model never quite took hold. Neither did a total form of "clean counterinsurgency."⁵¹⁷ In the words of one U.S. Army Colonel, "the U.S. made headway only when it used the threat of cutting off security assistance."⁵¹⁸

How should one view the overall outcome of the U.S. endeavor? When applying the lens of Realism, the U.S. military's involvement in the Salvadoran government's war against the FMLN resulted in more positive outcomes than negative. On a strategic level, the goal of U.S. involvement in the war was primarily to contain communism from spreading and to prevent El Salvador's government from being overthrown as had happened in neighboring Nicaragua in 1979 or in South Vietnam in 1975. Thanks to U.S. military aid and training, the FMLN guerrillas, unlike their FSLN and Viet Cong counterparts, were never

⁵¹⁶ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 125.

⁵¹⁷ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 101.

⁵¹⁸ Bacevich et al., "American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador," 25.

quite able to defeat the government's military forces. Indeed, "near the end of the war, one of the top insurgent leaders remarked that for the insurgents, the most damaging thing that occurred during the war was [the placement of] American trainers in the El Salvador armed forces brigades," which ultimately reduced human rights violations and thus led to a decreased number of Salvadorans willing to join the FMLN insurgency.⁵¹⁹ While the Salvadoran military did not achieve total defeat of the FMLN guerrillas, the counterinsurgency campaign did keep the FMLN off-balance and unable to achieve its goals, as evidenced by its changes in strategy and tactics. The war, although prolonged, nurtured a nascent democratic process in El Salvador and gave it room to grow.⁵²⁰ In the end, with insurgent desertions on the rise,⁵²¹ it was the FMLN that had to choose between either eventually losing all support or deciding to join the political process.

The biggest outcome of the war that was not an optimum result from a U.S. perspective would be its impact on Salvadoran human rights violations. In the end and

⁵¹⁹ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 176.

⁵²⁰ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 104.

⁵²¹ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 183.

despite making strides, the Salvadoran military "absorbed U.S. counterinsurgency advice selectively and controlled indiscriminate violence at their own pace and only under extreme pressure."⁵²² Many Salvadoran officers who had received specialized counterinsurgency and human rights training from U.S. military schools in Fort Bragg or from the infamous *School of the Americas* in Fort Benning later participated in human rights abuses. One example of such an abuse was the highly publicized massacre at the village El Mozote,⁵²³ an atrocity which was conducted by the elite Salvadoran Atlactl battalion, the first rapid response unit trained by U.S. advisers and led by a *School of the Americas* graduate. According to the Catholic Church, over half of the victims of this incident were women and children.⁵²⁴

However, despite the brutality of the human rights abuses and the attention they garnered when conducted by U.S. allies, what is it that can be gleaned, from a theoretical perspective, from the U.S. participation in

⁵²² Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 101.

⁵²³ Lesley Gill, *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). 6.

⁵²⁴ Leogrande, *In Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*: 155.

the war in El Salvador that may shed light on the evolution of U.S. COIN doctrine in future situations?

Analysis of U.S. Involvement from a Theoretical Perspective

The American military's involvement in El Salvador's war against the FMLN lasted from 1980 until 1992. As such, it was the Pentagon's most robust and longest sustained counterinsurgency campaign between the Vietnam War and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan following 9/11. Whereas the U.S. entered Vietnam feeling that victory was all but certain, America's "failure there made direct military deployment to El Salvador a decade later a political impossibility."⁵²⁵ As a result, the U.S. was forced to employ a form of counterinsurgency in El Salvador that is unique to its other post-Cold War interventions. This was because the U.S. was less concerned with the more idealistic goal of winning the war through nation-building within the Salvadoran state than it was with the more realist goal of forestalling a

⁵²⁵ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 73.

Communist insurgent victory.⁵²⁶ As such, the El Salvador case offers a model quite different from the Galula model of counterinsurgency.

One of the first aspects of the El Salvador case that differs from the Vietnam case is that the U.S. counterinsurgency effort was in support of a firmly established and long existing Salvadoran government that, despite its oppressive measures, had a long history of successful practice. Conversely, in South Vietnam the American military was supporting a corrupt government that had been originally created by the French as a colonial government. First the French, and then the Americans, had controlled the South Vietnamese government through coercion and manipulation. This, of course, made it easy for the communists to successfully frame the South Vietnamese government as an illegitimate "puppet" of the U.S.⁵²⁷

Another difference between the counterinsurgency strategies used in Vietnam and El Salvador that immediately comes to mind is that in the El Salvador model, the U.S. strategy required the heavy lifting of the

⁵²⁶ Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*: 87.

⁵²⁷ Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*: 15.

counterinsurgency campaign to be done by the Salvadoran government and its military. This Salvadoran heavy lifting was of even greater degree than that of the Vietnamese heavy lifting during Phoenix. Despite U.S. involvement for a decade, the Americans were able to assist the Salvadoran military without the fight against the FMLN turning into a U.S. job,⁵²⁸ which has so often been the case in America's history of interventions. By maintaining such a small footprint of U.S. military personnel in El Salvador, the *Accidental Guerrilla* phenomenon never took hold among the Salvadoran people. While undoubtedly the U.S. would have escalated its commitment and its troop levels had not the Vietnam Syndrome hung over the heads of its policymakers, the bottom line is that it didn't. The result is that the U.S. experience in El Salvador is barely remembered today, despite the fact that American troops were involved in that war for over a decade. It has been argued that the principal reason for this is due to the fact that by using a minimal number of American troops, the direct costs of the war remained low.⁵²⁹ In the end, U.S. Congressionally-imposed restrictions on U.S. troop levels may have

⁵²⁸ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 9.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

contributed to effective military action in El Salvador. With such few troops, U.S. casualties were very low. The extremely low casualty rate resulted in war zone reporting that lacked the sensationalism of Vietnam. As a result, the American public never became intolerant of the war in El Salvador as it had in Vietnam. The war in El Salvador was never in the spotlight as far as the American electorate was concerned, and thus the level of domestic pressure brought to bear against the state remained negligible throughout. In short, anti-war feelings among ordinary Americans never reached the high level of salience required to cause the U.S. to alter its COIN strategy or its level of involvement. Unlike the Vietnam case, U.S. national will was not lost in El Salvador.

Another interesting aspect of the El Salvador case is brought to light as a result of the reliance on Salvadoran forces to do the heavy lifting. The U.S. could afford to do this because the Salvadoran government and its military were both capable and relatively competent allies. However, there existed a conflict between the American philosophy of counterinsurgency and the way the Salvadoran military chose to wage counterinsurgency. In Vietnam, elements within the U.S. military correctly identified the

Viet Cong center of gravity as the VCI cadre. Thus, they established the goal of the Phoenix program as, to borrow from Mao's analogy, the sustained attack of the "fish" that were swimming in the "sea."⁵³⁰ As outlined in the previous chapter, the Phoenix program employed organizational amputation strikes against specifically identified high value targets, removing them from the battlefield either by capture or killing, and thus weakening the VCI as an organization over a period of time.

In the El Salvador case, the Salvadoran military also saw the FMLN infrastructure as the center of gravity. However, their approach was to weaken the organization by attacking the sea that supported the fish, rather than weakening the FMLN as an organization through selective strikes against high value targets. In the Salvadoran case, a civilian living in a zone controlled by the FMLN was seen as expressing solidarity with the enemy. This, in the eyes of the Salvadoran government, was a crime punishable by death.⁵³¹ Such a mindset drove indiscriminate killing throughout the years of conflict. Yet, the level of sheer violence ultimately proved

⁵³⁰ Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare: Translated from the Chinese with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith II*: 93.

⁵³¹ Anderson, *Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World*: 46.

successful, as the Salvadoran military wrecked the FMLN's cadre structure in civic organizations, inside the universities, and in the trade unions.⁵³² In the countryside, the Salvadoran Air Forces' heavy use of indiscriminate bombing attacks against guerrilla zones of control caused thousands of peasant refugees to leave the countryside.⁵³³ The falling population levels in the countryside resulted in a falling of the numbers of pro-FMLN sympathizers. This resulted in an increasingly desperate FMLN that began to rely on forceful strategies which further alienated the Salvadoran people. These strategies included the targeting of civilians,⁵³⁴ conscripting of guerrilla recruits⁵³⁵ and over-reliance on indiscriminate bombing and land mines – which often maimed or killed civilians.⁵³⁶ In the words of one Latin American specialist, "nothing succeeds like sheer violence when the targets can be located."⁵³⁷

⁵³² Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 105.

⁵³³ Ucles, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*: 103.

⁵³⁴ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 134.

⁵³⁵ Bracamonte and Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*: 22.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵³⁷ Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, & Guatemala*: 105.

For the Salvadoran military and Death Squads, the target didn't need to be located if it could be separated from its support base—it would die just as a fish out of water dies. Whereas the Phoenix program attempted to use be more surgical in its use of amputation strikes against the VCI, the Salvadoran military was much less discriminate. In the end, the U.S. and Salvadoran governments both had the same goal, i.e. saving the country from their mutual Communist adversaries, but each sought to accomplish this goal using a different approach.

Despite all of the money and training the U.S. provided the Salvadoran military, using security funding as leverage only had a limited impact. The Americans were ultimately unable to enforce clean counterinsurgency practices, and they could not induce all Salvadoran officers to behave in the same way as their U.S. counterparts.⁵³⁸ Yet, the important point that the war in El Salvador brings to light is the probability that if the U.S. attempts to engage in a future counterinsurgency campaign without Americanizing the war, it will undoubtedly face a similar dilemma. If, as in the El Salvador case, the lion's share of the heavy lifting is to

⁵³⁸ Arthur Schmidt, "The Continuing Significance of El Salvador," in *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 20.

be done by the local government and its forces, then in all likelihood, that local government will choose to do that lifting using its own methods, even if those methods conflict with U.S. philosophy. In short, the U.S. may have to accept a form of *dirty war* in order to defeat the insurgents. As one writer has stated, "success [in El Salvador] was built on a foundation of corpses."⁵³⁹

In the end, the experience in El Salvador shows the student of counterinsurgency that the relegating of American involvement down to a small-scale supporting role vice large-scale leading role has merit. The counterinsurgency campaign was successful as the FMLN's organizational structure was weakened and kept off-balance, and communism's spread was contained long enough for Salvadoran political and social conditions to stabilize. The result was that the FMLN guerrillas signed a UN brokered peace deal with the Salvadoran government, bringing an end to some twelve years of bloody conflict.

The next chapter in this study will examine the war in Iraq following 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, which in the end more closely resembles the U.S. approach to counterinsurgency used in Vietnam than in El Salvador.

⁵³⁹ Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*: 88.

In short, the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq, with its large number of setbacks and missteps, ultimately became the test bed for FM 3-24.

CHAPTER 8

Learning From History: Iraq

A Qualitative Case Study of Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar Province

Background: An Unexpected Insurgency

The decision to launch the U.S. military invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003 was the culmination of a battle of ideas among foreign policy intellectuals that began following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1990. The subject of this normative battle among foreign policy thinkers was a debate over the proper role the U.S. should play on the world's stage as the sole superpower and global hegemon. Throughout the Cold War years, the dominant school of thought for foreign policy matters had been Realism. Realists fully expected the nation-states of the former Soviet bloc to pursue their immediate national interests in ways that were unavailable to them during the Cold War era of Soviet domination. Thus, for old-school Realists like Henry Kissinger, post-Cold War America should continue to work toward the goal of balancing competing national interests among the world's regional powers.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*: 805.

However, in the years immediately following the demise of the Soviet Union, a second school of foreign policy thought gained traction. Referred to as "neoconservatives," the proponents of this school of idealist-based thought believed that American values and ideals held transformative power. Based on this view, neoconservatives argued that the spread of liberal democracy would improve U.S. national and economic security. These self-styled "hard Wilsonians"⁵⁴¹ viewed America as the moral authority that held the key to the final settlement of the world's political and economic ills. However, neoconservatives broke with traditional idealist foreign policy thought and argued that it was "absurd" not to use American military might to champion these ideals and interests.⁵⁴² The primary intellectual vehicle for promulgating the idea of this "new, proud American imperialism" was the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a neoconservative think tank led by William Kristol.⁵⁴³ PNAC applied consistent pressure on President Bill Clinton to wield U.S. power to recast the

⁵⁴¹ Max Boot, "Myths About Neoconservatism," in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 49.

⁵⁴² William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "National Interest and Global Responsibility," in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 70.

⁵⁴³ Kevin Baker, "The Year in Ideas: A to Z; American Imperialism, Embraced," *New York Times Magazine* (2001), <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/09/magazine/the-year-in-ideas-a-to-z-american-imperialism-embraced.html>.

nations of the world in the American model. Much of the debate regarding projection of American military power toward a goal of democratic reform centered on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which many neoconservatives viewed as a perfect target for regime change. In fact, several foreign policy leaders who would become prominent in the George W. Bush Administration sent an open letter to President Clinton in 1998 calling for regime change in Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Eliot Abrams, John Bolton and Richard Perle, all future high-ranking members of the George W. Bush Administration, were included among the signatories. As a testament to the level of traction the neoconservative hard Wilsonian approach toward Iraq had gained, within just a few months after the open letter was published President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act into law, making regime change in Iraq an official goal of U.S. foreign policy.⁵⁴⁴

From a policy making perspective, the attacks against the United States three years later on 9/11 provided a political window through which neoconservatives were able to capitalize on the national mood and couple militarily enforced regime change in Iraq with a Global War against Terror. Thus, despite misgivings from several sectors of

⁵⁴⁴ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 23-24.

the American policy-making establishment, the U.S. invaded Iraq for the purposes of ousting Saddam Hussein. This decision was reached despite an on-going war in Afghanistan. Opening a second front in Iraq seemed of little consequence because the majority of the key stakeholders believed the war would be quick and the reconstruction of Iraq would be paid for by Iraqi oil revenues.⁵⁴⁵

As a result of a rush to capitalize on the open political window, the belief that toppling Saddam Hussein would be quick and cheap, and the conviction that regime change in Iraq would result in the Americans being greeted as liberators,⁵⁴⁶ the planning and operationalizing of the post-Saddam Iraq was undertaken in a dysfunctional, fragmentary, and haphazard way. Planning for post-conflict stability and reconstruction operations "was monopolized by senior members of the U.S. Defense Department,"⁵⁴⁷ who deliberately "chose to ignore the most extensive study concerning post-war Iraq, the [State

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 115-116; Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 109; Stiglitz and Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*: 7-8.

⁵⁴⁶ Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2009). 254.

⁵⁴⁷ Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004). 229.

Department's] *Future of Iraq Project*."⁵⁴⁸ Between September 2002 and April 2003, responsibility for post-Saddam Iraq passed abruptly from the Office of Special Plans (OSP), to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), and finally to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). All three organizations fell within the purview of the Department of Defense.⁵⁴⁹

Under the ORHA, the plan that was developed would require only the very top-level Ba'athists to be removed from office, and require the U.S. to pay the salaries of the Iraqi police, civil servants, and military personnel. The logic behind this decision (which President Bush approved), was that it would allow the country's bureaucratic and security organizations to continue to operate, and Iraqi employees of these organizations would keep their jobs, increasing stability. To remove all Ba'athists would have resulted in large numbers of newly unemployed and very angry Iraqis taking to the streets.⁵⁵⁰ In the meantime, the plan called for an Iraqi interim

⁵⁴⁸ Dan Caldwell, *Vortex of Conflict: U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2011).

⁵⁴⁹ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 214.

⁵⁵⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 104.

government to be set up.⁵⁵¹ It was reasoned that these measures would help insure that the majority of the reconstruction work, or the heavy lifting, would be the responsibility of the Iraqis themselves.⁵⁵²

The Iraq War was opened by the U.S. with what the military terms *Shock and Awe*,⁵⁵³ an intensive aerial bombardment campaign which was "intended to destroy [Iraqi leader] Saddam Hussein's ability to control his forces and to push his government to the brink of collapse."⁵⁵⁴

As a concept, *Shock and Awe* was originally proposed in 1996 as part of a larger concept of *Rapid Dominance of the Battlespace*.⁵⁵⁵ In short, *Shock and Awe* were the expected psychological effects on the enemy as a result of the application of overwhelming military power aimed at destroying the enemy's will to resist even before the major land battle or campaign was launched.⁵⁵⁶ The general view was that *Shock and Awe* would not only prompt a quick cessation of resistance but would also reduce casualties

⁵⁵¹ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 129.

⁵⁵² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 163.

⁵⁵³ Harlan Ullman and James Wade, "Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance," ed. Defense Group Inc (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1996), 19.

⁵⁵⁴ Michael R. Gordon, "A Nation at War: Airstrikes; Aerial Pounding Intended to Push Iraq's Government Toward Brink," *New York Times*, 22 March 2003, A1.

⁵⁵⁵ Ullman and Wade, "Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance," 19.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

on both sides.⁵⁵⁷ This view was based upon the assumptions that the invasion war would be fought as a conventional war, just as the 1991 Gulf War had been fought.

Shock and Awe was unveiled on 19 March, 2003 with a "volley of cruise missiles and bunker penetrating bombs."⁵⁵⁸ In total, more than 1,300 cruise missiles and bombs were used in the initial attack.⁵⁵⁹ These strikes were "carried out by B-2 Spirit Bombers, F-117 Nighthawk Stealth Fighter-Bombers, Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles, and air-launched cruise missiles launched from B-52 bombers."⁵⁶⁰ The plan was to achieve *Rapid Dominance* by disrupting Iraqi lines of communication through the attacking of Iraqi command centers, thereby effectively separating Iraqi leadership from its forces. Additionally, the U.S. aerial bombardment focused on the forces tasked specifically with protecting the Iraqi government and Iraqi internal security. The third and final focus was on destroying Iraqi airfields.⁵⁶¹ The goal of achieving *Rapid Dominance* through the selection of these specific targets aligned *Shock and Awe* with

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., xxviii-xxix.

⁵⁵⁸ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 116.

⁵⁵⁹ Gordon, "A Nation at War: Airstrikes; Aerial Pounding Intended to Push Iraq's Government Toward Brink," A1.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

President Bush's earlier stated overarching goal of removing the threat of WMD and restoring control of Iraq "to its own people."⁵⁶² To accomplish this, U.S. and coalition forces focused on the capital city of Baghdad as the key to removing the regime of Saddam Hussein.⁵⁶³

Shock and Awe, intended as a "decapitation strike,"⁵⁶⁴ lasted only one night.⁵⁶⁵ Immediately, the aerial strikes were followed by ground operations launched from Kuwait. The first objectives of the ground assault were to secure the Iraqi oil fields, seize Tallil Air Base, and isolate the city of al-Samawah, which is located midway between Baghdad and Basra. These were achieved with relative ease. From there, Coalition Forces began "the march up-country," a series of combat and support operations undertaken in order to "set the tactical and logistic conditions necessary" to support an assault into Baghdad. Although hampered somewhat by "a sandstorm of Biblical proportions," Coalition Forces successfully

⁵⁶² Bush, "President Bush Addresses the Nation 19 March".

⁵⁶³ Gregory Fontenot, E. J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004). 90.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.; FoxNews, "U.S. Launches 'Decapitation Strike' Against Iraq; Saddam Personally Targeted," *foxnews.com*, no. 20 March (2003), <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,81607,00.html>.

⁵⁶⁵ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*: 87.

captured/isolated Najaf, Karbala, and al-Hillah.⁵⁶⁶ On the 4th of April, the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division had seized Saddam Hussein International Airport on the western fringe of Baghdad⁵⁶⁷ and by April 5th Baghdad itself had been encircled and effectively isolated, "denying [Iraqi] reinforcements or escape by regime military forces."⁵⁶⁸

What followed next was a series of two separate attacks, each led by an armored column built around a large contingent of tanks.⁵⁶⁹ These attacks, dubbed "Thunder Runs," thrust into the heart of Baghdad.⁵⁷⁰ A *Thunder Run* was simply a "reconnaissance-in-force" operation by armor and mechanized infantry units moving at high speed through the city. The purpose of a *Thunder Run* was to try and "catch the enemy off guard and overwhelm him with force."⁵⁷¹ The first *Thunder Run* was conducted on April 5th, and the second on April 7th. The two *Thunder Runs* were highly successful and not only demonstrated the ability of Coalition Forces to move freely about the Iraqi capital, but more importantly they "broke the regime's

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 88, 141-147.

⁵⁶⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 125.

⁵⁶⁸ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*: 241.

⁵⁶⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 125.

⁵⁷⁰ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*: 336; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 385.

⁵⁷¹ Franks, *American Soldier*: 517.

back"⁵⁷² and led to its "swift collapse."⁵⁷³ By April 9th, 2003, "ordinary Iraqis [had taken] to the streets by the thousands," to topple statues of Saddam Hussein, and to "give a cheering [and] often tearful welcome to advancing American troops."⁵⁷⁴ Amid the celebration, most of the Iraqi military and political officials "simply abandoned their posts and ran away" leaving the roads "littered with abandoned Iraqi tanks, armored personnel carriers and mobile artillery guns" and strewn with "camouflaged Iraqi uniforms and combat boots, suggesting the soldiers hastened into civilian clothes as they fled."⁵⁷⁵ It soon became evident that "every police station, every office of the ruling Ba'ath Party, every military barracks, every outpost of the security and intelligence network, had been abandoned." In effect, the Iraqi capital "had been captured without the Americans having [had] to fire a shot."⁵⁷⁶

For the most part, the events of April 9th, 2003 were the high point of Operation Iraqi Freedom as "much of Baghdad became, in a moment, a showcase of unbridled

⁵⁷² Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*: 336.

⁵⁷³ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 127.

⁵⁷⁴ Burns, "Cheers, Tears, and Looting in Capital's Streets," A1.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

enthusiasm for America" as cheering, flag waiving Iraqis numbering in the "tens of thousands" rushed into the streets showing "disdain for Mr. Hussein."⁵⁷⁷ April 9th also produced one of the war's most memorable images – that of the pulling down of the huge statue of Saddam Hussein in a square in downtown Baghdad. Back in Washington "an elated President Bush watched celebrating Iraqis drag a statue of Saddam Hussein through Baghdad" on television while a gleeful Secretary Rumsfeld "compared the toppling of the [Iraqi] government to the Berlin Wall, and said that Mr. Hussein had taken his place with Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, and Nicolae Ceausescu in the pantheon of failed, brutal dictators."⁵⁷⁸

In all, the breakthrough by Coalition Forces had taken place "at stunning speed, only six days after American troops [had] gained their first foothold in Baghdad."⁵⁷⁹ Using "unprecedented speed" of maneuver as a "force multiplier,"⁵⁸⁰ the U.S. was able to achieve tactical surprise over the Iraqi military and political leadership. The seizure of the city's international airport occurred within the first two weeks after the

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Elisabeth Bumiller and Douglas Jehl, "Bush Tunes in and sees Iraqis in Celebrations," *New York Times*, 10 April 2003, A1.

⁵⁷⁹ Burns, "Cheers, Tears, and Looting in Capital's Streets," A1.

⁵⁸⁰ Franks, *American Soldier*: 368.

commencement of *Shock and Awe*. This "after military experts had predicted it could take weeks, even months, to besiege Mr. Hussein's forces and overcome them."⁵⁸¹ Up to this point, the invasion resembled Operation DESERT STORM in 1991 in that it had been accomplished "with skill, precision, and speed — [and with] a minimum of casualties."⁵⁸² In terms of conventional war, this was an unquestionable victory. Regime ouster had been achieved. Regime change would prove immensely more difficult. Concerns had already begun to arise that *Shock and Awe* had not worked as planned. After stating that the U.S. military "would inflict such a shock on the [Iraqi military and political] system that the Iraqi regime would have to assume early on [that] the end was inevitable" and that the "goal was a short conflict," the Pentagon conceded that the U.S. had "failed to deliver a quick knockout blow."⁵⁸³ In fact, "none of the top 200 figures in the [Iraqi] regime [were] killed by an air strike."⁵⁸⁴ As attacks by Iraqi paramilitary forces began to increase in number, questions began to arise from prominent experts

⁵⁸¹ Burns, "Cheers, Tears, and Looting in Capital's Streets," A1.

⁵⁸² Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*: 469.

⁵⁸³ Eric Schmitt, "Bombardment Plan; Top General Concedes Air Attacks Did Not Deliver Knockout Blow," *New York Times*, 26 March 2003, A6.

⁵⁸⁴ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 177.

as to whether or not there were sufficient ground troops in Iraq to maintain order and security.⁵⁸⁵

On May 1st, 2003, President Bush gave his now infamous "Mission Accomplished" speech onboard the aircraft carrier USS LINCOLN, which was highlighted earlier in chapter two. What is significant is that, in the context of the speech, the President not only stated that major combat operations had ended, but also "seemed to characterize [the military operations that remained to be completed] as a mop up job."⁵⁸⁶ The President told his audience that what remained was to find both the Iraqi WMD and the Ba'athist leaders of Saddam's old regime.⁵⁸⁷ Yet, by accomplishing what the President himself had described as "one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in history,"⁵⁸⁸ Iraqi ammunition bunkers along the routes from Kuwait to Baghdad had been "bypassed and left undisturbed" by the American invasion force.⁵⁸⁹ This provided small teams of Iraqis the opportunity to break into the bunkers and steal ammunition and weapons.⁵⁹⁰ The recovered weapons and ammunition would support an insurgency that was rapidly emerging but that

⁵⁸⁵ Joseph P. Hoar, "Why Aren't There Enough Troops in Iraq?," *New York Times*, 02 April 2003.

⁵⁸⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 145.

⁵⁸⁷ Bush, "Remarks by the President from the USS Abraham Lincoln".

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 146.

⁵⁹⁰ Miller, "Smoking Gun Still Proves To Be Elusive for Searchers," B7.

the U.S. Army, steeped in the doctrines of conventional warfare, would be slow to recognize.

Much has been written regarding the causes of what became a major insurgency in Iraq. For some of those who were following the war's developments closely, defeat was "snatched from the jaws of victory."⁵⁹¹ In other words, despite the capture of Baghdad and the collapse of the Iraqi regime, the U.S. lost the initiative as a result of poor planning for what the military terms *Phase IV* or "Stability Operations." *The U.S. Army Field Manual for Stability Operations* describes the essence of stability operations as bringing safety and security to the embattled populace; immediately addressing the essential humanitarian needs of the people; restoring basic public order and normalcy to life; and rebuilding the institutions of government and market economy. In short, *Phase IV Operations* provide the very foundations for enduring peace and stability.⁵⁹²

Among the soldiers on the ground in and around Baghdad during the period immediately after the fall of Saddam's regime, everyone was just sort of waiting around,

⁵⁹¹ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 163.

⁵⁹² William B. Caldwell, "FM 3-07 Stability Operations," ed. Department of the Army (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2008), vi.

believing that they would soon be redeploying home,⁵⁹³ just as had happened following the defeat of the Iraqi army in Kuwait during Operation DESERT STORM in 1991. The resulting "power vacuum" began to be filled by anti-U.S. insurgents.⁵⁹⁴ One American soldier was quoted as saying that "it wasn't as if all hell broke loose...it was more like the situation eroded."⁵⁹⁵ Conditions which provided fertile ground for a blossoming insurgency were made worse by the decisions of L. Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), who arrived in May to oversee the transition of control of Iraq from the U.S. to the Iraqis. While the mission of the CPA was to "help the Iraqi people turn Iraq into a stable, safe, peaceful and prosperous country,"⁵⁹⁶ Bremer immediately made three strategic decisions that achieved exactly the opposite effect and changed the perception among ordinary Iraqis that the Americans had become *occupiers* rather than *liberators*. The first of these was de-Ba'athification, or the firing of *all* former mid-level and senior members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party who held positions of employment in the Iraqi public sector. The second was the

⁵⁹³ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 136.

⁵⁹⁴ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 315.

⁵⁹⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 136.

⁵⁹⁶ Patrick E. Tyler, "American Troops Step Up Efforts to Curb Crime and in Iraqi Capital," *New York Times*, 16 May 2003, A16.

dissolution of the Iraqi army, which the ORHA (which the CPA had replaced) had planned to use to help stabilize and secure Iraq during *Phase IV* operations. The final decision was the halting of the formation of an interim Iraqi government.⁵⁹⁷ Bremer's de-Ba'athification order went far beyond what President Bush had approved when the issue was first planned for by the ORHA. Bremer's order swept up "not merely top executives but mid-level officials, school teachers, and physicians."⁵⁹⁸ These firings, coupled with the dissolution of the Iraqi military forces and Iraq's various police and security units, meant that some 820,000 Iraqis lost their jobs without warning.⁵⁹⁹ Of these decisions, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld would later write:

The CPA's top-down approach inadvertently stroked nationalist resentment and fanned the embers of what would become the Iraqi insurgency. Many Iraqis associated the CPA with imperiousness and heavy-handedness. ... The broader impression of an overbearing U.S. authority issuing edicts to the Iraqi people buttressed the anti-coalition argument of militants - [playing well] into the propaganda that the United States was

⁵⁹⁷ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 546-569; Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 190; Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 158-166.

⁵⁹⁸ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 216-217.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

*trying to dominate and exploit Iraq rather than liberate it and return it promptly to Iraqi control.*⁶⁰⁰

Suddenly, not only was the Iraqi bureaucracy wiped out, but overnight the U.S. was facing a situation where several hundred thousand armed Iraqis, who were former members of the Iraqi military or security forces, were roaming the streets of Baghdad with no job, no salary, and no way to provide for their families.⁶⁰¹ The reason that Bremer's de-Ba'athification order cut so deeply is because almost every Iraqi who had held any position of managerial responsibility within the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein had been a member of the Ba'ath party. Given the nature of Saddam's authoritarian regime, which "reached into every nook and cranny of the lives of Iraqis [from the] state machinery, [to] the professional and academic institutions, [to the] media," jobs within the Iraqi government were rarely made available to non-Ba'athists.⁶⁰² Overall, in an effort to "eradicate Saddamism,"⁶⁰³ the U.S. "threw out of work more than half a million people and

⁶⁰⁰ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*: 514.

⁶⁰¹ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 191.

⁶⁰² Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 149.

⁶⁰³ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 547.

alienated many more dependent on those lost incomes.”⁶⁰⁴
To add insult to economic injury, the halting of the formation of an Iraqi government signaled to all that the U.S. was going to remain in Iraq for an indefinite period of time and that the Iraqis would not be governing themselves anytime soon.⁶⁰⁵

It is unclear exactly who made the decision to conduct de-Ba’athification in Iraq, or even whether or not the decisions were vetted properly before they were implemented. Bremer insists that he was presented with “marching orders” from Secretary Rumsfeld to “actively oppose Saddam Hussein’s old enforcers.”⁶⁰⁶ Rumsfeld, however, says that Bremer, who had been given too much “leeway,” was the one responsible for the decision to order de-Ba’athification.⁶⁰⁷ Then-CIA Director George Tenet has stated that the Bush Administration did not hold any type of meeting among the National Security Council (NSC) principals to discuss or debate the pros and cons of de-Ba’athification.⁶⁰⁸ Condoleezza Rice, who was President Bush’s National Security Advisor, recalls that “the

⁶⁰⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 163.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁰⁶ L. Paul Bremer, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006). 39.

⁶⁰⁷ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*: 512-514.

⁶⁰⁸ George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2007). 427.

Pentagon was aware of [Bremer's de-Ba'athification] intentions.⁶⁰⁹ Secretary of State Powell "was out of town when the decision was made"⁶¹⁰ and apparently wasn't consulted because he was "surprised" by the decision, which he attributes to Rumsfeld and Bremer.⁶¹¹ President Bush "did not remember deciding."⁶¹²

Regardless of how or why the decisions to move forward with de-Ba'athification orders were made, they had, for many Iraqis, a "punitive feel."⁶¹³ In the eyes of a huge percentage of the Iraqi population, the U.S. had "stopped being liberators and had become occupiers."⁶¹⁴ Naturally, many Iraqis were willing to oppose the occupiers vehemently. In a public statement made during a CPA-sponsored meeting by one prominent Iraqi sheikh, he and his descendants would be willing to die resisting a U.S. occupation. The sheik's words were "met with energetic applause" from the Iraqis in the audience, and were then followed by an abrupt and massive exit from the

⁶⁰⁹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011). 238.

⁶¹⁰ James P. Pfiffner, "George W. Bush as Chief Executive," in *Assessing the George W. Bush Presidency: A Tale of Two Terms*, ed. Andrew Wroe and Jon Herbert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 34.

⁶¹¹ Colin Powell, *It Worked For Me: In Life and Leadership* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012). 214.

⁶¹² Pfiffner, "George W. Bush as Chief Executive," 34.

⁶¹³ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 165.

⁶¹⁴ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 195.

room in which the meeting was being held.⁶¹⁵ Iraqi public opinion grew increasingly hostile toward the U.S. invasion force while at the same time numerous public marches and demonstrations denouncing the occupation were organized and conducted, some of which resulted in U.S. forces firing upon and killing Iraqi demonstrators.⁶¹⁶ Adding to the growing tensions was an increasing "string of bombings and snipings that were not only killing U.S. troops in ones and twos" but were "intimidating the Iraqi population."⁶¹⁷ Despite an increasing level of violence, the U.S. did not see the beginnings of an insurgency arising in Iraq. Rather, leaders within the Bush Administration viewed the situation as a result of small numbers of either "criminals"⁶¹⁸ or "dead-enders," and were described as the last remaining elements of Saddam Hussein's government, who were trying to "reconstitute" but would soon be found and eliminated.⁶¹⁹ At one point, believing the U.S. was only facing a small amount of final resistance, President Bush promised to find and punish

⁶¹⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 166.

⁶¹⁶ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 169.

⁶¹⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 168.

⁶¹⁸ Jim Garamone, "Coalition Not in Guerrilla War, Rumsfeld Says," *Department of Defense News*, no. 18 June (2003), <http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=28819>.

⁶¹⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, "Secretary Rumsfeld Media Availability with Jay Garner, June 18th," Transcript, *U.S. Department of Defense News* (2003), <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2758>.

anyone wishing to harm American troops in Iraq, stating: "There are some who feel that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. ... My answer is: bring 'em on. ... We got the force necessary to deal with the security situation."⁶²⁰ Almost on cue, U.S. forces then killed Saddam's two notoriously cruel sons in a heated and intense fire fight inside a safe-house in Mosul. U.S. leaders immediately reported that the deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein had eliminated the linchpins of Iraqi resistance, and that their killings represented "a landmark day for the people and for the future of Iraq."⁶²¹ Although the Americans believed they had reached a turning point and that Iraq would begin to stabilize, Iraqi insurgent attacks continued to increase.⁶²²

By the middle of the summer of 2003, the level of violence had grown from small, isolated attacks to an eruption of a "series of bombings in Baghdad and widespread small-arms attacks on U.S. patrols."⁶²³ Despite the repeated insistence by many high-ranking officials

⁶²⁰ Associated-Press, "Bush: 'Bring on' attackers of U.S. troops," *USA Today*, no. 02 July (2003), http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-07-02-bush-iraq-troops_x.htm.

⁶²¹ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 186.

⁶²² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 562.

⁶²³ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 176.

within both the military and within the Bush Administration that the situation in Iraq was neither a guerrilla war nor an insurgency,⁶²⁴ some scholars, media analysts, retired military personnel, and others began to view the situation differently. Words like *guerrilla war*, *insurgency*, and *quagmire* began to be tossed about in reference to Iraq. Despite the capture of Saddam Hussein in December, 2003, things became progressively worse as insurgent violence continued to increase during the early months of 2004. A large portion of the violence can be attributed to a Shi'ite insurgent group named the Jaish al Mahdi Army (JAM), which fell under the guidance and control of anti-American cleric Muqtada al Sadr. Under his leadership, the Mahdi Army predominantly relied on urban guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics targeting the newly formed and ill trained Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). According to most reports, the ISF during this period "performed disastrously" and those within the ISF who were not killed by JAM often deserted and joined the insurgents.⁶²⁵ The violence grabbed attention in the U.S. when on 31 March, 2004, in the city of Fallujah in Anbar province, Iraqi insurgents ambushed four American military

⁶²⁴ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004). 173-174.

⁶²⁵ Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*: 226.

contractors working for the private security firm *Blackwater USA*. The bodies of the men were pulled from their vehicles and dragged through the streets in a scene reminiscent of the American soldiers who were dragged through the streets during the First Battle of Mogadishu, better known as *Blackhawk Down*, in Somalia in 1993.

Following the incident with the Blackwater contractors, violence in Fallujah continued to spiral out of control. The city, and indeed the entire province of Anbar, would become a base of operations for Iraq's most violent and extreme foreign global insurgents and local jihadis.⁶²⁶ As the violence continued to increase, Spain announced it would be withdrawing its troops from the coalition effort.⁶²⁷ The Spanish announcement was followed by the breaking of the Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse scandal, where "poorly trained American reservists" were charged with "assault, cruelty, indecent acts and maltreatment of detainees."⁶²⁸ The scandal didn't help the U.S. cause, as the photographs from Abu Ghraib prison "seemed to confirm the worst of what many Iraqis believed" regarding U.S. occupation forces and their use of

⁶²⁶ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 324.

⁶²⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*: 346.

⁶²⁸ James Risen, "G.I.'s Are Accused of Abusing Iraqi Captives," *New York Times* (2004), <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/29/politics/29ABUS.html>.

excessive force against ordinary Iraqi citizens.⁶²⁹

Needless to say, the numbers of Iraqis supporting the insurgency continued to grow.

In November, the U.S. decided to clear Fallujah of insurgents once and for all, and launched the Second Battle of Fallujah. One of the primary goals of the assault on Fallujah was to disrupt the operations of Jordanian-born global insurgency leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi and his large following of foreign fighters. The elusive Zarqawi, who the U.S. had been trying to kill or capture for months, was the face of al Qaeda in Iraq.⁶³⁰

The Americans believed that retaking Fallujah "would have a lethal impact upon Zarqawi's capabilities and operations."⁶³¹ Thus, the U.S. undertook a heavy handed conventional operation that not only cleared the city of the entrenched urban insurgents but also damaged or destroyed many of the city's homes and buildings.⁶³² The devastation did not omit Iraqi holy places, as "nearly 60

⁶²⁹ Ian Fisher, "The Struggle for Iraq: Human Rights, Brutal Images Buttress Anger of Ex-Prisoners," *New York Times* (2004), <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/10/world/the-struggle-for-iraq-human-rights-brutal-images-buttress-anger-of-ex-prisoners.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

⁶³⁰ Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda*: 151.

⁶³¹ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 338.

⁶³² Mansoor, *Baghdad at Sunrise: a Brigade Commander's war in Iraq*: 300.

of the city's 200 mosques had been destroyed."⁶³³ Although the U.S. forces took the city, Zarqawi and many of his global insurgents managed to evade capture.⁶³⁴

Tensions between sectarian groups steadily increased throughout the 2003-2005 period. In January, 2005, the Iraqis held a legislative election, which the Sunnis largely boycotted.⁶³⁵ The retaking of Fallujah and the elections were supposed to both cripple the insurgency and co-opt Iraq's disparate sectarian groups into a new political order.⁶³⁶ Rather, the Sunni Arabs, many of whom lived in Anbar and who saw themselves as "inheritors of the Ottoman Empire," increasingly worried that they would be marginalized by the new Shia dominated Iraqi government.⁶³⁷ Throughout the spring of 2005, the level of violence continued to rise.

U.S. military leaders came to believe that much of the chaos and violence, especially in Anbar Province, was being perpetrated by the Zarqawi network's ability to infiltrate foreign global insurgent fighters, weapons, and supplies into Iraq through a corridor from Syria running

⁶³³ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 339.

⁶³⁴ Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda*: 151.

⁶³⁵ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 415-416.

⁶³⁶ Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*: 340.

⁶³⁷ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 416.

along the Euphrates River in the western part of Anbar Province. In response, the U.S. launched *Operation Matador*, a heavy offensive geared toward shutting down what many had begun to call the "Ho Chi Minh Trail of Iraq."⁶³⁸ In scenes reminiscent of the jungles of Vietnam, U.S. troops participating in the sweeps along the corridor often became "frustrated in their hunt for insurgents who seemed to disappear into the desert, prompting some Americans to describe the sweeps as *whack-a-mole*, after the arcade game involving a hammer and mechanical rodents that pop in and out of holes." This is because the U.S. did not have nearly "enough troops to control a sprawling desert where an increasingly adept [global insurgent] force [was able to flow] in and out with impunity."⁶³⁹

Although U.S. officials classified *Operation Matador* as a success,⁶⁴⁰ it failed to stem the increasingly large-scale and devastatingly deadly bombing attacks, leading some to speculate that the bombings may have been "a

⁶³⁸ John Kifner and James Dao, "Death Visits a Marine Unit, Once Called Lucky," *New York Times* (2005), <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9805E2DF173EF934A3575BC0A9639C8B63>.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Donna Miles, "Operation Matador Helping Flush Insurgents from Western Iraq," *U.S. Department of Defense News* (2005), <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31688>; Kirk Semple, "Iraqis Stunned by the Violence of a Bombing," *New York Times* (2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/18/international/middleeast/18iraq.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

response to the American command's claims" [of success].⁶⁴¹ For example, in July, a suicide bombing in the marketplace at Musayyib killed 100 Shia.⁶⁴² All told, the Iraqi Interior Ministry reported that Iraqi civilians and police officers were dying at a rate of more than 800 a month.⁶⁴³ The level of violence seemed to explode even further in September as a coordinated assault of at least a dozen separate bombing incidents ripped through Baghdad in rapid succession during a single day, killing some 150 and wounding more than 500. This single assault, which Zarqawi's al Qaeda in Iraq network took credit for, "inflicted the biggest death toll in Baghdad since the American-led invasion" in May, 2003.⁶⁴⁴

Frustrated with the continued infiltration of global insurgents and weapons, the U.S. launched a second major offensive along the porous Iraq-Syria border and the Euphrates River Valley region, this time in conjunction with the recently formed Iraqi Army, to stem the flow of

⁶⁴¹ "Iraqis Stunned by the Violence of a Bombing".

⁶⁴² Andy Mosher and Saad Sarhan, "Death Toll Rises to 100 in Suicide Blast in Iraq," *Washington Post* (2005), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/17/AR2005071700338.html>.

⁶⁴³ Sabrina Tavernise, "Data Shows Rising Toll of Iraqis From Insurgency," *New York Times* (2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/14/international/middleeast/14casualties.html>.

⁶⁴⁴ Robert F. Worth and Jr. Richard A. Opper, "Rebels Unleash Wave of Attacks in Baghdad, Killing about 150," *New York Times* (2005), http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/14/international/middleeast/14cnd-iraq.html?_r=2pagewanted=print&.

insurgents and material into Anbar.⁶⁴⁵ In November, 2005, in a scene reminiscent of My Lai, U.S. troops opened fire on Iraqi civilians in Haditha, a "lawless, insurgent-plagued city deep in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province."⁶⁴⁶ In all, 24 Iraqi civilians lay dead, and among them were women and children.⁶⁴⁷ While news of the slaughter was slow to become common knowledge among the American people,⁶⁴⁸ the event solidified the general consensus among Iraqis at all levels that the U.S. was frequently killing Iraqi civilians,⁶⁴⁹ further eroding Iraqi support for the U.S. effort.

Iraqi elections were held in the spring of 2006, and May saw the inauguration of the government of newly elected Prime Minister and Shia Nouri al-Maliki. While the U.S. put tremendous stock in the elections and held high hopes for an Iraqi government of national reconciliation, support for the new government in the

⁶⁴⁵ Craig S. Smith, "U.S. and Iraq Step Up Effort to Block Insurgents' Routes," *New York Times* (2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/03/international/middleeast/03rawa.html?pagewanted=print>.

⁶⁴⁶ Thom Shanker, Eric Schmitt, and Jr. Richard A. Oppel, "Military to Report Marines Killed Iraqi Civilians," *New York Times* (2006), http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/26/world/middleeast/26haditha.html?page_wanted=all.

⁶⁴⁷ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 5.

⁶⁴⁸ "In Haditha Killings, Details Came Slowly," *Washington Post* (2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/03/AR2006060300710.html>.

⁶⁴⁹ Jr. Richard A. Oppel, "Iraqi Assails U.S. for Strikes on Civilians," *New York Times*, 02 June 2006.

Sunni-dominated provinces throughout Iraq fell sharply. In short, the Sunni minority population felt that the Maliki government was promulgating anti-Sunni policies and supporting Shia militias.⁶⁵⁰ Further, the Sunnis read that President Bush's unwavering support for Maliki meant that the U.S. supported what they interpreted as Maliki's anti-Sunni agenda.⁶⁵¹ More Iraqi Sunnis joined the insurgency, and were countered by the Shia group Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM), which had been "essentially deputized by the state to become primary security providers."⁶⁵² The result was an explosion of what was an already high level of sectarian violence.

In the U.S., domestic support for the war continued to fall throughout 2006. Even the news of the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in June failed to provide a turning point in the war and, like the elections earlier, did nothing to stem the rising level of bloodshed in "what had become an all-out Shia versus Sunni conflict, with both sides aiming at civilians."⁶⁵³ The year 2006 also saw a

⁶⁵⁰ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 589-590.

⁶⁵¹ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008). 23.

⁶⁵² Ariel I. Ahram, *Proxy Warriors: The Rise and Fall of State-Sponsored Militias* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2011). 90.

⁶⁵³ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*: 16.

significant increase in the number of Americans who felt the war was "going badly" for the U.S. and that the invasion of Iraq had been a "mistake."⁶⁵⁴

Many scholars of counterinsurgency had long argued that the U.S. was failing to apply the principles of COIN and were thus losing the war. Prominent among these was Andrew Krepinevich, whose study on the Vietnam War is considered a modern day classic. Krepinevich had written a very persuasive piece in *Foreign Affairs* arguing for the incorporation of the "Oil Spot Strategy," the classic heavy footprint, population-centric approach advocated by the counterinsurgency theory of David Galula.⁶⁵⁵ While Krepinevich's ideas for revising the Iraq War strategy were not unique, his article helped the approach which he advocated gain traction outside the Pentagon, where a growing number of scholars and policy-makers were already thinking along the lines of shifting from an enemy-centric strategy to a population-centric strategy, and from conventional warfare to counterinsurgency. As mentioned in Chapter One, the concepts which Krepinevich advocated

⁶⁵⁴ Jeffrey M. Jones, "Americans' Views of Situation in Iraq Deteriorate Further," *Gallup News Service* (2006), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/25132/Americans-Views-Situation-Iraq-Deteriorate-Further.aspx>.

⁶⁵⁵ Andrew F. Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (2005): 88.

and Galula theorized were already being codified in a new counterinsurgency doctrine which was being written at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. However, senior White House officials believed the problem was less about strategy and more about the public's perception of the war.⁶⁵⁶ When President Bush's party lost control of the House and Senate in November, 2006, the President decided to change strategy. He announced his decision to change strategy and increase troop levels in January, 2007, and soon after named General Petraeus, chief architect of the revived COIN doctrine, as the overall commander in Iraq.

Under Petraeus' command there quickly followed the 2007 surge and the implementation of the Petraeus Doctrine. One area that saw significant turnaround is Anbar Province in Western Iraq, and in particular the Anbari city of Ramadi. This extremely violent city presented the U.S. with one of its greatest challenges throughout the war. Prior to the surge, Anbar was undoubtedly the most violent region in Iraq. Post-Iraq writings hold that the insurgent forces were the very

⁶⁵⁶ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 13.

strongest in Anbar.⁶⁵⁷ Thus the counterinsurgency operations undertaken in the province merit scrutiny. Large and often desolate, Anbar makes up approximately 30 percent of Iraq, and runs from the capital city of Baghdad to the borders of Syria and Jordan.⁶⁵⁸ During the war Anbar was heavily infiltrated with foreign global insurgent fighters and saw the heaviest levels of sectarian violence.⁶⁵⁹ Anbar also included a large portion of what journalists dubbed the "Sunni Triangle."⁶⁶⁰ By mid-2006, Anbar was considered by some to be "all but lost to the Sunni insurgents."⁶⁶¹ Yet, the degree to which the level of violence subsided after 2007 is astonishing. A description and analysis of this dramatic change is the heart of the remainder of this chapter.

Overview of U.S. Counterinsurgency Approaches Employed in Anbar

⁶⁵⁷ Angel Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*, 2 vols. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2011). 159.

⁶⁵⁸ Thomas E. Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq," *Washington Post* (2006), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/10/AR2006091001204_pf.html.

⁶⁵⁹ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 158.

⁶⁶⁰ Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq".

⁶⁶¹ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*: 15.

It is important to note that from 2003-2006 the U.S. did not face a single, monolithic insurgent force in Iraq. Rather, there were several dissimilar and unconnected groups with varying yet sometimes overlapping goals. Some sought to drive away the U.S. occupation forces. Others were determined to use violence to oppose the Iraqi government which was being supported by the U.S. In Anbar, the insurgency was predominantly Sunni. However, it was made up of nationalists, Ba'athists, Salafi-jihadists, and foreign global insurgent fighters. As a result, "the face of the insurgency constantly shifted as various actors and individuals moved in and out of threat groups."⁶⁶² The two dominant groups within the Anbar insurgency were the local tribal mujahidin, who were primarily concerned with protecting their neighborhoods from both foreign global jihadists and Shiite militias such as the notorious Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM). The second major group operating in Anbar was al Qaeda of Iraq (AQI),⁶⁶³ a quintessential global insurgent group, led by non-Iraqis.

⁶⁶² Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 157.

⁶⁶³ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 167.

The cooperative alliance between the tribal and Ba'athist Sunni insurgents and the Sunnis in AQI in Anbar Province was based upon a desire to resist what was perceived as an occupation of Muslim land by Christian crusaders. Given that the U.S. troops represented a Christian force, feelings that harkened all the way back to the Crusades of the Middle Ages were brought to the fore in the tribes, which were conservative and held strongly traditional Muslim values. Additionally, an alliance made sense given the cultural framing espoused by AQI: "We are Sunni. You are Sunni. The Americans and Iranians are helping the Shi'a, so let us fight them together."⁶⁶⁴

Anbar was like the Wild West. The insurgents, regardless of affiliation, enjoyed almost complete freedom of movement throughout Anbar, and this included the province's major city of Ramadi. Further, the insurgents dominated most of Ramadi's vital institutions, including the city hospital.⁶⁶⁵ The freedom of movement that the insurgents enjoyed allowed them to constantly launch

⁶⁶⁴ John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2009): 43.

⁶⁶⁵ Neil Smith and Sean MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review* 88, no. 2 (2008): 42.

attacks upon both the coalition forces and the Anbari population.⁶⁶⁶

From 2003-2004 there was no question that AQI was the dominant insurgent group. Seeing this to be true, the Anbari tribal sheikhs followed the lead of the foreign insurgents and threw their support behind AQI and the insurgency against the occupiers. However, by 2005 it had started to become clear to the tribal sheikhs that AQI, with its global insurgent goals, was working to subvert the traditional tribal governance structures in order to establish a pan-Islamic, fundamentalist theocracy.⁶⁶⁷ Furthermore, AQI had begun to rob businesses and kidnap daughters of the tribes.⁶⁶⁸ The kidnappings were part of an AQI demand that the tribal sheikhs give the daughters of their tribe to AQI key members in marriage. Interestingly, trying to force marriages through the use of violence and intimidation was a standard al Qaeda practice in other countries such as Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. The purpose of the practice was to create a bond with the tribal community, exploit kinship-based alliances, and embed the al Qaeda network

⁶⁶⁶ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 159-160.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁶⁸ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 246.

into the society. However, to the Sunni Sheikhs, these forced marriages were the equivalent of rape.⁶⁶⁹

In its search for funds, AQI branched out and began to compete for control of revenue sources "such as banditry and smuggling that had long been the province of the tribes."⁶⁷⁰ AQI also forced their way into the import-export business, the construction business, and other financial domains that had always been under control of the tribes.⁶⁷¹ Further, "AQI began to harshly punish those who used tobacco, alcohol, or pornography" as well as "assassinate prominent Anbari sheikhs who opposed them."⁶⁷² AQI used mosques for beheading operations, and then left the "headless bodies in the streets" as a gruesome warning to others not to oppose them.⁶⁷³ In short, AQI undertook a series of brutal steps which were seen as undermining the sheikhs' traditional positions of power in Anbar, and also were seen as disruptive to the sheikhs' abilities to control their tribes. The sheikhs saw that AQI was

⁶⁶⁹ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*: 171-172.

⁶⁷⁰ Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening," *Survival* 50, no. 2 (2008): 77; Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 162.

⁶⁷¹ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*: 172.

⁶⁷² Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 164.

⁶⁷³ Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008). 381.

becoming what would soon be an unstoppable political and military force in the province.⁶⁷⁴

Thus, by early to mid-2005, the Sunni tribes around the Anbari city of Ramadi had grown wary of their alliance with AQI and fearful of the growing power of the foreign group. In short, what took place in Anbar was a reversal of Kilcullen's "accidental guerrilla" theory - in that the Anbari sheikhs turned against AQI because they were the more troublesome group of foreigners. The sheikhs began to make moves toward trying to organize for the purpose of forcing AQI from their province. Organizing themselves in resistance against both AQI and the U.S. occupation, Anbari locals began attacking AQI forces in western Anbar.⁶⁷⁵ Many of the leaders of the movement were quickly assassinated by AQI operatives and the movement was largely set back. The assassinations left the area of Ramadi void of much of its top-level tribal leadership.⁶⁷⁶ Those who survived decided to quietly approach the U.S. forces and seek assistance.⁶⁷⁷ It was into this perfect storm of circumstances that Colonel Sean MacFarland stepped when his 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division,

⁶⁷⁴ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 44.

⁶⁷⁵ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 171.

⁶⁷⁶ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 42.

⁶⁷⁷ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 43.

also known as the *Ready First Brigade*, which had deployed to Ramadi in May of 2006. The situation was so bad that some saw the province of Anbar as "dire," with "no functioning Iraqi government institutions," and which was "lost" and "beyond repair."⁶⁷⁸ However, just a few weeks after MacFarland's *Ready First Brigade* deployed to Ramadi, he and key members of his staff were invited to attend a tribal council in organized by a Sunni sheikh named Sattar al-Rishawi of the Albu Risha tribe.⁶⁷⁹ The council was attended by over fifty sheikhs. Sheikh Sattar called this meeting the "Awakening Council." The outcome of the council was that the Sunni sheikhs approved a resolution to expel al Qaeda from Anbar, to form a local government, to reestablish the rule of law, and to cooperate with MacFarland's brigade.⁶⁸⁰ In turn, MacFarland promised that he and his troops "would stay as long as necessary to defeat the [AQI] terrorists."⁶⁸¹ The turnaround in Anbar that followed over the next few months would be truly remarkable.

⁶⁷⁸ Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq".

⁶⁷⁹ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 179.

⁶⁸⁰ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 248.

⁶⁸¹ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 44.

Given the size of the city of Ramadi, MacFarland's brigade was relatively small. His force was part of a multiservice force that included three Army battalions, a Marine regiment, and a few teams of Navy SEALs. Overall, it "didn't add up to much."⁶⁸² In short, MacFarland needed a much bigger force to have the level of combat power to deal with the security situation in such a large city.⁶⁸³ MacFarland obtained that force by capitalizing on the disfavor between the sheikhs and AQI "by actively courting" disgruntled Sunni tribal sheikhs in Anbar.⁶⁸⁴ Operating with the blessing and support of the sheikhs, MacFarland was able to recruit vast numbers of locals from the tribes to join the Iraqi police.⁶⁸⁵ Ultimately, some thirty-five tribes and sub-tribes joined what would become known as the "Anbar Awakening." The Iraqi police force in Anbar "expanded from 200 Iraqis who were too frightened to wear their uniforms to 7,400, and thirty police stations and substations were built or rebuilt."⁶⁸⁶ The U.S. also beefed up its military and police training programs in the

⁶⁸² Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 245.

⁶⁸³ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 43.

⁶⁸⁴ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 45.

⁶⁸⁵ Mark F. Cancian, "What Turned the Tide in Anbar?," *Military Review* 89, no. 5 (2009): 119.

⁶⁸⁶ Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*: 272.

province⁶⁸⁷ by holding one week training courses provided by Navy SEALs from the Joint Special Operations Task Force assigned to Anbar.⁶⁸⁸

MacFarland also made the decision to arm and effectively deputize the tribal defense militias, which provided security to local neighborhoods.⁶⁸⁹ This decision worried those above MacFarland in the military chain of command. It was seen as one thing for the U.S. to encourage reconciliation with Sunni tribes, but quite another to arm, equip, and pay⁶⁹⁰ militiamen who had been killing American and coalition troops just a few weeks earlier. The concern was that these tribal militiamen might rejoin the insurgency and resume killing Americans, only this time with weapons supplied by the Americans.⁶⁹¹ However, the conclusion was reached that despite the

⁶⁸⁷ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 182.

⁶⁸⁸ Christopher J. Lamb and Evan Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," in *Institute for National Strategic Studies, Strategic Perspectives No. 4*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 31.

⁶⁸⁹ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 49.

⁶⁹⁰ The issue of pay to Iraqi militias deserves some clarification, as conventional wisdom holds that the U.S. paid the militias to switch sides. During MacFarland's operational period in Anbar, co-opted Sunnis were paid out of the Iraqi government's budget. Later, when Petraeus would create the "Sons of Iraq" as way to employ the Anbar model for counterinsurgency operations in Baghdad, the Sunni militia men were paid from the American military's cash fund. See Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 262.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

risks, the potential gains against al Qaeda were tremendous and could not be passed up.⁶⁹²

As the number of police grew, so did their coverage. In Ramadi, the Iraqi police were able to permeate every neighborhood, causing great fear in AQI because the local Anbari police "knew who belonged and who did not," and also held "local linkages to the populace that procured tips and information unavailable to outsiders."⁶⁹³ As the numbers of police swelled, so did the number of intelligence tips regarding AQI safe houses, weapons caches, and the like.⁶⁹⁴ The increased intelligence resulted in increased captures and killings of key AQI insurgents.⁶⁹⁵

The U.S. also changed its standard operating tactics. Forces moved out of their large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and instead established small combat outposts throughout Anbar.⁶⁹⁶ American troops and their Iraqi

⁶⁹² John F. Burns and Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. Arming Sunnis in Iraq to Battle Old Qaeda Allies," *New York Times* (2007), <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶⁹³ Cancian, "What Turned the Tide in Anbar?," 119.

⁶⁹⁴ Joby Warrick and Robin Wright, "U.S. Teams Weaken Insurgency in Iraq," *Washington Post* (2008), http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-09-06/world/36869600_1_salim-abdallah-ashur-abu-uthman-iraqi-insurgents.

⁶⁹⁵ Carter Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003 - January 2007," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 257.

⁶⁹⁶ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 43.

counterparts began living and eating side by side,⁶⁹⁷ which enhanced cohesion between them.

Realizing the importance of the sheikhs who had joined in support of the U.S., MacFarland took great lengths to "ensure the survival of the tribal leaders who had 'flipped'."⁶⁹⁸ He "stationed tanks at key intersections near their houses and put drone aircraft circling over their homes to keep an eye out for attacks."⁶⁹⁹ Additionally, the U.S. moved away from the practice of vehicular patrols and began to extensively engage in foot patrols with Iraqi soldiers, police and militia, which helped establish regular contact and develop relationships with the local Iraqis.⁷⁰⁰ The combining of operations and living conditions enabled Iraqis and Americans "to learn from each other about Iraqi culture, about weapons maintenance, and about leadership."⁷⁰¹ The impact of these changes began to manifest themselves in the overall attitude of ordinary Iraqis. Once they began to think of the U.S. as a

⁶⁹⁷ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 65.

⁶⁹⁸ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 43.

⁶⁹⁹ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 64.

⁷⁰⁰ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 180.

⁷⁰¹ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 64.

reliable partner rather than a domineering occupier, their attitudes toward the Americans became increasingly positive.⁷⁰²

In addition to developing a relationship with the sheikhs and using them as the conduit to increase recruits for the Iraqi military and police forces, MacFarland completely altered the U.S. approach to financing reconstruction projects in Ramadi. He realized that the American competitive free market approach, in which competing contracts went to the lowest bidder, was actually being counter-productive because it was undermining the tribal system of patronage. John McCary, a human intelligence (HUMINT) collector who deployed to Anbar, explains:

*Sheikhs traditionally maintain the fealty of their subordinates by providing for them financially. They needed the leeway to funnel funding for reconstruction projects to lesser sheikhs within their tribe in order to reinforce a system of patronage. These higher sheikhs could then ask for cooperation in the form of volunteers for security forces.*⁷⁰³

Recognizing that the American system was actually denying the higher level sheikhs a consistent source of

⁷⁰² Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 44.

⁷⁰³ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 50.

revenue and the ability to control that revenue, and thus working against U.S. goals, MacFarland began using the Sunni tribal sheikhs as a conduit for contracting funds. This policy ran counter to the standard practice throughout the rest of Iraq of using contract bids or the routing the funds through the Iraqi central government.⁷⁰⁴ MacFarland's change in practice poured much needed money into the local communities, providing jobs and increased financial stability for Iraqi families. In all, some \$300 million was spent across all of Anbar in an effort "to repair war damage, compensate property owners and finance start-up businesses."⁷⁰⁵ It also increased the power of the tribal sheikhs.

As has been stated earlier in this dissertation, U.S. COIN strategy, as epitomized in FM 3-24, can be presented in the summary frame of *Clear, Hold, and Build*. As it relates to the task of building, MacFarland's goal was to re-build the infrastructure in a way that would sustain the success that was achieved by the combined U.S.-Iraqi effort in Anbar. To this end, he strove to begin rebuilding at the beginning of each clearing operation in

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁰⁵ John F. Burns, "U.S. Hopes Success in Anbar, Iraq can be Repeated," *New York Times* (2007), <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/08/world/africa/08iht-assess.1.6547431.html?pagewanted=all>.

a way that would return the infrastructure to pre-war normalcy as quickly as possible. In Ramadi, for example, the U.S. began working with the Iraqi tribes and the city mayor in a way that allowed power stations, sewer systems, schools, and hospitals all to become operational in one part of Ramadi while combat operations were continuing in another. These actions helped convince Iraqis living in Ramadi that municipal services could function once again and thereby Iraqis who were living in still-embattled neighborhoods were encouraged to join the Awakening movement.⁷⁰⁶

In sum, U.S. working with the sheikhs shifted power and influence away from AQI and back to the province's traditional sheikh leadership. Further, the growth of the Anbari police forces and the use of the sheikhs as a conduit for construction and restoration projects "delivered thousands of jobs to the local population."⁷⁰⁷ The U.S. military's actions scaled back what had previously been a more U.S.-centric, aggressive, and domineering approach to COIN in Anbar. The result was a significant increase in Anbari stability and security because the Anbaris were the ones who were doing the bulk

⁷⁰⁶ Smith and MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," 51.

⁷⁰⁷ Rabasa et al., *From Insurgency to Stability Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*: 181.

of the traditional, population-centric counterinsurgency work.

In addition to the incorporation and empowerment of the tribal sheikhs, the turn-around in Anbar was also the result of the involvement of U.S. Special Operations Forces, which were conducting surgical hits against key AQI high value targets. In short, these teams capitalized on the timely intelligence provided by the newly robust and sheikh-supported Iraqi police to knock AQI off-balance and cause it to be put on the defensive.

Beginning in May, 2006, which was about the same time MacFarland's brigade was deploying to Anbar, the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command embarked on a series of highly classified operations aimed at locating, targeting, and killing key individuals within the most extreme groups that made up the Iraq insurgency. While known only to a very few individuals within the military, this program of selective, surgical strikes was described as "the biggest factor" in reducing the levels of violence in Iraq.⁷⁰⁸ This program of selective strikes against high value targets undoubtedly multiplied the effectiveness of the steps taken by the *Ready First Brigade* in Anbar.

⁷⁰⁸ Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*: 380.

These teams, described as "fusion cells,"⁷⁰⁹ were not comprised of just special operations commandos. They were a collection of special operations assault teams, military support, intelligence and representatives from other government agencies. These teams worked in a collaborative effort to use simultaneously "every tool available... from signal intercepts to human intelligence and other methods, that allowed lightning-quick and sometimes concurrent operations."⁷¹⁰ Their main targets were the "terrorist and insurgent networks."⁷¹¹

Upon his arrival in Ramadi, MacFarland immediately began coordinating his counterinsurgency efforts with those of "TF 714 SEAL," the SOF Task Force assigned to Anbar.⁷¹² He made sure that his staff and the SOF Task Force "exchanged targeting files and prisoners and sat in on each others' targeting meetings, eventually leading to a seamless targeting process."⁷¹³ As more tribes flipped,

⁷⁰⁹ Lamb and Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," 5.

⁷¹⁰ Bob Woodward, "Why Did Violence Plummet? It Wasn't Just the Surge," *Washington Post* (2008), http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-09-08/world/36848691_1_al-qaeda-violence-intelligence-agencies.

⁷¹¹ Lamb and Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," 6.

⁷¹² Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Group (USA), Inc., 2013). 242.

⁷¹³ Lamb and Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," 29.

tribal fighters joined the security forces "en masse."⁷¹⁴ This produced a "snowball effect."⁷¹⁵ As more Ramadis signed up for the local police, the SOF HVT targeting teams obtained more actionable intelligence from Iraqi sources, which led to more HVT operations against AQI. Fresh intel tips were channeled to quick reaction special operations assault teams that responded "aggressively against reported terrorist targets – often multiple times in a single night."⁷¹⁶ Initially, AQI retaliated by "brutally attack[ing] any tribe around Ramadi inclined to support the coalition," but "by taking out terrorists," the SOF Task Force "scared the bejeebers out of them [AQI] and provided a critical enabler that gave the tribes breathing space."⁷¹⁷ MacFarland worked "to keep up the pressure, so that the enemy [AQI], once knocked off balance, couldn't regain the initiative."⁷¹⁸ As more of AQI's key operatives were neutralized, the attacks against

⁷¹⁴ David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009). 127.

⁷¹⁵ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 67.

⁷¹⁶ Warrick and Wright, "U.S. Teams Weaken Insurgency in Iraq".

⁷¹⁷ Lamb and Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," 30.

⁷¹⁸ Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*: 66.

Iraqis and coalition forces became both less numerous and less effective.⁷¹⁹

In February, 2007, soon after being named as the Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq, General Petraeus traveled to Ramadi to observe first-hand the transformation that was taking place there. Petraeus, who had overseen the just-published U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual, asked MacFarland if he had read it. When MacFarland replied that he had not, Petraeus is said to have responded, "That's all right, you don't have to. You've been doing it."⁷²⁰ Petraeus then sought to take the Anbari model of counterinsurgency and replicate it across Iraq as a way to stabilize the levels of violence, especially in Baghdad.⁷²¹

By the end of August, 2007, the effect of MacFarland's strategy was dramatic. Attacks across Anbar had fallen to "roughly a tenth" of what they had been, and "construction clatter and the slosh of wet concrete" had replaced the sound of gunfire and exploding bombs.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁷²⁰ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 249.

⁷²¹ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 67.

⁷²² Alissa J. Rubin and Damien Cave, "In a Force for Iraqi Calm, Seeds of Conflict," *New York Times* (2007),

Yet, from a theoretical perspective, how exactly did the most violent province in Iraq become pacified so quickly? What can the counterinsurgency operation in Ramadi teach us with regard to discovering the key elements useful for the U.S. in future counterinsurgency operations? The next section of this dissertation will explore the lessons of Ramadi.

Analysis of Counterinsurgency in Anbar, 2006-2007

The so-called *Anbar Awakening* has received much attention and is commonly hailed as an event which "developed just as [President] Bush was committing nearly 30,000 additional troops to Iraq in a bid to regain control of Baghdad and the 'belt' areas that surround it."⁷²³ Thus, common wisdom asserts that the Awakening happened as a result of the surge, which is what turned the tide away from an inevitable U.S. defeat in both Anbar and the greater Iraq. As it relates to Anbar, this view is incorrect. The Anbar Awakening and President Bush's 2007 surge were actually two separate events. One example brings this to light. In August, 2006, the Anbari police,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/23/world/middleeast/23awakening.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁷²³ Burns, "U.S. Hopes Success in Anbar, Iraq can be Repeated".

after receiving legitimization from the tribal sheikhs and training and weapons support from the U.S. military, drove off an al Qaeda attack against a newly built Iraqi police station. This occurred some five months before President Bush had even made the decision to surge U.S. forces.⁷²⁴ When the surge troops allotted for Anbar finally arrived to add to the relatively small American footprint in Anbar in mid-2007, they only increased the Anbari force size by about 10 percent.⁷²⁵

Thus, given that the U.S. footprint in Anbar was small relative to the area it was responsible for,⁷²⁶ the so-called "flip" of the tribes was not due to the proper ratio of soldiers to insurgents as called for by Galula's theory. Neither were the tribal flips the result of the proper ratio of soldiers to population, as called for in FM 3-24 and discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. The increased stability in Ramadi had less to do with the number of troops associated with MacFarland's *Ready First Brigade* or with the surge than with the strategic decision to use U.S. assets to *support* the local leaders in the

⁷²⁴ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 247.

⁷²⁵ Cancian, "What Turned the Tide in Anbar?," 19.

⁷²⁶ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 245.

region.⁷²⁷ After all, the U.S. military had tried counterinsurgency pacification operations in both the First and Second Battles of Fallujah, and in *Operation Matador*. These pacification operations were conventional in nature and dominated by U.S. forces. However, once the tribal sheikhs were empowered, through the arming of their militias and the funneling of money and contracts through them, the Anbari people began to do the counterinsurgency effort's heavy lifting, with the U.S. military providing support as needed. Consider the following quote by the leader of the Anbar Awakening:

*Our American friends had not understood us when they came. They were proud, stubborn people and so were we. They worked with the opportunists, now they have turned to the tribes, and this is as it should be.*⁷²⁸

-Sheikh Sattar

Upon examination, the arrangement between the U.S. military and the Iraqi people can be seen as resembling the U.S. effort in El Salvador in the 1980s. In short, as has been argued by Carter Malkasian, who served as a counterinsurgency advisor in Anbar province while MacFarland's forces were deployed there, "The rise of

⁷²⁷ McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 51.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., 43.

certain Sunni tribes in al Anbar against al Qaeda in Iraq.. *had little to do with U.S. counterinsurgency tactics*"⁷²⁹ (emphasis added). Indeed, while the U.S. provided support in the form of training, weapons, and funds to the Anbaris, the actual population-centric security and pacification operations were undertaken to primarily by the Iraqis themselves, with support by U.S. troops. Thus, it can be said that one of the keys to MacFarland's success was that he *de-Americanized* the war effort in the sense that the American military quit trying to run the entire show, as had been the case in *Operation Matador* and the battles for Fallujah. The result of the Iraqis conducting the COIN heavy lifting was a turning of Anbar's fortunes that "rose and rallied so abruptly and rapidly in the fall of 2006 that the most alert observers, back in the States and even elsewhere in Iraq, barely detected the rumbles."⁷³⁰

In addition to supporting the Anbari sheikhs and relying on the Iraqi police and tribal militias to provide the lion's share of security for the Iraqi people, the U.S. assisted the Anbari tribes in closing down the

⁷²⁹ Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003 - January 2007," 257.

⁷³⁰ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 245.

political space AQI needed to be able to operate. For years, Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party had supported the Anbari tribes with funding and equipment and had relied upon them for internal security. Thus, the tribal sheikhs were used to holding power and influence in their regions.⁷³¹ However, when Saddam was overthrown, and Paul Bremer fired all Ba'athists from government service and started handing out rebuilding contracts to foreign companies, the tribal sheikhs lost both power and influence. Further, U.S. military doctrine related to Phase IV Stability Operations, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, focuses on restoring a market economy. However, in Anbar the tribal sheikhs operated the economy based upon favors and graft, hardly compatible with free-market principles. Prior to MacFarland's arrival, the U.S. had been trying to force a free-market economy on Anbar. This too, was highly disruptive to sheikh power and influence. Hence, the only logical thing for the sheikhs to do was join AQI in their fight against the American occupation.

The result of the tribal support of AQI is that the sheikhs voluntarily opened up the political space the foreign fighters of al Qaeda needed to operate against the

⁷³¹ Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 73-74.

Americans. The available political space also provided for neighborhood support in the form of safe-houses for AQI as well as free reign of the routes from Syria where more and more foreign fighters infiltrated into Iraq to join the war effort.

As AQI became stronger in Anbar, the sheikhs began to see the foreign global insurgent organization as becoming an occupying, hostile force and a real threat to their long-term power, control of the local economy, and continued rule in the region. The tribal governing structure was still in place, but had become weakened. The sheikhs reasoned that eventually the U.S. would leave and AQI would remain and hold all power. Thus, it was in the better long-term interest of the tribal sheikhs that they sought to rid themselves of the global insurgent group and its intransigent view of a proper Muslim society.⁷³² The result was that the sheikhs turned to the U.S. for support, which as outlined earlier in this chapter, resulted in a total collapse of the political space available for AQI to operate in. Once Anbari tribal society stopped supporting AQI, that organization's effectiveness was drastically reduced.

⁷³² McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," 43-44.

In addition to primary responsibilities for population security shifting to the Anbari police and tribal militias and the closing of political space in which AQI had been able to operate, the surgical amputation strikes against AQI cells also played a major role in the turnaround of Anbar.

In the sprint of 2006, Ramadi was easily classified as the most dangerous city in Iraq as it was "experiencing three times more attacks each day, per capita, than any other location in Iraq."⁷³³ But, after a mere 9 months it was turned "into one of the greatest success stories of the American occupation."⁷³⁴ This was accomplished by coupling strikes against AQI's high value targets with a locally driven, locally directed counterinsurgency campaign receiving support and advice from American troops. The amputation strikes disrupted the operations of AQI, caused attrition within their operational networks, and rendered the organization ineffective, allowing the space for the traditional tribal political structure to return to its position of full pre-invasion strength and influence.

⁷³³ Lamb and Munsing, "Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation," 28.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

The Anbar Awakening is often characterized as nothing more than the U.S. trading cash to the Sunni militias for a decrease in attacks against American forces.⁷³⁵ This is a limited view of what happened in Anbar. The policies established by Bremer's CPA actually made it easier for AQI to establish such a firm presence in Anbar among the tribes and to enjoy the cooperation of the weakened tribal sheikhs. The Anbar turn-around resulted from the U.S. military empowering the sheikhs and supporting the traditional tribal governing structures, allowing the Iraqis to do the heavy lifting of providing security for the Iraqi people and rebuilding their war-torn infrastructure. This allowed the U.S. to conduct a relentless campaign of intelligence-driven special operations direct action strikes against AQI cell members throughout Anbar. The result was a drop in the average number of attacks in Ramadi from 30-35 per day in early 2007 to less than one per day by the following June.⁷³⁶ Like the success the Phoenix program had in breaking up the VCI and the success the counterinsurgency campaign in El Salvador had in preventing the FMLN from overthrowing the Salvadoran government, the Anbar case shows that if

⁷³⁵ Sam Dagher, "Will 'Armloads' of US Cash Buy Tribal Loyalty?," *Christian Science Monitor*(2007), <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1108/p01s04-wome.html>.

⁷³⁶ Burns, "U.S. Hopes Success in Anbar, Iraq can be Repeated".

the U.S. military is willing to keep its footprint small, support to the counterinsurgency goals and methods of the host nation, keep its focus on strikes against the insurgent group's high value targets, and is willing to provide training and aid to the host nation's forces while resisting the temptation to take over and Americanize the effort, positive outcomes have a chance to emerge.

CHAPTER 9

Proposing a New Theoretical Approach to COIN

From Winning "Hearts and Minds" To Causing "A Loss of Balance"

It has been argued that the strategy of the global insurgent, at least in the case of al Qaeda, is to draw the U.S. into multiple small wars of insurgency that drain American resources and political power.⁷³⁷ Further, it has been argued that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have indeed signaled a waning of American global dominance and have underscored the limits of U.S. power.⁷³⁸ Joseph Nye has long argued that in a globalized, interdependent world, traditional "hard" military power becomes less effective.⁷³⁹ However, in his latest work, Nye advocates the use of "smart power."⁷⁴⁰ For Nye, "smart power is the combination of the hard power of coercion and payment with the soft power of persuasion and attraction."⁷⁴¹ So, the

⁷³⁷ Bruce Reidel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010). 121-122.

⁷³⁸ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 10.

⁷³⁹ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2001). 9-10.

⁷⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs Books, 2011).

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

central question seems to be: What is the military's role in a strategy that employs smart power? Can the U.S. military employ and use "smart power" as part of its counterinsurgency strategy rather than the large footprint, population-centric approach that has been the thrust of U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine since the promulgation of FM 3-24? In other words, can the U.S. military still effectively combat insurgents without adhering to the "oil spot" principle and nation-building?

This dissertation attempts to demonstrate that the answer to these questions is a resounding "yes." However, rather than focus on winning the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the local population, the U.S. military's counterinsurgency strategy should focus on causing a loss of balance by the insurgent. In all cases studied - the VCI in Vietnam, the FMLN in El Salvador, and AQI in Anbar Province in Iraq, the insurgent organizations were knocked off balance by the counterinsurgent. This concept, as a part of a larger strategy of warfare, was developed by Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645), who was one of Japan's most renowned warriors.

Musashi is known to the Japanese as *Kensei* or "Sword Saint."⁷⁴² In his *Book of Five Rings*, written in 1645, he wrote:

*Many things can cause a loss of balance. One is danger, another is hardship, and another is surprise. You must research this. In large-scale strategy it is important to cause a loss of balance. Attack without warning where the enemy is not expecting it, and while his spirit is undecided follow up your advantage and, having the lead, defeat him. Or, in a single combat, start by making a show of being slow, then suddenly attack strongly. Without allowing him space for breath to recover from the fluctuation of spirit, you must grasp the opportunity to win.*⁷⁴³

For Musashi, causing an enemy to lose balance would then throw him into confusion. He wrote:

To throw into confusion—this means making the enemy lose resolve. In large-scale strategy, we can use our troops to confuse the enemy on the field. Observing the enemy's spirit, we can make him think, "Here? There? Like that? Like this? Slow? Fast?" Victory is certain when the enemy is caught up in a rhythm which confuses his spirit. In single combat, we can confuse the enemy by attacking with varied techniques when the chance

⁷⁴² William Scott Wilson, *The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2004). 7.

⁷⁴³ Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1974). 77.

*arises. Feint a thrust or cut, or make the enemy think you are going to close with him, and when he is confused you can easily win. This is the essence of fighting, and you must research it deeply.*⁷⁴⁴

Musashi's advice is more applicable to developing a strategy for defeating the global, non-territorial insurgent than is that of Galula for four main reasons. These are (1) differences in the type of insurgency the U.S. has encountered since 9/11 and will continue to encounter in the twenty-first century; (2) differences in the insurgent's strategy; (3) differences in the centers of gravity; and (4) differences in what is of primary concern for the counterinsurgent.

When one examines the strategy of the insurgent during the time of Galula, it was to start with the "strategic defensive" and increase the level of support from the local population until the insurgent could recruit and field a large enough army to go on the "strategic offensive." The strategy of the global insurgent is to draw his powerful enemy into small wars that will "bleed" him both of blood and treasure. Where the center of gravity for the insurgent in a nationalist

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., 79.

insurgency is the support of the local population, the center of gravity in a contemporary global insurgency is the insurgent's organizational structure, which encompasses his ability to fund operations; his communications network; his charismatic and talented leadership; his ability to train those wishing to join the insurgency, and his access to international travel. Indeed, in his classic work, *Modern Warfare*, Roger Trinquier recognized that the insurgent organization was the center of gravity and advised that in seeking a solution to a war of insurgency, the counterinsurgent must understand that he is "not up against just a few armed bands spread across a given territory, but rather against an *armed clandestine organization*" (emphasis included in original).⁷⁴⁵ Where the primary strategic concern for the counterinsurgent in a nationalist insurgency is to prevent the insurgent from increasing territorial control and the resulting vertical escalation of insurgent violence within the country, the primary strategic concern for the counterinsurgent in a global insurgency is to prevent horizontal escalation of terrorist violence across borders and regions, of the type demonstrated by the attacks in

⁷⁴⁵ Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* [La Guerre Moderne], trans. Daniel Lee (London, UK: Pall Mall Press, Ltd, 1964). 8-9.

Kenya, Tanzania, New York & Washington, D.C., Bali, and Madrid.

It has been heavily argued by both academics and policymakers that addressing these concerns will take a holistic or "whole of government" approach using many different state and non-state agencies.⁷⁴⁶ The whole of government concept for a sound counterinsurgency strategy "requires unity of effort within each governmental department at all levels."⁷⁴⁷ While there is currently much debate regarding the applicability of the whole of government approach to COIN, it is important to note that this approach may be the general direction toward which COIN strategy is evolving, as evidenced by the employment of fusion cells in Iraq. Indeed, in 2009, former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates adopted the concept in the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report.⁷⁴⁸ The focus here is not on the merits of the whole of government approach, but on the U.S. military's specific

⁷⁴⁶ Scott A. Smitson, "A Structural Contingency Analysis of the "Whole of Government" Approach to the Mau Mau Rebellion," in *2012 Midwest Political Science Association Conference* (Chicago, IL2012), 3.

⁷⁴⁷ Nathan Ray Springer, *Stabilizing the Debate between Population and Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency: Success Demands a Balanced Approach*, ed. Daniel Marston, Art of War Papers (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press 2012). 24.

⁷⁴⁸ Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Recommends 'Whole of Government' National Security Plans," *Washington Post* (2009), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/01/AR2009020101964.html>.

role in a counterinsurgency campaign against a global, transnational, non-territorial insurgent organization such as AQI. Very often the role of the military in a campaign against a national, territorially-based insurgent organization involves using conventional ground forces to "re-establish security and the rule of law,"⁷⁴⁹ which is very much in keeping with classical counterinsurgency theory.

When dealing with the new type of global, transnational, non-territorial insurgency, a new and different counterinsurgency doctrine needs to be devised. In this new, twenty-first century situation, the way to use military "smart power" is to address the four concerns listed above while at the same time following Musashi's edicts. This revised COIN doctrine must acknowledge that the centers of gravity in a global insurgency are vastly different from those of a national and territorial-based insurgency. While each of the centers of gravity listed in the framework above and detailed in chapter 5 do fall within the "sphere of interest" of the U.S. government,

⁷⁴⁹ Octavian Manea, "Counterinsurgency as a Whole of Government Approach," *Small Wars Journal* (2011), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/657-manea.pdf>.

not all of them fall within the "sphere of influence" of the U.S. military.⁷⁵⁰

If one focuses on the above-mentioned centers of gravity, the one which falls within the sphere of influence of the U.S. military is the insurgent organization's key leadership. This is a potentially high value target. Since the highly publicized special operations direct action strike which resulted in the killing of Osama bin Laden in May, 2011, and the recent publicity regarding targeted killings against other key insurgent leaders using either special operations assault teams or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drone aircraft, the question of the effectiveness and propriety of these so-called "decapitation strikes" is of central interest at both the academic and policy-making levels.

On the surface, it seems intuitive from a purely military perspective that the skill sets possessed by U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) and the force multiplying effects of UAV operations can be used above all methods to cause the global insurgent's organization structure to lose his balance and its members to be thrown into

⁷⁵⁰ Sidney T. Ellington, "Special Operations in Littoral Warfare," ed. Department of Defense (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School 1995), 70.

confusion. It seems clear that one key military element in waging contemporary global counterinsurgency campaign will be special operations. This, however, runs contrary to Galula's warning that "small commando-type operations ... cannot represent the main form of the counterinsurgent's warfare."⁷⁵¹ Yet, there are practical reasons why Galula's warning is out of date. These reasons are exactly why the Obama Administration has used special operations missions as the military focus for conducting the war in Afghanistan.

Special Operations Forces and UAVs or drones, with their surgical strike capabilities, have repeatedly disrupted the global insurgent's activities, created confusion, eliminated both dynamic and visionary leaders as well as other key personnel, and thus caused visible and undeniable losses of balance. As of late, U.S. SOF have enjoyed a string of successful kill/capture missions. Similarly, the U.S. has increased its use of drone strikes in the Middle East. According to the New America Foundation, the U.S. conducted 349 UAV strike operations in Pakistan and 84 additional strikes in Yemen between

⁷⁵¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 73.

2008 and July 8, 2013.⁷⁵² The most infamous of these drone strikes was the September, 2011 strike in Yemen that killed American citizens Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan. Awlaki and Khan were founders and editors of the al Qaeda's English-language online magazine *Inspire*, the purpose of which was to motivate and inspire aspiring young jihadists in America and Britain.⁷⁵³ While the primary focus of these strikes has been to decapitate al Qaeda and Taliban leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the regional scope of these targeted strikes is expanding, as the al-Awalaki/Khan hit attests. There have also been reported drone strikes in Mali.⁷⁵⁴ Indeed, the Obama Administration is currently examining the possibility of extending the use of drone strikes and special operations kill-or-capture missions to include missions against non-al Qaeda affiliated groups such as the al-Nusra Front in Syria and Ansar al-Sharia, which has been linked to the

⁷⁵² Peter Bergen et al., "Drone Wars Dataset," *Drone Wars* (2013), <http://natsec.newamerica.net/about>.

⁷⁵³ Peter Finn, "Inspire, al-Qaeda's English-Language Magazine, Returns without Editor Alwaki," *Washington Post* (2012), http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-05-02/world/35456656_1_awlaki-english-language-online-magazine-samir-khan.

⁷⁵⁴ Raf Sanchez, "US 'to deploy drones to launch air strikes against al-Qaeda in Mali'," *The Telegraph* (2012), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/mali/9582612/US-to-deploy-drones-to-launch-air-strikes-against-al-Qaeda-in-Mali.html>; Bill Roggio and Lisa Lundquist, "Did the US launch a drone strike on AQIM in northern Mali?," *Long War Journal* (2012), http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/06/did_the_us_launch_a_drone_stri.php.

September, 2012 attack on a U.S. diplomatic post in Benghazi, Libya.⁷⁵⁵

Ultimately, the ability of the global insurgent to coordinate his large-scale terrorist attacks has been vastly reduced. This limitation was most profoundly brought to light when the documents seized from Osama bin Laden's home in Abbottabad, Pakistan revealed just how weak al Qaeda had become since the 9/11 attacks. Al Qaeda correspondence that was recovered during the raid "shows bin Laden and his lieutenants lamenting al Qaeda's lack of funds and the constant casualties from U.S. drone strikes."⁷⁵⁶ Yet, despite this type of anecdotal evidence indicating that there may be positive effects of decapitation strikes and targeted killings, many scholars of insurgency and terrorism have questioned the overall outcome or impact to an insurgent movement once the group experiences either leadership decapitation or suffers a series of targeted killings.

At the time of this writing, there are a limited (but growing) number of scholars who have written on the topics

⁷⁵⁵ Greg Miller and Karen DeYoung, "Administration Debates Stretching 9/11 Law to go after al Qaeda Offshoots," *Washington Post* (2013), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/administration-debates-stretching-911-law-to-go-after-new-al-qaeda-offshoots/2013/03/06/fd2574a0-85e5-11e2-9d71-f0feafdd1394_story.html.

⁷⁵⁶ William McCants, "Al Qaeda's Challenge: The Jihadists' War With Islamist Democrats," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): 30.

of leadership decapitation and targeted killings. While not all of the literature applies directly to the impacts of decapitation operations and targeted killings against insurgent leadership, many writings provide useful insights for the purposes of this dissertation. Of the literature currently available, the scholars who question the effectiveness of targeted killings and leadership decapitation strikes outnumber those who argue that the tactic can be an effective tool in a counterinsurgency campaign. Overall, and despite the importance of understanding the role of leadership decapitation or targeted killing operations as part of a counterinsurgency strategy, the subject remains understudied. This is probably due to the fact that these types of operations are highly classified in nature. Also, the emergence of the transnational, non-territorial global insurgent is a fairly recent development. This type of insurgent, with his over-reliance on terrorist tactics, has blurred the lines between studies of terrorism and those of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare, which further hinders detailed academic study. Finally, it is difficult to evaluate the effects of decapitation strikes and targeted killings on groups that operate so deeply in the shadows.

The subject of targeted killings has sparked recent debate that is growing in scope. Given that two of the three cases of counterinsurgency operations examined in this dissertation employed targeted killings, namely against the VCI in Vietnam and against AQI in Anbar Province in Iraq, a quick review of the available literature is warranted. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

Targeted Killings and Leadership Decapitation: The Current Debate

*One Side of the COIN:
Leadership Decapitation Strikes and Targeted Killings are
Ineffective*

While the Persian Gulf War of 1991 may be well known for its advances in military technology through platforms such as the "stealth bomber" and "stealth fighter" aircraft, perhaps the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be best known 10 years from now for the increase in the use of targeted killings using drone aircraft and the increase in the number of "capture or kill" missions undertaken by special operations forces. As a general rule, those who have written on the topic of targeted killings, and/or leadership decapitation strikes, tend to argue that this is an ineffectual tactic at best, and counterproductive at worst.

One of the first scholars of the post-Cold War contemporary era to write of leadership targeting is Stephen Hosmer, who focused his research on U.S. decapitation strikes against enemy leaders of state since the end of World War II. He argues that decapitation

strikes against state leaders are far from being a panacea that brings about strategic victory, as removing enemy leadership via a direct action-type mission is an endeavor that is exceedingly difficult. He attributes this difficulty to the fact that "enemy leaders devote priority attention and large resources to the protection of their person and power" and have repeatedly proven themselves "hard to kill."⁷⁵⁷ He concludes that U.S. attempts at decapitation of enemy leadership have met with only limited success and that the only successful way the U.S. has been able to "remove hostile governments" has been through the use of invasion and occupation. He argues that "the demise of a targeted leader may not necessarily produce the change in enemy policy and behavior that the attacker desires."⁷⁵⁸ Further, he posits that "an ill-considered attack can produce unintended consequences that are seriously detrimental to the attacker's interests."⁷⁵⁹

The most obvious critique of Hosmer's analysis is that it is focused on state vs. state conflict rather than small wars or insurgencies. Although his analysis and overall conclusions do not apply directly to the

⁷⁵⁷ Stephen T. Hosmer, *Operations Against Enemy Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2001). 133.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

counterinsurgency focus of this dissertation, his argument that ill-conceived leadership decapitation strikes can lead to unintended consequences is important to note. It is also important to highlight that he predicts that U.S. decision-makers are likely to continue to attempt to employ decapitation strikes in future conflicts and crises "given the absence of other low-cost options for removing enemy leaders and the promising benefits that might accrue should such removal operations prove successful."⁷⁶⁰

One of the first authors to discuss decapitation strikes as it relates to small wars or counterterrorism operations is Robert Pape, who is considered one of the leading authorities on suicide terrorism. Pape has argued that targeting enemy leaders has never been effective when used as a tactic during interstate war.⁷⁶¹ He further argues "although decapitation of suicide terrorist organizations can disrupt their operations temporarily, it rarely yields long-term gains."⁷⁶² Using the situation in 2003 Afghanistan to support his point, he argued that "so far, leadership decapitation has not ended Al Qaeda's campaign," and that "although the United States

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). 316.

⁷⁶² "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 356.

successfully toppled the Taliban in Afghanistan in December 2001, Al Qaeda launched seven successful suicide terrorist attacks from April to December 2002, killing some 250 Western civilians, more than in the three years before September 11, 2001, combined."⁷⁶³

In seeking to discover the effect targeted assassinations have on cycles of violence, Mohammed Hafez and Joseph Hatfield's quantitative analysis of Palestinian attacks against Israel leads them to conclude that "targeted assassinations do not decrease rates of Palestinian violence" either in the short term or the long run.⁷⁶⁴ The second finding of the study is that contrary to some who have argued that targeted killings can spur an increase in retaliatory strikes by the insurgents, the Israeli campaign of targeted killings of Palestinian leaders did not increase the rates of Palestinian violence.⁷⁶⁵

Another highly esteemed terrorism scholar who argues against the effectiveness of decapitation strikes is Bruce Hoffman of the RAND Corporation, who is considered by most

⁷⁶³ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁴ Mohammed M. Hafez and Joseph Hatfield, "Do Targeted Assassinations Work? A Multivariate Analysis of Israel's Controversial Tactic during Al-Aqsa Uprising," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 4 (2006): 361.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

who are familiar with terrorism studies to be one of the world's leading authorities on the subject. Speaking before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities in 2006, Hoffman argued that from a historical perspective, "decapitation strategies have rarely worked in countering mass mobilization terrorist or insurgent campaigns"⁷⁶⁶ and that "despite the damage and destruction and losses of key leaders and personnel that al Qaeda has suffered over the past four-plus years, it stubbornly adheres to its fundamental *raison d'être*: continuing to inspire and motivate the broader radical jihadi community."⁷⁶⁷

Meanwhile, David Byman points out in his study of Israel's use of targeted killings against Hamas that the strategy has several shortfalls. He argues that terrorist groups retaliate when their leaders are killed, that true decapitation is not possible against decentralized groups, that targeted killings create martyrs that help a group frame its issue and sell its cause to the people, that a strategy of targeted killing can undermine the possibility of peace negotiations, that the practice raises legal and

⁷⁶⁶ Bruce Hoffman, *Combating Al Qaeda and the Militant Islamic Threat*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND_CT255.pdf. 2.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

moral issues, and that the practice inevitably leads to the death of innocent bystanders.⁷⁶⁸ Thus, Byman argues, "the United States should not blindly follow Israel's lead in targeted killings."⁷⁶⁹ His conclusion is based on both practical and normative grounds. His main reason for taking this position include the federal "assassination ban,"⁷⁷⁰ better known as Executive Order 11905, which prohibits "agencies of the U.S. government from participating in assassination plots."⁷⁷¹ Other reasons Byman cites include the risk the U.S. runs in diminishing its global status as an upholder of the rule of law; the fear that if used with too much frequency other nations would follow the U.S. lead and targeted killings would become a widely used tactic; the fact that using targeted killings would be "ineffective and ultimately unsustainable" if attempted on a global scale; that the U.S. is morally bound to respect another nation's sovereignty; and that "the U.S. must consider the goodwill of its [global] allies more than Israel does."⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁸ Daniel Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2006): 99-101.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷¹ Stephen F. Knott, *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). 171.

⁷⁷² Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 106-108.

While many of the studies regarding the targeting of specific individuals in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations tend to focus on Israel, such as those listed above, one recent attempt at quantitative analysis of leadership targeting is presented by Jenna Jordan, who seeks to discover the specific circumstances in which decapitation is effective, and whether or not it leads to the collapse or significant degradation of the organization. In her examination of 298 incidents of leadership decapitation from 1945-2004, she finds that older and larger groups are likely to withstand the removal of their leadership,⁷⁷³ and that overall "decapitation does not increase the likelihood of organizational collapse beyond a baseline rate of collapse for groups over time."⁷⁷⁴ On the question of organizational degradation, she finds the results mixed and inconclusive.⁷⁷⁵ She concludes that "despite a tremendous amount of optimism toward the success of decapitation, there is very little evidence on whether and when removing leaders will result in organizational

⁷⁷³ Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," 722.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., 723.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.

collapse"⁷⁷⁶ and that overall, "leadership decapitation seems to be a misguided strategy"⁷⁷⁷

Or Honig's study of targeted killing, which he terms "strategic assassination," approaches the tactic from a slightly different angle. Rather than attempting to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the use of targeted killings, or arguing that the policy is ineffective and should be abandoned, Honig's examination of Israel's tactical use of "strategic assassination" concludes that it fails to produce consistently positive results due to Israel's systematic misuse of the tactic.⁷⁷⁸ He states that Israel's use of strategic assassination against senior and mid-level leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations has actually decreased Israeli national security because these operations have been conducted in a manner that is "insufficiently discriminate" with regard to timing of the strikes, attention to the target's political opinions, consideration of the target's organizational affiliation, degree of attentiveness to domestic political repercussions, and regard for the

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 721.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., 754.

⁷⁷⁸ Or Honig, "Explaining Israel's Misuse of Strategic Assassinations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 6 (2007): 563.

transparency of Israel's responsibility.⁷⁷⁹ He states that a more discriminate employment of targeted killings might enhance their effectiveness and render them as potentially "the best means to deal with the low-level tactical echelons in those cases where performing an arrest is too complicated and risky."⁷⁸⁰

Matt Frankel follows a similar line of thinking as that offered by Honig. Frankel focuses on what he terms "high value targeting (HVT)" operations versus "targeted killing" operations—the difference being that Frankel includes "capture" as well as "kill" operation in his study. Further, Frankel does not limit his study to only leadership, but also includes other key operatives who possess unique skill-sets, such as bomb-makers or recruiters. While he argues that, historically, the U.S. has struggled to achieve strategic success through HVT operations; with the incorporation of historical lessons learned, the success rate of these operations could be improved.⁷⁸¹ These lessons are: (1) that HVT campaigns are most effective against groups that are organized hierarchically with strong leaders; (2) that HVT campaigns

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., 564-569.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 574.

⁷⁸¹ Matt Frankel, "The A.B.Cs of H.V.T: Key Lessons from High Value Targeting Campaigns Against Insurgents and Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 1 (2010): 17.

do not work as a sole strategy, but must be included as part of a larger counterinsurgency campaign; (3) that the operations with the best chance of success are undertaken by indigenous forces rather than U.S. forces; (4) that HVT success in missions carried out by the U.S. are difficult to achieve; (5) that capture is preferred to killing the HVT; and (6) that it is critical that the U.S. have a clear understanding of the insurgent group's organization dynamics and must make sure that the correct individuals are being targeted.⁷⁸² The three lessons learned from his study of 20 specific HVT operations since World War II are that these types of operations must be undertaken in conjunction with the host nation forces, that success of HVT operations is improved when the top tier of targets is hit in short and rapid succession, and that the key nodes in any organization do not begin and end with just leadership, as the group can contain other individuals whose skills cannot be easily replaced and their removal can also have a severely damaging impact upon group operations.⁷⁸³

In summary, the published literature reveals a range of views regarding surgical targeting of key nodes within

⁷⁸² Ibid., 19-27.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., 27.

terrorist and insurgent groups. While some writers have focused specifically on targeted killings of leadership, others have included the killing of key players whose unique skills make them a critical member of the group. Still others have begun to include capture missions as part of an overall strategy. A number of studies focus exclusively on Israel, which is understandable since Israel has been employing the tactic more regularly and thus more data on the Israelis' use of the tactic is available. All of the above authors have argued that decapitation strikes are either counter-productive in helping governments achieve their military and political goals, are ineffective, or are not leading to positive outcomes at present because of the way the strategies are being implemented. On the whole, the recurring criticisms leveled against leadership decapitation and targeted killing operations center on the inherent difficulty of the operations themselves and their impropriety. Several authors have even used the value-laden term "assassination" when discussing the tactic. Yet, while a decapitation strike is an operation that has been planned and ordered by the government, it differs from an "assassination" in that the operation takes place in the

context of a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign.

U.S. use of drones to conduct targeted killings and special operations forces to conduct kill or capture operations against suspected insurgents has been a regular part of America's counterinsurgency campaigns since 9/11. However, President Obama has ordered a tremendous increase in the number of these operations since becoming Commander-in-Chief in 2008. In particular, the President's decision to increase the use of targeted killings through the use of drones has not only brought a firestorm of criticism aimed at his administration but has ignited a debate in academic circles as well. Yet, despite the numerous essays and articles that argue against the effectiveness of the tactic, a small number of scholars have begun to argue strongly in favor of leadership decapitation and targeted killing, particularly since the U.S. special operations direct action mission that killed Osama bin Laden. This dissertation will now turn to examine these arguments.

The Other Side of the COIN: Decapitation and Targeted Killing are Viable Strategies

Two papers published in 2012 argue that the effective implementation of leadership decapitation is a useful tool in both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies. In a 2012 study by Patrick B. Johnston, the argument is made that the general consensus regarding the ineffectiveness of decapitation strikes is premature, and that although it is not a panacea, there is a causal link between leadership decapitation strikes and subsequent positive developments in a counterinsurgency campaign. Johnston argues that the research design and methodologies used in nearly all previous studies are problematic in three general ways: these are (1) an over-reliance on "no variance" research designs, (2) a systematic use of extremely restrictive coding criteria which sets the bar "unrealistically high for decapitation to be considered successful," and (3) case selection bias.⁷⁸⁴ Johnston's quantitative Large-N study found causality between successful insurgent leadership decapitation and (a) an increased likelihood that the insurgent campaign would end quickly, (b) an increased likelihood of victory for the

⁷⁸⁴ Patrick B. Johnston, "Does Decapitation Work?: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns," *International Security* 36, no. 4 (2012): 48-49.

counterinsurgent, (c) a decrease in the intensity of insurgent violence, and (d) a reduction in the frequency of insurgent-initiated incidents.⁷⁸⁵ Further, he found that leadership decapitation had the same effects on all types of insurgencies, whether they were identified as religious-based insurgencies or were driven by a Marxist ideology.⁷⁸⁶

Another scholar who advocates the usefulness of leadership decapitation is Bryan Price, who argues that the tactic "significantly increases the mortality rate of terrorist groups, even after controlling for other factors." Price sees groups who employ terrorism as being susceptible to decapitation "because they have unique organizational characteristics" such as their proclivity toward violence, the clandestine nature of their operations, and the fact that the organizations are values-based,⁷⁸⁷ which "increase the influence of their leaders and exacerbates the difficulties associated with leadership succession."⁷⁸⁸ Rather than focus only on killing of a group leader, Price included capturing and

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

⁷⁸⁷ Bryan C. Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2012): 43.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., 14.

imprisonment and capturing and execution of the group leadership as well. He found that not only did decapitated terrorist groups have a "significantly higher mortality rate than non-decapitated groups," but also that the earlier the decapitation strike occurred in a terrorist group's life cycle, the greater the effect it would have on the organization's mortality rate.⁷⁸⁹ Further he found that organizations were affected equally by leadership decapitation, regardless of the organization's size. Finally, Price discovered that religious-based groups are less resilient and easier to destroy than are nationalist groups following the decapitation of its leadership. Interestingly, Price attributed this last finding to "the important role leaders of religious terrorist groups play in framing and interpreting organizational goals and strategies."⁷⁹⁰

While the literature examined in this chapter offers insights into leadership targeting and specific targeted killings, both approaches are too narrow to fully encompass the tactic of surgical attacks against specific individuals. For example, most of the arguments made against targeted strikes do not even engage the

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 43-44.

possibility of capturing a particular high value target.

The next chapter will attempt to add to the debate of this chapter by expanding the concept of surgical, target specific strikes to include a wider range of missions.

CHAPTER 11

A Fresh Look: Toward Organizational Amputation

While the authors listed in the preceding chapter discuss the impacts of leadership decapitation and targeted killings neither of these phrases accurately describes the range of missions the U.S. has been undertaking. The terms most generally used in these studies, i.e. "leadership decapitation" and "targeted killing," are both too specific. Obviously the term "leadership decapitation" infers eliminating only the head of an organization, but doesn't seem to fit the killing or capture of key individuals who may be vital to the organization, such as an operational planner or a bomb-maker. One example would be the killing of Yahya Ayyash, the Palestinian master bomb-maker known as "the Engineer," who was targeted and killed by the Israelis in 1996.⁷⁹¹

Along a similar line of argument, the term "targeted killing" infers only killing the target, and thus rules out capture. A selective, surgical strike against a high value target that is vital to the organization, such as a

⁷⁹¹ Joel Greenberg, "Slaying Blended Technology and Guile," *New York Times* (1996), <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/10/world/slaying-blended-technology-and-guile.html?ref=yahyaayyash>; Patrick Cockburn, "How the Phone Bomb was Set Up," *The Independent* (1996), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/how-the-phone-bomb-was-set-up-1323096.html>.

highly skilled bomb-maker or operations planner may result in the capture of that particular individual. The phrase "high value target," used by Frankel, is the most inclusive, but is vague and doesn't assert that if the high value target is eliminated it will result in the loss of balance advocated by Musashi.

To overcome these shortfalls in terminology, this dissertation suggests the concept and phrase "organizational amputation strike," or "group amputation strike" to mean a surgical yet crippling strike against the insurgent group's organizational structure. Organizational amputation strikes can include both capture and kill missions against group leadership as well as against highly skilled individuals vital to the organization. Given the individual group's dynamics, a node most vital to successful group operations may not be the organization's leader. Yet, the loss of this individual will, in reference to Musashi, cause the group to lose balance, just as the loss of a limb will cause an individual to be limited, inefficient, and out of balance. Consider the reaction of Robert E. Lee, Commanding General of the Army of Northern Virginia when he was informed that General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson had been shot and

his left arm had been amputated by Confederate doctors. Lee is quoted as saying "He [Jackson] has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right."⁷⁹² What Lee meant was obvious --- that he relied heavily on Jackson's skill on the field of battle and that Jackson was so vital to the success of the Confederate Army that losing Jackson's expertise was as crippling to the Army of Northern Virginia as a right-handed man losing his right arm. Undoubtedly, the loss of Jackson knocked the Army of Northern Virginia out of balance. While Jackson was not the overall leader of the army, he was an individual who was vital to its early successes. His loss was a huge blow to the morale of Lee's army, and the argument can be made that it negatively impacted the very next battle in which the Army of Northern Virginia took part - Gettysburg. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, the terms "targeted killing," "leadership decapitation," and "capture" of high value targets will all be considered sub-categories of the umbrella term "organizational amputation strike."

From a pragmatic perspective, the concept of the U.S. military adopting a policy of group amputation strikes in

⁷⁹² Judith W. McGuire, *General Robert E. Lee: The Christian Soldier* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010). 107.

the context of a global insurgency would cause an overall loss of balance within the insurgent group in several key ways. The first of these involves morale, both that of the insurgents and that of the U.S. electorate. The killing or capture of a group's charismatic leader would have a negative impact on the will of at least some of the group's foot soldiers to continue to fight for the cause. Galula discussed the collective action problem insurgent groups inherently have to deal with when he outlined his second law of counterinsurgency, that the support of the people is gained through an active minority.⁷⁹³ Thus, the successful decapitation of the leader "can signal the [counterinsurgent's] strength and capabilities, signaling that remaining followers will be next to fall if they continue the rebellion."⁷⁹⁴ It can also weaken the framing of the organization's message. This certainly seemed to be the case in many of the provinces in Vietnam which were subjected to the Phoenix program, as the systematic elimination of VCI caused villagers to begin to openly support the government of South Vietnam.

⁷⁹³ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 75.

⁷⁹⁴ Patrick Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," *Doctoral, Center for International Security and Cooperation Stanford University* (2009).

From a policy support perspective, successful group amputations are also advantageous to the U.S. As news of the capture or killing of a well-known leader or technical/operative specialist satisfies public demand for a forceful response. This was best exemplified by the large crowds that gathered in cities around the nation to wave flags and cheer after President Obama announced the killing of Osama bin Laden. This vast outpouring of emotion occurred despite the fact that bin Laden's orchestrated attacks of 9/11 had occurred almost 10 years earlier.⁷⁹⁵

Another advantage to group amputation strikes is that a successful operation can eliminate the more radical members of an insurgent group - often the more dynamic and charismatic founding members - and thus leave the group under the leadership of those with a more pragmatic and moderate view. One historical example that bears witness to this can be found in Burma, when "decapitation of an extremist leader helped pacify Burma during the Second Anglo-Burmese War in the 1850s. The British helped the Burmese heir to the throne, Mindon Min, overthrow his

⁷⁹⁵ Elizabeth A. Harris, "Amid Cheers, a Message: 'They Will Be Caught'," *New York Times*, 02 May 2011, A1.

half-brother, King Pagan Min. Mindon sued for peace and accepted British Rule in exchange for local power."⁷⁹⁶

Group amputation strikes might also be a way around the 'accidental guerrilla' problem identified by Kilcullen. Given that the members of the "neutral majority" identified by Galula become Kilcullen's "accidental guerrillas" because they see Westerners as having invaded their territory, amputation strikes against the group's organizational structure can occur with a very limited or even negligible footprint, and can provide for a highly decreased degree of collateral damage, as compared to other methods of military intervention. Rather than flood a region with ground forces to establish and maintain security, the high value target is removed in a very precise way, whether that be through the use of a drone strike or a successful special operations kill/capture mission. Additionally, the drone can be used to assist allies who are engaged in their own internal counterinsurgency campaigns without ever deploying U.S. troops. One such attack was the 2004 strike conducted against Pashtun rebel leader Nek Muhammad which had been

⁷⁹⁶ Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," 8.

requested by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.⁷⁹⁷ More recently, the government of Iraq has begun to explore the possibility of working with the U.S. on developing a clandestine anti-terrorist drone strike program.⁷⁹⁸

One common criticism lodged against drone strikes is that they cause excessive collateral damage. However, when compared to a 500-pound bomb launched by conventional manned strike aircraft, the "grenade-like warheads carried by most drones create smaller, more precise blast zones that decrease the risk of unexpected structural damage and casualties."⁷⁹⁹ Given the rapid advances in technology, it is most likely that the precision factor involved in these types of operations will only become more refined and surgical. Thus, selective and judicial application of amputation operations, when successful, can ensure little or no Western footprint, can minimize collateral damage, can avoid the creation of accidental guerrillas, and thus can leave the neutral majority unchanged in their attitudes toward the insurgent movement. This is not to say that reckless and excessive use of this tactic could

⁷⁹⁷ Mark Mazzetti, "A Secret Deal on Drones, Sealed in Blood," *New York Times*, 07 April 2013, A1.

⁷⁹⁸ Indira A. R. Lakshamanan, "Iraq Open to U.S. Drone Strikes on Terrorists," *Bloomberg News* (2013), <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-16/iraqi-foreign-minister-open-to-u-s-drone-strikes-on-terrorists.html>.

⁷⁹⁹ Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2013): 34.

not back fire and create resentment among the neutral majority; of course it easily could. It is for this reason that each proposed operation against a high value target should be weighed carefully and assessed for negative impacts upon the local populace.

Failed states are often cited as one of the reasons terrorist groups and global insurgents are able to flourish. In a 2013 speech, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that even after more than a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, "the threat of violent extremism persists and continues to emanate from weak states and ungoverned spaces in the Middle East and North Africa."⁸⁰⁰ These types of groups "benefit from the fact that scores of weak states lack the legitimacy or capacity to effectively control their own territory."⁸⁰¹ The answer to this problem, some have argued, is to work to create global economic stability through nation-building and the provision of economic aid to weak, failed, and failing states. Some scholars, such as Jeffrey Sachs, argue that "whether terrorists are rich or poor or middle class, their staging areas – their bases of operation – are

⁸⁰⁰ Chuck Hagel, "Speech Delivered by Secretary of Defense at National Defense University " (Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 2013).

⁸⁰¹ Nye, *The Future of Power*: 33.

unstable societies beset by poverty, unemployment, rapid population growth, hunger, and lack of hope."⁸⁰² Sachs argues that, with enough aid, extreme poverty can be eliminated by 2025. Thus, by attacking one of the key root causes of terrorism--which is extreme poverty--Sachs believes global terrorism can be reduced.

However, humanitarian aid programs in violent and unstable states often result in the use of U.S. military forces to engage insurgent forces and establish security so that humanitarian aid can be delivered, as the U.S. involvement in Somalia in the mid-1990s attests. Again, anytime the U.S. sends large numbers of troops into an area, there is always the likelihood that accidental guerrillas will be created. Yet, as far as combating the global insurgent, who often takes advantage of the failed state to train and organize his operations, amputation strikes against key members of the group can be used as a viable option "since there is no true 'sovereignty' to violate."⁸⁰³ Indeed, al Qaeda, which has a history of using failed states and remote areas to organize and train, has seen the U.S. drone campaign turn their "command and training structures into a liability, forcing

⁸⁰² Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005). 330-331.

⁸⁰³ Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 107.

the group to choose between having no leaders and risking dead leaders."⁸⁰⁴

Successful organizational amputation strikes can serve as a deterrent against the planning and undertaking of future terrorist attacks by the global insurgent. The term "deterrence," as defined by Thomas Schelling, is "to turn aside or discourage through fear; hence, to prevent from action by fear of consequences."⁸⁰⁵ Thus, a successful amputation strike against the group can act as a deterrent towards other individuals who might otherwise see an opportunity to strike against the U.S. or move into some type of leadership position. By killing or capturing specific individuals, a message of "this could happen to you" is sent to others that might think about assuming the leadership or other key role.⁸⁰⁶ An example of effective deterrence against insurgent leadership can be found in the Israeli killing of Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas in 2004. Yassin was immediately replaced by Abdel Azia al Rantissi, who was then also killed by the Israelis the following month. Then, Hamas "announced that it had appointed a new leader but would not name him publicly: a

⁸⁰⁴ "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," 33.

⁸⁰⁵ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*: 71.

⁸⁰⁶ Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," 19.

necessary step for his survival perhaps but hardly a way to inspire the group's followers or win new converts."⁸⁰⁷ Additionally, Hamas "asked [the Israelis] for a period of calm because the losses among its senior cadre were making things very difficult."⁸⁰⁸ Another example can be seen in the increase in the number of VCI who chose to *chieu hoi* in the South Vietnamese provinces where the Phoenix program was successfully implemented.

Group amputation strikes can also serve as a way to pre-empt a planned attack. Through selective targeting, the U.S. can "proactively eliminate terrorists before they have a chance to inflict harm" on civilians or the homeland.⁸⁰⁹ In the words of one scholar, "one of the most successful means of eliminating terrorists before they can strike is the policy of targeted killing."⁸¹⁰

Thus, there are several distinct advantages that can be gained from the use of selected amputation strikes against the transnational, non-territorial global

⁸⁰⁷ Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 105.

⁸⁰⁸ Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," 19.

⁸⁰⁹ Thomas Byron Hunter, "Targeted Killings: Self-Defense, Preemption, and the War on Terrorism," *Journal of Strategic Security* 2, no. 2 (2009), <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol2/iss2/1>.

⁸¹⁰ Steven R. David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," in *Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 51* (Bar-Ilan University: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies 2002), 6.

insurgent's organization in a contemporary counterinsurgency campaign. This dissertation argues that the focus of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy should be to cause a loss of balance by the insurgent rather than the classical population-centric 'hearts and minds' approach. Yet, whether or not selective, targeted strikes against high-value targets within a global insurgent organization can lead to group dysfunction and inefficiency has not yet been fully explored and conclusively determined. The next section of this dissertation will attempt to examine this question.

Can Selective, Targeted Decapitation Cause a Loss of Balance?

In addressing the question posed above, consider this quote from Brian Michael Jenkins, one of the leading experts in the field of terrorism studies:

The elimination of a terrorist group's leader or leaders causes confusion and disarray. Often terrorist groups are led by a single charismatic and organizationally effective individual who cannot easily be replaced. If he has left no clear successor, his heirs may fight for the number one position. They may anyway, and in a group of violence-prone men and women, it is likely to be a violent struggle. If those responsible for his killing have not been identified, some in the group

*may suspect a rival faction or a traitor inside. Mutual suspicion will increase. Security precautions will be tightened; communications will become more difficult. "Foreign relations"—the contacts and deals with governments and other groups, which are often the personal domain of the leader himself—will be interrupted. All this will lower the group's operational efficiency, at least temporarily.*⁸¹¹

It would seem that the loss of operational efficiency would indeed equate to a loss of balance. But, given that Jenkins was writing almost 30 years ago, what do more contemporary authors say with regard to decapitation strikes and targeted killings upsetting the normal flow of group operations? A review of the unclassified literature on the subject of decapitation strikes indicates that there are several cases where a leadership decapitation or targeted killing has caused a loss of balance within the insurgent organization. In his study of the Israeli use of targeted killings, Steven David points out that "targeted killings have impeded the effectiveness of Palestinian terrorist organizations where leadership, planning, and tactical skills are confined to a few key individuals" and concludes that "there is no question that

⁸¹¹ Brian Michael Jenkins, "Should Our Arsenal Against Terrorism Include Assassination?," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1987), 4.

Israel's policy of targeted killing has hurt the capability of its Arab adversaries to prosecute attacks against Israel."⁸¹²

David Byman highlights the breadth and depth of the Palestinian loss of balance. He notes a 69 percent drop in the number of Israeli civilian deaths from 2004-2005, the year Israel stepped up its use of targeted killings against Palestinian militant leaders. Byman attributes this drop in part due to Israel's use of targeted killings, which "shattered Palestinian terrorist groups and made it difficult for them to conduct effective operations."⁸¹³ At the same time that the Palestinian attacks were becoming less lethal, the actual number of attacks increased. As the "number of attacks grew, the number of Israeli deaths they caused plunged, suggesting that the attacks themselves [had become] far less effective" due to a decrease in "the number of skilled terrorists" within the organization.⁸¹⁴ It takes "many months, if not years" for a newly recruited insurgent to become effective as a leader, a bomb-maker or a trainer.⁸¹⁵ Indeed, the direct action strikes against AQI in Anbar

⁸¹² David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," 6.

⁸¹³ Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 103.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 103-104.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., 104.

province resulted in a significant decrease in not only the number of attacks against U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians, but also a decrease in the lethality of the attacks.

Thus, when these key individuals who possess special skills such as those possessed by the "passport forgers, bomb makers, recruiters, and fundraisers,"⁸¹⁶ are removed from the group dynamic, the organization is disrupted. "The groups may still be able to attract recruits, but lacking expertise, these new recruits will not pose the same kind of threat."⁸¹⁷

When an insurgent group suffers a loss of balance through successful leadership decapitation, often it manifests itself in a decrease in the efficiency of planning, coordinating, and executing its operations. For example, when the Sri Lankan Army arrested Rohana Wijeweera, the Marxist leader and founder of the People's Liberation Front, the result was a guerrilla campaign that "floundered."⁸¹⁸ Planned attacks were never carried out; the group became disorganized, incoherent, and vulnerable to counterinsurgency efforts by the Sri Lankan government,

⁸¹⁶ "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," 33.

⁸¹⁷ "Do Target Killings Work?," 103-104.

⁸¹⁸ David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," 9.

and ultimately suffered defeat shortly after Wijeweera's capture.⁸¹⁹ This argument is supported by a statement made by Osama bin Laden in 2010, when he warned his chief aide that "when experienced leaders are eliminated, the result is the rise of lower leaders who are not as experienced as the former leaders and are prone to errors and miscalculations."⁸²⁰

When a group suffers several targeted killings, the surviving members are forced to spend more time and effort ensuring their own personal safety. They change their behaviors, keep changing locations or go into deep hiding, and limit communication with others, all of which can lead to group dysfunction and inefficiency. By keeping their heads down, information flow between members is reduced, which further disrupts operations, as any communication at all becomes highly dangerous for those in hiding.⁸²¹ An insurgent "tip sheet" found in Mali "advised militants to maintain complete silence of all wireless contacts and to avoid gathering in open areas."⁸²² Osama bin Laden and Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, the top two leaders of al Qaeda, were

⁸¹⁹ Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," 9.

⁸²⁰ Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," 33.

⁸²¹ "Do Target Killings Work?," 104; David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," 7.

⁸²² Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," 33.

in such deep hiding after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that they were left incapable of controlling the direction of their global insurgency. The void in leadership gave rise to Abu Musab al Zaraqawi, who embarked on a bloody campaign of regional terror in and around Iraq. Zaraqawi's actions, particularly his incessant killing of Shi'a Arabs, caused Dr. Zawahiri to try to contact Zaraqawi via letter to remind him of al Qaeda's global strategy, that he should remember the political aspects of his actions, and that the U.S. occupation of Iraq gave Islamic militants a historic opportunity to win the popular support of all of those of the Islamic faith. Zawahiri then urged Zaraqawi to cease staging additional attacks against Iraqi Shiites.⁸²³ The contents of this letter, which was captured by U.S. forces, shows that the loss or isolation of the visionary leadership can cause group dysfunction and leave room for actions by the de-facto leaders that actually run counter to a group's original goals and reduce its success. In this case, Zaraqawi's focus was much more local, and his tactics were alienating Muslims. Zawahiri and bin Laden, on the other hand, wished to maintain a global strategy that included all

⁸²³ Douglas Jehl, "Full Qaeda Letter to Iraq Ally Speaks of Group's Global Goal," *New York Times*, 12 October 2005, A6.

Muslims. This created dysfunction in goal pursuit within al Qaeda, which in turn lowered the group's popularity in some Muslim circles and may have led to disagreement within Zarqawi's organization. This is evidenced by the fact that Zarqawi was betrayed to Jordanian Intelligence by an inside member of Zarqawi's own organization.⁸²⁴

The impacts of successful organizational amputation campaigns in the few studies that are available in unclassified format indicate that decapitation causes much angst among remaining group members. This was certainly true for Osama bin Laden, as mentioned above.⁸²⁵

Another example can be found in the work of Cambridge University's Khaled Hroub, considered by many to be one of the leading experts on Hamas, who has stated that there is "no question that Hamas has been seriously weakened by the decimation of its ranks through assassination and arrest."⁸²⁶ Avi Dichter, the former head of Shin Bet, the Israeli intelligence organization, has credited Israel's campaign of targeted killings of Hamas leaders as one of the keys to explaining Hamas' decision to endorse a cease-

⁸²⁴ Dexter Filkins, Mark Mazzetti, and Jr. Richard A. Oppel, "How Surveillance and Betrayal Led to a Hunt's End," *New York Times* (2006), <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/09/world/middleeast/09raid.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁸²⁵ McCants, "Al Qaeda's Challenge: The Jihadists' War With Islamist Democrats," 30.

⁸²⁶ Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 105.

fire during the Second Intifada. When discussing details of the cease-fire talks, Dichter was quoted as saying that "senior Hamas leaders [had] decided they were tired of seeing the sun only in pictures."⁸²⁷ When the Palestinians were asked by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon what they wanted from him, they listed an end to targeted killings as their primary request.⁸²⁸ Also, during his brief tenure as leader of Hamas before he was killed in a targeted Hellfire missile strike, al Rantissi acknowledged that the Israeli campaign of targeted killings had made operations much more problematic for Hamas.⁸²⁹

In sum, most of the studies on decapitation strikes and targeted killings available to the general public are studies of Israel's use of the tactic. The details collected in many of the more recent studies indicate that Israel's use of decapitation strikes and targeted killings against Palestinian insurgents has indeed created a loss of balance. The strategy has "prevented some attacks against Israel, weakened the effectiveness of terrorist organizations, kept potential bomb makers on the run,

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸²⁸ Johnston, "The Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation in Counterinsurgency," 7.

⁸²⁹ Byman, "Do Target Killings Work?," 105.

deterred terrorist operations, [and] gained the support of the overwhelming percentage of the Israeli population."⁸³⁰

But just because the tactics of group amputation seem to work for Israel, will they work for the U.S.? Based upon the three case studies used in this dissertation, there are indications that the use of organizational amputation strikes in the past has caused disruptions and a loss of effectiveness in insurgent group operations.

⁸³⁰ David, "Fatal Choices: Israel's Policy of Targeted Killing," 8.

CHAPTER 12

21st Century COIN: The Way Ahead

Placing Galula's Laws of COIN in Context

As has been repeated throughout this dissertation, Galula argued that the primary objective in a war of insurgency was the population itself, which he divided into three categories. For Galula, individuals within the population were either part of an active minority that supported the insurgent cause, part of a neutral majority, or part of an active minority that supported the government. The operations of the counterinsurgent were to be designed to either win the neutral majority over to the side of the government or to at least keep it submissive to the government.⁸³¹ Toward this end, Galula offered his four laws of counterinsurgency. These laws were discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, but for the purposes of review are listed again below:⁸³²

⁸³¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 9.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 74-79.

First Law:

Support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent.

Second Law:

Support is gained through an active minority

Third Law:

Support from the population is conditional

Fourth Law:

Intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential.

Galula's theory of counterinsurgency is grounded in these four laws, which are promulgated to provide guidance for the counterinsurgent in a war that is 80 percent political and only 20 percent military.⁸³³ In other words, Galula's *Laws of COIN* are designed to keep the counterinsurgent's focus on the center of gravity, which Galula's theory holds as the population.

However, the argument has been made in this study that while the population was the correct center of gravity for the Western counterinsurgent during the anti-colonial uprisings common during Galula's era, this is no longer the case when countering contemporary global insurgency, especially for the U.S. As has been argued, the reasons for this are the fact that the U.S. will

⁸³³ Ibid., 89.

inevitably withdraw, and it is most unlikely that the counterinsurgency effort as epitomized by FM 3-24 can sustain the support of the American people for the long haul.

The case studies in this dissertation were used to determine if aspects of past successful counterinsurgency practices existed outside of the large-footprint, population-centric approach to COIN favored by advocates of the Petraeus Doctrine. As stated at the beginning of this dissertation, this study attempts to view counterinsurgency through the theoretical lenses of pragmatic Realism. In other words, the goal of this work is not to provide normative counsel on counterinsurgency policy as much as to offer a theoretically sound prescription for carrying out a COIN campaign that is truly within the capabilities of the United States military. The U.S. military is not the right tool for every job related to COIN, and it should only focus on that part of counterinsurgency to which it has a legitimate shot at achieving success. Indeed, Galula himself advised that the military was "but one of the many instruments" available to the counterinsurgent, and warned

of "giving the soldier authority over the civilian."⁸³⁴ To put it bluntly, Galula advised against using the military as a one-stop-shop for all counterinsurgency efforts. Yet, after the implementation of FM 3-24 and the Petraeus Doctrine in 2007, "COIN in Iraq was in fact performed almost entirely by the military."⁸³⁵ The danger this precedent holds for future U.S. COIN efforts is that the implementation of the Petraeus Doctrine in Iraq will serve as a template to be pulled off the shelf, dusted off, and implemented once again. This has happened before, as a new and revolutionary military doctrine, "enshrined in the first flush of victory," hardens into dogma.⁸³⁶ Historical examples of hardened military doctrine can be found in the devotion to the Napoleonic principle of massed firepower that led to Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, or the emphasis on the defense that resulted in trench warfare stalemate and the slaughter of World War I.

To avoid this end, the case studies in the previous chapters have been used to bring to light elements of counterinsurgency that can be used to forge a new set of theoretical laws of counterinsurgency that are applicable

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 89-90.

⁸³⁵ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 287.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., 4.

to the global insurgencies the U.S. will face in the future.

Where Galula's first law emphasizes the importance of popular support, the first of the 21st century laws of COIN proposed by this dissertation speaks to the importance of the support of the host nation government. In short, the U.S. military is incapable of successfully carrying out COIN alone. The "heavy lifting," as it were, must be completed by a competent host nation. The U.S. military's role must be limited to the provision of technical support, training, and in filling an advisory role. Consider the wisdom of T. E. Lawrence:

*Better to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short.*⁸³⁷

If warranted, the U.S. military may provide intelligence and special operations tactical support as occurred during the Phoenix program in Vietnam and the Special Operations Forces' Fusion Cell operations in Anbar province during the Iraq War. The relationship with the host nation partner must be a true partnership "grounded

⁸³⁷ Malcolm Brown, ed. *T. E. Lawrence in War and Peace: An Anthology of the Military Writings of Lawrence of Arabia* (London, UK: Greenhill Books, 2005), 54.

in the idea of mutual indispensability."⁸³⁸ Mutual indispensability is not only synergistic; it is a necessary force multiplier.

The support role the U.S. fulfills will be enhanced if the host nation military staff and the U.S. advisory staff are co-located and work closely together. This arrangement will not only enhance tactical operations, but will also provide synergy in the areas of intelligence and logistics. Further, U.S. counterinsurgency advice and counsel must be aligned with the host nation's goals in order to achieve the desired political end-state. If the goals of the U.S. and those of the host nation are not aligned, the result may be that the U.S. is working at cross-purposes against the host nation. Worse still, a situation where goals are not necessarily aligned will most likely result in a tendency for the U.S. military to "Americanize" the war, which must be avoided at all costs. In order for success to be achieved in a war of insurgency, the U.S. and the host nation leadership have to "want the same basic things"⁸³⁹ on a big-goal or strategic level. This was certainly the case in El

⁸³⁸ Leslie H. Gelb, "The Right Play," *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2013, 18.

⁸³⁹ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*: 209.

Salvador, as both the Salvadoran government and the U.S. wanted to stop the spread of Communist influence. While the Salvadorans opted to "cherry pick" U.S. counterinsurgency advice when it came to curbing human rights abuses, the U.S. kept its primary focus on the strategic goal of preventing a Communist takeover and avoided placing too much emphasis on the operational level goal of conducting "clean counterinsurgency" and eliminating all Salvadoran human rights abuses.

Another advantage to allowing the host nation government to do the heavy lifting is that the counterinsurgency planning will be facilitated by a better understanding of the familial, cultural, and kinship ties among the local people. These types of in-depth knowledge certainly impacted the counterinsurgency efforts of the Phoenix program, as the South Vietnamese were much more effective at identifying VCI cadre than were their American counterparts. So too, was the impact of the tribal militias operations against AQI in Anbar province in Iraq.

While Galula's second law of counterinsurgency states that support of the population is gained through what he calls the "active minority," the 21st century

counterinsurgent needn't be as worried about the active minority as the amount of political space available in which the insurgent's organization structures are allowed to operate. In the Vietnam case, the VCI cadres were able to use terrorist violence to drive elements of the South Vietnamese government apparatus from the villages and then exploit the political space available to create a Communist shadow government in the countryside. The Communists remained strong in many of the provinces of South Vietnam until the Phoenix program, with its focus on attacking the VCI, closed down the political space and sent VCI cadre fleeing back to the North. Similarly in El Salvador, a rapidly growing Salvadoran military capitalized on its receipt of U.S. aid and training to wage a campaign of brutal attrition, resulting in the closing of the political space exploited by the FMLN by making it too costly for FMLN cadres to operate in the open. As a result of being driven underground, everything from recruiting to training to resupply became more complex and problematic for the FMLN. In Anbar province, the involvement of the tribal militias in the Anbar Awakening closed the political space in which AQI had been operating freely.

Galula's third law stresses the conditionality of popular support and with it the inference that the people are the true center of gravity. He emphasizes that the counterinsurgent must instigate reforms to address popular grievances and show enough strength that the population's neutral majority are convinced of his ability, means, and will to win. Conversely, the 21st century's third law of counterinsurgency places emphasis on the organizational structure of the insurgent group as the center of gravity.

Within each insurgent organizational structure, as has been discussed in this dissertation, are key individuals who possess the vital skills that enable the organization to prosper. The reason that Galula's third law is not applicable to global insurgency is that today's insurgent is not a fish swimming in a sea of the population. Today's insurgents operate within a virtual sphere and are part of a flat, networked, and internetted organizational structure that is shrouded in secrecy. As a result, the insurgent's sphere of influence is reduced when key personnel who are vital to the organization are neutralized either by being captured or killed.

These key individuals are to be treated as targets of high value because their neutralization will have a

significant negative impact on the operational capacity of the insurgent organization.

Galula's fourth law of counterinsurgency stresses the importance of what he refers to as *vastness of means*, which he quantifies by recommending a ratio of at least 10 counterinsurgents per insurgent. Along a similar line of thought, FM 3-24 states that a ratio of twenty to twenty-five counterinsurgents for every 1000 members of the local population is needed. Generally speaking, counterinsurgents are perceived by American military doctrine and U.S. foreign policy as U.S. troops. As a result of American interpretation of the fourth law of COIN, the tendency to *Americanize* the counterinsurgency effort with vast numbers of troops has been an all too prevalent characteristic of U.S. COIN strategy. With the exception of El Salvador, this truth was most recently epitomized by the 2007 surge in Iraq ordered by President Bush and the similar deployment surge of 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan ordered by President Obama in 2010.⁸⁴⁰

Yet, as was detailed in Chapter 4, a large footprint will render the counterinsurgent forces to be perceived as

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., 317.

a foreign army of occupation. Thus, for the 21st century counterinsurgent, it is necessary to keep the footprint small. A small footprint, such as was the case in El Salvador, forces the lead to be taken up by the host nation. Consider the comments of John Waghelstein, a retired U.S. Special Forces Officer and former Military Group Commander in El Salvador:

Contrary to the U.S. Defense Department's usual way of doing things, smaller is better. The traditional American Way of War is rarely the right option in someone else's insurgency. ...We probably cannot deliver victory from the outside and if we can, it probably is transitory. This means that the U.S. personnel and equipment footprint needs to remain small.⁸⁴¹

In addition to the exploration of Galula's four laws of counterinsurgency, there is one additional point which should be addressed before moving on. This involves the notion of victory in a war of insurgency. Galula clearly states that "victory is not the destruction in a given area of the insurgent's forces and his political organization," but rather it is "the permanent isolation

⁸⁴¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 36.

of the insurgent from the population."⁸⁴² He argues that when faced with a depleted force structure or destroyed political organization in a particular area, the insurgent will simply recruit new guerrilla fighters and recreate his organization. In other words, Galula's theory posits that the destruction of an insurgent's forces and his political organization is neither necessary nor sufficient for achieving victory. Rather, Galula's theory holds that the necessary condition is to permanently isolate the insurgent from the population, and if the isolation of the insurgent reaches a point that it is "not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population,"⁸⁴³ the condition has reached a point it becomes sufficient to achieve victory.

When Galula's theoretical determination of victory is placed in a contemporary context, it becomes clear that it is no longer accurate. Contrary to Galula, attacking the organizational structure can be both necessary and sufficient conditions for counterinsurgent success. The Viet Cong insurgent organization was attacked relentlessly during the brief life of the Phoenix program in South Vietnam, and in the areas where the program was well-run

⁸⁴² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 77.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

the crippling impact on the VCI has been well documented.⁸⁴⁴ Similarly, when U.S. special operations tactical fusion cells conducted a relentless series of strikes against AQI high value targets, the effectiveness of AQI operations was tremendously degraded.

Secondly, the case study of the FMLN insurgency against the Salvadoran government shows that pressure from the government and the forced closing of political space can indeed lead to a prolonged isolation of the insurgent's organizational structure from the people. Hence, Galula's edict that forced isolation that is not undertaken with the willful support and cooperation will be unsuccessful is also incorrect. As one Latin American scholar stated, "Repressive violence by the state actually works."⁸⁴⁵ In short, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."⁸⁴⁶

Victory in a contemporary counterinsurgency campaign will be unlikely to consist of a general decrease in operational effectiveness by the insurgent organization. Since wars of insurgency are primarily political wars,

⁸⁴⁴ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for statements from former VCI cadre reflecting upon the negative impacts of the Phoenix program on the Viet Cong insurgency against the South Vietnamese government.

⁸⁴⁵ This quote was made by Dr. James A. Cane-Carrasco, University of Oklahoma Department of History, during a conversation with the author of this dissertation on 10 May, 2013.

⁸⁴⁶ Tse-Tung, "Problems of War and Strategy (November 6, 1938)," 274.

positive outcomes for the counterinsurgent are either a slow dissolving of the insurgent organizational structures, or the modification of the insurgent goals to the point that the organization's leaders are willing to come to the negotiating table, as was the case in El Salvador. For the 21st century counterinsurgent, success must be defined in a much more limited scope than achievement of the type of victory President Bush promised prior to the invasion of Iraq.⁸⁴⁷ The key is that America's goals for a war of insurgency going forward is to keep the insurgency contained and avoid horizontal escalation of the insurgent violence. America's focus on the Domino Theory during the FMLN insurgency in El Salvador, coupled with the numerical limit on the number of advisers allowed in country, provided the U.S. military forces with the necessary guidance to maintain a slow and persistent approach to counterinsurgency. Success in 21st century COIN will require keeping "a small, highly-skilled force in place for an indefinite period" of time.⁸⁴⁸ It will also require a willingness on the part of the United States military, to avoid the tendency to Americanize the war. In the end, the U.S. can achieve success if the

⁸⁴⁷ Please see Chapter 4 for a review of the meaning of victory.

⁸⁴⁸ John Arquilla, "A Case for Slow War," *Foreign Policy*(2013), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/05/06/the_case_for_slow_war?page=full.

insurgent organization is kept off-balance and dysfunctional. This can be obtained by relentless pursuit of the neutralization of the organization's high value targets.

In sum, it is time for Galula's four laws of counterinsurgency to be updated in light of the threat from the global insurgent. This section of the dissertation has offered this update, and the key aspects of the 21st century laws of COIN are presented in Table 12.1 on the following page:

Laws of COIN for Traditional and Global Insurgency

Galula's Laws of Counterinsurgency	Laws of 21st Century COIN
The support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as it is for the insurgent	Heavy lifting must be done by the Host Nation while the U.S. provides support and advice. Americanizing the COIN campaign only serves the goals of the insurgent.
Support is gained through an active minority. (Pro-insurgent minority - Neutral majority - Pro-government minority)	The insurgent needs political space for his organization and mobilization structures to survive and to operate.
Support of the population is conditional	High Value Targets (HVTs) are essential to the insurgent's organization structures and must be surveilled, tracked, and attacked relentlessly.
Intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential	U.S. military footprint must be kept small and the counterinsurgency effort must incorporate interagency collaboration, quick response, and full coordination/integration with the Host Nation
Victory is the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, not enforced but rather with the support of the formerly neutral majority which has become active	Victory is never complete, but success can be achieved when the targeted organization becomes contained, dysfunctional and less lethal. Horizontal escalation of insurgent violence is of much greater concern for than is vertical escalation of violence.

Table 12.1

The world has changed tremendously since Galula's time. Yet, his theory still holds tremendous sway over contemporary counterinsurgency thought, especially within

Department of Defense circles. Two examples of this truth experienced by this writer have taken place at the two most recent Midwest Political Science Annual Conventions. Two papers were presented by active duty Army officers at the conferences' counterinsurgency panels. A 2012 paper presented by an Iraq war veteran and West Point instructor called for the further Americanization of future counterinsurgency efforts by extolling the merits of a *whole of government* approach to COIN, and the author advocated the U.S. military as the overall coordinating authority. Along a similar vein, a 2013 paper presented by a student at the Command and General Staff College argued that the U.S. military's counterinsurgency efforts, as practiced in Iraq, were highly successful but that there were also lessons that could be culled from the surge and used to make the next iteration of COIN even more successful. While the cognitive and analytical biases of the two panelists is understandable, they were both adhering to what has been espoused as the fundamental theoretical truths of counterinsurgency codified by FM 3-24.

An American Approach Toward 21st Century COIN

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, one of the shortfalls of an academic study such as this is the difficulty in obtaining focused data regarding amputation strikes from the case studies due to the classified nature of the operations. For this reason, several quantitative studies have included targeted killings of heads of state as part of their data set, which undoubtedly impacts the findings. While some data is available regarding the use of drone strikes in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, very little is available regarding special operations direct action target assaults, often referred to as 'kill/capture missions' by journalists. But, as it relates to drone strikes, according to the New America Foundation, there were a total of 36 drone strikes in President Bush's last year in office in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. In 2009, the numbers began to rise dramatically, reaching a peak of 122 in 2010. What also fell dramatically was the civilian death rate, commonly referred to as "collateral damage" in military circles. During the early years of drone strikes, the ratio of civilian deaths was about 46%. Since 2009, the annual civilian death ratio has fallen to

just over 2%.⁸⁴⁹ This data point is a testament to the increasingly surgical nature of the tactic. This decrease "is likely the result of increased numbers of U.S. spies in Pakistan's tribal areas, better targeting, more intelligence cooperation with the Pakistani military and smaller missiles."⁸⁵⁰ A table display of casualty statistics is reproduced below:

Percentage of Total Casualties Resulting from Drone Strikes per Category per Year

Afghanistan - Pakistan Border Region Only

Year	Militant	Unknown	Civilian
2012	89%	9%	2%
2011	80%	8-18%	1-15%
2010	94%	5-6%	2-3%
2009	69-70%	12-19%	11-19%
2008	80-84%	16-21%	8-10%
2004-2007	35-43%	9-10%	54-61%
TOTALS	78-81%	9-13%	10%

Table 12.2

Source:

<http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>

⁸⁴⁹ Steve Coll, "Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative: The Year of the Drone," (2013), <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>.

⁸⁵⁰ Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Hidden War: There Were More Drone Strikes -- and Far Fewer Civilians Killed," *Foreign Policy* (2010), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/21/the_hidden_war?page=0,5.

In spite of the limited availability of hard quantitative data regarding special operations strikes against high value targets, there are some indications, as seen in the data presented in the Table above, that selective targeting of key individuals within an insurgent organization can produce positive outcomes for the U.S. on both a strategic and tactical level.

As has been previously stated, wars of insurgency and rebellion are as old as warfare itself, and these types of wars will continue. What this dissertation has tried to show so far is that the nature of the type of insurgency that threatens the U.S. has changed. The type of insurgent group that directly threatens the U.S. is that of the transnational, non-territorial group that operates within the political space allowed for by an anarchic international system. These groups have a global strategy focused on the far enemy. Further, this dissertation has argued that the U.S. military doctrine of population-centric counterinsurgency strategy as codified in FM 3-24 which focuses on nation-building and winning the support of the local population is not as effective when facing the global insurgent. The reasons for this are several. These are: (1) population-centric COIN requires a large

footprint and thus creates accidental guerrillas, (2) the national will of the U.S. electorate will not last long enough to support the type of "long war" that classical counterinsurgency campaigns require, (3) U.S. fiscal concerns brought on by the 2008 recession, annual deficits, and ballooning national debt dictate less government spending, and (4) both the local population and the insurgents know that the U.S. cannot stay engaged in a population-centric COIN campaign indefinitely and will eventually withdraw. Additionally, this dissertation has argued that a strategy that employs population-centric COIN will gain tactical victories as long as the U.S. troops are in place, but those victories are fleeting and, upon withdrawal of American forces, the U.S. will most likely suffer an eventual strategic loss. Finally, this dissertation has argued that due to the cellular nature of many insurgent groups, complete elimination of a transnational, non-territorial threat through population-centric COIN strategy is impossible, and that the U.S. military must focus on keeping the global insurgent off-balance and thus rendering him less effective in his attacks.

As articulated above, the military strategy of keeping the enemy off balance is best accomplished by using a strategy of surgical amputation strikes against key nodes or high value targets within the group. Advocating this approach as the primary and theoretically-based role of the U.S. military in global counterinsurgency operations will no doubt be controversial, as the larger institutionalized military has traditionally seen special operations in more of a support role. Further, as John Nagl, who has written extensively on an army's ability to learn and adapt, posits, "changing an army is an extraordinarily challenging undertaking."⁸⁵¹ Consider the fact that the U.S. military was at war fighting insurgents in two theaters from 2003-2011, and is still engaged in Afghanistan. In the realm of operationalizing COIN in the Middle East, the U.S. military has learned some very painful lessons. It has also suffered some very large setbacks, has developed a new doctrine in response to those setbacks, and is perceived to have carried out the new doctrine and had it vetted via a skillfully coordinated "surge" in Iraq. For many affiliated with the

⁸⁵¹ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Second ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005). xii.

U.S. military, it is imperative that the lessons on counterinsurgency learned in Iraq be institutionalized so that the mistakes of that war are never repeated, and the U.S. can get better at building societies that can stand on their own.⁸⁵² In short, advocates of the Petraeus Doctrine, which seem to be the overwhelming majority of officers on active duty, see future conflict as a result of Huntington's "clash of civilizations,"⁸⁵³ and believe that the U.S. military will continue to be involved in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns where the application of force will continue to be "a lesser part of the soldier's repertoire."⁸⁵⁴

However, history is full of mistaken predictions regarding the nature of future war. Following World War I, the British military saw its role as one of primarily maintaining order and security within the countries of its colonial empire. Thus, the British were ill prepared for the German *Blitzkrieg*, and saw an entire British Expeditionary Force become trapped at Dunkirk.⁸⁵⁵ A

⁸⁵² Bacevich, "The Petraeus Doctrine," 18.

⁸⁵³ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

⁸⁵⁴ Bacevich, "The Petraeus Doctrine," 18.

⁸⁵⁵ Gian P. Gentile, "Think Again: Counterinsurgency," *Foreign Policy*(2009), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/01/12/think_again_counterinsurgency; E. B. Potter, *Sea Power: A Naval History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1960). 503-504.

minority voice has begun to argue that the U.S. military, by focusing so strongly on counterinsurgency operations, is in the process of reinventing itself as a constabulary "adept at nation-building but shorn of adequate capacity for conventional war-fighting."⁸⁵⁶ Indeed, former Secretary of Defense Panetta, speaking specifically of the reconstruction efforts undertaken in Iraq, has observed that "the U.S. military was in Iraq to fight a war. They were not USAID [the U.S. Agency for International Development]. That is not their role."⁸⁵⁷ Yet, the current military doctrine as codified in FM 3-24 advocates just the sort of role that Mr. Panetta decries, and that is one of clearing, holding, and building.⁸⁵⁸ So, this begs the question, if not winning hearts and minds through a strategy of *clear, hold, and build*, what should the strategic focus of U.S. military be in the midst of a global insurgency? The next section will try to address this question.

⁸⁵⁶ Bacevich, "The Petraeus Doctrine," 20.

⁸⁵⁷ Bowen, "Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction," 21.

⁸⁵⁸ Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War: 195-197*.

Organizational Amputation strikes and a Return to the Powell Doctrine

Echoing a call made by Stephen Walt, the U.S. military and civilian leaders should remember what the U.S. military is good at doing and what it is not good at doing.⁸⁵⁹ The U.S. has often used its military power as the primary driver to shape the world in its own image, and generally to minimum avail -- as the interventions in Vietnam, El Salvador, Iraq, and Afghanistan attest. The reason for this is due to what Jurgen Habermas refers to as the *legitimation crisis*, which he defines as a situation where the expectations of the people rise to a level that that can't be satisfied by the actions of the government.⁸⁶⁰ In short, the economic and military power of the U.S. is well-known throughout the world. Thus, when the U.S. intervenes as in the case of Iraq or Afghanistan, the increased expectations of those in the neutral majority of the host nation who may initially see U.S. intervention as a positive are often dashed. In Iraq, for example, the emerging realization of the Iraqi people that the all-powerful U.S. military, which had thrown out the much-vaunted Army of Saddam Hussein in a

⁸⁵⁹ Walt, "The End of the American Era," 13.

⁸⁶⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* [Legitimationsprobleme im Spatkapitalismus], trans. Thomas McCarthy (Ypsilanti, MI: Beacon Press, 1975). 73.

matter of three weeks, was, even after a year, unable provide reliable electricity. This alone led many Iraqis to become skeptical and increasingly critical of the Americans' abilities and of their presence in Iraq. Very quickly, U.S. *liberators* became *occupiers* in the minds of many of the Iraqi people.⁸⁶¹ Once the Americans are perceived as occupiers, the problem of winning hearts and minds becomes much more difficult.

During the era of the Powell Doctrine, the U.S. military moved away from nation-building and proved itself to be highly capable of maneuver warfare, as both the 1991 Gulf War and the rapid assault on Baghdad attest. This dissertation calls for an abandonment of the Petraeus Doctrine as the primary driver of U.S. strategic focus, and a return to the Powell Doctrine with an approach to COIN based on organizational amputation strikes vice the large-footprint, population-centric, hearts and minds approach which dominates current COIN thinking.

Organizational Amputation nests nicely within each of the Powell Doctrine's prerequisites for military operations -- (1) that the objective is clearly defined and achievable; (2) that the mission is vital to U.S.

⁸⁶¹ Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*: 197-203.

national interests; (3) that the mission has the support of the American people; (4) that the U.S. will use overwhelming force when it engages the enemy; and (5) that the mission has an exit strategy. The first prerequisites, that the objective be clearly defined and achievable, can be met by ensuring that the high value target is clearly identified and that his role within the organization is vital to the efficient and successful operation of the group. The operation undertaken to eliminate the high value target, whether that mission involve a drone strike or a direct action assault by a special forces team, must be weighed and analyzed carefully and by the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM has responsibility not only for all U.S. military special operations missions, but also for military drone operations. Thus, mission evaluation and planning for every military operation involving the type of group amputation missions discussed in this dissertation would begin at USSOCOM. Additionally, the organization to which the high value target belongs must be one that the President and his national security team have determined to be a direct threat to U.S. and/or its vital national interests.

One of the key prerequisites of the Powell Doctrine is that the U.S. always use overwhelming force to engage an enemy. This particular prerequisite is pulled straight from Clausewitz, who wrote of the importance of bringing "as many troops as possible ... into the engagement at the decisive point" in order to "counterbalance all other contributing circumstances."⁸⁶² In other words, in battle, whatever can go wrong, will go wrong -- but if one brings overwhelming force to bear chances are victory can be achieved. This thinking drove the Army's initial troop level estimates prior to the invasion of Iraq, which were consistently on the plus side of 500,000.⁸⁶³ The use of an unmanned drone, which is being operated from hundreds or thousands of miles away and is capable of launching a small missile at a particular high value target is -- in and of itself -- a display of overwhelming force. Likewise, the direct action missions conducted by U.S. Special Operations Forces are also a display of overwhelming force.

On the surface, it would seem that a small special operations assault team attacking a guarded and fortified compound, as was the case in the direct action assault

⁸⁶² Clausewitz, *On War*: 194-195.

⁸⁶³ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*: 116-117.

against Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad compound in Pakistan, would violate the Powell Doctrine's key principles. However, well-rehearsed special operations assaults combine simplicity, security, purpose, surprise, and speed to achieve and maintain "relative superiority" throughout the team's limited time on target.⁸⁶⁴

The Powell Doctrine stresses the importance of the exit strategy for each military operation. The purpose of this particular prerequisite is so that the U.S. will avoid open ended commitments such as Vietnam or Iraq/Afghanistan. For U.S. SOF, each mission is the result of detailed planning according to a specific cycle of phases. The ten phases of a full mission profile (in order) include: planning, rehearsal, deployment, insertion, infiltration, actions at the objective, exfiltration, extraction, recovery, and debriefing.⁸⁶⁵ Of these 10 phases, the final four can be seen as the elements of a special operation team's planned exit strategy. The strong planning emphasis on the phases following the actions at the objective stem from adherence to USSOCOM's four "SOF Truths": (1) humans are more

⁸⁶⁴ William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare, Theory and Practice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995). 8.

⁸⁶⁵ Chuck Pfarrer, *SEAL Target Geronimo: The Inside Story of the Mission to Kill Osama bin Laden* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011). 219.

important than hardware; (2) quality is better than quantity; and (3) special operations forces cannot be mass produced or (4) created after an emergency has occurred.⁸⁶⁶ These SOF Truths were developed as a way to codify the Special Operations Community's need to limit unnecessary risk to its highly-trained members.

The final prerequisite of the Powell Doctrine involves the support of the American people, or national will. The effects of losing public support for the war can be seen in an examination of the Vietnam War, when public opinion against that war was a factor in President Johnson's decision not to run for re-election in 1968. The war's unpopularity also pushed President Nixon toward reducing U.S. troop levels and to begin looking for alternative ways to support the South Vietnamese Government, such as an expansion of U.S. bombing campaigns. A lack of public support for the Iraq War helped drive down President Bush's approval ratings to historic lows and was undoubtedly instrumental in the defeat of his party in the 2008 presidential election to a candidate who promised to end the war and bring the troops home. Yet, as the deployments of large numbers of troops

⁸⁶⁶ Bryan D. Brown, "United States Special Operations Command History," ed. Department of Defense (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM History and Research Office, 2007), 25.

to the battlefield are watched closely by the American people, the flight of an unmanned drone or the deployment of a special operations assault team is generally only noticed by the families of those who deploy. Consider the fact that the U.S. was involved in El Salvador for a decade, yet, because of the small military footprint, this fact was basically ignored by the U.S. electorate. Additionally, organizational amputation strike missions will always remain highly classified, with the American public or the press only finding out about them, if they ever do, after the fact. Thus, national will is unlikely to turn strongly against the military's involvement in an organizational amputation strike in the way it is likely to turn against U.S. involvement in a prolonged traditional counterinsurgency campaign involving large numbers of troops.

In sum, as the U.S. draws down from two prolonged wars of insurgency, and begins to turn its attention toward the Asia-Pacific region,⁸⁶⁷ the time is right for the military to return to the Powell Doctrine. However, even as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who led the Obama Administration's foreign policy re-focus or so-

⁸⁶⁷ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (2011): 56.

called "pivot" toward Asia has stated: "The Arab Spring has ushered in a time when al Qaeda is on the rise."⁸⁶⁸ Further, the RAND Corporation has reported that despite having persisted for over two decades, historical evidence suggests that al Qaeda-affiliated groups "have tended to rise when the United States has deployed large numbers of conventional forces to Muslim countries."⁸⁶⁹ Conversely, the numbers of these same groups "have ebbed when the United States has utilized a 'light footprint' strategy that focuses on intelligence and special operations forces."⁸⁷⁰ Thus, a return to the Powell Doctrine coupled with a new set of laws of COIN which provide the theoretical foundation for counterinsurgency operations will allow the U.S. military's conventional forces to be prepared to meet the growing influence of China while at the same time using its special operations units to counter the trans-national, non-territorial global insurgents who overwhelmingly rely on terrorist attacks against the far enemy. The military can rely on USSOCOM to apply continuous pressure through organizational

⁸⁶⁸ Micahel Hirsh, "The Clinton Legacy: How Will History Judge the Soft-Power Secretary of State?," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2013): 84, 87.

⁸⁶⁹ Seth G. Jones, "The Resurgence of al Qaeda," *Rand Review*(2012), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/periodicals/rand-review/issues/2012/fall/leadership/resurgence-of-al-qaeda.html>.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

amputation strikes to cripple the group in a way that renders it unbalanced, inefficient, dysfunctional, and unable to launch the types of major attacks that impact the U.S homeland or lead to horizontal escalation of regional violence. For the purposes of clarity regarding the ways the strategy of group amputation strikes are compatible with the Powell Doctrine, Table 12.3 is included below.

**Organizational Amputation/Powell Doctrine
Compatibility**

Powell Doctrine	Organizational Amputation Strike
Clearly Defined Objective	Very Specific High Value Target
Achievable Objective	Kill or Capture; Surgical Strike
Vital National Interest	High Value Target is Vital to the Organization, which has been Identified as a Direct Threat to U.S. Vital National Interests
Use of Overwhelming Force	Economy of Force, Yet Achieves Relative Superiority
Exit Strategy	Each Full Mission Profile Focuses on Exit Strategy
National Will	Classified Missions— Limited Military Footprint

Table 12.3

CHAPTER 13

Conclusion

Intervention on the part of the U.S. military into the midst of an internal war of insurgency inevitably complicates a situation that is already highly complex. Wars of insurgency each have their own origins, causes, and dynamics that are almost completely obscure to those Americans tasked with executing the intervention.⁸⁷¹

Historically, the U.S. military, with its focus on conventional war, has been slow to even recognize when it was involved in an insurgency. This was certainly the case in Vietnam during Westmoreland's tenure, and was again the case during the years 2003-2006 in Iraq. When the U.S. finally did fully recognize that it was embroiled in an insurgency in Iraq, its response was to produce a counterinsurgency doctrine that completely omitted the lessons from its most recent efforts at COIN in El Salvador. Given the highly unconventional nature of U.S. involvement in El Salvador, this omission was most likely intentional due to the U.S. military's institutional preference for conventional warfare. Yet, the very nature of insurgency has evolved from that of a nationalistic

⁸⁷¹ Greentree, *Crossroads of Intervention: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America*: 18.

territorial form to one of non-territorial, transnational globalism. Rather than trying to revamp U.S. military doctrine by combining the U.S. military's institutional preference for large footprint conventional warfare with classical counterinsurgency theory, this dissertation has argued that the conventional U.S. military should return to the Powell Doctrine, while adapting the four laws of conventional COIN. This would leave the bulk of counterinsurgency operations to the U.S. military's special operations community, ensuring a smaller and supporting role of advisement, training, equipping, and group amputation strikes for the U.S. Kilcullen has argued that a large foreign military presence creates "accidental guerrillas" that join the insurgency. One of the lessons of Anbar is that the global, non-territorial insurgent fighter can also turn the local people into accidental supporters of the counterinsurgent. This type of situation cannot be capitalized upon by the U.S. if it is determined to deploy large numbers of troops and "Americanize" the counterinsurgency effort.

Historically, the U.S. military "is not good at running other countries, particularly in cultures where there are deep ethnic divisions and few democratic

traditions."⁸⁷² This was most recently brought to light again in Iraq. Indeed, the 2009 *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* states that it is "folly" for the U.S. to intervene in a counterinsurgency campaign on foreign soil unless there is a likelihood of host-nation cooperation. Further, if engaged in COIN, the document states that the U.S. should "seek a careful balance which employed the most appropriate, most indirect and least intrusive form of intervention yet still gives a high probability of achieving the necessary effect."⁸⁷³ In short, the heavy lifting of the COIN campaign must be done by the local government. Yet, from a pragmatic, realist perspective, this dissertation argues that FM 3-24, which was forged in response to a specific case, that being a deteriorating situation in Iraq, dictates that the conventional military do what both Walt and Panetta argue it is not good at. Intervention on the part of the U.S. military must be combined with very clear and very limited aims. Yet, the key lesson the military has learned from Iraq may be that the panacea for U.S. success is to employ a "surge." Consider the recent talk on Capitol Hill

⁸⁷² Walt, "The End of the American Era," 13.

⁸⁷³ Henrietta Fore, Robert Gates, and Condoleezza Rice, "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide," ed. United States Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), 3-4.

regarding a "surge" at the U.S.-Mexico border to address the problem of illegal immigration.⁸⁷⁴ This must be avoided. USSOCOM, with its combination of Special Operations Forces and unmanned drones, is adept at the type of mission critical to a global counterinsurgency campaign. U.S. Special Operations Forces are best suited for attacking and eliminating certain key high value personnel within a group, and thereby rendering the group or cell less capable.

However, there is currently much controversy surrounding the group amputation approach this dissertation advocates. The first is the issue of collateral damage, or the accidental killing of innocents who may be in the same area as the intended high value target. One example of unintended collateral damage was the accidental killing of 40-year-old cleric Salem Ahmed bin Ali Jaber, a highly influential and vocal critic of the Taliban who was "just the kind of leader most crucial to American efforts to eradicate al Qaeda"⁸⁷⁵ who was killed in May 2013. The second is the lack of

⁸⁷⁴ Joseph Tanfani and Brian Bennett, "Border 'Surge' Plan would be Financial Bonanza for Private Firms," *Los Angeles Times* (2013), <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jul/08/nation/la-na-adv-border-money-20130708>.

⁸⁷⁵ Robert F. Worth, Mark Mazzetti, and Scott Shane, "Drone Strikes' Risks to Get Rare moment in the Public Eye," *New York Times*, 06 February 2013, A1.

transparency and oversight, which has led some former military and intelligence officials to voice concern that the drone strikes "are increasingly targeting low-level militants who do not pose a direct threat to the U.S."⁸⁷⁶ No doubt that these are viable critiques of the tactics involved in group amputation strikes, which must be addressed by the military's civilian leadership. One of the contributing factors to collateral damage and the targeting of low-level militants stems from the fact that both the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), a subordinate command of USSOCOM, are currently conducting their own individual drone targeted killing campaigns with different rules and restrictions. The JSOC drone program is under tighter scrutiny than is the CIA's, having different and more restrictive policies, accountability mechanisms, oversight, and authority.⁸⁷⁷ For example, the military must obtain approval from the host nation before it can launch a drone strike, whereas the CIA does not. One of the proposals currently being examined by the White House which may have a positive effect on this situation is to transfer all responsibility for drone strikes to the military. Given that military

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Micah Zenko, "Policy Innovation Memorandum No. 31," ed. Center for Preventive Action (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 2013), 1.

operations are guided by Title 10 and that military targeting operations are codified in Joint Pub 3-60 (*Joint Targeting*), which outlines the processes, responsibilities, collateral damage estimations required prior to launch,⁸⁷⁸ a transfer of lead executive authority for all drone strikes would "pave the way for broader strategic reforms, including declassifying the relevant legal memoranda, explicitly stating which international legal principles apply, and providing information to the public on existing procedures that prevent harm to civilians."⁸⁷⁹ This move, along with continued advances in weapon accuracy and continued decreases in the size of the missiles fired, would help reduce collateral damage.

The third issue which needs to be mentioned revolves around the legal issues of targeted killings. These too, must be resolved but this has more to do with the Justice Department and is outside the purview of the military, and thus outside the purview of this dissertation.

However, issues aside, a strategy of organizational amputation strikes is a much more fitting way for the U.S. to conduct counterinsurgency against the transnational, non-territorial global insurgent in a time of fiscal

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 2.

limits. As Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said recently, "The United States military remains an essential tool of American power ... but one that must be used judiciously, with a keen appreciation of its limits."⁸⁸⁰ Given the way insurgencies evolve, the unique skills of special operations assault teams, combined with the tremendous capabilities brought to bear by unmanned aerial vehicles, can go a long way -- and at a much cheaper cost -- toward keeping the global insurgent off-balance and thus limited in his capabilities. This is not to say that targeted amputation strikes are a replacement for careful analysis of the context of a particular insurgency and are to be employed in every situation. Rather, the military's response must be tailored to each case. However, group amputation is preferred over large deployments as it gives the host nation flexibility while continuing to do the heavy lifting in its counterinsurgency campaign. Consider the 2013 request by the Iraqi government not for U.S. troops to help quell a rising insurrection, but rather for the use of U.S. drones.⁸⁸¹

Friedrich Engels advised would be insurgents that there existed certain rules which, if neglected, would

⁸⁸⁰ Hagel, "Speech Delivered by Secretary of Defense at National Defense University".

⁸⁸¹ Lakshamanan, "Iraq Open to U.S. Drone Strikes on Terrorists".

"produce the ruin of the party neglecting them."⁸⁸² Engels wrote:

Firstly, never play with insurrection unless you are fully prepared to face the consequences of your play. Insurrection is a calculus with very indefinite magnitudes, the value of which may change every day; ...Secondly, the insurrectionary career once entered upon, act with the greatest determination, and on the offensive. The defensive is the death of every armed rising; ...[and] rally those vacillating elements to your side which always follow the strongest impulse, and which always look out for the safer side;..."⁸⁸³

Thus, Engels advocated individual determination and tenacity, securing and maintaining the offensive, and maintaining high morale within the group. To these three rules this writer would add a fourth -- that the insurrectionists must have some type of functioning organizational structure which allows the group to exploit political space and to transmit a well-framed message that will resonate with those who would be convinced to support the movement.

⁸⁸² Friedrich Engels, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1919), <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/marxists/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/revolution-counterrevolution-germany.pdf>. 60.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

Although the approach to global counterinsurgency advocated in this dissertation is not a panacea, and will not eradicate all forms of insurgency and terrorist violence, UAVs and special operations assault teams have the ability to attack the structures that provide for the ability to adhere to Engels' rules of insurrection.

Galula pointed out that an "insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident, for in an insurgency leaders appear and then the masses are made to move."⁸⁸⁴ UAVs and special operations assault teams have the ability to monitor and strike those leaders after they appear and before they have the chance to organize followers and plan operations that result in the kind of damage al Qaeda inflicted on the West from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s. It is time to re-examine counterinsurgency theory in a contemporary context as demanded by the post-Cold War changes in the global environment, the strategies and tactics of the global insurgent, and the changes in military weapons and technology. The oil spot principle with its focus on winning hearts and minds is not applicable in the same ways as it was during the colonial struggles of the Cold War. The U.S. military's goals in fighting a global

⁸⁸⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*: 5.

insurgency must be to defuse such a war, limit the global insurgent's ability to repeatedly strike, and limit horizontal escalation of conflict -- not to wage and win it. Following the laws of 21st Century COIN and the judicious application of organizational amputation will allow the U.S. military to do just that, while still focusing its conventional forces on the more traditional military roles.

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