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The crucible of war: Dutch and British military learning processes in and beyond southern Afghanistan

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Chapter 3

Chapter

Chapter 3: Counterinsurgency theory

3.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, the process of learning from conflict by military organizations has been examined. Here, the focus shifts towards the substance of the lessons that armed forces can glean from counterinsurgency missions specifically. The objective of this chapter is to build a frame of reference of counterinsurgency prescriptions pertaining to the employment of armed forces. With an, albeit abridged, overview of the theoretical discourse on the role of the military in these conflicts, the manifestations of learning in the case studies can be assessed.³⁶⁷ Naturally, any counterinsurgency practitioner will do well to take note of the concepts his foes use, however analysis of insurgency manuals or practices is beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, this chapter does not examine works that describe the dynamics of (irregular) conflicts in general.³⁶⁸

Of course, most theorists on countering insurgencies emphasize the political dimension in such conflicts, arguing that armed forces can only play a subsidiary role in a comprehensive governmental effort.³⁶⁹ This chapter does not argue otherwise, but within this context it seeks to identify the competencies, skills and knowledge armed forces should possess or acquire to contribute to resolving an insurgency. After all, in most counterinsurgencies, military forces are often heavily involved, if not coordinating the overall effort.³⁷⁰ In expeditionary counterinsurgency operations, such as those by the Dutch and British forces in Afghanistan, the armed forces may represent the main instrument of state power that can be deployed in strength to assist foreign partners. At the very least, this means that the conduct of military forces is crucial to the outcome of the conflict. While good military performance will not be sufficient for defeating the insurgency in lieu of a political solution, operations marred by incompetence and lack of knowledge will have an adverse effect on the security situation.

The lessons described in this chapter are those that are considered to be generally applicable for counterinsurgency campaigns. Specific knowledge that is more narrowly applicable to the Afghan conflict or even to local dynamics will be touched upon in the case studies of

367 The best-known example of such works is of course Mao's treatise on guerrilla warfare.

368 See for this subject important works as: Rupert Smith (2006). *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*. London: Penguin; Mary Kaldor (2012). *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (3 ed.). Cambridge: Polity; Stathis Kalyvas (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

369 See Robert Thompson (1966). *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. St Petersburg: Hailer Publishing, p.50-52.; David Galula (1964). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport: Praeger Security International, p. 4-5.; David Kilcullen (2006). *Counter-insurgency Redux*. *Survival*, 48(4), p. 123.

370 See for example: Ian Beckett (2001). *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750*. London: Routledge, p. vii-ix; see also Sarah Sewall's introduction of Field Manual 3-24: United States Department of the Army. (2007). *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. xxii-xxiv.

this dissertation. A further consideration is that the cited lessons apply to the armed forces rather than other state institutions. While some of these lessons are specific to a certain place and time, others are thought to have a more widespread application. To provide an overview of theoretical literature on counterinsurgency, this chapter will summarize the main prescriptions from three such counterinsurgency eras. In the first section, the literature on colonial conquest and imperial policing will be examined, roughly spanning the 19th Century and the early 20th century. The second section surveys the 'classical era' of counterinsurgency, that of imperial retreat and other 'small wars' in the context of the Cold War. In the third section the theoretical discourse on counterinsurgency after the Cold War is assessed. The findings of these three sections are analyzed in a fourth, concluding, section to gauge the extent to which the theoretical prescriptions have changed over time and whether the body of literature represents a coherent theoretical frame that armed forces can turn to for insight.

3.2: Establishing control: the colonial experience

The roots of modern counterinsurgency concepts can be found in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although the conquest, pacification and administration of colonies required use of military force, application of this instrument was in itself insufficient. In essence, the economic potential of a colony had to be exploited which presumed that a modicum of governance and development activities were necessary.³⁷¹ Consequently, expeditionary small wars of conquest and subsequent pacification were established "as a discrete category of warfare [...]".³⁷² As Western powers grappled with the challenge of imposing control on the restive populations of conquered territories, colonial officers and officials pondered the ways to apply military force and political action to this end. Various French, British and Dutch practitioners disseminated their musings on colonial warfare.

One of the earliest French thinkers is Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, who gained notoriety during his tenure in Algeria in the 1840's. As a commander, he advocated the use of mobile forces in punitive raids against indigenous rebels. This was a departure from the garrisons in static fortification, beyond which the French troops had little influence, which had been the common approach until then. At face value, force protection was traded for mobility and aggressiveness. Bugeaud further emphasized intelligence, acquired by employing local informers and intensive scouting, on the whereabouts of the insurgents and their supporters. With this information, the French troops sought to strike at the rebels' sanctuaries. This approach was deemed necessary as the rebel forces declined to offer battle to the French troops. Often, these punitive raids (or *razzia's*) were aimed at the general populace rather

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371 Martijn Kitzen, *Course of Cooption*, p. 108-109.

372 Douglas Porch (2013). *Counterinsurgency*. p. 1.

than the resistance fighters. The raids terrorized the local population and destroyed its livelihood.³⁷³

Beyond the military operations, Bugeaud recognized that the administration and pacification of areas were the main objective, rather than their conquest. To this end, he employed so-called *Bureaux Arabes*³⁷⁴ whose task was to build relationships with tribal leaders and bring them into the French fold through persuasion. Furthermore, the *Bureaux* could serve as a conduit for intelligence, given their ties with local population. The *Bureaux* were staffed by French officers and troops who spoke Arabic and had experience; consequently, the local administration was a military affair. Development of these areas beyond economic exploitation was not a consideration for wooing the populace.³⁷⁵ In the end, Bugeaud largely succeeded in conquering Algeria, yet as the methods did little to ingratiate the population to French rule, occasional uprisings continued. From a military perspective, the diverging approach from continental warfare stands out. The French troops' dispersed operations, lack of artillery support and raids on the local population were (theoretical) anathemas for the European conduct of war.³⁷⁶ As such, the colonial army increasingly had a different outlook than the 'metropolitan' army.

Later on, French discourse on colonial warfare was continued by officers including Joseph Simon Gallieni and Hubert Lyautey. In 1892, Gallieni was tasked with pacifying Tonkin (modern day northern Vietnam), for which he initiated an approach that was called "progressive occupation". Starting from their posts, troops would conduct patrols that expanded over time, ultimately linking its area of control with that of another post. Concurrently, the post was to serve as a marketplace for the local population where they could trade. This had the benefit of making contacts with the local population and gathering intelligence. More importantly, this displayed the benevolent effects of French occupation, provided the local population would cooperate.³⁷⁷

In 1894, Gallieni was joined in Indochina by Hubert Lyautey. A vocal critic of the French metropolitan army, Lyautey found a new purpose in the service of France's overseas ambitions. Lyautey embraced Gallieni's approach and expanded upon it. Their cooperation was reprised in 1896 when Gallieni summoned Lyautey to Madagascar. The latter officer conducted an ultimately successful campaign to subdue the population in his area of responsibility. He employed *razzia's* to separate the population from insurgents and subsequently tried to

373 Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 18-25; Christopher Griffin, *Revolution in colonial military affairs*, p. 16-18.

374 Thomas Rid, (2010). The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33(5), p. 735-737.

375 Christopher Griffin (2009). A Revolution in Colonial Military Affairs: Gallieni, Lyautey and the "Tache d'Huile". *British International Studies Association Conference*, Leicester, p. 18-19.

376 Ian Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, p. 29.

377 Porch, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 388.

address the needs of the population. Another important aspect of his approach was his ability in co-opting the main insurgent leader and his followers. The combination of these factors contributed to the French success in pacifying Madagascar.³⁷⁸

Lyautey put his experiences into writing. In an article published in 1900: “*Du rôle colonial de l’Armée*” he advocated how the army should conduct operations in the overseas colonies. He favorably described Gallieni’s gradual approach of “progressive occupation”. Lyautey rebranded this as a “*tache d’huile*”, a slow spreading oil spot of control over the population. Furthermore, Lyautey advocated the role of administration over the populace beyond pure military efforts.³⁷⁹ Often, political, and military authority was combined within French officers.³⁸⁰ As such, if an officer was to develop the region under his command, he must be an “administrator, farmer, architect, engineer” instead of just a warrior. In the colonies, Lyautey contended, war was a constructive force. He also campaigned for an autonomous colonial army, due to the distinct roles and requirements for each institution.

Yet, despite this seemingly benevolent intent of colonialism, in practice the effects were more prosaic and brutal. The French army imposed a foreign administration and culture on new subjects, whose patterns of life were subsequently uprooted. When this ostensible progress was lost on the local beneficiaries and they rebelled against French rule, the latter were capable of applying indiscriminate force for pacification. Although Lyautey himself tried to adhere to his principles in later postings in Algeria and Morocco, his theories on the role of the military in colonial context was not universally accepted by other French officers and did not help to enamor the local populations’ feelings towards French rules. Ultimately, Morocco and other territories were subjugated through the use of force, not by acquiescence of the populations. As such, the theories of the “*tache d’huile*” and the constructive force of colonialism generally did little to persuade indigenous people.³⁸¹ Still, Bugeaud, Gallieni and Lyautey professed that the military contribution to colonial conquest stood in stark contrast to conventional warfare in Europe. Military force should be used discriminately, with more emphasis on mobility rather than force protection. Additionally, officers should be able to assume roles beyond commanding troops, in order to administer and pacify their regions of responsibility.

As the largest colonial empire, Britain accumulated experience in colonial warfare throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This ranged from wars of conquest, interventions to enact ‘regime change’, and punitive expeditions, to quelling rebellions and policing. Again, this led to the publication of prescriptions by practitioners. For instance, Charles

378 Kitzen, *Course of Cooption*, p. 125-127.

379 Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, p. 40.

380 Robert Asprey (2002). *War In The Shadows*. Lincoln: iUniverse, p. 154.

381 Porch, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 394-399.

Callwell published a treatise “Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice”. This book extensively explored the considerations for the employment of armed force “[...] against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers, campaigns undertaken to suppress rebellious and guerrilla warfare in all parts of the world where organized armies are struggling against opponents who will not meet them in the open field.”³⁸² As such, Callwell distinguished ‘small wars’ from conventional wars against regularly organized armies.³⁸³ Callwell saw the exemplary use of force as instrumental for success against ‘uncivilized’ enemies. In theory, military operations against selected targets would dissuade the local population to rise up against the British.³⁸⁴ Thus, the main objective in quelling resistance was moral effect so that the rebellious subjects would cease their hostilities.³⁸⁵ Still, Callwell acceded that victory in small wars was often elusive.³⁸⁶ In contrast to his French contemporaries, Callwell had little consideration for the political and developmental aspects in small wars.

A generation later in 1934, major-general Charles Gwynn showed a broader view of irregular warfare in his book “Imperial Policing”. By now, the context of the British Empire had evolved in the sense that it focused on preserving or restoring order in the overseas territories.³⁸⁷ Gwynn recognized this and as the title of his book attests, in his mind the military contribution to suppressing civil unrest was rather more in policing than normal combat operations. Even so, he acknowledged that the manifestations of malcontent could be diverse, ranging from full-blown insurgencies to “communal disturbances”.³⁸⁸

Gwynn identified four main principles for the military on colonial duty. First, he emphasized the primacy of civil authority.³⁸⁹ It was the civil government that set out the policy objectives, which the military should execute. Furthermore, officers should offer advice to the civil authorities to the effect of force employment. The second principle was the application of minimum force. Gwynn stressed that the objective was restoration of civil order and the eventual acceptance by the population. Harsh punitive measures could therefore be counterproductive as these might arouse sympathy among the population for the rebels. The third principle was of the need for firm and timely action. Gwynn asserted that the failure to act will be “interpreted as weakness, encourage further disorder and eventually necessitate measures more severe than those which would suffice in the first instance.” The final principle is the need for close cooperation between civil and military instruments. In

382 Charles Callwell (1899). *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice*. London: War Office, p. 1.

383 Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 137-138.

384 Daniel Whittingham (2012). ‘Savage warfare’: C.E. Callwell, the roots of counter-insurgency, and the nineteenth century context. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23(4-5), p 593-594.

385 Ibidem, p. 600.

386 Callwell, *Small Wars*, p. 7.

387 Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 282-283.

388 Charles Gwynn (1939). *Imperial Policing*. London: MacMillan & Co, p. 10-11.

389 Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, p. 3-4.

essence, this is an acknowledgement that coercive (military) measures alone do not suffice for regaining control over the population.³⁹⁰ Although not included as principle, Gwynn placed a premium on intelligence without which the troops would be relegated to “aimless wandering”.

Beyond the French and British empires, other European countries had to establish and retain control over their colonial territories. For its empire in modern day Indonesia, the Netherlands had created a colonial army (*Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, KNIL) and was tasked with expansion through conquest, pacification, and policing. Although this army saw much action, officers and NCOs lamented the lack of central guidance in the form of doctrine. To a certain extent, this was remedied by officers and officials who wrote in a private capacity on the subject.³⁹¹ In particular, the protracted Dutch pacification campaign in Aceh (Northern Sumatra, 1873-1909) inspired some salient lessons.

The Dutch exertions to pacify Aceh were unsuccessful for the first twenty years of the conflict. Dutch forces were unable to expand their writ beyond their bases and came under frequent attack. In reaction to this situation, the KNIL mounted punitive expeditions against the population that were counterproductive.³⁹² Only at the end of the nineteenth century did the KNIL take another approach. With small, aggressive patrols the Dutch forces took a more measured employment of force with the objective of controlling rather than terrorizing the population. Although Dutch intelligence efforts had gradually improved throughout the war, this received a boost by the involvement of Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje, a prominent scholar on Islam (the insurgents’ religion) with knowledge about Aceh’s political landscape. His study and subsequent report on the causes of the resistance and the internal political divisions in Aceh offered the Dutch authorities’ inroads to pacify the province.³⁹³

Snouck Hurgonje suggested that the Dutch should co-opt local chiefs that were undermined by the Islamist resistance. By empowering these traditional leaders, the Dutch could exploit local fissures and cooperation with them to establish security. Secondly, as the Dutch sought the collaboration of the local population, military force should only be directed at active members or supporters of the resistance. Of course, this required fine-grained intelligence. Finally, the Dutch would offer benefits to the Acehnese population by stimulating trade, agriculture, and industry.³⁹⁴ After an area was pacified a civil administration was established

390 Ibidem, p. 13-15.

391 Ger Teitler. (2001). Voorlopers van het VPTL, 19828-1829. *Militaire Spectator*, 170(5), p. 268-269.

392 Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (2008). ‘The roots of Dutch Counter-Insurgency, Balancing and integrating Military and civilian efforts from Aceh to Uruzgan. In R. G. Davis (Red.), *The U.S. army and irregular warfare 1775-2007: Selected papers from the 2007 Conference of Army Historians*. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, p. 122-123.

393 Montgomery McFate, (2018). A Military Anthropologist Looks at Islamic Insurgency in Aceh. *Orbis*, p. 632-634.

394 Kitzen, *The Course of Cooption*, p.208-209.

in which civil servants, officers and local leaders closely collaborated.³⁹⁵ Ultimately, this approach as adopted by the commanding general, Jo van Heutsz in 1898. Although these measures were successful after prolonged and bloody campaigning, the Aceh War as not concluded until 1912 and the animus against Dutch rule remained.³⁹⁶

Certainly, the colonial era and its wars hold scant examples to emulate. Using military force to subjugate and exploit foreign territories and their inhabitants should obviously not pass ethical muster. Yet, the experiences of these small wars have inspired prescriptions such as the abovementioned examples. When summarizing the various recommendations from colonial officers, an uneven picture arises (see table 3.1). For instance, the use of measured force against civilians that supported rebels was generally deemed to be acceptable, although excessive force was regarded as counterproductive. With the exception of the Aceh War, intelligence was mainly used to find the enemy. In most of the wars described, the armed forces were dominant in fighting the insurgents. Yet, in the French examples, officers had to conduct a variety of tasks such as administration and economic development. Alternatively, in British and Dutch publications, the cooperation with civilian officials was awarded more prominence. Finally, non-kinetic efforts were advocated by some of the thinkers to complement the use of military force in order to establish control over restive populations. In sum, some hallmarks of later counterinsurgency theories can be seen in these prescriptions. Nevertheless, while some of the more benevolent prescriptions have been embraced by later theorists, these small colonial wars were brutal affairs that had devastating effects on the local societies. Therefore, current counterinsurgency students should be aware of the historical reality of the colonial when perusing the theories of that era.

395 Mcfate, *A Military Anthropologist*, p. 634.

396 Kitzen, *The Course of Cooption*, p. 297-303.

	Bugeaud	Gallieni/ Lyautey	Callwell	Gwynn	Snouck Hurgonje/ Van Heutsz
Campaign plan/objective	Pacification/ administration	Pacification/ administration	Conquest/ pacification/ maintaining order	Maintaining order	Pacification/ administration
Role of military/ civil military cooperation	Exclusive, including administrative tasks	Exclusive, including administrative tasks	Exclusive	Constabulary Operations in support of civilian authorities	Dominant
Use of Intelligence	Identification of enemy	Enemy/ political	Identification of enemy	Identification of enemy	Ethnographic/ political
Use of force/ actions against insurgents	Punitive operations	Punitive operations	Exemplary force	Minimum	Minimum/ exemplary
Non-kinetic effects/ persuasion	Providing governance and development	Providing governance and development (Tache d'Huile)	-	-	Providing governance and development

Table 3.1: Prescriptions on the military contribution to small wars in the colonial era

3.3: “The counterinsurgency era”

In the decades after the Second World War, Western armed forces became intensively embroiled in various irregular conflicts. Two international developments served as a catalyst to the Western involvement in these ‘small wars.’ First of all, the European colonial powers largely lost their overseas empires. This process of decolonization was in many cases accompanied by intense violence.³⁹⁷ Secondly, the advent of the Cold War imposed an ideological layer over many internal conflicts in which the sides sought support from either the West or the Communist bloc. This was exacerbated by the success by Mao Tse-Tung in the Chinese civil war, his writings on revolutionary war inspired other insurgents to copy the Chinese model for overthrowing incumbent governments; among others, in Vietnam and Malaya.³⁹⁸

This prevalence of potent insurgencies prompted interest in this phenomenon from both practitioners and scholars. As a result, prescriptions by revolutionaries such as Mao, Vo

397 Ian Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies*, p. 109–115.

398 John Mackinlay (2009). *The Insurgent Archipelago*. London: Hurts, p. 35–36; Kitzen, *The Course of Cooption*, p. 110.

Nguyen Giap and Che Guevara were studied by Western armed forces. Moreover, Western officers began to write theoretical works with recommendations based on their experiences in fighting in these revolutionary wars.³⁹⁹ Five of these authors and their works will be studied in this section. Of course, this selection of authors and their experiences does not capture a comprehensive overview of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies during the Cold War. However, these works are among the most influential for Western counterinsurgency doctrine and later theoretical works. Yet, it warrants consideration that these publications were products of their time when communist(-inspired) insurgencies were wracking the European former colonies within the context of the Cold War.

One of the chief writers on counterinsurgency was the French officer, David Galula, who saw service in the Second World War and in the Algerian War. In his work *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Galula argued that in conventional war, both sides of the conflict generally adhered to the same principles. In contrast, revolutionary war saw two types of warfare: the revolutionary's and the counterrevolutionary's, as both worked under different rules. Galula compared this to a "[...] fight between a fly and a lion, the fly cannot deliver a knockout blow and the lion cannot fly."⁴⁰⁰ The main thrust of Galula's work was then to offer the rules of counterinsurgent warfare.

In many ways, *Counterinsurgency Warfare* is a reaction to Mao's work. Galula acknowledges that the population is the objective for both the insurgents and the counterinsurgents. Consequently, the political aspect of the war is paramount as opposed to conventional wars and is an "[...] active instrument of operation."⁴⁰¹ Weighing political effects of military actions becomes even more prominent in counterinsurgency, which adds to the challenge for the military as this organization is often not attuned to do this. Galula thus subscribes to the notion that counterinsurgency "[...] is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political".⁴⁰² Even so, he saw a crucial role for the use of the military in such conflicts.

In counterinsurgency, victory cannot be attained by destruction of the insurgent's forces and their political organization. Instead, Galula asserts, the counterinsurgent should strive to "the permanent isolation from the population [...], maintained by and with the population."⁴⁰³ While armed forces can play a crucial role in this approach, they should refrain from large-scale conventional operations.⁴⁰⁴ Galula translated this approach into a phased strategy in which the role of military force progressively diminishes with each sequential phase. For

399 Ian Beckett (2012). *The Historiography of Insurgency*. In P. B. Duyvesteyn, *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (pp. 23-31). London: Routledge, p. 25.

400 David Galula, (1964). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport: Praeger Security International, p. xii-xiii

401 Ibidem, p.4-5.

402 Ibid, p. 63.

403 Ibid, p. 54.

404 Ibid, p. 50-51.

instance, the first phase consists of clearing operations from a given area. This step should be followed by detaching troops to hold this area by billeting them among the population. From here, the next step of establishing contacts with and control over the population can be taken. The role of troops now comes to resemble that of a police force that is tasked with maintaining order, protection of the population and intelligence collection.⁴⁰⁵

After a sufficient level of control is established and enough intelligence is analyzed, the neutralization of the insurgent's political organization can be undertaken. In the subsequent phases, the role of the military becomes less pronounced. Yet, while Galula emphasized that military activities should be subservient to civilian control, he acknowledged that a strict bifurcation between civilian and military tasks is often impractical. Indeed, military personnel have to assume different roles because civilian authorities are incapable of delivering them. In Galula's words: "[t]he soldier must be prepared to become a propagandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse [...] as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians."⁴⁰⁶ This requires adaptability on the part of the military and its personnel as they have to conduct other activities than in conventional war.⁴⁰⁷ A further central aspect of Galula's strategy is the importance of information operations (propaganda). He saw three main audiences for these efforts: the population, the insurgents, and the counterinsurgent forces. The latter identified audience must be made to understand what their role in the campaign and phases is. In sum, military operations in counterinsurgency require more than the application of force and are distinct from conventional warfare.

Roger Trinquier, a contemporary of David Galula, also distilled prescriptions on counterinsurgency based on his experience. His book *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (1964) evoked controversy due to Trinquier's condonement of torture for intelligence purposes.⁴⁰⁸ Trinquier lamented the French army's lack of attention to the realities of modern warfare (counterinsurgency). Instead, the army stubbornly continued to prepare for conventional warfare, which he saw as obsolete.⁴⁰⁹ In counterinsurgency, "military operations, as combat actions [...] against opposing forces, are of only limited importance and are never the total conflict." With his book, Trinquier aimed to study effective countermeasures against insurgency. Central to victory in this type of warfare is control over the population. This can be achieved by the destruction of the enemy's "armed clandestine organization".⁴¹⁰

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405 Ibid, p. 75-84.

406 Ibid, p. 61-62.

407 Ibid, p. 66-67.

408 See Eliot Cohen's foreword to the 2006 edition of Trinquier's book, p. viii-ix.

409 Trinquier (1964). *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*. London: Pall Mall Press Ltd., p. 3.

410 Ibidem, p. 5-7.

Key elements in defense against insurgents identified by Trinquier are the protection of the population and collection of intelligence on the enemy. Acquiring intelligence hinges in large part on the support of the population as they can identify the insurgents. The main weapon of the insurgents to prevent this is employing terrorism so that the population is cowed into acquiescence and will not cooperate with the counterinsurgent forces.⁴¹¹

Therefore, Trinquier advocated a gradual, concentric approach. First, the towns and cities have to be controlled as the bulk of the population lives there. Here, troops assist the police force and the civilian administration. To be effective, troops have to live among the population to deny insurgent influence and to acquire relevant intelligence.⁴¹² After the population centers are secured, the *intermediate area*, which is contested by both sides must be brought under control, based on the intelligence provided by the population. Again, the objective here is to bring the inhabitants of the outlying villages under control and thereby destroy the insurgents' organization there. Consequently, this would weaken the insurgents as they would progressively be deprived of intelligence and support. Additionally, Trinquier suggested the use of development projects to improve the populations welfare.⁴¹³ Finally, the insurgents' sanctuaries can be attacked and destroyed after careful planning and intelligence preparation. This operation should only be concluded when no insurgent remained in the region. When successful, the military operation is followed by a return of civilian administration of the area.

As in the nineteenth century, the British armed forces also acquired substantial experience in counterinsurgency. These wars were fought both in the shrinking empire and in the British Isles themselves when the conflict in Northern Ireland commanded attention for several decades. As with the French, British writers with first-hand experiences published books about this type of warfare and its prescriptions. The most well-known of these authors are Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson.

Robert Thompson had served during the Malayan insurgency and was later asked by the Americans to advise their growing entanglements in Vietnam. His book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (1966) enumerated five principles that have become the hallmark of counterinsurgency warfare. First, the government must have clear political aim of what it wants to achieve. The second principle is that the government must act in accordance with the law in order to retain legitimacy. A third rule is that the government must coordinate its various instruments of power, balancing military and civilian efforts under an overall plan. The fourth principle emphasized the defeat of political subversion rather than destroying

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411 Ibid, p. 31-32.

412 Ibid, p. 60-62.

413 Ibid, p. 64-65.

the insurgents. Finally, the government should secure its base area first in the guerrilla phase of the conflict, and from there wrest control back from the insurgents.⁴¹⁴

On this account, the role of the military is subservient to civilian authorities and as an instrument within a general plan. According to Thompson, this requires a highly trained, mobile army with light equipment that is adequately supported by a navy and air force. He contends that small unit actions with delegated authority to junior commanders are more prone to success against insurgent than large scale conventional operations.⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, in case of an insurgency, the armed forces present should retrain and reorganize rather than expand. Its primary role is to support the government to regain control of disputed areas by evicting the insurgents from them. Holding the area is a task of the police force and civil authorities. The secondary role is to deny the insurgents freedom of movement in other areas in order to keep them off balance. However, the military should avoid the employment of heavy weaponry in populated areas as this would create more insurgents than kill them.⁴¹⁶ Interestingly, Thompson is apprehensive of the establishment of informal militias beyond self-defense purposes, arguing that such militias are prone to prolong violence.⁴¹⁷

A further central tenet to the eradication of an insurgency is intelligence, preferably under responsibility of a single organization. Thompson asserts that the police force should be responsible rather than the armed forces, as the former is more attuned to the population. However, the army is one of the primary consumers of intelligence for its operational direction.⁴¹⁸ Another element that Thompson identified is the use of information operations, based on intelligence, directed at the insurgents and the population. With regard to the insurgents, messaging aims to: induce surrenders among the insurgents; sow dissension in their ranks; and create an image of a firm but just government.⁴¹⁹

At the level of military operations, Thompson asserts these should be aimed at isolating the insurgents from the population. Ultimately, these “clear-and-hold” operations are aimed at destroying the insurgent’s organization and infrastructure rather than killing insurgents. Thompson was wary about the efficacy of the large “search-and-clear” operations that he saw in Vietnam. Conversely, he saw value in small scale operations that aimed to disrupt the enemy’s freedom of movement.⁴²⁰ Although strategic hamlets were used in Vietnam, Thompson was critical as he found that their establishment was an end rather than serving

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414 Robert Thompson (1966). *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. St Petersburg: Hailer Publishing, p. 50-58.

415 Ibidem, p. 61-62.

416 Ibid, p. 105-106.

417 Ibid, p. 108.

418 Ibid, 84-86.

419 Ibid, p. 90-91.

420 Ibid, P. 116-117.

the purpose of isolating the insurgents (Viet Cong).⁴²¹ In the end, Thompson's advice in Vietnam was to little strategic effect. Yet, his principles and operational phases would have a lasting impact on counterinsurgency theorists.

Another important British thinker on counterinsurgency of this era is Frank Kitson. As an army officer, he served in Kenya, Malaya, Oman, and Cyprus. His book, *Low Intensity Operations* (1971) aimed to prepare the British army "to deal with subversion, insurrection, and peace-keeping operations [...]".⁴²² Kitson observed that to defeat an insurgency, the government must employ a combination of political, economic, psychological, and military measures. He noted that although military commanders will regard the non-military measures as beyond their responsibility, civilian authorities will expect them to conduct these roles. As a result, soldiers must be prepared to use these instruments in their operational plan.⁴²³

Central to defeating an insurgency is gaining control over the population. A crucial condition for control is that the government clearly communicates its goal of defeating the insurgency. If the resolve of the government is questionable, the population will not be inclined to support it. Furthermore, the government must draw up an overall plan designed to "regain and retain the allegiance of the population."⁴²⁴ Beyond dismantling the insurgency, this plan must seek to address legitimate grievances and maintain the prosperity of the country. For the military contribution to such a plan, Kitson contends that officers must know the interdependency of the various state instruments within a program. To coordinate effectively with other agencies, this knowledge must be available throughout every level of the military as "even in the operational sphere civil and military measures are inextricably intertwined."⁴²⁵

Kitson railed against the assertion that any good soldier is capable of fighting insurgents. He argued that conventional military operations call for distinct qualities than counterinsurgency activities or peacekeeping. Although Kitson recognized that these two sets of tasks provided a conundrum for the armed forces, he stressed that the military should prepare for both eventualities while acknowledging the differences between these types of conflict.⁴²⁶

In case of subversion, the military should be involved at the earliest stage possible in an advisory role. At this point, military personnel can familiarize themselves with the situation, augment intelligence efforts or assist in psychological operations.⁴²⁷ If and when subversion

421 Ibid, p. 141-144.

422 Frank Kitson, (1971). *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 2.

423 Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, p. 7.

424 Ibidem, p. 49-50.

425 Ibidem, p. 50-51.

426 Ibidem, p. 200-201.

427 Ibidem, p. 67-81.

evolves into a violent insurgency, the role of the military becomes more prominent. Here, the military can contribute in three ways. First, it can help perform protective tasks towards the population and other elements of the government. Second, it can assist in separating the population from the insurgency. Third, it can provide background information from captured documents or through interrogation which contributes to the overall intelligence position. Such background information can then be developed into contact information (or actionable intelligence) that is instrumental in finding the generally elusive enemy and bring the fight to him. Kitson envisaged this as a self-reinforcing mechanism. Intelligence-led operations would yield more intelligence that in turn drove new actions.⁴²⁸ Such a methodical approach requires patience, perseverance, and the ability to manage information. As such, units have to be attuned to collecting information and analyzing it to become actionable.

For better or worse, prescriptions from the colonial era, such as the principles by Gwynn or the ‘tache d’huile’, have clearly influenced these guidelines from the Cold War era. In general, the mentioned books in this section reinforced the idea that counterinsurgency forms a distinct category of warfare from conventional conflicts.⁴²⁹ Still, crucial differences stand out between the works of the two eras. First of all, the insurgents of the Cold War are respected as more capable adversaries than the indigenous rebels contesting imposition of colonial rule. Secondly, although the military is required to conduct many non-organic tasks, the primacy of civilian command is clearly established in the modern texts. While employment of the military was regarded as crucial, the thinkers of the Cold War universally acknowledged that this was insufficient on its own.

To conclude, the described works from the Cold War-era have many similarities (see table 3.2). Indeed, Kitson extensively refers to Thompson, Galula and Trinquier. The principles as espoused by Thompson and Galula are largely present in the other works. All authors acknowledge that the military contribution to counterinsurgency must be subservient to civilian authorities. Furthermore, the population forms the objective rather than the adversary. Another point of consensus is that successful campaigns should be initiated gradually from secure base areas, from which the government’s writ can be expanded and the insurgent’s organization can be defeated. To be sure, some differences exist between the prescriptions such as the willingness to employ force, the efficacy of good governance, the practical implications to separating insurgents from the population and the use of mobile forces to harass insurgents in their sanctuaries. Perhaps the most original thinker is Kitson with his relentless focus on intelligence for the armed forces, not only as consumer but also as a primary producer. Despite all these prescriptions, success in counterinsurgency proved hard to attain for Western states. Moreover, the conventionally calibrated armed forces struggled to adapt to the prescribed requirements of counterinsurgency. Firepower and

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428 Kitson, p. 95-98.

429 Ian Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies*, p. 44.

conventional tactics were used as a substitute for understanding the conflict and the need for a gradual, persistent engagement that required the integration of non-kinetic activities. Salient exceptions such as the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland notwithstanding, the interest in counterinsurgency, and its prescriptions, declined throughout the 1980’s. However, the texts would be rediscovered in a new counterinsurgency era at the start of the 21st century.

	Galula	Trinquier	Thompson	Kitson
Campaign plan/objective	Defeating political subversion. Separating the population from the insurgents, gradual approach	Establishing control over the population, gradual approach	Defeating political subversion, gradual approach	Separating insurgents from the population and gathering intelligence, gradual approach (military contribution)
Role of military/ civil military cooperation	Shifting roles throughout the campaign, under civilian authority	Military assists civilian authorities	Military used for clearance operations. By integrated committee under civilian authority, coordinating all instruments	Civilian control of all instruments of power
Adaptability	Military must be ready to assume other roles	Fundamental call for adapting military for modern warfare (counterinsurgency)	Reorganization and retraining of troops in case of insurgency	Adaptation from conventional warfare. Military must assume broader responsibilities in the absence of civilian capacity
Use of Intelligence	Paramount to destroy insurgent organization	Paramount, albeit with the use of illegal methods	Paramount, preferably by a single organization	Paramount, primary consideration for the armed forces. Contextual intelligence as well as 'contact' information
Use of force/ actions against insurgents	Decreasing use of force as campaign progresses	Securing the population by clearing insurgent presence, eventual destruction of insurgent sanctuaries	Isolate insurgents through small unit actions. Warned against search and destroy operations	Small unit targeted actions, based on intelligence
Non-kinetic effects/ persuasion	Vital: military must prepare for these tasks	Use of development projects to enhance the population's welfare	Information/ psychological operations but are responsibility of government	Increasingly important, armed forces must prepare for this task

Table 3.2: Counterinsurgency prescriptions and principles by authors during the Cold War

3.4: The rediscovery of counterinsurgency

After the end of the Cold War and at the outset of the 21st century insurgencies and the efforts to combat them were not much in vogue, both in Western academic and in military environments. During the 1990's, these militaries saw a large number of deployments in stabilization, peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. For these types of operations, conventional war fighting capabilities were insufficient.⁴³⁰ Indeed, some observers argued that the nature of war had even changed.⁴³¹ As a result, new theories and prescriptions were developed for these new wars.⁴³² In spite of these apparent paradigm shifts in war and warfare, some inspiration for tackling the modern problems was drawn from the counterinsurgency texts of the Cold War era.⁴³³ Of course, this approach risked the conflation of these types of conflicts for the intervening Western forces. In particular, the notions of minimum force, winning over the population and the need for a comprehensive approach as espoused by earlier prescriptions were thought to be applicable to the interventions of the 1990's.⁴³⁴

In the United States the political leadership was wary of committing the military to “low intensity conflicts” such as counterinsurgency and stabilization operations. Such missions were regarded as distractions for which the U.S. armed forces were ill-suited. Protracted, open-ended conflicts that placed a premium on use of minimum force and reconstruction efforts were to be avoided.⁴³⁵ For the United States military, the most salient memory of a counterinsurgency campaign was that of Vietnam. From the early 1960's to 1973, the United States deployed its military in support of South Vietnam against insurgents and incursions from communist North Vietnam. Despite the large commitment of forces, over 500,000 troops were present at its height in 1968, the United States was unable to sustain the South Vietnamese government, which collapsed in 1975. The technological and military advantage the U.S. military held over its opponents proved irrelevant as the Americans were unable to attain their political objectives. According to contemporary and later critics, the U.S. armed forces, with notable exceptions, suffered from a conventional mindset and were unable to apply proper counterinsurgency tactics.⁴³⁶ The conflict was prosecuted as a conventional war with little regard for the political dimensions. Political pressure to prepare

430 Martijn Kitzen, *Course of Cooption*, p. 111.

431 See for instance: Mary Kaldor (2012). *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (3 ed.). Cambridge: Polity; Martin van Creveld, (1991). *The Transformation of War*. New York: Simon & Schuster; T.X. Hammes, (2004). *The Sling and The Stone: On War in The 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Zenith Press.

432 See for example: Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force*, p. 306.

433 David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith (2010). Whose Hearts and Whose Minds? The Curious Case of Global Counter-Insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33(1), p. 85-87.

434 Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (2012). Counterinsurgency and Peace Operations. In P. B. Rich, & I. Duyvesteyn (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*. London: Routledge, p. 85-86.

435 Keith Shimko (2010) *The Iraq Wars and America's Military Revolution*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 131-133.

436 See: Neil Sheehan (1988). *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Vintage; Andrew Krepinevich (1986). *The Army and Vietnam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

for counterinsurgency operations by the Kennedy administration were actively resisted by the U.S. military on an institutional level.⁴³⁷

In his 1998 book, Richard Downie shows that the lessons of Vietnam were not institutionalized but discarded soon afterwards.⁴³⁸ Instead, the experience of Vietnam reinforced the idea that the United States should either employ its overwhelming firepower or better still, refrain from intervention with substantial amounts of troops at all. In short, the lessons that the United States Army took away from Vietnam did nothing to help it prepare for future counterinsurgency campaigns. Subsequent counterinsurgency campaigns in Latin America during the 1970's and 1980's were mostly small advisory missions with a small footprint where the fighting was done by local forces.⁴³⁹ Like their European allies, the American armed forces focused on conventional warfare in the European theatre. Previous lessons from counterinsurgency were consequently repeatedly forgotten, willfully ignored, or purged outright from military curricula.⁴⁴⁰

Instead, the United States military was to exploit its technological advantages that had been displayed in the lopsided victory over Iraq in 1991. According to some observers, the experience of *Operation Desert Storm* heralded a *Revolution in Military Affairs* (RMA).⁴⁴¹ This RMA would enable the United States military to fuse optimal situational awareness through information dominance and precise stand-off weapons. Combined with sophisticated, real-time, command and control, this would build a highly mobile and nimble lethal force. This force was to fight wars characterized by swiftness, decisiveness, few casualties (on the American side at least) and with little influence of geographical factors or even friction.⁴⁴²

Such sterile high-intensity warfare would certainly be preferable over protracted wars against irregular foes, both for the military as for politicians. Still, critics as Colin Gray contended that the advocates of the RMA overvalued the technological factor in warfare while disregarding the human aspect. Moreover, the ability to strike targets with precision would be irrelevant if this failed to coerce the adversary, who by default would seek to negate this military prowess by employing asymmetrical countermeasures.⁴⁴³

437 Stephen Rosen (1991). *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 100-105.

438 Richard D. Downie (1998). *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War*. Westport: Praeger, p. 55-57.

439 Richard D. Downie (1998). *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War*. Westport: Praeger, p. 183.

440 Eliot Cohen, Conrad Crane, Jan Horvath & John Nagl (2006). *Principles, Imperatives and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency*, *Military Review*, 86(2), p. 53; Austin Long (2008). *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence: The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960-1970 and 2003-2006*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, p. 19-20.

441 Mahnken, T. G., & Watts, B. D. (1997). What the Gulf War Can (and Cannot) Tell Us about the Future of Warfare. *International Security*, 22(2)

442 David Gompert, Richard Kugler and Martin Libicki (2015). *Thucydides was right: Defining the future threat*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, p. 34.

443 Colin Gray (2001). The RMA and intervention: A sceptical view. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 22(3), p. 54-55.

The attacks of September 11th, 2001, proved to form a watershed in the foreign policy advocated by the administration of U.S. president George W. Bush with profound repercussions for both its allies and its opponents. In response to the terrorist attacks, the United States found itself compelled to unleash its military to proactively combat terrorism, first in Afghanistan and later in Iraq.⁴⁴⁴ The initial military successes in Iraq and Afghanistan seemed to vindicate the proponents of the RMA. Indeed, the victories in Iraq and Afghanistan heralded a “New American Way of War”. No longer was the deployment of large numbers in men and materiel necessary to apply overwhelming firepower, long the hallmark of American warfare. Wars of attrition, which resulted in heavy casualties on both sides, were obsolete for the U.S. military. Instead, modern information technology enabled operations that attained quick victories with “speed, maneuver (sic), flexibility and surprise”.⁴⁴⁵

The primary catalyst for the resurgence of interest in counterinsurgency after the Cold War was the war in Iraq. While the initial invasion to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime was conducted with impressive speed, the coalition forces were ill-prepared for a stabilization role and overstretched to provide security. This was exacerbated by the ill-conceived measures to disband the Iraqi security forces and to purge the Iraqi government from members of the Baath-party by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). In the resulting power vacuum, multiple armed groups sprang up to fight the Western occupation forces, the new Iraqi government and each other. Observers recognized the coalition troops faced an insurgency that required a different approach than combat operations against terrorists.⁴⁴⁶ In this context, American forces started to improvise and adapt to the realities of counterinsurgency operations.⁴⁴⁷ Officers shared their experiences through professional media and scholarly articles.⁴⁴⁸

In the case of Iraq, the United States military’s path towards adaptation proved tortuous but led to major changes.⁴⁴⁹ As described in the introduction, the publication of *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (FM 3-24), was one of the most significant manifestations of this process. Inspiration for this doctrinal document was drawn from a combination of classical counterinsurgency theories, the battlefield adaptations and expertise from other

444 Benjamin Lambeth (2010). Operation Enduring Freedom, 2001. In J. A. Olsen (Ed.), *A History of Air Warfare* (pp. 255-277). Dulles: Potomac Books.

445 Max Boot (2003). The New American Way of War. *Foreign Affairs*, 82(4), pp. 41-58

446 See for example: Stephen Biddle, (2006). Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon. *Foreign Affairs*, 85(2), 2-14; Steven Metz and Raymond Millen (2004). *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st century: Reconceptualising Threat and Respons*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, p. 18.

447 See for example: James Russell (2011). *Innovation, Transformation and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005-2007*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Chad Serena (2011). *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The US Army in Iraq*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

448 David Ucko (2009). *The New Counterinsurgency Era*. Washington DC: Georgetown, p. 76-78.

449 See for example David Barno and Nora Bensahel (2020). *Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime*. New York: Oxford University Press; David Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era*.

academic disciplines such as anthropology.⁴⁵⁰ The public edition by Chicago University Press contained an annotated bibliography which included the works of Galula, Kitson, Thompson and Trinquier, as well as more contemporary works.⁴⁵¹

The main objective for American efforts in counterinsurgency is “to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government [...] by the balanced application of both military and non-military means”. Legitimacy is achieved when a regime can govern with the consent of the population. In the case of an insurgency, this legitimacy is challenged through subversion and violence by a portion of the population. Thus, counterinsurgents must seek to enhance to the legitimacy of the (host nation) government in the eyes of the population. In essence, the popular support for the regime must be improved through, for instance provision of security, basic services and the rule of law.⁴⁵²

The influence of the classical prescriptive texts in FM 3-24 is apparent in its “historical principles”. Beyond legitimacy as the main objective, FM 3-24 further lists: unity of effort is essential; political factors are primary; counterinsurgents must understand the environment; intelligence drives operations; insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support; security under the rule of law is essential; and counterinsurgents should prepare for a long-term commitment.⁴⁵³

While these historical principles can be traced to those of the Cold War-era, FM 3-24 also included “imperatives” based on the context of the 21st century: manage information and expectations; use the appropriate level of force; learn and adapt; empower the lowest levels; and support the host nation.⁴⁵⁴ The emphasis on learning and adaptation is interesting in light of this research. FM 3-24 posits that the adversaries are in a competition of adaptation. Therefore, an effective counterinsurgent force must be a learning organization that assess progress, share lessons, and implement changes.⁴⁵⁵

For the execution of a counterinsurgency campaign, FM 3-24 envisages multiple “Logical Lines of Operations” that must be pursued concurrently and are mutually reinforcing. For instance, lines of operations can include conducting combat operations, train and employ host-nation security forces, support development of better governance and support economic development.⁴⁵⁶ The main line of operation is that of conducting information

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450 See Conrad Crane, *Cassandra in Oz*.

451 United States Department of the Army. (2007). *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 391-395.

452 US Army, FM 3-24, p 37-39.

453 Ibidem, p. 36-43.

454 Ibidem, p. 44-47.

455 Ibidem, p. 46, 196.

456 Ibid, p. 154-158.

operations. Information operations can help shape the perceptions of the population and thereby support the other activities. At the same time, success in the other operational activities can shape the substance and validity of information operations.⁴⁵⁷ Of course, the converse is also true: failure in these activities will have an adverse effect on the perception of the population. Moreover, lack of consistent messaging will undercut tactical successes.

Further on in the field manual, significant emphasis is placed on the role of intelligence (chapter 3) and the developing the host-nation's security forces (chapter 6). Although the function of intelligence is crucial in any conflict, FM 3-24 states that it is even more important in counterinsurgency.⁴⁵⁸ Although acquiring actionable intelligence on the adversary forms an indispensable part of the overall intelligence activities, insight in the operational environment in a broader sense than terrain is also considered crucial. An expeditionary counterinsurgent force must possess a working understanding of the culture, history and value system of the area and its inhabitants in which it operates.⁴⁵⁹

Thus, FM 3-24 emphasizes that counterinsurgency operations require other competencies from armed forces than in conventional warfare. As such, armed forces generally have to perform tasks that are normally in the remit of civilian agencies. In this sense, the field manual fits within the earlier prescriptions on counterinsurgency.

In January 2007, the champion of the field manual, David Petraeus, was promoted and appointed to the overall commander in Iraq. He was to implement the proposed new approach and received significant additional troops and resources. When subsequently violence in Iraq decreased, this suggested that this population centric approach to counterinsurgency worked. Later research shows that this effort, colloquially known as “the Surge”, concurrently reinforced and benefitted from prevailing local conditions such as the co-option of Sunni tribes and a truce with Shia militias.⁴⁶⁰ At the time, following the apparent success of “the Surge” in Iraq, population centric counterinsurgency seemed to provide an adequate and palatable answer to the intractable conflicts in which Western militaries found themselves mired in.

Despite the apparent success of the new counterinsurgency approach in Iraq, the concept was by no means uncontroversial. The criticism ranged from questioning the intellectual underpinnings of FM 3-24 and the applicability to modern insurgencies, to the cautioning

457 Ibid, p. 160-167.

458 Ibid, p. 79.

459 Ibid, p. 80-92.

460 Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro (2012), “Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?” *International Security*, 37 (3), p. 36-40.

against counterinsurgency as a “dangerous myth”.⁴⁶¹ Among the most vocal critics of the counterinsurgency approach applied in Iraq are Gian Gentile and Douglas Porch.⁴⁶² These detractors of counterinsurgency shared some arguments against the concept. A prime argument of Gentile and Porch is that the U.S. military had overemphasized counterinsurgency operations, which in turn had diminished the U.S. military’s ability to fight conventional wars. Indeed, according to Gentile and Porch, an army that is well prepared for conventional combat, will adapt more easily to the challenges of counterinsurgency than *vice versa*. This means that the American military (and by extension other Western armed forces) should focus on conventional capabilities to ensure they are ready for any contingencies.⁴⁶³

Furthermore, Gentile and Porch contend that population centric counterinsurgency is an assortment of tactics that has been sold as a strategy. According to them, the advocates of population centric counterinsurgency promise success when these tactics are applied. The inherent danger is that counterinsurgency falsely poses as a winning strategy, providing incentives to engage in foreign adventures.⁴⁶⁴ This argument is disingenuous, as the proponents of counterinsurgency have lamented the lack of strategic and have explicitly warned that doctrine can never be a substitute.⁴⁶⁵ Another argument by Gentile and Porch is that modern counterinsurgency theory is based on a misrepresentation of counterinsurgency campaigns from the colonial and Cold War eras. They argue that current doctrine overstates the importance of benevolent, non-kinetic tactics, while in reality brutal coercive measures were more prevalent.⁴⁶⁶ While this analysis of previous counterinsurgency campaigns is historically correct, this does not invalidate the aspiration to curtail the use of force by counterinsurgents. Rather, it is an indication that counterinsurgents often predominantly rely on the use of military force to address a political problem.

The skeptical view regarding the applicability of classical counterinsurgency theory from the Cold War in contemporary operations was not beholden to the detractors of counterinsurgency. Proponents of population centric counterinsurgency questioned the relevance of experiences from the Cold War to contemporary conflicts as well. Given

461 For the latter qualification, see: Douglas Porch (2011). The dangerous myths and dubious promise of COIN. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22(2), pp. 239-257.

462 Their arguments against counterinsurgency have been offered in various articles and are available in their books: Gian Gentile (2013). *Wrong Turn: America’s Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. New York: The New Press; Douglas Porch (2013). *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press. See for a critical review of these books: David Ucko (2014). Critics gone wild: Counterinsurgency as the root of all evil. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 25(1), pp. 161-179.

463 Gian Gentile, (2010). Freeing the Army from the Counterinsurgency Straitjacket. *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 58(3), 121-122 ; Douglas Porch (2013). *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 318-320.

464 Douglas Porch (2013). *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 9; Gian Gentile (2009). A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army. *Parameters*, 39(3), p. 6-7.

465 Sara Sewall (2007). Introduction to the University of Chicago Press Edition, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. xl-xli.

466 Douglas Porch (2011). The dangerous myths and dubious promise of COIN. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22(2), p. 252-253; Gian Gentile (2009). A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army. *Parameters*, 39(3), p. 8-9.

the apparent roots from classical counterinsurgency theories, FM 3-24 was considered as a manifestation 'neo-classical' counterinsurgency. It adapted historical principles and imperatives to the 21st century. Yet, scholars like John Mackinlay, Frank Hoffman, and T.X. Hammes contend that the insurgencies of the 21st century differ considerably from those during the Cold War. For instance, the adversaries are no longer Maoist revolutions inspired by secular or nationalistic ideals, but rather local Islamic insurgencies that are unified by religious motives. Therefore, these scholars argue, the analysis underpinning FM 3-24 is outdated, and the proposed measures are insufficient for addressing the contemporary challenges. Rather than dusting off classical texts, Western armed forces should prepare to fight a global insurgency.⁴⁶⁷

The most influential thinker of this 'global insurgency school' is David Kilcullen, a former Australian infantry officer with experience as a company commander in East-Timor. Later on, he served as a counterinsurgency adviser for the American Department of Defense and in various positions across the Middle East. Kilcullen has written extensively on counterinsurgency based on his academic knowledge and his practical experiences. In his 2005 article "Countering global insurgency", he posited that the American-led 'Global War on Terror' was in fact a campaign against a global Islamist insurgency. Kilcullen lamented the US' strategy of aggregation "lumping together all terrorism", as this risked the creation of new enemies, overstretch and strategic failure.⁴⁶⁸ A main premise of his thinking was that the adversaries in Iraq, Afghanistan and other theaters of this war should be regarded as insurgents rather than terrorists. By shifting the lens through which the West saw its enemies, it could adopt a more appropriate strategy. Instead of fighting a monolithic transnational organization consisting of psychopathic terrorists, Western forces were fighting local insurgencies who shared a common ideological outlook and operational styles. The methods employed by the insurgent groups, such as terrorism, are unacceptable, but their objectives could be grounded in legitimate grievances.⁴⁶⁹ As such, Al Qaeda acted more as an inspiration than as a central insurgent headquarters.⁴⁷⁰

Consequently, Kilcullen argued, to defeat this global insurgency the application of classical counterinsurgency methods as prescribed in the 1960's was insufficient as these were intended to defeat an insurgency in a single country. As seen in the previous section, 'classical' counterinsurgency campaigns required a centrally directed overall plan in which the various instruments of power are used in concert. In a global insurgency, such an executive body does not exist. Furthermore, in the context of the 21st century, it is much harder to

467 John Mackinlay subscribes to this idea of a globalized insurgency with local nodes: *The Insurgent Archipelago*, p. 231-232; See also: T.X. Hammes (2012) *The Future of Counterinsurgency*, *Orbis*, 56(4), pp. 565-587; F.G. Hoffman (2011-2012) *Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency*, *Parameters*, 41(4), pp. 1-17.

468 David Kilcullen (2005). *Countering Global Insurgency*. *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28(4), p. 608.

469 Kilcullen, 'Countering global insurgency', p. 605.

470 *Ibidem*, p. 598-600.

isolate insurgents from external support. Ungoverned spaces provide ample geographical sanctuaries, while the advent of internet provide 'cyber-sanctuaries' that can ensure the flow of information and finances.⁴⁷¹ Kilcullen advocated a strategy of 'disaggregation' by destroying the links between local insurgencies that allow them to function as a global insurgency. This does not mean the destruction of each local insurgency but rather isolating them from each other. Regional and local actors could then be neutralized through a mix of military and non-military measures, aimed at reducing popular support for the insurgencies.⁴⁷² To be successful in such diverse environments, counterinsurgents must be able to adapt and learn from experience.⁴⁷³

With these environmental changes, Kilcullen advocated to rethink the classical counterinsurgency principles.⁴⁷⁴ Where classical counterinsurgency called for the destruction of the insurgent organization, Kilcullen states that in modern conflicts marginalization of insurgents will be more expedient as complete defeat will take decades. Time that is mostly not available to expeditionary counterinsurgency campaigns.⁴⁷⁵ Later, Kilcullen expanded upon this by introducing the term "accelerated COIN". To reduce the level of violence in Iraq after 2006, Kilcullen saw a combination of coercive and persuasive methods. This approach was based on population centric counterinsurgency. The coercive element was an intense campaign of kinetic targeting of irreconcilable insurgents supported by a concentrated intelligence effort. The persuasive part was the cooption of other elements such as Sunni tribal militias. A further central element to this approach is the building of local security forces. As the Western commitment to expeditionary counterinsurgency is limited in time, the host-nation's security forces must be assisted to be able to bear the burden of combating the insurgency. As such, the training, mentoring, and advising the local forces is not only essential to eventual counterinsurgent success but also to the Western exit-strategy.⁴⁷⁶

Another hypothesis by Kilcullen is that counterinsurgency is 100 per cent political. By this he means that there are no purely military considerations. Even at the lowest tactical level, soldiers must be aware of political consequences of their actions.⁴⁷⁷ This notion is elaborated upon in Kilcullen's "Twenty-Eight Articles," which provided prescriptions on how to conduct counterinsurgency operations at the company-level. It emphasized the centrality of understanding the environment and its inhabitants and the necessity of performing non-organic tasks such as liaising with local authorities, conducting information operations,

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471 Ibid, p.606-608.

472 Ibid, p. 609-610; In later works Kilcullen recognized the limits of this strategy of disaggregation, see: David Kilcullen (2016). *Blood Year: The Unravelling of Western Counterterrorism*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 113-114.

473 David Kilcullen, (2010). *Counterinsurgency*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 19-20.

474 Kilcullen, 'Counterinsurgency redux,' p. 114-115.

475 Ibidem, p. 123

476 David Kilcullen. *Counterinsurgency*, p.42-43.

477 Kilcullen, 'Counterinsurgency redux,' p. 123

and policing the area.⁴⁷⁸ Despite the notion of a globalized insurgency the prescriptions for military activity at the tactical level do not differ significantly from the classical era. Indeed, an adaptation of Kilcullen's "Twenty-Eight articles" features in FM 3-24.⁴⁷⁹

A final interesting work on counterinsurgency prescriptions is the study by RAND Corporation *Paths to Victory* (2013). Examining 71 insurgencies since the Second World War, the authors seek to distill the best practices to inform counterinsurgent responses. It evaluates counterinsurgency prescriptions against the outcomes of historical insurgencies to establish the correlation between the two. As opposed to other counterinsurgency texts, this study benefits from the wide array of case studies that goes beyond commonplace examples as Vietnam, Malaya, and Algeria. Furthermore, it is agnostic on counterinsurgency debates such as 'enemy-centric' versus 'population-centric' or the 'neo-classical' versus 'global insurgency' schools.⁴⁸⁰

Interestingly, the authors found that an exclusive enemy-centric approach by itself is historically far less successful than measures that are geared toward addressing the motives behind an insurgency (population-centric) or a mix of both.⁴⁸¹ In all the cases that the counterinsurgents were successful, the RAND-study found three practices were always implemented. First, the reduction of tangible support for the insurgency. By denying insurgents access to funds, intelligence, recruits, sanctuary and supplies, counterinsurgent forces will be successful. The report emphasizes that tangible support is different from popular support. For instance, external actors can supply insurgents. The second-best practice is "commitment and motivation" by the counterinsurgents to defeat the insurgency instead of narrow power retention or personal gains. The third and final factor found in every successful counterinsurgency case is "flexibility and adaptability". It recognizes that the insurgents have a say in the conflict. Therefore, the counterinsurgent forces must adapt to the insurgent tactics.⁴⁸²

For the military contribution to counterinsurgency, the RAND-study has further recommendations based on the case studies. First, it advocates a nuanced balance between population-centric and enemy-centric activities. Furthermore, the initial focus must be on denying the insurgents their conventional military capabilities and force them to fight as guerrillas. Additionally, identifying their sources of support to target them is deemed critical. Another prescription for expeditionary counterinsurgency is to build the host-nation's security force with a balance between quantity and quality. Still, the quality of these

478 See: David Kilcullen, (2006). Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency. *Small Wars Journal*.

479 US Army, FM 3-24, p. 287-303.

480 Christopher Paul, Colin Clarke, Bethany Grill and Molly Dunigan (2013). *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, p. 1-11.

481 Paul, et. Al., *Paths to victory*, p. 180.

482 Ibidem, p. 181-183.

forces is more important than their numbers. The use of ill-trained militias to increase the volume of security forces is often detrimental to the counterinsurgency efforts. From a political perspective, enhancing the legitimacy, motivation and commitment of the host-nation's government is crucial to address the insurgency as external forces cannot form a substitute for this.⁴⁸³ Beyond these highlighted recommendations, *Paths to Victory* offers other best practices, such as: coherent strategic communications, actionable intelligence, gradual pacification combined with fostering development and governance ("Clear-Hold-Build").⁴⁸⁴ Interestingly, the study shows that cultural awareness is helpful in expeditionary counterinsurgency, it does not seem to be crucial.⁴⁸⁵ The study emphasizes that these practices work best in conjunction, yet the implementation of these best practices require six years of consistent implementation to be successful.⁴⁸⁶

Overall, the 21st century's rediscovery of counterinsurgency saw some modest shifts from its theoretical lineage (see table 3.3). First, the Western perspective on counterinsurgency became that of expeditionary operations. In the new century, the United States and its allies had to support internally beleaguered regimes. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, these governments had of course been installed after Western interventions. A second apparent shift was that many of these modern insurgencies found their inspiration in religion rather than secular political ideology. In combination with globalization and the information revolution, this led to a globalized Islamist insurgency. Although not centrally directed, the links between local insurgencies helped in terms of finances, information operations, mobilization, and knowledge transfer. However, even the global insurgency school, as exemplified by Kilcullen, subscribes to most of the classical prescriptions at the tactical level.

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483 Ibid., p. 188-190

484 See for an elaboration on each concept p. 86-137 and for a consolidated overview, p. 138.

485 Ibid., p. 125-127.

486 Ibid., p. 186-187

	FM 3-24	Kilcullen	RAND
Campaign plan/objective	Comprehensive, interagency approach, legitimacy is main objective	Accelerated approach, control is key objective. Disaggregation of local insurgencies.	Gradual “clear-hold-build” approach. Legitimacy is main objective.
Role of military/ civil military cooperation	Limited in theory, yet often called to perform multitude of tasks in practice. Appropriate use of force. Fostering security. Interagency partners support governance and development	Coordination is crucial. Executive command in contemporary operations is virtually impossible. Militaries must adjust to other tasks.	Nuanced balance between enemy-centric and population-centric operations
Adaptability/learning	Counterinsurgents must adapt as fast as the insurgents and draw lessons	Counterinsurgency success depends on adaptability	Ability to learn and adapt is crucial to succeed.
Use of Intelligence	Both threat intelligence and broader understanding of the environment	Intelligence is part of information as the base for all other activities	Actionable intelligence is critical for targeting/ disrupting insurgents. Cultural awareness not deemed essential
Use of force/ actions against insurgents	“Appropriate use of force”	Targeting irreconcilables, severing links between areas/ insurgencies. Fostering security	Reducing tangible support for insurgents. Targeted disruption of insurgent activities
Non-kinetic effects/ persuasion	Information operations is the all-encompassing “logical line of operation”. Grievances must be addressed through governance and development	Reconciliation and cooption, enhancing legitimacy. Information is the base for all other activities, perception of population is crucial	Development and perceived legitimacy are instrumental for success. Coherent strategic communication is important supporting activity

Table 3.3 Counterinsurgency prescriptions and principles in the 21st century

3.5: Conclusion

Examining the intellectual lineage of modern counterinsurgency concepts and comparing the different theoretical prescriptions can be perceived as an academic parlor game. Still, as shown in this chapter, many of the current counterinsurgency paradigms can be traced to the colonial era and subsequently to the Cold War. Admittedly, this selection of sages and their writings is limited in scope. Yet, to reiterate, these prescriptions have influenced later works and doctrine on counterinsurgency. Therefore, the evolutionary path and substance of counterinsurgency knowledge should be studied to examine to what extent modern armed forces have (re)discovered them in modern conflicts such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, by listing the “historical” prescriptions, novel best practices in counterinsurgencies that fall outside of this scope can be determined.

A fundamental aspect of these prescriptions is that counterinsurgencies form a distinct type of warfare. Consequently, counterinsurgency requires different skill sets than conventional warfare. Based on the prescriptions on counterinsurgency from three different eras, several common themes emerge (see table 3.4). In general, the counterinsurgency prescriptions point to the necessity of a comprehensive campaign plan. In these plans objectives are couched in terms as “pacification”, “legitimacy”, “defeating political subversion” or, “obtaining control over the population”. Thus, as these objectives indicate, insurgencies are fundamentally political problems. As a result, the employment of the military in countering insurgencies forms a crucial but subsidiary contribution.

Recurring themes in counterinsurgency prescriptions
Integral campaign plan
Ability to learn and adapt
Interagency cooperation
Primacy of intelligence
Utility of non-kinetic activities
Countering adversarial activities

Table 3.4 Consolidated themes on counterinsurgency

This is reflected in the identified themes. Although the prescriptions were often written from a military perspective, the authors recognized that the military could not produce success on its own. Instead, a comprehensive plan under civilian authorities is needed to address insurgencies. Counterinsurgents must use all instruments of power in concert; in

practice this means that various agencies must cooperate intimately to obtain control over the population. To win the population's support, counterinsurgents must employ persuasive methods such as fostering security, economic development, and improved governance. Although such tasks are not the primary responsibility of soldiers, in practice troops have often performed these non-kinetic activities during counterinsurgency operations. Still, military units must collaborate with a host of actors in counterinsurgency, ranging from other government agencies, host-nation officials, the local population, non-governmental organizations, and informal powerbrokers.

As for countering enemy activities, the prescriptions increasingly state that the excessive force aimed at destroying the insurgents and their support is counterproductive. Instead, the military should be focused on separating the insurgents from the population. This then denies the insurgents their base of support and hampers their activities. To be sure, the use of force is often required, but these kinetic activities should be highly discriminating. For this, intelligence on the identity and location of the insurgents is crucial. However, Kitson, Kilcullen and FM 3-24 argue that a thorough understanding of the human environment is essential to understand the dynamics of the conflict. These works advocate a profound knowledge on linguistic, social, cultural, historical, and other aspects of the area of operations. Not only can this help in acquiring intelligence on enemy activities, but this intelligence can also guide non-kinetic activities as information operations.

Newer counterinsurgency prescriptions as FM 3-24 continue to subscribe to the classical notions and differ mostly in emphasis. For Western armed forces, the expeditionary character of counterinsurgency operations is a salient aspect. This means that they must support a host-nation government and help build local security forces that can ultimately combat the insurgents by themselves. Of course, this cooperation with the host-nation provides additional challenges for counterinsurgent forces. Another aspect that has received increased attention in recent years is the centrality of information operations. This is a recognition that the perception of different audiences such as the local population, the insurgents and the domestic public is essential in counterinsurgency. Finally, the counterinsurgent's ability to learn and adapt is noticeable in the Cold War prescriptions. In the more recent works, this theme is even more pronounced as essential for counterinsurgency success.

For armed forces engaged in counterinsurgency campaigns these common themes do not form a checklist to which they must adhere, to attain success. Of course, following a set of prescriptions will not produce success in the absence of a viable strategy that is attuned to the specific dynamics of a given conflict. As the examined counterinsurgency prescriptions emphasize, employment of the military on its own is insufficient in these conflicts. Moreover, the enemy gets a vote; the insurgent will learn and adapt to mitigate the counterinsurgent's activities. Still, the identified themes form a frame of reference. Combined with the

theoretical framework of chapter 2 on how military learning processes work in relation to conflict, the dynamics of learning in counterinsurgency operations can be examined. In chapter 4 and 5, the Dutch and British learning processes in southern Afghanistan on the established themes are analyzed. Therefore, the case studies will look into the performance at the campaign level through, for example, the campaign plans and assessments. Furthermore, the ability to adapt will be examined through the learning processes in the Dutch and British militaries. Finally, more in-depth vignettes on interagency cooperation, intelligence, non-kinetic activities and mitigating efforts against enemy activities will help assess the extent of learning in southern Afghanistan and beyond.



