The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis

The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual. By the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Forward by David H. Petraeus, James F. Amos, and John A. Nagl. Introduction by Sarah Sewall. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 472p. $15.00.

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Book Review Editor

The current crisis in Iraq no doubt lends a certain urgency to the revised *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual.* In an age of "failed states," "asymmetrical warfare," and new forms of networking and war making, the U.S. Army is hardly alone in wanting to better understand the sources of rebellion and the requisites of stable political order. Yet if the manual is a timely document, it is also continuous with a long and venerable political science tradition. From Machiavelli's *The Prince* to Antonio Gramsci's "The Modern Prince," from Lenin's *The State and Revolution* to Samuel P. Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies,* writers seeking a "science of politics" have argued not simply about how to understand the dynamics of rebellion and the mechanisms of state power but about the desirability of different ways of mobilizing and channeling rebellion and of incorporating it within stable political structures. "Counterinsurgency" is thus both a topic of theorizing and a form of praxis, whether its practitioners be the Red Army in postrevolutionary Russia or the U.S. Army in Guatemala, Vietnam, or contemporary Afghanistan and Iraq. The revised manual thus presents an excellent occasion to reflect on current events and on broader theoretical issues.

The contributors to this symposium were selected because each, in a different way, has thought seriously and written about questions of insurgency and counterinsurgency broadly understood. They were asked to comment on the manual, the context in which it appears, and its basic political analyses and prescriptions. They were also asked to reflect more generally on the manual as an exercise in "applied political science," considering the ways it draws from and makes use of current political science theories and the value positions that lie behind its analyses. In occasioning these questions, the manual can serve not simply as an object of political science commentary but also as a mirror through which to view our profession and the value of the knowledge it produces.

Stephen Biddle

Official doctrinal manuals are a unique source of insight for the study of war, but too often are ignored by political scientists. An exception is the new *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (U.S. Army FM 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5). Downloaded more than two million times on the Internet (p. xxi), it has now been published by the University of Chicago Press and has sold vigorously.

Much of this extraordinary interest is of course attributable to the war in Iraq. The manual's relationship to the conduct of this war has been of particular interest, in that the current commander of the multinational forces in Iraq, General David Petraeus, was one of the two generals under whom the manual was written. It has been widely reported that the principles in the manual have guided his conduct of the war since he took command in early 2007.[1] After an initial upswing, violence in Iraq is now down dramatically as of this writing; many have thus attributed this improvement to the ideas in the new manual.

With this interest has come considerable debate. Controversy within the military is common with any major doctrinal revision, and the new counterinsurgency (COIN) manual has attracted a range of critiques from officers. The most important of these debates have involved the relative emphasis on coercive violence as opposed to the winning of hearts and minds (the manual stresses the latter); the relative focus on offensive action against enemy forces as opposed to the defense of civilian populations (the manual emphasizes the latter); the comparative merits of waging COIN with large conventional forces as opposed to small commando detachments (the manual mostly concerns the former); the relative utility of airpower in COIN (the manual focuses on ground action and says much less about air forces, especially in strike

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roles); the ability of civilian agencies to provide the development assistance needed to win civilian hearts and minds (the manual prefers that civilians play such roles, but instructs the military to fill the gap themselves if their colleagues fall short); and the willingness of democracies to afford the cost of effective counterinsurgency (the manual warns that COIN is slow, labor-intensive, and very expensive in lives and treasure).

The manual's defenders have mostly gotten the better of these arguments to date. The manual was vetted in advance before an extraordinary range of potential critics and other interested parties, and its authors clearly profited from this process. The result is a remarkably thoughtful response to a vexing military problem, and one worthy of the widespread attention it has received both within and beyond the military.

It is not perfect, however. In particular, it makes assumptions about the nature of insurgency and the relationship between the United States and the host government that are sometimes sound but sometimes not. Yet these assumptions shape much of the manual's prescriptions. Where a war fits the presumption, these prescriptions are sound, but elsewhere the manual could easily lead to serious strategic error. In fact, Iraq is among the cases that fit the manual's assumptions poorly—which has led actual U.S. strategy in Iraq to diverge from the manual's prescriptions in ways that are not always fully appreciated in the public debate.

The Nature of Insurgency

The manual assumes that insurgencies represent a contest for the loyalty of a mostly uncommitted general public that could side with either the government or the insurgents; success requires persuading this uncommitted public to side with the government by winning their hearts and minds via provision of superior goods and services, including government-supplied security.[2] For the United States in ideologically driven wars of national liberation such as Vietnam, this is not an unreasonable assumption, and the manual's extensive treatment of the means for winning hearts and minds makes much sense for such wars.

Not all internal wars are ideological, however. In ethnic or sectarian wars of identity, by contrast, the truly uncommitted fraction of the public can be small—and the fighting itself quickly reduces it, as subnational identities harden and frightened civilians turn to their co-ethnics or co-religionists for survival.

Some have argued that partition is the only solution to such conflicts.[3] Others argue that negotiated power-sharing deals enforced by outside peacekeepers can succeed.[4] Still others see no meaningful solution short of overpowering the weaker community.[5] But it is far from clear that the manual's central prescription of drying up an insurgent's support base by persuading an uncommitted population to side with the government makes much

sense in an identity war where the government's ethnic or sectarian identification means that it will be seen as an existential threat to the security of rival internal groups, and where there may be little or no supracommunal, national identity to counterpose to the subnational identities over which the war is waged by the time the United States becomes involved.

Interest Alignment with the Host Government

Similarly, the manual assumes that the role of the United States is to support and defend a threatened government that has a presumptive claim to legitimacy. It may be necessary to persuade that government to reform in order to strengthen this claim to legitimacy, but the manual presupposes a powerful alignment of interest between the United States and the host government—the Americans' role is to enable the host government to realize its own best interest by making itself into a legitimate defender of all of its citizens' well-being.[6] The authors were constrained here by other U.S. doctrinal documents, but the result is a potentially problematic assumption. Many threatened governments are more committed to their own subgroup's interests than they are to some abstract idea of national well-being. The existence of an insurgency in the first place is often a signal of an illegitimate government with strong leadership interests in an unrepresentative distribution of wealth and power. In many cases, leaders will see U.S.-sponsored reforms as a greater threat to their personal well-being—or even survival—than the insurgency. One thus cannot assume that the U.S. interest and the host government's interest are aligned in COIN; what the United States wants is not necessarily in the self-interest of the host leadership.

This in turn interacts with the manual's assumption that uncommitted civilians can be persuaded to side with the government. Sectarian governments in identity wars will often be highly resistant to U.S. hopes for nonsectarian outreach that provides services and builds confidence among their internal rivals' populations. To expect this to flow naturally from a common interest in good government is unrealistic, yet the manual offers little guidance on other, more coercive approaches to changing the host regime's behavior.

Problems of Omission and Commission

Together, these two assumptions give rise to some potentially serious errors of omission and commission.

The chief error of omission is the absence of any discussion of coercive bargaining with the host. There is much instruction in the manual on capacity building in the host state—of creating improved systems for delivering government services. But what if an ethnic or sectarian faction in control of the government views provision of services to rival groups as enabling their enemies? To create a more efficient bureaucracy under such leadership can simply be

to create more proficient sectarians with a stronger technical capacity to direct services to their followers and more systematically deny them to their rivals. What if a host government beholden to a land-owning plutocracy sees U.S.-favored COIN reforms as the end of a system of privilege that they value more than peace or stability? To assign U.S. mentors to government ministries or military commands will hardly persuade lifelong plutocrats to embrace equal opportunity for all. For such regimes, persuasion is insufficient, and ostensibly apolitical capacity building can actually make things worse. If host-government legitimacy in U.S. terms is the only route to success in such wars, then far more forceful coercive leverage will be needed. Yet the manual says nothing about how this should be done—or how its employment would affect the conduct of the tasks it does describe: The details of everything from joint combat operations to intelligence gathering to interagency coordination would surely differ as a function of the mix of coercion and cooperation between the United States and its host.

The chief error of commission is the manual's treatment of host nation security force development (especially Chapter 6). Rapid buildup of indigenous security forces makes much sense in ideological wars. In identity wars, however, it can easily exacerbate the internal security dilemma that often fuels the violence. If a major ethnic or sectarian group sees the government as a tool of its rivals, for the United States to strengthen the government military is to increase the others' perceived threat, which will often stimulate greater mobilization of the rivals' population and harsher resistance from them in wars that are often seen as existential by the parties. The manual acknowledges this problem in passing, and suggests overcoming it by raising communally mixed security forces.[7] In an identity war, however, mixed forces are subject to serious effectiveness challenges due to the same communal distrust that affects the larger society.[8] Nor is it clear that nominally mixed forces under rivals' command will be trusted by threatened communities, especially where the threatened group is a minority of both the population and the military.

The Manual and Iraq

Perhaps ironically, Iraq is precisely the kind of nonideological communal war of identity that the manual is least suited for. This war has many overlapping *casus belli,* but the chief underlying enabler of the others is the struggle among Iraqi Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds for power and survival. Ideology, conventionally understood, is among the least important contributors to the violence.

Some aspects of the manual have proven very helpful in Iraq even so. In particular, its guidance, for example, on unity of action, limitation of violence, the need to accept risk in population security, the importance of human intelligence, respect for the laws of war, adaptive small-unit leadership, accounting for the greater difficulty of logistics, or understanding the local society and culture are all sound and important, whether the conflict is ideological, ethnic, sectarian, or merely criminal. In these respects, the manual has contributed importantly to Iraq's recent decline in violence as these provisions have been implemented. And its emphasis on adaptability has proven helpful in reacting to a war whose premises differ in important ways from those on which the manual was based.

The manual's assumption of interest alignment with the host, and its emphasis on indigenous security forces, have been much more problematic, however. The predominantly Shiite Maliki government has consistently resisted U.S. pressure to compromise with its Sunni rivals. And in spite of more than three years of trying, the United States has not yet produced an Iraqi security force that can consistently defend the interests of all Iraqis. These problems have led to some significant divergences between actual U.S. strategy in Iraq and the approach embodied in the manual.

In particular, the "surge" strategy adopted in early 2007 represented a deliberate movement away from reliance on Iraqi forces to counter the insurgency. Whereas U.S. policy in 2006 put the primary U.S. emphasis on preparation for a transition to Iraqi responsibility for the war, the policy in 2007 assigned U.S. troops a primary mission of providing direct security to Iraqi civilians.

In addition, the rapid growth of local negotiated cease-fires between American commanders and Iraqi insurgent factions in the field has increasingly posed an alternative to reform of the Iraqi national government in Baghdad as a means of stabilizing the country. As of this writing, more than 80,000 Iraqis have joined over a hundred "Awakening Councils" or "Concerned Local Citizen" (CLC) groups in observing local cease-fires across much of central and western Iraq. This extraordinary spread of negotiated deals is largely responsible for the recent reduction in violence: Whereas earlier U.S. offensives had merely induced insurgents to move elsewhere, destabilizing new areas while securing old ones, now many of the insurgents have remained in place but have stood down in voluntary cease-fires, preventing a mere movement of violence from one part of the country to another. The United States would like the Maliki government to embrace this movement and incorporate its members into the official Iraqi Security Forces, and eventually it may. But for now, the government is resisting such entreaties, and hence the CLC cease-fire movement remains largely extragovernmental and independent.

Nor is the CLC phenomenon that has been so instrumental in the current reduction of violence chiefly a product of the hearts-and-minds logic at the root of the manual. The availability of more U.S. troops to provide population defense was certainly important, and this emphasis on population security is clearly consistent with the manual's prescriptions. But the surge was far too small to secure all of threatened Iraq in itself, and cannot in itself

account for the growth in negotiated cease-fires. At least as central to the latter was a dramatic change in Sunnis' perceived military prospects following their defeat in the wave of sectarian violence after the February 2006 bombing of the Askariya Mosque. Prior to this, Sunnis believed that they would win an unconstrained civil war with Shiites, but their inability to prevent Shiite militias from evicting them from much of Baghdad in the 2006 fighting has now made it clear to Sunni insurgents that the military balance vis-à-vis the Shiites is against them. Combined with the needless brutality of their erstwhile Al Qaeda allies toward fellow Sunnis, and Al Qaeda's interference with traditional Sunni smuggling routes in western Iraq, the strategic interest calculus of the Sunni insurgency thus underwent a sea change in late 2006 and early 2007, leading most Sunnis to conclude that self-interest lay in abandoning Al Qaeda for a negotiated accommodation under American protection while they could still get it. If this condition holds, it will prove a very favorable development. But it hardly represents the winning of Sunni hearts and minds by the Shiite government through the provision of services and government security. On the contrary, most CLCs provide their *own* security from continuing fear and distrust of their fellow Iraqis in the government security forces.

Of course, today's favorable trends in violence may reverse in the future. And the voluntary decisions of former insurgents to sign CLC contracts and stand down could reverse as well.[9] It is far from clear what the ultimate outcome in Iraq will be. But either way, recent improvements are only partly attributable to the policies prescribed in the new manual. To the credit of General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, they have proven able to improvise and innovate under fire, departing from the manual to take advantage of unexpected trends like the growth of CLCs, and working around the major interest divergence between the United States and the Maliki government to forge a significant reduction in violence. For this, the prescriptions in the manual deserve some, but only partial, credit; but if the improvement proves transient, the manual's imperfect fit between assumption and Iraqi reality may ultimately get the greater attention.

Notes

1 See, for example, Coll 2007; Michael Gordon, "A New Commander, In Step with the White House on Iraq," *New York Times,* 5 January 2007, A1; Jim Michaels, "Petraeus Strategy Takes Aim at Post-Vietnam Mind-set," *USA Today,* 7 March 2007, 9A.

2 See, for example, pp. 1, 2, 6, 15, 37–39, 42, 45, and especially 35: "In almost every case, counterinsurgents face a populace containing an active minority supporting the government and an equally small militant faction opposing it. Success requires the

government to be accepted as legitimate by most of that uncommitted middle"; see also p. 51: "At its core, COIN is a struggle for the population's support."

3 See, for example, Chapman and Roeder 2007, Downes 2001, Kaufmann 1996.

4 See, for example, Doyle and Sambanis 2000, Fortna 2004, Walter 2002.

5 See, for example, Licklider 1995; Luttwak 1999, Walter 2002.

6 See, for example, pp. 37–39, 47 (e.g., paragraph 1-147: "Support the Host Nation").

7 Ibid., 214–15.

8 Malkasian 2007.

9 On the prospects for preserving Iraqi cease-fires, see Biddle 2008.

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Policy guides, including field manuals, tend to be based on an intuitive rather than explicit or theoretical understanding of the issues with which they deal. The *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* issued jointly by the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps is no exception, which suggests the two questions motivating this review essay: What theory of counterinsurgency underpins the manual's analysis? And what kind of social and political theory informs its theory of counterinsurgency?

In this essay, I identify the manual's intellectual foundations and lay out their implications. First, I point out that the manual is derived from classic counterinsurgency texts of the 1960s and has much more in common with older theories of revolution than recent research in political science; I argue that this makes sense given the manual's goals. Second, I identify the theory underpinning it as constructivist and point to a key problem, namely, the conceptualization of politics as "high politics" and the concomitant downgrading of local politics into a fuzzy understanding of culture and social structure, which is effectively bracketed off.

What theory of counterinsurgency underpins the analysis? The answer is fairly straightforward. The manual breaks little new ground. Beyond a substantial dose of practical, technical instructions on operational matters, such as "intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations," "designing counterinsurgency campaigns," and the like, this is an elaboration and reformulation of a body of work that emerged in the 1960s, primarily in response to anticolonial or communist insurgencies in such places as colonial Algeria or Malaya. Overall, there is little in the manual that is new—its substance can be found in such counterinsurgency classics as David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964), Frank Kitson's *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (1971), Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (1966), or Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (1964).[1] These earlier works conceptualized insurgencies as revolutionary movements based on mass mobilization (i.e., *peoples' wars*), and devised methods of response that integrated specific military and political strategies—with a heavy stress on the former.

What are the main precepts of the theory of counterinsurgency championed by the manual? On the military front, the goal is to identify and eliminate key local insurgents while establishing effective population control so as to sever the relation between the insurgents and the population they claim to represent. Once this has been

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achieved, political objectives kick in; they boil down to political reforms that render government more efficient and responsive, hence, more "legitimate." In short, this is a strategy of competitive state building combining targeted, selective violence and population control, on the one hand, with the dissemination of a credible mass ideology, the creation of modern state structures, the imposition of the rule of law, and the spurring of economic development, on the other.

In practice, however, the theoretical "primacy of the political" has proved elusive in most cases; winning "hearts and minds" and promoting economic development and political reform often takes the back seat to the application of violence and the establishment of control. In some cases, the "correct" application of violence proves enough to defeat the insurgency and consolidate state control (think Sendero Luminoso in Peru or the recent Chechen insurgency). In other cases, however, the military success of counterinsurgency is undone less by the inability to introduce the right reforms and more by much broader political developments, as indicated by the cases of the Algerian insurgency against the French and of the Vietnam War. The manual does acknowledge this possibility, especially through its discussion of Vietnam, thus implicitly recognizing that despite the correct application of counterinsurgency principles, the mission may fail because of political dynamics located outside the issues covered.[2] To use the medical metaphor favored by the manual (pp. 153–54), insurgencies may well go through three stages ("stop the bleeding," "inpatient care—recovery," and "outpatient care—move to self-sufficiency"), but each stage, and especially the last one, may create the illusion of recovery while hiding a major relapse.[3] This bracketing-out of politics is a problem to which I return later.

In contrast to the classic counterinsurgency literature, the manual betrays zero impact by political science research. This is so for two main reasons. First, political scientists have, with few exceptions, refrained from studying how to design successful counterinsurgency campaigns, turning their gaze instead on the causes of civil wars,[4] their duration, termination, and the postconflict reconstruction. Second, political scientists, including large-n practitioners, have failed so far to produce startling results. I doubt that the most robust finding of the econometric literature, namely, that poor countries face a higher risk of civil war, would have impressed (or been of much use to) the manual's writers.[5] Not surprisingly, perhaps, there is little in the manual on a key theme of recent research, the supposedly central role of natural resources. In fact, the authors not only ignore recent political science research but contradict a great deal of it: It is squarely located within the "grievance" line of thinking, which has been shunned by many researchers who have privileged, instead, "greed" interpretations. Indeed, the manual associates insurgencies with mass mobilization and asks counterinsurgents to address

popular grievances. Clearly, the theory of counterinsurgency that informs the manual speaks to theories of insurgency that have much more in common with the older literature on revolutions (from Mao Zedong to Eric Wolf (1969) and Barrington Moore (1966)) than with recent political science research.

This is not to say, however, that the manual is not a social-scientific enterprise. Quite the contrary. Though recognizing that every insurgency is contextual and presents its own set of challenges, it espouses a definitively *nomothetic* posture, adopting a unified framework that sees these differences as variations on a single theme. It thus focuses on the common or universal characteristics of all insurgencies. Yet, at the same time, it is also clear to the careful reader that the authors had two overarching cases in the back of their heads: Vietnam and Iraq—both instances of the type of case that inspired the counterinsurgency literature so central to the manual—namely, revolutionary/nationalist insurgencies. In other words, it is written primarily for a specific type of situation: U.S. interventions in "host nations" (its writers did not contemplate the possibility of a domestic insurgency). It is possible, therefore, to characterize it as a guide to "benevolent occupation," benevolent in the sense that occupation is perceived as a temporary device until authority can be devolved to a (friendly) government.

By focusing on *peoples' wars,* the manual neglects a significant subset of civil wars—those labeled "greed" or "new" wars—that is, conflicts that appear to be characterized by the fragmentation of rival actors, as well as the "economization," criminalization, and privatization of their motives and goals. Think Sierra Leone or the Congo.[6] This would be a significant omission were we to treat the manual as a scholarly text, but it is less so once we recognize its goals. As John Mueller (2004) has convincingly argued, the assortment of ragtag militias and armed bands that emerge in these wars do not pose much of a military problem as they can easily be defeated by a well-organized and disciplined army. The problem in those cases is a different one from what the manual's writers primarily care about: rebuilding a collapsed state rather than defeating a serious and resilient insurgency. In other words, while it is important to recognize the subset of civil wars the manual deals with, its selection bias is fully justified from a policy perspective.

What is, however, less justified is the bracketing off of politics that typifies the manual. This point is related to my second question: What kind of social and political theory informs its theory of counterinsurgency? It is possible to pinpoint two key elements. First, it is informed by a constructivist understanding of identities as malleable (or at least of individual behavior as relatively independent of identities). Second, it is characterized by a misperception of the battlegrounds of insurgency that leads to confusion between the objectives of intervention and its methods.

It is not surprising that an "on-the-ground" policy manual adopts a hard, voluntaristic stance and fails to acknowledge or theorize any structural limitations. The manual views human societies as being divided by fundamentally weak cleavages: An active minority supports the government while a passive minority opposes it. The counterinsurgent's goal is to bolster the former and neutralize the latter, while influencing the mass in the middle. Identities can be changed, or at the very least behaviors can be delinked from identities, hence, its constructivism. The manual does not seem to entertain the idea that some identities (say ethnic or religious ones) maybe so hardwired as to preclude reconstruction or reshaping; and while it does recognizes that in the age of nationalism there is little love or patience for foreign intervention or occupation,[7] it brushes such considerations aside. I think that this may be less of a problem than many political scientists would acknowledge, for there is considerable evidence that "ethnic defection," the collaboration of ethnic minority members with the government rather than with ethnic minority insurgents, is much more common than generally acknowledged (Kalyvas forthcoming). Nevertheless the variable modalities of ethnic defection ought to be studied and theorized, rather than thrown in the fuzzy basket of "cultural specificities" that can be understood only by astute observers or practioners on the ground.

The second element of the political and social theory underpinning the manual is more problematic, however. By adopting the *peoples' war* model, it misperceives the insurgent battlegrounds as places where the population interacts directly with either governments or insurgents (a problem, by the way, common to both the counterinsurgency and the revolutions literature of the 1960s). Sever the link with the insurgents, the thinking goes, and the population will have no choice but to turn to the government. The fallacy here is obvious: In many "traditional" societies, the population is organized along several layers of local and regional networks; its interaction with both incumbents and insurgents is mediated by local and regional elites (Kalyvas 2006; Scott 1977). Goals may often be achieved (or impeded) via interactions and political deals with these elites. It is clear to me that such deals explain a large part of the "success" of the recent "surge" in Iraq, where former Sunni insurgents "switched sides" only after their traditional leaders negotiated local deals with the U.S. military; and they did so in a context characterized by the clash between Shiite and Sunni political factions.

To be sure, the manual includes a great deal about networks and traditional forms of organization, including tribes. It also keeps repeating the mantra of political primacy: Resolving most insurgencies requires a "political solution" (p. 40). However, these points remain either underdeveloped or vague: "Political solutions" is a term that usually refers to some sort of high-level arrangement

at the political center. In contrast, the crucial local politics (which takes place at the local level while being influenced by developments in the political center) is downgraded into the twin residual categories of "cultural specificities" or "social structure," and their identification and operationalization is outsourced to local commanders, who are told to "thoroughly" map them out in a way that amounts more to subtle "art" and less to method.[8] In doing so, the manual allows the unrealized, long-term objectives of intervention (i.e., political development) to influence its methods (i.e., its understanding of societies as entailing direct and unmediated links between national actors and the population at large).

It is often said that militaries tend to fight the previous war. It is, therefore, tempting to conclude that this quip applies to processes of learning as well. The *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* is in many ways a crystallization of the lessons that American commanders painfully learned in the wake of the invasion of Iraq in 2003–5. As such, it seems to have been overtaken by developments on the ground since that period.

Notes

1 Surprisingly, Leites and Wolf (1970), arguably the best work in this tradition, is missing from the manual.

2 Here is the formulation: "In 1972, South Vietnamese forces operating with significant support from U.S. airpower defeated large-scale North Vietnamese conventional attacks. Unfortunately, a North Vietnamese conventional assault succeeded in 1975 after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, ending of U.S. support, and curtailment of U.S. funding to South Vietnam" (p. 75).

3 To push the medical analogy a step further, what if the false recovery amounts to long-term paralysis or incapacitation? Would it not have been better to allow for the elimination of the weakest states through a process of "natural selection," as suggested, for instance, by Herbst (2000)?

4 For reasons that have more to do with politics than substance, the manual shuns the concept of civil war. Nevertheless, the term insurgency is effectively used as a synonym of civil war. Replace insurgency with civil war and nothing in the manual changes.

5 Fearon (2007) has successfully attempted a translation of some large-n empirical regularities into lessons for Iraq; it is telling, though, that this exercise was informed by simple descriptive statistics rather than the much more elaborate econometric exercises in the field. For the robustness problems of this research program, see Hegre and Sambanis (2006).

6 The manual does recognize the existence of such conflicts (pp. 7–8) in the post–Cold War era, but

this recognition has minimal impact on the bulk of the discussion.

7 "Eventually all foreign armies are seen as interlopers or occupiers; the sooner the main effort can transition to HN [Host Nation] institutions, without unacceptable degradation, the better" (p. 47).

8 The manual recognizes that "what makes intelligence analysis for COIN [counterinsurgency] so distinct and so challenging is the amount of sociocultural information that must be gathered and understood" (p. 135) and describes the counterinsurgency as an "art" (p. 245), rather than a method.

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"We are winning militarily but losing politically" is the going word from those who continue to think that there might be brightness in the future of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.[1] However, according to the 2007 *U.S. Army/ Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual,* this is not a possibility. Where "the political and military aspects . . . are so bound together as to be inseparable" against insurgents—whether Al Quaeda, Mao's Red Army, the Taliban, the Irish Republican Army, or Hamas—to lose politically is to lose (p. 40). War of this sort is not politics by other means, as Carl von Clausewitz had it, nor is there aptness to Michel Foucault's infamous reversal of Clausewitz's maxim.[2] Rather, both insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN) involve extensively researched and coordinated orchestration and exploitation of military, police, economic, cultural, political, and religious powers.

Substantially expanding the principle applied too late in the Vietnam debacle, that of "winning the hearts and minds of the people," and making it a central rather than a supplemental concern, the manual argues that triumph in a particular nation over today's insurgents requires nothing less than a combination of artful governance amidst violence and instability; provision of social welfare for the whole population (including meeting basic needs for food, water, shelter, clothing, and medical treatment); the securing of civilian safety (from both insurgent and counterinsurgent violence); the establishment and maintenance of the rule of law and protocols for addressing grievances; and the building of political legitimacy for the regime being defended or installed. In short, it requires—from the U.S. military no less—a degree of political intelligence and foresight worthy of Rousseau's Lawgiver, a degree of provision for human needs worthy of the farthest reach of the communist imaginary, a degree of stabilization through governance worthy of Thomas Hobbes or perhaps Immanuel Kant, an ability to "decipher cultural narratives" (the manual's words) worthy of a trained ethnographer, and an ability to manipulate these narratives worthy of Plato. It also entails the paradox of fostering the strength and legitimacy of what are often puppet regimes, and doing so while the occupiers are still on site. And all of this in a milieu of upheaval, violence, and complexly riven societies with weak or nonexistent states.

Indeed, what is most striking about the manual is not its informational content or recommendations—these are surprising only if one expects to find old-fashioned techniques for victory on the basis of superior military tech-

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nology, strategy, and force—but its relentless confounding of conventional boundaries among military, political, economic, and anthropological spheres of activity, on the one hand, and its upending of conventional military structure and protocol, on the other.[3] Consider, to start with, the intriguing phenomenon of war doctrine produced jointly by Ivy League and military experts, and specifically through a collaboration between the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard and the U.S. Army.[4] The text was produced (one cannot quite say "written," since there is so much material lifted from unattributed sources) by teams consisting of scholars—mainly anthropologists and sociologists rather than political scientists, and no game theorists or formal modelers—and military personnel with heavily featured academic degrees.

The strangeness of a military manual that draws extensively on liberal arts scholarship is compounded by its republication with the imprimatur of a prestigious university press, a phenomenon especially noteworthy in light of the shabby scholarly practices.[5] Is there significance in the fact that the University of Chicago and its Press are home to Straussians instrumental in promulgating a foreign policy of regime change in the Middle East? Or in the enormous boost the book has evidently given to the Press's coffers? (The manual was on amazon.com's top 100 for several months in fall 2007 and remains a very strong seller.) Of course, the back cover informs readers that the Press "will donate a portion of the proceeds from this book to the Fisher House Foundation, a private–public partnership that supports the families of America's injured servicemen." That is, in keeping with capital's latest ploy to garnish sales by promising to donate an undesignated and potentially minuscule amount of proceeds to charity, thus blurring the lines between profitable and nonprofit enterprises (producing profitability from the nonprofit world and corrupting nonprofits with corporate interests), the Press will bestow part of what it makes off the military to a project that mixes public and private funds as well as labor, and that compensates for inadequate public funding for military families suffering losses from a war itself increasingly outsourced and draining public coffers while filling private ones. If you had trouble following the fusions and flows in that last sentence, it is neither the writer's fault nor your own but consequent to the historically unparalleled lines of transit and boundary breakdowns between spheres formerly distinct from one another.

The publication story offers only a foretaste of the boundary crossings, substitutions of functions, and interlocking spheres featured within and contextualizing the *Counterinsurgency Manual.* If the manual can be reduced to a single didactic point, it is that successful wars against insurgents involve erudite and careful mobilization of every element of the society in which they are being waged. These wars will be won through a new and total kind of governance, one that emanates from the military but reaches

to security and stability for civilian life, formal and informal economies, structures of authority, patron–client relationships, political participation, culture, law, identity, social structure, material needs, ethnic and linguistic subdivisions, and more (pp. 81–99). So the COIN military not only must coordinate closely with other agents of regime change, including in the host nation, but must itself apprehend and manipulate every aspect of a society if it is to bend the society to its cause rather than to the insurgent one.

The difficulties of these requirements for the military cannot be understated. First, even as it recruits heavily from the uneducated strata of the U.S. population and is notoriously allergic to complex academic knowledge and cultural cosmopolitanism, the military engaged in counterinsurgency must become an intellectually astute and sensitive operation highly attuned to the complexities of governance, political economy, religious belief, cultural practices, and local *mores.* More than merely borrowing knowledge from the academy, the military has to supplant an emphasis on technological and tactical supremacy, manly strength and fortitude, and xenophobic patriotism with an emphasis on intellectual reflexivity, cultural sensitivity, and cosmopolitan appreciation of cultural difference. In short, it has to remake its culture and approach to war through the terms of the effeminate political liberalism against which its own identity has traditionally been crafted. Second, the military must largely shed its hierarchical and bureaucratic protocols to glean and operationalize the knowledge it needs. Commands emanating from distant Beltway generals and carried out by obedient grunts are irrelevant, if not damaging, to successful counterinsurgency—"effective COIN operations are decentralized, and higher commanders owe it to their subordinates to push as many capabilities as possible down to their level" (p. 47). Or, consider this from the *Manual*'s Introduction: "Forces that learn COIN effectively

> have generally developed COIN doctrine and practices locally; regularly challenged their [own] assumptions, both formally and informally; learned about the broader world outside the military and requested outside assistance in understanding foreign political, cultural, social and other situations beyond their experience; promoted suggestions from the field; fostered open communications between senior officers and their subordinates; coordinated closely with governmental and nongovernmental partners at all command levels; [and] proved open to soliciting and evaluating advice from the local people in the conflict zone. These are not always easy practices for an organization to establish. Adopting them is particularly challenging for a military engaged in a conflict. However . . . learning organizations defeat insurgencies; bureaucratic hierarchies do not." (p. liii)

So the military is not only to become a comprehensive and finely tuned instrument of governance amidst infelicitous conditions of statelessness and violence but also to do so by replacing its hierarchical command and control structure with unprecedented boundary porousness inside and out—developing and affirming circulating flows between military and nonmilitary, research and policy, commanding officer and subordinate. At the same time, the military must reckon with the paradox (as the manual itself identifies it) that "political factors are primary" (pp. 39–40) and that what secures these factors is not only a deep appreciation of principles of varieties of government, power, and legitimacy but also a "thorough understanding of the society and culture in which COIN operations are taking place"—a quick read of *The Arab Mind* will no longer suffice (p. 40). Indeed, each of the nine "paradoxes of counterinsurgency" identified in the manual pertains to valorizing the mobilization of knowledge, governance, and culture over force; for example, "some of the best weapons do not shoot," "tactical success guarantees nothing," and "sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction" (pp. 47–51).[6]

The boundary breakdowns and erasure of settled jurisdictions articulated and advocated throughout the volume, however, are also at the heart of a set of contemporary problems for counterinsurgency that the manual cannot address or solve. What happens when the military is no longer in charge of the wars it wages because the wars themselves are outsourced to private contractors, and when an occupier is no longer in charge of its occupation because the resources and enterprises of the occupied country have been sold off to the highest bidders in the world market? These are the problems signified today by proper nouns like Blackwater, Halliburton, Abu-Ghraib, and J. Paul Bremer. While the new manual clearly represents a serious effort at securing American hegemony through stabilizing and transforming rather than simply sacking the regions targeted as critical to this hegemony, insurgents are often the least of the forces exceeding the military's control. There are more than 180,000 private security employees in Iraq, substantially more than the total number of U.S. troops even after the spring 2007 surge. The deadly Blackwater shooting spree of September 2007 revealed the extent to which these private security forces are not only beyond the pale of American military command but also beyond the pale of law, any law. As nonmilitary personnel, they are not subject to the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice and, if fired, could not be court-marshaled in any event. Operating as combatants outside the boundaries of the United States, they are not subject to American constitutional law. International law would be awkwardly and ineffectively summoned in a context in which international justice instruments have been spurned from the outset.

Blackwater also operates outside Iraqi law: Order 17 of the Coalition Provisional Authority, issued by Bremer the day before the CPA was ceded to a formally sovereign Iraqi government but which remains unimpeachable by that supposedly sovereign body, states that "contractors

shall not be subject to Iraqi laws or regulations in matters relating to the terms and conditions of their Contracts." The Bremer orders, which also included the privatization of all public enterprises, full ownership rights and repatriation of profits by foreign firms of Iraqi businesses, opening Iraqi banks to foreign ownership and control, and the elimination of most labor protections, were designed to facilitate a radically neoliberal legal, political, and economic order in Iraq. This is a neoliberalism so relentless in its subordination of local legal and political power to the appetites of world capital that it undermines the very capacity of the United States to control or master the Iraqi occupation.

So the manual represents something of a tragic irony, in which the American military has grasped the importance of conducting counterinsurgency on all fronts and with a transformed military culture at the very moment that it is neither capable of controlling most of these other fronts nor in charge of outsourced military operations. The deliberate facilitation of capital's superordination in the new Iraq radically undermines the possibility of coordinating and controlling the elements of counterinsurgency identified as critical in the manual. Similarly, even as the manual repeatedly stresses the importance of unity of effort in counterinsurgency struggles (Chapter 2 is wholly concerned with this), such unity is rendered impossible by the ubiquitousness of privatized security forces, privatized resources, privatized infrastructure building and rebuilding, privatized industry, and privatized prisons and water supplies.[7] How is unified and coordinated effort to be expected among agents produced and governed by a neoliberal rationality whose ruling principle is lack of regulation, restriction, or control by anything outside the private enterprise? And what motivation could there be for investors and contractors involved in these operations to organize their efforts around any end other than profitability, an end that might well collide with "successful" counterinsurgency? It is hard to know why the private enterprises lured to Iraq specifically to sustain an occupation would aim to conclude that occupation. It is even harder to know why any of the foreign capital that flooded post-Saddam Iraq would become invested in national sovereignty and substantive democracy there.

If the COIN manual updates the military's approach to counterinsurgency, it remains premised on a severely outmoded figure of sovereign power, one in which American powers within the theater of war are imagined to be under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Notes

1 The claim about winning militarily and losing politically emerged as early as 2004 (cf. Thomas E. Ricks, "Dissension Grows in Senior Ranks on War Strategy: U.S. May Be Winning Battles in Iraq But Losing the War, Some Officers Say," http://www.washingtonpost.com May 9, 2004, A01) and has continued through Max Boot's widely cited *Wall Street Journal* editorial on President George W. Bush's August 22, 2007, "losing Vietnam" speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (Max Boot, "Another Vietnam? President Bush's Analogy to Iraq Is Not Inaccurate, Just Incomplete" http://www.wsj.com August 24, 2007). A different variation on the theme is offered in Ali A. Allawi's *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

2 Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 90–92.

3 The appellation "field manual" is notably odd for a treatise concerned with a battle lacking spatial or temporal boundaries and which is precisely not about "going by the book."

4 There has been much rumbling on the Internet and in the print news (cf. Patricia Cohen, "Scholars and the Military Share a Foxhole, Uneasily" *New York Times,* December 22, 2007) about the tawdriness of scholarly research mobilized for military purposes, and also about the moral unseemliness of an academic human rights center collaborating on a war manual. But the moralizing eclipses what is most important to understand about the phenomenon—why the military needs this particular academic knowledge, how human rights operates in an imperial frame today, why anthropologists are being "embedded" in the field in significant numbers, and what the implications are of the blurred borders among military, academy, and capital. Not only has Sarah Sewell, head of the Carr Human Rights Center at Harvard, formerly worked at the Pentagon, but Sewell herself points out that one of the major concerns of the manual is with protecting civilians, a preeminent human rights concern during wartime. If human rights activists regard the reducing of civilian casualties and the protecting of human life as an end in itself, while the generals see it as strategic in winning the civilian population over to their side, within the strictly instrumental calculations of a neoliberal rationality, the different motivations are largely irrelevant to the convergent aims. This is especially so given the importance of being nonpartisan and even apolitical to most human rights projects—it makes the task of protecting human life amidst war perfectly consistent, and leaves aside the question of a war's purposes or of who is responsible for instigating it. A strictly moral and decontextualized commitment to reducing violence and preserving human life makes any collaboration a possibility. That said, the manual's joint authorship

gives new meaning to then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's 2002 declaration, "the war on terrorism is a war for human rights."

5 According to anthropologist David Price, who closely examined one chapter of the manual's unmarked and unacknowledged cribbing from scholarly sources (and discovered that they range from Max Weber and Anthony Giddens to Victor Turner), the plagiarism was brushed off by University of Chicago Press Editor in Chief John Tryneski. What the Press took on board, Price reports Tryneski as saying, was not a work of scholarship but, rather, a key "historic document." "Pilfered Scholarship Devastates General Petraeus' *Counterinsurgency Field Manual," CounterPunch* October 16–31, 2007, 1–6.

6 Many of the paradoxes sound like variations on chapter titles from Machiavelli's *Prince* and herald the same fusion of war and governance. Nor, upon consideration, is this surprising: Machiavelli's focus in that little book, it will be remembered, was on what he called the "new principality"—a populated territory initially taken by force but enduringly secured through discerning engagement with the history and possibilities of the new acquisition.

7 Only three very short paragraphs of this nearly 400-page text are devoted to the subject of private contractors and multinational corporations. These paragraphs are largely descriptive, and the only prescription the manual can offer is this: "When contractors or other businesses are being paid to support U.S. military or other government agencies, the principle of unity of command should apply" (p. 65).

Douglas A. Ollivant

As I begin to compose this essay, the University of Chicago edition of the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (FM 3-24) is ranked #182 on the amazon.com best-seller list. This mass appeal for a book with numbered paragraphs, from an institution hardly known for its mesmerizing prose (even acknowledging the difference between a book purchased and a book read), is both welcome and mysterious. The fact that the mass public seems to be taking an interest in modern warfare, the American Army, and how the latter conducts the former may serve as a caution to those who posit the apathy of the aforementioned mass public. However, a better informed citizenry is only one of the political effects resulting from the publication of FM 3-24. It brings to the fore a political irony. While the manual itself is not particularly radical, and may in fact oversimplify complex political events to fit them into a counterinsurgency "box," it is a radical challenge to conventional military culture and raises deep questions about the type of military—and especially the type of army—the Unites States wishes to maintain.

First and foremost, the appearance of the manual is important for the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. FM 3-24 is the product of not only the preexisting literature on counterinsurgency (COIN)—most notably that of David Galula, T. E. Lawrence, and Mao Zedong[1]—but also of hard-learned lessons from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of the authors of this committee-drafted text are experienced practitioners, and it shows. The codification of dearly purchased lessons "raises the bar" for performance, and in turn promotes further learning. The manual is then both caused and causal. In terms of increasing effectiveness in a purely pragmatic sense, it is extremely important to the young men and women who operate in a deeply ambiguous and dangerous environment in Southwest Asia. For those who believe the stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan to be clear national and humanitarian interests—whatever one's opinions about the original justifications for their invasions—the appearance of a field manual that makes the eventuality more likely is welcome. In this sense the publication of this text can only be advantageous.

There exists a very real possibility of a downside resulting from this publication, however. There is something just a bit troubling about a manual devoted to counterinsurgency appearing in isolation from the broader theory

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The views expressed herein are solely those of the author. These views do not reflect those of the U.S. Army or any agency of the U.S. government.

of war. Arguably, counterinsurgency is but one of several types of what has variously been called "small wars," "stability operations," "peace operations," "low-intensity conflicts," or (most recently) "war amongst the people."[2] FM 3-24 does admit that "insurgency and COIN are included within a broad category of conflict known as irregular warfare" (p. 2). However, it then moves cheerfully along, without concern for what other phenomena might be included in this broad category, how they might differ from counterinsurgency, how they might be similar, how these might be distinguished, and—most importantly—what said distinctions might imply in terms of approach: the use of force and the utility of softer forms of power.

For the reader (let alone the practitioner), the absence of a larger framework of warfare tends to pull all instances of irregular war into the counterinsurgency model. In a remarkably short period of time, counterinsurgency has become the new Kuhnian paradigm, or normal science, for nonkinetic (or limited-kinetic) warfare. However, it is far from obvious that this framework truly captures the dynamics that are occurring in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. In regions of the world that lack mature, recognized political institutions, it is not self-evident that the government that happens to have a hold on power at the moment is one that it is in the national interest of the United States to support. To be flippant, we have been down this road before, and we know where it takes us—names like Anastasio Somoza, Fulgencio Batista, and the Shah of Iran should all come to mind. The true danger is that COIN doctrine will dominate all forms of "war amongst the peoples" and, in the process, fail to incorporate nuanced differences and lessons learned from other types of limited warfare.

In the absence of a larger context in which counterinsurgency is posed as one possible variety of "war amongst the people," a context in which peace enforcement, peacekeeping, nation building, and other paradigms also compete as frameworks for action, it is quite possible that the default position of counterinsurgency—which is, when boiled down, to build up the existing central government at all costs—will achieve a hegemonic hold on the military imagination and push out alternative conceptions of the challenges likely to be encountered on future battlefields. This would be a very subtle snare, but it would do little good to replace one inadequate conception of warfare with another.

This rhetorical sleight of hand, which equates counterinsurgency with all small wars, flies in the face of facts on the ground. While it is still controversial to say so, the Iraq War itself may no longer be best described as an insurgency, as the bulk of the insurgents—the nationalist Sunnis—are now realigning themselves with the American forces in Iraq against the nihilistic-Islamist terrorist Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). With the Sunni nationalists at least temporarily allied and AQI deprived of its sanctuary among the Sunni population, just who are the insurgents in Iraq

against whom a counterinsurgency might be conducted? This is not to say that Iraq does not remain an extremely difficult and lethal problem. However, a situation best characterized, in General David Petraeus's words, as a "competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources" is not exactly an insurgency.[3]

The future of conflict will almost certainly be defined by such "wicked problems," or situations that are unique, intractable, and interminable.[4] There will be aspects of these problems that are recognizable—crime, ethnic and religious conflict, group competition, and yes, even insurgency. But to try to maintain that all these problems should be dealt with in a counterinsurgency framework—as FM 3-24 implicitly maintains—may leave the end users, not to mention policymakers, somewhat at a loss when dealing with situations that are not best characterized in such limited terms. In these cases, using a counterinsurgency-based response may be at least inefficient, if not wholly inappropriate, counterproductive, or even catastrophic. FM 3-24 should then be seen as a first (and very necessary) step toward a reconceptualization of warfare, but one that must be immediately qualified and contextualized.[5]

In the largest sense, the publication of this text must be seen as a political act. The heart of the manual is captured in the nine "Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency Operations," in paragraphs 1-148 through 1-157. These paradoxes, such as "Sometimes The More Force Is Used, The Less Effective It Is," "Sometimes Doing Nothing Is The Best Reaction," and "Tactical Success Guarantees Nothing," turn conventional military wisdom on its head. The paradoxes effectively communicate that the standard manner of proceeding used by the general-purpose army must change in order to operate in a changed world. The logical corollary to this conclusion would be that those military leaders who are unable or unwilling to change may be of limited utility in the conduct of future wars. In short, the manual is an implicit call for the army to engage in an enthusiastic round of "creative destruction."

It would be both an exaggeration and an oversimplification to view the field manual as the opening salvo in a fight for the internal culture of the army (and, by extension, the Department of Defense), but only slightly so. This story would portray the two most successful commanders in Iraq—General Petraeus and Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli—as leading an internal revolt (insurgency?) with their disciples, partisans, and fellow travelers against the traditional, kinetic, force-on-force army—the army that prepared to fight the Fulda Gap, so successfully fought in Desert Storm, and seized Baghdad in three weeks. In other words, this interpretation would reflect a battle against the "American Way of War," shorthand for a binary conception in which war is fought as an alternative to diplomacy and politics, rather than (as Carl von Clausewitz teaches) as its extension.[6]

The war for the "soul" of the U.S. Army certainly has implications for the nation that it serves. To begin with, it must be acknowledged that there is a large segment of American society that is deeply ambiguous about an army that operates in a nontraditional manner, as can be seen in the following letter from a Mr. Jay Lewis to the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*:

> Your article on the unsuccessful attempts by a U.S. Army officer to open a local bank in Iraq ("In Iraq, an Army Officer Battles to Open a Bank," page one, March 29) implies that such an effort is a worthy and legitimate component of modern warfare. In fact, this is not true. . . .
>
> History shows conclusively that armies are best used and most successful when they serve a singular purpose: the destruction of the enemy and his will to fight. Every resounding victory by U.S. military forces has been accomplished by subscribing to this dictum. Only after achieving complete dominance on the battlefield should an army assume any type of political role, as the U.S. military did in Germany and Japan after World War II. So while the tactics of successful warfare have changed over the years, the overall strategy has not.
>
> Any army that ignores this basic truth is sure to be stalemated, just like our armed forces in Iraq are today.[7]

This (popularized) concept of the American Way of War, and its associated aversion to limited war, was perhaps most clearly enunciated by then Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, assisted by then Lieutenant General Colin Powell.[8] These Reagan-era officials maintained that military force should be limited to the attainment of U.S. vital interests; a clear political determination to win militarily; clearly defined political and military objectives, with broad public and congressional support as "reasonably" assured; and, as a last resort, military force could be used in an overwhelming fashion to decisively defeat the enemy.

This formula, later known as the Weinberger-Powell doctrine, was in essence the distillation of the professional military's view of the lessons drawn from the Vietnam War. It expresses a preference for fighting wars only where U.S. vital interests are at stake, and with overwhelming military capability. Long drawn-out conflicts with no clear and easily identifiable end state are anathema to this conception of how and when U.S. military force should be employed.

If the Weinberger-Powell doctrine was a summation of the dominant vision reflecting the American Way of War, then the behavior of the post-Vietnam army represented its implementation. As the army rebuilt itself in the late 1970s and early 1980s, virtually all combat training and professional military education centered on building proficiency in high-end combat, as army officers became self-defined "warrior-trainers," and emphatically *not* nation builders. Of note, during this time period, there was no doctrine on counterinsurgency, peace operations, or stability operations. The leadership of the army had made a conscious decision that never again would it be drawn into a conflict the likes of Vietnam. By the early 1990s, this institutional vision was so ensconced throughout the

U.S. military that the Pentagon was often viewed as the dominant obstacle to the use of forces in places such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Haiti.

Perhaps the most notable example of how this preference for fighting conventional force-on-force battles was made manifest occurred during the late 1990s as the army began thinking about "transformation." While tens of millions of dollars was spent on conducting war games postulating a new army composed of rapidly deployable small units that took full advantage of advanced weaponry, armor, and information technologies to defeat hypothetical future adversaries on the battlefield, the experiments always ended when the enemy military formation collapsed. From the viewpoint of many in the defense establishment, that was when the war ended, and the only thing remaining was to determine how fast the forces could redeploy to the United States. Perhaps this type of wishful, apolitical (read: anti-Clausewitzian) thinking about warfare was responsible for the inability of General Tommy Franks and Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to develop a plan for the invasion of Iraq that contemplated more than defeating the Iraqi military, turning control of Iraq back to the Iraqi people, and coming home within months of the end of "major combat operations."

Today, the U.S. Army officer corps remains divided regarding how best to train, organize, and equip the force, and under what types of conditions the force ought to be employed. The COIN doctrine articulated in FM 3-24 is a direct affront to the large constituency of military officers who prefer thinking of warfare along the lines of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine. To an extent, FM 3-24 is an affront to all the adherents of the army transformation community who believed that the emerging "Revolution in Military Affairs" would enable the army to become much smaller, more lethal, and more rapidly deployable. The COIN manual is, in a very real sense, a direct affront to the way much of the army sees itself.

The American Way of War then remains alive and well in the ranks (and particularly—though not exclusively—the senior ranks) of the army. The American preference for simple and forceful action is noted by our allies, and is certainly reflected in many of our writings and the instinctive reactions they inspire.[9] A significant portion (whether majority or minority remains to be seen) of the military is deeply ambiguous about any task that does not involve "destruction of the enemy and his will to fight" and would much prefer to be blowing things up, rather than performing armed politics—or worse yet, armed civil relief.[10] The actions required in Iraq and Afghanistan do not conform to our preconception of what war looks like, and so we wish to change the reality to match the theory, or cultural preference, and return to the American Way of War.

What if the opinion reflected in Mr. Lewis's earlier quotation, however, actually does reflect majority opinion in the United States? What if the American people really do

not want their army to fight in a manner other than the American? What then? Who decides whether the American people get the army they want, or the army they need? The issue, of course, is that, to use a now-hackneyed quote, you go to war with "the army you have." So should Petraeus, Chiarelli, and their followers be encouraged to conduct an institutional refounding? Such questions challenge the boundaries of political routine and echo the problematic careers of earlier military reformers, most notably (though outside the American context) the younger Charles de Gaulle.

The COIN manual may eventually prove to be not only a pragmatic guide for the conduct of foreign contingency operations but also a transgressive spur for domestic bureaucratic reform. If its theoretical framework is overly limiting, it is certainly more comprehensive than earlier visions. But reconceptualizing the U.S. Army and Defense Department approach to future contingencies—as the lead agency for the larger U.S. government—will be a continuing, contested, and ultimately political process.[11]

I will close by noting that military theorists and practitioners have long debated the uses of force and the extent to which military force can be used to effect political change. To some, war is absolute and when used, reflects a failure of diplomacy. This is largely the position taken by the Weinberger-Powell doctrine. To others, military force can be used in a limited fashion to help achieve ongoing political and diplomatic efforts, while recognizing that war by its very nature is an unpredictable contest among many actors and that military force must often be constrained in its application in order to achieve broader political goals. The nation and its army are now entering the fifth year of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the COIN manual reflects at least a "first draft" of the way this type of war must be waged. But how will this experience prod us as a nation to view the future use of force? Will we once again retreat to the more comfortable and more easily understood paradigm espoused by the army of the 1980s and 1990s, or will we accept the fact that "war amongst the people" is likely to be the dominant face of conflict in the twenty-first century? The answer to this final question will largely determine the army that the nation will have "on the shelf" when it next requires one.

Notes

1 See Galula 1964, Lawrence 1991, and Mao 1961.
2 See Smith 2007, esp. p. viii.
3 Gen. David Petraeus, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq" April 8–9, 2008, p. 2.
4 On "wicked problems," see Rittel and Webber 1973.

5 For example, I have found it much more helpful to think of the situation in Iraq as an instance of "transition from authoritarian rule," rather than as an insurgency. See O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986.
6 Weigley 1977
7 Jay Lewis, "Armies Should Fight, Win, Then Adopt Political Role. *Wall Street Journal,* 12 April 2007, A13.
8 See Weinberger 1990.
9 See Aylwin-Foster 2005.
10 For a somewhat extreme example, see Lt. Col. Gian P. Gentile's argument that, contra the arguments in FM 3-24, insurgencies should be dealt with through killing in order to maintain the morale and fighting spirit of soldiers (Gentile 2007).
11 For a first "cut" on what this might entail, see Chiarelli and Smith 2007.

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