A Call for a New Counterinsurgency Theory

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The End of a War but Not of Uncertainty

On 19 December 2011, the last vehicle convoy of American troops and equipment withdrew from Iraq to Kuwait, bringing an end to almost nine years of war. As promised by President Barack Obama in the fall, all US Soldiers would be home by Christmas.[1] In contrast to the return of troops from the region 20 years earlier, following the first Gulf War, these returning combat veterans enjoyed no ticker-tape parades or over-the-top fanfare back in the United States.[2] In fact, the last departing Soldiers didn't even have "time for goodbyes to Iraqis with whom they had become acquainted" since details of the departure convoy remained secret to minimize the likelihood of an attack from either Iraqi insurgents or "Iraqi security officers aligned with militias."[3]

Troops have returned from Iraq, but the United States is still engaged in Afghanistan. However, this war will end soon as well. According to a strategic partnership agreement signed by President Obama and Afghan president Hamid Karzai, US forces will draw down "at a steady pace" until the United States hands over all security responsibilities to the Afghan leadership in 2014.[4] This drawdown is occurring faster than some people, including retired Army general and former Central Intelligence Agency director David Petraeus, wish to see.[5] However, the president has stated that the United States can reach its goal in Afghanistan of ensuring that "no safe haven [exists] from which al Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against [the US] . . . homeland or [its] . . . allies."[6] He has also remarked

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that, given the huge cost of the wars in terms of both blood and treasure during a period of "rising debt and hard economic times . . . it is time to focus on nation building here at home."[7]

Although predicting what the future holds for both Iraq and Afghanistan after US forces leave is impossible, some indicators suggest that both countries will face difficulty with internal security once they are completely on their own. In Iraq the final exodus of American forces coincided with a political crisis in Baghdad as "a large group of mostly Sunni lawmakers" boycotted the Iraqi Parliament following a surge of arrests by the Shiite-dominated government that had systematically rounded up "hundreds of former Baath Party members" and placed them under arrest.[8] The day following the pull-out of the last of the US combat forces, the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, after "preparing a case against [Iraqi vice president Tariq al-Hashimi] . . . on terrorism charges," ordered the arrest of the Sunni lawmaker and leader of the Iraqiya Party.[9] This action led to speculation "that Iraq's leaders may now be using the very institutions America has spent millions of dollars trying to strengthen—the police, the courts, the media—as a cudgel to batter their political enemies and consolidate power."[10] Then, less than a week after the exit of the final US military combat units, a series of explosive blasts rocked Baghdad, signaling a "deepening political and sectarian crisis" and handing the Iraqi capital its "deadliest day in more than a year."[11]

Additionally, the Iraqi Shia-dominated central government has ordered the Sunni Awakening—a militia force of about 80,000 that had proved enormously helpful to the United States in hunting down insurgents and members of al-Qaeda since the 2007 surge—to disband and turn in its weapons. Without the buffer between the Awakening and the central Iraqi government, tensions are rising. Reportedly, a voluntary disbandment and weapons turn-in will not happen anytime soon, leading to more uncertainty regarding what the future holds for Iraq.[12] Further still, known terrorist Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri has sworn to "conduct 100 attacks in Iraq" to avenge the death of former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, leading some senior US officials to express concern that the withdrawal from Iraq may spur a resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq.[13]

Moreover, concerns exist regarding the US troop pullout in Afghanistan. There, a substantial part of the counterinsurgency strategy (in addition to a

larger troop presence) has assumed that plentiful aid and higher incomes for local Afghans would foster security, thus helping defeat the Taliban. However, the World Bank issued a gloomy report arguing that the pullout of US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization troops in 2014 would most likely plunge the country into an economic recession that, in turn, would worsen the security situation and possibly lead to complete collapse of the country since it currently receives most of its revenue "from American military and civilian spending."[14]

Thus, the future of both Iraq and Afghanistan is anything but certain. As the war in Iraq ends and the one in Afghanistan moves along a set timetable leading to its conclusion in 2014, one should reflect upon the US military involvement in Iraq, which, as one writer put it, appears along a continuum "from hope to barbarity, from swaggering invasion to quiet departure."[15] This article seeks to focus that reflection upon military doctrine that transformed completely, primarily because of the stubborn insurgency. The violent insurgency followed President George W. Bush's victory speech delivered only weeks after US forces commenced hostilities in Iraq. At that time, President Bush declared, under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."[16] Tragically, yet ironically, the war in Iraq would drag on for over eight more years.

A Doctrinal Shift

With the benefit of hindsight, one might be tempted to conclude that President Bush, at the time he gave his victory speech, was completely out of touch with realities on the ground. However, one must note that, considering the Iraq war up to that particular point in time in terms of conventional warfare and Army doctrine, US forces had indeed accomplished the mission. After all, the objective, as outlined by the president in a nationally televised speech a mere 42 days earlier, was "to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger."[17] Further, in the same speech, President Bush assured the American people that the United States had "no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people" and that our forces "would be coming home as soon as their work [was] done."[18] Taking these words in the context of the 1991 Gulf War, many people expected that 2003's Operation Iraqi Freedom would follow along similar lines.

The military's run from Kuwait into Baghdad during the first days of Iraqi Freedom had taken place with "stunning" swiftness, using unprecedented speed of heavy-armored maneuver as a "force multiplier" and with "skill, precision . . . [and] a minimum of casualties."[19] When Baghdad fell and the Iraqi government fled, "the mission, as defined for the military as getting rid of the [Saddam Hussein] regime, had indeed been accomplished."[20] Yet, America celebrated a mission accomplished amid signs that an insurgency had begun to brew.[21] Rapidly gaining momentum, it would become something that the leadership of the US Army, steeped in the doctrines of conventional warfare, would be slow to recognize. The level of violence grew over the summer of 2003, and by the fall, people began comparing this insurgency with the last one that involved the United States—Vietnam.[22]

The situation in Iraq, however, was not simply another Vietnam, where America confronted a determined and unified guerrilla force supported by the North Vietnamese Army. US forces on the ground in Iraq had to contend with a combination of insurgent attacks, sectarian violence, and terrorist strikes from al-Qaeda of Iraq—Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group. As the violence in Iraq grew worse during 2004–6, a group of officers assigned to the Doctrine Division of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, began to rewrite a much outdated doctrine for counterinsurgency. Led by Lieutenant General Petraeus, who had completed two tours in Iraq, the group included input from not only current and former military practitioners of counterinsurgency but also journalists, human-rights advocates, and academics.[23] Amazingly, the team completed the new doctrine in a mere 13 months and released it to the field in late 2006, just as President Bush ordered a "surge" of 20,000 additional troops to deploy to the Iraqi theater of operations, selecting General Petraeus to lead the effort.

If one were to judge success or failure of the new doctrine in Iraq based on levels of violence, then it is safe to say that it had a tremendous impact. Before the surge and implementation of the new counterinsurgency doctrine, the violence in Iraq was staggering, compared to the situation 12 months after Petraeus took command. Even though Iraq's religious and political "factions remained murderously divided," by late 2008 the violence had reached its lowest level of the entire war.[24]

By the time Petraeus left Iraq, he had transformed the battlefield from a bloody quagmire to a much more stable and secure area. Questions regarding

the long-term direction of Iraq remain unanswered, but the 2007 surge allowed the US military to negotiate cease-fire agreements with tribal leaders and turn former insurgents (e.g., the Awakening Forces) into armed supporters. As a result of the Army's use of counterinsurgency doctrine, by late 2008 "kebab stands and coffee shops had reopened across the city, and many ordinary Iraqis felt safe enough to venture out of their homes at night."[25]

Although the new counterinsurgency doctrine had a pronounced effect on the security situation in Iraq, US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, December 2006—now often referred to as the Petraeus Doctrine—has had an even greater (and arguably longer-lasting) impact on the US military as a whole.[26] Referring to the doctrine as "radical," the introduction to the University of Chicago Press's edition of the manual boldly proclaims that it "challenges much of what is holy about the American way of war" and that "it demands significant change and sacrifice to fight today's enemies *honorably*" (emphasis added).[27] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 quickly became the cornerstone of what is now referred to in Defense Department circles simply as "the long war," suggesting that counterinsurgency, as a primary doctrine of military operations, is here to stay.[28] Indeed, given the number of articles about counterinsurgency written by military officers for professional journals such as *Joint Force Quarterly*, *Parameters*, or *Military Review* or the emphasis on that subject in the training curriculum upheld by the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, then it certainly seems that the doctrine espoused by General Petraeus has superseded all others. According to the center,

> JRTC scenarios allow complete integration of Air Force and other military services as well as host-nation and civilian role players. The exercise scenarios replicate many of the unique situations and challenges a unit may face to include host national officials and citizens, insurgents and terrorists, news media coverage, and non-governmental organizations.[29]

For clarity, all Army ground-combat units must go through a JRTC rotation prior to deploying. The training outlined above differs vastly from the AirLand Battle focus of the JRTC just a dozen years ago when the Army followed what was then commonly referred to as the Powell Doctrine, named after Gen Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who presided over the 1991 Gulf War.

This doctrine grew from the Army's self-examination following the less-than-desired outcome of the Vietnam War. Struggling to discover how the US military could have "won all of the battles but lost the war," the Army turned to the Army War College and, in particular, Col Harry G. Summers, who spearheaded a research effort that used Clausewitzian theory and the classic principles of war to critically examine the failure in Vietnam.[30] Summers concluded that the Clausewitzian trinity of government, the people, and the military had been dysfunctional during Vietnam. In brief, the civilian government failed to establish clear strategic goals, the war did not have the full support of the American people, and the Army failed to employ the proper military strategy to ensure victory. The colonel's book *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (1982) provided the foundation for a transformation in Army doctrine in the years between Vietnam and the first Gulf War.

In its most basic form, the Powell Doctrine sought to make sure that America didn't repeat the mistakes of Vietnam. Specifically, the United States should weigh certain criteria before entering into a war: (1) that all other options short of war to resolve the conflict had been exhausted, (2) that the resolution of the conflict was of vital interest to the United States, (3) that a clearly defined and militarily attainable political objective had been selected, (4) that the option of going to war had the full support of the American people and their elected representatives, (5) that the US military would use overwhelming force, and (6) that a well-thought-out and executable exit strategy had been planned and determined.[31] The Powell Doctrine was on full display during the Gulf War of 1991, and FM 3-0, *Operations*, 14 June 2001, outlined the latest revision of the doctrine in detail. Unlike FM 3-0, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 moves the Army away from a doctrine of state-versus-state warfare and toward small wars and insurgencies. Although a detailed juxtaposition and analysis of these two manuals lie outside the limited scope of this article, table 1 highlights the major differences between the two.

Table 1. FM 3-0, *Operations*, and FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*: A side-by-side comparison

	FM 3-0	*FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5*
Most Recent Date Published	June 2001	December 2006
Foundational Theorist	Carl von Clausewitz	David Galula
Focus / Center of Gravity	Enemy Force	Population Centric: Winning Hearts and Minds
Priority	Offensive Operations	Establishing a Secure Environment for the Local Population
Purpose	Total Domination of Enemy Force	Fostering Economic and Political Stability
Scope	Full-Spectrum Joint Military Operations	Balance between Combat and Interagency Coordination Based on Local Situation
Primary Tactic	Violence of Action Speed of Maneuver Armor / AirLand Battle	Employment of a Mix of Familiar Combat Tasks with Skills More Often Associated with Nonmilitary Agencies
Strategy	Force Projection	Oil-Spot Strategy: Establishing Security in One Area and Then Moving to Secure the Next
Primary Threat	Enemy Army	Insurgents and Terrorists
Size of Footprint	Large	No Larger than Necessary
Use of Force	Overwhelming: Collateral Damage Acceptable	Minimize Civilian Casualties, Limit Collateral Damage
Risk	Minimize as Much as Possible	Short-Term Risk Is an Operational Necessity
Desired Outcome	Defeat of Enemy Army	Defeat of Insurgency, Leading to a Stable and Secure Society
Memorable Contextual Quotation	"First we are going to cut its head off, then we're going to kill it." Gen Colin Powell, US Army	"No better friend. No worse enemy. First, do no harm." Gen James Mattis, USMC

Importantly, both doctrines are driven by their own theoretical writings. Carl von Clausewitz, the nineteenth-century Prussian army officer whose classic book, *On War*, has been read and dissected by countless American officers during their tours as war college students since the end of Vietnam, probably had the most influence on the Powell Doctrine, not to mention the US military. By the 1990s, "Clausewitz studies [had] become something of a cottage industry for military intellectuals."[32] Indeed, up until the last five years or so, the ideas of this particular warrior-philosopher undergirded most modern American military thought. Originally published in 1832, *On War* has been translated countless times and has served as the subject of

volumes of books and papers. Phrases from the text have become commonplace in discussions of military strategy and tactics; these include *mass*, *maneuver*, *friction*, *centers of gravity*, *economy of force*, *strategic defensive*, and—probably the most famous—*war as an instrument of policy*.

Clausewitz supplied much of the theoretical framework for the Powell Doctrine, but the theoretical precepts that guided development of the Petraeus Doctrine appear in the writings of David Galula (1919–67), a French army officer whose firsthand experiences in wars of insurgency range from Mao's revolution in China to the colonial war in Algeria. One need only look at the acknowledgments section of FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 to discover the high regard in which the authors of the doctrine held Galula's work. John Nagl, one of the key contributors, writes in the foreword to the University of Chicago Press's edition that "of the many books that were influential in the writing of Field Manual 3-24, perhaps none was as important as David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.*"[33] Despite their familiarity with Clausewitz, military officers had considerably less knowledge of Galula's work prior to the publication of FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5. For example, when this writer attended the Naval Postgraduate School in 1994–95, studying in the Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict academic curriculum, the reading list did not include Galula's work. Thus, one can safely surmise that Galula's treatise may still not enjoy the notoriety of Clausewitz's. In fact, had the United States not found itself embroiled in an insurgency in Iraq, Galula still might not be part of the required reading for military officers. I, for one, had no exposure to *Counterinsurgency Warfare* until 2004, when a retired Air Force colonel and faculty member at the Joint Special Operations University introduced me to a scanned version of an old, worn copy of the then-out-of-print text, assuring me that I needed to read the book as soon as possible. Since many individuals outside military circles may still have no familiarity with Galula's thesis, this article would do well to quickly cover the essence of this important work and place his theory in the context of the environment following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) and the war in Iraq.

Galula and His Theory of Counterinsurgency

Even on the surface, Galula's work appears vastly different from that of Clausewitz. For starters, Clausewitz's *On War* numbers more than 850

pages—Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, a mere 143. Yet, the latter has had a profound effect on the US military in the last five to seven years.

A monograph published by the US Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute in 2010 contains the only biographical material available on Galula.[34] This short, insightful study points out that his theory of counterinsurgency grew out of a decade-long experience in China during Mao Tse-tung's People's War. For Mao, the first fundamental step in a revolutionary movement called for "arous[ing] and organiz[ing] the people" because "guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them . . . [and] it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation."[35] Stationed in China, Galula observed the war firsthand and apparently became so "immersed" in the conflict that at one point he was captured by Mao's communist guerrillas, spending a week in captivity.[36] Galula was highly impressed with the guerrillas' indoctrination of and friendship with the local people.[37] As deduced by his biographer Ann Marlowe, it makes sense that Galula developed his theory of counterinsurgency as a counter to Mao's theory of revolutionary guerrilla war.[38]

A reading of *Counterinsurgency Warfare* makes evident Galula's respect for the teachings of Mao; in fact, the introduction opens with a quotation from Mao. Galula points out that he wishes to "define the laws of counter-revolutionary warfare, to deduce from them its principles, and to outline the corresponding strategy and tactics."[39] In other words, he was attempting to overcome the "vacuum of studies" in the area of "concrete courses of action" for those engaged in "counterrevolutionary" operations.[40] In short, Galula was drafting a doctrinal guide for a specific type of "protracted" and "internal conflict" known as "colonial" warfare.[41] Galula points out that the "problem" of colonial warfare is concentrated mainly in the "underdeveloped" regions of the world, stating that this particular type of warfare "is not acute in the developed parts of the world."[42] At the time of Galula's writing, his home country of France was attempting to maintain control of its colonies; thus, he was speaking to a situation—indigenous uprising against the colonial power—not present in the world today. The article will return to this important point later.

Galula considered revolutionary war a political struggle whose primary objective is the population.[43] He warns that whoever controls the population

physically and secures its active support will win the war because "the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population."[44] Success for the counterinsurgent in this endeavor, Galula warns, is very costly. He even speculates that the ratio of expenses between the counterinsurgent and the insurgent "may be ten or twenty to one, or higher."[45]

The outline of the insurgency doctrine that Galula uses in his work also reflects Mao's influence on his theory. Mao, who had analyzed revolutionary guerrilla warfare in his treatise *On Protracted War* (1938), postulated that this type of conflict included three phases. During the first, the strategic defensive, insurgents would build political strength among the population. The second phase, the strategic stalemate, saw guerrilla forces increasing their strength, consolidating their control of a territorial base area of operation, and accelerating the level and intensity of attacks on the government's strategic defensive positions in the major cities and along its main lines of communication. In the strategic offensive, Mao's third phase of protracted war, the insurgent commits regular, conventional forces in the final drive against the government.[46]

One can easily see Mao's imprint on Galula's thinking as he describes the "orthodox pattern" of communist revolution.[47] Primarily, Galula wished to propose a theory of counterinsurgency that would prove effective against communist revolutionaries. Consequently, for the purposes of clarity, he expands his reinterpretation of Mao's three phases of revolutionary war into five steps: (1) creation of a party, the "basic instrument for the entire revolutionary process"; (2) recruitment of other antigovernment groups as allies to present a "united front" of the people against the government, which then aids in gaining support of the people; (3) commencement of a protracted guerrilla warfare campaign against the capitalist and imperialist government and the establishment of operating bases about the country to maintain links with the population; (4) creation of an "insurgent regular army" to permit conventional "movement warfare" against the government's forces, exploiting the army's ability to move about quickly and leverage its superior intelligence as well as its "simple but effective cross-country logistical facilities afforded by the organized population"; and (5) launching of an annihilation campaign against the government forces and political structure once the insurgent forces are strong enough.[48]

Although Galula seems to emphasize the protracted model of guerrilla warfare, he notes a different one employed by the National Liberation Front in Algeria—the "Bourgeois-Nationalist" pattern. In this much more brutal model, better suited for operations in an urban environment, he sees only two steps: (1) the use of concentrated, coordinated, and synchronized waves of seemingly random yet spectacular bombings as a way to gain publicity for the insurgent movement and its cause, and (2) the use of "selective terrorism" or targeted killings of "some of the low-ranking government officials who work most closely with the population."[49]

To counter both models of insurgency, Galula offers four laws of counter-insurgency that reflect his emphasis on population as the center of gravity in a war of revolutionary insurgency. His first law maintains that the support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as it is for the insurgent. For Galula, the population includes three groups: an active minority that supports the insurgent cause, an active minority that supports the government, and an inactive and neutral majority. In short, he argues that counterinsurgent forces must win the support of the neutral majority: "The technique of power consists in relying on the favorable minority in order to *rally the neutral majority* and to neutralize or eliminate the hostile minority" (emphasis added).[50] Thus, Galula's second law of counter-insurgency holds that one gains and holds support for the government through the active minority that supports that government, which leads into his third law—support of the population for either the insurgent or the counterinsurgent is conditional.[51] That is, this third law posits that the portion of the local population that Galula classifies as the neutral majority will support the stronger force. He argues that counterinsurgents must communicate through their actions that they have the will, means, and ability to win.[52] To clearly communicate commitment and determination to win, Galula's fourth law of counterinsurgency advances the notion that the counterinsurgent must display an "intensity of effort," a "vastness of means," and a willingness to see the conflict through its "long duration."[53] By these means, counterinsurgents will relieve the local population from the threat presented by insurgent forces and convince it of the counterinsurgency's inevitable victory. According to Galula, counterinsurgents should demonstrate these concentrated efforts, massive resources, and vast personnel "as early as possible."[54] For Galula, a "ratio of force of ten or twenty to one

between the counterinsurgent and the insurgent is not uncommon when the insurgency develops into guerrilla warfare."[55] These statements lead the reader to surmise that, in an ideal scenario, this display of concentrated effort, massive resources, and vast personnel should occur during what Mao would term the strategic defensive phase or what contemporary scholars would call the "proto-insurgency."[56]

Galula's four laws of counterinsurgency represent an "oil spot" strategy for winning a war of insurgency, which one can compare to "an oil drop that upon striking a cloth gradually seeps outward."[57] Thus, as counterinsurgent forces clear one area of insurgent activity and establish a "base area," they then "gradually seep outward to pacify more regions and transform them into secure, government-controlled areas."[58] Galula offers an eight-step strategy for conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign in each "selected area":

1. Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.
2. Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives.
3. Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.
4. Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.
5. Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities.
6. Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents; give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defense units.
7. Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.
8. Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants.[59]

FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 reflects the influence of Galula's theory of counterinsurgency and its population-centered approach: "[Counterinsurgency] requires Soldiers and Marines to be ready both to fight and to build" through the use of a "combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations."[60] The manual notes that the counterinsurgency campaign has the goal of creating a situation in which the local government is "accepted as legitimate by most of [the] uncommitted middle [of the local population]," which occurs only when the people believe they are "secure from insurgent intimidation."[61] After establishing and maintaining such security, the counter-

insurgent can stabilize the population by meeting its essential needs (food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical treatment). This provision of essential services is critical in any counterinsurgency campaign because "if the HN [host nation] government provides reliable, essential services, the population is more likely to support it."[62]

FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 refers to establishing security and providing essential services as a manpower-intensive endeavor.[63] As mentioned above, Galula recommended 10–20 counterinsurgents per single insurgent fighter.[64] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 takes into consideration the difficulty of identifying the exact number of insurgent fighters, suggesting a ratio of 20–25 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 residents in an area of operations.[65]

Therefore, according to both Galula's counterinsurgency theory and counterinsurgency doctrine as outlined in FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, using a population-centric approach will produce a successful campaign. Galula defines success as the "permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population," maintained not by military force alone but "by and with the [willing cooperation of] the population."[66] Similarly, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 defines a successful counterinsurgency campaign as one that "depends on the people taking charge of their own affairs and consenting to the government's rule."[67] However, given the context of current events and projected global trends, does the type of manpower-intensive, population-centric approach to counterinsurgency continue to offer the correct tactic? Will the application of intensity of effort and vastness of means lead to the type of successful counterinsurgency envisioned by FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5? Does success in counterinsurgency equate to victory in conventional war? In light of the current fiscal concerns of the global economic order, particularly within Western industrialized democracies, is the application of today's counterinsurgency doctrine even possible?

FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 and Galula's Counterinsurgency Theory in a Twenty-First-Century Context

Probably the most important of Galula's laws of counterinsurgency is the fourth, which declares that "intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential."[68] Any attempt to examine American counterinsurgency in light of the post-9/11, post–Iraqi Freedom context must consider key areas related to this law: the impact of vastness of means (1) in terms of the large

numbers of troops necessary to successfully execute the oil-spot strategy, (2) in terms of the fiscal cost of waging a prolonged war of counterinsurgency, and (3) on national will. One should also reflect upon a fourth aspect of American counterinsurgency in the twenty-first century: the meaning of victory in a war of insurgency.

Troop Strength

By January 2007, the insurgency in Iraq appeared to have spiraled completely out of control. An analysis by the Central Intelligence Agency in November 2006 described the situation as one resembling "anarchy and 'civil war.'"[69] In response to the deteriorated situation, President Bush ordered a surge of an additional 20,000 troops deployed to Iraq to "bring security to the people of Baghdad."[70] In a nationally televised speech, the president justified the increase in force levels to "hold the areas that [had] been cleared."[71] Mincing no words, he explained that, in previous security sweeps when US forces had cleared an area of insurgents and had "moved on to other targets, the killers returned."[72] The surge sought only to improve the daily lives of Iraqi citizens and bolster their confidence in their leaders, giving the Iraqi government the "breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas."[73]

The speech signaled a shift in strategy toward one built around the classic population-centric counterinsurgency theory of Galula—one focused on protecting the Iraqi people.[74] Without doubt, the surge enjoyed tactical success in the form of a de-escalation of violence and improved overall security, but six years afterward it remains unclear whether or not the fundamental social and political problems in Iraq that lay beneath the insurgent violence have been eliminated. Why? How is it that after years of US training and support as well as US-Iraqi combined military operations, the future of Iraq still appears so uncertain?

One may find an answer in the surge itself. A recent report by the RAND Corporation brings into question the concept of using large-scale foreign military interventions as part of a counterinsurgency strategy:

> History provides no basis for expecting large-scale foreign military intervention to make COIN [counterinsurgency] victorious. Rather, there is a correlation between large-scale foreign military intervention and unsuccessful COIN. The larger the foreign troop presence—France in Algeria, France and the United States in Indochina, the USSR in Afghanistan—the worse the outcome tends to be.[75]

These findings run directly counter to the classic counterinsurgency theory of Galula and to the doctrine in FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5. David Kilcullen, a modern-day Galula who has written extensively on contemporary insurgency, also asserts that a large foreign force on the ground is detrimental. He argues that the global insurgency facing the West today does not fit the classic model and is more akin to "hybrid warfare."[76] According to Kilcullen, in the context of global insurgency, the West does not contend with the traditional insurgent who holds a specific aim such as the overthrow of the local government. Rather, the global insurgency includes two classes of enemy—the local guerrilla with local concerns and the transnational terrorist with a much more "global outlook." Members of the local population, who may possess a "strong dose of traditional anticolonialism" and may oppose "the impact of modernity in its westernized, American-dominated form," then join an insurgency for primarily defensive reasons when they observe large numbers of foreign troops and consider them an occupying force.[77] Kilcullen writes that

> the local fighter is therefore often an accidental guerrilla—fighting us because we are in his space, not because he wishes to invade ours. He follows folk-ways of tribal warfare that are mediated by traditional cultural norms, values, and perceptual lenses; he is engaged (from his point of view) in "resistance" rather than "insurgency" and fights principally to be left alone.[78]

If the RAND study's findings and Kilcullen's thesis concerning the accidental guerrilla are correct, then one would conclude that the degree of numerical strength—one of the cornerstones of Galula's theory of counterinsurgency and of FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5—may not contribute to victory when applied in a noncolonial, contemporary context.[79] Consequently, one could surmise that the surge of forces in 2007 may have realized gains visible only as long as US forces remained in place. Sometimes individuals closest to the situation have the clearest view and can provide the best assessments; for at least some of the Soldiers who participated in the surge, their predictions weren't very optimistic. For example, Army staff sergeant Jose Benavides of Miami, Florida, deployed to Baghdad as part of the surge and witnessed firsthand the decrease in sectarian and terrorist violence. He assessed the situation simply yet pessimistically: "If the Americans leave, the sectarian violence will flare up."[80] Now that US combat forces have withdrawn, time will determine the accuracy of the sergeant's prediction. However, early

indicators, such as the spate of bombings currently plaguing Iraq, may prove Benavides correct sooner rather than later.[81]

Fiscal Costs

Today, the United States has serious concerns about its fiscal situation. Now that combat troops have left Iraq and are scheduled to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014, America is rethinking its defense strategy for what will likely be "an age of austerity."[82] Washington is looking for ways to cut the federal budget, and many Americans across the political spectrum—from Tea Party Republicans to Occupy Wall Street Democrats—want a large portion of those cuts to come from defense spending.

Wars are expensive—particularly prolonged campaigns such as Iraq and Afghanistan with large numbers of troops on the ground. Much has been written regarding the total costs of fighting these wars, and many individuals argue that the costs of the counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan are largely responsible for the nation's current economic status, which recently suffered a downgrade from a "AAA" credit rating to a "AA-plus."[83] Both economists and international relations scholars have concluded that the total costs of the Iraq war to the United States, including future expenses (such as providing health care for returning war veterans) that will continue to escalate even after the last of the troops withdraw, will exceed $3 trillion.[84]

The state of the US economy has concerned the American electorate since the 2008 recession began. At present, "the country faces persistently high unemployment, a growing deficit, a shrinking middle class, and a sluggish housing crisis."[85] Some scholars are highly skeptical that the United States will return to vigorous growth anytime soon.[86] Meanwhile, the electorate is demanding action, and elected representatives are responding. In years past, defense budgets have enjoyed only modest cuts during times of fiscal belt-tightening, and lawmakers from the Democratic Party pushed most of them. Not so this time around: more than 50 percent of Republican freshmen lawmakers have voted in favor of proposals to cut defense spending.[87] Reportedly, some of the proposed defense budget cuts could reach as high as 25 percent. Spread over the next five years, they would drop the total defense budget from its current level of $700 billion to $522.5 billion.[88] Former secretary of defense Leon Panetta, finding him-

self under intense political pressure to cut spending, went on record advocating a "smaller, lighter, more agile, flexible joint force" rather than "maintaining a ground force large enough to conduct a long, bloody war and then [follow-on] stability operations."[89] In other words, in the face of fiscal belt-tightening, Mr. Panetta sought to reduce troop levels and restructure the force in a way that will make it even more difficult to field the numbers of troops that both the classic counterinsurgency theory of Galula and FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 call for. Indeed, the Pentagon's focus on reducing the size of the force to something smaller and more agile has the full support of President Obama.[90]

The impact, according to former senator David Boren, cochairman of President Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board, is that the United States must "reprioritize what we have to do."[91] Benjamin Friedman of the CATO Institute observes that the smaller number of ground troops "encourage[s] policymakers to employ the armed services less promiscuously, keeping American troops—and the country at large—out of needless trouble."[92] Mr. Friedman's value judgments aside, the final troop levels may make it very clear to even the most hawkish of policy makers that the United States can no longer carry out another protracted campaign of counterinsurgency using the so-called oil-spot principle, as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, more scholars and policy makers are beginning to call for retrenchment, arguing that the United States needs to "[shift its overseas] commitments and resources from peripheral to core interests" and "use the resulting 'retrenchment dividend' to foster recovery at home."[93] Thus, the call for the United States to "eschew its present fascination with nation building and counterinsurgency" has begun.[94] In all likelihood, America will continue to encounter problems presented by a huge national debt and a sluggish economy, making Americans less willing to tolerate another long counterinsurgency campaign.

National Will

Galula's first law of counterinsurgency—that "support of the population is as important for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent"—can also be applied to the domestic population at home.[95] Long, expensive wars wear away the domestic population's support of the counterinsurgent, which can contribute to defeat as quickly as anything else. In his analysis of the Vietnam

War, Harry Summers reached this conclusion, writing that the failure to acquire national will or support of the American people "was one of the major strategic failures."[96]

Victory

When it comes to winning and losing, Americans simply hate to lose. The legendary Vince Lombardi, probably the most celebrated football coach of all time, famously said that "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing."[97] Some Americans would likely disagree with Coach Lombardi's extreme view of the importance of winning an athletic contest, but very few would question his view of winning when applied to warfare—one espoused throughout America's history by both its generals and presidents. For example, speaking to the nation from the Oval Office in March 2003, on the night that the United States launched its invasion of Iraq, President Bush vowed, "This will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory."[98]

In the United States, victory in war is critical to maintaining public support for that war. Conflict is expensive, in terms of both blood and treasure, and the cost is borne by those who serve in the armed forces and those at home who pay taxes and provide political support for the effort. For this reason, the populace must perceive the costly and bloody effort as worthwhile. Therefore, one of the most critical factors begins with a clearly articulated definition of victory. In instances when victory "is not clearly articulated or achieved, a depressing sense of futility can ensue," leading to a loss of public support for the war effort.[99] Further, "from the viewpoint of political leaders, an inadequate understanding of the complexities surrounding victory can result in decision-making paralysis, embarrassment, and loss of internal and external support, escalating postwar violence, pyrrhic triumphs, and ultimately foreign policy failure."[100] America's "way of war" has historically involved using conventional forces in a strategy of annihilation.[101] In a conventional war between nation-states, one can thus see victory as the annihilation of a nation's military forces and a follow-on surrender by the defeated government, at which point the victorious nation-state "gets to use its power to hurt coercively" the other side and gain concessions.[102] In other words, wars traditionally applied force for the purpose of realizing political objectives—a type of victory that the American people can easily define

and understand. Those who fought and won the most recent war that conforms to this definition became known as America's "greatest generation."[103] Similarly, Americans had no trouble recognizing victory following the 1991 Gulf War, which removed the Iraqi army from Kuwait, and the troops came home to ticker-tape parades. If most Americans view victory in warfare this way, can it apply to a war of insurgency? Further, given that "being successful [in warfare] is most likely if complete clarity exists about the meaning of success" and "without a clear strategy with clear goals in war, there is no good way to gauge progress," is victory even possible in a war that uses a population-centric approach with a vague goal of winning hearts and minds?[104]

In his recent study of the meaning of victory in warfare, Robert Mandel points out that the meaning of military victory has changed since the Cold War. Rather than define it in overarching terms as in generations past, he posits that victory entails two phases: military victory and strategic victory. According to Mandel, "War is won, or lost, in two phases—military outcomes on the field of battle, and the battle to win the peace through reconstruction and reconciliation afterward; what is won on the battlefield can be lost entirely thereafter if the countries attacked are not turned into better and safer places."[105]

In a war of insurgency waged by the United States, as exemplified by Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, American troops will eventually pull out. This inevitability, however, was not the case when Galula developed his theory of counterinsurgency. He participated in and wrote about colonial wars of insurgency, usually against communist guerrillas bent on overthrowing the colonial ruler and establishing an indigenous government. In this regard, the "oil spot strategy" or "oil stain principle" makes perfect sense. In the colonial wars of insurgency fought during the Cold War, the colonial power had no intention of leaving the area since it considered the territory and resources part of its empire. In the case of Americans as counterinsurgents, US political leaders, military leaders, and the people all know, going in, that the end state includes a complete withdrawal of combat forces and the territory left to its indigenous leaders. Indeed, should the United States have an unlimited amount of time and resources to secure an entire territory, as Galula posits in step two of his counterinsurgency general strategy, and "sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength," then it might attain both military and strategic victory.[106] However,

America is not a colonial power and will not have unlimited resources and an unlimited amount of time to conduct a protracted campaign; thus, those elements should not become part of American counterinsurgency planning.

Consequently, there will always be a chance of losing the gains secured by military victory following the departure of US forces. Since a war of insurgency does not involve annihilating an enemy army or taking and holding ground, it is entirely possible to win all of the battles yet lose the war—certainly the US experience in Vietnam. Although it is too early to tell for sure in Iraq, given the current series of events that have taken place since the withdrawal of US forces, we may be witnessing another case of America's winning a military victory only to suffer a strategic defeat. Over the next several years, the events in Iraq and Afghanistan will be of interest to students of counterinsurgency. If the history of major counterinsurgency campaigns since World War II is any indicator, then both conflicts will likely end in military victory followed by strategic defeat.

Conventional versus Global Insurgency: Fundamental Differences

Thus far, this article has argued that as the United States leaves Iraq after waging war for more than eight years and prepares to leave Afghanistan after what will be a 13-year war, the type of classic / vastness of means / population-centric counterinsurgency campaign as advocated by theorist David Galula no longer applies. Following US Army counterinsurgency doctrine, based on classic counterinsurgency theory, the counterinsurgent should use the oil-spot strategy by securing an area with a force of proper ratio of troops to local population. Then, after having firmly established security and putting the area completely under control, the counterinsurgent repeats the process in other areas until the insurgents are isolated from the local population and no longer pose a threat. Yet, the local population's perception of vastness of means (with regard to troop levels as an occupying force) can create accidental guerrillas, thereby making the situation worse. Further, because the contemporary counterinsurgent does not intend to keep his forces deployed indefinitely in the campaign, does not intend to inflict coercive punishment on the defeated government, and does not intend to strip the controlled territory of natural resources, then a classic counterinsurgency campaign can inflict tremendous fiscal strain. The prolonged loss of blood and treasure

can result in a withdrawal of support for the campaign by the counter-insurgent's domestic population, resulting in a loss of national will. As Gil Merom points out, "Democracies are prone to fail in protracted small wars" primarily due to a lack of domestic support back home.[107] Stephen Walt's summation of the US counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq lends support to Merom's argument: "If victory is defined as achieving your main objectives and ending a war with your security and prosperity enhanced, then both of these conflicts [Iraq and Afghanistan] must be counted as expensive defeats."[108]

This article maintains that classic counterinsurgency theory no longer applies because the insurgency that poses a threat to the vital interests of the United States in the foreseeable future is not the same type that threatened the vital interests of Western powers in Galula's day—basically a rebellion against a colonial power, as mentioned earlier. Many people identify today's struggles as "global insurgencies, which differ from conventional ones in several ways—especially in terms of the overall goal of the insurgent."[109] Conventional insurgents wish to "overthrow or oppose a state or regime by force of arms."[110] So their overarching goal is more specific and usually directed at the local power structure. Conversely, the objective of the global insurgent is "more grandiose and ethereal" in scope—to overthrow or oppose the Westphalian system of nation-states.[111] For example, al-Qaeda—described as waging a global insurgency against the West—wishes to upset relations between Western nation-states and those populated with large concentrations of Muslims.[112]

Such differing goals make a conventional insurgency campaign much more territorial and centralized, focused on gaining the support of the local population. As Mao put it, "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people."[113] The conventional insurgent maintains targets within territorial boundaries so that he can display the weakness of the local government. The global insurgent, however, is nonterritorial, striking US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in one coordinated attack and urban mass transportation systems in London or Madrid in another. He does not need to win the battle for the hearts and minds of the local population. Rather, he wishes to gain the financial support or operational services of ideologically like-minded individuals from anywhere in the world who are drawn to the cause by a well-framed message put forth by one or a few dynamic leaders who can convince large numbers of rational people to put

themselves at a high level of personal risk to support the cause. Technological advances in communications make the global insurgent part of a flat, worldwide network form of organization instead of a traditional, group-based hierarchy.[114]

The tactics of the conventional insurgent also differ from those of his global counterpart. Whereas the latter relies primarily on terrorist attacks designed to incur large numbers of fatalities, the conventional insurgent depends less on terrorism and more on sabotage and guerrilla warfare. The conventional insurgent "seek[s] to aggravate such social and political dissension as exists and to raise the level of political consciousness and of revolutionary *will* among the people" (emphasis in original), but the global insurgent wants to inflict as many casualties as possible on the perceived enemy population.[115] That is, the global insurgent, using "the strategy of a thousand cuts," simply desires to inflict as much physical and economic pain as possible on the powerful states of the global order in order to attain "relative strategic balance."[116]

Theories specifying motivational factors that drive insurgents to either engage in violence or support the insurgency also differ between the conventional and global actor. For the former, these include the perception of occupation, which, as discussed earlier, can create an "accidental guerrilla" and/or a relative sense of deprivation.[117] In short, Relative Deprivation Theory, developed by Ted Robert Gurr, posits that internal violence is an outraged reaction to exploitation and relative deprivation—the perception held by the local population that they receive an unequal portion of economic wealth relative to others at the top of the socioeconomic ladder.[118] As the expectations of the local population become unequal with their material gains, therefore, the likelihood of conflict with the state's elites increases.

Although both Relative Deprivation Theory and the Accidental Guerrilla Syndrome explain the motivational factors driving the conventional insurgent, Jessica Stern's framework of grievances provides a way of understanding factors that motivate the nonterritorial global insurgent. She argues that several fundamental grievances, held individually or in various combinations, can lead individuals to commit to the type of terrorist violence distinguishing today's global insurgency. These are alienation, humiliation, demographic shifts, historical wrongs, and claims over territory.[119] Robert Leiken adds support to Stern's thesis by noting that many of Europe's second- and

third-generation Muslim immigrants feel cultural and social alienation and a resulting humiliation—the result of their host countries' failure to integrate them into European society. This then leads many of these "angry Muslims" to join the global insurgency "to slaughter Westerners."[120] To summarize, fundamental differences exist between the classic, territorial-based conventional insurgency of the kind Galula experienced during the 1950s and 1960s, and the type of global, nonterritorial insurgency of today, as epitomized by the al-Qaeda movement (table 2).

Table 2. Conventional versus global insurgency: A side-by-side comparison

	Conventional Insurgency	*Global Insurgency*
Goals of Insurgent	Specific—such as the overthrow of the local government	Complex, thematic—such as the overthrow of the global order
Power Source	Support from local population	Worldwide support of ideologically like-minded individuals
Center of Gravity	The local population	Insurgent funding sources, communications, training, international travel, dynamic leadership
Organizational Structure	Hierarchical: either by single group or by village/tribe	Flatter, networked, and Internetted
Insurgent's Primary Tactic	Local terrorism, sabotage, guerrilla warfare	International terrorism, hybrid warfare
Source of Insurgent Motivation	Sense of deprivation, perceived occupation	Strong sense of grievance

To this point, this article has asserted that conventional insurgency differs fundamentally from global insurgency of the type waged by al-Qaeda against the West. Further, it has argued that classical counterinsurgency theory, with its emphasis on a population-centric approach to the development of a counterinsurgency campaign will not lead to successful outcomes, given the contexts of contemporary global insurgency. Yet, this same Cold War–era, population-centric model of counterinsurgency forms the foundation for US Army counterinsurgency doctrine. Thus, the US military needs a new theoretical lens through which to view contemporary global insurgency.

According to a saying among people in military circles, "We always fight the last war." That is, the institutionalized military traditionally adopts lessons learned from the most recent campaign and spends the interwar

period updating equipment, doctrine, and training to avoid making these mistakes during the next war. Of course, the flaw of this approach manifests itself in the fact that no two wars are ever alike and that concentrating on past enemy behavior can easily lead to a complete misjudging of a future adversary's capabilities, strategy, and tactics. The French learned this when they took the lessons from World War I and sat behind the Maginot Line preparing for a German invasion. Meanwhile, Germany's panzer divisions rolled around the fortified positions of the French army and into Paris. In Vietnam the United States found that the strategy and tactics which brought victory during World War II did not result in either the closing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail or the prevention of the fall of Saigon.

As the United States leaves Iraq and Afghanistan, it appears (based on the JRTC training curriculum, at least) that the Army will continue to operate under the Petraeus Doctrine and prepare for the next territorially based counterinsurgency campaign. Among other goals, this article seeks to advance an alternative to the population-centric approach to counter-insurgency in hopes it will add to the literature in a way that spurs discussion and debate. The remainder of this article outlines some general thoughts on this matter.

From Winning Hearts and Minds to Causing a Loss of Balance

Some individuals believe that the strategy of the global insurgent, at least in the case of al-Qaeda, involves drawing the United States into small wars of insurgency to drain American resources and political power.[121] Further, commentators argue that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have indeed signaled a waning of American global dominance and have underscored the limits of US power.[122] Joseph Nye has long maintained that in a globalized, interdependent world, traditional "hard" military power becomes less effective.[123] Because the final outcome in Iraq remains in doubt, one can insist that this thesis certainly applies to a counterinsurgency campaign. In his latest work, Nye advocates the use of "smart power[, which] is the combination of the hard power of coercion and payment with the soft power of persuasion and attraction."[124] So the right question seems to be, Can America employ and use "smart power" as part of its counterinsurgency strategy rather than the large-footprint, population-centric approach which has guided US counterinsurgency doctrine since the promulgation of FM

3-24/MCWP 3-33.5? In other words, can the United States still effectively combat insurgents without adhering to the oil-spot principle?

The answer to both of these questions is a resounding yes. However, rather than win the battle for the hearts and minds of the local population, counterinsurgent strategy should cause a loss of balance by the global insurgent. This concept, as a part of a larger strategy of warfare, was developed by Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645), one of Japan's most renowned warriors, known to the Japanese as *Kensei* or "Sword Saint."[125] In his *Book of Five Rings,* written in 1645, he observes that

> many things can cause a loss of balance. One cause is danger, another is hardship, and another is surprise. You must research this. In large-scale strategy it is important to cause loss of balance. Attack without warning where the enemy is not expecting it, and while his spirit is undecided follow up your advantage and, having the lead, defeat him. Or, in single combat, start by making a show of being slow, then suddenly attack strongly. Without allowing him space for breath to recover from the fluctuation of spirit, you must grasp the opportunity to win.[126]

For Musashi, causing an enemy to lose balance would then throw him into confusion:

> To throw into confusion—this means making the enemy lose resolve. In large-scale strategy, we can use our troops to confuse the enemy on the field. Observing the enemy's spirit, we can make him think, "Here? There? Like that? Like this? Slow? Fast?" Victory is certain when the enemy is caught up in a rhythm which confuses his spirit. In single combat, we can confuse the enemy by attacking with varied techniques when the chance arises. Feint a thrust or cut, or make the enemy think you are going to close with him, and when he is confused you can easily win. This is the essence of fighting, and you must research it deeply.[127]

Musashi's advice is more applicable to developing a strategy for defeating the global, nonterritorial insurgent than is Galula's because of differences in (1) the insurgent's strategy, (2) the centers of gravity, and (3) the primary concern for the counterinsurgent. The strategy of the insurgent during Galula's time started with the strategic defensive and increased the level of support from the local population until the insurgent could field an army large enough to go on the strategic offensive. The strategy of the global insurgent involved drawing his powerful enemy into small wars that would bleed him both of blood and treasure. Whereas the center of gravity for a classic insurgency is support of the local population, that for a contemporary global insurgency is the insurgent's funding, communications network, ability to train those wishing to join the insurgency, and access to international travel.

The primary strategic concern for the counterinsurgent in a classic insurgency entails preventing vertical escalation of insurgent violence within the country, but that of the counterinsurgent in a global insurgency is preventing horizontal escalation of terrorist violence across borders, of the type demonstrated by attacks in Kenya; Tanzania; New York and Washington, DC; Bali; and Madrid.

Some analysts fervently believe that addressing the unique concerns inherent in counterinsurgency will take a holistic or whole-of-government approach encompassing many different state and nonstate agencies.[128] Although a critique of the whole-of-government approach to counterinsurgency lies outside the scope of this article, it certainly appears that counterinsurgency strategy is evolving in this general direction. Indeed, in 2009 former secretary of defense Robert M. Gates formally adopted the concept in the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report*.[129] However, this article wishes to focus on the US military's specific role in a global, transnational, nonterritorial counterinsurgency. Very often the military's part in a conventional, territorially based insurgency involves using conventional ground forces to reestablish security and the rule of law.[130] This article favors the use of military smart power to address the three concerns listed above and at the same time follow Musashi's edicts. This calls for approaching global, transnational, nonterritorial counterinsurgency from a different theoretical precept—namely, acknowledging that the centers of gravity in such an insurgency are variables (e.g., the source of funding, communication, training, easy access to international travel, and dynamic leadership). Each of these centers of gravity falls within the sphere of interest of the US government, but not all of them fall within the sphere of influence of the US military.

If one makes use of a theoretical framework or lens to bring to light the above-mentioned centers of gravity, then those that fall within the sphere of influence of the US military are the dynamic leaders and training compounds. To destroy or significantly disrupt these centers of gravity, the military should rely on the surgical precision of special operations, such as those conducted by remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) and special operations forces. From a purely military perspective, the military can use the skill sets possessed by special forces and the force-multiplying effects of RPAs above all methods to cause the global insurgent to lose his balance and throw him

into confusion. Thus, special operations should become the key military element in the waging of a contemporary counterinsurgency campaign.

Contrary to Galula's warning that "small commando-type operations . . . cannot represent the main form of the counterinsurgent's warfare," special operations forces and RPAs or drones, with their surgical-strike capabilities, have repeatedly disrupted the global insurgent's activities, created confusion, eliminated dynamic leaders, and caused losses of balance.[131] As of late, U.S. special operations forces have enjoyed a string of successful kill/capture missions, the most notable of these being the US Navy SEAL raid in May 2011 that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden. Similarly, the United States has increased its use of drone strikes in the Middle East, conducting more than 260 RPA operations since 2009, the most infamous of which was the drone strike in September 2011 that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born Yemeni cleric and anti-US propagandist. Primarily, these strikes have sought to eliminate al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but their regional scope is expanding—witness the al-Awlaki hit in Yemen. Ultimately, such actions have vastly limited the global insurgent's ability to coordinate his large-scale terrorist attacks—a fact most profoundly brought to light when the documents seized from bin Laden's home in Abbottabad, Pakistan, revealed just how weak al-Qaeda had become since the 9/11 attacks. Correspondence recovered during the raid "shows bin Laden and his lieutenants lamenting al Qaeda's lack of funds and the constant casualties from U.S. drone strikes."[132]

Advocating this approach as the primary and theoretically based role of the US military in counterinsurgency operations will no doubt prove controversial because the larger institutionalized military generally sees special operations in more of a support role. Further, as posited by John Nagl, who has written extensively on an army's ability to learn and adapt, "Changing an army is an extraordinarily challenging undertaking."[133] Consider the fact that the US Army has fought insurgents in two theaters since 2003 and has learned some painful lessons, suffered some large setbacks, has developed and is currently carrying out a new doctrine, and has had this new doctrine vetted via a skillfully coordinated surge in Iraq. Many people affiliated with the Army urge that the lessons on counterinsurgency learned in Iraq become institutionalized so that we never repeat the mistakes of that war. They also insist that the Army codify a whole-of-government

approach and become more proficient at building societies that can stand on their own.[134] In short, advocates of the Petraeus Doctrine (evidently the overwhelming majority) see future conflict as a result of a "clash of civilizations."[135] They believe that the US military will continue its involvement in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns, in which the application of force will constitute "a lesser part of the soldier's repertoire."[136]

However, history is full of mistaken predictions regarding the nature of future war. Following World War I, the British military saw its primary role as maintaining order and security within its colonial empire. Thus, the British were ill prepared for the German blitzkrieg, and an entire British expeditionary force found itself trapped at Dunkirk.[137] Some have argued that the US military, by focusing so strongly on counterinsurgency operations, is in the process of reinventing itself as a constabulary "adept . . . at nation-building but shorn of adequate capacity for conventional war-fighting."[138]

Thus, echoing a call made by Stephen Walt, the US military and civilian leaders should remember what the military is good at doing and what it is not good at doing.[139] During the era of the Powell Doctrine, the US military proved itself highly capable of maneuver warfare, as reflected by its performance in the 1991 Gulf War and the rapid assault on Baghdad. The military "is *not* good at running other countries, particularly in cultures . . . [where] there are deep ethnic divisions and few democratic traditions" (emphasis in original).[140] Along a similar vein, US special operations forces are adept at direct-action missions, special reconnaissance, and security *assistance* (as opposed to *providing* security), all of which are critical in a counterinsurgency campaign. These skills, combined with the tremendous capabilities brought to bear by RPAs, can go a long way—and at much less cost—toward keeping the global insurgent off balance and confused. Galula pointed out that an "insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident, for in an insurgency leaders appear and then the masses are made to move."[141] RPAs and special operations forces can monitor and strike those leaders after they appear and before they have a chance to organize followers and plan such damaging operations as those that al-Qaeda inflicted on the West from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s.

It is time to reexamine counterinsurgency theory in a contemporary context. The oil-spot principle and its emphasis on winning hearts and minds no longer applies in the same ways it did during the Cold War. In fighting a

global insurgency, the United States should try to defuse such a war—not wage and win it. Consequently, this article argues that military decapitation strikes should become an important element of the United States' counter-insurgency efforts. If the SEAL team's direct-action mission against bin Laden had taken place in the late 1990s, when the Clinton administration targeted him, would an article such as this one have even been necessary?

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