A Question of Relevancy:
The RMA, Transformation and Counter-insurgency Warfare

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
at The University of Manitoba in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

The concept of an emerging Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) came to light in American military thinking in the late 1980s, and largely dealt with a new generation of military technologies which promised to alter the nature of modern warfare. In order to exploit these new technologies to their fullest, U.S. military planners set in motion the process of transformation. Significant questions, however, have emerged regarding the utility of RMA technologies and the transformation of the U.S. military and its ability to meet the challenges of insurgency and counter-insurgency (COIN). A central question then emerges as to whether or not the RMA is relevant to COIN? Although the impact of the RMA has failed to give the U.S. an unchallengeable advantage while waging COIN campaigns, it has certainly assisted in developing specific and vital capabilities in such operations.

Dedication

For my parents

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List of Acronyms

Afghanistan-Pakistan – Af-Pak
Afghan Study Group – ASG
Afghan National Army – ANA
Air Land Battle – ALB
al-Qaeda – AQ
Command, control, computers and communications – C^4I
Counter-Insurgency – COIN
Counter Terrorism – CT
Counter Insurgency Field Manual 324 – FM-324
Department of Defense – DOD
Dominate Battlefield Knowledge – DBK
Effects Based Operations – EBO
Federally Administered Tribal Areas – FATA
Forward Operating Bases – FOB
Fourth-Generation Warfare – 4GW
Global War on Terror – GWOT
Human Intelligence – HUMINT
Improvised Explosive Devise – IED
Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance – ISR
Iraq Study Group – ISG
Joint Chiefs of Staff – JCS
Joint Special Operations Command – JSOC
Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System – JSTARS
Military Technical Revolution – MTR
Network Centric Warfare –NCW
North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO
Office of Net Assessment – ONA
Operation Enduring Freedom – OEF
Precision Guided Munition – PGM
Revolution in Military Affairs – RMA
Satellite communications – TACSAT
Signals Intelligence – SIGINT
Special Operations Forces – SOF
Special Operations Command – SUBCOM
Stryker Combat Brigade Team – SCBT
Unmanned Aerial Vehicle – UAV
U.S. Air Force – USAF

Introduction

> "War remains a rough and dirty business. But the forces
> that wage it are fundamentally unlike their predecessors."[1]

The concept of an emerging Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) came to light in American military thinking in the late 1980s, and largely dealt with a new generation of military technologies which promised to alter the nature of modern warfare. These new technologies include those related to surveillance and reconnaissance which involve close coordination between satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), sixth generation computers and advanced digital networks for intelligence data to be gathered and analyzed in near real time, and the introduction of precision guided munitions which were supposed to reduce collateral damage in combat.[2] In order to exploit these new technologies to their fullest, U.S. military planners set in motion the process of force transformation. Transformation in this context is focused on organizational and doctrinal changes.

In its original manifestation, the RMA primarily related to modern inter-state warfare, with the first glimpses found in the development of the U.S. air-land battle concept in the final stages of the Cold War, and its significance arguably apparent in the 1991 Gulf War. Subsequently, the RMA married to U.S. military transformation is given credit for the initial success of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). While successive U.S. administrations perceive the RMA and transformation as essential to meeting twenty-first century security challenges, significant questions have emerged regarding the utility of RMA

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[1] Eliot A. Cohen, "Change and Transformation in Military Affairs", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27:3 (2004), p. 404.
[2] For a strong overview of the RMA see Andrew Latham, (2002): "Warfare Transformed: A Braudelian Perspective on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs'" *European Journal of International Relations* 8:2

technologies and the transformation of U.S. military organizations and doctrine in their ability to meet the challenges of insurgency and counter-insurgency (COIN) operations as witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq after the defeat of their respective conventional armies.

This thesis critically examines the debate on the utility and relevance of the RMA and transformation to U.S. COIN operations as found in the case of Afghanistan (2001-2014) and Iraq (2003-2011). This debate has largely been framed in an either or perspective. This analysis posits that both sides of this debate have fundamental shortcomings. On one hand the impact of the RMA has failed to give the U.S. an unchallengeable advantage while waging COIN campaigns. On the other, it has certainly assisted in developing specific and vital capabilities in such operations. These COIN operations represent the most significant empirical cases to examine the conflicting impacts. The importance of this debate and the lessons of these conflicts is that they will significantly determine future U.S. COIN operations. More importantly, they will influence the military structure and technologies that the U.S. will embrace.

Chapter One examines the manner in which the RMA and transformation has been conceptualized in the United States. It demonstrates that the RMA is largely a product of U.S. strategic culture, which is embedded with technological optimism. It traces the historical development of the RMA, and the evolution of the intellectual understanding of it by the U.S. strategic community. In particular, the U.S. view of the RMA is largely based around the Military Technical Revolution (MTR), which has its origins in the Soviet Union and the views of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov[3] and the development of U.S. Airland Battle doctrine in the 1980s. The key technologies, doctrines and general changes associated with the RMA and transformation are explored. These factors explain why the U.S. military has placed a perceived overreliance on the use of technology in COIN warfare.

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[3]Orgarkov was the Soviet Union's Chief of Staff 1977-1984.

Chapter Two examines the various debates surrounding the historical evolution of insurgency and COIN doctrine. These debates are centered around a 'heavy footprint' approach to COIN, where manpower and 'boots on the ground' are favored over airpower and high-tech weapons systems and the 'light footprint' that relies on airpower and Special Operations Forces (SOF). Classical COIN doctrine and its key theorists, such as David Galula, have been adamant that high-technologies have no place in an effective COIN campaign and argue that older tactics that ignore the use of high tech weaponry, and rely upon a 'heavy footprint' of manpower have proven to be more efficient at fighting insurgencies. This debate largely occurred due to the Vietnam War. The chapter examines the U.S. experience in Vietnam and its doctrinal legacy. Vietnam was the largest and most significant U.S. COIN campaign until the start of the Global War on Terror, and its complicated legacy left the U.S. military with a very negative attitude towards COIN. It concludes with a wider understanding of how the U.S. has come to conceptualize insurgent warfare and what kind of role the RMA can play within it.

Chapter Three examines the debate relative to existing empirical evidence surrounding operations in Afghanistan (2001-2014). The United States military toppled the Taliban regime in a conventional warfare setting by utilizing the technologies and doctrines of the RMA and transformation to their fullest effect. However, beyond the initial invasion, the U.S. found itself bogged down in a long and difficult COIN campaign. The Afghan experience offers a unique perspective which differs from Iraq, since much of the fighting took place in more rural and less urbanized settings. Furthermore, Afghanistan as a state, is considerably less developed and is much more fragmented than Iraq. The Afghan insurgency lacks access to any advanced weapons systems, and they have no organizational or doctrinal sophistication. Instead, insurgents have embraced classic guerrilla warfare techniques that predate the RMA and transformation.

Chapter Four examines the debate relative to existing empirical evidence surrounding operations in Iraq (2003-2007). U.S. and coalition forces were able to topple Saddam Hussein's regime and destroy his conventional military with relative ease in a matter of weeks. However, the U.S. military encountered notable challenges after the initial invasion, during the occupation and pacification stages of the conflict. The uniqueness of the Iraqi insurgency provides an interesting examination of the impact of the RMA and transformation. The vast majority of COIN combat in Iraq occurred in highly urbanized centres such as Baghdad and Fallujah. The geographic context of the urban setting is perceived to place considerable strains on the effectiveness of the technologies of the RMA. Furthermore, the nature of the insurgent groups, particularly the ethnic-sectarian component, also helped to place notable challenges on the transforming U.S. military. The chapter explores the evolution of COIN strategy in Iraq, and highlights the effective role of SOF, UAVs and various electronic sensors in combating insurgents. It also examines the successes that a 'light footprint' approach gave U.S. forces in some areas of the country.

The analysis concludes with an understanding of the relevance of RMA and transformation to COIN. The experience of the US military in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrates that the RMA and transformation has not allowed it to achieve an easy victory. Although, through important organizational innovations such as the increased role of SOF and the efficient use of new technologies such as UAVs, the RMA and transformation has managed to make a positive impact on U.S. COIN operations. The RMA and transformation have not allowed the United States to dominate completely the battlefield while combating insurgencies. However, they have helped to develop certain capabilities that have assisted in such operations. These

findings suggest that contemporary COIN doctrine within the U.S. military is in need of updating to reflect the potential of the RMA.

Chapter One:
The Revolution in Military Affairs

"A revolution can be neither made nor stopped"[4]

Among scholars there is no universally accepted conceptualization of the RMA as a broad historical phenomenon, nor is there any consensus regarding the defined characteristics of historical military revolutions and the contemporary RMA. The field has been diluted by 'pop theorists' who have sought to offer their own input into describing military transformation in the contemporary period. The lack of a universal conceptualization of the RMA, is, in part, due to its broad appeal to multiple disciplines. As a result, there lacks a proper intellectual approach for analyzing military revolutions.[5] Some scholars continue to question the existence of military revolutions as a historical phenomenon. Many of these critics also focused their attention towards the current RMA and its various technological characteristics, asserting that it is more of an evolution in military affairs rather than a revolution. Due to the absence of a consensus within the literature concerning how to conceptualize a RMA, it has become incredibly difficult to identify what a RMA is, and whether one has or is occurring. Nevertheless, there is general scholarly agreement that a RMA will bring about a fundamental shift in the nature of war due to a variety of technological, social, doctrinal and organizational changes in military affairs.[6]

The contemporary RMA is an intellectual shift in the understanding of how modern war is fought, that is based on existing information technologies, electronic sensors, and other high

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[4] Napoleon Bonaparte quoted, in Robert Daniels, *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 71.
[5] Latham, pp. 231-232.
[6] Patrick M. Morgan, "The Impact of the Revolution in Military Affairs", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23:1 (2000), p. 134-135.

technologies. Transformation is the process of putting into practice the theoretical concepts of the RMA through organizational and doctrinal reforms.

The Cultural and Strategic Origins of the RMA

Military revolutions do not always happen suddenly. They can sometimes take decades to come to fruition. They are revolutionary because of their impact on warfare, not due to the speed of their development.[7] Culture is a central influential factor in the development of a RMA since it helps to provide a wider context for military innovation to take place.[8] Military revolutions involve a shifting of intellectual paradigms in how strategic communities conceptualize the nature and conduct of modern warfare. However, to be considered a RMA this shift in paradigms needs to be revolutionary and radical in nature. It cannot be a mere linear progression.

Dima Adamsky observes that "when a new paradigm is eventually articulated, it brings fundamental changes in theoretical assumptions and transforms the entire world-view in which it exists".[9] The relevancy of culture to the development of a RMA is as an intellectual construct. Strategic communities are heavily influenced by the cultural environment in which they operate.[10] A strategic culture is the formation of trends in thoughts and actions influenced by a variety of national characteristics that are relatively unique to the concerned actor including: national geography, economic development, political philosophy and traditions, national history, and self-characterization of its citizenry.[11] Ultimately, in terms of military cultures, not all states are created equal. Certain states generate, due to their own unique cultural and cognitive features,

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[7] Morgan, p. 135.
[8] For example, the Napoleonic RMA was driven by the socio-political influences of the French Revolution.
[9] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2010), pp. 20-21.
[10] Ibid, p. 21.
[11] Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example", *International Security* 6:2 (1981), p. 22.

an intellectual environment which enables its strategic community[12] to understand when fundamental changes are occurring to the nature of warfare.[13]

U.S. strategic culture is driven by technological optimism. Central military officials, such as Admiral William Owens,[14] have made very definitive public statements about why they openly embrace technology as a means of achieving superiority in modern warfare.[15] Technological superiority and the advantages that it presents to the military are a key part of U.S. strategic culture. This heavy emphasis on technological superiority is a dogmatic trait amongst the U.S. strategic community.[16] The embrace of technology is not simply contained within the US military, since it is a product of the entire civilian society.[17] The U.S. obsession with technology is linked to its frontier mindset. Dima Adamsky observes, "America's romance with machinery, particularly with mechanical means of transportation, was a result of the need to conquer the wilderness".[18] This is in some ways a product of American exceptionalism,[19] which lies at the centre of U.S. technological advancement. U.S. society and culture pushes the state to be a leader in technological development and global affairs. Consequently, the U.S. has been drawn to the RMA as a tool to make this happen.[20]

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[12] The term "strategic community" refers to a state's military and political leadership as well its defence orientated bureaucrats and academics.

[13] Adamsky *The Culture of Military Innovation*, p. 15.

[14] Owens, a former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (1994-1996) was one of the earliest, strongest, and due to his position, one of the, most influential advocates of the RMA. He played a lead role in integrating it into the U.S. military.

[15] Thomas G. Mahnken, *Technology and the American Way of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 1–2.

[16] For example, when analyzing the outcome of the Vietnam war, many US strategic analysts attempt to shift the focus away from the performance of US weapons systems in the field to seeking political explanations for the eventual US withdrawal. See Gray, *National Style in Strategy* p. 40.

[17] For example, the Luddite movement found little popular support in the US compared to the UK.

[18] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2010), pp. 85-86.

[19] American Exceptionalism is a set of beliefs that the U.S. holds a unique place in the history of the world, and that it is unlike any other state or nation. It asserts that the U.S. is qualitatively superior to other countries. For more details see Robert R. Tomes, "American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-Frist Century" *Survival* 56:1 (2014).

[20] Jeremy Black, "The Revolution in Military Affairs: The Historian's Perspective", *The RUSI Journal* 154:2. (2009), pp. 100-101.

U.S. culture embraces problem solving. When faced with a challenge, the American thought process will seek to solve it through rationalism in an attempt to secure measurable results in the outcome. Thus, U.S. culture focuses on procedural knowledge that will lead to favourable outcomes. American strategic culture conceptualizes problems as something that can be reduced to a simple solution. There is a generally held belief that U.S. ingenuity, particularly of a technical nature, will triumph over any potential issue or problem. U.S. military officials are then drawn to technological innovations as a means of solving strategic problems. The technocratic element of U.S. military culture embraces new trends and holds little sentimentality towards tradition, as is clearly demonstrated by its enthusiastic embrace of new technologies and weapons systems.[21]

U.S. military culture is focused on the ability to learn from its mistakes. This is an attribute that is influenced by wider U.S. society and leads to a desire among the military to experiment and seek unique and new solutions to problems. Americans tend to be drawn towards individualism, and openly embrace entrepreneurialism.[22] This is connected to another cultural influence on innovation in the US military which is the existence of a 'management bias'. This bias leads to a preference towards large scale defence programs, rather than micro level operational planning. This culture creates an environment where senior officers and bureaucrats think in grand scales.[23]

Within U.S. military culture, there has been a heavy emphasis on mechanical and industrial solutions paired with overwhelming firepower to military problems. This was especially seen during the American Civil War, the Second World War, as well the wars in Korea and Vietnam where the U.S. military emphasized seeking a direct attack approach

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[21] Black, pp. 76, 82.
[22] Cohen, p. 401.
[23] Gray, *National Style in Strategy*, pp. 25-26.

supported by significant firepower capabilities. This approach channels the military's attention towards solving problems with overwhelming firepower.[24] For example, during the Second World War, the U.S. military sought to utilize technologically advanced weapons systems to smash the German Wehrmacht. They were able to achieve this aim successfully without sustaining overwhelming casualties to their own forces. This was achieved by a significant bombing offensive paired with a gruelling ground campaign.[25] General Dwight D. Eisenhower's army was highly mechanized with each division allocated nearly four thousand vehicles. The B-17 strategic bombing campaign inflicted considerable and relatively precise damage upon Nazi economic and military assets.[26]

American strategic culture is marked by a preference for identifying clear objectives and then pursuing them with overwhelming force. It prefers decisive, rather than limited style engagements. This embrace of the role of technology has only increased further in the 1990s with operations during the Gulf War and Kosovo, and continues in the 2000s with operations in Iraq and in Afghanistan.[27]

The Soviet MTR

The intellectual origins of the contemporary RMA can, in part, be traced to the U.S. strategic community's reaction to their Soviet counterparts' perspectives on military technology during the late 1970s. The Soviets initially conceptualized the shift in warfare as the Military-

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[24] The literature surrounding the "American Way of War" often links this tradition to George Washington and the Revolutionary War, or to General Ulysses S. Grant and the American Civil War, and their preference for attrition centric strategies. However, this perspective remains very contested. These debates go far beyond the scope of this thesis. For more on this see Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973).

[25] Weigley, pp. 316-317, 358-359.

[26] Victor Davis Hanson, *The Father of Us All: War and History* (New York, Bloomsbury Press, 2010), pp.142-144.

[27] Mahnken, p. 4-5.

Technical Revolution (MTR) in relation to Soviet thoughts towards a "deep battle" concept.[28]

The central figure in the development of the concept of an MTR was Marshall Nikolai Ogarkov, Chief of the Soviet General Staff during the 1970s. He spearheaded the Soviet strategic intellectual discourse concerning the technological developments in weapons' systems during this period. He called for a reorientation of Soviet strategic thought away from its nuclear arsenal back to its conventional forces, which needed to be restructured in terms of organization and command systems in order to utilize new weapons' technologies to their fullest extent.[29] In Ogarkov's estimation, new technologies had given the U.S. a notable strategic advantage, and that if the Soviet Union failed to match the U.S., they risked becoming militarily obsolete. He strongly lobbied for heavy investment in new electronic weapons' systems, such as microelectronics, lasers and remote control technologies. In addition, Soviet military theorists began to develop the concept of a 'system of systems' that would integrate a way to bring together intelligence and recognisance data with long range weaponry and a command and control method that would be able to synthesize incoming information and then disburse appropriate targeting information in near real time.[30]

Ogarkov authored several articles in Soviet academic strategic journals which were then read by the US intelligence community which influenced U.S. thinking.[31] The existence of U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) tactical nuclear weapons in the European theatre led the Soviet strategic community to attempt to develop new ways to avoid their substantial firepower. The community sought to develop military forces that had the ability to

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[28] Deep Battle concept was a Soviet military theory developed in the 1920s-1930s designed to break an enemy's frontline defences: Dima Adamsky, "Through the Looking Glass: The Soviet Military-Technical Revolution and the American Revolution Military Affairs", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31:2 (2008), p. 258.

[29] Elinor Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press: 2002), p. 26.

[30] Dima Adamsky, "Through the Looking Glass", p. 272.

[31] Admiral Bill Owens, *Lifting the Fog of War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) p. 83.

disperse rapidly and then concentrate their forces in order to counterattack. This ability to concentrate quickly near a NATO offensive force would not only give the Soviets an advantage in firepower, but would also reduce the chance of NATO effectively using tactical nuclear weapons. This became conceptualized as Soviet Echelonment Doctrine.[32]

This new doctrine, paired with Soviet quantitative conventional superiority in Europe, forced the US strategic community to rethink its strategy for the European theatre. This led to the development of the Airland Battle (ALB) doctrine. This new doctrine was the U.S. strategic community's intellectual response to the changes in Soviet strategic planning. The U.S. policy planners shifted their attention to the importance of technology in offsetting the Soviet and Warsaw Pact quantitative conventional superiority.[33] The development of ALB was heavily influenced by new technologies, such as precision guided munitions (PGMs), new command, control and communication systems and new electronic sensors.[34] Ultimately, ALB represented a 'made in America' approach to dealing with the Soviet threat. The U.S. was reacting to Soviet strategic developments. However, the method of its response was deeply rooted in U.S. culture and its technocentricism.

The evolution of ALB had a considerable impact on the development of technologies and organizational structures associated with the contemporary RMA. One of the most notable legacies of ALB was that it emphasized new command and control systems in order to create a more fluid and rapid decision cycle. Rigid 'top down' leadership systems were no longer viable in the new age of warfare that prioritized quick thinking and the initiative. For these changes to

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[32] Adamsky, "Through the Looking Glass", pp. 259-260.
[33] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, p. 59-61.
[34] Sloan, *A Revolution in Military Affairs*, pp. 25-26.

be effective, it reinforced military professionalism and legitimized the decision to create an all-volunteer force.[35]

This doctrinal shift in the U.S. led to a heavy investment in stealth technology which leads to the eventual development of the F-117A fighter bomber and the B-2A bomber. The ability of U.S. aircraft to be almost invisible to enemy radar was thought to be a significant strategic advantage against Soviet forces.[36] Furthermore, ALB stressed the synchronization of military forces. This would include linking the operations between conventional forces and their nuclear counterparts within the US military. It also required close synergy with NATO allies. Synchronization was needed in order to be able to utilize the changes to their fullest extent.[37]

The RMA Defined

The ALB was not a military revolution. However, it was part of the RMA's development. No specific date or event marks the US conceptualization of the RMA. It was a gradual process that gained significant attention in the late 1980s. Its intellectual conceptualization was the result of the work of a core group of policy elites. Key defence establishment officials such as Andrew W. Marshall, MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, along with important institutions such as the Office of Net Assessment (ONA), began to formulate the intellectual underpinnings of the RMA, and these men and institutions were heavily influenced by the intellectual developments associated with the Soviet MTR and the U.S. development of ALB.[38] Andrew Marshall and his colleagues in the ONA felt that ultimately Ogarkov and the Soviet strategic community had not

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[35] Richard Lock- Pullan, 'How to Rethinking War: Conceptual Innovation and AirLand Battle Doctrine", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28:4 (2005), pp. 689-690.

[36] Owens, P. 82: ALB was also an influence on future weapons systems, such as the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle that have become associated with transformation.

[37] This was a precursor to the RMA Jointness doctrine.: Lock-Pullan, p. 691.

[38] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, p. 65.

fully grasped the completely revolutionary nature of the changes occurring in modern warfare. The technological weapons systems that were being utilized under ALB had far more potential than had initially been conceptualized. Marshall observed that the MTR and ALB was merely the first stage of what was to become the RMA.[39] Marshall's views on the developing Soviet MTR was influenced not just by reading Soviet strategic publications, but also by intelligence procured about the Soviet military where Marshall observed that the Soviets were developing plans to win a conventional war in Europe without the use of tactical nuclear weapons.[40]

The Gulf War (1991) [41] was the first time that Marshall and the rest of the U.S. strategic community was able to observe the various RMA related technologies on the field of battle. The overwhelming success of the Desert Storm campaign in 1990-1991 gained a significant amount of intellectual attention. The U.S. military, according to many, had perfected the Soviet conventionally focused offensive doctrines associated with the MTR.[42] By 1993 Marshall and his staff had determined that the MTR was far too narrow a phrase to describe accurately what was occurring to modern warfare. Marshall's assessment on this subject matter was accompanied by a lively discourse in various U.S. military journals and Department of Defense memos and official reports that came to similar conclusions.[43] In 1993, the term 'Revolution in Military Affairs' first entered the lexicon of the US strategic community as Andrew Marshall and his ONA office began to use it in official papers and documents. The term and its concepts appeared

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[39] Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, p. 27.
[40] Stephen Peter Rosen, "The Impact of the Office of Net Assessment on the American Military in the Matter of the Revolution in Military Affairs", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33:4 (2010), p. 478.
[41] A war fought between a U.S. led international coalition against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, in response to Iraq's invasion, and subsequent annexation of Kuwait.
[42] Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, p. 67-68.
[43] James R. Blaker, "Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs: A Guide to America's 21st Century Defense", *Progressive Policy Institute Defense Working Paper No. 3*, (1997), p. 6.

throughout several White House and Pentagon documents such as *Joint Vision 2010* and *Joint Vision 2020*.[44]

For some militaries, peacetime can hinder innovation, since it leads to complacency. There are also changing political and socioeconomic environments such as a decline in political and public support for large investments in the military. As Girish Luthra notes, "often, war is the testbed of all forms of military innovation. Unlike the civil sector, militaries are not forced out of business due to lack of innovation but face a stark choice of victory or defeat during war".[45] The Gulf War became the initial testing ground for the effectiveness of the revolutionary changes introduced by the RMA. It ultimately helped to showcase and legitimize the influence of the RMA, particularly with regards to the effectiveness of PGMs and stealth technology, but also new weapons systems such as the M1 Abrams, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and Apache and Blackhawk helicopters.[46] The Gulf War demonstrated the dominance of situational awareness on the modern battlefield. Iraqi armoured forces, relying on older pre-RMA tactics, such as entrenching their ground forces in static dug in locations, were simply unable to offer a viable response to the U.S. and Coalition's overwhelming airpower dominance.[47]

The Gulf War provided several important examples of the dominance of U.S. airpower and RMA technologies. One such incident occurred near the Saudi village of al-Kafji where two Iraqi mechanized brigades were first detected by U.S. Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft systems. Coalition airpower launched coordinated strikes which decimated the operational capacity of the Iraqi brigades, killing 2000 soldiers and destroying 300

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[44] Elinor Sloan, *Military Transformation and Modern Warfare: A Reference Handbook* (London, Praeger Security International: 2008), p. 3.
[45] Girish Luthra, "Military Innovation: Hurdles, Bumps, and Jumps" *Strategic Analysis* 27:4 (2003), pp. 571-573
[46] Mahnken, p. 167.
[47] Thomas G. Manken and Barry D. Watts, "What the Gulf War Can (and Cannot) Tell Us About the Future of Warfare", *International Security* 22:2 (1997), pp. 155-156.

vehicles.[48] The Gulf War was not, as some commentators suggested, a RMA in itself. [49]

However, it represented the first tangible proof of the effectiveness of the RMA's theoretical

concepts.

Once the RMA had become widely accepted within much of the US strategic community,

more influential officials began to take more interest in its development. These would include

Admiral William Owens, who became a strong advocate for using technology to reform the US

military, and lobbied members of Congress to allow the proper funding to be allocated to nurture

its development at the policy level.[50]

The various technological, doctrinal and organizational innovations associated with the

contemporary RMA are driven by two important trends: the rise of information technology and

the rise of networking. These include the concept of Dominate Battlefield Knowledge (DBK)

and the doctrines of Network Centric Warfare (NCW), jointness and the emergence of unmanned

warfare. All of these are products of the technological optimism that is embedded within the U.S.

strategic community.

DBK is a military commander's access and ability to process relevant information

concerning both the nature of the enemy units and the various environmental factors of the

battlespace. This knowledge is procured by Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

systems and Special Operations Forces (SOF). This process allows commanders to access an

incredibly accurate digital map of the battlespace that outlines key geographic obstacles such as

rivers, as well the position and characteristics of enemy units. This data can then be dispatched

from a centralized authority to combat units in the field along with appropriate targeting

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[48] Ibid, pp. 155-156.
[49] For more analysis on the impact of the Gulf War see: Stephen Biddle, "Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us about the Future of Conflict" *International Security* 21:2 (1996).
[50] James R. Blaker, "Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs: A Guide to America's 21st Century Defense", *Progressive Policy Institute Defense Working Paper No. 3* (January 1997), p. 7.

information.[51] The modern battlefield for the U.S. military is digitized. Individual soldiers and military vehicles are linked to computer networks which allow commanders, to know in near real time where their units are located, and so they are also able to dispatch ISR intelligence to their troops regarding the location of enemy forces.[52]

The ability to process data and information in near real time is due to the development of high speed computing capabilities. Computers, along with space based sensors and JSTARS have completely modernized the use of maps in warfare. They can be digitized, and updated with new information concerning the placement of enemy units and terrain. Patrick M. Morgan observes: "Commanders can have the proverbial bird's-eye view of both an entire combat arena and small unit situations".[53] There is very little territory on the earth's surface that cannot be surveyed by a variety of sensors and surveillance systems. Only the deepest sections of the oceans and subterranean locations, such as caves or the basements of buildings, cannot be pierced by radar, infrared or other sensors.[54] These capabilities have allowed the U.S. military to overcome many of the challenges posed by the 'fog of war' which refers to uncertainty in situation awareness during warfare.

There is an important difference between simply being able to see what is in the battlespace, which is referred to as battle-awareness, and the ability to be able to understand and hold knowledge of what is occurring in the field of battle, which is DBK. It allows commanders to analyze the nature of the enemy such as their organizational and command structures and allows them to select targets that will severely hamper the operational capacity of the enemy.

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[51] Owens, pp. 100-102.
[52] Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, pp. 6-7.
[53] Morgan, p. 136.
[54] David Kirkpatrick, "Revolutions in Military Technology, and their Consequences", *The RUSI Journal* 146:4 (2001) pp. 67, 71.

This adds even more lethality and increased effectiveness to new weapons systems such as long range PGMs.[55]

NCW is the conceptual response of the US military to the realities of the information age. It aims to link the soldiers operating within the battlespace and those across the globe, and seeks to influence the operational, tactical and strategic levels of military operations. Computerized command and control systems play a vital role in this. NCW is much broader than simply involving aspects of electronic warfare, since it links together information and knowledge domination on the battlefield, and effects based operations (EBO).[56] EBO is a central part of NCW and a product of the RMA. It involves engaging a wide range of military and even non-military capabilities against the enemy in order to reach a desired strategic outcome or effect. It is focused on selection specific targets to focus attacks in order to maximize the desired outcomes.[57]

NCW allows the U.S. military commanders to have up-to-date information on the outcomes of engagements in near real time. This allows commanders to analyze quickly the situation, and then dispatch follow up orders and directions based on results of what has just happened. This has the potential to deprive the enemy forces of the ability to think independently of the conflict as they are forced to try and keep up with the U.S. military and thus are unable to analyze properly themselves what has just occurred. Essentially, the U.S. is able to be a part of the enemy forces command and targeting cycles.[58]

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[55] Owens, pp. 136-13.
[56] Commander Erik J. Dahl, "Network Centric Warfare and the Death of Operational Art", *Defence Studies* 2:1 (2002), pp. 3-5.
[57] Douglas A. Macgregor, *Transformation Under Fire: Revolutionizing How America Fights* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), pp. 65-69.
[58] Blaker, p. 10.

NCW involves the interlinking of several computerized systems, which include ISR and those relating to command, control, computers and communications (C^4I) which is then linked to a third system of precision force. By working in a synchronistical fashion with one another they create the conditions needed for a decisive victory.[59] This approach to combat and military structure is one of the most influential and potentially most revolutionary aspects of the RMA.[60] The development of C^4I allows for intelligence data to be analyzed almost instantaneously and then targeting information can be dispatched to field units. These command and control system give US commanders the ability to dominate the modern battlefield.[61]

NCW has altered the fundamental structure of the US military. Stiff hierarchies are no longer well-suited for this type of warfare. NCW can only be used to its full potential if the military structure surrounding it provides the necessary flexibility in terms of planning and executing operations. Here, close collaborations amongst horizontal and vertical actors is very necessary for success. It requires individuals to be ready to adapt and innovate as operations progress. NCW also places far less emphasis on centralized planning in military operations. Field commanders, on the lower levels of the military hierarchy, are more empowered with increased situational awareness due to a constant inflow of relevant information and are then able to engage the enemy without constant micromanagement from senior officers.[62]

NCW goes far beyond possessing new types of tanks or missiles; its significance is that all of these new technologies can now be networked together to maximize their efficiency and increase the lethality of the armed forces. Only the U.S. has the resources to develop and operate

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[59] Owens, pp. 98-100.
[60] Blaker, p. 8-9.
[61] Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, p. 8.
[62] Dahl, pp. 5, 13.

a massive global network of sensors and communications systems to develop this battlefield knowledge in any environment around the globe. [63]

The jointness doctrine is a key element of the RMA. With jointness, the RMA has pushed the military to embrace operational integration and interoperability of its forces. Airpower must be directly linked to ground forces. All of these, in turn, must be supported by manned and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and space based surveillance systems.[64] Jointness involves linking and integrating all military services on an institutional, organizational, technological and intellectual level.[65]

UAVs, in particular, have emerged as a major new tool for the modern US military and their role is constantly expanding. When UAVs initially entered service, their primary mission was centered within surveillance, intelligence and reconnaissance information gathering. However, military officials were quick to realize these weapons systems' potential for directly engaging the enemy in kinetic[66] operations.[67] Other new technologies include the expanded role of PGMs in modern warfare. These weapons are guided by the Global Positioning System and onboard optical and laser sensors, and are capable of traveling hundreds of kilometers to hit a relatively small target, such as an individual vehicle. These weapons can be deployed in a variety of ways from ground vehicles, to ships to fighter planes.[68]

[63] Owens, pp. 133-134, 149.
[64] Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, p. 9.
[65] John M. Shalikashvili, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington D.C.: Joint Staff, 1996) pp. 8-9.
[66] Kinetic refers to lethal military operations.
[67] Adam N. Stulberg, "Managing the Unmanned Revolution in the U.S. Air Force" *Orbis* 51:2 (2007), pp.251-252.
[68] Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, pp. 4-6.

Transformation

The U.S. Government eventually began to develop specific policies to operationalize the theoretical RMA concepts, and this process became known as transformation. Donald Rumsfeld, President G.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense was a particularly strong advocate of transformation. In his view, the global strategic environment and incumbent new security challenges required substantial alterations to the organizational, doctrinal and technological aspects of the U.S. military.[69] In Rumsfeld's view, the new global security environments required new ways of thinking about warfare. The Cold War was over, and thus the U.S. needed to look to the future in order to establish how its armed forces should be structured. The rise, or at least resurgence of new threats, such as international terrorism presented new challenges to the U.S. military and as such they required new solutions. Transformation would shift the military from the labour-intensive heavy force structure of the Cold War, to one that was smaller, more flexible and highly techno-centric. This allowed the military to fight campaigns with less manpower, while not reducing operational efficiency.[70]

Rumsfeld became the most active supporter of transformation in the U.S. government, even going so far as to oversee the establishment of a new governmental institution, the Office of Transformation, which was under the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to continue developing transformation-friendly policies.[71] According to Max Boot, Rumsfeld's conceptualization of transformation was "a change of mindset that will allow the military to harness the technological advances of the information age to gain a qualitative advantage over any potential foe".[72]

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[69] Macgregor, p. 3.
[70] Donald Rumsfeld, "Transforming the Military" *Foreign Affairs* 81:3(2002) pp. 22-23, 26-27.
[71] Cohen, p. 400.
[72] Max Boot, "The New American Way of War", *Foreign Affairs* 82:4 (2003), p. 42.

From an organizational standpoint, U.S. force transformation is an all-encompassing process that impacts not just the tactical and operational level of military operations, but the entire organizational structure of the U.S. Department of Defense and how it interacts with other government departments and agencies.[73] The Army is smaller, quicker and more flexible, while embracing a capital-intensive approach to modern combat.[74] A key organizational impact of transformation has been the emphasis on the increased importance and role of SOF. These soldiers are a highly selected group of individuals who have received a variety of specialized training for specific types of missions.[75] The military embraced a 'light footprint' approach to modern warfare, where high technologies and Special Operations Forces (SOF) dominated future battlefields, rather than the heavy and cumbersome infantry divisions and armoured brigades of the Cold War era. Furthermore, airpower had become in many ways, the central actor in the transformed U.S. military. It is seen as, perhaps, the most important of the services when it comes to securing a decisive victory in combat. The U.S. Air Force (USAF), in particular embraced this position as the U.S. military shifted from countering the threat of the Soviet Union, to a more agile expeditionary force.[76]

Donald Rumsfeld conceptualized transformation as being driven by knowledge and human capital.[77] Since transformation is, in many ways, based on human capital and knowledge, it is not something that can be finalized, at least not in the foreseeable future. Rather, it is a continuous process. As Rumsfeld observed, "Transforming the military is not an event; it is an

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[73] Office of Force Transformation "Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach" (Washington DC, Department of Defense 2003), p. 2.
[74] Sloan, *Revolution in Military Affairs*, pp. 11, 15.
[75] Sloan, *Military Transformation*, p. 28.
[76] Sloan, *Revolution in Military Affairs,* p. 13.
[77] Robert T. Foley, et al, "Transformation in Contact: Learning the Lessons of Modern War", *International Affairs* 87:2 (2011), pp. 255.

ongoing process. There will be no point at which we can declare that U.S. forces have been 'transformed'".[78]

Conclusion

The RMA has changed the way the U.S. wages modern warfare, by combining technological, social, doctrinal and organizational changes in military structures with new intellectual constructs of how they can be applied to the field of battle. The innovations associated with the RMA are primarily the product of U.S. cultural influences which foster technological optimism. Its intellectual roots can be traced to the European-front of the Cold War. However, by the late 1980s, the U.S. strategic community had began to identify and conceptualize the beginnings of a RMA. This was further demonstrated by the events of the Gulf War, which saw the rise of new concepts, such as jointness and NCW. The U.S. strategic community's intellectual understanding of the RMA led to changes in the U.S. military on the policy level, which is demonstrated by its adoption of transformation which has brought the theoretical concepts of the RMA to the field of battle. U.S. national characteristics was the driving force behind these reforms. The U.S. approach towards transformation helps to demonstrate that, ultimately, the contemporary RMA is about new ideas about how to wage war in the modern era, and not necessarily linear, technical innovations. Donald Rumsfeld sums up this sentiment: "A revolution in military affairs is about more than building new high-tech weapons - although that is certainly part of it. It is also about new ways of thinking and new ways of fighting".[79] Chapter Two explores the role of the RMA in COIN doctrine.

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[78] Rumsfeld, p. 28.
[79] Ibid, p. 21.

Chapter Two:
The United States and Counter-Insurgency Doctrine

"Historical experience is written in iron and blood"[80]

The problems that militaries encounter when they go to war are rarely solved quickly or easily. There are numerous variables that can affect outcomes, and so it is nearly impossible to develop a foolproof blueprint or strategy that can universally be applied to any situation. Sometimes these problems persist overtime. Insurgent warfare has historically proven highly difficult for conventional armies. Militaries spend the majority of their time preparing to fight similarly organized armed forces in the open battlefield. Counter-insurgency (COIN) operations are not structured this way, nor do they contain easily identifiable benchmarks for victory.[81]

The contemporary debate within COIN doctrine is centered upon the 'heavy' versus 'light' footprint. The heavy footprint places a tactical and operational emphasis on the use of ground forces to pacify civilian areas. The 'light footprint' aims to rely on Special Operations Forces (SOF), mobility, airpower and technology to achieve victory. Proponents of the RMA argue that it will allow the U.S. military to utilize the 'light footprint' approach to overcome insurgencies, while its critics argue that this is a faulty assumption. This chapter surveys the theoretical debates within insurgent warfare and COIN doctrine and concludes with a wider understanding of how the U.S. has come to conceptualize insurgent warfare and what kind of role the RMA can play within it.

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[80] Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Praeger, Publishers, 1961), p. 65.
[81] For an overview of the nature of insurgency, see, Colin S. Gray, "Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1 (2007).

"A War is a War is a War"

The concept of insurgent warfare first entered the Western strategic lexicon with Karl von Clausewitz's *On War*.[82] In many ways, however, the tactical origins of putting the concept into practice dates back to primitive man.[83] It was during the Napoleonic Wars that the term 'guerrilla warfare' emerged, which came to categorize the 'little war' between Spanish partisans and Napoleon's forces during the Peninsula War (1807-1814). The Spanish partisans fought in the countryside and received support from local populations. The aim of the partisans was not to engage French forces in a pitched battle. Rather, they sought to weaken Napoleon's forces in a protracted campaign.[84]

The term guerrilla warfare is typically refers to fighting on a tactical level between insurgents and counter-insurgents. Tactically it often includes ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. The term is primarily used in a strictly military context and is not used to describe insurgents who are seeking wider political, ideological or socio-economic objectives.[85] This is evident by the fact that the Spanish partisans were not seeking social change, and sought guidance from local governing institutions such as the Catholic clergy.[86] It was not until much later that the nature of insurgent warfare began to shift towards the rising influence of revolutionary ideology.

In the twentieth century, a new type of insurgency developed known as revolutionary war. This phenomenon was the product of the rapidly changing global system. The old European empires were falling into decay, in part due to the impact of the Second World War, and were declining at a steady pace. This, combined with the rise of indigenous nationalism and Marxist

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[82] Clausewitz used the term "people's war".

[83] Charles Townsend "People's War" in Charles Townsend ed., *The Oxford History of Modern War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005), p. 177.

[84] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 157.

[85] Ian F. W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: An Historical Perspective* (Carlisele PA.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), p. 2.

[86] Edward N. Luttwak, "Dead End: Counterinsurgency warfare as military malpractice" *Harpers Magazine* (Feb 2007), p. 3.

ideology, produced an explosive combination for the outbreak of this new type of warfare.

Revolutionary war is exceedingly difficult to analyze due to the various forms it takes. On the

tactical level it is similar to the type of fighting found during guerrilla warfare where insurgents

avoid direct battles with the government's security forces and focus instead on sabotage and

terror tactics. However, it also began to incorporate non-violent actions such as general strikes,

and political and legal mobilization.[87]

Mao was a central figure in the evolution of revolutionary war and he theorized that such

warfare tended to be protracted; a victorious campaign must follow through several stages of

development. He was much influenced by Marx's teleological perspective of history, in which

the insurgents secure short term goals in order to achieve eventually their overall political

objectives. Under revolutionary warfare, the insurgents must first establish political support,

followed by the outbreak of guerrilla warfare. However, Mao contends that once the insurgency

has been able to build up enough strength, it must engage the counter-insurgents in conventional

fighting and annihilate them.[88]

Mao's writings on the subject are steeped in Marxist rhetoric of freeing the poor from the

governments by means of a protracted military campaign. Mao writes that, "they are the

inevitable result of the clash between oppressors and oppressed when the latter reach the limits

of their endurance".[89] Mao goes on to write: "These guerrilla operations must not be considered

as an independent form of warfare. They are but one step in the total war, one aspect of the

revolutionary struggle…[g]uerrilla warfare has qualities and objectives peculiar to itself. It is a

weapon that a nation inferior in arms and military equipment may employ against a more

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[87] John Shy and Thomas W. Collier "Revolutionary War" in Peter Pare ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 816-817.
[88] David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1966), pp.44-57.
[89] Mao, pp. 41-42.

powerful aggressor nation".[90] Che Guevara, one of the other major revolutionary warfare theorists, echoed Mao's revolutionist sentiment in writing that, "it is important to emphasize that guerrilla warfare is a war of the masses, a war of the people. The guerrilla band is an armed nucleus, the fighting vanguard of the people".[91] Ultimately, revolutionary warfare was very much the product of the socio-economic and political context of the Cold War.

Alongside guerilla and revolutionary war, the term 'asymmetric' has emerged in the contemporary literature as a popular buzzword. The asymmetry of the conflict can be measured on several different levels. Primarily, it refers to the differences in kinetic capabilities; men and materials between insurgent and counter-insurgent forces. However, it also refers to the legal differences between the two sides, where the counter-insurgent is theoretically constrained by the Geneva Conventions and international law, but the insurgents can choose to ignore such guidelines. The asymmetry aspect of the conflict may also refer to differences in strategy and tactics employed by both sides.[92]

A more contemporary term, Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW), has now emerged and is beginning to push aside "asymmetry" in COIN literature. It contends that a variety of globalized trends in changing cultural, political and social paradigms are leading to a new type of warfare that encapsulates a broader perspective of modern warfare which, in turn, places increased emphasis on non-military aspects of war, such as the political and social mobilization of civilians.

4GW theorists tend to argue that the RMA is irrelevant or even a hindrance on modern battlefields when dealing with non-state actors. RMA technologies have no bearing on social or

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[90] Ibid, p. 42.
[91] Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), p. 1.
[92] Tim Benbow: "Irresistible Force or Immoveable Object? The "Revolution in Military Affairs" and Asymmetric Warfare" *Defense & Security Analysis* 25:1, (2009), pp. 25-28.

political paradigms. According to 4GW theorists, the role of the media can be as important to dominating a conflict as securing air supremacy over a battlefield.[93] Overall 4GW theorists assert that non-state actors such as terrorists, insurgents and ethnic or clan-based militias are some of the most important actors in modern war. Here conflicts are fought over networks, be it cultural, religious, national, economic or ethnic in nature. It is believed that globalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union helped to exacerbate these changes.[94]

While 4GW theory can provide some valuable insight into the contemporary strategic environment, it largely fails to prove there has been a systemic shift in the nature of insurgencies. After all, Clausewitz developed his trinity of how the people, government and military were important to the nature of war. The will of civilians has always been viewed as important in war.[95] Furthermore, religious or clan-based militias are hardly a new phenomenon, they have been around for centuries. The simplest and most accurate term for non-conventional, revolutionary, asymmetric, guerilla warfare, or 4GW is just 'insurgency' or 'insurgent warfare'. Insurgency can be identified when a group of non-state actors engage in non-conventional military action, while using either direct or tacit support from elements of the civilian population. Austin Long observes that, "Insurgency is a method of war, in the same way that combined arms blitzkrieg is one. The context of the method and some elements of the method may change, but the fundamentals do not".[96] Insurgency remains grounded in guerrilla warfare tactics, and continues to embrace a protracted path to victory, in which insurgents seek to outlast the will of the counter-insurgents to continue fighting. Insurgency takes the protracted path due to the

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[93]Benbow, Irresistible Force or Immoveable Object, pp. 25-26.
[94] Tim Benbow, "Talking 'Bout Our Generation? Assessing the Concept of "Fourth-Generation Warfare", *Comparative Strategy* 27:2 (2008), pp. 149-150. For more on 4GW see Martin van Creveld, *Transformation of War*.
[95] Clausewitz, p. 30.
[96] Austin Long, *On "Other War": Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2006), p. 18.

power differentiation between insurgent and counter-insurgent. Thus, it should be expected that these wars will last a considerable time period, usually years. The strategy of an insurgency is to focus on creating disorder within the state.[97] Outbreaks of insurgent warfare are occurring on an increasing basis around the globe.[98]

COIN Doctrine

The most influential classical COIN doctrine is based on 'hearts and minds', where the focus of the COIN campaign is placed on improving economic development and governing institutions of the local area, to sway the majority of the civilians to the side of the counter-insurgents. This process is then supposed to drain the insurgency's main lifeline of money and supplies, and essentially create a clear separation between them and the civilian population. This doctrine was developed during the British colonial experience in dealing with insurgents in the 1940s and1950s.[99] In principle, classical COIN doctrine embraces a 'heavy footprint' approach to dealing with insurgencies. The doctrine states that the large presence of ground troops is deemed necessary for this to succeed since they are viewed as being the only means of providing stability and security for civilians. The 'hearts and minds' doctrine was also informed by Western liberal-democratic perspectives in which the aim of COIN operations is to improve the lives of local civilians, and that a military force should be deployed to protect civilians.[100] This population-centric doctrinal thinking seeks to establish and legitimize a stable local government while winning the 'hearts and minds' of the domestic population. This is achieved by providing

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[97]Galula, pp. 10-11.
[98] Frank G. Hoffman, "Small Wars Revisited: The United States and Nontraditional Wars", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28:6, (2005), p. 18.
[99] Long, p. 57.
[100] David French, "Nasty not nice: British counter-insurgency doctrine and practice, 1945-1967", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23:4-5 (2012), p. 745.

security for civilians, overseeing development projects, such as the construction of schools, and ensuring the continued delivery of social services.[101] To be successful, the counter-insurgent must adopt a labour intensive strategy centred on a soldier to civilian ratio that allows them to control the contested territories. There is no set number for the ratio, but most analysts suggest either 20:1000 or 25:1000 of soldiers to civilians.[102]

Classical COIN theorists, such as David Galula, argue that militaries fighting insurgencies have little use for high-tech weapons' systems and heavy equipment. Following this line of thought, infantry are the primary units needed to engage the enemy. In particular they need to be highly mobile and can be supported at most by light armour and artillery. Galula argued that airpower cannot play a major role in counter-insurgency operations, and may only be used to support the efforts of the infantry. He felt that airpower was limited because of the risk of collateral damage to civilians, which may, in turn, push the civilians further into the arms of the insurgency. He also argued that airpower cannot be used to cause a physical separation between insurgents and civilian populations, something that is extremely important according to classical COIN doctrine.[103] In fact, Galula goes so far as to state that the most effective units are infantry and that "paradoxically, the less sophisticated the counterinsurgent forces, the better they are".[104] Thus, according to classical COIN doctrine, the relevancy of the RMA and transformation is viewed at best as irrelevant, or at worst even detrimental to the conducting of operations. A 'light footprint', according to this doctrine is incapable of providing the necessary security to local

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[101] Michael Fitzsimmons, "Heard Hearts and Open Minds? Governance, Identify and the Intellectual Foundations of Counterinsurgency Strategy", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31:3 (2008), p. 338.
[102] Steven M. Goode, "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency" *Parameters* 39:4 (2009), p. 46.
[103] Galula, pp. 93-94.
[104] Ibid, p. 32.

civilians and allows insurgents to overtake significant portions of territory. High technologies are dismissed as operationally irrelevant.

Frederick Kagan, perhaps the most well-known critic of the RMA's relevancy to COIN, has argued that transformation and the RMA have weakened the U.S. military's ability to fight insurgencies. Primarily, he feels that transformation has placed considerable strain on the military's ability to deploy large numbers of personnel overseas. In his view, the RMA has caused the U.S. military to ignore key lessons of its past successes and that any temporary advantages gained by the U.S. military due to new technologies will eventually become less relevant over time. Kagan ultimately argues that boots on the ground will always be needed in large numbers to secure strategic objectives and that, in particular, only they will be able to engage in what is required for COIN's successes such as pacification and local reconstruction projects.[105] Other critics of the RMA argue that the RMA is far too focused on conventional enemy forces.[106]

However, despite classical COIN doctrine's almost hegemonic position within strategic studies' discourses, there are some alternative perspectives on the topic. Mainly, the problem with classical COIN doctrine is that its evolution was very much the product of the global environment of the Post-Second World War era. It was primarily designed to pacify Maoist insurgencies fighting under the banner of communism and Maoist thought. However, the insurgencies of the contemporary period, particularly those in Afghanistan and Iraq, do not follow these characteristics.

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[105] Frederick W. Kagan, "A Dangerous Transformation", *The Wall Street Journal* (Nov 12, 2003) Accessed June 12, 2013, http://online.wsj.com/newarticles/SB122729758616448641?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB122729758616448641.html.
[106] Benbow, "Talking 'Bout Our Generation?", p. 148-149.

Classical COIN doctrine was also forged in de-colonialization conflicts by both British officers and colonial bureaucrats. These individuals were able to utilize the best and brightest of the British civil servants working for the Foreign Office. They, along with their predecessors, had been on the ground for decades learning all the intricacies of local history, culture and language. Often, during outbreaks of insurgency, the British military would be under the subordination of these civil servants.[107] In contrast, U.S.-led military interventions in the contemporary period did not have the luxury of having access to embedded bureaucrats on the ground, who had been there for decades, and so it seems questionable why such a steadfast dedication to a doctrine established in a by-gone era continued.

Another problem with classical COIN doctrine is that it is centered on a very Western and liberal-democratic world view. It presupposes that the civilians in the conflict regions would prefer a Western and liberal democratic world view over one based around orthodox religion or their own political culture.[108] Local populations may come to aggressively resent any attempts by the counter-insurgent to alter their traditional ways of life. Furthermore, the claim made by classical COIN theorists that the 'heavy footprint' approach is necessary to protect civilians is challengeable. Having large numbers of boots on the ground increases the probability of collateral damage. Collateral damage is often associated with airpower, but in reality, it often comes from soldiers living and fighting within civilian populations on the ground.[109]

The Vietnam War (1955-1975)

The Vietnam War is important to the history of American COIN for three reasons. It represents the first significant attempt of the U.S. strategic community to examine COIN

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[107] John Mackinlay, "Is UK Doctrine Relevant to Global Insurgency?", *The RUSI Journal* 152:2 (2007), p. 35.
[108] Luttwak, p. 34.
[109] Daniel Baltrusaitis, "Airpower: The Flip Side of COIN", *Conflict and Security* (2008), p. 31.

intellectually and to attempt to entrench it within military doctrine. It was one of the longest

COIN operations in U.S. military history and the bitter legacy surrounding the end of the conflict

significantly impacted the future of U.S. COIN.

The U.S. strategic community in the 1950s had not focused at all on preparing for COIN

operations. This is evident by the lack of attention to COIN in military field manuals and

academic journals.[110] It was not until 1961, when President Kennedy took a personal interest in

developing U.S. COIN capabilities, that any serious attempt to establish it as a major role of the

army. President Kennedy was responding positively to the changing global environment and the

rise of revolutionary warfare. Under President Kennedy various training procedures and

educational manuals on the subject were developed. Kennedy also felt that the U.S. needed to

counter the threat of Soviet expansion by more than just nuclear deterrence. He correctly

predicted that revolutionary war would be a growing trend, particularly within the Third World,

which would be driven by radical Marxist ideology. Due to this growing threat, the U.S. needed

an effective and 'flexible response' since strategic and tactical nuclear weapons were of little

use. This in turn meant that the military needed to reform in order to meet these new challenges.

These sentiments were echoed by his close strategic advisors, such as Secretary of Defense

Robert S. McNamara.[111]

Globally, the U.S. could not resort to the threat of a nuclear war when faced with a

strategic conundrum due to the potential loss of international credibility should it fail to follow

through with its threats. It had to respond to certain threats, such as revolutions in the third world

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[110] Andrew F. Krepinevich, JR., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltamore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 30-31,46-47.
[111] Martin G. Clemis, "Crafting Non-kinetic Warfare: the Academic-military Nexus in US Counterinsurgency Doctrine", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 20:1 (2009), pp. 161-162.

with irregular means. Washington policy think-tanks, such as RAND,[112] began a discussion over

COIN as a part of this strategy.[113] Kennedy sought to institutionalize COIN and break the

military's obsession with large-scale conventional warfare.

This institutionalization led to specific COIN-centric courses at the Army's Special

Warfare School. The military also began to reach out to the academic community, particularly

the behavioural and social science disciplines. This led to the establishment of the Howze Board

in 1962, which was made up of senior generals and issued a finding that the Army needed to

begin formal COIN training. This board also increased significantly the number of SOF

personnel raising the number from 2300 to 9000 by 1968. These reforms firmly established the

Green Berets as the SOF unit of the Army.[114] Kennedy's influence also saw the formation of the

Military Assistance Training Advisors' course, which was developed to give officers slated to

deploy to Vietnam a crash course in the history of previous COIN campaigns such as the Malaya

Emergency.[115] They were also given some language training. Curiously, the course lacked any

real coverage of local Vietnamese history or cultural customs and initially, it was plagued by

poor-quality instruction. Other than this specialized class, the majority of officer education

remained focused on conventional warfare preparation. The infantry officer's basic course barely

covered COIN at all, and it was not until 1965, when out of pure necessity, this changed. By

then, large numbers of infantry were being deployed to the Vietnamese theatre.[116]

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[112] RAND is a non-profit, and highly influential think-tank that has dedicated several major studies from the 1950s to present day on the practice of COIN and the U.S. experience with it.

[113] William S. Turley, *The Second Indochina War: A Concise Political and Military History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2009), pp. 59-60.

[114] William P. Yarborough, "Counterinsurgency: The U.S. Role – Past, Present and Future" In Richard H. Shultz, Jr., et al, eds., *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 104.

[115] The Malaya Emergency was a war fought between the British military and the communist insurgent group, the Malayan National Liberation Army 1948-1960.

[116] Krepinevich, pp. 48-49.

When the Kennedy Administration and its strategic advisors drafted a new policy that called for the U.S. military to shift part of its attention to developing responses to nonconventional military engagements, there was a very harsh reaction to it from senior Army officials. John Nagal argues that the strong presence of institutional culture in the Army prevented any meaningful doctrinal innovations that could have led to a more efficient COIN campaign in Vietnam. The Army had deeply entrenched views on how conflicts should be waged.[117] In particular, this view was strongly held by Kennedy's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), who felt this shift in focus was unwarranted. The Chairman of the JCS, General Lyman Lemnitzer, even went so far as to challenge the President's position by leaking a story to the press about the JCS concerns about the matter.[118]

It is important to note that such attitudes are not simply the product of a conservative military culture. In the view of the U.S. strategic community, primarily its senior generals, insurgency was not a unique form of conflict and so it could be dealt with using the same strategies and tactics that had defeated previous U.S. enemies, such as the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War. If the Army was capable of such monumental tasks then, in their view, surely doctrinal change did not need to occur, nor was there any need to find a technical or mechanical breakthrough.[119] The Army did not require new solutions since in their opinion there was no problem to fix.

The early U.S. military advisors to South Vietnam sought to recreate its military based on the U.S. Army model. This placed their main focus on preparing for conventional, rather than insurgent engagements. This prevented the South from forming paramilitary units that could

[117] John A. Nagal, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 117.
[118] Ibid, p.124.
[119] Krepinevich, p. 37.

have been particularly useful in the more rural regions of the country. By 1964, the insurgency

problem in South Vietnam had worsened considerably. Terror strikes were still carried out on a

routine basis. President Kennedy had been assassinated the previous year and thus the strongest

advocate of reshaping the U.S. military to take on a more COIN minded perspective was gone.[120]

The size of the Vietnamese insurgency began to increase at a relatively rapid pace with 99 000

new members in the 1961-1964 period. Initially, the structure of this insurgency was a series of

individual units that were around the size of the average army platoon. The command structure

was headed by the local provincial communist party officials. However, as time went on, and the

new recruits became veterans and gained notable combat experience, the insurgency began to

shift into a more organized fashion. These small platoons began to grow into near regimental

sized organizations.[121]

Insurgency was almost embedded within the culture of the Vietnamese people. The main

agricultural production in the region was wet rice farming, which required close knit cooperation

amongst rural citizens. Throughout its history, when facing invasion, these farmers would band

together and utilize their country's naturally foreboding terrain in an attrition strategy against any

foreign invaders. These farmers, knowing their organisational and material limitations, avoided

direct confrontations with invaders and essentially relied on mobile guerrilla tactics.[122]

In 1964, it seemed as if the Viet Cong might threaten to overrun Saigon. The U.S.

military leadership, in particular General Westmoreland, the senior commander, was confident

that their technological superiority, in terms of firepower and mobility, would allow them to turn

the tide of the war relatively swiftly. Westmoreland's primary COIN strategy was to focus the

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[120] Nagl, pp. 120 -121, 137.
[121] Turley, p. 63.
[122] Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 146.

majority of U.S. troops in offensive minded operations, and then to mass, or in his terms, 'pile on' forces where the enemy forces were located. They would then, in theory, be obliterated by the U.S.' significant firepower advantage. In the view of U.S. commanders, the Viet Cong were not supposed to have any effective response to the artillery and airstrikes.[123] Westmoreland's attrition strategy was based on the notion that, due to the U.S.' superior firepower, they would be able to kill more Communist troops than could be recruited to replace them, and thus, the enemy forces would eventually collapse. U.S. commanders measured the effectiveness of these engagements by the number of enemy troops killed per battle (body count).[124]

The attrition approach in Vietnam was very much the product of U.S. strategic culture. It focused on finding a technical solution to the insurgency problem. The mass application of firepower maximized insurgent casualties while minimizing U.S. ones. Andrew Krepinevich observes, "the Army's attrition strategy was nothing more than the natural outgrowth of its organizational recipe for success – playing to America's strong suits, material abundance and technological superiority".[125] The attrition based COIN efforts did achieve several key short term goals and primarily prevented the collapse of the South's civilian government. This prevented the insurgency from gaining control over any major urban centre in the South, disrupted several key supply lines and, in general, blocked them from gaining any real offensive momentum. However, it did not achieve a total victory, and it became clear that more efforts were needed to end the conflict on favourable terms.[126]

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[123] Nagl, pp. 151-154.
[124] Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 238.
[125] Krepinevich, pp. 196-197.
[126] Dale Andrade, "Westmoreland was right: learning the wrong lessons from the Vietnam War", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19:2 (2008), p. 161.

Krepinevich argues that the attrition strategy failed to focus on a major tenant of traditional COIN approaches, which is the connection between insurgents and its centre of gravity, the population. Large numbers of insurgents were killed, but their link to the population was never severed. The U.S. also did not apply its resources well. It should have directed more of its troops to pacification programs to prevent insurgents from returning to areas once they were cleared.[127] However, it is important to note that a central problem that plagued U.S. COIN efforts in Vietnam was the dual nature of the conflict. Aside from the insurgency aspects, there was also a large scale conventional war occurring as large North Vietnamese regular units became engaged. If U.S. commanders had structured its ground forces since a series of small company sized units that could go out and live with the Vietnamese peasantry, as advocated by some COIN theorists, they would have risked being attacked and overwhelmed by the North's conventional forces.[128]

U.S. commanders on the ground were very aware that there were two threats: the conventional and the insurgency. In Westmoreland's view, conventional North Vietnamese forces posed the greatest danger to the stability of the South. If he had focused solely on attempting to pacify the insurgency, since he was severely criticised for by many post-conflict observers, it could have led to further problems relating to the conventional threats. This was a matter of proportionality. Insurgents were a very real threat, but due to their asymmetric nature, it would take them a notably longer time to destabilize and annex the South compared to their conventional counterparts.[129]

Efforts that attempted to follow population centric approaches to COIN, such as the Strategic Hamlet program did not meet with much success. The Hamlet program, which was

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[127] Krepinevich, p. 197.
[128] Geraint Huges, "The Cold War and Counter-Insurgency", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 22:1 (2011), p. 151.
[129] Andrade, p. 155.

influenced by earlier U.K. COIN efforts during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960),[130] involved the forced relocation of local villages into fortified hamlets that could be more easily defended against Viet Cong infiltration and attacks. The aim of this was to create a physical separation between the insurgent and the civilian population. However, due to some poor efforts during the implementation of this program, such as failing to curb the corruption of village officials, led South Vietnamese citizens turning against U.S. COIN efforts. In fact, this program proved to be so unpopular with some villagers that they began to aid the insurgency.[131]

SOF was amongst the most underutilized aspects of the U.S. military during the war in Vietnam, despite achieving some of the most noticeable successes. This was first seen during their operations in the Darlac province in 1961, in which local villages were provided with equipment, supplies and training by the SOF, and the two groups in turn, went on to pacify their surrounding areas. By the end of the year, there were forty village success stories in this region. However, senior military officials remained highly sceptical of these operations and would have preferred the SOF to focus on more offensive minded operations. Senior military leadership lacked the intellectual flexibility and foresight to see how these units could be utilized in different ways, other than simply assisting their conventional counterparts. [132]

In particular, SOF was used efficiently in one of the most controversial aspects of the war: the Phoenix Program. The purpose of the program was to reduce dramatically the operational capacity of the insurgency to function normally. It sought to eliminate its key members and suppliers, which would, in turn, severely disrupt its internal infrastructure. It would be false to assume the program was centered on assassination; killing the selected targets

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[130] The Malaya Emergency is viewed as the origin of 'heart and minds' approaches to COIN. Here, the UK military uprooted entire Malayan villages and moved them, often miles away from territory that had been infiltrated by insurgents.
[131] Arreguin-Toft, p. 156.
[132] Nagl, p. 128.

was not the preferred method. Rather, operatives of the program sought to capture individuals which would allow intelligence to be procured from their interrogation. This is reflected by the use of the term "neutralization" rather than "assassination" in official documents. The intelligence gathered from captured individuals proved to be highly useful in providing the U.S. with a blueprint of how the insurgency operated in order to plan further targeted strikes.[133]

It is important to remember that every pacification campaign is not just a discourse on 'hearts and minds' or a series of developmental programs, such as the construction of schools, but it also has a military component. The Phoenix Program was part of the military wing of American pacification efforts in the war. In total, it eliminated 81 740 members of the insurgency, either by killing, capturing or forcing their desertion between 1968-1972. The Phoenix Program also disrupted the Viet Cong's ability to maintain control over civilian centres, and, in particular, their ability to recruit new members or impose their own taxes on civilians in rural villages. It also disrupted their logistical infrastructure and communication lines. General surveys also indicated that in areas where the program was carried out, civilians felt their standard of life had improved, particularly in terms of economic opportunities and their overall sense of personal safety.[134]

Airpower was used widely by the U.S. to pacify the insurgency. It was viewed by senior military commanders as one of their greatest strengths. Airstrikes were used frequently in the South. Almost one quarter of the Southern population lived near an airstrike location and while no firm number has been accumulated yet, it is reasonable to estimate that collateral damage was high. Given the technological limitations of airpower in the 1960s, it was considerably difficult to avoid collateral damage during airstrikes. Precision guided munitions were slowly introduced

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[133] Tal Tovy, "The Theoretical Aspect of Targeted Killings: The Phoenix Program as a Case Study", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 11:4 (2009), pp. 6-7, 13-14.
[134] Ibid, pp. 18-20.

during the very later stages of the war. However, for the duration of the war, bombing was a largely inaccurate process due to a number of factors, such as forests, wind, or the skill of individual pilots. There was virtually no way for a pilot to identify a member of the insurgency over a civilian, even when briefed with intelligence reports prior to the strikes.[135] Furthermore, much of the bombing was strategic in nature. These operations were not very effective against a country with a non-industrialized economy, and proved of little worth when combating an insurgency. The Vietnam bombing campaign also failed to break the will of the insurgents, or the civilian population.[136]

The 1968 Tet Offensive by the Communist insurgents and North Vietnamese conventional forces is often viewed as the beginning of the end of the U.S. intervention. The U.S. was shocked and surprised that they would have been attacked during a ceasefire agreement. The Tet offensive was a massive propaganda victory for the Communist insurgencies. This was, in part, driven by the sheer size of the attacks. The U.S. citizens, media and policy makers had not anticipated that the insurgency was capable of launching such a sizeable operation at this point in the war. It was shocking to them, especially after official U.S. government official statements suggested that victory was in sight. It seemed that the insurgency could not be stopped and that it was able to hit anywhere in the country.[137]

On the ground, the Tet Offensive was a brutal defeat for the insurgency and Communist forces. Large units not destroyed outright by U.S. firepower, were forced to disperse and conceal themselves out of fear of annihilation. The impact of this defeat was felt in Communist central

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[135] Matthew Adam Kocher, et al., "Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War", *Parameters* 55:2 (2011), p. 205.

[136] Sam C. Sarkesian, *America's Foreign Wars: The Counterrevolutionary Past and Lessons for the Future* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 143.

[137] Dominic D. P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 128-129.

command, where a decision emerged that they would no longer seek to engage in any large scale offensives against American forces due to their obvious futility. As a result North Vietnamese commanders felt that they needed to revert to a more insurgent focused approach in order to regroup their forces.[138] The offensive had also exposed much of their intelligence networks within the South, including the names of their spies. These individuals were then rounded up and sought after by the Southern Vietnamese security services. This devastated the offensive capabilities of the Viet Cong insurgency and the North Vietnamese conventional forces, the majority of whom needed to withdraw from the south and reform near the Cambodian border, which then allowed them to take a more defensive stance against U.S. counterattacks.[139]

The way the Vietnam War ended is a contradiction. On one level, it could be interpreted as a clear tactical military victory for the U.S. Every logistical feat the military undertook during this endeavour was a success. The North Vietnamese were unable to defeat the U.S. military on the field of battle. They simply did not have the capacity or the resources to do so. Yet, on a strategic level, it was clear that it was a victory for the Communists.[140] This confusing and contradictory ending helped to foster a bitter legacy for the war which significantly came to influence the way COIN was perceived by both the military, general public and civilian politicians.

The legacy of the war became firmly entrenched within American culture, as reflected in the significant amounts of scholarly and political attention dedicated to analyzing the conflict, and also within pop-culture with the many Hollywood films that were made about the war.[141]

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[138] Andrade, pp. 166-167.
[139] Johnson and Tierney, p. 144.
[140] Harry G. Summers, JR., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute 1981), p. 1.
[141] Some examples include, The Deer Hunter (1978), Platoon (1986), Full Metal Jacket (1987), Born on the Fourth of July (1989).

Much of this legacy took a relatively negative view of the U.S. experience. Senior politicians and military commanders of the war period were vilified by the popular media and press.[142] A cultural shift in the U.S. strategic community occurred that brought about a change in attitude towards foreign interventions.[143] The legacy of the outcome of the Vietnam War had a lasting impact on U.S. policy makers in the form of the 'Vietnam syndrome', which largely dampened any enthusiasm for COIN within the military, or even the wider civilian political community.[144]

The war had, in many ways, been a laboratory for testing and implementing COIN techniques. However, in the wake of the war, there was next to no political or even popular support for extended ground wars. Those within the military who remained supportive of practising COIN muzzled themselves and did little to argue against the wider narrative at the time that the U.S. military had no business participating in any COIN campaigns as such participation would likely lead to failure. These attitudes led to the number of SOF personnel being cut significantly.[145]

The large, anti-war movement also helped to foster an uneasy and resentful attitude towards the end of the war. These activists were very vocal in their criticisms which were directed against the military and the government.[146] Many civilians aggressively opposed the draft; they feared being sent overseas. They also developed negative feelings towards the war due to the human costs of Vietnamese civilians and to the number of U.S. casualties. Gil Merom observes that "there can be little doubt that domestic pressure, often of expedient origins, had a

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[142] James J. Wirtz, "The "Unlessons" of Vietnam", *Defense Analysis* 17:1, (2001), p. 44-46.

[143] Hoffman, p. 920.

[144] The term originated from a Ronald Regan Presidential campaign speech, refers to the general malaise towards military intervention following the Vietnam War – Ronald Regan, "Peace: Restoring the Margin of Safety", (Speech at VFW Convention, Chicago August 18, 1980), http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/8.18.80.html.

[145] William P. Yarborough, "Counterinsurgency: The U.S. Role – Past, Present and Future" in Richard H. Shultz, Jr., et al, eds., *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), pp. 107-108.

[146] Huges, p. 151.

detrimental effect on the capacity of the United States to fight in Vietnam, let alone win the war".[147]

The Vietnam War holds a complex position in U.S. military history. Despite President Kennedy's best efforts, the U.S. strategic community's central failing during this war was to analyze properly insurgency warfare at the doctrinal level. This was an intellectual, rather than practical failure; SOF was underutilized and airpower used too indiscriminately. The military did achieve some notable success at the operational and tactical levels. On the strategic level, it will likely continue to be debated among academics about why and how the U.S. 'lost' the war. What is clear is that the way in which the conflict ended created a toxic legacy for the U.S. military and highly influenced attitudes towards COIN.

FM- 324: A New Beginning?

Following the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. strategic community did not engage in any significant COIN doctrinal reforms based on any lessons learned from the campaign. During the 1990s, the U.S. military intervened in Somalia and the Balkans, yet neither conflict was able to spark any significant doctrinal or intellectual attention to COIN in the U.S. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. and the subsequent beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), one of the central issues in contemporary U.S. foreign and defense policy became how to overcome insurgent challenges.[148] In December 2006, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps published the updated version of its COIN Field Manual (FM-324). This represented the first time since the Vietnam War that a major doctrinal review of COIN occurred. In the introduction to the University of Chicago Press Edition, Sarah Sewall

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[147] Gill Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 237.
[148] Tim Benbow, Talking 'Bout Our Generation?, pp. 148-149.

describes it as being "radical" in nature, and something that will "challenge" traditional American perspectives on war.[149] While an overview of U.S. COIN doctrine was long overdue, FM-324 is not, radical.

This field manual largely approaches COIN from a 'hearts and minds' perspective; an idea that has been a part of the U.K. school of COIN since its emergence during the Malaya and Kenyan Emergencies during the 1950s and was part of the U.S. military's lexicon in Vietnam. FM-324 overwhelmingly ignores the impact of the RMA and transformation on the U.S. military. It seems as if the authors of FM-324 are more interested in turning U.S. soldiers into bureaucrats, social workers, teachers and diplomats, rather than what they are historically trained to do, which is fight the enemy. This is exceedingly problematic, especially in the age of transformation. Transformation is designed for the military to do one thing, while FM-324 expects the military to do something very different entirely. Apparently COIN operations are somewhat 'more political' than conventional combat. This is of course a based on a misguided understanding of the nature of all warfare. As Clausewitz argued, "under all circumstances war is to be regarded not as an independent thing, but as a political instrument".[150] War is always an exceedingly political affair. There is no such thing as an apolitical war, and no war is somehow more political than another. As such this perspective has helped to establish a very problematic focus for U.S. forces in COIN operations.

Most problematic, FM-324 discusses airpower in a mere nine pages out of the nearly four hundred page document.[151] Of those nine pages, five are dedicated to regulating airpower to a supporting role, where it is described as a force multiplier as it gives counter-insurgent forces an

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[149] U.S. Department of the Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual 3-24 (Washington, DC: Chicago University Press, 2007), pp. 1-30.
[150] Car von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 121.
[151] U.S. Department of the Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, pp. 363-372.

advantage in areas that contain harsh terrain. It is acknowledged that it can be used to strike at insurgent targets, but only in certain situations where the chances of collateral damage are minimal. Primarily, airpower can only be primarily used as a means of transport, or to procure intelligence data from surveillance operations.[152]

FM-324 was written strictly as a guide for ground forces, and does not reflect many of the doctrinal innovations that were introduced from RMA thinking, such as unmanned warfare, networking, and jointness. COIN doctrine and defence policy it seems did not match.

Conclusion

Insurgent warfare is exceedingly complex and has evolved overtime. It has become influenced by several different global trends. It has to be quite difficult for Western militaries to overcome. Classical COIN doctrine offers a potential solution in its calls for a 'heavy footprint' approach to fighting insurgencies, with the military focused on protecting civilians from insurgents. This doctrine is centered on the use of ground troops. Classical doctrine also challenges the relevancy of the RMA towards COIN, since its main theorists argue that high technologies can be detrimental to an effective campaign. This perspective is hardly universal, since there are many direct challenges to classical doctrine, such as those who feel it is the product of a by-gone age of the wider socio-economic and political context of the twentieth century and the Cold War.

The U.S. experience in Vietnam is fundamentally important to understanding the country's experience with COIN. During the initial stages of the Vietnam War, the U.S. strategic community made its first very serious attempt to intellectualize COIN. However, it really did not go anywhere. U.S. COIN operations in Vietnam showed mixed results. The

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[152] Ibid, p. 363.

military achieved success on the tactical level. However, strategically the conflict did not end in favour of the U.S. In particular, SOF was underutilized and airpower was used inefficiently.

The bitter way the Vietnam War ended would have a long lasting impact on the Army, politicians, and civilian populations' reluctant attitude towards any future COIN operations. The publication of FM-324 is certainly a step in the right direction in some ways for the U.S. military. However, it has several noticeable flaws, primarily its omission of the influence of the RMA and transformation. This suggests that RMA and transformation clash with classical COIN perspectives.

<center>**Chapter Three:**
Afghanistan and the First Counter-Insurgency Challenge</center>

<center>"A scrimmage in a Border Station-
A canter down some dark defile
Two thousand pounds of education
Drops to a ten-rupee *jezail*
Strike hard who cares – shoot straight who can
The odds are on the cheaper man"[153]</center>

Following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda (AQ), the United States

responded by launching Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and invaded Afghanistan in an

attempt to prevent AQ from continuing to use it as a base of operations by removing the Taliban

from power. U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), intelligence assets and airpower supported

its Afghan allies in destroying the Taliban's military forces and overthrowing their

government.[154] The fall of the Taliban was followed by the outbreak of an insurgency in 2002.

This would represent the first major example of where an' RMA driven military engaged in a

sustained COIN campaign. According to several observers in the academic community and

popular press, the RMA actually hindered COIN operations and this criticism became

exacerbated as the conflict continued.[155] This criticism is driven, in part, by followers of classical

COIN theory who advocate downplaying the role of technology when fighting insurgencies in

favor of embracing population centric engagement.[156]

This chapter explores the relevancy of the RMA and transformation on the COIN

campaign in the rural environment of Afghanistan. It begins by outlining the nature and structure

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[153] Richard Kipling, "Arithmetic on the frontier" in Christopher Hitchen's "Afghanistan's Dangerous Bet", *Vanity Fair* (November 2004) Accessed July 5th, 2013: http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2004/11/hitchens200411.

[154] Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills, Thomas E. Griffith Jr, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model", *International Security* 30:3 (2005/2006), p. 124.

[155] Such as Frederick W. Kagan.

[156] David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1966) , p. 32.

of the Afghan insurgency to help demonstrate the effectiveness of certain RMA influences. It

then examine the broader U.S. COIN campaign paying particularly close attention to the 2009

troop surge and the debate amongst senior policy planners regarding what type of COIN strategy

should be followed by U.S. forces. This debate is centered on whether the U.S. should embrace a

'light footprint' approach to COIN in Afghanistan that utilizes the technologies of the RMA or

whether to engage in a more traditional style COIN campaign, and the troop surge lies at the

heart of this discourse. Next, the specific role that SOF plays is explored. Finally it will analyze

the role of airpower in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) borderlands.[157] The RMA's influence

over the fighting in Afghanistan has clearly demonstrated its relevancy and worth towards COIN

warfare in rural environments.

Terrorists, Ethno-Nationalists and Criminals

Afghanistan is overwhelmingly a rural country, with very few large urban centers. The

insurgents have been pushed out of those few urban centers by the counter-insurgents.[158] In total,

seventy-six percent of the population resides in rural areas.[159] Geographically, most insurgent

activity is centered in the southern and eastern Pashtun regions of the country. There are also

significant, external influences on the insurgency. The Northern regions of Pakistan are used

frequently by insurgents as safe havens.[160]

In some ways, the insurgency follows a classic pattern that was often found in the post-

Second World War period and the emergence of Maoist style guerrilla warfare. In Afghanistan,

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[157] Borderlands are a region that shares cultural, economic, and geographic ties but happens to have a national boundary run through them.

[158] Seth G. Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", *RAND* Counterinsurgency Study Vol. 4 (2008) p. 50.

[159] Matthew Charles Ford, "Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35:2 (2012), p. 123.

[160] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 44.

insurgents moved to the shelter of rural regions and attempted to control the local civilian

population by the use of propaganda and physical violence, while also attacking, whenever

possible, the counter-insurgent security forces and the symbols of their power.[161] Strategically

however, the Taliban are not following a Maoist pattern of protracted war. Rather, they are

attempting to exhaust the Afghan government and survive and outlast the U.S. and coalition

intervention.[162] They are not attempting to destroy directly the national Afghan government or its

U.S. allies in a decisive battle since they realized they lack the capabilities to do so.[163] The

Afghan insurgency can be classified as being 'post-Maoist' in that it is rurally-based. What

differentiates it from the Maoist style insurgencies of the Cold War period is that the Afghan

insurgency lacks true popular support.[164]

The insurgency has undergone several tactical and strategic transitions since the initial

invasion of U.S. forces. The first phase began in 2002 and was focused mostly on conventionally

styled combat and open engagements with coalition forces. The insurgents initially engaged U.S.

forces in open pitched battles involving several hundred fighters at a time, and were quickly

overwhelmed by superior U.S. firepower. In 2003-2004, the second phase began and tactics and

strategy shifted to a more protracted guerrilla pattern. Cross border raids began in the Af-Pak

area. Later, the insurgency began engaging in smaller group attacks, such as ambushes or hit and

runs. The third and current generation of fighters from 2006 onwards, is the most deadly. The

insurgents now gained considerable experience utilizing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

that were the leading cause of U.S. and allied casualties. The latest generation of insurgents are

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[161] Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", p. 50.
[162] Mao's protracted war theory involves the insurgency forming a base of support in the country, building their operational capacity, and once they are able to challenge the counter-insurgent in a conventional battle, then, engage and defeat them in a decisive battle.
[163] Kilcullen, p. 52.
[164] Ford, p. 114.

the best suited for insurgent warfare, and have shifted towards embracing terrorist style attacks.[165] Be it through theory or practice, COIN and counter-terrorism (CT) are inexorably linked. Insurgents will often engage in terrorist actions to help secure their aims, and many terrorist groups will fight in insurgency conflicts. AQ has identified insurgency as a key tool to assist in its wider political agenda.[166]

The insurgency in Afghanistan is not a cohesive unified force. Rather, it is a series of networks. It primarily consists of the Taliban, AQ, the Hezb-i-Islami, Haqqani network, various foreign fighters, local warlord militias and criminal gangs. All have a vested interest in seeing the central Afghan government fall. The Taliban, AQ and Haqqani network are the most prominent groups.[167] The insurgency is also split into two general camps. One is focused on pan-Islamicist aims. The second is driven by localized objectives, and is primarily an ethnic Pashtun movement fighting for ethno-nationalist self-determination.[168] The Taliban itself is not a singular entity, but rather a collective of several loosely aligned networks. Many of these networks do not follow the fundamentalist-Islamic ideology that is often associated with the term Taliban.[169]

The Taliban insurgency is not the same movement that governed Afghanistan between 1994-2001. It is a very loose amalgamation of various groups drawn together due to their opposition to U.S. intervention and the U.S. backed central government. There is no centralized pyramid style leadership structure. Mullah Omar is amongst its senior leadership; however, he does not hold dominion over the entire insurgency. Various groups are drawn to the banner of

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[165] Kilcullen p. 53.
[166] Daniel L. Byman, "Friends like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism, *International Security*, 31:2 (Autumn, 2006), pp. 84-85.
[167] Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", p. 1.
[168] Shehzad H Qazi, "The 'Neo-Taliban' and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", *Third World Quarterly* 31:3 (2010), p. 1.
[169] Matthew Hoh et al., "New Way Forward: Rethinking US Strategy in Afghanistan" *Report of the Afghanistan Study Group* (2010). p. 2.

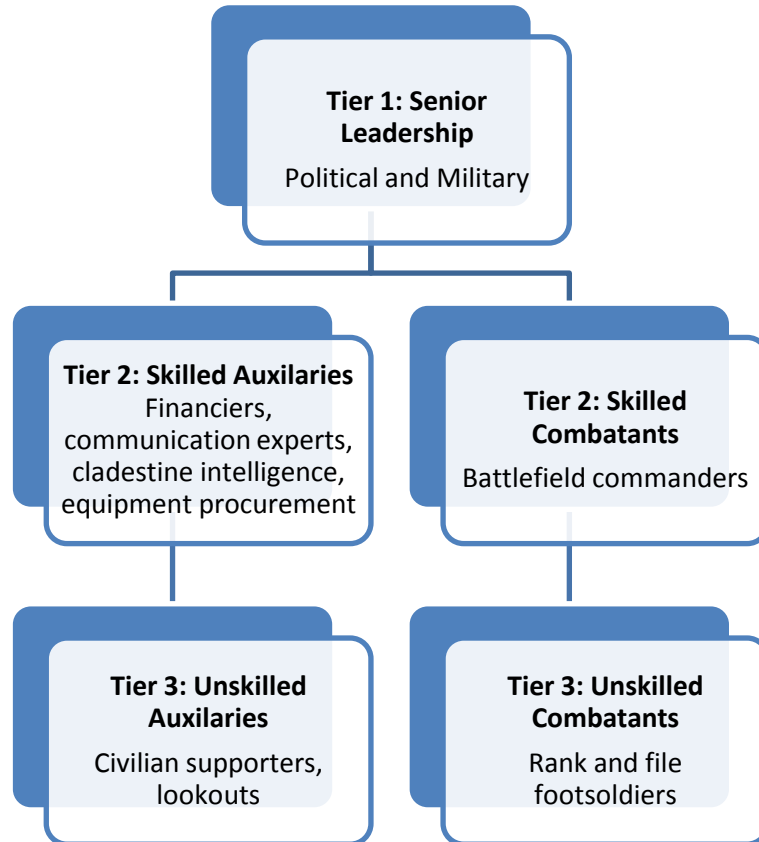the Taliban due to the various imagery and religious connotations associated with the term.[170] There are senior leaders, but they lack direct strategic control over local insurgent units. Senior leaders provide guidance, rather than direct orders to local fighters. Not all insurgents are driven by ideological fervor, including Taliban fighters. Often they are driven into fighting due to physical threats, humiliation, drug addiction and financial benefit.[171]

Although the Afghan insurgency lacks a formal pyramid type structure, it is important to note that not all insurgents are created equally. The insurgency contains different tiers with each level more important than the one which precedes it. Certain insurgents possess important skills that are difficult to replicate. The first tier is represented by senior political and military figures and is skilled at either strategy or manipulating propaganda. The second tier holds tangible skills for the battlefield or the insurgencies' auxiliary service. These include advanced IED-making and veteran field commander experience. The third tier consists of the insurgencies' base supporters who provide minor logistical, tacit consent, and those who serve as foot-soldiers. The first and second tiers are considerably more difficult to replace than those of the third tier.

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[170] Qazi, pp. 486-487.
[171] Peter Dahl Thruelsen, "The Taliban in southern Afghanistan: a localized insurgency with a local objective" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21:2 (2010), p. 264.

Figure 3.1 The Structure of a Networked Insurgency[172]

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   Tier 1: Senior    │
                    │     Leadership      │
                    │                     │
                    │ Political and Military │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
    ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Tier 2: Skilled      │      │  Tier 2: Skilled     │
    │ Auxilaries           │      │  Combatants          │
    │ Financiers,          │      │                      │
    │ communication experts,│      │ Battlefield commanders│
    │ cladestine intelligence,│    └──────────────────────┘
    │ equipment procurement │                 │
    └──────────────────────┘                 │
              │                               │
    ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Tier 3: Unskilled    │      │ Tier 3: Unskilled    │
    │ Auxilaries           │      │ Combatants           │
    │                      │      │                      │
    │ Civilian supporters, │      │ Rank and file        │
    │ lookouts             │      │ footsoldiers         │
    └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
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COIN in Afghanistan

While serving President Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld initially wanted lower levels of ground forces in Afghanistan to avoid disrupting the lives of the locals too much. He had examined the previous experience and significant difficulties that the Soviet Union faced during its COIN experience in the country, and felt that a different approach was needed. The Soviets had deployed large numbers of troops and were met with fierce resistance from local Afghans and foreign fighters who viewed them as imperialist invaders.[173] The 1979 Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation devastated the country, killed over a million Afghans and

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[172] Figure 1.1 is the amalgamation of information from Thruelsen, pp. 270-272 and U.S. Department of the Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, pp. 20-22.
[173] Robert M. Cassidy, "The Afghanistan Choice", *The RUSI Journal* 155:4 (2010), p. 40.

turned 40 percent of the country's population into refugees while utterly destroying what little infrastructure existed. This was followed by horrific infighting amongst various factions of the anti-Soviet Mujahedeen fighters. This was clearly not something the U.S. wished to repeat.[174] David Kilcullen argues that the U.S. strategic approach was subsequently applied in Afghanistan to use an "economy of force", in part due to its large manpower, and financial commitment to Iraq. In the period between 2003-2008, the U.S. spent 445.7 billion dollars more in Iraq than it had spent in Afghanistan in 2001-2008.[175]

The overall U.S. COIN strategy was focused on achieving two goals. The first was to build the capacity of the national government to handle its own security operations. The second was to maintain only a 'light footprint' in the country, which involved keeping troop deployments at comparably low levels.[176] This would allow the U.S. military to reduce its number of casualties, and avoid being viewed by the local population as an occupying power, which could potentially inflame anti-American sentiments. This was achieved by using Afghan forces, such as the Northern Alliance troops, as the main ground force. It was concluded that U.S. airpower and other technological assets would allow U.S. forces to compensate for the absence of significant numbers of boots on the ground. The initial successes during OEF, and avoidance of any large scale ground force mobilization in favor of relying on SOF and airpower, helped to justify Rumsfeld's strategic approach. OEF was the epitome of the triumph of the RMA in practice given its blending of SOF, airpower, and precision strikes.[177] This is a reversal of the dominant COIN approach of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era, where SOF was

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[174] Terry Terriff, Aaron Karp and Regina Karp, *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating fourth-generation warfare* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 133-135.
[175] Kilcullen, p. 41.
[176] Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", pp. 88-89.
[177] Ehsan Ahrari, "Transformation of America's Military and Asymmetric War", *Comparative Strategy* 29:3 (2010) p. 230

merely on the periphery and a clear emphasis was placed on engaging insurgents with

conventional forces. The RMA, it seemed, was ushering in a new era of COIN practice by

demonstrating that a 'light footprint' approach could be used effectively to quell insurgencies.

However, this new trend was met with significant criticisms. Some observers were highly

critical of the Bush Administration's handling of Afghanistan in the period between 2001-2007.

The most common criticism leveled was that President Bush and Rumsfeld had failed to place

enough conventional troops on the ground. This line of thought stems from classical population

centric approaches to COIN, and tended to ignore or significantly downplay the role that SOF

and RMA related technologies had played during initial COIN efforts after the Taliban

government fall.[178]

It was a general perception among scholars and observers that, at the start of the Obama

Administration's first term in office, Afghanistan was heading towards disorder and that the U.S.

lacked a proper, structured plan as to how to complete the pacification of the country. After the

2009 Afghan national elections, the insurgency appeared to continue to gain momentum.[179] The

perception of the Afghan situation at this time was that the Taliban insurgency was making

notable gains due to the number of prominent attacks, including some which occurred within the

capital of Kabul.[180]

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[178] Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban: How to Win in Afghanistan", *Foreign Affairs* 88:4 (2009), p. 34
[179] C. Christine Fair, "Clear, Hold, Transfer": Can Obama's Afghan Strategy Work?", *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 37:3 (2010) pp. 113-114
[180] Christia and Semple, p. 34

Figure 3.2 Number of Afghanistan Insurgent Attacks 2004-2011[181]
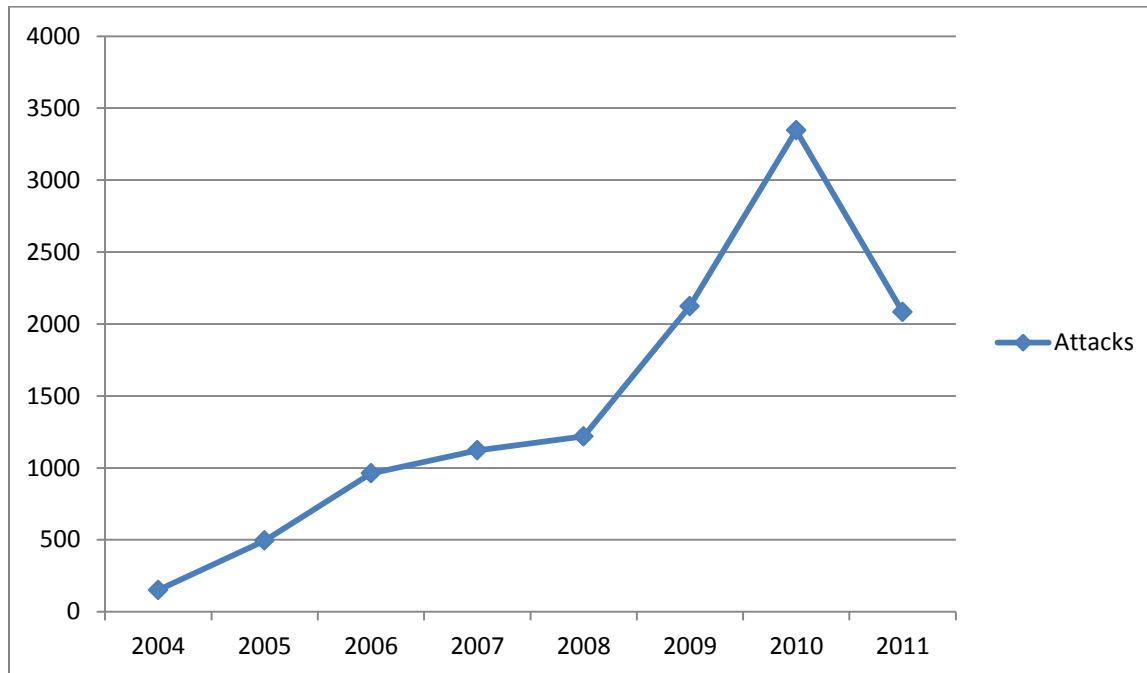
In August 2009, spurred on by the 2007 troop surge in Iraq, General Stanley McChrystal,

the commanding General of Coalition forces in Afghanistan, called for a further 40 000 ground

troops to be deployed to Afghanistan. The rationale for this move was to allow the U.S. to

protect Afghan civilian centres from insurgent strikes and allow the national Afghan military to

continue to build its operational capacity. This surge followed a traditional population centric

approach to COIN, and goes against the principles and influence associated with the RMA.[182]

President Obama announced his support for General McChrystal's plan in December 2009.[183]

However, Obama would not send the full number of troops requested by General McChrystal.

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[181] Data taken from - Anthony H. Cordesman and Arleigh A. Burke, "Afghanistan: The Failed metrics of Ten Years of War", *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (2012) Accessed March 2, 2014 https://csis.org/files/publication/120209_Afghanistan_Failed_Metrics.pdf - it should be noted that ISAF no longer releases data from beyond the early months of 2012.

[182] Riaz Mohammad Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernityn* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2011), pp. 151-152.

[183] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in

The Obama Administration's new COIN strategy was marketed to the general public as 'Clear Hold Build'. 'Clear' is the tactical offensive stage designed to destroy local insurgent forces; 'Hold' is to protect the civilian population from insurgent reprisals and create a clear physical separation between them and civilians. 'Build' refers to the various economic and social development and stabilization programs associated with winning 'hearts and minds'. The notion of 'Clear Hold Build' seems to be heavily influenced by the U.K school of COIN and its population centric approach.[184] The Obama Administration's approach to COIN in Afghanistan has also been referred to as 'Clear, Hold, Build and Transfer'. The general idea is to pass on security responsibilities to the Afghan government, allowing the U.S. to withdraw.[185]

The general perception emerged among U.S. observers that the RMA and transformation was detrimental to U.S. COIN efforts in the country. The Bush and Obama Administrations seem to have contradictory views on the role of the RMA in COIN, and what the appropriate response should be to the problems posed by the Afghan insurgency. The Obama Administration, at a glance, seemed to be reverting back to the Vietnam era sentiment that favoured conventional ground troops since the prominent means to deal with insurgencies. However, things are not always as they appear.

During the speech at West Point when President Obama announced the Afghan troop surge to "protect key population centres", he announced in the same sentence their withdrawal after only 18 months.[186] Historian Niall Fergusson points out the very noticeable issue with having such a brief timeline for change. He writes, "A U.S. President who says he will deploy 30

Afghanistan and Pakistan", (Speech at the Eisenhower Hall Theater, United States Military Academy at West Point, West Point, New York, December 1, 2009) http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan.
[184] Thruelsen, pp. 261-262.
[185] Fair, pp. 115.
[186] Obama. "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan".

000 additional troops to Afghanistan and then, in 18 months' time, start withdrawing them again already has something of a credibility problem".[187] The Obama Administration's new policy towards the surge and COIN seemed self-defeating. In principle it appeared to be a move towards a classical population-centric approach to COIN. However, the surge was tied to a timeline of withdrawal which severely hampered its effectiveness. Insurgents are often successful in protracted conflicts by simply outlasting and surviving the counter-insurgents efforts'.

Based on the doctrine set by FM 3-24, which advised counter-insurgents to follow a troop to civilian ratio of around 25:1000, the U.S. should have had 445 000 – 575 000 boots on the ground. However, at its peak deployment, there were only slightly more than 100 000 actually deployed. The troop deployments of NATO allies raised the number to around 140 000. In short, the U.S. lacked the appropriate number of boots on the ground to engage in a successful population centric COIN campaign. The Taliban was also able to blend in with the local civilian populations and the U.S. troops lacked the numbers to push them out.[188]

The U.S. troop drawdown in Afghanistan was initiated in July 2011.[189] As of January 2014, there are currently 37 500 U.S. personnel remaining, and the Obama Administration is contemplating reducing the number further between 8 000-12 000. These remaining troops would remain to quell any resurgent Islamic-extremist terrorist group activity and prevent AQA from returning to the region.[190] It is clear that the Obama Administration has no long term plans

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[187] Niall Ferguson, "Complexity and Collapse", Foreign Affairs (2010) Accessed
July 14th, 2013 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65987/niall-ferguson/complexity-and-collapse.
[188] Fair, pp. 116-117.
[189] Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.) Andrew Exum and Matthew Irvine, "Beyond
Afghanistan: A Regional Security Strategy for South and Central Asia" *Centre for New American Security*, (June 2011), p. 10.
[190] Jackie Calmes and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Military Eyes Afghan Force of 10, 000, or a Pullout", *The New York Times*, (Jan 21, 2014) Accessed Feb 1, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/22/world/asia/military-eyes-afghan-force-of-10000-or-a-pullout.html?_r=0.

to pursue a population centric approach to COIN in Afghanistan, and is reverting back to a 'light footprint' involvement.

Figure 3.3 U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan 2001-2013[191]
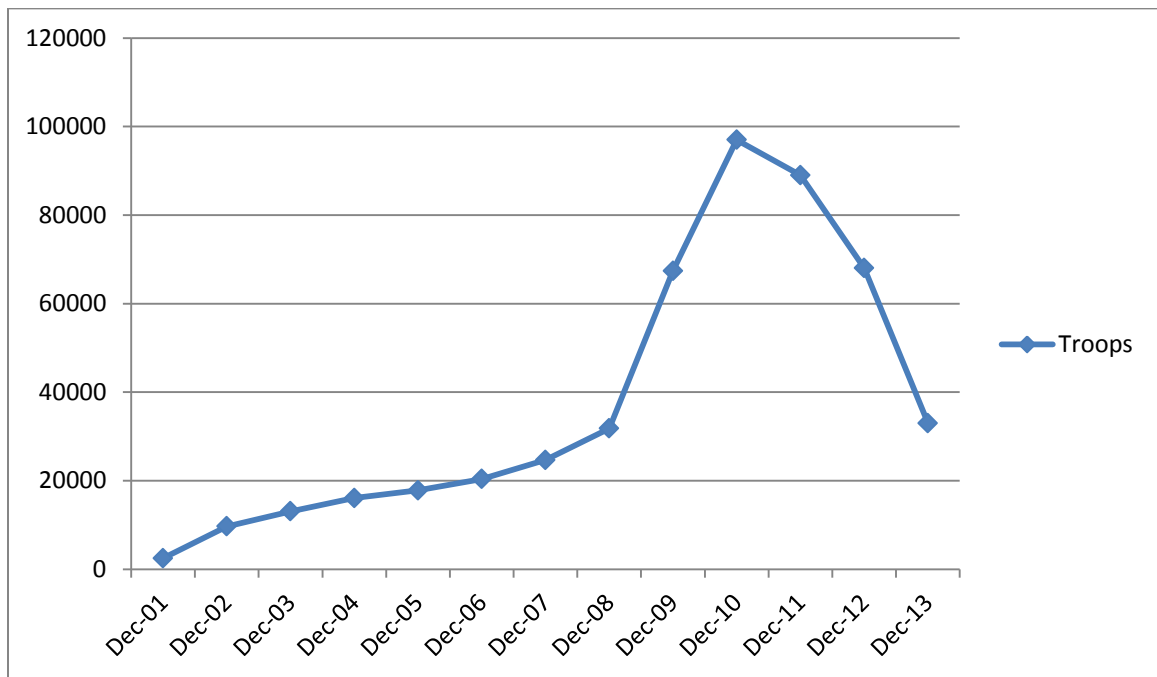
By September of 2012, the U.S. had withdrawn all 33 000 personnel that had been deployed as part of President Obama's troop surge. U.S. military commanders felt it was an important move that allowed local Afghan security forces to increase their role. However, they also admitted that violence levels had not decreased overall during the surge period.[192]

Even supporters of the surge, such as Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, generally acknowledge that it was unlikely the surge would achieve a desired political outcome for the

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[191] Data taken from, "American Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, (Oct 21, 2011), Accessed Dec 05, 2013 http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/10/21/world/asia/american-forces-in-iraq-and-afghanistan.html.

[192] Rod Nordland, "Troop 'Surge' in Afghanistan Ends with Mixed Results", *New York Times* (September 21 2012) Accessed July 04, 2013http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/22/world/asia/us-troop-surge-in-afghanistan-ends.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

conflict.[193] Furthermore, there have been a large number of civilian casualties in the Afghan war due to the effects of collateral damage. This runs counter to the traditional doctrine of 'hearts and minds' approaches to COIN, which dictates that the main priority of counter-insurgent forces should aim to protect civilians from harm.[194]

The troop surge of 2009-2010 hardly represents a complete embrace of a 'heavy footprint' approach to COIN in Afghanistan. There were not enough troops deployed, they were given too short an operational timeline and ultimately, their results were, at best, mixed. In reality the Obama Administration became every bit a defender as Rumsfeld of the RMA's impact on COIN.

Shadow Warriors

At its peak of the troop surge, there were only around six thousand SOF personnel deployed to Afghanistan. SOF undertook two primary roles. The first the direct approach, involved directly targeting the insurgency. The second role was indirect. This has SOF personnel integrated with local security forces and attempted to increase their readiness and operational capacity by training their counterparts in the Afghan national security forces. Other indirect roles involved SOF personnel spending large amounts of time with village elders which enabled them to form key partnerships which could then be used to further important strategic aims. In these local villages, SOF members often acted as dispute mediators, and worked in other promotional activities, such as building water wells.[195] SOF and their 'light footprint' allowed the U.S. to raid areas that were culturally sensitive with greater ease than if they had attempted similar operations

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[193] Christia and Semple, p. 3.

[194] Lisa Hultman, "COIN and civilian collaterals: patterns of violence in Afghanistan, 2004-2009", *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23:2 (2012), p. 245.

[195] Linda Robinson, "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces", *Council on Foreign Relations*, Special Report No. 66 (2013) pp. 9-12.

with a large group of conventional soldiers. Conventional troops have a slower operational pace

due to their larger numbers, and they often use much heavier equipment such as tanks or other

mechanized combat vehicles. Conventional troops draw far more from local civilians, who feel

their lives and homes are being severely disrupted by their operations.

A small SOF team is able to slip potentially in an out of a village unnoticed and their

unique skill sets often allow them to capture targets without causing a lot of destruction due to

their preference for stealth during operations. SOF units also prove to be, by far, the most

effective integrating with the Afghan National Army (ANA), where SOF would assist in

conducting offensive operations against insurgents and with the procurement of intelligence.[196]

The significance that SOF played in COIN operations in Afghanistan was quickly

realized and acknowledged by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2003. He decentralized

its command structure to allow it to prepare and engage in its own operations with the formation

of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM).[197] The Obama Administration's embrace of the

SOF driven 'kill and capture' campaigns, paired with precision strikes to deal with insurgents, as

opposed to traditional population centric strategies that rely on overwhelming ground forces

helps to demonstrate the relevancy of the RMA in Afghanistan.[198]

The significant growth of the size and importance of the SOCOM with its 'kill and

capture' campaign directed at insurgent leadership, were spearheaded by its Joint Special

Operations Command (JSOC). SOF utilize a variety of technologies for operational success. This

includes the use of considerable signals intelligence capabilities which allow them to possess

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[196] Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan", pp. 92,96
[197] Matthew Johnson, *The Growing Relevance of Special Operations Forces in U.S. Military Strategy*, Comparative Strategy, 25:4 (2006), p. 273.

exponential advantages in surveillance, communications and information analysis capabilities compared to their insurgent opponents.[199]

SOCOM's role in Afghanistan runs counterintuitively to the vast majority of population-centric COIN theory that is focused around 'hearts and minds'. SOCOM operations are often offensive in nature, which runs counter to the traditional approach of protecting the civilian population from insurgents in a more defensive pattern. Furthermore, SOCOM leaves a 'light footprint' in terms of manpower, while traditional COIN theory advocates large scale deployments of ground forces. SOCOM embraced continued investment into related technologies to enhance its electronic intelligence capabilities. As Lindsay observes, "If RMA fantasies were suited only to Soviet hordes in Central Europe or to a replay of the First Gulf War, then we would expect investment to subside after a decade of irregular warfare. Instead, computational networks have grown more robust".[200]

JSOC embodies the RMA doctrine of jointness. It is not structured in a traditional pyramid style command. Rather various elite units are linked together via an innovative joint command. In practice, it is quasi-autonomous and decentralized in its operations where informational and intelligence sharing is made with ease. JSOC is highly technologically driven. Its operations are driven by near real time surveillance and targeting data and this is not possible without advanced networking.[201] Computer networking has played a large role in JSOC's efficiency. Personnel use software to upload intelligence data such as transcripts, images and biometrics that can then be freely accessed by all other members. JSOC is quasi-independent in that it is allowed to draft its own wanted list of suspects and then pursue their capture or

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[199] Jon R Lindsay, "Reinventing the Revolution: Technological Visions, Counterinsurgent Criticisms and the Rise of Special Operations Forces", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36:3 (2013), p. 424.
[200] Ibid, p. 439.
[201] Steve Niva, "Disappearing violence: JSOC and the Pentagon's new cartography of networked warfare", *Security Dialogue* (2013), pp. 191-192.

killing.[202] General Stanley McChrystal, the Commander who called for a troop surge, was incredibly supportive of the influence of this network centric approach to warfare that epitomizes the RMA: "We had to figure out a way to retain our traditional capabilities of professionalism, technology, and, when needed, overwhelming force, while achieving levels of knowledge, speed, precision, and unity of effort that only a network could provide".[203]

In Afghanistan, JSOC became focused on night raids. These raids shifted focus from exclusively targeting important leadership figures, to the 'middle management' or Tier 2 of the insurgency which include those giving logistical support to the insurgency via procuring arms or financing their activities. The raids also occurred with incredible frequency. In 2010 JSOC averaged 600 unique raids per month. The Obama Administration has been highly supportive of JSOC's activities, and has been constantly increasing material support, and the political approval for it to continue its activities in regions like Northern Pakistan.[204] Lindsay echoes just how commonplace the RMA's influence on COIN has become: "The RMA has become business as usual for addressing putatively COIN problems".[205]

JSOC was responsible for one of the most high profile victories of the Afghan War, and perhaps the entire Global War on Terror, with the killing of Osama bin Laden in Abattobad, Pakistan, on May 1, 2011. The raid achieved a clear symbolic achievement, and also captured a significant amount of hard intelligence data that was procured from bin Laden's compound within the heart of Pakistan.[206] Given the exceedingly sensitive, geopolitical location of the bin

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[202] Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, " 'Top Secret America': A look at the military's Joint Special Operations Command", *The Washington Post* (September 2, 2011) Accessed July 12, 2013 http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-09-02/world/35273073_1_navy-seal-joint-special-operations-command-drones.

[203] Stanley A. Mcchrystal, "It Takes a Network", *Foreign Policy* (2011) Accessed: July 14th, 2013 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/22/it_takes_a_network.

[204] Niva, pp. 196-197.

[205] Lindsay, p. 426.

[206] David Ignatius, "How the U.S. found and finished Bin Laden", *Washington Post* (May 02, 2011) Accessed

Laden's compound, this operation could only have been achieved with SOF, since regular ground forces would have been too cumbersome and far too high profile.

The SOF 'kill or capture' campaign in Afghanistan has made a considerable impact on the operational capacity of the insurgents. Despite having a somewhat decentralized structure, terrorist groups, such as AQ, have a difficult time replacing individuals in leadership positions due to the influence of their internal organizational culture. Insurgent groups are incredibly violent and clandestine in nature and this creates clear problems for a smooth transition or succession to occur because of infighting between rivals. The highly secretive nature of an insurgency and terrorist organization places increased pressure on the importance of leadership since individuals at lower levels in the organization lack the formal bureaucratic experience to oversee a smooth transition of power and often potential leaders view internal rivals with suspicion.[207] The internal organizational infrastructure of the Taliban insurgency makes it prone to a 'kill and capture' campaign. The insurgency places great value and prestige on individuals who possess information and secrets, and so commanders are often reluctant to inform their subordinates of information to which they are privy to in order to maintain their own prestige. Secrecy is valued as it is needed to prevent counter-insurgents from gaining intelligence on the activities of the insurgent cell. When a promotion occurs and a Tier 3 insurgent combatant becomes a Tier 2 commander, he must then re-establish all the various information networks of the previous commander. In this period, there is a clear loss of initiative and momentum at the local level of the insurgency. Furthermore, some Tier 3 insurgents have refused leadership

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August 4th, 2013 http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-05-02/opinions/35263485_1_abbottabad-bin-laden-manhunt-assault-on-osama-bin.
[207] Bryan C. Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists" *International Security*, 36:3 (2012*)*, pp. 16-18.

promotions out of fear of becoming a target of the counter-insurgents.[208] These are tangible

results procured by the threat of SOF raids.

SOF play an integral role in securing the relevancy of the RMA in a COIN campaign. In

practice their operations often run counter to most principles advocated by traditional COIN

theorists. They are offensive in nature and play little attention to engaging the civilian

population. They are highly technologically-focused. They manage to achieve considerable

results on the battlefield as seen by the sheer number of raids targeting insurgent groups, or

individual leadership, who, as shown, are actually quite vulnerable to such operations.

AF-PAK

The northern border regions of Pakistan have proved to be a very attractive area of

operations for Afghan insurgents.[209] The daunting geography of the Af-Pak borderlands[210] poses

considerable challenges for any counter-insurgent forces. The mountainous region provides the

various groups of the insurgency with natural protection and cover where new fighters are

trained for combat against coalition forces. The insurgents, particularly AQ, also formed

personal relations with the various tribal networks of the region.[211] In effect, Northern Pakistan is

a "safe haven", as recognized by President Obama: "Al Qaeda has not reemerged in Afghanistan

in the same numbers as before 9/11, but they retain their safe havens along the border".[212]

The Taliban have been using Northern Pakistan as a base of operations since spring of

2002. Initially, Pakistani security services attempted to crack down on AQ members in urban

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[208] Thruelsen, pp. 270-271.
[209] The list of insurgent groups in Af-Pak include: Taliban (Afghanistan, Pakistan), AQ, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Haqqani Network, Tehrik-i-Taliban, and the Tora Bora Military Front.

[211] Cassidy, pp. 38-39.
[212] Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan"

centers; however, those operating in rural areas were left alone, as were the Taliban forces. The

Taliban have taken considerable advantage of the lack of Pakistani control by establishing what

Williams refers to as "a state within a state".[213] The Pakistani military lacks the capabilities and

regional presence to engage in any COIN operations in the Northwestern part of the country. The

territory is too vast, and the insurgents too fierce. Upwards of 80 000 Pakistani troops have been

deployed. However they have become bogged down fighting local militias and have been unable

to deal adequately with the transnational insurgencies of the Taliban and AQ. The large number

of Pakistani troops is necessary because they lack the technological sophistication, and structural

organization to engage in a 'light footprint' approach in the Northern parts of their country. They

lack access to the sophisticated electronic sensors, UAVs or even SOF personnel possessed by

the U.S. military.[214]

Classical COIN theory points out that insurgents will favour international borders if

neighboring states contain sympathetic elements to the insurgent cause. Furthermore, rugged and

hard terrain filled with natural barriers such as mountain ranges also favor the insurgent.[215] Thus,

from a theoretical position, it would seem that the Afghan insurgency has considerable advantage

over the U.S. military given the environment of the Af-Pak borderlands. The borderlands are just

too large and too physically imposing to engage in traditional approaches to COIN. It is nearly

impossible to block this Afghan border area with fences and fortifications. The workable

alternative is to use a flexible airpower response, most commonly in the form of airstrikes from

UAVS more commonly referred to as drones. Robert Cassidy describes UAVs as follows: "the

alternative model to traditional counter-insurgency is one that narrows the effort to lethal

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[213] Brian Glyn Williams, "The CIA's Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan, 2004-2010", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33:10 (2010), p. 873.
[214] Riaz Mohammad Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: *Woodrow Wilson Centre Press*, 2011), pp. 122, 127, 137.
[215] Galula, pp. 35-37.

counter-terrorist strikes by special operations and armed drones to persistently disrupt Al-Qa'ida and other militias and prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a terrorist safe haven".[216]

The drones are primarily used to target insurgent leadership in decapitation strikes and for intelligence gathering.[217] In some ways drones have allowed the U.S. to overcome the troubles with national borders and transnational insurgents. The Pakistani government would be strongly against the deployment of U.S. ground forces on their sovereign territory. It is speculated that they have consented to the use of drones, since they are seen as less intrusive and not as politically inflammatory for Pakistani nationalists due to being 'unmanned'. Drones therefore prevent Pakistan from becoming a complete safe haven.[218] The local tribal networks in the Af-Pak borderlands have begun to be wary of assisting the insurgency out of fear of being caught in a strike. The insurgencies have been forced to abandon the use of key technologies, such as cell phones, due to fears that they will be tracked by counter-insurgents. Furthermore, the new training camps that AQ and the rest of the insurgency had established in the borderlands have been dismantled by choice, as the insurgency is no longer able to train in the open. The safe haven no longer appears to be so safe. The strikes have also led to infighting amongst insurgents as some have been paranoid that other members have become informants for the U.S. Ultimately, the use of drones has reversed much of the momentum the insurgency gained in recent years in the borderlands, and forced them to go on the defensive, rather than offensive, as seen by a decline in their operational activity.[219]

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[216] Cassidy, p. 41.

[217] High profile leaders that have been eliminated as part of these operations or have been captured by SOF include Mullah Dadullah and Abu Liat al-LibKhtar Usmani, Mullah Obaidullah, Mullah Berader, Baitullah Mehsud, Thir Yuldash, and Darim Sedgai.

[218] Megan Smith and James Igoe Walsh, "Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25:2 (2013), p. 312.

[219] Brian Glyn Williams, "The CIA's Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan, 2004-2010", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33:10 (2010), pp. 879-880.

Drone strikes against insurgent leadership produce several tangible results. The insurgency is placed in a position of chaos, due to the difficulty they have during leadership transitions. It also leads to a decrease in violent attacks, since the remaining members of the organization often go into hiding and their ability to coordinate large scale operations becomes particularly difficult. Most importantly, these strikes have deep reaching qualitative results since they create a talent gap within the insurgency. For example, if a drone kills an insurgent cell's most skilled bomb maker, the individual replacing him would likely have less talent for that role and as such the overall effectiveness of the cell is reduced. Precision strike on key insurgents reduces their organization's professionalism.[220] Brian Glyn Williams argues that: "The list of high value Al Qaeda targets assassinated in Pakistan is nothing short of impressive and is clear evidence of the precision of the deadly robotic drones".[221]

Furthermore, the constant threat of drone strikes has taken a psychological toll on many insurgents. They fear meeting in large groups or even many public places such as mosques due to the fear of being killed. Many have even in some cases given up sleeping in buildings, preferring the safety of the outdoors.[222] Leadership vacancies can lead to organizational infighting. This was evident in the Af-Pak borderlands in 2007. Following leadership drone strikes, in-fighting broke out between Taliban fighters in South Waziristan and AQ operatives from the group Islamic Movements of Uzbekistan. In this feud several hundred insurgents were killed. The leadership strikes helped to exacerbate a growing divide between the groups over AQ's killing of so called 'bad Muslims', whereas the Taliban wish to remain focused on fighting

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[220] Alex S. Wilner, "Targeted Killings in Afghanistan: Measuring Coercion and Deterrence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33:4 (2010), p. 312.
[221] Williams, p. 878.
[222] Pir Zubair Shah, "The Drone War: View from the Ground" in Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedmann eds,, *Talibanisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 238.

the U.S and its Allies. Mullah Omar, the Taliban's main leader, could have directly intervened which may have ended the dispute earlier, but decided to rely on intermediaries due to fear of being the target of a drone strike and this noticeably delayed the process.[223]

From the start of the drone strike campaign in 2004 until June 2012, upwards of 2 377 suspected insurgents have been killed.[224] These have almost removed AQ from the region entirely. In 2010 AQ was already down to only 400 veteran fighters remaining in the region.[225] Daniel Baltrusaitis notes that: "The use of airpower in Afghanistan has been highly effective, allowing a NATO presence across the breadth and depth of the country, denying sanctuary to insurgents while insuring a sustained NATO offensive".[226] Ultimately, decapitation strikes may offer U.S. strategists a way to withdraw from Afghanistan, by forcing the insurgency to accept terms that are more favorable to the U.S.[227]

The continuous use of kinetic airpower does not follow the traditional COIN paradigm, which focuses on continuous, direct engagement with local civilian populations in order to create a physical and ideological separation between them and the insurgency. There has been considerable journalistic and academic research dedicated to the impact of drone strikes in North-Western Pakistan, where critics suggest that drone strikes drive the local civilians into supporting the insurgency due to the supposed level of collateral casualties among civilians. Civilians reacting to the death of their kinsmen may be more susceptible to recruitment by insurgents who are using the aftermath of the strikes as a propaganda tool. These critics further assert that, if the U.S. loses public opinion battle with local civilians, they will not be able to

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[223] Wilner, p. 313.
[224] Peter Bergen and Jennifer Rowland, "CIA Drone Strikes and the Taliban" in Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedmann eds,, *Talibanisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 230.
[225] Hoh et al., p. 1.
[226] Daniel Baltrusaitis, "Airpower: The Flip Side of COIN", *Conflict & Security* (2008), p. 90.
[227] Patrick B. Johnston, "Does Decapitation Work?", *International Security* 36:4 (2012), p. 74.

defeat the insurgency, since the insurgent groups rely on local civilians for material supplies and shelter.[228]

However, much of this literature tends to exaggerate the number of civilian casualties and overstates the negative attitudes of the Pakistani civilian population to such drone strikes. Most of these researchers rely on inaccurate local Pakistani journalistic reporting to accumulate their data. Furthermore, other major journalistic coverage of the subject such as *The Guardian, New York Times*, or *Al Jazeera* lack any permanent and reliable presence in the heart of Waziristan, due to the highly volatile nature of the region. In the wake of a drone strike, Taliban forces almost always secure the surrounding area, preventing any investigation in the immediate aftermath.[229] Even if you count every 'unknown' or unidentified person killed by a drone strike as a civilian, the causality rate is still 4:1 in favor of insurgent deaths. When it comes to high value targets, the gap was even larger with a rate of 36:1. In the period between 2004-2010, U.S. drone strikes in northern Pakistan had a considerably lower civilian causality rate than Pakistani ground forces did during their offensive campaigns against the insurgents.[230]

Part of the criticism directed at U.S. drone strikes in the Af-Pak borderlands is that such actions run counter to orthodox COIN theory, which rests on the assumption that they turn local public opinion against the U.S. war effort. However, this is at best a half-truth. Polling data suggests that public opinion in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) regions of Northern Pakistan tend to be overwhelmingly against the U.S. strikes, in particular because of the collateral damage associated with them. The people in the region, however, are not overwhelmingly anti-American, since they view many of the insurgents with great suspicion.

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[228] Matthew Fricker, Avery Plaw, and Brian GlynWilliams, "New Light on the Accuracy of the CIA's Predator Drone Campaign in Pakistan," Terrorism Monitor (The Jamestown Foundation) 8:41 (2010), p. 8.
[229] Farhat Taj, "The year of the drone misinformation", *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 21:3 (2010), p. 529-530.
[230] Fricker, et al, p. 9-11.

These insurgents, particularly those belonging to AQ, are foreign born fighters and thus lack any direct connection to the local population. The insurgents often inflict violence on civilians for refusing to assist them.

Furthermore, it is very difficult to accurately measure Northern Pakistani public opinion on the matter. Although several polls have demonstrated the majority of people in the areas are against the strikes, there are some dissenters. Farhat Taj, who conducted interviews with people living in the FATA tribal regions, observed that, "contrary to the wider public opinion in Pakistan, the people of FATA welcome the drone attacks and want the Americans to continue hitting the FATA-based militants with drones until they have been completely eliminated".[231] Many people in these tribal areas actually prefer drones to more intrusive ground operations from the Pakistani Army and feel they are more accurate and would cause less collateral damage than Pakistani air strikes.[232] The Obama Administration clearly feels that the benefits of the airstrikes to U.S. COIN efforts far outweigh any potential fallout in popular opinion in the Af-Pak borderlands.[233]

The insurgency has been very active developing a propaganda response to the strikes. They lack any basic weapons systems in which to counter U.S. airstrikes, and so they must rely on propaganda to try and dissuade their use.[234] However, a study carried out by Megan Smith and James Walsh indicates that sustained drone strikes have not given the insurgency the ability to increase its propaganda effectiveness. Although the Taliban are an ethno-nationalist Pashtun organization, they have not been able to capture widespread public support amongst their fellow

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[231] Taj, p. 533.
[232] Pir Zubair Shah, "The Drone War: View from the Ground" in Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedmann eds., *Talibanisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 246.
[233] Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, "Afghanistan: How Much is Enough?", *Survival* 51:5 (2009), p. 59.
[234] Daniel Baltrusaitis, "Airpower: The Flip Side of COIN", *Conflict & Security* (2008), p. 90.

Pashtuns, many of whom actually hold considerably negative opinions of them.[235] Brian Glyn Williams observes that "clearly the simplistic paradigm that Predator drones drive Pakistanis into the arms of the militants and infuriates and undermines the Pakistani government needs to be reevaluated".[236]

The kinetic use of airpower, primarily via drone strikes, has been devastating on the structure of insurgent leadership, and has almost eliminated AQ in its entirety in the region. Drones have allowed the U.S. military to overcome one of the major challenges posed by a rural insurgency, which is the ability to use international borderlands that have noticeably rugged terrain as a way to hide from counter-insurgents. Drones have allowed the U.S. to maintain a constant and threatening presence in the borderlands without having to deploy hundreds of thousands of ground forces. This has allowed the U.S. to save considerable amounts of its own blood and treasure.

Conclusion

Ultimately one of the main U.S. strategic interests in the country is to prevent terrorist organizations, such as AQ, from re-establishing it as a base to plan and prepare attacks against the U.S. The U.S. has the ability to achieve this while maintaining a light troop footprint in the region.[237] The Afghan Study Group (ASG), a bipartisan ad hoc research team consisting of academics and bureaucrats recommended that, in the future, the U.S. reduce the number of boots on the ground, contrary to traditional COIN theory and doctrine. The ASG concluded that prolonged presence of large numbers of U.S. ground forces would continue to be a noticeable financial burden for the U.S. government, and would have great difficulty achieving is desired

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[235] Smith and Walsh, p. 325.
[236] Williams, pp. 884-886.
[237] Barno et al, p. 7

aims due to the highly difficult task of nation building in a under-developed country like Afghanistan. Nation building is not normally a military mandate, and it is futile for the U.S. military to attempt to chase this goal. The ASG advocate a 'light footprint' approach be continued that relies on SOF and other non-intrusive weapons systems such as drones. They point out the lack of progress achieved by the brief Afghan troop surge as evidence. The ASG observe that the central objective of the U.S. intervention was the removal of AQ from the region, and that this can be achieved via the use of drones and SOF based on results achieved so far.[238]

The RMA and transformation has made a considerable impact on how the U.S. wages its COIN campaign in the rural environment of Afghanistan. The Afghan insurgency does not follow a traditional structure. There are tiers of different types of insurgents and this causes their organizational structure to remain vulnerable to kinetic targeting from U.S. counter-insurgents using RMA technologies such as precision strikes.

The discussion about U.S. COIN strategy even from within the U.S. government seems muddled. The initial stages of the conflict followed a 'light footprint' approach to COIN, which then seemed to give way to the troop surge of 2009-2010. However, the surge hardly constituted an abandonment of RMA COIN influences, and with the Obama Administration's withdrawal of these surge forces, it remained strongly committed to the RMA influences of SOF and airstrikes via drones. SOF, particularly with JSOC, has engaged in a systematic 'kill-capture' campaign against the insurgency, which has removed several thousand insurgents from the battlefield. The use of airstrikes in the A Af-Pak borderlands has prevented the insurgency from using the region as a reliable safe haven. When put into practice during COIN campaigns such as Afghanistan,

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[238] Hoh et al., pp. 2-5, 10-11

airpower continues to overcome doctrinal bias against its use, by proving time and time again it

is indeed relevant. Clearly, the doctrine is in need of an update.

Chapter Four:
The RMA and the Occupation of Iraq

"Everything in war is very simple but the simplest thing is difficult" [239]

The Iraq War (2003)[240] began when U.S. aircraft bombed Iraqi government and military targets on March 19, 2003. This was the first of the 'shock and awe' strikes that would spearhead the U.S. led coalition's campaign to remove Saddam Hussein from power.[241] This conventional war was a victory of the RMA influenced military. It lasted a mere 26 days, and used an estimated 250 000 coalition soldiers. There were one hundred and twenty-nine Americans killed in action. Furthermore, it cost the American taxpayer $20 billion. In comparison, the First Gulf War (1991) required 500 000 personnel, lasted for 48 days, resulted in 300 soldiers killed in action and cost upwards of $80 billion.[242] However, in 2003 an insurgency eventually developed in the country, and the U.S. military was faced with the uncomfortable challenge of engaging in a long protracted conflict for which it had not planned and had little enthusiasm for fighting.[243]

Some critics of the RMA, such as Michael R. Gordon, have placed the blame for the insurgency at the feet of Rumsfeld's support of transformation. The George W. Bush Administration's steadfast dedication toward speed and technology over mass infantry created more problems than it solved. Gordon bluntly observes that "the high-tech revolution in military affairs is not the answer for stifling insurgencies and certainly cannot compensate for shortages of manpower when borders need to be secured, law and order established in towns and cities, and

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[239]Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard and Peter Paret trans. *On War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 65.

[240] For a broad history of Iraq see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[241] Kalev I Sepp, "From 'shock and awe' to 'hearts and minds': the fall and rise of US counterinsurgency capability in Iraq", *Third World Quarterly* 28:2 (2007), p. 217.

[242] Boot, pp. 43-44, 49-50.

[243] James A. Barker, III., et al., *The Iraq Study Group Report* (Washington, D.C.: Report for Iraq Study Group, 2006), p. 218.

a population protected". [244] In short, the argument is that the RMA and transformation's preference for technology over manpower hampered the effectiveness of the U.S. military's ability to fight insurgencies in Iraq by creating a security vacuum.

This chapter explores the relevancy of the RMA and transformation on the COIN campaign in the urbanized environment of Iraq. The analysis is strictly focused on U.S. military operations, which is largely centered on Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle. Operations in the north of the country are largely not explored because the Kurds were pro-U.S. and the region was relatively stable; therefore there was not much U.S. military activity in the area. The south of the country which includes Basra, and the majority of Iraqi Shiites is not part of the analysis as it was primarily under U.K. military command. It begins by outlining the chaotic structure of the Iraqi insurgency and the urbanized environment, where combat operations primarily occurred, to explain the particular challenges faced by the U.S. military. It then outlines the main problems of the U.S. COIN strategy in Iraq, and demonstrates why those who place the blame for the violence in Iraq on Transformation are misguided. Next it outlines the effectiveness of the RMA and transformation in the operational and tactical levels of battle in Iraq. Finally, the 2007 Troop Surge and the Sunni Awakening will be explored to explain further why proponents of classical COIN theory in Iraq were incorrect in their assessment of the validity of the light footprint approach to COIN. Although there are certain limitations, the RMA has demonstrated its clear relevancy in urbanized environments.

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[244] Michael R. Gordon, "Breaking Point? Iraq and America's Military Forces", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 48:4 (2006), p. 79.

The Urbanized Insurgency

The insurgency in Iraq was highly urbanized and posed several challenges to a transforming military. The chaotic structure of the insurgency poses further challenges. There is no formal hierarchy and the insurgent groups spend considerable efforts engaging in sectarian violence which has the potential to place manpower strains on the military when it is placed into a policing role. David Killcullen summaries up the immense challenge facing the U.S. military in Iraq when he wrties that, , "Iraq is not just an insurgency, It is an insurgency plus a terrorist campaign plus a sectarian civil war, sitting on top of a fragile state within a divided, unstable region".[245]

In a dense urban environment the insurgents had more areas to hide from counter-insurgents than if they were in a rural area. Insurgents prefer using urban environments to launch ambushes or IED attacks. In Iraq, the various insurgent groups viewed cities as objectives that needed to be secured.[246] The majority of insurgent activity occurred in the Sunni Triangle which incorporates the North-Western part of the country and includes such major urban centers as Baghdad, Mosul, Tal Afar, Fallujah and Ramadi.[247]

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[245] Killcullen, p. 152.

[246] Truls Hallberg Tonnessen, "Training on a Battlefield: Iraq as a Training Ground for Global Jihadis", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20:4 (2008), p. 552.

[247] Daniel Gozales, et al., *Networked Forces in Stability Operations: 101st Airborne Division, 3/2 and 1/25 Stryker Brigades in Northern Iraq* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2011), p. 14.

Figure 4.1 The Sunni Triangle[248]

Urban environments pose different challenges for counter-insurgency than do rural ones.

In a city, a soldier on one street may be directly engaging insurgents in kinetic operations, the

next street providing humanitarian aid to civilians, and a few city blocks later might be expected

to operate in a more informal policing role, such as preventing looting or stopping civilians from

participating in revenge killings. It is extremely difficult to have a functioning military that is

capable of dealing with these tasks.[249] Combat in urban environments poses several problems for

modern military forces. The close proximity of clusters of large buildings paired with narrow

streets, with the inevitable mountains of concrete rubble that form in the wake of kinetic

operations places severe strains on unit cohesion, maneuverability and logistical and

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[248] "Map of Iraq", [map]. x2 Visual Scale. *The World Factbook* Washington, DC: Central
Intelligence Agency, 2014, Accessed Feb 1, 2014, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/maps/iz-map.gif.

[249] This is the Marine Corps 'Three Block War' concept - Russell W. Glenn, et al., *"People Make the City",*
Executive Summary: Joint Urban Operations Observations and Insights from Afghanistan and Iraq (Santa Monica:
RAND, 2007), p. 41.

communication lines, as well as reduced situational awareness. The urban environment also reduces the effectiveness of direct-fire weapons and places increased physical and psychological burdens on soldiers constantly fighting in these situations. These complications often require far greater manpower investments, especially when compared to operations in rural environments. Urbanized environments have much higher population densities, and thus require more personnel to pacify.[250]

The first wave of insurgency that impacted Iraq was driven by Baᶜathist and the fanatic ideologues of Saddam Hussein's regime. However, they were eventually neutralized by the U.S. military.[251] Next was a widespread outbreak of Sunni, Shiᶜa and foreign born insurgent activity. The insurgency that emerged was a combination of various groups, cells and militias. The militias were largely localized and were formed after the fall of Baghdad. Some were small and more like neighborhood that gangs aimed to control a couple of streets. Other militias were large, numbering several thousand members and capable of controlling large urban centers.[252] The insurgent cells were often as small as two or three individuals.[253]

There was no overall unifying objective of the insurgency and each group was driven to violence for a unique reason. Criminal gangs emerged, seeking to control local neighborhoods.[254] Some insurgent groups were driven by a sectarian desire to break up the country. In particular there were efforts by some groups to form a Shiᶜa controlled territory in the south. Sunni groups preferred to maintain the national unity of the country, especially since that would allow them to control the country's oil, and by extension, the state. Sunni Arabs were drawn to the insurgency

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[250]Michael Evans, "Lethal Genes: The Urban Military Imperative and Western Strategy in the Early Twenty-First Century", J*ournal of Strategic Studies* 32:4 (2009), pp. 519-523.

[251]Keith L. Shimko, *The Iraq Wars and America's Military Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 21.

[252] Toby Dodge, "The Causes of US Failures in Iraq", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 49:1 (2007) p. 92

[253] Munson, p. 150.

[254] Geraint Hughes, "The Insurgencies in Iraq, 2003-2009: Origins Developments and Prospects", *Defence Studies* 10:01-02 (2010), p. 153.

as a response to the U.S. occupation since there was a perception within this population that the U.S. was going to protect Shi‘a interests.[255]

Insurgent groups need civilian support for manpower, money, and material supplies to flourish, and there were ample amounts of it. In their view the Iraqi national government was merely a collaborative puppet regime of American interests.[256] At the same time, many Sunni insurgent groups were not focused on fighting U.S. forces. Rather, they sought direct confrontation with their Shi‘a counterparts, driven by a desire to spark a sectarian conflict that would have the potential to cement Sunni supremacy in the new state. However, even the various Sunni insurgent groups lacked any true unity. They had differing long term objectives for the future of Iraq. Some supported an Islamicist view of the country, while others did not. Some were former Ba‘athists, seeking to strike back at the U.S. There were also no central leadership figures within the Sunni community.

The insurgency was dominated by Sunni groups until the end of 2005. In February 2006 a budding Iraqi civil war began. On February 22nd, 2006 sectarian violence reached a point of no return with the bombing of the Shi‘a 'Golden Mosque', by AQ which was located in Samarra.[257] The aftermath led to a sharp increase in fighting across the country between Sunni and Shi‘a insurgent groups. Elements of sectarianism had been a part of the insurgency from the beginning, but after 2006, the clear majority of insurgent activity was Iraqi on Iraqi violence

Foreign fighters were drawn to Iraq by the pan-Islamicist objective of creating a new Caliphate in the Middle East. These fighters were not unified under any sort of single command

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[255] Saddam Hussein was a Sunni and he insured they dominated the Iraqi state while he was in power, though Shi‘as represented of the majority of the population. After the fall of Baghdad many Sunni's feared violent reprisals from Shi‘ites.

[256] Bruce R. Pirine and Edward O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006),* (Santa Monica: Rand, 2008), pp. 22, 25.

[257] Shimko, p. 190.

or even a single ideology. They were drawn towards violence and each sought to make political gains to establish an Islamic controlled government, through the creation of chaos and instability in the country.[258] The foreign-born insurgents were generally of a much higher fighting talent level than their local counterparts. These fighters were veterans of other conflicts and had advanced skills in bomb-making, logistical planning and recruiting techniques.[259] The most notorious of the foreign fighters in Iraq belonged to AQ, but who only undertook a relatively small number of insurgent attacks. However, when they did occur they were often very high profile, in that they usually occurred in major city centres and was very deadly. These included attacks on civilians, religious buildings and a variety of political targets. AQ's grand strategy in Iraq involved causing as much chaos as possible within the country, increasing ethnic tensions between Sunni and Shiᶜa through selective bombings, and eventually driving the U.S. from the country.[260] AQ in Iraq was led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. His version of AQ was more of a franchise of the parent organization than one that had a direct hierarchal connection.[261]

Bruce Hoffman observes that, "Iraq is the closest manifestation yet of *netwar*; the concept of warfare involving flatter, more linear networks rather than the pyramidal hierarchies and command and control systems (no matter how primitive) that have governed traditional insurgent organizations".[262] In this sense, Iraq's insurgency is structurally similar to the networked ones in Afghanistan. They are a series of groups with no sense of hierarchy and come into conflict with one another.
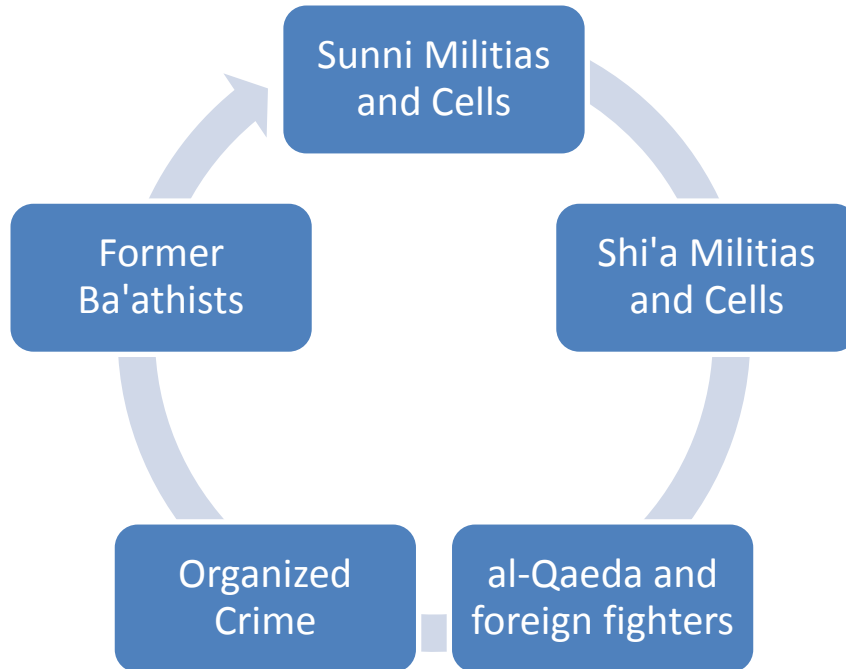
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[258] Munson, pp. 112-115.
[259] Pirine and O'Connell, p. 30.
[260] Barker, et al., p. 4.
[261] Brian Fishman, "After Zarqawi: The dilemmas and future of Al Qaeda in Iraq", *The Washington Quarterly* 29:4 (2006), p. 20.
[262] Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:2 (2006), p. 115.

Figure 4.2 Overview of Iraqi Insurgent Groups

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      The main reason for the deteriorating security situation in the country lies with the de-Baᶜathification campaign and the complete disbandment of the Iraqi security services which utterly handicapped the fragile Iraqi state from providing even the most basic services to its citizenry. After the fall of Baghdad, Lieutenant General Jay Garner was the senior official in charge of the Iraqi reconstruction effort, and his plan was to use the existing Iraqi civil service and security services as the central tools to spearhead the creation of a new Iraqi state. President Bush however, decided to promptly replace him with L. Paul Bremer. Bremer reversed direction, and oversaw a rigorous de-Baᶜathification campaign disbanding the main Iraqi security institutions, including the military due to their close connections to Saddam Hussein's old regime.[263]

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[263] Ehsan Ahrari, "Transformation of America's Military and Asymmetric War", *Comparative Strategy* 29:3 (2010), p. 3.

The de-Ba'athification essentially decapitated the civil service of its senior management and resulted in up to 120 000 people being unemployed. This severely hampered the capacity of the Iraq government to provide services to its citizens and handicapped its future development due to the rapid removal of so much talent, resulting in a loss of institutional memory. When a state's citizenry loses faith in the government's ability to govern, it leads to a fracturing of society. The massive void resulting from the collapsing of the Iraq civil service was soon filled with insurgents and organized crime. The state had lost its authority and capacity to govern.[264]

The Baʿath Party in Iraq numbered almost two million members and was an institution embedded within Iraqi society. Its membership controlled all the key professional, academic, media and civil service positions in the country. Even members of the provisional Iraqi government were wary of the fervor of the de-Baʿathification campaign. It was felt that many people were essentially forced into joining the party and were now being unfairly punished.[265] Bremer's purge of Baʿathists did not just apply to the top echelons of the country's government ministries, but to all levels, including even water infrastructure technicians and some schoolteachers. James P. Pfiffner describes Bremer's work as "far-reaching and draconian".[266] The Iraqi civil service was devastated by an unnecessary and overreaching witch hunt and the state was now having considerable difficulty in providing even the most basic of services to its citizens.

The second part of Bremer's strategy, to cleanse Iraq by dismantling Saddam Hussein's security services, further exacerbated the security situation to a point beyond control of the U.S. and remaining Iraqi security services. The Iraqi national military was a very revered institution

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[264] Dodge, pp. 80, 89.
[265] Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 147-149
[266] James P. Pfiffner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army", *Intelligence and National Security* 25:1 (2010), pp. 77, 79.

within Iraqi society. The totalitarian structure of Iraq under Saddam Hussein had shielded the

public from learning about the various atrocities committed by the security services against the

Kurds and other non-conformist groups, and so their reputation remained fairly positive.[267] The

disbanding of the Iraqi security services placed a further 400 000 people out of work.[268] The

newly unemployed soldiers felt humiliated and alienated from the national Iraqi political process.

They faced the threat of poverty, which not only affected their personal well-being, but also that

of their families. These idle young men soon became angry and resentful of the U.S. presence in

the country and possessed the appropriate talents and access to weaponry to do something about

it. This was the perfect breeding ground for an insurgency.[269] Many former soldiers and officers

were drawn to the insurgency out of a sense of humiliation and unemployment.[270]

Of course certain units had to be removed, which included the Republican Guard. These

units had been the most loyal to Saddam Hussein and had committed some of the worst atrocities

of his regime. However, the majority of the security services were merely professionals and

conscripts dedicated towards national pride and providing protection for the Iraqi people.[271]

Their replacements in the newly recreated Iraqi security forces for the Iraqi provisional

government were unable to carry out properly security operations within the country. They

lacked appropriate training and leadership and were infiltrated by sectarian minded individuals

all of whom hampered their operational effectiveness. Senior policy planners, unfortunately,

continued to try to effect a transition of power to these security services that were clearly

unprepared at the time for the task and were not on par with the Saddam Hussein era forces.[272]

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[267] Allawi, p. 155.
[268] Ibid, p. 157.
[269] Pfiffner, p. 76.
[270] Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq", *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14:3 (2003), pp. 6-7.
[271] Pfiffner, p. 80.
[272] Burton and Nagl, p. 305.

Thus, any attempt to implement a 'light footprint' approach to COIN in Iraq was severely

hampered by a lack of talent within the local security forces.

The Descent into Chaos 2003-2006

As the security situation in Iraq began to worsen following the end of the conventional

fighting, the general scholarly consensus was that the lack of U.S. boots on the ground created a

security vacuum. For the RMA and transformation, this was guilt by association due to the

perceived failure of the 'light footprint' approach in Iraq.[273] This sentiment was even echoed by

President Bush in a televised address to the American people: "Our past efforts to secure

Baghdad failed for two principal reasons: There were not enough Iraqi and American troops to

secure neighborhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents. And there were too

many restrictions on the troops we did have".[274] These sentiments are misguided. The chaos that

threatened to collapse post-Saddam Hussein Iraq into anarchy occurred, not due to the impact of

transformation, but rather, due to two key strategic blunders. The first was that aspects of the

'heavy' and 'light' footprint approaches to COIN were used at the same time, and this proved to

be very ineffective. The second was the de-Baᶜathification campaign paired with the

disbandment of the Iraqi security services.

The U.S. personnel on the ground, during the transition period after the defeat of Saddam

to the start of the insurgency, were uncomfortable with the idea of policing civilians. This was

not something they had prepared for prior to the invasion when their focus was strictly on the

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[273] For some of the most prominent criticism see Fredrick W. Kagan, "Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq" *American Enterprise Institute* (December 2006) Accessed October 1, 2013 http://www.aei.org/files/2007/01/05/20070111_ChoosingVictoryupdated.pdf .

[274] George W. Bush, The New Strategy in Iraq: Primetime Address to the Nation", (Speech at the White House, Washington D.C., January 10, 2007) Accessed Nov 1st, 2013 http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/01.10.07.html.

conventional aspect of the war and the destruction of Saddam Hussein's security forces. As such, there was little intervention in the civilian looting that occurred in the period of quasi-anarchy in Iraqi streets.[275] Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, wanted to lower the U.S. troop presence in Iraq, and did not want several hundred thousand boots on the ground. His long term plan for U.S. involvement in Iraq was a complete troop drawdown. In his view the largest challenge would be the defeat of Saddam Hussein's conventional military, and any reconstruction efforts would require minimal manpower commitments by the U.S. Rumsfeld had no desire to maintain long term military operations in Iraq.[276] War planners also failed to anticipate the potential resentment of the Iraqi civilian population to a sustained large scale presence of U.S. troops who soon became perceived as occupiers rather than as liberators. Steven Metz observes that, "the honeymoon period of universal welcome for coalition forces lasted only a few weeks after the overthrow of Saddam's [Hussein] regime".[277] The U.S. in Iraq were about to face a challenge that would prove far more difficult to overcome than invading the country.

It was not publically acknowledged by the Bush Administration that U.S. forces were facing an insurgency problem until 2004. Despite the emergence of the second stage of the conflict, there lacked an overall COIN strategy among U.S. high command. Some U.S. Army field commanders felt that U.S. policy planners simply had not anticipated the outbreak of an insurgency and thus lacked proper preparation.[278] The reasons for not taking more preventative action against the formation of the Iraqi insurgency in its early stages can be found within domestic political concerns in the U.S.. Insurgencies are, by their nature, protracted in that insurgents avoid open pitched battles, and seek to grind down the counter-insurgents' will to

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[275] Shimko, p. 175.
[276] Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 180.
[277] Steven Metz, "Insurgency and counterinsurgency in Iraq", *The Washington Quarterly* 27:1 (2003), pp. 27-28.
[278] Kaplan, p. 77.

fight in a brutal and long conflict. Insurgencies often require long-term solutions which are unpopular with domestic populations who favor quick solutions in war. When a quick victory cannot be secured, it may imply fault with the planning stages of the conflict which could then reflect poorly on the President's Administration.[279] This was very similar to what had occurred during Vietnam, and this historical parallel was surely in the minds of senior policy officials. Figure 4.3 demonstrates the growing challenge of the insurgency overtime, as the number of insurgent attacks increased steadily until the fall of 2006.

Figure 4.3 Insurgent Attacks Against U.S. Forces and its Allies 2003-2007[280]
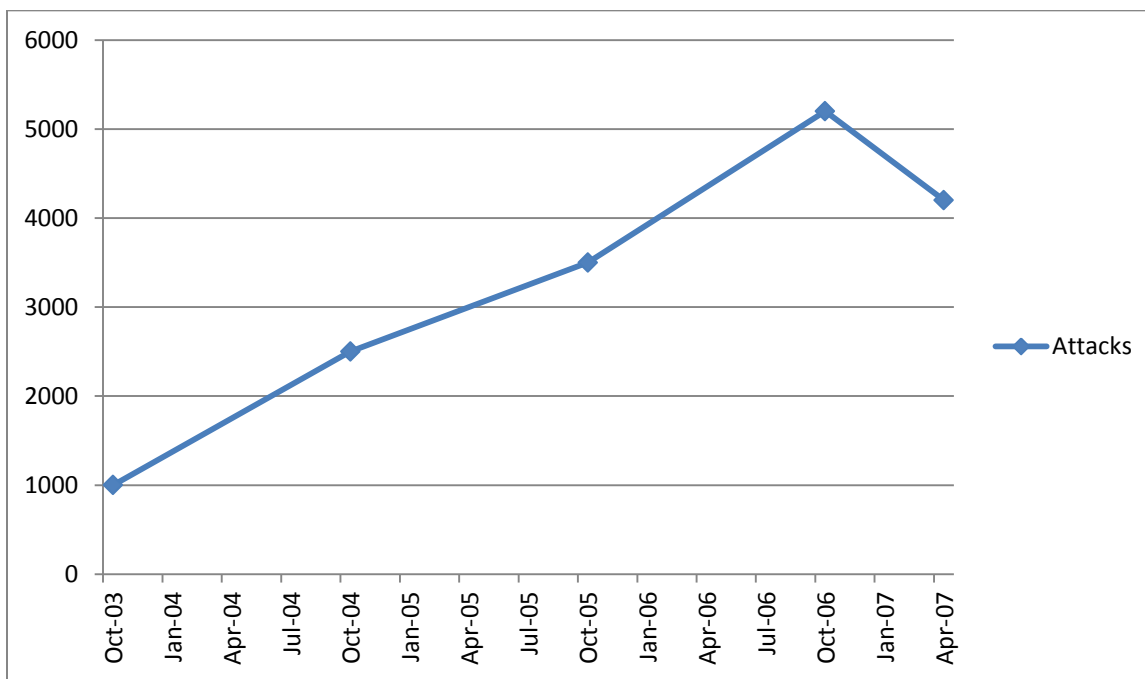
Critics have come to classify U.S. COIN operations during the early stages of the conflict as being part of the 'light footprint' strategy. However, this is only partly accurate. The COIN

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[279] Metz, p. 26.
[280] Data taken from The Brooking Institution, "Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction in Post-Saddam Iraq" *The Brookings Institution* (October 1, 2007), p. 8.

efforts were, in reality, a hybrid between the 'heavy' and 'light' footprint approaches. In 2004, there was an attempt to shift the majority of COIN operations to indigenous Iraqi security forces. However, the entire Iraqi army and security forces such as the police needed to be rebuilt from the ground up, and few in the U.S. military felt that this was an achievable goal, especially as the security situation began to worsen. It seemed that U.S. forces, would have to continue to shoulder the burden of COIN operations.

The 'light footprint' efforts in Iraq during this time have been chastised as being 'war tourism'[281] in that the troops were not properly engaged in the local communities and this caused a reduction in the situational awareness of COIN forces. There was no real relationship formed between Iraqi citizens and U.S. forces, and arguably this led to increased resentment and by extension higher levels of active and tacit support for insurgents from civilians.[282]This lack of local situational awareness was the function of the tactical decisions made by U.S. commanders during this period.

This opinion was not shared by General George W. Casey Jr., the Commanding General of Coalition Forces (June 2004-February 2007). General Casey felt it was the large scale presence of U.S. ground forces, which was exacerbating the worsening security situation in Iraq and the cause of spreading violence.[283] The deployment of large numbers of troops by its very nature is going to provoke an insurgent response. The physical presence of the troops is disruptive to civilians, and the large force structure makes for a large target for insurgents. In some areas, the U.S. forces were attempting to stay out of the way of Iraqi civilians by staying in their Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Yet, in other regions they remained a large and

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[281] The term 'war tourism' is used to describe operations in which soldiers remain embedded in FOBs or with their main garrisons, and do not spend much time interacting with local civilians, or engaging in large scale operations. For more on the term see Shimko's *The Iraq Wars and America's Military Revolution*.
[282] Shimko, pp. 183-185.
[283] Kaplan, p. 181.

physically imposing presence. For example, in 2004, there was nothing 'light' about the First and Second Battles of Fallujah - where over 10 000 U.S. troops fought - major offensive operations. It was if they were trying to have the best of both worlds, but were failing to succeed at either. This demonstrates that U.S. COIN efforts between 2003-2006 were in realty, a hybrid between the 'heavy' and 'light' footprint approaches.

The presence of U.S. forces on Iraqi soil was a very attractive situation for insurgent propagandists. Since the U.S. is the leading Western nation, the propagandists were able to market this conflict as a 'Christian Crusade' against Islamic peoples.[284] This marketing campaign was not only effective within Iraq, but also it was used to recruit foreign fighters from throughout the global Islamic community.[285] Edward Luttwak notes that: "Iraqis will never believe that foreigners are unselfishly expending blood and treasure in order to help them".[286] In order for classical COIN doctrine and the 'heavy footprint' approach to be successful, the counter-insurgency must win over the 'hearts and minds' of local civilians. However, the very presence of large numbers of foreign troops is disruptive to local civilians which directly challenge the presumptions of classical COIN.

The role for the U.S. military in this conflict should be clear. First, it was to focus on disabling the operational capacity of the insurgents, followed by supporting the development of the indigenous Iraqi security services so that they could take over the provision of security for the entire country.[287] Although the troop presence in Iraq was always less than two hundred

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[284] The Crusades remain an incredibly sensitive subject in the wider Middle East. Many Arab people few Western political and military regional interventions with great suspicion as part of their legacy. For the Arab world's view on the legacy of the Crusades see, Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984).

[285] Edward N. Luttwak, "Dead End: Counterinsurgency warfare as military malpractice" *Harper's Magazine* (Feb 2007), pp. 33-35.

[286] Ibid, p. 36.

[287] Brian Burton and John Nagl, "Learning as we go: the US army adapts to counterinsurgency in Iraq, July 204-December-2006", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 19:3 (2008), p. 306.

thousand, it would be disingenuous to describe this as a 'light footprint' approach to COIN. The Bush Administration and senior policy planners failed during its early stages to develop any strategy to deal with a potential outbreak of an insurgency. When the insurgency began to develop, the U.S. attempted to implement a COIN strategy which tried to use elements of the 'heavy' and 'light footprint' approaches.

It is reasonable to suggest that, if the U.S. had employed significant portions of Saddam Hussein's security services to provide the basic policing services for their local communities, the U.S. forces could have concentrated on the insurgency with kinetic operations; a role which they were comfortable handling. The potential for fulltime employment is often more than enough of an incentive to convince young men to embrace conventional living, rather than picking up a rifle to fight against the U.S.[288] The fault of the worsening security situation then lies with two obvious strategic blunders by the Bush Administration and their man on the ground, L. Paul Bremer. Both the de-Baᶜathification campaign and the disbandment of the military created a vast pool of angry, idle young men who proved to be the perfect recruits for the insurgency. These decisions drained the Iraqi government of key talent in its civil and security services that prevented it from providing basic services to its citizenry, which further pushed civilians into the arms of insurgents. This problem was further exacerbated by the lack of any coherent strategy for the transitional period after Saddam Hussein was removed from power.

The Sunni Awakening and the Surge

In 2007, the U.S. added a further 30 000 combat troops to Iraq in order to help quell the growing violence and were primarily deployed within Baghdad. The origins of the 2007 Troop Surge can be found in the halls of the Pentagon where senior policy planners felt that a distinct

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[288] Glenn, et al., p. 42.

shift in strategy would be necessary to help bring about a more favorable outcome to the war.

General Petraeus took advantage of this shifting intellectual paradigm to push for putting the

doctrinal thinking of the newly written USMC and Army Counter-insurgency field manual (FM-

324) into practice.[289] Paula Broadwell, and other observers, such as Frederick Kagan, were

supportive of this move, pointing out that insurgent violence levels were considerably reduced.

Broadwell writes that, "the surge proved to be Petraeus's finest hour as a field general".[290] These

proponents of the surge helped to cement the general perception that the decrease in insurgent

violence level in Iraq is a vindication of classical COIN doctrine. The supporters of the surge

sought to demonstrate that it was not a forgone conclusion that the U.S. military was unable to

engage in a classical COIN strategy due to transformation.

The Iraq Study Group (ISG), a multilateral, bipartisan and interagency working group

was focused on analyzing the Iraq War. It was formed in 2006 in response to the growing

instability within the country, and over concerns that Sunni and Shiᶜa Iraqis were heading

towards a possible civil war. They published a report that focused on potential future approaches

for the U.S. in Iraq. It did not focus on blaming any individuals or organizations for the

deteriorating security situation in the country. One of the key findings of the report was against

increasing the number of U.S. boots on the ground. The ISG argued that the presence of such

forces would simply prevent any type of national reconciliation from occurring. Any decreases in

the levels of violence achieved would only be short-lived.[291]The ISG report stated that,

"sustained increases in U.S. troop levels would not solve the fundamental cause of violence in

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[289] Kaplan, p. 223. The elements of the U.S. strategic community who have called for a full embrace of classical approaches to COIN have become known as "COINdinistas", that invokes the memory of the Sandinistas, an insurgent force of the late 1970s.
[290] Paula Broadwell with Vernon Loeb, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 242.
[291] Barker, III., et al., p. 38.

Iraq, which is the absence of national reconciliation".[292]The ISG maintained that in order for the

U.S. to succeed, the Iraqi people must take the lead in rebuilding their country. Furthermore:

"U.S. forces can help provide stability for a time to enable Iraqi leaders to negotiate political

solutions, but they cannot stop the violence – or even contain it – if there is no underlying

political agreement among Iraqis about the future of their country".[293] The ISG advocated for the

steady drawdown of major U.S. conventional forces in the country, and that the remaining forces

should consist of rapid response, SOF, and intelligence units due to their ability to target the

most dangerous groups of the insurgency, including AQ.[294]

RAND analysts estimated that the U.S. would require upwards of 500 000 to properly

pacify the country based on classical COIN doctrine which calls for a 25:1000 ratio of troops to

civilians. The actual number on the ground was far less than 200 000, even after the troop

surge.[295] Based on the FM-324 ratios, a city the size of Baghdad would require at least 120 000

to pacify, and even after the surge's increase, there were only 85 000 on the ground at its peak.[296]

Furthermore, it was almost entirely focused on just one city and ignored the rest of the country.

[292] Ibid, p. 38.
[293] Ibid, p. 64.
[294] Ibid, pp. 70-71.
[295] Pirine and O'Connell, p. 37.
[296] David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military For Modern Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), p. 129.

Figure 3.4 U.S. Troops Levels in Iraq 2003-2011[297]

The main reason for the decrease of violence was that the U.S. military was able to convince the Sunni tribal leadership that it was in their best strategic interests to partner with it in security operations against AQ and the various foreign insurgent cells. These joint operations first occurred in Anbar in 2005, and thus predated the surge by two years. The tribal leadership felt that these foreign insurgents posed a larger threat to their way of life than did the presence of U.S. troops.[298] This divided the Sunni insurgency and distracted them from striking at U.S. targets. The mainstream Sunni militias who had initially partnered with AQ out of hatred for the central government soon partnered with coalition forces that were viewed as the lesser of two evils. This was spurred on by the extreme violence perpetrated by AQ on local Sunnis.[299]

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[297] Data taken from, "American Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, (Oct 21, 2011), Accessed Dec 05, 2013 http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/10/21/world/asia/american-forces-in-iraq-and-afghanistan.html.
[298] John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: AN Alliance of Incentives", *The Washington Quarterly* 32:1 (2009) pp. 44, 52.
[299] Ucko, p. 126.

The U.S forces were able to identify groups within the insurgency with which it could partner, and rather than fighting them, they sought cooperation. The way the U.S. was able to court these Sunni militia leaders was to take a 'light footprint' approach to security in the area. They allowed these militias to police and protect their own neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the local leaders were drawn to forming an alliance with the U.S. out of a desire to avoid the long term U.S. troop presence in the country. They felt the troops were intrusive and neo-colonial and were far more attracted to supporting U.S. forces if they were only going to be there on a temporary basis. Furthermore, they were willing to offer their services for monetary compensation by the U.S.[300]

This partnering with local forces conjures images of the Afghan Model.[301] It was first applied in Iraq during the conventional fighting in 2003 along the northern part of the country. U.S. SOF and airpower supported local Kurdish militia forces against Iraqi regulars, including veteran Republican Guard divisions. The model was applied in a highly successful way, and the U.S. and local militias were able to smash the conventional Iraqi forces while only deploying an absolute minimal number of U.S. personnel to the combat zone.[302] During the Awakening and Surge, there was a UAV surge to accompany the troop increase, with the number of UAVs in Iraq increasing tenfold in 2007 which vitally increased the situational awareness capacity of the troops being deployed.[303] Furthermore, JSOC played a prominent role during the surge operations where they undertook as in Afghanistan, their kill-capture campaign and increased the number of raids per month and expanded its target focus to include the more radical Shiᶜa

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[300] McCary, pp. 49-50.
[301] Theorized by Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills and Thomas E. Griffith Jr., it argues that indigenous ground troops supported by U.S. airpower, SOF and intelligence assets can prove very efficient at achieving strategic objectives. – see Stephen D. Biddle, "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq", *International Security* 30:3 (2005/2006).
[302] Richard Andres, "The Afghan model in northern Iraq", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29:3 (2006), p. 395.
[303] Shimko, p. 210.

groups.[304] The most effective COIN efforts, it seems in Iraq, were found when the U.S. acted in a supporting, rather than occupying role.

The RMA in Iraq

The relevancy of the RMA and transformation in the operational and tactical levels of battle in Iraq can be demonstrated in several areas. One of the most widespread influences was the use of airpower. UAVs were used extensively to provide real time intelligence updates on insurgent activities. Even in urban centers, they proved highly useful at identifying and monitoring insurgent safe houses, and lines of communications. The most commonly used UAVs was the Predator which, due to its multi-role capabilities, was used for both surveillance and kinetic operations against insurgents.[305] For example, UAVs were used effectively during the Battle of Sadr City (2008). Predators armed with Hellfire missiles were used extensively alongside RQ-7 Shadow UAVs in kinetic anti-insurgent operations. In particular, they were highly effective at destroying insurgent rocket sites.[306] During the battle, U.S. commanders had access to detailed battlefield data transmitted in near real time to their command centers, which included live feeds of the city via UAV cameras. The various data procured by surveillance sensors were then packaged and distributed to the company sized units to provide them with constant intelligence on insurgent positioning and activity. This process proved to be absolutely devastating against insurgent rocket and mortar teams that were effectively wiped out. Sensors on UAVs identified the location of a rocket team, headquarters was contacted, which would then dispatch an airstrike to eliminate the target.[307]

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[304] Niva, pp. 194-195.
[305] Pirine, and O'Connell, pp. 43-44.
[306] David E. Johnson, et al., "The 2008 Battle of Sadr City", *Rand Occasional Paper* (2011), p. 14.
[307] Ibid, pp. 14-15.

Airpower's precision strike capabilities allowed airstrikes to be used in dense urban environments without running significant risks of inflicting collateral damage against the civilian population. UAVs provided a high degree of flexibility for U.S. forces. For example, they were able to deploy the Dragon Eye UAV which was deployed and controlled by company and small sized units. They were launched by hand and were able to provide troops on the ground with real time surveillance of neighborhood streets. No longer did infantry patrols have to wait for airborne intelligence data from headquarters.

Perhaps the most important RMA influence in Iraq was the use of SOF. Here the JSOC was at the forefront of COIN operations. JSOC does not follow classical COIN doctrine which advocates a 'hearts and minds' approach towards the civilian population; JSOC advocates a surgical strike approach that values kinetic operations designed to kill or capture insurgents Under the direction of General Stanley McCrystal, JSOC engaged in a large scale kill-capture campaign which was initiated in 2006 directed to 'decapitate' the insurgent leadership of AQ and Sunni militias. On the tactical level in Iraq, a typical JSOC operation located an insurgent base of operations, typically a safe house in an urban centre. This was then raided, and searched for intelligence data that would then be analyzed to dictate where the next operation would occur. The decentralized networked hierarchy of JSOC allowed individual units to formulate and select their own missions, which led to a much greater speed and efficiency. This broke down the traditional patterns of war in which newly discovered intelligence had to be transported back to headquarters for analysis by official intelligence officers.[308] The speed and wide scope of JSOC operations in Iraq prevented the targeted insurgent groups from being able to reorganize themselves adequately. This was effects-based operations at its finest. JSOC's speed was

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[308] Niva, p. 192.

disorientating to the insurgency, while not affecting the counter-insurgent forces in the slightest.[309]

The kill-capture campaign proved to be particularly effective against AQ in Iraq. It was forced to rely on younger and less skilled fighters to replace the veteran combat leaders and auxiliaries neutralized by the U.S.[310] JSOC's most high profile operation was the killing of Zarqawi. The targeted strike on Zarqawi had two tangible benefits to U.S. COIN efforts. AQ's most talented battle commander and grand strategist had been removed from the conflict, and second, it signaled to the surviving AQ members that the counter-insurgents had the ability to procure information on any of their whereabouts. If their leader could be killed, then any one of them could, theoretically, be next. Furthermore, the insurgent's ability to recruit new members was hampered due to their desire to close themselves off to potential ways of being discovered. These raids prevented insurgents from developing truly populist strategies by forcing them to stay in the shadows.[311]

Even when the majority of the conventional military forces in Iraq lacked a coherent strategy for dealing with the worsening insurgent situation and general chaos of the country, JSOC became a leading innovator of COIN tactics, and pushed for a new network-centric approach to the problem. It averaged 300 unique raids per month that were directed at high profile and middle tier insurgents. They were discovering and annihilating AQ insurgent cells faster than they could be recruited and replaced.[312] JSOC and SOF in Iraq merged human intelligence (HUMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) when drafting their targeting priorities. The data was drawn together and then analyzed following their network centric

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[309] Matthew Charles Ford, "Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification", *Studies In Conflict and Terrorism* 35:2 (2012), p. 119.
[310] See Figure 3.1 for the different tiers of insurgents.
[311] Fishman, pp. 19, 25.
[312] Niva, p. 193.

approach to modern warfare. SOCOM was the leading user of UAVs in Iraq. U.S. SIGINT

capabilities allowed them to tap into Iraqi cellphone networks to expand further their data

procurement capabilities. The number of cellphone users had steadily increased in Iraq which

further increased the importance of SIGINT. The amounts of data procured by SIGINT and UAV

surveillance in Iraq were massive.[313]

The networked approach that SOCOM and JSOC have taken in Iraq has globalized the

COIN efforts in that combat environment by linking the forces on the ground, to their

counterparts in the U.S., and Afghanistan. JSOC, under the jointness doctrine, also became

further integrated with their conventional counterparts. They began to work alongside regional

command forces. This broke historic precedent, where SOF often viewed their conventional

counterparts as rivals. This close cooperation resulted in highly effective COIN operations.

Furthermore, by following the jointness doctrine JSOC was able to utilize the local contacts that

regional counter-insurgent forces had established.[314]

U.S. forces in Iraq made invaluable use of a variety of high tech sensors to increase their

COIN capacity. Marines fighting in Anbar initiated a RMA-driven approach to COIN entitled

"Project METRO" which utilized various types of surveillance equipment, including sensors and

cameras, that were deployed in areas where insurgent activity was highest. This was determined,

by data analyzed from the COPLINK computerized databases, that could be accessed by the

local battalion. The Marines would embed acoustic recorders in the homes of suspected

insurgents. Marines used various other technologies to assist in their tracking of insurgents,

which included the Wearable Intelligent Recording Environment throat microphone that, when

paired with a computerized personal data assistant, considerably eased the burden of data

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[313] Lindsay, pp. 442-443.
[314] Ford, pp. 120,123.

recording in a combat environment for the Marines, by allowing them to have voice to text capabilities.[315]

U.S. troops in Anbar made use of networked computer databases to keep data on the population. Pictures were taken of local, male civilians during visitations to all civilian homes. Furthermore, vehicle registration information was also collected. All of this data was then uploaded to the COPLINK. The use of COPLINK and surveillance sensors significantly increased the target allocation speed from taking up to several hours to develop, to only a few minutes.[316] Satellite communications (TACSATs) allowed battalions to link directly not only to senior commanders in the combat environment, but directly to the offices within the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.[317] Intelligence information procured from the interrogation of insurgents was then utilized by JSTARS in selecting additional targets for the military to pursue. Targets included other members of the insurgent leadership or insurgent's arms depots. JSTARS also proved to be highly effective in tracking insurgent border crossings. In 2005, insurgents were making nine border crossings per month on average. After JSTARS was deployed, the average was reduced to only one[318]

The deployment of Stryker Combat Brigade Teams (SCBTs) to Iraq represented a major influence of the RMA. The SBCTs are at the forefront of the U.S. Army's transformation agenda. They embrace advanced command and control, intelligence and network-centric capabilities. Its NCW capabilities are some of the most advanced in all of the military where it merges command and control, surveillance sensors and shooters together into a streamlined

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[315] James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa, Iraqi, 2005-2007* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2011), pp. 71-72.
[316] Ibid, pp. 69, 72.
[317] Charles H. Swannack, "Aerospace Power and the All American 82nd Airborne Division Operations in Iraq (August 2003 – March 2004)" in James Fergusson and William March eds., *No Clear Flight Plan: Counterinsurgency and Aerospace Power* (Winnipeg: Centre for Defence and Security Studies, 2008), p. 171.
[318] Russell, pp. 84-85.

digital network.[319] SBCTs held a considerable advantage over other units in situational awareness of combat areas as they were able to have near real time visual displays of their peer units in the field and were able to communicate instantly via instant message and email communications. They were also able to have access to visual displays of enemy activity.[320]

This was all able to happen because of access to high-bandwidth satellite networks. The SBCT's digitized approach to COIN reduced the time needed to dedicate to briefing cycles and the time needed to process intelligence data. It increased command and control abilities by the use of various geospatial maps and displays that listed troop movements, geographic boundaries and other key infrastructure locations, as well as known locations of insurgent positions. It also allowed SBCT units to increase their ability to synchronize with other units based on data uploaded to their network from the field.[321]

The SBCTs are part of a 'light footprint' due to their high mobility and flexibility. They are not large, cumbersome infantry divisions. Rather, they are swift moving mechanized units. The mobility of SBCTs allowed the U.S. to take advantage of swarm tactics, which involved several SBCTs quickly converging on a specific location with little notice or preparation. This placed insurgents at a clear disadvantage due to the risks of being overwhelmed by speed, and reduced time to gather surveillance data of COIN unit movements.[322] The networked capabilities of the SBCTs connected them to a wide variety of external units and civilian organizations to share and analyze data together. These networks were further enhanced by the use of UAVs which provided real-time imagery to both the units on the ground in Iraq and to other

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[319] Gozales, et al., pp. 1-2
[320] Ibid, pp. 49-60, 69.
[321] Ibid, pp. 49-60, 69.
[322] Ibid, p. 70.

organizations located in the continental U.S. This essentially flattened the organizational structure of the COIN forces which led to much higher efficiency.[323]

Conclusion

The RMA and transformation demonstrated their relevancy in Iraq while waging a COIN campaign in an urban environment. The urban centers place very clear limits on military power. The Iraqi insurgency was structured in a highly chaotic fashion, lacking any clarity, leadership or direction; it was unified only through a desire to spread violence. Combined, these factors posed considerable challenges to the U.S. military. The 'light footprint' approach to COIN is not solely responsible for the problems of Iraq. Those lie with the considerable strategic failings of the Bush Administration and Paul Bremer during the transitional period from conventional to insurgency warfare. The de-Baᶜathification campaign and the disbandment of the military created thousands of insurgents, angered Iraqi civilians and prevented the U.S. military from partnering with a highly skilled local security force.

There can be no question of the relevancy of the RMA on the operational and tactical levels of the Iraq War; high tech sensors, UAVs, SBCTs, and SOF have all achieved great success on the field of battle. The success of the Awakening should be conceptualized as an achievement of the 'light footprint' approach to COIN. The U.S. has demonstrated that, when it has a strong local partner, it holds a much higher chance of success at overcoming insurgency challenges. The Co-Chairs of the ISG Report perceptively observes that "There is no magic formula to solve the problems of Iraq".[324] This is true. The RMA has certainly not provided the U.S. military with a 'silver bullet' to win this conflict. However, it is absurd to suggest

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[323] Russell, p. 139.
[324] Barker, III., et al., p. ix.

transformation has hampered such efforts, and that it has clearly proved its relevancy in fighting

COIN in urbanized environments.

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

> "Of course there is much more to war than warfare,
>   but warfare is warfare, and the most core competency
>   of soldiers is skill in inflicting pain, killing people, and
>   breaking things"[325]

This thesis explored the relevancy of RMA technologies and transformation to COIN warfare. The RMA has introduced a large number of new technologies and related doctrines that have reshaped modern warfare. During the 1990s, the RMA demonstrated its relevancy in conventional warfare during the Gulf War (1991) when the U.S. led coalition swept Saddam Hussein's military out of Kuwait with relative ease. During the initial interventions in Afghanistan (2001), and later in Iraq (2003), the U.S. military once again demonstrated its might by dominating the conventional battlefields. However, the U.S. found itself engaged in protracted COIN campaigns in both countries, which has prompted many observers to question the relevancy of the RMA in fighting insurgencies. At the heart of this discourse is a doctrinal debate within COIN between 'heavy' versus 'light' footprint approaches.

Insurgencies have come to dominate the majority of conflicts across the globe, and the RMA debate is paramount to formulating a successful response to this phenomenon. The debate has considerable bearing on the future of U.S. military operations. Particularly, it will influence their size and commitment levels. Furthermore, it will help influence whether the U.S. embraces or shies away from COIN warfare in the future. If senior policy planners believe they can fight insurgencies without requiring several hundred thousand ground troops, they will be more likely to enter these types of conflicts due to their cheaper costs in U.S. blood and treasure. The debates surrounding the troop surges in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that the 'heavy

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[325] Gray, *Irregular Warfare*, p. 37.

footprint' remains a policy option for war planners. However, transformation is now embedded within the U.S. military, and it would be highly disruptive and confusing to attempt to reverse this trend by reverting back to Cold War era force structures.

This thesis began with an introduction to the RMA. This provided an overview of its historical development, key concepts and doctrines. It was argued the RMA and transformation are largely the product of U.S. strategic culture which is predisposed to technological optimism. This was followed by the various debates concerning the nature of insurgency and COIN doctrine. It demonstrated the fluid nature of the evolution of insurgency over time, and the noticeable difference between classical COIN doctrine and its need of a 'heavy footprint' versus the newer perception of a 'light footprint' in COIN. Its first case study tested the relevancy of the RMA and transformation in Afghan rural environments. The second examined their impact in the urbanized environments of Iraq.

The RMA is a product of U.S. cultural trends. Techno-optimism is embedded within the U.S. military. This has been reflected by its embrace of transformation and enthusiasm for the potential for the various RMA related technologies. Ultimately, the U.S. military has embraced structural change, and has reoriented its force structure towards smaller, more mobile and increasingly techno-centric forces. It is only logical that the U.S. military would embrace COIN doctrine that conforms more to these national characteristics.

Insurgency remains a fundamentally complex type of warfare. They are difficult wars to fight because insurgents do not wear uniforms and can blend into local civilian populations. Environmental factors, such as dense urbanization, can also place limits on certain counter-insurgent weapons' systems due to the risk of inflicting collateral damage on civilians and the ability of insurgents to hide within buildings and rubble. Classical COIN doctrine is predicated

on the assumption that high technology is irrelevant to fighting insurgency. It dictates that to be successful states must embrace a 'heavy footprint' approach that is largely manpower-intensive.

The RMA has not led to an "end of history"[326] for COIN. The complexity of insurgency ensures that it will be highly unlikely that a successful universal model for COIN could ever be developed to solve its problems. The U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular, has clearly demonstrated that it is far easier to achieve victory in conventional combat than COIN. However, just because the RMA has not provided a 'silver bullet' for insurgency does not mean it lacks relevancy for counter-insurgency operations.

There are several examples in both the Afghanistan and Iraq case studies that demonstrate its relevancy to COIN in both rural and urban combat environments. UAVs have proven to be incredibly effective at reducing the operational capacity of insurgent groups. In the Af-Pak borderlands, they have decimated insurgent leadership, and have afforded the U.S. force projection capabilities in regions that lack, for a variety of reasons, the presence of large ground forces. The use of UAVs has prevented groups of the insurgency from using mountainous and isolated regions to hide from counter-insurgents.

Many persons who live in areas with high levels of UAV activity would think much more highly of the U.S. if it increased aid to the area, allowing them to balance the negative perceptions of their war aims.[327] This relates to the Islamic practice of 'blood money' where compensation is given for wrongful deaths. The U.S. military routinely pays 'blood money' in

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[326] For more on the "end of history" concept see - Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (1989).

[327] Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, The Year of the Drone: An Analysis of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004-2010, *New American Foundation Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper* (February 24, 2010), pp. 249-250 .

Afghanistan for collateral damage.[328] This practice should be extended to Pakistan as long as the drone strikes continue, in order to appease public opinion.

Kinetic UAV strikes have been exceptionally effective in rural Afghan environments. However, they have also demonstrated their worth in the dense urban centers of Iraq. In particular, they were highly effective at identifying insurgent rocket teams, and served in a variety of operations during the 2007 'surge'.

The use of SOF has also proven to be highly effective in the rural and urban insurgency operations. JSOC has engaged in an immense campaign of targeting insurgent leadership and middle tier commanders. Their widespread use in Afghanistan and Iraq has reduced the operational capacity of insurgent groups to carry out successful attacks on U.S. forces and their allies. Guided by the jointness doctrine, SOF has used UAVs and conventional airpower to increase their efficiency in dealing with insurgents by streamlining operational selection and planning in a network-centric manner.

A variety of other high tech weapons systems have also been used to great effect in Afghanistan and Iraq. These include JSTARS and the SCBTs, the various electronic sensors and SIGNINT. The COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan are driven by high technologies in a 'light footprint' approach, rather than the manpower-intensive 'heavy footprint' preached by classical COIN doctrine.

It is misguided to claim that the early failings in Iraq and Afghanistan are the result of the 'light footprint'. Until the publication of FM-324, the U.S. military had not updated its COIN doctrine since the Vietnam War.[329] The U.S. was unprepared for COIN operations in Iraq and

[328] Ernesto Londono and Javed Hamdard, "U.S. pays 'blood money' to victims of Afghan massacre", *Washington Post* (March 25, 2012), Accessed Dec 15, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-pays-blood-money-to-victims-of-afghan-massacre/2012/03/25/gIQARfIaZS_story.html.
[329] John A. Nagl, 'Forward to the University of Chicago Press edition", Department of the U.S. Army and Marine

Afghanistan. This fault lies with the lack of available doctrine, rather than the military's force structure. The U.S. military was forced to learn under fire what worked and what did not. In Iraq, during the early stages of the insurgency, COIN practices were a strange hybrid between the 'heavy' and 'light' footprints which simply exacerbated the security situation. It was not until later in the Afghan and Iraqi conflicts that the U.S. commanders began to understand the true relevancy of the 'light footprint' approach. This is evident by the significant increase in the use of UAV strikes and SOF operations later in the wars. The U.S. doctrinal relationship with COIN remains complicated. The publication of FM-324 is a step in the right direction because it represented a desire of the military to intellectualize COIN for the first time in recent decades. It has, however, some clear failings. Primarily, it lacks any acknowledgment of transformation, which is particularly evident by the way it ignores the use and potential of airpower in COIN operations.

The U.S. has been at war since 2001. Large scale expeditionary deployments of ground forces, the kind which are required for the implementation of a classical COIN doctrine, will become less viable over time for policy planners in the near and slightly more distant future. The impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession has also placed a strain on the U.S. Department of Defense's budget. President Obama's current Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, has pledged to shrink the size of the U.S. military, particularly reducing the size of the Army.[330] These trends indicate that the U.S. lacks the necessary capabilities or has chosen to not invest in manpower-intensive operations required by classical COIN doctrine. However, insurgent and non-state actors will continue to threaten U.S. national interests. AQ in particular,

Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, p. xiii.
[330] David Alexander and Andrea Shalal, "Budget cuts to slash U.S. Army to smallest since before World War Two", *Reuters*, (Feb 24, 2014). Accessed Feb 25, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/24/us-usa-defense-budget-idUSBREA1N1IO20140224.

along with its affiliated organizations, has reoriented itself out of Af-Pak to fighting insurgent-style warfare across the Middle East and East Africa.[331] The U.S. must be able to respond to these insurgencies, and this is where the 'light' COIN footprint approach will be incredibly useful. The U.S. could transform the Afghan Model, which partners SOF, airpower and intelligence assets with local allies into a new way to wage COIN. Successful elements of this have been demonstrated in Iraq and Afghanistan. This would allow the U.S. to maximize the advanced RMA influenced weapons' systems along with the flexibility of transformation to protect its national interests against global insurgencies.

The scholars and observers who assert that the influence of the RMA is detrimental to the practice of COIN are misguided. It is problematic to assume that there is a universal structure to insurgencies. Each conflict is shaped by a variety of historical, cultural and geographic circumstances that are unique to regions in which these wars are fought. The challenges posed by insurgencies require intellectual and structural flexibility by modern militaries to defeat them.

U.S. military personnel are neither diplomats nor social workers, and it is counter-productive to embrace COIN doctrine that requires them to engage in roles in which they are not trained. As James S. Corum observes: "The United States Army is, above all, a tactical army".[332] It is here where the RMA's relevancy is most clearly demonstrated for COIN. It has allowed the U.S. military to develop new and more effective ways to fight insurgencies. It is now up to U.S. policy officials to ensure that doctrine and strategic planning reflect this shift in warfare.

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[331] J. M. Berger, "War on Error", *Foreign Policy* (Feb 5, 2014), Accessed Feb 8, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/02/04/war_on_error_al_qaeda_terrorism.
[332] James S. Corum, "Rethinking US Army Counter-insurgency Doctrine", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 28:1 (2007), p. 131.

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