U.S. COUNTERINSURGENCY MALPRACTICE?

by
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Abstract

The following thesis analyzes the effectiveness of U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and whether or not codified guidance on executing COIN operations successfully translated to operational success on the battlefield. The *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual,* authored by General Petraeus, underpins the assessment on how well the U.S. has wielded political, economic, and security power in these conflicts. Crowding the policy and national security arena is the debate over if the U.S. rightfully aligned its end, ways and means in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. This thesis espouses a slightly different approach by examining whether or not U.S. COIN principles and practice are incongruent to ensure campaign success.

The paper is divided into three chapters, each dedicated to answering a question on how well the U.S. operationalized its COIN doctrine across interagency domains. The first chapter analyzes whether or not COIN operations diminish U.S. military full-spectrum readiness. The second chapter dissects whether the U.S. employed a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach with a balanced civilian-military fighting force. Lastly, the third chapter ascertains whether or not unmanned aerial vehicles are a more viable kinetic option in COIN warfare than U.S. ground forces. The three chapters contain individual case studies, coupled with a hybrid of primary and secondary research approaches, to test the hypotheses presented. Yet all of them contain the overarching backdrop of COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since it is these wars that inspired the publication of the *Field Manual.*

I conclude that the U.S. has not properly coupled its doctrine to its employment paradigm in its decade-long COIN campaigns. The U.S. has levied onerous requirements on its ground forces while not adequately leveraging its political and economic power to apply a multi-faceted response, consequently oversoftening the Department of Defense and underhardening civilian institutions. Lastly, unmanned aerial vehicles should more aggressively augment U.S. ground troops in killing the insurgents, allowing our foot soldiers to focus on other COIN activities among the populace. The U.S. has not sufficiently fused kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities into a cohesive fighting force.

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Introduction

The U.S. has been embroiled in counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare in the Middle East for over a decade and it has consumed the focus of its military's readiness paradigm. The American way of conducting COIN operations, as codified within *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual,* authored by General Petraeus, is unambiguously comprehensive, and the U.S. has worked tirelessly to achieve strategic success by translating the policy prescriptions into operational success in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, COIN theory has dominated political and academic arenas as much as COIN campaigns have dominated the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the heart of the debate is whether or not the U.S. rightfully aligned its end, ways and means in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Yet I approach the debate through a slightly different lens by examining whether or not U.S. COIN principles and practice are incongruent. The author concludes that the U.S. has not properly coupled its doctrine with its employment paradigm in its COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The answers to the three questions that the author asks all share a pessimistic undertone: the U.S. has not effectively wielded political, economic, and security power in these conflicts.

COIN warfare is not new for the U.S. The U.S. conducted COIN operations in the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century, and more infamously known in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. While the U.S. military is arguably the most effective COIN force today, history tells us that a robust toolkit involving economic, security, and political

power is required to contain or eradicate insurgents and their motivations. Thus, our COIN doctrine stipulates a whole-of-government, holistic and decentralized operational platform to effectively conduct COIN operations. However, this has yielded a prominent assumption within the policy and national security realm that COIN warfare is uniquely un-kinetic and more humanized than other types of warfare, such as combined armed live fire and maneuver or air-to-air combat. It is sophomoric to surmise that COIN warfare is less violent, and the U.S. tactical response to the existing U.S. COIN doctrine marginalizes the importance of killing its enemy in COIN. U.S. political strategy is clear: it aims to deny terrorists the ability to establish safe havens to plan and conduct attacks against the U.S.; it has simply chosen to operationally achieve that strategic objective by employing COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I ask three questions that seek to answer how effectively the U.S. has operationalized its COIN doctrine. The first chapter analyzes whether or not COIN operations diminishes U.S. military readiness and adversely impacts its ability to conduct its core, designed missions. The second chapter dissects if the U.S. employed a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach with a balanced civilian-military fighting force. Lastly, the third chapter ascertains whether or not unmanned aerial vehicles are a more viable kinetic option in COIN warfare than U.S. ground forces. All chapters contain individual case studies, coupled with a hybrid of research approaches, to test the hypotheses presented. Yet all of them contain the overarching backdrop of COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The first chapter explores whether the focus on COIN operations over the last twelve years that have largely dictated how the U.S. military produces warfighting

capabilities enhance or detract from United States military's conventional readiness. The paper is split into three sections. The first section examines COIN theory and the critical ingredients for successfully executing COIN operations, and the difference between conventional and unconventional warfare. The second section assesses what types of investments the United States military have made during 21st COIN campaigns and the futility of these augmented force structure changes and costs for high-end conventional kinetic warfare. Third, it addresses the military's appetite to divest these capabilities and investments in support of regaining full-spectrum combat capabilities at the culmination of COIN operations.

Given the robust and oftentimes contradictory nature of COIN warfare, I provide an upfront thorough background to COIN fundamentals. I leverage COIN theorists and assumptions that underline the American way of fighting unconventional wars, and provide a broad context in which COIN operations are conducted. To understand the effects of COIN warfare on United States' conventional military readiness, I use Afghanistan (and Iraq where the data is not discernible from each other) as the prime case study for making my argument. Because overseas contingency operations costs in support of these wars have remained disentangled from the annual baseline defense budgets, the investments specifically made for 21st century COIN operations are entirely distinguishable from "business as usual" investments. Specifically, I decompose COIN warfare investments in personnel, training and equipment arenas using Congressional budget documents, Department of Defense doctrine and policy guidance, and Service-specific publications.

Not only have the military Services grown their force in sheer numbers, but they had to alter the composition of those forces to generate niche skill sets required for COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, as the U.S. withdraws from these conflicts, the Services' plans to reduce end-strength largely resemble pre-9/11 force levels. Secondly, the Services revolutionized their collective training exercises to replicate the operational environment by injecting role players and scenarios in preparing for deployment. Recent promulgations that they are reverting back to training blueprints that focus on high-end combat capability reflects the need for the Services to divorce themselves from COIN preparedness to regain full-spectrum readiness.

I conclude in my first chapter that the U.S. military has perceived 21st century COIN warfare as a protracted obligation rather than as an opportunity to refine its role in a highly complex and irregular world. As a result, military conventional readiness has suffered, and the military Service-augmented capabilities and corresponding investments are feckless in confronting similarly equipped adversaries. The theoretical underpinning of COIN requires a burdensome set of combat capabilities among its military personnel and a strategic shift away from kinetic supremacy. The Department's regression from COIN operations indicates it has placed too high of an emphasis on nation building as a fighting tool rather than fighting itself. The Department's current and planned investments gives fidelity to its perception that the core principle of fighting should be augmented by the capabilities required to succeed in nation-building missions rather than vice versa.[1]

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[1] "Let's Build an Army to Win All Wars," Gian Gentile, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 52, 1st Qtr 2009, p. 1.

The second chapter dissects whether or not the U.S. employed a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach with a balanced civilian-military fighting force. The literature review details the arguments made by COIN advocates that a more civilian-oriented fighting force breeds economic and political success by uprooting the local populace's disaffection with the host government, thus guaranteeing long-term stability and economic sustainment. Others, such as military hawks and neo-conservatives, maintain that the military should modulate as a kinetic political body in order to execute COIN campaigns on a global and perpetual basis, and argue that the likelihood of U.S. engagement in fragile or failed states is ever-increasing. I reference a host of policy statements, news releases, Congressional reports, and U.S. government official reports to reinforce whether or not the U.S. needs to increase civilian involvement within its COIN campaigns.

Specifically, the analysis unpacks the role of the Department of State and USAID in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, serving as my two case studies to ascertain the success and challenges in the two conflicts. I discuss the joint initiatives engendered within these agencies to further COIN operational objectives, and how capabilities required for fighting U.S. COIN operations inherently exist within soft power agencies more so than within the military. Notably, the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce expanded U.S. civilian presence in support of building governance and security capacity in Afghanistan, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams were created to expedite national reconstruction and development projects. However, these two primary organizations germane to the Stabilization, Security, Transition and Reconstruction portfolio lack the

capacity, authorities and cost to rapidly deploy their organic capabilities in support of large-scale, protracted war efforts.

I conclude within my second chapter that although the United States has attempted to employ a whole-of-government approach for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, it has failed by placing too much emphasis on the military component and not enough on the civilian side. Of the roughly $1.2 trillion that has been appropriated for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military has received about 94%.[2] The Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have been allocated approximately $67 billion, comprising of about 5%.[3] The U.S. needed to leverage a proportionately larger number of civilians. Having done so would have likely prolonged the political tolerance of the United States' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lastly, the third chapter examines whether or not unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) are a more viable kinetic option in COIN warfare than U.S. ground forces. U.S. COIN paradigm requires a heavy emphasis on non-kinetic activities; that is, those addressing the political, economic, and social vulnerabilities of the host nation government that fuel the insurgency, but has it downplayed the significance of the kinetic requirements as a result? The COIN operational trifecta stipulates that counterinsurgents must concurrently protect the population, build sound governance and kill insurgents. The last of the three is ostensibly the most combat-intensive, and I assess whether or not UAVs can effectively augment the hard power exercised in COIN operations as previously fulfilled by U.S. foot soldiers.

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[2] Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, Congressional Research Service, March 2011, p. 2.
[3] Ibid., 3.

UAV operations in Pakistan and Yemen serve my primary case studies and as the bedrock of my analysis. I leverage a variety of data sources, to include strategic defense documents, open source CIA and DIA documents, congressional reports, think-tank reviews, surveys from civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. I chose counterterrorism (CT) campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen to illuminate the contrast in the U.S. operational approach to COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, I argue why the transferability of U.S. COIN campaigns within the last decade in Pakistan and Yemen are futile given their tenuous political, economic and social conditions. U.S. ground troops interwoven into the indigenous population to embolden their fight against insurgents would foment additional discontent again the host government, and would further the insurgents' momentum. Surgical means to combat the insurgents in Pakistan and Yemen, coupled with top-down political advisory and economic development teams, yields the best chance to continue containing and killing key insurgents aiming to attack the U.S. as well as begin to address endogenous political and economic challenges facing Pakistan and Yemen.

Much like the first and second chapters, my conclusion within the last chapter is cynical; the U.S. has not fully employed UAVs to offset the soft power required in U.S. COIN campaigns. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven that the expectation for ground troops to both show restraint of force among the civilian population and then quickly use it against insurgents is overambitious. UAVs, the premier weapon within U.S. CT operations, should also be the pre-eminent kinetic method within U.S. COIN operations. The U.S. has been reticent to interlace CT and COIN tactics, and it has necessitated that ground troops employ hard and soft tactics simultaneously.

Unfortunately, victory in the COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan appears all but elusive, and my conclusions contribute to the understanding of why. The U.S. has over-encumbered the Department of Defense to orchestrate and execute COIN campaigns that require military personnel to concurrently fight insurgents and foster sound and legitimate governance in the eyes of the local populace. Not only has this proven untenable for political survival, but also it has diluted U.S. military readiness for conventional combat missions. Moreover, it did not sufficiently balance political and economic power across U.S. bureaucratic institutions to apply the economic and political tools needed to align U.S. COIN theory and practice. While programs and initiatives created by U.S. State Department and USAID are laudable, they were hindered by cost, authorities, and capacity constraints. Lastly, the CT element of COIN has been silenced within the U.S. strategy to deny terrorists the safe havens to plan and execute attacks on the U.S., and UAVs should be the weapon of choice to achieve American strategic objectives going forward.

The promulgation of a new defense strategy in January 2012, titled *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, in addition to the refined counterterrorism strategy heralded by President Obama in May 2013, represent political platforms articulating a conspicuous shift away from U.S. COIN operations and more a parochial focus on executing high-end combat operations and defeating terrorism globally. U.S. COIN theory will remain for now, but we should acknowledge our operational malpractice, and focus on retooling our warfighting profile to conduct more pertinent operations to secure U.S. national security objectives.

Chapter I

21st Century Counterinsurgency within the United States Military: A Misguided Guidebook for Strengthening Conventional Warfare Capabilities?

Introduction

The hyper-focus on counterinsurgency (COIN) operations over the last twelve years has largely dictated the way the United States military produces warfighting capabilities and how it trains for operational success. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have required a metamorphosis of how the Services generate ready forces in order to effectively employ the unconventional tactics required by COIN. Department of Defense guidance asserts that COIN requires joint forces to both fight and build nations sequentially or simultaneously.[4] As opposed to conventional warfare, the success of COIN is predicated upon the counterinsurgents' ability to influence and control the population instead of enemy forces. Thus, the counterinsurgents necessitate a different mix of capabilities.

With the need for the United States military to modulate its force structure in support of 21st COIN campaigns, does a concentration on preparedness for COIN enhance or detract from United States military's conventional readiness? COIN warfare has distracted the Services from focusing on their inherent missions, requiring a host of operational tools unsuitable for traditional warfare. The defense enterprise's deliberate departure from a COIN-intensive force reflects the need to recalibrate the force to effectively execute its designed mission areas. While a myopic focus on COIN has been an entirely necessary one, it has required a dramatic change in how the military is

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[4] Joint Publication 3-24, "Counterinsurgency Operations," Department of Defense, October 2009, p. x.

manned, trained and equipped. As a result, the conventional military arena has been

eclipsed by the operational requirements dictated by COIN, and the department's

divestiture of these capabilities reflects the need to restore conventional military

capabilities. In order to develop a sound argument, I will unravel how the military has

augmented its manpower and strength and skill sets, training curriculums and

modifications to equipment, and examine the Services' decision calculus on divorcing

themselves of these changes.

To that end, I have divided this paper into three sections. The first section

examines COIN theory and the critical ingredients for successfully executing COIN

operations, and the difference between conventional and unconventional warfare. The

second section will assess what types of investments the United States military has made

during 21st COIN campaigns and the futility of these augmented force structure changes

and costs for high-end conventional kinetic warfare. Lastly, it will address the military's

appetite to divest these capabilities and investments in support of regaining full-spectrum

combat capabilities at the culmination of COIN operations. This will shape my claim that

COIN weakens the viability of the United States military.

Definitions & Omissions

I define COIN operations as comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to

simultaneously defeat and contain an insurgency and address its root causes.[5] I

characterize United States military force structure by the way in which the Services man

and organize, train and equip their forces. Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed*

Forces of the United States, defines conventional (or traditional) warfare as "a

confrontation between nation-states or coalitions/alliances of nation-states involving

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[5] "United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide," Department of State, January 2009, p. 12.

small to large scale, force-on-force military operations in which adversaries employ a

variety of conventional military capabilities against each other in the air, land, maritime,

and space physical domains and the information environment (which includes

cyberspace)."[6]

This paper will not address whether or not United States' definition of

conventional warfare is flawed. That is a separate theoretical discussion altogether. The

more worthwhile undertaking is the exploration of the United States' focus on COIN

manifesting as a detriment to military conventional warfare health as currently defined.

Literature Review

Given the importance of securing the interests of the indigenous population in

COIN operations, many policymakers and national security practitioners argue that COIN

warfare has enhanced the efficacy of the United States military by restoring the human

element in warfare.[7] The need for a hyper-disciplined force has arguably yielded the

finest officer corps the United States military has seen in decades. Concurrently fighting

the Taliban, protecting the Afghan population and training the Afghan security forces

requires unprecedented talent at the lowest tactical level. Yet, effectively executing this

complex trifecta levies significant responsibility on the individual warfighter. Many

argue that COIN unduly overbears junior offices given that United States COIN doctrine

requires them to fulfill multiple roles—combatant, humanitarian worker, diplomat,

government administrator—on the battlefield and determine when to interchange those

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[6] Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Department of Defense, March 2013, p. 5.
[7] Frederick W. Kagan, "War and Aftermath," *Policy Review*, August 2003, p. 44.

roles.[8] Masterfully integrating a rigorous blend of tactics and strategy within American ground forces remains a challenge.

The emphasis on COIN capabilities critical to carrying out the United States' military campaign in Afghanistan undoubtedly transformed the way it has engendered warfighting readiness. Not only do COIN operations demand disparate skill sets and mission requirements from a high-end conventional conflict, but they also generally require a lot more of them. David Galula proposes a force ratio of ten or twenty or higher to one between the counterinsurgent and insurgent, contending that COIN conflicts are cheap to start and very costly to preclude.[9]

COIN operations have not only precipitated a spike in the sheer number of troops within the United States military, but they command both a change in force composition and the way in which it is utilized. However, the change in force packaging required by COIN operations is not a matter of shrinking or expanding units, it is about revolutionizing how these force packages think and operate. Winning the hearts and minds of an indigenous population requires kindness and ideology on the front lines; however, armed warriors are often times not appropriate vehicles to instill new beliefs.[10] John Nagl argues that, "conventional military forces are too prone to emphasize offensive actions such as capturing and killing terrorists rather than the predominately political, economic, and security requirements upon which the ultimate defeat of the insurgency depend."[11] The tactics and capabilities required for COIN warfare represent an aberration

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[8] Thomas Meyer (2013): Flipping the Switch: Combat, State Building, and Junior Officers in Iraq and Afghanistan, Security Studies, 22:2, p. 222-258.

[9] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 7.

[10] John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, July 2005, p. 24.

[11] Foreword for "Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (Galula)," John Nagl, May 2006, page viii.

from the conventional thinking that increased bloodshed to the enemy equates to victory, and the United States military has by and large resisted institutional change in providing ground forces for Afghan deployments. For instance, the Army's defiance in creating specialized units and continued application of its conventional brigade-centric structure yields ineffective employment of those forces.[12]

Realists share similar convictions with regard to the misfit between COIN as an operational approach and United States political objectives. They are incredulous of COIN warfare as they perceive it as inconsequential in the scheme of great power politics and wasteful because such efforts rarely succeed or are sustainable.[13] The magnitude and duration of the use of force required for COIN operations is disproportional to the political objectives of the United States. Counter to the imperialist and neo-conservative opinion that COIN warfare promotes strong leadership and a positive global influence, realists favor the use of force only in pursuit of national interest.[14] COIN operations, in the eyes of realists, fall outside of the scope of projecting power and thus do not qualify for a significant exertion of force abroad.

Conversely, many defense and policy analysts advocate for a COIN-heavy military given the strong likelihood that the United States will be engaged in similar unconventional conflicts in the future. Whether or not the United States fight these wars going forward, they argue, should determine the type and amount of COIN-specific capacity and capabilities. Clausewitz stated that war is a continuation of political

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[12] "Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force or Specialized Units?" Andrew Feickert, *Congressional Research Service*, January 2008.
[13] "From Bismarck to Petraeus: The Question of the Social and the Social Question in Counterinsurgency," Patricia Owens, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2013, p. 19.
[14] Paul Dixon, *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (England: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012), p. 16.

intercourse through other means.[15] Because policymakers determine whether or not war

is the appropriate course of action to pursue political gains or to strengthen American

interests, it is a futile endeavor for the military to overtly shape its structure based on its

preference for war. Many COINdinistas, an oft-used term referring to wonks and national

security practitioners lauding COIN warfare, claim that the United States will inevitably

fight unconventional wars given the fact that predominant threats to American security

have been supplanted by rogue states, failed states, and non-state actors.[16] As a result,

they assert that the decision to intervene is outside of the Pentagon's control and the

department should ingrain COIN warfare within its primary mission focus.

I conclude that COIN warfare detracts from the operational viability of United

States military conventional warfare. Because the American way of fighting COIN

warfare necessitates an accentuated focus on the human element of warfare and requires

significant augmentation to force structure, it is counterproductive to the conventional

nature of United States warfare. That said, because the American military is methodically

designed to subvert any adversary by force-on-force engagement, COIN warfare is

merely a deviation from these strategic aims given the importance of political, economic,

and cultural interplay. The department's divestiture of COIN capabilities from its force

structure, however, represents the need to reinvigorate its conventional warfare

capabilities that renders it the world's most preeminent fighting force. Although COIN

warfare and the capabilities required to fight it have not contributed to the health of

conventional military readiness, the Services' departure from it is a prudent decision.

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[15] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 81.
[16] "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," Jeffrey Record, Policy Analysis No. 577, *Cato Institute*, Sept 2006, p. 6.

Method and Data

Given the robust and oftentimes contradictory nature of COIN warfare, I dedicate a thorough background to COIN fundamentals. I leverage COIN theorists and assumptions that underline the American way of fighting unconventional wars, and provide a broad context in which COIN operations are conducted.

To understand the effects of COIN warfare on United States' conventional military readiness, I will use Afghanistan (and Iraq where the data is not discernible from each other) as the backdrop for making my argument. Because overseas contingency operations costs in support of these wars have remained disentangled from the annual baseline defense budgets, the investments specifically made for 21st century COIN operations are entirely distinguishable from "business as usual" investments. Specifically, I will decompose COIN warfare investments in personnel, training and equipment arenas using Congressional budget documents and departmental doctrine and policy guidance. Where appropriate, I use Service-specific publications used to prioritize operational requirements.

In discussing force structure and investments that the Department of Defense has made in support of COIN operations in the 21st century, I will focus mainly on ground forces (i.e. Army and Marine Corps). While the Air Force has provided substantial amounts of close air support and medical evacuation and the Navy contributed expeditionary forces (e.g. construction battalions), the most palpable augmentation to force structure is within the ground force.

COIN Theory and its Departure from Conventional Warfare

Understanding the fundamental principles and theoretical underpinnings of COIN warfare is critical in understanding how this type of warfare diverges from conventional warfare. The goals of both the insurgents and counterinsurgents are different than opposing forces in a conventional conflict, and thus the means in which to defeat one another are misaligned from the conventional wisdom of war. Specifically, the goal of an insurgent is to make the nature of the conflict asymmetrical; where insurgents need very little to accomplish a lot and the counterinsurgents need a lot to accomplish very little.[17] Insurgents groups are allotted the luxury of having meticulous knowledge of the terrain, political structure, and cultural and tribal intricacies and thus contain an unequivocal advantage over the counterinsurgents. Leveraging this home field advantage yet simultaneously acknowledging that the counterinsurgent is more capable and powerful as a unified force requires the insurgents to act not as a nucleus of army bands spread across specific geographical parameters, but rather as an "armed clandestine organization."[18]

Conversely, the primary goal of the counterinsurgent is soliciting and maintaining the legitimacy of the host nation government and marginalizing the influence of the insurgency.[19] Naturally, the goal of the counterinsurgent is much more difficult to accomplish given the complexity of restoring order versus defying it. The invariable determinant of the counterinsurgency's success lies in legitimacy, and the key to gaining legitimacy is gaining trust of the population that renders it such. Only when the host

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[17] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 56.

[18] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*," (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 7.

[19] "Forging a Comprehensive Approach to Counterinsurgency Operations," Robert Caslen, Jr., *PRISM 2, No. 3*, p. 6.

nation government can ensure security, provide access to essential services, and protect their cultural identity can it assure the ultimate demise of the insurgency.[20]

In order for the counterinsurgents to wholly subvert the efforts of the insurgents to undermine the government's legitimacy, they must apply an exorbitant amount of force. Counterinsurgencies are inherently manpower intensive and depend heavily upon specialized skill sets—to include civil affairs, police, public health, foreign language and cultural expertise, training and advising indigenous forces, and psychological warfare—that are ancillary to the prosecution of conventional warfare.[21] Furthermore, the means in which intelligence is utilized is markedly disparate from the standard conduct of war. Major General Michael Flynn, the former Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence (CJ2), for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, asserts that intelligence gathering should focus on the entire operational environment, specifically the political, economic and cultural aspects, instead of solely on the tactics and techniques subscribed to by the enemy.[22]

Most importantly, the dichotomy in the theoretical undertones between COIN warfare and conventional warfare must be understood before examining the effect that COIN has on conventional warfare readiness. As explained earlier, the goal of the counterinsurgent is to bolster the perception of the host nation government in the eyes of its people and create a holistically stabilized environment; the goal of the conventional warrior, on the other hand, is conflict is to seize control of enemy territory and annihilate

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[20] "The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition," Montgomery McFate & Andrea Jackson, *Military Review*, January 2006, p. 13.
[21] "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," Jeffrey Record, Policy Analysis No. 577, *Cato Institute*, Sept 2006, p. 6.
[22] "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," Major General Michael Flynn, Center for a New American Security, January 2010, p. 7.

the forces contained within it.[23] This same paradigm cannot be applied to COIN warfare as the enemy is ubiquitous and unconstrained to defined parameters. A second important distinction between the two camps of war is that conventional warfare assumes that either side can initiate the conflict. In revolutionary warfare, however, only the insurgent can spark the war.[24] Thus, the counterinsurgents are by default a reactive force born as the effect of the insurgency. Thirdly, and arguably the most notable delineation drawn between conventional and unconventional war involves the degree in which force is applied in order to defeat the enemy. In conventional war, the scheme of maneuver for operational progression is linear: a front line that advances as enemy units are destroyed, territory held by the enemy is captured, and enemy capitals are seized.[25] COIN warfare follows no structured progression into enemy territory.

Unfortunately, indicators of operational success are more opaque given the diffuse nature of the enemy. Unlike conventional wars, the battlefield for COIN is amongst the population to which everyone, not just the combatants, has access.[26] Therefore, the decisive use of force prescribed for conventional warfare is inappropriate and counterproductive for the counterinsurgents. David Galula contends that, "Conventional operations [in counterinsurgencies] by themselves have at best no more effect than a fly swatter."[27] Hence, it is the conflicting and often contradictory tactics and

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[23] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 1.
[24] Ibid., 1.
[25] "Operational Art in Counterinsurgency: A View from the Inside," LTG James Dubik (Ret.), *Institute for the Study of War*, July 2012, p. 1.
[26] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*," (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 40.
[27] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. 51.

strategy of COIN compared to conventional warfare that marginalizes its utility in

building conventional competence of the United States military.

Changes and Investments in United States' Force Structure for 21st Century COIN Campaigns and their Utility for High-End Conventional Warfare

Due to the fact that the department could apply few conventional tactics to the

ostensibly unconventional COIN campaign in Afghanistan, it heavily invested in force

structure and specialized capabilities to ensure operational success in subverting the

Taliban. The increase in American troop levels compounded with comprehensive

mission sets required for COIN operations has yielded a substantial price tag. The

Department of Defense alone has spent 445 billion dollars on the war in Afghanistan

through FY2012.[28] This equates to an average of 1.2 million dollars per soldier for the

war in Afghanistan.[29] Put differently, with troop levels reaching 100,000 in 2010 with a

yearly estimated cost of approximately 30 billion dollars, the United States has

committed around 1,000 soldiers and 300 million dollars a year for each Taliban

fighter.[30] Several factors triggered the need for additional forces and capabilities on the

battlefield, all of which directly contribute to the unique aspects of COIN practices.

Personnel and Critical Skills

The intrinsic struggle between the insurgents and American forces is predicated

upon a war of attrition; victory for either one cannot be won immediately.[31] Hence the

recipe for success involves sound ingredients for sustainability. In order to ensure a

viable operational campaign to subvert a relentless enemy, the United States military has

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[28] "Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget," Todd Harrison, *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, July 2011, p. 6.
[29] Ibid., p. 7.
[30] Anthony Gregory, "What Price War? Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Costs of Conflict," *The Independent Institute*, June 2011, p. 11.
[31] "Assessing Counterinsurgency and Stabilization Missions," Jason Campbell, Michael O'Hanlon and Jeremy Shapiro, *The Brookings Institution*, May 2009, p. 1.

increased its number of ground forces. At the end of 2012, the Army's active duty end

strength reached 547,000 and the Marine Corps has bolstered its active duty troop

numbers to over 202,000, a 13% and 16% increase, respectively, since the September

11th attacks.[32] Due to the protracted nature of COIN warfare and the associated

ambiguity of decisive defeat, the military re-oriented its deployment strategies in order to

maintain a steady operational flow in theater. United States troop levels in Iraq and

Afghanistan peaked at 187,900 in 2008, and even though this figure was tempered due to

the drawdown of forces and Iraq, the surge in Afghanistan in 2009 required a sustained

troops level average of 63,500 until the end of 2012.[33] In order to maintain this

operational tempo, the Army both increased the number of brigade combat teams (BCTs)

from 33 to 43 and implemented a rotational readiness model to ensure continuity of

heavy ground support.[34] The Marine Corps has adopted a similar cyclical structure.

Moreover, about 59% of the Army's personnel growth is attributed to key capability

areas including military police, military intelligence, engineers, medical, explosive

ordnance disposal, and information operations.[35] Similarly, the Marine Corps has

increased the number of civil affairs and intelligence billets since 2004.[36]

However, the growth in the Army and the Marine Corps to sustain ground

operations in Afghanistan will undoubtedly be reversed given the department's renewed

focus on high-end conventional warfare. The Army and the Marine Corps have heralded

plans to reduce their personnel strength to 490,000 and 182,000, respectively, by

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[32] "Strengthening the All-Volunteer Military," Doug Bandow, *Cato Handbook for Policy Makers,* 7th Edition, 2009, p. 509.

[33] "Troop Levels in Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues," Amy Belasco, *Congressional Research Service*, July 2009, p. 9.

[34] "Maintaining the Combat Edge," Major General Michael Tucker, *Military Review*, June 2011, p. 10.

[35] Flourney and Schultz, "Shaping U.S. Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right," *Center for a New American Security*, June 2007, p. 26.

[36] Ibid., 28.

FY2017.[37] Furthermore, the Army plans to reinvigorate firepower and target destruction capabilities critical to the Army's core functions that have been considerably overshadowed by the need for inflated force levels in securing population centers and infrastructure, providing humanitarian assistance, and facilitating delivery of essential services.[38] The Army and Marine Corps' plans to recalibrate their end strength to levels similar to pre-9/11 indicates that the augmented troops for COIN operations in Afghanistan are inexpedient in regaining conventional warfare capabilities.

Not only has the need for persistent and sustained presence in Afghanistan for the last twelve years required an influx of additional United States troops, but it also dictated a mix of capabilities not typically organic within the department. As articulated in COIN theory, the paradoxical foundation of using combat force to create a peaceful and secure state precipitated the United States military to radically shift its tactical conduct in Afghanistan. Specifically, the need to inculcate United States soldiers within the Afghan population required the need to grow a cadre of language-capable and culturally aware personnel. David Kilcullen argues that linguistic and cultural competence in COIN warfare is a critical combat capability given that it "generates a permissive operating environment and enables access to cultural centers of gravity, situational awareness and interaction with the population."[39]

In addition to manufacturing a core of language and culturally-attuned military personnel to effectively interact with and conduct human intelligence among the Afghan population, the Department of Defense invested in building a sector of advisors. As of

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[37] Department of Defense, "Defense Budget Priorities and Choices" (January 2012), p. 11.
[38] "FY2013 National Defense Authorization Act: Selected Military Personnel Policy Issues," Lawrence Kapp, *Congressional Research Service*, January 2013, p. 7.
[39] David Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Jan 2007, page 613.

December 2012, approximately 250 United States Army and Marine Corps advisor teams have been operating in Afghanistan.[40] Security force assistance teams are generally comprised of 9 to 18 advisor personnel made up of a mix of company and field-grade officers, and senior non-commissioned officers, and are tailored to match the needs of their Afghan counterparts. Additionally, more than 700 men and women of the 438th Air Expeditionary Wing have been re-missioned to train, equip, and mentor all levels of the Afghan Air Force.[41] Given the emphasis on nation building and erecting a tenable security force, the military placed a greater emphasis on the need to support, train and advise the indigenous population that is key to long-term institutional stability. They are embedded within the government sector, to include the Afghan Ministries of Defense and the Interior in Kabul, and they are also operating alongside their tactical unit equivalents to provide support with regard to security techniques. Between 8,000 and 12,500 United States military advisors work with over 170,000 Afghan soldiers and 136,000 Afghan police officers.[42]

While these advisors have contributed markedly to the overarching United States-led campaign in Afghanistan, advisor skill sets do not typically fare well at the promotion boards. The Army for instance tends to promote officers that have commanded combat units, such as infantry, armor or aviation battalions.[43] The career advancement of military personnel who have performed well in building rapport, entrenching themselves in a foreign culture, and operating effectively with minimal direction in Afghanistan is

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[40] "GAO-13-381: Security Force Assistance," United States Government Accountability Office, April 2013, p. 8.

[41] Stewart Nusbaumer, "The New Afghanistan Air Force," Air & Space Magazine, January 2011, p. 1.

[42] Malkasian, Carter, Weston, J. Kael, "War Downsized," Foreign Affairs, April 2012, Vol. 91, Issue 2.

[43] Douglas Ollivant, "Parsing the New Promotion List for Army 2 Stars: There are Some Good Signs Here," Foreign Policy, January 2012, p. 1.

more or less limited. This is also evidenced by the institutional current proving too strong

for many in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands program, and many "Hands" did not return

to Afghanistan for a second tour as a result.[44] Yet after twelve years of continuous COIN-

focused that has resulted in a seasoned force with the experience and aptitude working as

foreign advisers, human intelligence professionals, linguists, and development workers,

the department plans to erase this nucleus of generated talent. As the Army and Marines

begin to cut around 100,000 personnel during the next few years, political and defense

leaders have announced plans to retain an expansible, experienced force that can be

reconstituted rapidly in the event of a major conventional conflict.[45] The department's

focus on re-modeling the force given the growth of conventional threats lends credence to

its plans to divest itself of the unique capabilities to conduct COIN operations. The

promotion boards serve as powerful messaging instruments in relaying what the Services

value for war.

Another substantial shift involving force composition pertains to the heavy

reliance on the reserve component. Critical enablers and logistics assets critical to

sustaining the COIN fight in Afghanistan largely reside in the reserve component,

including civil affairs capabilities.[46] Since 9/11, over 800,000 reservists have been

mobilized in support of COIN operations.[47] Yet the continual deployments to

Afghanistan have levied onerous requirements on the reserve component, and have often

times exceeded deployment to dwell policies. More problematic is that the department's

dependence on the reserve component will not only persist, but in fact increase as it

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[44] "Wanted: Ph.D.s Who Can Win a Bar Fight," Fernando Lujan, *Foreign Policy*, March 2013, p. 3.
[45] Ibid., 3.
[46] Department of Defense, "Quadrennial Defense Review Report," Secretary Robert Gates, 2010, p. 25.
[47] "Unit Cost and Readiness for Active and Reserve Component of the Armed Forces," Report to the Congress, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013, p. 3.

prepares to rebalance. The new strategic guidance issued by the department in January 2012 emphasizes the need to maintain a ready and capable reserve force by utilizing its years of war experience to meet a growing set of security challenges in the 21st century.[48] What this assertion conveniently ignores is that the reserve component has inherently more parochial mission requirements and contains different plan assumptions than those applied to the active component. While the reserve forces called upon for duty for COIN-centric warfare for the last twelve years has proved valuable, their core mission areas make them ill-suited to provide significant combat capabilities for high-end conventional warfare.

Training and Preparedness

The department has virtually transformed its training platforms in order to prepare forces to deploy in support of COIN operations in the Middle East. Specifically, the Army and the Marine Corps have implemented dramatic changes in its training curriculums from the individual professional military education levels up to large-scale mission rehearsal exercises prior to deployment. Not only have COIN principles moved to the forefront in battlefield exercises over the last twelve years, but also to the head of military classrooms as well. Army's Command and General Staff College (CGSC), for example, used to include about 30 hours worth of COIN course work for majors; as of 2008, it includes more than 200 hours of COIN core course work plus 40 hours of COIN electives.[49]

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[48] "Right-Sizing the Force: Lessons for the Current Drawdown of American Military Personnel," Bernard Rostker, *Center for a New American Security*, p. 5.
[49] Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force or Specialized Units?" Andrew Feickert, *Congressional Research Service*, January 2008, p. 6.

More dramatically, the Army and the Marine Corps have spent billions of dollars in cultivating realistic culminating exercises for deploying units by emulating the operational environment in Iraq and Afghanistan and incorporating insurgent techniques required for them to counter. The Army's two Combined Training Centers in the United States and the Marine Corps' Air Ground Combat Center have focused solely on operational requirements for COIN, to include incorporating Afghan role models and simulated improved explosive devices.[50] The Marine Corps restructured its Enhanced Mohave Viper exercise around the "Clear, Hold, Build" model espoused for successful COIN operations.[51]

The training overhaul orchestrated by the United States military to prepare its forces for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan over the last decade has produced an expert force in COIN and stability operations. However, this heavy concentration towards a narrowed capability area has detracted from the conventional readiness of the military, specifically Army and Marine Corps forces. Core competencies unique to these Services have suffered skill atrophy, and their most recent training plans once again underscore a departure from a focus on COIN to high-end kinetic warfare. Specifically, the Army is beginning to experience severe degradation in its ability to integrate fires with maneuver.[52] Over 90% of fire supporters are serving outside of their primary skill specialty and thus uncertified.[53]

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[50] "Military's Demand for Iraqi, Afghan Role Players Boosts Lexicon," Matt McCue, *Bloomberg*, November 2010.

[51] "Mojave Viper," Harold Kennedy, *National Defense,* Vol. 90, Issue 627, February 2006, p. 44.

[52] MacFarland, Shields, and Snow, "The King and I: The Impending Crisis in Field Artillery's Ability to Provide Fire Support to Maneuver Commanders," 2008, www.npr.org/documents/2008/may/**artillery**whitepaper.pdf.

[53] Ibid., 1.

In 2012, the Army published its revised training strategy titled "Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* to regain focus on combined arms maneuver and wide area security.[54] In order to adhere to these doctrinal prescriptions, the Army recently began revamping its brigade-level training exercises to emphasis commander-based training and reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) in austere environments required for conventional force-on-force engagements.[55] Similarly, the Marine Corps is replacing the Mojave Viper training exercise with the Integrated Training Exercise, which places a renewed focus on synchronizing combat ground, air and logistics forces in a combined arms event.[56] Moreover, starting in 2011 after the announcement of the United States troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Marine Corps and the Navy teamed up for a joint brigade-level training exercise named Bold Alligator to conduct amphibious operations for the first time in 10 years.[57] The Marine Corps' renovated training paradigm places renewed energy on combined arms maneuver, mountain, jungle and amphibious warfare which all underpin the essence of the Marine Corps.

The ostensible shift in training priorities within the Army and the Marine Corps highlight the significance in value between conventional warfare and COIN warfare. While live fire exercises have been overshadowed by an acute focus on stability operations exercises have diminished a broad range of military capability over the last twelve years, the department is in the process of reversing this phenomenon. The military

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[54] "The Army Training Strategy: Training in a Time of Transition, Uncertainty, Complexity and Austerity," Chief of Staff of the Army, October 2012, p. 5.
[55] "The CTC Program: Leading the March into the Future," Michael Barbee, *Military Review*, July 2013, p. 18.
[56] "MAG-13 Leads Integrated Training Exercise," Cpl. William Waterstreet, *Headquarters Marine Corps*, January 2013.
[57] "Marine Corps Amphibious Capabilities Will Be Put To Test," Emelie Rutherford, *Defense Daily,* Vol. 248, Issue 46, December 2010. p. 5.

Services must uphold their ability to subvert adversaries that have the potential to employ like capabilities, a concept that bellies the theoretical basis of COIN warfare. Ultimately, the impetus behind the department's restoration of conventional military training is that it reinforces what it knows it does well. Military preparation for COIN warfare required the Services to pigeonhole much of its combat capability, but the resurgence of high intensity combat operations as evidenced by their new training plans speaks to their importance.

Equipping our Force

Although many of the investments the department has made in readiness over the last decade are manpower-focused given the non-kinetic techniques surrounding COIN operations, it is important to note the department has given considerable pecuniary attention to equipment for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2008, Congress provided $16.8 billion to buy the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles in supplemental overseas contingency operations (OCO) funds to counteract the growing threat of IEDs.[58] Furthermore, the overuse of equipment coupled with the unforgiving terrain in which these equipment sets are being operated breeds substantial costs to maintain mission-capable equipment. In 2012, for instance, the department requested $11.9 billion for equipment reset – the cost of repairing, rebuilding and replacement equipment in support of operations in Afghanistan.[59]

However, the investments in acquiring and procuring equipment tailored for the operational environment in Afghanistan falls outside the confines of the department's business as usual acquisition process, and they have done little to interrupt long-term

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[58] "Troop Levels in Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues," Amy Belasco, *Congressional Research Service*, July 2009, p. 16.
[59] Congressional Budget Office, *Replacing and Repairing Equipment Used in Iraq and Afghanistan: The Army's Reset Program* (Washington DC: CBO, September 2007), p. xi.

Service recapitalization and modernization plans. Procurement funding in the FY2012 base defense budget request was $113 billion, an increase of approximately 10 percent from the FY2011 base budget.[60] Not only has the department segregated equipment funding specifically for COIN operations in the Middle East from its baseline budget, but its desire to modernize aligns with its desire to restore conventional weapons as its front line of defense. In the height of American embroilment in Iraq, the budget request for FY2008 prioritized traditional weapons programs and moving ahead with the vast majority of the acquisition programs included in the Services' long-range plans, the majority of which were also projected in the last Clinton Administration defense plan prior to September 11th.[61]

The standard acquisition plans and decisions made throughout the last decade separate from those made to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan exhibit the department's perception of COIN as shortsighted. Equipment requirements for COIN warfare are wholly disparate from those required to execute high intensity combat operations, and thus do not contribute to conventional military readiness. Yet the investments made in customizing end items required for Iraq and Afghanistan, such as MRAPs, lose relevance in the department's demarcation from large-scale COIN operations. Separating these niche investments from standard business practices within the budget process highlights the fact that military perceives conventional acquisition as indispensible in maintaining superiority over the enemy. COIN requirements are strictly additive, not complementary, to the capital-intensive nature of conventional warfare.

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[60] "Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget," Todd Harrison, *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, July 2011, p. 33.
[61] "Innovation or Inertia: The U.S. Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency," David Ucko, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Spring 2008, p. 299.

COIN in the Department's Rear-View Window

The department has conducted a massive overhaul of its ground force that has manifested in new capabilities inorganic to the force yet critical in ensuring success in the Iraq and Afghan wars. However, given the department's fiscal priorities in obscuring the role of COIN-specific skill assets and illuminating the strategic placement of conventional high-end capabilities at the drawdown of these wars, this overhaul is ephemeral at best. The department's plan to shrink the increased manpower figures comparable to 9/11 numbers, re-orient training programs to emphasis core competencies unique to both the Army and Marine Corps, and continue the growth of major acquisition programs underscores the futility of COIN in support of conventional warfare readiness. For instance, current discourse within the department suggests that the Army's security force assistance training brigade at the Joint Readiness Training Center and the Air Force's Air Advisor Academy at Fort Dix will be cut entirely.[62]

It is the confluence of the department's strategy to re-shape its personnel, training and the department's handling of fiscal planning over the last twelve years that renders COIN warfare a detraction from conventional spheres of war. The department has paid for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan war funding with a separate pot of money from the defense budget, and has been excluded in the Future Year Defense Program (FYDP), the five-year budget landscape proposed by the Services.[63] The salience of this is two-fold. For one, the department has bifurcated the funding available for fighting the COIN campaigns in Afghanistan from baseline funding, which includes peacetime operations,

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[62] Pre-decisional Department funding priorities for POM 15, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Force Training and Readiness.

[63] "Analysis of the FY2012 Defense Budget," Todd Harrison, *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, July 2011, p. 13.

procurement, R&D, etc. The department's standard business practices, to include preparing for major theater war, do not include large-scale COIN conflicts. Secondly, by not including OCO funds in out-year budget plans, the department has consciously refrained from pecuniary planning of these COIN-centric operations. The funds appropriated for COIN operations over the last decade are predicated on the department's reactive posture to the conflicts versus the proactive posture assumed by conventional manning, training and equipment requirements. If the department saw strategic utility in retaining COIN investments and capabilities after these wars culminated, the fiscal accounting between COIN and conventional warfare would have become indistinguishable.

The Defense Strategic Guidance promulgated in January 2012 by President Obama and former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta reinforces the United States' strategic priorities in the midst of the impending drawdown in Afghanistan and declining resources. The new strategy states, "U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations" and stresses the need to reinstate the combat capabilities required for a broad set of contingencies.[64] Key investments in the realm of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, countering anti-access/area denial strategies, and countering weapons of mass destruction typify the department's priorities given their kinetic preponderance.

Yet, the reality of the matter is that America's conventional military superiority has been predicated on its ability to deliver quick, cheap, and decisive success since the

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[64] "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," President Barack Obama, January 2011, p. 6.

early 1940s. [65] The department is innately predisposed to employ traditional conventional military operations, and its behavior towards fighting COIN operations further underscores its lack of malleability against an unlike enemy. The department's regression from COIN operations indicates it has placed too high of an emphasis on nation-building as a fighting tool rather than fighting itself. The department's current and planned investments gives fidelity to its perception that the core principle of fighting should be augmented by the capabilities required to succeed in nation-building missions rather than vice versa.[66] Put more plainly, the United States military will once again place the lavish use of firepower at the forefront of the battlefield by leading first with advanced weapon systems and not with its people.[67] This shift in paradigm is indicative in its reorientation of investments in manning, training and equipment towards high-end conventional combat in order to secure its role as a unipolar hegemon.

Conclusion

The Department of Defense has perceived 21st century COIN warfare as a protracted obligation rather than as an opportunity to refine its role in a highly complex and irregular world. As a result, military conventional readiness has suffered, and the department's augmented capabilities and corresponding investments are feckless in confronting similarly equipped adversaries. The theoretical underpinning of COIN requires a separate set of combat capabilities within the United States' military and a strategic shift away from kinetic supremacy. The United States has acquired tailored skill

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[65] "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," Jeffrey Record, Policy Analysis No. 577, Cato Institute, Sept 2006, p. 1.
[66] "Let's Build an Army to Win All Wars," Gian Gentile, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 52, 1st Qtr 2009, p. 1.
[67] "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," Jeffrey Record, Policy Analysis No. 577, *Cato Institute*, Sept 2006, p. 4

sets and adapted its force to effectively execute these unconventional wars in such a way that it can deliberately reverse its actions. The United States ground force has undoubtedly garnered invaluable experience in Afghanistan, but that vigor will be re-packaged towards recovering conventional warfare capabilities.

It is evident that the department aspires to migrate away from COIN warfare and its associated investments in order to reinstall conventional warfare as the face of the United States military. The recent doctrinal and resourcing shifts underscore the department's de-emphasis on COIN and the need to regain conventional military readiness as evidenced by the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance. The department's fixation on conventional capabilities, however, is predicated on its ability to control the enemy by employing weapons and kinetic assets and thus controlling the outcome of the conflict. The less compatible a partner culture is to America's, the harder it becomes to control COIN operations.[68] For this reason, the department's decision to re-mission its fighting force back to a conventional one is wise and entirely justifiable.

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[68] "Counterinsurgency and American Strategy, Past and Future," Steven Metz, *World Politics Review*, January 2012, p. 1.

Chapter II

How does the use of civilians on the battlefield affect the outcome of counterinsurgencies and has the United States miscalculated the proper mix of civilians and military personnel required to succeed in these wars?

Introduction

In late 2010, comedian Kathleen Madigan visited Helmand Province, Afghanistan and recalled her encounter with a young Marine captain who emphatically shared with her his unit's plans to build a school, establish a health clinic, and transform the local police force, among other things. As his list of ambitions continued to roll off his tongue, Madigan finally interjected and asked, "When are you going to invade Detroit?"[69] This anecdote effectively illustrates that the American way of fighting counterinsurgencies requires a comprehensive, multi-dimensional force that is largely un-kinetic. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the Department of Defense has been the primary proponent for constructing this force.

Of the roughly $1.2 trillion that has been appropriated for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military has received about 94%.[70] The Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have been allocated approximately $67 billion, comprising of about 5%.[71] Although the United States has attempted to employ a whole-of-government approach for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, it has failed by placing too much emphasis on the military component

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[69] Karl Eikenberry, "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan, Foreign Affairs, Sept/Oct 2013, Vol. 92, Issue 5, p. 65.
[70] Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, Congressional Research Service, March 2011, p. 2.
[71] Ibid., 3.

and not enough on the civilian. General Petraeus' masterpiece, Field Manual 3-24 "Counterinsurgency," states that as a counterinsurgency campaign is successfully prosecuted, the "government secures its citizens continuously, sustains and builds legitimacy through effective governance, and can manage and meet the expectations of the nation's entire population."[72] The complexity and the number of roles levied upon US soldiers exhausted their ability to fight and debilitated US strategic effectiveness. The US needed to leverage a proportionately larger number of civilians. Having done so would have likely prolonged the political tolerance of the United States' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States military is by and large ill-suited to house the entirety of the counterinsurgency portfolio, as it should reside primarily within a myriad of civilian-dominated organizations.

Literature Review

The US has put forth exorbitant amounts of time and resources towards the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the counterinsurgency campaigns it has engendered to achieve its strategic objectives transcend conventional military operational requirements. Many recognize the increased need for civilians on the counterinsurgency battlefield due to the fact that these conflicts are centered on the control of the indigenous civilians. Over the past few years, there has been a considerable uptick in the civilian presence in Afghanistan. Specifically, the number of Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) civilians increased from 531 to 1,300 between January 2009 and June 2011, and the total is projected to rise to 1,450 civilians operating

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[72] Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual No. 3-24, "Counterinsurgency," December 2006, Chapter 5, p. 2.

in the region by mid-2014.[73] This in large part is due to the escalating focus on transitioning security operations to the Afghans, thereby transferring many of the functions performed by the US military to the civilian sector.

Yet prior to the promulgation of US drawdown plans, several initiatives were underway to increase the role of civilians within the Middle East counterinsurgency efforts. In 2009, the State Department began building a Civilian Response Corps, a 250-member team comprised of nonmilitary personnel who could serve as first responders to conduct reconstruction and stability operations in foreign countries.[74] The tailored force was able to draw personnel from Departments of State, Agriculture, Justice, Homeland Security, Commerce, Treasury, Health and Human Services, and the USAID. The idea for an expeditionary force of civilians emanated from the aftermath of the US invasion in Iraq, when critics accused the US of being ill-prepared to "win the peace."[75] While the Corps was established to help alleviate the military of extraneous duties required by counterinsurgency operations, its assistance in these efforts remains very limited.

Additionally, President Obama heralded an effort, the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW), to expand US civilian presence in support of building governance and security capacity in Afghanistan in 2009. This workforce, under the authority of the Department of Defense, was charged with training and equipping groups of civilians to provide security, ensure access to basic services, and stimulate economic development.[76]

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[73] U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Evaluating U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan: For the 112th Congress," June 8, 2011, p. 6, available at http://urlm.in/kowi.
[74] Stew Magnuson, "New Civilian Force To Conduct Stability Operations," National Defense Magazine, December 2009, http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org.
[75] Ibid. 1.
[76] U.S. Government Accounting Office, GAO-12-285, "Afghanistan: Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence," February 2013, http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-285.

Perhaps most widely recognized as the hallmark of US civilian-military integration in 21st century counterinsurgencies is the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). Derived from the experience of US military civil affairs teams operating in Afghanistan, PRTs were espoused to help expedite national reconstruction efforts and influence the new and fragile Karzai government in early 2003.[77] PRTs initially consist of security forces, special operators, and troves of civilians from the USAID, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of State. These task-organized cells embedded themselves in Afghan society, and were assigned with projects such as building local infrastructure and facilitating information sharing among the populace.[78]

While many academics believe these civilian enhancements on the counterinsurgency battlefield have proved to be expedient endeavors, they often times view their shortcomings as eclipsing their success. For instance, many PRTs have a disproportionately low number of civilian personnel to military personnel. In January 2009, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reported that there were 1,021 military personnel and only 35 civilians in all US PRTs in Afghanistan.[79] This speaks to a larger issue of US civilian agencies simply lacking the end strength capacity during protracted and intricate stability operations. The two primary interagency partners germane to the Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction portfolio—Department of State and USAID—are relatively small organizations with a constrained

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[77] Volker Franke, "The Peacebuilding Dilemma: Civil-Military Cooperation in Stability Operations," International Journal of Peace Studies, Vol 11, No 2, Autumn 2006.
[78] Ibid., 11.
[79] Curt Tarnoff, "Afghanistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," Congressional Research Service, July 2009, p. 3, www.hsdl.org/?view&did=35054.

ability to rapidly deploy capabilities in support of large-scale, complex operations.[80] For example, the organic capacity of the Army in stability operations (e.g. civil affairs personnel) outnumbers the capacity of Department of State and USAID.[81]

While many critics share the concern that the US has not given civilian organizations due diligence within the counterinsurgency landscape, very few actually refutes their invaluable utility. In fact, civilians playing primary versus supporting roles in US counterinsurgency campaigns has been espoused by the Department of Defense and codified within joint doctrine. In December 2010, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness promulgated a Directive-Type Memorandum titled, Counterinsurgency Training and Reporting Guidance for Preparing U.S. Forces to Succeed in Afghanistan and Pakistan, directing interagency partners' assessments to be incorporated within established Department of Defense reporting, planning, and assessment processes.[82] Coinciding with the recognition to fuse interagency efforts with those of the military is the need to better operationalize civilians –such as those within the Department of State and USAID – to succeed in combat and austere environments. In an attempt to make it more combat-capable, USAID engendered the Office of Military Affairs in 2005, renamed Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation in 2011, which provides the focal point for synthesizing USAID and Department of Defense planning, training, education and policy.[83]

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[80] Thomas Szayna, "Integrating Civilian Agencies in Stability Operations," RAND Corporation, 2009, p 128.
[81] Ibid., 128.
[82] Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness, DTM-11-002, "Counterinsurgency Training and Reporting Guidance for Preparing U.S. Forces to Succeed in Afghanistan and Pakistan," December 2010, p. 5.
[83] U.S. Agency for International Development, "Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation," April 2013, http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office-4.

In fact, staunch proponents for civilians serving as the primary warriors within counterinsurgencies submit that their effectiveness in injecting humanitarian, economic, and development assistance to gain the support of the local population actually surpasses military efforts. There is a growing consensus that the indigenous population responds more favorably to the restoration of good governance and programs involving social and economic equities more so than the provision of aid and development provided by the military.[84] Military personnel can be useful in facilitating the delivery of aid given the decentralized and expansive parameters of counterinsurgencies; however many posit that US civilians should be responsible for their implementation. Moreover, the missions endemic to US civilian agencies, such as Department of State and USAID, are oriented to bolstering the long-term stability and security of nations vulnerable to insurgents. Anthony Cordesman, renowned national security analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argues, "You can't win where you do not go and stay…we begin to lose when we take over." Thus, it is asserted that US civilian agencies are better postured to sustain long-term operations endemic to the American way of fighting counterinsurgencies, and their smaller and non-kinetic footprint deprives them of the temptation to overextend themselves.

It is no surprise that national security scholars and practitioners advocating for a higher degree of civilian inculcation within counterinsurgency operations are in turn ostensibly wary of US military involvement in these conflicts. David Kilcullen contends that military force can only create pre-conditions for non-military measures to succeed,

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[84] Jamie Williamson, "Using Humanitarian Aid to 'Win Hearts and Minds': A Costly Failure?" International Review of the Red Cross, Vol. 93, No. 884, December 2011, p. 1037.

and they should leave the conflict once the bullets stop flying.[85] Furthermore, Karl

Eikenberry, retired United States Army lieutenant general and former U.S. ambassador to

Afghanistan, candidly stated:

> It was sheer hubris to think that American military personnel without the appropriate language skills and with only a superficial understanding of Afghan culture could, on six- or 12-month tours, somehow deliver to Afghan villages everything asked of them by the COIN manual.[86]

Some argue that the application of large amounts of military personnel within

counterinsurgencies is paradoxically inappropriate given they are unwanted by the

indigenous people. Firepower and cash are not fitting weaponry and do not bode well for

the US attempting to achieve strategic political outcomes. Jeffrey Record maintains that

transforming military victories into political ones are not only challenging, but fatal.

Moreover, it overlooks the recognition that insurgencies are first and foremost inherently

political struggles.[87] Therefore, US military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has

been a force of misalignment. The theoretical composition of counterinsurgencies, the

synergies created by political, economic and cultural instability, demands "a different

bureaucratic machinery altogether."[88]

Conversely, other analysts and academics maintain that the Department of

Defense should in fact retain the multifaceted operational capabilities to remain viable to

execute counterinsurgencies. In 2005, the Department codified short-term and long-term

goals for stability operations within Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 3000.05,

Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR)

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[85] David Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," Journal of Strategic Studies, January 2007, p. 611.
[86] Karl Eikenberry, "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan," Foreign Affairs, Sept/Oct 2013, Vol. 92 Issue 5, p. 64.
[87] Jeffrey Record, "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," Policy Analysis No. 577, Cato Institute, September 2006, p. 5.
[88] Major Fernando Lujan, "Light Footprints: The Future of American Military Intervention," Center for a New American Security, March 2013, p. 23.

Operations that included providing security and restoring essential services, garnering enduring and viable market economies, and promoting the rule of law.[89] Many argue because the nature of these conflicts involve a considerable amount of combat capacity for security purposes, the military must be engaged in post-conflict operations as much as they are involved intra-conflict.

More fervent military enthusiasts posit that the military should transform its capability repertoire to fight protracted wars aimed at nation building and countering insurgencies in the future. John Nagl, author of the renowned book "Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife," contends that the majority of the conflicts facing the US within the next 50 years will emanate from an "Arc of Instability" within the greater Middle East and parts of Africa and Central and South Asia, under which irregular warfare will become quite regular.[90] To mitigate the challenges associated with the high propensity that many of US adversaries will be insurgents, America's armed forces must change. Even with operations in Iraq complete and the drawdown of US ground forces in Afghanistan underway, there is still an appetite among COINdinistas to preserve and even grow counterinsurgency skills and capacity. Many war wonks support the notion that it is the intrinsic responsibility of the military to cultivate fragile states in order to ensure our own future security. Specifically, they advocate for redistributing investments in special operations forces to grow more capacity for "indirect action."[91]

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[89] Johnson G, Ramachandran V, Walz J. CERP in Afghanistan: "Refining Military Capabilities in Development Activities." PRISM Security Studies Journal [serial online]. March 2012, p. 82.
[90] John Nagl, "Preface to Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife," available at the website of the University of Chicago Press, http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/567702.html.
[91] Michele Flourney and Tammy Schultz, "Shaping US Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right," Center for a New American Security, June 2007, pg. 4.

However, it is insufficient interagency coordination capability more so than military miscalculations and civilian capacity shortfalls that is most conspicuous in the counterinsurgency literature. Michele Flourney, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, asserts that the US government lacks the mechanisms required to synchronize the multitude of agencies at all levels, both in Washington and on the front lines.[92] Specifically, she notes that the National Security Council is undermanned to both effectively facilitate the development of whole-of-government plans and oversee the deployment of the interagency operations already underway.[93] Furthermore, convoluted fiscal authority between US agencies exacerbates the ambiguity associated with a diverse counterinsurgency fighting force.

What is lacking in the literature is exactly how authorities and resources could be redefined and reallocated respectively to optimize the role of civilians within US-led counterinsurgencies. While the military should lead the initiative to shape the region or state in preparation for sustained development and stability post-conflict, it is the civilians that must be emboldened to execute those plans. Proposals to realign elements of institutional power within the US government civilian agencies are relatively sparse. Civilian-military cells, such as Civil-Military Operations Centers, Civilian-Military Centers, Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centers, and PRTs have generated varying degrees of success, but they are all piecemeal solutions that were never intended to redress the larger whole-of-government infusion issues.[94] The US government unambiguously has the capacity and skills to conduct counterinsurgency operations the

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[92] Michele Flourney, "Achieving Unity of Effort in Interagency Operations," Center for a New American Security, January 2008.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

way in which it subscribes to fighting them; however, these ingredients are too diffuse across multiple agencies to serve as a united counterinsurgency force.

Method and Data

This paper references a host of policy statements, news releases, congressional reports, and US government officials and reports to reinforce the argument made in support of increased civilian involvement within counterinsurgencies. Specifically, the analysis decomposes the role of the Department of State and USAID in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the success and challenges in the two conflicts. It also includes the whole-of-government initiatives engendered within these agencies to further counterinsurgency objectives, and how capabilities required for fighting US counterinsurgency operations inherently exist within soft power agencies more so than within the military.

Case Studies

The role of USAID in US Middle East counterinsurgencies

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) serves as the linchpin for promoting economic growth, democracy, and smart governance worldwide, and thus has been a critical component of executing US counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is the predominant conduit for development assistance and plays a pivotal role in security-sector reform. This includes stability and reconstruction, counter-narcotics, law enforcement among other activities.[95] Because USAID contains such a prolific portfolio with close collaboration with several organizations, such as US Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the US Customs and Border Protection,

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[95] Christopher Paul, "What Works Best When Building Partnership Capacity?" RAND Corporation, 2013, p. 10.

roles and responsibilities are often times muddied. While this reflects the comprehensive nature of fighting counterinsurgencies, the mission of USAID cannot be overstated.

Today, USAID operates in more than 100 countries across the globe, and has been actively pursuing global development and sustainment for over 65 years.[96]Although providing foreign aid has been the agency's modus operandi since its inception, the US aid framework has undergone a significant transformation in the aftermath of 9/11. The 2002 National Security Strategy, released by the White House, established for the first time global development, a primary objective of US foreign aid, as a third pillar of US national security, commensurate with defense and diplomacy."[97] Given the emphasis on bolstering political, economic and security platforms in US-style counterinsurgencies, USAID has been an invaluable player in Afghanistan and Iraq. Specifically, Afghanistan remained the top recipient of total US economic and military assistance, totaling 12.9 billion dollars, from 2007-2011; Iraq had held the premier spot from 2003–2007.[98] While USAID spearheads foreign aid, namely humanitarian aid, the US Department of Treasury manages a technical assistance program that offers temporary financial advisors to countries reforming their economic foundations and combating insurgents, such as Afghanistan.[99] Again, these roles, often closely shared with various agencies, can yield confusion in these complex operations.

The application of foreign aid in support of counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan represents a point of departure from the majority of assistance programs

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[96] "USAID History," http://www.usaid.gov.
[97] Curt Tarnoff, "Foreign Aid: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy," Congressional Research Service, February 2011, p. 1.
[98] U.S. Agency for International Development, "Foreign Assistance Fast Facts: FY2011," http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/data/fast-facts.html.
[99] Curt Tarnoff, "Foreign Aid: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy," Congressional Research Service, February 2011, p. 22.

after the 1970s.[100] In the past decade, the preponderance of aid for development in Iraq

and Afghanistan has been for constructing roads, schools, power plants, health clinics,

and irrigation systems. In Iraq alone, more than $10 billion has gone towards economic

infrastructure.[101] Moreover, USAID invested considerably in education across

Afghanistan, a critical ingredient for promoting democracy and directly combating the

insurgents that seek to undermine it. It printed more than 97 million textbooks in 2011 for

grades 1-12, trained more than 53,000 teachers, and built or refurbished 680 schools.[102]

While USAID is currently undertaking ostensibly ambitious development efforts

in order to achieve US strategic goals in Afghanistan, it didn't necessarily start off that

way. USAID initially focused on humanitarian and short-term assistance, such as food

assistance.[103] Soon after, the agency recognized the magnitude of aid requirements for

galvanizing economic growth, implementing effective governance, and creating a

functioning workforce in order to weaken and defeat the Taliban. By 2008, USAID was

orchestrating a litany of development programs, to include road construction and

rehabilitation, electrical network improvements, credit and micro-credit programs, and

privatization support for state-owned enterprises.[104]

Although USAID lacks a kinetic component that the Department of Defense

single-handedly provides within counterinsurgencies, the aid and development programs

spearheaded by USAID have proven to be a powerful weapon in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Its contribution to the fight outmatches what the military has attempted to do with its

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[100] Ibid., 24.
[101] Ibid., 24.
[102] "Development and COIN in Regional Command-East: 2004-2008," Military Review, May-June 2012, p. 7.
[103] Ibid., 4.
[104] Ibid., 4.

unencumbered fiscal allowance, simply because USAID has performed in Iraq and Afghanistan much like it always has since its inception. The military, on the other hand, required an entire makeover for these conflicts. This notion is evident in the military's implementation of the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) that has provided commanders with tactical means to perform a host of stability tasks that have traditionally been conducted by US, foreign or host nation professional civilian personnel or agencies. [105] These tasks ranged from facilitating access to basic services, support to provincial leaders, and economic development projects. PRTs have been the biggest consumers of CERP funds, and they undoubtedly benefitted from the flexibility and rapid access associated with these funds. The nature of these funds differs drastically from those spent by USAID, which are subject to strict and mandatory oversight and reviews.[106] However, the scrutiny associated with these funds forces discipline with regard to prioritizing and budgeting US development projects. This discipline has been largely absent in economic and security reconstruction efforts undertaken by the Department of Defense, and the lack of accountability and credibility in these functions has hampered progress within US counterinsurgency campaigns.

Within counterinsurgencies, development aid is as important as ammunition and artillery shells; however, it is only success if economic, political and security improvements resulting from aid are sustainable. Long-term persistent engagement lies at the heart of US COIN doctrine, and USAID and its civilian workforce serves as this

[105] "Development and COIN in Regional Command-East: 2004-2008," Military Review, May-June 2012, p. 5.
[106] Ibid., 5.

mission's headquarters.[107] In fact, USAID in collaboration with the Department of State

heralded its plans to Congress to resume a wide range of assistance in support of

Pakistan's fight against terrorism.[108] This includes helping Pakistani law enforcement and

a multibillion-dollar dam in disputed territory during an impeding period of vulnerability

with US troop withdrawal in neighboring Afghanistan."[109]

The role of US Department of State in US Middle East counterinsurgencies

Much like USAID, the Department of State has played an instrumental role in

executing holistic counterinsurgency strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Specifically, it

has heavily supported the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in

establishing a framework for a thriving populace, and governance that emphasizes

democratic principles through a viable rule of law and high moral standards. The United

States remains dedicated to helping Afghans implement their vision for a country that is

stable and committed to protecting civic rights, including women's rights and religious

tolerance.[110]

The Department of State intensified its role in Afghanistan in 2009 when the

administration and Congress recognized the need for an upsurge in civilian efforts to

influence the Afghan governance domain. In response, the State Department stood up the

Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan under Ambassador

Holbrooke, which provided a single office where civilians from various bureaus and

agencies could exchange information and coordinate efforts. [111] Holbrooke also lead the

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[107] Colonel Chadwich Clark, "Strategic Thinking in an Era of Persistent Conflict," Military Review, May-June 2012, p. 34.
[108] "U.S. Quietly Releasing $1.6B in Pakistan Assistance," USA Today, October 2013.
[109] Ibid.
[110] U.S. Department of State, "Afghanistan," http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/.
[111] "Development and COIN in Regional Command-East: 2004-2008," Military Review, May-June 2012, p. 14.

influx of hundreds of civilians into Afghanistan, both in the Embassy and in field positions for development projects along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.[112] In addition, Department of State crafted civilian-military operational plans for all twelve American PRTs in addition to developing plans for Regional Command East, for Regional Command South writ large.[113] Furthermore, the State Department has played a palpable hand in helping Afghanistan prepare for its highly anticipated presidential election in 2014.

Perhaps the most recognized undertaking by the State Department is the development of the Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq (OSC-I) to ensure long-term stability in Iraq and perpetuate US-Iraqi relations following the departure of American troops. Iraq serves as a strategic hub in securing US democratic values within the Middle East region, and OSC-I puts the role of US Department of State at the forefront. Unfortunately, much like USAID has experienced, the perennial money tree for direct civilian involvement in Afghanistan will soon be uprooted as the US scales down funding for operations and assistance in 2014.[114] Supplemental funding from Congress secures near-term investment, such as oversight activities and civilian protection but this will vanish in tandem with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

To complicate matters further, there have been notable missteps within the US whole-of-government efforts to clearly delineate responsibility between the State Department and the Defense Department. While the US initially planned for the State Department to assume key responsibilities after military operations ceased, it did not

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[112] Ibid., 14.
[113] "Waiting on a Civilian Surge in Afghanistan," Interview with John Herbst, Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010.
[114] Josh Rogin, "Budget Day: State Department Reducing Role in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2014," Foreign Policy, April 2013.

receive adequate funding to perform all of the stipulated post-conflict tasks; this resulted

in State requesting assistance from the presiding Combatant Command (U.S. Central

Command) in charge of conducting military operations there to provide security and

logistics support in enclaves where OSC-I personnel resided and the OSC-I conducted its

activities. [115] This budget-induced dichotomy within OSC-I caused it to become directly

and uniquely involved in supporting significant functions for both Departments that were

essential for implementing both security cooperation and security assistance activities.

However, it was the profound dissidence on effectively scoping the OSC-I

mission that jeopardizes the US from fully achieving full range of planned DoD security

cooperation priorities. [116] Interagency tensions inhibited accomplishing efforts important

to improving the Iraqi government's security sector and enhancing bilateral security

relations with Iraq. In fact, a U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General report

released in September 2013 stated, "Disagreement between Department of State and

Department of Defense officials detracted from overall unity of effort and resulted in

mixed signals, confused mission objectives, and unclear lines of authority, particularly in

Baghdad between the U.S. Mission and the OSC-I."[117]

OSC-I is but one example of a host of fiscal quagmires confronting the

Department of State in support of the counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. For

instance, it took the State Department four years to garner the funds necessary from

Congress to implement the Civilian Response Corps. [118] This program as mentioned

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[115] U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, "Assessment of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Mission Capabilities," September 2013, p. 6.
[116] Ibid., 17.
[117] Ibid., 17.
[118] "Waiting on a Civilian Surge in Afghanistan," Interview with John Herbst, Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010.

earlier held much promise for providing a robust force package containing civilians from various US agencies and organizations during the post-conflict era in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the failure of the US to manufacture a long-term Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) with Iraq in the aftermath of combat operations illustrates the complexities of establishing lines of authorities within counterinsurgencies. Like most SOFAs, the US-Iraq SOFA delineates rules and regulations regarding civil and criminal jurisdiction of US forces operating in country, weapon possession, uniform wearing, customs, taxes, entry/exit into Iraq, yet it differs from most SOFAs in having a concrete expiration date; the US-Iraq SOFA expired in December 31, 2011.[119] The absence of a long-term SOFA compounds the challenges of securing fiscal support for stability operations within the confines of OSC-I.

Not only have budget-related barricades and inter-Departmental strains adversely impacted progress in the Department of State's ability to directly influence US counterinsurgency endeavors in Iraq and Afghanistan, but its institutional stigmas seem to be equally as problematic. The State Department's John Herbst, former State Department Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, who was primary frontrunner in staffing the civilian efforts in Afghanistan, admits that the department has "a substantial risk-averse culture when it comes to deploying its own civilians in an unpredictable and precarious environment.[120]

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[119] Chuck Mason, "U.S-Iraq Withdrawal/Status of Forces Agreement," Congressional Research Service, January 2011, p. 7.
[120] "Waiting on a Civilian Surge in Afghanistan," Interview with John Herbst, Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010.

Analysis

While the US framework for fighting counterinsurgency entails a multi-faceted campaign to combat political, economic, and security vulnerabilities susceptible to insurgent control, it has overextended itself militarily in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Persistent military deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have proven politically unpalatable in the long run, and ultimately resulted in a forcible exit plan for both counterinsurgency campaigns. Employing civilians within various agencies that already specialize in areas such as reconstruction, development, and societal changes, allows for the US to be engaged in these conflicts longer.

The US strategic approach for Afghanistan is three-pronged, comprising of a military campaign against al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban insurgents; a civilian campaign to strengthen the political, economic and civil foundations; and an intensified diplomatic push to culminate conflict and facilitate a more secure future for the country. This strategy of "fight, talk, build," as referred to by former Secretary of State Clinton, represents the political remedy to end conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and offers the best hope of peace and stability for the region.[121]

The first of these three elements, however, has a tangible expiration date. It is the latter two efforts that capture the long-term plans to sustain and improve their security and governance practices that underpin US counterinsurgency principles. In fact, RAND Corporation conducted a study titled "How Insurgencies End" where it examined 89 insurgencies and concluded that the median length of an insurgency is ten years,

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[121] Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, "Special Report: Afghanistan and Pakistan Civilians Engagement," Department of State, November 2011, p. 1.

generally tailing out to an end state of 16 years.[122] Because of the lengthy timeline

endemic to counterinsurgencies, it is difficult for policymakers to preserve political

capital required to fully achieve US strategic end states. As a result, they must leverage

the skill sets among civilian agencies whose missions already align with those needed in

post-conflict shaping and reconstruction operations. A prolonged campaign will most

likely yield higher political and public tolerance if it involves the expansion of civilian

agencies' roles versus the transformation of US military conduct.

Furthermore, a sound and sustainable US civilian presence in Iraq post-conflict

should have been at the forefront of the US proposal versus the remaining troop numbers.

This would have increased the likelihood of an enduring Status of Forces Agreement

(SOFA) between US and Iraq if the US had downplayed the role of a continuing military

presence and accentuated the utility of a larger civilian task-organized force focused on

diplomacy and economic stability within the Iraqi state. Because civilians do not have the

kinetic capabilities of military forces, a SOFA containing procedures for US personnel

committing wrongdoings or transgressing Iraq authority would have been much easier to

reach consensus with the Iraqi government.

In order to succeed in its subscribed way of fighting counterinsurgencies, the US

must adjust its warfighting fulcrum to empower civilian organizations so that their niche

missions and capabilities can be translated into these conflicts. Department of State and

USAID's systemic underfunding has plagued effective planning, development assistance,

and stabilization initiatives, and has robbed these pertinent civilian organizations of

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[122] Ben Connable, "How Insurgencies End," RAND Corporation, 2010, p. xii.

deployable assets.[123] Thus, the Department of Defense should represent the bedrock of security support to civilians rather than spearheading holistic, whole-of-government operations that typify US counterinsurgencies. For instance, the Marine Corps provides support to the Department of State, codified through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of State and Defense, cited in the US Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 12 Diplomatic Security, that allows State principal officers or their designees to exert direct operational control of assigned Marine Corps personnel during diplomatic missions, such as guarding a US embassy abroad.[124] The US should consider broadening this initiative and applying a similar paradigm to counterinsurgency operations in order to provide the necessary security support to civilian teams. Although force protection has posed a series of challenges for civilian warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan, enhancing funding authorities within State and USAID would streamline security augmentation requirements levied on the Department of Defense and improve the efficacy of economic development, security and diplomatic endeavors in counterinsurgency campaigns.

Conclusion

While US efforts to amalgamate civilian-based humanitarian, economic and stability activities within its operational counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan are laudable, the applied number of civilians and military personnel remains an imbalanced equation. Civilian organizations whose missions are most germane to fighting the root causes of insurgencies – Department of State and USAID – are certainly

[123] Joseph Cerami, "The Interagency and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Roles," Strategic Studies Institute, December 2007, p. 114.
[124] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual," Vol. 12, Sec. 431 Authorities, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/88396.pdf.

better poised than the Department of Defense to implement sound and sustainable governance and stability operations once combat operations culminate; their organizational toolkits are already equipped with the capabilities to conduct them.

The revival of US counterinsurgency doctrine around 2006 laid the strategic foundation that would lead the American military to undergo a humanitarian facelift. Rather than properly augment civilian organizations to operate seamlessly to employ a bottom-up development and reconstruction paradigm, the US employed a top down military approach based on commander's intent.[125] The Department of State and USAID have artfully applied niche capabilities, such as PRTs, to bolster and advance US counterinsurgency objectives in the Middle East. Their success, however, has been overshadowed by mission overreach within the Department of Defense due to their massive budget and manpower allotment. In the future, the US must break institutional stovepipes, realign combat capability within the Department of State and USAID, and diffuse funds more appropriately if it plans to remain committed to its current counterinsurgency template.

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[125] U.S. Agency for International Development, "Civilian-Military Operations Guide," April 2010, p. 5. https://www.cimicweb.org/cmo/compapp/Documents/United%20States/CMOG%20Version%201.0[1].pdf.

Chapter III

Is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles as the primary weapon in US counterterrorism operations more effective than US counterinsurgency operations in the Middle East?

Introduction

In May 2013, President Obama heralded a comprehensive strategy during a speech at National Defense University to effectively counter terrorism as the United States winds down its combat operations in in Afghanistan.[126] The impetus behind the change in policy to fight terrorists worldwide is three fold: the threat terrorists pose to U.S. national security looms large, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have proven effective in killing operatives abroad, and U.S. counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be replicated in the future. Indeed, UAVs have allowed the U.S. to expand counterterrorism (CT) activities beyond the borders of their counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, killing key leaders within Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

However, there remains significant discourse around whether or not UAVs as a CT tactic or soldiers embedded within the indigenous population as a COIN tactic is more effective to ultimately combat terrorists' ability to orchestrate an attack on the U.S. homeland. Current COIN doctrine, contained within Joint Publication 3-24, states, "In COIN, the defeat of the enemy's military capabilities is just one component of what is ultimately a broader struggle for control over a target population that requires a balanced mix of both lethal and nonlethal actions."[127] Thus, U.S. COIN paradigm requires a heavy emphasis on non-kinetic activities; that is, those addressing the political, economic, and

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[126] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university.
[127] Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency," November 2013, page 4.

security vulnerabilities of the host nation government that fuel the insurgency. Yet, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven that the expectation for ground troops to both show restraint of force among the civilian population and then quickly use it against insurgents is sophomoric. UAVs, the premier weapon within U.S. CT operations, should also be the preeminent kinetic method within U.S. COIN operations.

Definitions and Omissions

There are some important definitions and distinctions to be discussed upfront that underpin the analysis that follows. In the first chapter, I define COIN operations as comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain an insurgency and address its root causes.[128] Counterterrorism, as defined by the U.S. Army Field Manual, is "operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt and respond to terrorism."[129] Both COIN and CT are considered tenets under the broader irregular warfare architecture and can be employed in isolation or in combination with each other.

However, many defense scholars warn about conflating the theory of CT and COIN, asserting that they are two distinct warfare models with disparate assumptions on the use of force, the role the population plays, about the importance of host nation government legitimacy.[130] Although nationalist insurgencies such as the Taliban and transnational groups, namely Al-Qaeda, have different motivations that underwrite U.S. COIN and CT operational campaigns, respectively, they both asymmetrically employ

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[128] Department of State, "United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide," January 2009, page 12.
[129] Headquarters Department of the Army, "Field Manual No. 3-24 'Counterinsurgency,'" December 2006, Chapter 1, p. 5.
[130] Michael J. Boyle, "Do Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Go Together?," *International Affairs,* Vol. 86: 2 (2010), p. 336.

terror to attain their political ends.[131] To that end, U.S. strategic objectives in both CT and

COIN are to deny these individuals the ability to plan and carry out attacks against the

U.S. In discussing the effectiveness and utility of UAVs within my argument, COIN and

CT operations are, in essence, interchangeable. Finally, I will explicitly not address the

legal debate of scoping the parameters of the Authorization of the Use of Force in

analyzing the use of UAVs in the Middle East. My arguments will focus only on the

operational effectiveness through the operational prism of U.S. COIN operations. That

discussion, although important, is outside the scope of my argument.

Literature Review

There is no shortage of literature on the effectiveness of UAVs to combat

terrorists and insurgents that aim to plan and execute attacks on the U.S. homeland.

While the proponents of UAVs tend to argue that they provide a sustainable, long-term

kinetic approach to addressing global Islamist combatants, opponents of UAVs assert

they may actually contribute to the growing number and more diffuse nature of terrorist

groups. Thus, it is important to analyze the repository of existing literature and narratives

of UAVs, specifically the main arguments underlying the positions of its advocates and

antagonists.

The literature that supports the use of UAVs in the U.S. global fight against

terrorism share the position that they have been the chief kinetic tool that has weakened

and largely dismantled Al-Qaeda core. Since President Obama came into office, UAVs

have killed an estimated 3,300 al Qaeda, Taliban, and other jihadist operatives in Pakistan

and Yemen. This figure includes over 50 senior leaders of al Qaeda and the Taliban—top

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[131] David Jones, "Counter-COIN: Counterinsurgency and the Preemption of Strategy," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 35 Issue 9, page 599.

figures who are pivotal planners and not easily replaced.[132] UAVs have not only

annihilated key persons within terrorist groups, but they have forced them to change their

tactics and behaviors in an attempt to evade attacks. In fact, documents retrieved from

Osama bin Laden's compound reveal he acknowledged the debilitating effect on Al-

Qaeda's movements, advising high-level operatives to avoid gathering in large numbers

and only be out during overcast days.[133]

Another argument prevalent in pro-UAV literature is that UAVs are relatively

cheap to operate and manage, allowing for a more viable operational footprint than large,

protracted deployments of U.S. ground troops. In fact, the UAVs themselves are

markedly less expensive compared to other U.S. aviation platforms. The MQ-9 Reaper,

furnished with the most powerful weapons of all drones, costs around $12 million per

airframe, while a conservative estimate of the cost of an F-22, the Air Force's most

advanced war plane, is 10 times more expensive.[134] Not only do advocates for UAVs

make the case that they are exorbitantly more resourceful than other platforms, but many

proponents submit that the employment costs are relatively negligible. Pilots of the

UAVs can control them virtually, and there are modest costs for infrastructure and the

associated launch recovery element responsible for managing munitions loads and routine

maintenance.

This argument seamlessly flows into another one that UAV advocates tend to

make; because there are relatively marginal infrastructure and footprint costs associated

with UAVs, the U.S. can disentangle itself from kinetic operations against insurgents and

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[132] Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," *Brookings Institution*, July/August 2013.
[133] Peter Bergen, "The Last Days of Osama bin Laden," *Time*, Vol. 179 Issue 18, May 2012.
[134] Romesh Ratnesar, "Five Reasons Why Drones Are Here to Stay," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, May 2013, http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-05-23/five-reasons-why-drones-are-here-to-stay.

terrorists fairly easily and quickly. Compared to the nearly 400 U.S. and coalition bases

built in Afghanistan, to include camps, forward operating bases, and combat outposts,

many drones are based at previously established airfields in host countries that are

modified and modernized by American engineers.[135] This allows optimal flexibility in

employing UAVs and precludes the need to entrench U.S. military assets in the countries

where its targets are residing.

Advocates of UAVs maintain that the confluence of their small footprint, low-cost

and kinetic effectiveness have yielded politicians a palatable platform on which to

continue hunting and killing terrorists with malevolent intentions to conducts attacks on

the U.S. While the counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost over

6,800 American lives in combat, UAV operations in the broader Middle East have spared

none.[136] The literature endorsing the continued use of UAVs to address the threat of

jihadist fighters is undoubtedly one side of the argument; however, there is an

overwhelming undercurrent within *all* of existing work that acknowledges that the threat

terrorists and insurgents pose to U.S. national security is not abating. Understanding the

longevity of the threat, UAV protagonists state, the U.S. must wield a response with

commensurate endurance. The American public has a proportionately large influence on

how U.S. senior leaders and lawmakers react, and their tolerance for UAV operations in

the Middle East over combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be ignored.

Despite the prominent contention surrounding drones, a majority of Americans (56%)

continue to support the program, according to a February survey conducted by Pew

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[135] Micah Zenko, "Where the Drones Are: Mapping the Launch Pads for Obama's Secret Wars," *Foreign Policy*, May 2012.
[136] http://costsofwar.org/article/us-killed-0.

Research, and only 26% oppose it.[137] Perhaps most surprising is that the position on the use of UAVs cuts across partisan lines, with 68% of Republicans and 58% of Democrats approving of the drone operations.[138]

The literature and arguments touting the efficacy of UAV operations ultimately all agree that they are the best weapon to counter terrorists and Islamist operatives that remain committed to attacking the U.S. to advance their ideological and political agenda. They represent the most preferable and surgical tactical answer that has left Al-Qaeda and the Taliban with anemic leadership nexuses, compelling them to change their operational techniques and maneuvering. Cameron Munter, former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, states that drones are actually the most humane tools the U.S. could possibly employ in the broad fight against terrorism.[139] A targeted approach with the judicious use of UAVs, advocates contend, provides the U.S. with an opportunity to progressively contain militant combatants plotting attacks on the U.S. without providing a conspicuous presence endemic to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is an equally saturated pool of literature opposing the use of UAVs to counter global terrorists and insurgents. Scholars and policy analysts that unfavorably view UAVs include "COIN-dinistas," critics of nebulous Authorization of the Use of Force parameters, and those who views them as a breach of sovereignty.[140] Dissecting their dithers associated with UAVs and their ineffectiveness to disrupt and dismantle terrorist and insurgent networks is necessary to full understand their limitations.

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[137] *Pew Research Center*, May 2013, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/23/a-majority-of-americans-still-support-use-of-drones-despite-questions/.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Cameron Munter, speaking at the Pakistan Afghanistan Federation Forum, hosted by the Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Winter 2014.
[140] As discussed in previous chapters, "COIN-dinistas" those who advocate for General Petraeus' population-centric COIN warfare, inspired by British and French COIN originators early in the 20th century

Many critics that are diametrically opposed to UAV operations as the prime counterterrorism tactic maintain that they are not only unproductive, but actually counterproductive. While UAVs have successfully killed key members of targeted terrorist and insurgent groups, many policy and national security experts are growing increasingly concerned that UAV operations *themselves* are creating more of them. The secretive nature of UAVs has provided Islamist extremists with fodder to generate a narrative to recruit more combatants. Specifically, many posit that the underlying obscurity of UAVs fosters further alienates the U.S. in its efforts to stymie the spread of al-Qaeda and its associated ideology that fuels its appeal.[141]

While proponents of UAVs have argued that they've decimated so many key individuals within terrorist and insurgent factions to the point that they are structurally weakened, the opponents of the strikes assert their success is immeasurable. Richard Clarke, the architect of the U.S. drone program, even stated recently that U.S. "may actually be creating terrorists rather than eliminating them by using this program in the wrong way."[142] Indeed, there are several accounts of insurgents and terrorists claiming responsibility for attacks in direct retaliation for UAV strikes. In March 2009, the Pakistani Taliban attacked the Lahore policy academy in response to continued U.S. UAV operations, with Hakimullah Mehsud, Baitullah Mehsud's successor as leader of the Pakistani Taliban, heralding that the Taliban "will continue to launch suicide attacks until U.S. drone attacks are stopped."[143]

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[141] "The Impact of CIA Drone Strikes and the Shifting Paradigm of US Counterterrorism Strategy", Joseph Karam and David Gray, *Global Security Studies*, Summer 2013, Vol 4, Issue 3, page 57.
[142] "Top Counter-Terror Chief Slams Drone Assassination Program," June 2014, http://www.washingtonsblog.com.
[143] Andrew Callam, "Drone Wars: Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles," *International Affairs Review*, Vol. XVIII No 3:Winter 2010, http://www.iar-gwu.org/node/144.

Not only do adversaries of UAV operations emphasize the danger drones pose in serving as a recruitment tactic for terrorist and insurgent organizations, but they also contend that UAVs are contributing to diplomatic erosion between the U.S. and countries in which terrorists and insurgents are operating to attack the U.S. While the seemingly obvious success of drones precipitated an increase in their use between 2009-2011, many argue that the breach in sovereignty by the U.S. has yielded indelible consequences, including a more angered transnational Pashtu population and the deterioration of diplomatic relations with Pakistan.[144] There is pervasive discourse over the level of support from the Pakistani government of U.S drone strikes within its borders, but critics broaden their case against them by claiming they breed mission creep that extends beyond the interest of American national security. UAVs operations, they argue, are a convenient tactical tool that insidiously extends the parameters of the U.S. strategy against terrorist and insurgent networks worldwide. "Micah Zenko, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, stated, "We don't say that we're the counterinsurgency air force of Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, but we are."[145] Troves of literature against the broad use of UAVs to kill identified terrorists and insurgents submit that the tactical precision of drones have dangerously morphed into a strategic political approach to the problem that will inevitably lead to U.S. foreign policy failure. Terrorist expert Audrey Cronin claims that, "An instrument of war seems to have become a policy rather than the other way around."[146]

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[144] Peter Matulich, "Why COIN Principles Don't Fly with Drones," *Small Wars Journal*, February 2012.
[145] Scott Shane, "White House Presses for Drone Rule Book," *The New York Times*, November 2012.
[146] Audrey Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What does it Mean to Win?," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Nov 2013, page 186.

"COIN-dinistas" are generally incredulous about the use of UAVs to effectively counter terrorists or insurgents because they only kill the individuals without addressing the root cause of their discontent. Counterinsurgency operations, as codified within strategic military documents, requires a multi-pronged approach involving a concurrent economic, political, social and security response to truly counter terrorists and insurgents' underlying motivations. UAVs, they argue, are woefully insufficient tactical technique to fulfill even the security element within counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, they contend that human intelligence, arguably more than any other type of intelligence, is integral in understand the violent sentiments behind terrorist and insurgent movements. Because U.S. UAV strikes almost always eliminate terrorist operatives, it is deprived of the opportunity to gain cascading intelligence that could be obtained through questioning them.[147] For "COIN-dinistas," this limitation is a disqualifier given the vital role of information transfer within successful counterterrorism campaigns.

Perhaps the most pronounced undertone behind the arguments put forth by UAV critics is the lawfulness in question behind their vast use and employment. There are unambiguous legal ramifications in question behind the use of UAVs and whether or not the U.S. can rightfully continue to vindicate strikes against insurgents and terrorists abroad. Opponents are resolute in asserting that the narrative surrounding the use of drones in support of counterterrorism operations, that is, it is a U.S. strategic priority is to protect American lives, is unacceptable. The long-term costs in authority and moral implications, they declare, are not fully weighed alongside the marginal near-term benefit. Ardent opponents of UAV operations argue that they are simply immoral and unjust weapons because unintended consequences, albeit outweighed their success,

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[147] Ibid, 186.

generate irreparable damage to U.S. objectives. Prolific legal and moral deliberations, including accusations of extra-judiciary executions, violation of international humanitarian law, conveniently dismissing the right to due process and inadvertent civilian casualties, dominate the chorus of UAV critics.[148]

There is abounding existing literature to support scoping or even completely shuttering the use of UAVs to fight terrorists and insurgents channeling their political and ideological fervor against the U.S. Reluctantly acknowledging, however, that the threat posed by these networks is not only unrelenting but metastasizing, much of the existing work is grappling with how to manufacture a UAV program that delineates wartime UAV operations from peacetime UAV operations. The U.S. existing constitutional framework is currently designed to declare war within the confines of state-on-state conflict.[149] While many scholars call for the need to scope and define an operational architecture that is tenable and sustainable for future UAV operations, it is uncertain within the currently policy circles what that looks like.

Methods & Data

I will unpack current UAV operations in Pakistan and Yemen as my primary case studies for analysis. I leverage a variety of data sources, to include strategic defense documents, open source CIA/DIA documents, congressional reports, think-tank reviews, surveys from civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen. To illuminate the differences between drone operations in Yemen and Pakistan, I will contrast COIN operations in Afghanistan and Iraq where appropriate.

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[148] Joseph Karam and David Gray, "The Impact of CIA Drone Strikes and the Shifting Paradigm of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy," *Global Security Studies*, Summer 2013, Vol. 4, Issue 3, page 56.
[149] Brad Taylor, "Al Awlaki: The Difference Between War and Peace," October 2011, http://bradtaylorbooks.com.

Case studies:

The expansive deployments of UAVs operating in Pakistan and Yemen, although contentious in nature, have proven fruitful in eradicating key Al-Qaeda and Taliban members. Drone strikes in these two countries persist, branded as silent killers, compared to the ostensible combat challenges associated with the ongoing U.S. COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the CT operations in Pakistan and Yemen are markedly different, both in execution and the organizations spearheading them. UAV operations in Pakistan and Yemen are executed under the authority of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) versus the U.S. military, as is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, a different authorities framework, operating under Title 50 authorities versus Title 10, provides plausible deniability to U.S. drone strikes.[150] This configuration of authorities has yielded unprecedented murkiness surrounding UAV operations, but they have undeniably weakened Al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Qaeda members in Yemen and Pakistan, respectively.

UAV Operations in Pakistan

Pakistan is the birthplace of global Islamist jihad and hosts a series of terrorist of insurgent networks that pose a threat to the U.S. Pakistan is perhaps the most littered with the highest number of high-value targets in accordance with the U.S. intelligence because of the sheer profile of networks. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, there are 12 different domestic terrorist groups, and 32 different transnational groups, all of which are largely categorized within sectarian, anti-Indian, Afghan Taliban, Al-Qaeda and its

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[150] Leila Hudson, Colin Owens & David Callen, " Drone Warfare in Yemen: Fostering Emirates Through Counterterrorism?," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 3, Fall 2012, page 148.

affiliates, and the Pakistani Taliban.[151] This issue alone presents the U.S. with the quandary in employing a cohesive COIN campaign in Pakistan.

As a result, the U.S. has largely responded with UAV operations to the rampant insurgent threat emanating from Pakistan in 2004. Within the first four years of the drone campaign in Pakistan, the U.S. used in the Hindu Kush region was 42 with an accelerated increase to 53 in 2009 and peaking at 122 in 2010.[152] Although reports declined starting in 2011 due to souring relations between the Pakistanis and the U.S., the precision of the UAVs was unequivocally improved. In an expose released in 2012 with Taliban and al-Qaeda members, Pir Zubair Shah provided a personal account of the significant impact the application of UAV strikes has had on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) save haven, notably stating that al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters that must go out of their way to avoid convening in large groups, even when attending mosque or pray.[153] Furthermore, collateral civilian casualties have continued to decrease over the lifetime of the campaign. In 2013, civilian casualties hit the lowest rate ever albeit there were less UAV engagements than the prior year. Yet, a notable observation is that the casualty rate in Pakistan for civilians and "unknowns" -- those individuals whose identify cannot be confirmed as either militants or civilians -- was approximately 40% under President Bush as compared to about 7% under President Obama.[154]

While the U.S. has enjoyed tactical success in Pakistan using UAV strikes to contain the insurgent and terrorist threat facing American national security, Pakistan's

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[151] http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/Pakistan/terroristoutfits/group_list.htm.
[152] Audrey Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What does it Mean to Win?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Nov 2013, page 184.
[153] Joseph Karam and David Gray, "The Impact of CIA Drone Strikes and the Shifting Paradigm of US Counterterrorism Strategy," *Global Security Studies*, Summer 2013, Vol. 4, Issue 3, page 59.
[154] "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis, *New America Foundation*, http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan/analysis.

tenuous internal security and safety measures make it difficult for U.S. involvement to be anything other than kinetic. Pakistan's population of 180 million, with nearly 60 percent of the population under the age of 24, is shrouded in high illiteracy rates, poor access to education and healthcare, resource scarcity such as water and electricity, and growing socioeconomic challenges.[155] Political institutions remain categorically underdeveloped and corrupt, with a ruinous jostling for power between a strong army and weak civilian-led governance paralyzing the nation. Additionally, precarious U.S.-Pakistani, sensitive to civilian deaths caused by drones and U.S. relations to India, precludes the U.S. from wielding other elements of power to weaken terrorist and insurgent networks. American suspicion of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) supporting elements of the Taliban, coupled with incidents such as the U.S.' withholding the special operation mission that killed Osama bin Laden in Abbattabad prior to execution, further contribute to unstable relations between the two. It also widely understood how unpopular the U.S. among Pakistani civilians. Around 69% of Pakistanis have unfavorable perceptions of the current U.S. government, and only 10% of the respondents believe the U.S. has a positive influence in world affairs, according to a poll conducted by the University of Maryland in 2009.[156]

While the UAV campaign in Pakistan directly allow the U.S. to combat the threat of insurgents and terrorists looking to coordinate and execute attacks on the U.S., there is pervasive recognition by both the U.S. and Pakistani governments that UAV operations remains the best options to temper the issue. Specifically, as the U.S. prepares to draw

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[155] "Crisis Guide: Pakistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, http://www.cfr.org/interactives/CG_Pakistan/index.html.
[156] Bruce Riedel, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of the Global Jihad* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), page 122.

withdraw its foot soldiers in Pakistan's neighbor, Afghanistan, the need to maintain a relatively functioning relationship with Pakistan will be instrumental to the broader U.S. counterterrorism priority.

UAV Operations in Yemen

The U.S. UAV campaign in Yemen is two years older than the U.S. campaign in Pakistan, beginning in 2002 to target Al-Qaeda-affiliated militants associated with high profile attacks against U.S. and Western interests. While Al-Qaeda core began to deteriorate largely due to U.S. CT efforts, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has grown to become the most dangerous and capable faction of Al-Qaeda to orchestrate plans to threaten U.S. national security. While U.S. strikes in Pakistan began to decline in 2011, they spiked in Yemen, particularly as the Obama administration began employing UAVs to support the Yemeni government's fight against the group.[157] Starting in June 2012, Yemeni military forces under new President Abdu Rabbo Mansour Hadi regained control of cities in Abyan and Shabwah that had served as AQAP strongholds in southern Yemen a year earlier. While the absolute number of UAV strikes in Yemen is difficult to measure, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported that there had been between 54 and 64 between 2002 and 2013, killing between 334-488 militants.[158]

Yet AQAP is not Yemen's singular problem threatening stability and undermining the President Hadi's efforts to improve the current state of security. A long-simmering separatist movement in the south has also gained strength, and many southerners want independence from the Houthis, the Shi'ite insurgent group in the

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[157] "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis, *New America Foundation*, http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan/analysis.
[158] Audrey Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What does it Mean to Win?" *Journal of Strategic Studies,* Vol. 37, No. 2, Nov 2013, page 184.

north.[159] Unique among the northern and southern groups, however, is that they are too large and locally popular to be easily contained by Yemeni military forces. Albeit AQAP does not enjoy that luxury, it is compounding Yemen's internal security struggles and has elevated the threat on a global scale.

Similar to Pakistan, Yemen's state of economic and political affairs is distressingly anemic. Yemen is replete with high levels of corruption and unemployment, estimated at some 40% and inflation anywhere from 10% to 20%.[160] Yemenis face severe shortages of fuel, water, and electricity, and nearly 45% percent of Yemen's population live below the poverty line.[161] Yet, the Arab revolutionary movements beginning in 2011, more pointedly in Yemen starting in February 2012, reflects the growing intolerance for autocratic repression. The mobilization in Yemen spurred a re-negotiation of the social contract between its people and the government, leading to the negotiated ousting of President Saleh and the formation of a democracy. While the movement precipitated the hope towards installing a legitimate political framework, Yemen's relatively new government is confronted with challenges from all angles: the old regime, the protestors and regional Islamist terrorism.

The perception of American involvement in targeting and killing Al-Qaeda-based militants among the Yemeni population contained more mixed results compared to the more unified outrage expressed by the Pakistani people. In Abyan, for instance, there is little complaint about the U.S. role in the military campaign; Ahmed, a member of the

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[159] Bobby Ghosh, "The End of Al-Qaeda," *Time,* Vol. 180 Issue 12, September 2012, page 43.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Tobias Thiel, "Yemen's Arab Spring: From Youth Revolution to Fragile Political Transition," *London School of Economics*, page 45, http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR011/FINAL_LSE_IDEAS__YemensArabSpring_Thiel.pdf.

citizens' militia, scoffed at claims that American participation compromises Yemeni sovereignty by stating that, "Al-Qaeda brought Saudi, Somali and Afghan fighters into my town. If the American drones help to kill them, we won't mind."[162] However, the salvos of disapproval from the Yemeni populace over inadvertent civilian deaths cannot be ignored. In December 2013, a U.S. drone strike killed 15 Yemenis traveling in a wedding party, intended to kill an AQAP commander. In that same month, Yemen's parliament voted to immediately end U.S. drone strikes in Yemen, but the action was almost immediately overturned.[163]

CIA-led UAV operations against Al-Qaeda-affiliated operatives have allowed the U.S. and Yemen to coordinate attacks AQAP in the midst of significant Yemeni government reform and reconstruction. While strikes have been lauded in keeping attacks against the U.S. at bay, AQAP continues to grow in numbers and lethality. The U.S. State Department estimates the organization has close to 1,000 members, reflecting a dramatic growth from about 200-300 members in 2009.[164] The U.S. UAV campaign has certainly impacted Yemen's success in driving AQAP militants out of populated areas in southern provinces and in enfeebling its leadership. That said, the group continues to operate in the capital and continue fighting asymmetrically.[165]

Analysis

UAV operations in Pakistan and Yemen undeniably weakened transnational terrorists, specifically Al-Qaeda operatives and its affiliates, and their ability to exercise

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[162] Bobby Ghosh, "The End of Al-Qaeda," *Time,* Vol. 180 Issue 12, September 2012, page 43.
[163] Jeremy Sharp, "Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, February 2014, page 6.
[164] The U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2012," *Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism*, May 2013, Chapter 6, http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209989.htm.
[165] Jeremy Sharp, "Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, February 2014, page 5.

malice against the U.S. While the CT campaigns have some notable drawbacks, they are markedly more effective than manufacturing COIN campaigns similar to those executed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps the most conspicuous reason is that the threats emanating from Pakistan and Yemen are not bounded by physical parameters; their loyalties are state-agnostic and thus their movements reflect a tendency to cross borders. During the Cold War, an insurgency's home was usually a country, as seen in Vietnam or Malayia. But the home of today's insurgents is defined by geographic, ethnic, economic, social, cultural, and religious characteristics that allow them to further their political and ideological ambitions.[166] In Iraq and Afghanistan, the insurgents wanted to unseat the current political structure, thus the U.S. campaigns to counter them was state-based. With Al-Qaeda core debilitated by U.S. UAV campaigns, its diffusion into more, but smaller factions will require an even more borderless response from the U.S. As a result, U.S. COIN operational tactics cannot easily be peppered across several states given the need to tailor its focus on bolstering the host nation government.

Although U.S. UAV operations have contributed to the disaffection among the Pakistani and Yemeni populations, they paradoxically have been supported by their governments. Government support, albeit tacit and hesitant at times, has allowed U.S. to make tactical inroads to defeat Islamist militants within their borders. In 2012, Yemeni President Hadi unequivocally endorsed continued U.S.-led UAV strikes in Yemen given their technological advantage and effectiveness, asserting that Yemen remains "a favored

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[166] John Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, July/August 2005, page 22.

counterterrorism partner of the United States."[167] Pakistani government support, however, is much less enthusiastic. Despite repeatedly rebuking the U.S. drone campaign, top officials in Pakistan's government have for years implicitly approved the CIA-led campaign and constantly receive classified briefings on strikes and casualties. In fact, the CIA even used Pakistani airstrips for its Predator fleet (MQ-1 platforms) in the mid-2000s.[168] Because the U.S. drones are a point of consternation among the people they lead, the Pakistani and Yemeni governments must artfully deal with the U.S. to ensure their political capital is protected while also complying with U.S. efforts to achieve national security objectives. Extensive boots on the ground, as demonstrated in Iraq and Afghanistan, require interacting with both the government and its people. It is the Pakistani and Yemeni people themselves that yield tenuous political relations with their leaders and the U.S., therefore limiting U.S. involvement to covert operations only.

Securing political viability among the Pakistani and Yemen leadership is largely what affords the U.S. operational longevity within their UAV campaigns. In order to protect their interests in the U.S. pursuit of combating global terrorism within their borders, the U.S. has had to adhere to a strict line of authority to continue that promise. Parking UAV operations within the CIA offers legal cover the U.S. In conducting strikes as covert actions under U.S. law, it provides plausible deniability and does not require the Pakistani and Yemeni governments to attribute the attacks to a source; under U.S.

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[167]Scott Shane, "Yemen's Leader Praises U.S. Drone Strikes," *The New York Times*, September 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/29/world/middleeast/yemens-leader-president-hadi-praises-us-drone-strikes.html?_r=0.

[168] Greg Miller and Bob Woodward, "Secret Memos Reveal Explicit Nature of U.S., Pakistan Agreement on Drones," *The Washington Post*, October 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/top-pakistani-leaders-secretly-backed-cia-drone-campaign-secret-documents-show/2013/10/23/15e6b0d8-3beb-11e3-b6a9-da62c264f40e_story.html.

military law, troops cannot conduct hostile actions outside a declared war zone.[169] The Pakistani and Yemeni governments can circuitously inform the public of UAV strikes while sparing the details and preserve their political stature. While the U.S. recognizes that their ground troops would be a corrosive kinetic measure to employ in Pakistan and Yemen, the top officials within both countries also recognize that *their* own troops are perhaps even more harmful in combating resident terrorist. The Pakistani and Yemeni militaries are infamous for regularly torturing and executing detainees, and they often unscrupulously bomb civilian areas or use draconian tactics against Islamist militant groups.[170] Thus, while the U.S. CIA-led UAV campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen are far from flawless, there is no other viable tactical alternative that is either organic to the two nations or to other U.S. employment options.

The security challenges roiling Iraq and Afghanistan, much like Pakistan and Yemen, are not causes but symptoms of broader political, economic and ethnic instability. More pointedly, these challenges have existed since the inception of all four nations, and thus will be influenced by exogenous influence, particularly the U.S. The population-centric U.S. COIN campaigns of Afghanistan and Iraq, although riddled with challenges, were more appropriate given that the U.S. actively participated in fabricating their democratic governments. Pakistani and Yemeni governments are cognizant that economic development and political legitimacy must be accomplished organically. That said, the ideological undercurrent that perpetuates the Islamist militant groups in Pakistan and Yemen that the U.S. strikes target are impervious to COIN principles. There is no

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[169] Gordon Lubold, "Exclusive: The CIA, Not the Pentagon, Will Keep Running Obama's Drone War," *Foreign Policy*, November 2013.
[170] Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice," *Brookings Institution*, July/August 2013.

remedial "hearts and minds" campaign that exists to combat global radical Islam. Simply put, the resolve of the U.S. is not to eradicate the motivations of Al-Qaeda operatives, but to preclude them from posing a threat to U.S. national security.

However, UAV operations alone are inadequate to support Pakistan and Yemen in combating terrorism within their borders. As mentioned above, both suffer from severe economic woes that manifest in high unemployment and poverty rates. The confluence of scant economic conditions *and* anti-American sentiment precludes a bottom-up approach that the U.S. attempted to employ in Iraq and Afghanistan. A continued CT campaign, coupled with political advisory and economic support teams from top-down, could lend itself to support the governments of Pakistan and Yemen and embolden their efforts to improve the political, economic and social issues they face today.[171] Decentralized operations in Iraq and Afghanistan yielded cumbersome oversight requirements that were hard to measure in aggregate; a light foot print, top-down approach in Pakistan and Yemen would avoid this U.S. concern, and help strengthen their governments' outward support of UAV operations.

Conclusion

I conclude that the deliberate shift away from troop-heavy, comprehensive COIN campaigns and a heavier focus on CT operations is a testament to how effective UAVs have been in weakening and dismantling Islamic terrorist groups that pose a threat to U.S. national security. A more acute focus on killing them versus engulfing terrorist-laden countries with economic, political and security support proves that the danger surrounding global Islamist militancy has not subsided, and will in fact require persistent

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[171] Seth Folsom, "Why Can't We Win? Pitfalls in Modern U.S. Counterinsurgency Operations," *FAOA Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 16 Issue 3, Fall 2013, page 52.

attention by the U.S. for the foreseeable future. As such, the increase in the U.S. UAV fleet, both in the military and the CIA, has been unprecedented. The Department of Defense owns about 7000 UAV platforms compared to the total of 50 they owned in 2001, and the Air Force trained more drone pilots in 2011 than they did conventional fighter and comber pilots.[172]

Unfortunately, I conclude that the U.S.' focus on orchestrating and executing a holistic COIN campaign in Iraq and Afghanistan by attempting to inject soft capability within ground troop fighting force was overambitious and detracted from the kinetic capability required. The U.S. did not sufficiently rely on UAVs to provide a surgical military response to alleviate the role of the military and civilian teams to integrate and influence the local population. Conversely, I have showcased that the UAV campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen are a resourceful and effective tactical answer to the strategic problem in denying terrorists the ability to conduct an attack on U.S. soil.

Looking forward, the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates has survived despite U.S. war efforts over the last decade, and the radical Islamic ideology blanketing the Middle East will have profound impacts worldwide.[173] The U.S. should shift the fulcrum underpinning COIN operations to accentuate CT operations rather than modifying U.S. ground troops, and allow UAVs to do the fighting they were explicitly designed to do.

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[172] Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, "War Evolves with Drones, Some Tiny as Bugs," *The New York Times*, June 2011.
[173] Joseph Karam and David Gray, "The Impact of CIA Drone Strikes and the Shifting Paradigm of US Counterterrorism Strategy," *Global Security Studies*, Summer 2013, Vol 4, Issue 3 page 61.

Conclusion

The U.S. COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have consumed the focus of U.S. operational capability over the last decade. The *Field Manual,* written by General Petraeus, represents the bedrock by which the U.S. employed military, economic, and political capability into a cohesive force package. The U.S. doctrine, inspired by David Galula who published COIN theory based on French-Algerian COIN war in the 1950s, underscores that such operations requires an "intensity of effort and vastness of means."[174] As such, the U.S. has applied an acute and disproportionately large show of force for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to humanize the battlefield and gaining the trust of the local population. Revolutionizing the U.S. military readiness profile and injecting elements of soft power are emblematic of the U.S. operational response to its COIN doctrine. However, I conclude that the U.S. campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan are evidenced as operational malpractice as a result employing an imbalanced kinetic an un-kinetic force.

The U.S. has fashioned comprehensive COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan that have overemphasized the role of ground troops as a kinetic toolbox and underemphasized the role of UAVs and civilian capabilities. The U.S. transformed and grew the U.S. military to meet the multi-faceted operational requirements mostly because it was not willing or able to increase the capacity or the lines of authority across the more germane civilian-based organizations, such as Department of State and USAID. Moreover, I conclude that it has branded, to its detriment, UAV operations in the context

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[174] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Ct: Praeger Security international, 2006), page 52.

of CT operations and population-centric foot soldiers in the context of COIN operations. Interlacing the two should have been a priority from the inception of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but rather it downplayed the kinetic advantage endemic to the UAV fleets. My arguments pinpoint that the U.S. drone campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen have demonstrated that a surgical response is more cost-effective and politically sustainable while able to secure strategic objectives by denying terrorists the ability to carry out attacks against the U.S.

Current defense and national security policy platforms, to include the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, Obama's refined CT approach, and the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, stress the need to focus on 21st century threats and to recalibrate the U.S. military after over a decade of protracted combat operations. While this is largely to protect the U.S. stature as the world's pre-eminent fighting force, it is also because it has not enjoyed strategic victory as a result of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq, specifically, has devolved into mass upheaval as a result of political disenfranchisement on behalf of the Maliki government; any previously touted U.S. success there has been upended, and Islamist extremists are capitalizing on its dissolution. Fiscal pressures coupled with a more diffuse threat of Islamist extremists looking to employ terrorist attacks on the U.S. are additional complications, and a U.S. defense strategy refresh to account for that is a sign that the U.S. simply cannot afford to fail.

Yet, if past is prologue, the U.S. will once again find itself involved in COIN operations at some point in the future. While the current Department of Defense's plans typify a focus on high-end combat threats, such as anti-access/area denial in the Asia-Pacific, they rarely become operationalized as written. When the time comes to

regenerate forces suited for COIN operations, I conclude that the U.S. must leverage its

existing tools, such as UAVs, and also expand its civilian-led institutions with the organic

capabilities needed for a population-ridden battlefield.

General Petraeus' *Field Manual* should continue to serve as the U.S. COIN

guidebook; in fact, re-writing it would cheapen its foundational principles. That said, the

U.S. needs to manufacture a better cohesive response by more seamlessly intertwining its

platforms and its people. In his book, *American Force: Dangers, Delusions, and

Dilemmas in National Security*, Richard Betts reminds us that, "the most salient

characteristic of war is that it involves killing. If politicians are to authorize war, they

must endorse killing."[175] COIN warfare is no exception and the U.S. must avoid the

operational malpractice resultant of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan in future

conflicts.

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