



COINdinitas and Contradictions: US Adoption of Counterinsurgency in 2007

Alex Li*

Abstract

Multiple theories of politics—specifically, rational actor theory and organization theory—have been used to explain decision-making processes for military actions. Rational actor theory states that military actors base decisions on value calculations and incremental changes. Organization theory suggests that military organizations push a specific doctrine to preserve power in the face of civilian challenges or criticism. While organizations generally wish to appear rational, doctrinal decisions may betray irrationality. This paper aims to identify a clear history of US counterinsurgency (COIN) and test the existing literature on organization and rational actor theory against the US military's readoption of the counterinsurgency doctrine in 2007. The US military COIN operations in Iraq that accompanied the Surge of 2007 followed a legacy of failed COIN experiments. Beginning in Vietnam with the strategic hamlet program, the continued use of COIN despite its empirical inefficacy throughout the 20th century demonstrates the military's pattern of irrational action. This paper concludes that COIN existed quietly in the background of the Cold War before its implementation in 2007. Moreover, COIN's doctrinal adoption in 2007 is better explained through organization theory as the military organization pushed COIN onto a desperate Bush administration. Finally, the history of COIN indicates that rational actor theory is insufficient to explain doctrine during low-intensity conflicts.

1. Introduction

The strategy of counterinsurgency (COIN) is a method that the US attempted throughout the 20th century and is widely regarded as a failure. Starting in Vietnam, COIN was ultimately a failed experiment, both unable to prop up a failing government and adding fuel to an ideologically driven fire. The US military continued to use COIN for clandestine operations in Latin America throughout the Cold War. Despite a history of major failures, the Bush administration adopted COIN strategies in Iraq. Theories of politics can help explain the sudden return to COIN in Iraq. Two competing explanations of military posture are organization theory and rational actor theory.¹

Conventional wisdom indicates that military posture during conflict should closely align with rational action and realist analysis of state intentions. Conversely, during peacetime, military posture should largely be structured by organizations. However, the readoption of COIN indicates a failure of the rational actor explanation because military organizations pushing for COIN became overwhelmingly dominant during wartime.

This study argues three main points. First, the use of COIN continued after Vietnam. COIN practitioners in the early 2000s presented COIN as a novel reinterpretation of bygone tactics. In the background of the Cold War, COIN became a strategy for clandestine elements of the

¹ Theories are discussed in detail below.

intelligence community. The US military readopted COIN at the forefront of American strategy in Iraq after more failed experimentation by the intelligence community in Latin America.

Second, the best theoretical explanation for the development and readoption of COIN in 2007 is organization theory. Organization theory runs contrary to the notion that military force posture is structured by rational actors during war. However, the Iraq war was clearly structured by parochial organizational interests.

Third, during low-intensity conflict, rational actor theory is insufficient in explaining the decision-making process of military force posture. This indicates that not all decision-making processes during conflict adhere to the tenets of rational actor theory.

1.1. Defining COIN

Before evaluating theories of politics, a stable definition of COIN must be developed. COIN is fundamentally defined by the existence of an insurgency. Analysts and academics broadly agree that insurgencies share a few main characteristics. During the Iraq War, US generals published Field Manual 3-24, a US joint doctrine publication analyzing the potential of COIN strategy in Iraq. FM 3-24 defined insurgency as the “organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict,”² indicating that the defining characteristic of an insurgency is the propensity to overthrow a government. COIN is then defined as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”³ The definition of COIN centers on the defeat of an insurgency. Because FM 3-24 gives a definition of COIN, the

analysis will be constrained to the defeat of insurgency and will align with the common field understanding of historical counterinsurgencies. While the particular facts of COIN have shifted over a century of development, the goal of COIN remains the same. Starting with the defeat of an insurgency, COIN is a military doctrine that seeks to employ force as a primary tactic to defeat the enemy.

COIN also includes other systems of support that are not purely military assets. FM 3-24 sets out a specific doctrine for application in the direct military context but does not extend to other areas of countering an insurgency. Espionage and allied support systems are commonly applied to the wider definition of COIN, consistent with “political, economic, psychological, and civic action.”⁴ After Vietnam, COIN shifted through the Cold War. The CIA’s version of COIN in Latin America during the ’70s and ’80s through advisory committees and top-down government support is distinct from the population-centered military strategies adopted during the surge in 2007. However, given the similarities between strategies employed by the intelligence community and the military, this paper will analyze both strategies under the COIN umbrella.

There are two main ways COIN is classically conducted. Enemy-centric COIN focuses on the defeat of an insurgency through military victory. In contrast, population-centric COIN focuses on winning the hearts and minds of the population through ideological and infrastructural development before combat operations. Both versions of COIN involve countering an insurgency through significant support to the government and security forces. The historical effectiveness of each strategy has varied.⁵ Because both versions of COIN have been attempted by the

² Petraeus, David Howell, and James F. Amos. *Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24 (2006)*. Boulder, CO: Paladin, 2009.

³ This, unfortunately, gives rise to any number of actions to achieve the end goal of defining an insurgency. With definitions as broad as the ones given in FM 3-24, there are potentially hundreds of conflicts that meet the definition of COIN. Petraeus & Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

⁴ Petraeus and Amos. *Counterinsurgency*.

⁵ Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan. “Moving beyond Population-Centric vs. Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 6 (2016): 1019–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1233643>.

military and the CIA, this study will not discriminate between the two.

2. Methodology

This study will explore two competing theories—rational actor theory and organization theory—on the rise of COIN in the US. This study will include a literature review and historical analysis. This study traces the development of COIN from its earliest application in Vietnam to answer where COIN worked, where COIN failed, and why the US used it in 2007. The history will focus primarily on the US and the US's relationship with COIN as a doctrine and strategy. The history will also address vital international contexts. This study will test the explanatory power of organization and rational actor theory for the reintroduction of COIN in 2007. The bulk of this study will consist of identifying which theory best explains COIN's adoption. Finally, the conclusion will integrate the existing theories and literature into a coherent and complete theory of US COIN from 1961 to 2007.

3. Literature Review

Despite COIN being a prevalent part of military history and development, there is limited literature attempting to answer the question of why the US adopted COIN after disastrous results in Vietnam. This section will categorize the existing academic literature on the United States' adoption of COIN into rational actor theory or organization theory. This analysis will test existing theories about security against the adoption of COIN. The literature review will broadly categorize the existing literature into theories and weigh theories against each other.⁶

⁶ While some authors might not consider themselves political scientists or strictly adhere to these theories, the scope of this thesis is defined primarily as theory testing. The conclusions will evaluate the explanatory power of existing theories of international relations, not the explanatory power of individual accounts. It is useful to pare down existing literature to limit the scope of the analysis and arrive at a broader theoretical conclusion.

3.1. Rational Actor Theory

3.1.1. Rational Actor Theory in Existing Literature

Rational actor theory posits the US adoption of COIN as a fundamentally calculated action based on the constant re-evaluation of the security environment and rational adoption of COIN in response to circumstance. Constant re-evaluation means that the rational adoption of military strategies is stronger and more capable than the previous iterations as it considers the significant lessons of past successes and failures.

Political scientist Graham Allison explains rational actions as the genesis for force posture. Force posture—the configuration and deployment of military assets—is a logical deduction from objectives and doctrines.⁷ Allison also identifies four central tenets that form the backbone of rational action and terms them Model I. First, goals and objectives allow for a logical calculation of whether an action is valuable.⁸ Rational actors are bound by a decision-making framework that evaluates terminal goals. Second, alternative options to the action taken are present.⁹ The existence of alternatives gives different potential avenues for the rational actor to follow. Rational actors should be capable of taking multiple actions and understand what constitutes each individual alternative. Third, Allison identifies consequences as central to rational action.¹⁰ Alternatives are thus attached to consequences and can be valued and ordinally ranked to make decisions. This generates a cause-and-effect framework through which the impact of alternatives can be predicted and weighed. Finally, Allison isolates choice as the final aspect of rational action. Rational action derives from an action in the face of alternatives based on the calculated consequences of each

⁷ Allison, Graham Tillet. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. London: HarperCollins, 1971, 24.

⁸ To evaluate costs and benefits, the perceived benefits must be a starting point. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

⁹ Not only must alternatives occur, but the evaluation of alternatives consistent with the utility calculations of rationality must occur as well. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

¹⁰ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 30.

potential action.¹¹ This process of taking rational action applies to an individual scale of how rational actor theory should explain decisions.

Allison's decision-making unit of analysis extends beyond individuals and incorporates governmental actions.¹² Rational actor theory can accurately describe individual and state-level decision-making. Moreover, Model I explicates a process—goal setting, information gathering, alternative evaluation, and decision-making—for rational actors to prioritize the established goals.

Political scientist Kenneth Waltz interrogates the macro scale of rational action and describes a state of constantly shifting adjustment to meet a potential enemy. Waltz distinguishes between national and international systems, explaining that international decisions are based on reactions characterized by understanding shifting contexts.¹³ This process of international actors adjusting to each other and constantly adapting to the shifting environment causes incremental and piecemeal development of capabilities and decisions.¹⁴ Militaries who adhere to rational action should attempt to reconfigure themselves to be reactive, so strategy changes start with a fundamental understanding of the international system.

Waltz is speaking to an audience concerned with systemic dynamics on an international scale. His totalizing analysis of the international system is characterized by states' actions in reference to the system and to other states. Ultimately, Waltz dismisses the importance of specific strategies that arise through military decision-making, especially when applied to insurgencies. In Waltz's estimation, states are primarily interested in and responsible for their own survival, and their

behavior changes because of potential survival.¹⁵ Since international systems are not threatened by nationalist or popular movements within national borders,¹⁶ insurgencies would be counted outside of the systems-level analysis. This analysis, however, does not preclude a discussion of COIN and COIN strategy. Waltz also articulates that when feeling sufficiently threatened—akin to the supposed threat of global communism during the Cold War or global terrorism post 9-11—states may find clear definition of ends.¹⁷ The lack of an international arbiter means that, to securitize against perceived threats, nationalist causes can be rationally viewed as threats to a state's survival and thus can be rationally acted against.

3.1.2. Applications of Rational Actor Theory

Some authors writing extensively about COIN have arguments for its adoption that align with rational actor theory. The following authors reason that COIN's adoption was based on goal setting and reactions to international changes and similarly view the decision to readopt COIN as rational.

Seth Jones—current Director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies—wrote in 2008 for the RAND Corporation, pointing out the possibility of correct forms of COIN. Jones, while speaking about Afghanistan, indicates that the most effective methods of COIN should support indigenous actors native to the operating environment to conduct their own COIN operations. Jones's primary argument is that traditional understandings of COIN as exploiting interrelated issues within insurgencies fail to consider the development of governments that will continue the fight after the US eventually

¹¹ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 30.

¹² The majority of Allison's specific analysis pertains to nuclear weapons. Despite this, Allison describes the model of rational action as characterized by information gathering and action based upon rational calculations. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 32.

¹³ This is distinct from the national systems, which are more static. Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press, 2010, 113.

¹⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 113.

¹⁵ These are central assumptions of realism. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105.

¹⁶ While domestic and non-state actors certainly affect international systems, realism primarily focuses on states themselves as actors. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 112.

¹⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 109.

leaves.¹⁸ While Jones is less clear about the overall development of COIN from the '50s onward, his prescription for success echoes the evaluation process of rational action. Jones uses previous RAND studies to argue that COIN's effectiveness significantly increases with the strength of the police force and local governance. This analysis indicates that authors like Jones apply previous lessons learned from statistical analysis to develop new methods of COIN. Jones is making prescriptions about Afghanistan and is critical of conventional approaches to COIN predating 2008. However, the justification for Jones's study is that COIN can defeat insurgencies and be modified to meet the desired goals.

Another advocate for COIN's rational adoption is Steven Metz, professor of national security and strategy at the US Army War College. As argued as recently as 2021, Metz believes that the international system will inevitably contain some level of insurgency because of civil wars and nonstate violence. COIN, therefore, has played an important role in US strategy and should play a larger role in the future.¹⁹ Metz makes the argument that there are three distinct waves of insurgency.

Starting with Chinese revolutionary Mao, Metz argues that insurgencies were explicitly politically focused—combining Marxist thought and Leninist organization in the case of Mao—and that overthrow of the government and expansion of ideology were the primary mechanisms that characterized the first wave. The second wave was characterized by the Taliban, Iraqi insurgents, and Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. These insurgents were insular and unsupported by external forces. Separate from the peasant revolutions of East Asia, second-wave insurgencies were not ideologically motivated. Instead of toppling a government,

second-wave insurgents relied on developing dispersed networks and terrorism to continue conflict. Insurgencies themselves adapt over time, creating the necessity for rational COIN adaptation.

Metz goes on to identify a third wave and a potential fourth wave, but these are largely used to frame policy recommendations for future US COIN and argue that it should play an enduring role in US strategy. While Metz does not explicitly state that US COIN developed as a response to different waves of insurgency, the implication is clear that developments in insurgency require updated tactics and strategies to combat them. Additionally, the assertion that civil conflict and nonstate violence are and will remain a part of the international system indicates the clear necessity for COIN's existence into the future.

Both Jones and Metz's commentaries are critical of the current models of COIN and believe that COIN should be updated. While they disagree with the capabilities of COIN in their respective eras—Jones in 2008 and Metz in 2021—their belief in the doctrine to produce legitimate results remains staunch. These authors illustrate attempts to revise and update COIN during the invasion of Iraq and more contemporary attitudes. Their analysis is consistent with the rational actor model because they are reactive to new developments in the threat environment. Jones is attempting to implement intelligence gathering and a decision-making process by evaluating previous attempts at COIN and new formulations. Metz is similarly attempting to drive a reconfiguration of military assets to better meet the incoming challenges of insurgencies in the modern age.

David Kilcullen, a contractor who worked for the State Department in 2005 advising the military

¹⁸ Jones, Seth G. "Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare." In *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study--Volume 4*, 7-24. RAND Corporation, 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg595osd.10>.

¹⁹ Metz, Steven. "Not Your Grandfather's Counterinsurgency: The United States Must Prepare for Radically New Forms of

Nonstate Violence." Modern War Institute, July 28, 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/not-your-grandfathers-counterinsurgency-the-united-states-must-prepare-for-radically-new-forms-of-nonstate-violence/>.

on asymmetric and unconventional warfare in Iraq, understood the development and response to insurgencies as inevitable. Kilcullen's accidental guerilla syndrome states that modern ideological conflict and the necessity for unconventional warfare drive the specific tactics observed in modern insurgencies.²⁰

Accidental guerilla syndrome is identified by four parts: infection (establishment of an insurgent haven), contagion (spreading violence and ideology), intervention (insurgent growth via local populations), and rejection (destruction of the insurgent haven). Kilcullen's analysis focuses on the development of post-surge Iraq, and his application is specific to the context of Al Qaeda. Kilcullen applies his argument to the Islamist militant organization Al Qaeda rather than COIN. However, his argument remains generalizable; the longer a disagreement between a government or central governing structure and a population exists, the greater the drive towards insurgencies and the necessity for population-centered approaches.

Identifying weakness in the state as creating the breeding ground for insurgency and unconventional warfare indicates that insurgencies are a product of their environment. Kilcullen's argument shows his attempt at a rational analysis of cyclical violence. Kilcullen was a central advocate for COIN and believed in COIN as a powerful and capable doctrine specifically designed to combat the violence that occurred in weak states.

While Kilcullen's analysis is more specific than Jones' and Metz's, it reaches the same conclusion. Insurgencies and their environments shift, so a new look at COIN is necessary to combat modern progress. Outside of external and retrospective writings, the most important

document about the rationality of COIN is the military's justification for FM 3-24. Informed by operations in Mosul and his own education, Petraeus, an author of FM 3-24, believed in the capability of COIN.²¹ FM 3-24 contains historical analyses of COIN, indicating that FM 3-24 aimed to understand COIN's historical development.²² The framing of FM 3-24 aligns with the existing thesis that insurgencies are an inevitable form of warfare and COIN is the only rational response.

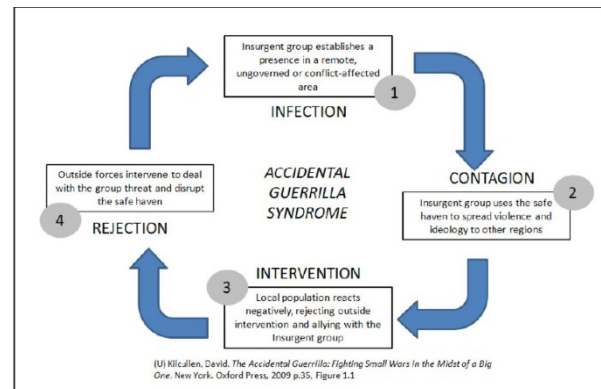


Figure 1. Kilcullen's Accidental Guerilla Syndrome.²³

3.2. Organization Theory

3.2.1. Organization Theory in Existing Literature

A competing theory for why institutions adopt strategies and doctrines is organization theory. The following authors of organization theory conclude that COIN was a failure and that the primary justification for adopting COIN was to promote the parochial interests of the military organization.

Political scientist Barry Posen concludes that organizations as discrete institutions exist to coordinate, plan, and supervise doctrine.²⁴ Organizations control doctrine by increasing their autonomy. Organizations seek to separate themselves from civilian leadership to avoid being beholden to the political whims that control

²⁰ Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 35.

²¹ Petraeus & Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²² This history, however, is an analysis more of insurgencies themselves as opposed to the efficacy of COIN as a doctrine.

²³ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 35.

²⁴ Posen, Barry. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, 41.

funding or overarching political realities.²⁵ Organizations tend to be insular and disconnected from a wider political context and take action to continue separation to stay in power.

Posen applies his doctrinal analysis to World War II, breaking down specific military trends and comparing them to doctrinal trends. In looking at the German defeat of the French in May 1940 and the subsequent loss to the British RAF in late September,²⁶ Posen argues that the most well-prepared organizations experienced the greatest success.²⁷ Furthermore, Posen argues that the doctrines and organizations were responsible for either creating a robust force capable of victory or shifting towards an ultimately doomed strategy.²⁸ While the conventional forces of WWII are distinct from COIN, war plans remain a useful heuristic to reach conclusions about militaries because doctrinal innovation is a consistent feature of military organizations.

Posen also establishes that organizations experience a strong offensive bias. In limiting the uncertainty of a military endeavor, taking the initiative is useful because it creates a standard scenario un beholden to an opposing offensive action and denies the opponent the capacity to define the operating terrain.²⁹ Organizationally, doctrine will tend towards offensive capabilities that create specific and trainable scenarios that require less individual reaction. Offensive capabilities also justify the increased size and wealth of the organization. Because organizations are primarily interested in their existence and subsequent expansion, offensive doctrine becomes preferable to defensive doctrine as it requires more investment—capital or otherwise.³⁰ Ultimately, organizations are interested in defining their operating procedure, environment,

and capacity. Doctrine and overarching strategy become useful for justifying investment into the necessary tools to allow the existence of said organization into the future.

Scott Sagan offers a similar approach to organizational pressure but focuses on organizational control of nuclear weapons instead of military doctrine specifically. In addition to Posen's argument that organizations seek autonomy, Sagan argues that organizations are beholden to civilian pressures like funding³¹ and are fundamentally limited in their scope.³² To Sagan, organizations seek to maximize their efficiency within limited domestic bounds and experience a limited set of rational calculations. Sagan concedes that organizations can act rationally³³ but argues that rationality is limited in scope. Rationality is limited because the organization has finite information and defines its own goals.³⁴ Organizations tend towards specific goals that prioritize short-term information gathering based on internal empiricism instead of external environmental observations.³⁵ Sagan argues the other central tenet of organizations is the politicized nature of organizational debates. Citing Charles Perrow, Sagan indicates that organizations are political subunits that should vie for power and the capability to expand their own influence.³⁶ Sagan also concludes that organizations operate through specific and standardized procedures to regiment action and decrease uncertainty.

Sagan's application of organization theory is in reference to nuclear proliferation and the potential ramifications of further proliferation. Sagan also articulates that organization theory offers a substantially bleaker world than rational actor theorists and hopes that rational action is

²⁵ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 46.

²⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 81.

²⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 82.

²⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 87.

²⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 48.

³⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

³¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 45.

³² Sagan, Scott Douglas, and Kenneth Neal Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate: With New Chapters on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, and on the Prospects for Global Nuclear Disarmament*. New York, New York: Norton, 2013, 46.

³³ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁴ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁵ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁶ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

more explanatory of status quo nuclear weapons.³⁷ Ultimately, however, the organizational theory tenants between military doctrine and nuclear proliferation remain the same. While Posen is attempting to explain why organizations act, Sagan attempts to explain how organizations will act.

3.2.2. Applications of Organization Theory

Like rational actor theory, authors have written about COIN through the lens of organizational and irrational decision-making. Douglas Porch, an academic at the Naval Postgraduate School, offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of COIN's evolution. Porch traces the genesis of COIN well before Vietnam in the 19th century but places the development of modern insurgency firmly in the hands of Mao Zedong's guerilla warfare in revolutionary China.³⁸ While COIN has been a potential form of military doctrine and warfare, its modern developments occurred after World War II. Porch argues that Mao's brand of protracted people's war comes at a time when warfare becomes an ideological question placed in the hands of the people. This also narrows Porch's definition of an insurgency, as guerilla warfare is a clearly defined ideological approach to warfare that Mao sought to implement.³⁹ Porch makes it clear that COIN changed after Vietnam. Developments in Vietnam showed that warfare was about an ideological battle and the capacity to control populations instead of strongholds and capturing land. Citing *The Troubles* as one of the primary eras in which COIN developed, Porch analyzes new versions of COIN that attempted to police and suppress an insurgency. However, Porch concludes that COIN is a form of liberal

internationalism and follows a romanticized and misread history in the modern day. The discussion about the surge is brief and placed in the context of wider American development post-Vietnam. Porch specifically traces the White House's decision to adopt COIN during the surge as a desperation play and a potentially revolutionary new methodology developed in reaction to a failed public relations campaign to sell the Iraq war and stagnate political discussion.⁴⁰ This stagnation highlighted organizational insecurity and was a clear attempt to maintain public credibility. Porch argues that COIN became a method by which political elites attempted to reach a quick victory and fill existing gaps rather than being necessary to secure Iraq.

Another author, Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, states that COIN's adoption after Vietnam was mired by failures and was only successful after repeated attempts in Iraq.⁴¹ O'Hanlon breaks from rational actor theory and asserts that the military used COIN in Latin America in the 20th century. O'Hanlon also states that while COIN persisted behind the scenes and represented a failure of doctrine, there were a few successful implementations of the strategy—namely in the Philippines in the 19th century and unspecified instances in Latin America in the 20th century. COIN proponents used these successes to justify an adherence to the tenets of COIN. O'Hanlon's essay does not fit neatly under organization theory as he does not answer why COIN was implemented in the wake of failure. However, O'Hanlon concludes that COIN's adoption was a legacy doctrine that has been repeatedly tried and failed rather than a process of rational value calculation.

³⁷ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 134.

³⁸ It is important to note that Porch is critical of COIN's adoption at the conclusion of his book.

³⁹ A programmatic focus portraying Maoist revolutionary guerilla class warfare as the new form of insurgency is an important aspect of existing literature. For rational actor theorists, Mao represents a primary framework from which insurgencies adapt and change. These assumptions, to rational

actor theorists, indicate a clear and concise beginning of modern insurgency.

⁴⁰ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 301.

⁴¹ O'Hanlon, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings. Brookings, June 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06_counterinsurgency_ohanlon.pdf.

David Hunt of the University of Boston also takes an in-depth look at the persistence of COIN. Hunt's account focuses on COIN's failures in Vietnam. Citing the inadequate justification for COIN, flawed metrics for its success, and failure to reach its goal, Hunt concludes that COIN would have failed even with increased attention and material support.⁴² However, despite widespread failures, COIN was propped up by advocacy groups that wished to avoid using the overwhelming firepower of the Army. Advocates focused on COIN as one of the few viable alternatives to conventional war between armies. Hunt does not arrive at a satisfying conclusion, ultimately concluding that Vietnam is indicative of failures that are widespread in Iraq and the Middle East writ large. While parts of Hunt's analysis indicate that COIN was a potentially viable alternative, the failure to reach a meaningful policy conclusion indicates that Hunt is still skeptical of COIN's capabilities. The persistence of COIN is explained by the perpetual advocacy that cemented COIN in the minds of leaders looking to adhere to new restrictive modes of war rather than a proven track record of success.

Finally, Joshua Foust of the Atlantic Council and journalist Fred Kaplan claim that COIN's adoption in 2007 indicates a central cast of characters dubbed the COINdinistas. The COINdinistas were military leaders who believed they could use COIN to make their mark and revolutionize how the US military conducted warfare. General David Petraeus' sudden rise during the Bush administration indicates to authors like Foust that the prominence of the COINdinistas was produced from a legacy mired in falsehoods and an empirically tenuous track record developed during the early stages of the invasion of Iraq.

While Foust speaks more about Petraeus as a leader as opposed to COIN itself, the story of COIN

cannot be separated from Petraeus. Kaplan's book, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*, takes a less pessimistic angle on Petraeus' leadership capabilities but defends the characterization of COIN's rise as a plot arising out of the vestiges of failures seen in Vietnam. Kaplan tells the story of Petraeus emerging from a White House characterized by strict adherence to Rumsfeld's orthodoxy and fears of a new Vietnam. While Kaplan rejects the hypothesis that the persistence of COIN in Latin America was the driving factor behind its adoption, he attributes COIN's rise to the rejection of existing models and a handful of individuals taking advantage of a key opportunity. Petraeus and his accompanying cohort indicate a radical shift in doctrine. The literature surrounding Petraeus agrees that COIN was a Petraeus initiative. Petraeus and the military thus put their own organization above the wishes of the White House and convinced Bush of the viability of COIN. This indicates that COIN was a tool for the military to further entrench itself in Iraq.

4. Hypotheses

Both rational actor theory and organization theory include testable hypotheses that can establish the explanatory power of each theory. Using a top-down approach, each theory contains multiple hypotheses that, if true, would indicate the significant explanatory power of each given theory.

4.1. Rational Actor Theory Hypotheses

Rational actor theory—as a specific sub-theory of realism—indicates that individuals and institutions react to changes in the operating environment. According to rational actor theory, the capability of COIN is a constantly evolving process defined by the reaction to historical and

⁴² Hunt, David. "Dirty Wars: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam and Today." *Politics & Society* 38, no. 1 (2010): 35–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329209357883>.

contemporary developments. Graham Allison and Jack Levy write a robust set of hypotheses to test the decision-making process and its rationality.

4.1.1. Information Gathering

The first major tenet of rational actor theory is goal prioritization. Value and utility estimation must occur for COIN to be a rational action. Well before the decision is made, goals should be identified and prioritized. This allows for a rational analysis of the tradeoffs between each potential choice.⁴³ Furthermore, the prioritization of goals will coincide with an assessment of the capability and consequences of each potential action.⁴⁴ Rational actor theory predicts that an action is made up of a steady-state choice⁴⁵ coherent with changing or shifting contexts of the environment rather than piecemeal decisions. Rational actors will aim to identify the operating environment, set robust goals within that environment, and continuously monitor the potential consequences of actions.

4.1.2. Adaptation

Another central hypothesis of rational actor theory concerns adaptation. Because rational action is predicated on the choice between multiple alternative potential actions, each alternative should carry its own set of analyzed consequences.⁴⁶ This spectrum of choices will cause rational actors to shift their decision to better account for changing environments or change their chosen method. The potential choices should come from the environment itself, as every considered alternative should suit the established contexts.⁴⁷ Rational actors will constantly make value calculations and change their strategy in response. Adaptation to utility calculations is predicated on perceived payoff,

known consequences, and fixed alternatives as evaluated by the decision-maker.⁴⁸ Thus, rational actors should adopt strategies to better meet their established goals or investigate new options.

4.1.3. Course Correction

Finally, as an internal assumption about value calculations, rational actor theory posits that value is maximized through a specific process. The value proposition of a given option is defined by a cost and the capability to achieve goals. Rational actor theory predicts that an increase in the cost of an option decreases the likelihood of an actor taking that option. On the other hand, a decrease in the cost of an alternative increases the likelihood of an actor taking that alternative. The definition of cost is nebulous and changes between actors and actions. However, an action's cost has two primary aspects: the utility value and the ability to achieve fixed goals given material constraints. Cost decreases when benefits outstrip the harms or when the capacity to reach stated goals increases. Conversely, costs increase when the harms outstrip the benefits or the capacity to reach stated goals decreases.⁴⁹ Rational actor theory predicts that actions are more or less likely to occur based on changes to an action's capability to resolve certain issues or changes in utility calculus.

4.2. Organization Theory Hypotheses

The second prominent theory in the existing literature is that organizational pressures keep COIN afloat. Organization theory posits that COIN was not developed and adopted because of reactions to the changing security environments but was pushed as a source of power within specific groups.⁵⁰ Instead of reacting to new

⁴³ Levy, Jack S., and William R. Thompson. *Causes of War*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 130.

⁴⁴ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

⁴⁵ Allison characterizes "steady-state" as a collection of decisions made to elicit a specific outcome. This singular "solution" is contrasted against "partial choices." Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 33.

⁴⁶ Levy & Thompson, *Causes of War*, 131.

⁴⁷ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 33.

⁴⁸ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 31.

⁴⁹ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 34.

⁵⁰ This power can come from decision-making capabilities, increased organizational needs, or autonomous resource acquisition and utilization.

developments, organization theory indicates that COIN was used as a tool to keep specific organizations in power and ensure their survival. Barry Posen's analysis of organization theory⁵¹ sets out hypotheses that predict the interaction between organizations and their environment.

4.2.1. Power Preservation

The first hypothesis of organization theory is that power is preserved in the center of the organization. The organization is built around a specific task, attempting to maximize its power and the power of relevant sub-organizations.⁵² Organizations should also prioritize their own operating capabilities, making it favorable to keep decision-making authority within the organization. The organization will attempt to define narrow technical requirements and preferred operations elevated above policy external to the organization—in this case, presidential and congressional wishes.⁵³ Finally, within power maximization, a robust civilian-military integration should be observed.⁵⁴ This can take the form of civilians increasing their own status in conjunction with the organization's increase in power or civilians attempting to take some control and intervene in the doctrine.

4.2.2. Doctrinal Stagnation

Another hypothesis of organization theory is the contexts that drive innovation within organizations and doctrines. Organization theory generally predicts that innovation within doctrines is unlikely.⁵⁵ Innovation is unnecessary when investment into a doctrine already exists, as the organization's survival is guaranteed. However, given that an organization is not always

guaranteed power, there are two predicted causes of innovation. First, organizations innovate when defeated⁵⁶ because defeat introduces uncertainty by challenging existing authority and capabilities and threatening instability. If the organization cannot achieve its goals, then it cannot justify its survival. Secondly, because organizational survival depends on the outside help of entrenched decision-makers—like the president in this case—the second cause of innovation is intervention.⁵⁷ Civilians may intervene in doctrine or the mission. Because political-military integration is the cause of stability, organizations will innovate to accommodate political forces.

4.2.3. Uncertainty Reduction

Finally, organization theory posits that organizations want to reduce uncertainty through insularity and limited rationality. To reduce uncertainty, organizations will tend to maximize their size and wealth. Maximization gives them more resources and allows the organization to define its operations, reducing uncertainty.⁵⁸ Militaries will also tend towards offensive operations, as offensive operations allow militaries to control the task environment and justify vast resource investment.⁵⁹ Another way to reduce uncertainty is insularity and keeping political forces in the dark.⁶⁰ Insularity allows organizations to better operate alone with less oversight and stops intervention into the doctrine itself as the formation of doctrine is opaque. Furthermore, this necessitates keeping civilians in the dark, causing them to rely on the organization or external forces as sources of military knowledge.⁶¹ These aspects of uncertainty reduction and insularity give organizations incredible power to define their own environment

⁵¹ There are certainly other analyses of organization theory, but Posen's is both specific to doctrine and outlines succinctly hypotheses of the theory. This study will touch on other theorists, but the hypotheses will be drawn primarily from Posen.

⁵² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵⁴ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵⁵ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 54.

⁵⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

⁵⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

⁵⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

⁵⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

⁶⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁶¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

and minimize the chances that outside intervention in organizational operations occurs.

5. The History of COIN

5.1. Vietnam (1961–1963)

The US's first foray into COIN occurred in Vietnam, utilizing physical geography to combat Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong's ideological power and popular warfare. The organization of Mao's people's war came from a collective ideological drive to sublimate class—an ideological position contrary to the US's defense of capitalist free markets. This ideological conflict led to the US's response and investment in COIN, starting with President John F. Kennedy. The US's attempt to integrate into the population and its implementation of strategic hamlets were a colossal failure. The strategic hamlets were a conventional tactic to conduct an unconventional war and failed to deal with the ideological question Mao had introduced.

Vietnam was a battle of competing spheres of culture and influence. The war contested revolutionary capabilities and the US's established world order.⁶² The context of the Chinese Civil War, the success of Maoist revolutionary struggles, and the prior defeat of French colonial forces gave the North Vietnamese forces examples of success and the capacity and theoretical knowledge to win. Communist forces in the North were pitted against US-backed capitalist forces in the South. Mao's seminal work published during

his struggle against the nationalists in 1937, *On Guerilla Warfare*, sets out a blueprint for combining conventional warfare and insurgencies to defeat a technologically advanced enemy, including supplementing conventional battle tactics with hit-and-run strategies against lines of communication.⁶³ Distinct from past insurgencies defined by resistance to government before ideology, Mao's centering of ideology in the Marxist tradition of class consciousness created a different political goal and method for success.⁶⁴ The US faced a unique problem from insurgencies of the past. The US had to resist North Vietnamese regulars in the National Liberation Front and insurgencies scattered across the country that, by 1961, were rapidly gaining ground and vital population centers.

Just after his inauguration in 1961, President Kennedy asked what the US was doing about guerilla warfare.⁶⁵ The war in Vietnam was heating up. It was becoming clear that the US would need to invest significant resources into unconventional and proxy wars by training advisors on new tactics to stop the spread of communism in Asia. By August 1962, a COIN doctrine was established as a government-wide attempt to restructure the capabilities in Vietnam. In a secret National Security Action Memorandum⁶⁶ titled *Counterinsurgency Doctrine*, NSAM No. 182, an insurgency is identified as a pressing national security problem for the foreseeable future.⁶⁷ The document identifies Vietnam as a successful nationalist revolution⁶⁸ in comparison

⁶² Even though Soviet expansion was also an established “world order” for many areas, the policy of containment made clear the US's position on what was the dominant ideology.

⁶³ Zedong, Mao. *On Guerilla Warfare*. Translated by Samuel Blair Griffith II. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000 first published 1937, 42.

⁶⁴ This echoes both Clausewitz's warfare as a political tool and T.E. Lawrence's revolutionary consciousness. Clausewitz identified “people's war in civilized Europe” as a revolutionary conflict and “a phenomenon of the nineteenth century.” Clausewitz enumerated the differences between a conventional conflict and that of an insurgency, explaining “that the principle of resistance exists everywhere, but is nowhere tangible.” Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. New York, New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004, 534-536.

⁶⁵ Maechling, Jr., Charles. 1988. “Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire.” Pp. 21–48 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 21.

⁶⁶ Maechling, Jr., Charles. 1988. “Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire,” 28.

⁶⁷ Papers of John F. Kennedy. *National Security Action Memoranda [NSAM]: NSAM 182, Counterinsurgency Doctrine*. JFKNSF-338-010. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Presidential Papers. National Security Files. Meetings and Memoranda (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

⁶⁸ This further identifies the North Vietnamese struggle as an ideological and Maoist war.

with subverted internal institutions or governments, incited internal rebellion, and captured revolutions of popular anti-dictatorial character.⁶⁹ This solidifies the rationale for staying in the conflict and highlights the conflict's political nature. NSAM 182 also identifies the US strategy in Vietnam as an ideological struggle as opposed to one resisting revolutions writ large, stating the right of peoples to change their governments by revolution is recognized in international law.⁷⁰ After identifying the problem, the memorandum identifies the methodology for COIN operations in Vietnam. The methodology included land reform, civic action, community development, social projects, education, labor and youth development, leadership, police, and diplomacy.⁷¹ NSAM became the governing doctrine through which the Kennedy administration implemented COIN in Vietnam.

The implementation came broadly through interdepartmental support, combining state, defense, and independent agencies. NSAM 182 calls on the Department of Defense to train US forces and foreign fighters and support the psychological operations of the USIA in counter-insurgency.⁷² The United States Information Agency (USIA) was to work in conjunction with the CIA to covertly operate in psychological warfare and clandestine operations designed to shift ideological support towards the defending governments, collect vital information, and provide training.⁷³ NSAM 182 also established a Special Group (CI) and added roles to the Agency for International Development (AID) to oversee the development of COIN and approve missions abroad.⁷⁴ With the establishment of the Special Group, the White House quickly expanded its

COIN development in Vietnam through indigenous force multiplication and the strategic hamlet program.

By 1962, there were two main US support contingents operating in Vietnam. The first was the US Operations Mission—part of AID⁷⁵—and the US Military Assistance Command (MACV) aided by the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG).⁷⁶ After discussion, the groups decided on using supposedly adapted techniques from British operations in the Boer War and Malaya and French operations in Vietnam. Together, they implemented the strategic hamlet program. The strategic hamlet program was a resettlement program that placed Vietnamese locals into protected communities designed as a branching network of defensive strongholds and interconnected defensive routes designed to disrupt the traditional village structure and decentralize the existing power structure taken advantage of by the NLF.⁷⁷ In addition to shaping the physical geography of the counter-insurgency, MACV was responsible for assisting and training a force of 175,000 ARVN regulars, 67,000 Civil Guard, and a self-defense force of 54,000 armed civilians.⁷⁸ While this fell short by almost half of the 16-to-1 government-to-rebel troop requirement, the central goal was to fortify specific areas and create a civilian-centric defensive policy. Reliance on advanced US technology, including new small arms⁷⁹ and incredibly mobile firepower, led to a strategy of encircling and destroying Viet Cong strongholds.⁸⁰ This combined policy, while sound in theory, assumed that the NLF would operate on a

⁶⁹ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 5.

⁷⁰ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 12.

⁷¹ This overarching and expansive list of potential actions and strategies is reminiscent of the expansive list of FM 3-24. Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 14-17.

⁷² Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 28-29.

⁷³ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 30-31.

⁷⁴ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 22.

⁷⁵ Known as USAID now.

⁷⁶ Farmer, J. A. "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963." RAND Corporation, January 1, 1978. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P2778.html>, 11.

⁷⁷ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

⁷⁸ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," "38-39.

⁷⁹ Farmer, "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963," 15.

⁸⁰ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

paradigm of attacking from strongholds and was interested in defeating an enemy through offensive operations. This assumption entirely discounted the ideological struggle and failed to grapple with the failing South Vietnamese government and insurgent tenacity. One of the rationales, however, for the strategic hamlet program was to stop NLF attacks without the appearance of an attack on the people they were supposed to be helping.⁸¹ This rationale indicates

program culminated in the deployment of over 184,000 US ground troops—up from the 23,000 in 1964.⁸² The failure was primarily due to three factors. The first was the misidentification of ideological strongholds, as it became increasingly clear that the people living in strategic hamlets were at best ideologically inconsistent and more likely pro-NLF.⁸³ The spread of the ideological struggle was nearly impossible to stop with geography alone. Second was the reliance on

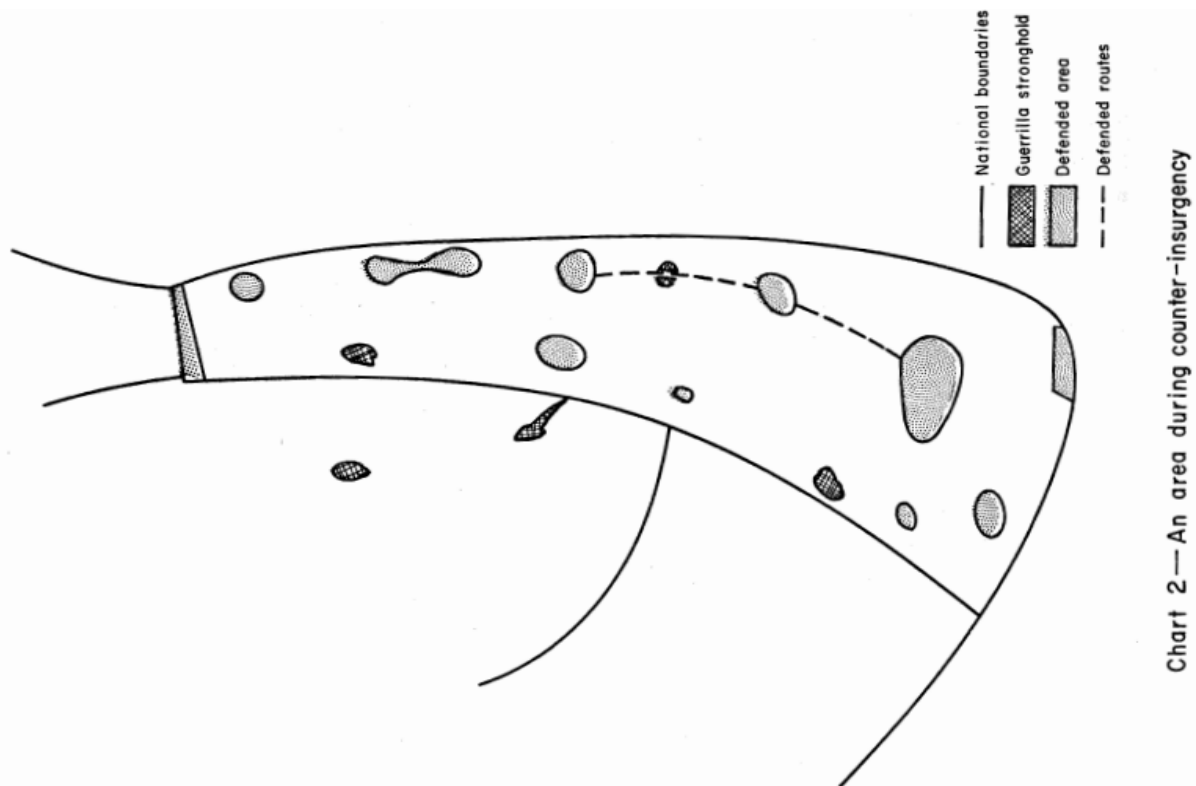


Figure 2. Strategic hamlet organization.⁸¹

that MACV assumed that geography was the key factor in political ideology and thus wrongly believed the strategic hamlets represented physical and ideological strongholds.

Ultimately, the strategic hamlets turned out to be a colossal failure. Even though it operated on knowledge gained from British and French experience, four years of the strategic hamlet

overwhelming firepower. The US absolutely had technological superiority, yet the NLF had little trouble maneuvering in and around the networked defensive structures. US helicopters offered quick deployment and maneuverable air support that could wipe out designated enemy territory through search-and-destroy-operations⁸⁴ but could not support an ideology-forward

⁸¹ Farmer, "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963," 26.

⁸² "Vietnam War Allied Troop Levels 1960-73." American War Library, 2008. <https://www.americanwarlibrary.com/vietnam/vwatl.htm>.

⁸³ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

⁸⁴ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 42.

approach. Finally, and most importantly, was the dissolution of the South Vietnamese government. The US could not implement many strategies it had devised around land reform and public infrastructure projects. Widespread corruption and the insular and privileged government doomed any chance of winning hearts and minds.⁸⁵ The conflict soon shifted away from counterinsurgency into an open conflict and the commitment of regular US troops.

The US involvement in Vietnam was the first major doctrinal push for a COIN-centered approach, producing many failures. However, the framework for information gathering and clandestine activities through NSAM 182 and the implementation of civilian defense remained a persistent part of US military operations throughout the late 20th century. Many advisors who aided in COIN efforts would have long careers in the military advising policymakers and military officials. Thus, Vietnam set the groundwork for COIN's existence and evolution into the proxy wars and revolutionary movements of the '70s, '80s, and '90s.

5.2. Latin America (1967–1986)

After the failures in Vietnam, clandestine operators of the CIA adopted COIN. South America became a proving ground to attempt to change the methods of COIN used in Vietnam. The US deployed more advisors to work behind the scenes and tried once again to invest in COIN. Widespread corruption and parochial interests meant that the governments the US worked with were untrustworthy and ineffective. Minor victories still allowed the US to elevate COIN as a strategy above conventional war. However, the victories were largely due to external factors

rather than COIN operations. Latin America also proved the necessity for expanded resources. Without adequate oversight from US forces, COIN operations in the hands of repressive governments turned violent and brutal. US COIN in Latin America had many problems, revealing the US's willingness to stick to tenuous strategies.

While the US was still waging the Cold War, it attempted to stem the rising tide of communist revolutions, especially in Latin America. Despite the failures of COIN to win over the population and create a defensive framework against the NLF, COIN was far from abandoned. The US attempted COIN numerous times, most notably in Latin America. With revolutionary movements igniting across Latin America galvanized by Fidel Castro's success in Cuba in 1959, the US became increasingly aware that insurgencies and revolutionaries were a growing concern.⁸⁶ After the development of NSAM 182 and a renewed focus on COIN doctrine, Latin America would become a hotbed for US experimentation and activity. Wars of independence ignited in El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, and other countries. Support for the revolutions flowed from the Soviet Union, while counterinsurgent advisors flowed from the US. Che Guevara, a Cuban revolutionary devoted to expanding the Maoist people's war into Bolivia, was met in 1967 by Bolivian Rangers backed by the CIA's Special Activities Division.⁸⁷ With US support, Che was defeated. However, the result was far from a decisive victory against insurgencies and revolutionaries.⁸⁸

By 1972, the US military was beginning to call on the CIA to aid in the planning and training of ideologically aligned groups. On July 19th, the Director of International and Civil Affairs was asked to update US Army doctrine to account for

⁸⁵ Randolph, Stephen. "Foreign Policy and the Complexities of Corruption: The Case of South Vietnam." American Foreign Service Association, June 2016. <https://afsa.org/foreign-policy-and-complexities-corruption-case-south-vietnam>.

⁸⁶ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 228.

⁸⁷ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 227.

⁸⁸ This was not an instance of COIN, but it postdated the strategic hamlet program that ended in 1963 and justified the COIN strategies used in El Salvador and Guatemala.

new developments in national doctrine.⁸⁹ The study that analyzed US doctrine accounted for 43 recent revolutionary movements and texts to understand the nature of contemporary insurgencies and the implementation of foreign internal defense (FID).⁹⁰ However, contrary to the historical effectiveness of highly specialized units embedded within populations, like T.E. Lawrence's campaign during the Arab Revolt, the study concluded that—although a manual should establish a command post exercise (CPX) training regimen for Army units—a discreet unit of specially trained individuals was unnecessary.⁹¹ In line with Vietnam-era combat operations, the study identified the problem as tactical. The tactics-focused approach shows the influence of politics on every level of FID.⁹² A bottom-up approach centering interaction with the population instead of centering on the wider ideological mission was the central focus. The US seemingly learned from the failures of supporting a failing and unpopular South Vietnamese government and moved away from waging their own war in parallel. Their solution was to support the government and armies directly through more advisors and technical assistance.

Despite the call for updated material and the increasing intensity of proxy conflicts, the Cold War turning hot preoccupied the attention of the wider military apparatus. In 1976, FM 100-5, simply titled *Operations*, focused almost entirely on a land war with the Soviet Union.⁹³ The movement towards a systemic focus on the great

power war rejected COIN and pushed the Latin American wars to the periphery of military strategy. COIN, however, was not abandoned during this period. The Army published updated guidance on COIN in 1986, titled Field Circular (FC) 100-20.⁹⁴

Updated guidance coincided with the revolution in El Salvador, which by 1986 was in full swing. Between 1979 and 1983, the US was supporting substantial paramilitary operations in El Salvador, which were responsible for the killings of 38,000 potential political dissidents and supporters of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).⁹⁵ By 1982, the El Salvadoran government security forces were lagging in officer training, and the US Army stepped in to train over a thousand officers at Fort Benning, Georgia.⁹⁶ At the end of 1983, El Salvador, armed with thousands of advisors aided by CIA intelligence and psyops, was losing ground against the insurgents.⁹⁷

After the El Salvadorian government restructured its military leadership in 1983,⁹⁸ El Salvador instituted the Counterinsurgency Campaign: United for Reconstruction (UFR), including a four-stage strategy of cleansing operations, consolidation, reconstruction, and construction.⁹⁹ The approach sought to integrate all parts of El Salvadoran society, win hearts and minds, and isolate insurgents politically, physically, and psychologically, combatting their influence over the civilian population.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁹ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

⁹⁰ CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 1.

⁹¹ CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 2-5.

⁹² CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 121.

⁹³ Long, Austin, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence – The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960-1970 and 2003-2006: RAND Counterinsurgency Study – Paper 6*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008. https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP200.html. Also available in print form, 19.

⁹⁴ Long, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence*, 19.

⁹⁵ Siegel, Daniel and Joy Hackel. 1988. "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited." Pp. 112-35 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 115.

⁹⁶ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 117.

⁹⁷ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 117.

⁹⁸ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 118.

⁹⁹ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 121.

¹⁰⁰ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 121.

Ultimately, the insurgents were defeated in El Salvador, but the reasons are disputed. The government victory coincided with the collapse of other revolutionary movements, namely the Sandinistas' political defeat in Nicaragua in 1990 and the collapse of the USSR.¹⁰¹ The major turning points in the military outcomes came from foundational shifts in leadership and political victories abroad. However, this did not stop El Salvador from being hailed as the poster child for COIN's effectiveness against revolutionary movements by observers and future advocates.¹⁰²

Although many of the Latin American wars—most poignantly Nicaragua—are often attributed to Reagan's anti-communism, repressive and barbaric COIN in Latin America did not begin nor end with Reagan. From 1965 to 1976, the US Army School of the Americas (USARSA) was operating under USSOUTHCOM until it was shut down by Carter because of human rights violations.¹⁰³ Six years later, training material written in the context of lessons supposedly learned in Vietnam and Latin America, dubbed Project X, resurfaced with objectionable material cleared by Washington and implemented by USSOUTHCOM.¹⁰⁴ While it is unclear whether the material was subsequently removed, training material was already embedded within the exported COIN training regimens, specifically in Honduras. This enduring record of violence in training indicates issues that existed decades before the legacy of Reagan-era

paramilitaries were relevant and that human rights violations were encouraged by US advisors.

A CIA intelligence assessment in April 1986 included El Salvador on a list of counterinsurgencies that had achieved noteworthy progress in terms of ground gained and insurgents captured.¹⁰⁵ However, the assessment also predicted that the FMLN would remain resilient and formidable for two more years,¹⁰⁶ concluding that insurgency was the most prevalent form of warfare in the Third World,¹⁰⁷ indicating a clear stance on the necessity of COIN. The report also claims that the insurgency in Guatemala was in disarray because of personal differences among guerilla leaders.¹⁰⁸ Despite this assessment that the revolutionary movement was losing steam, the COIN campaign by the Guatemalan government, aided by the US government beginning in the 60s,¹⁰⁹ was unnecessarily violent and brutal. In addition to extremely intimate government-to-government relations,¹¹⁰ a report in 1991 retroactively looked at the tactics used in southern Guatemala and found particularly cruel torture techniques employed by the Guatemalan army between 1984 and 1986. These included mass graves and holding cells over pits filled with water that forced prisoners to hold onto bars to keep their heads above water.¹¹¹ To sanitize evidence and ensure limited evidence of torture, the captured insurgents were reportedly thrown out of aircrafts off the coast of Guatemala.¹¹² Throwing revolutionaries out of

¹⁰¹ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency* pg. 242

¹⁰² Perceived success in El Salvador would go on to justify re-adoption of COIN.

¹⁰³ National Security Archive, *USSOUTHCOM CI Training-Supplemental Information*, by Thomas Blanton and Peter Kornbluh. NSAEBB No. 122 Doc. 4, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2004, [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20\(U\).pdf](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20(U).pdf) (accessed March 8, 2022).

¹⁰⁴ National Security Archive, *USSOUTHCOM CI Training-Supplemental Information*

¹⁰⁵ [U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, by N/A, CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2011, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf)

[RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf) (accessed March 8, 2022), pg. ix

¹⁰⁶ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 3.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁷ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 1.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁸ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 45.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁹ Farah, Douglas. "Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, March 11, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/guatemala11.htm>.

¹¹⁰ Farah, "Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses."

¹¹¹ National Security Archive, *Concerns Over the Military*, by Department of State. NSAEBB No. 11 Doc. 29, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2017, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB11/docs/doc29.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022), 67.

¹¹² National Security Archive, *Concerns Over the Military*, 67.

planes was certainly not within US doctrine nor overseen by US advisors in the region. However, these strategies showcased the brutal tactics that characterized the militaries that the US was advising and supporting.

5.3. Afghanistan (2001–2002)

As a preamble to Iraq, the war in Afghanistan saw the rise of Donald Rumsfeld and the debate about low-footprint warfare with minimal resource allocation from the US. Afghanistan pre-2007 set out the divide between the interventionists and the champions of low-footprint warfare. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld advocated for minimal resources, while Secretary of State Colin Powell believed that more troops and peacekeeping were necessary. The war in Afghanistan settled the debate. Rumsfeld's war won out, shutting down Powell almost immediately.

By most accounts, there was a hiatus of COIN operations between the end of the Cold War and the new wars in the Middle East. While the CIA kept a watchful eye on different potential insurgencies and other rebel groups, no major developments occurred within the US COIN strategy. However, the attacks on September 11th were a wake-up call, and the US quickly jumped into action. Targeting the Taliban militant group in Afghanistan for failing to turn over Al Qaeda operatives, the US rapidly mobilized. With the help of the Pakistani government,¹¹³ the US began airstrikes on October 7th.¹¹⁴ After a little over a month, Kabul fell on November 13th,¹¹⁵ starting the real test of American COIN in Afghanistan. The defeated Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters fled to Pakistan, leaving the US to clean up the mess and

secure a country wracked by political fracturing.¹¹⁶ As the largest foreign contingent in the region, it was up to Washington to decide how to secure Kabul.

There was a major debate surrounding the methodology of securing Kabul. On one side of the table was Secretary of State Colin Powell, who wished for a larger peacekeeping contingent outside of Kabul.¹¹⁷ On the other side was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who simply wanted to bolster Afghan indigenous police and other security forces without extending beyond the capital.¹¹⁸ President Bush, on the campaign trail in 2000, had initially made promises to avoid engaging in nation-building—including political and developmental assistance—and made a preemptive endorsement of the Rumsfeld camp.¹¹⁹ In the end, while Washington was in a heated discussion, Rumsfeld took charge of the situation and steamrolled his strategy through.¹²⁰ Rumsfeld was unwilling to back down on low-footprint warfare and allowed only a contingent of military teams to work with Afghan leadership.¹²¹ The US deployed 8,000 troops in 2002, aided by a 4,000-strong international peacekeeping force that stayed in Kabul.¹²²

Since the primary goal of Rumsfeld's intervention was the training of Afghan soldiers rather than peacekeeping, Rumsfeld believed in many of the same principles as advisors and the intelligence community during the end of the Cold War. Rumsfeld thought that Afghanistan's stability depended on strengthening the government.¹²³ The US and the ISAF were to promote indigenous forces and approach the situation from the top down, focusing on government forces above population-based tactics. These principles of

¹¹³ Jones, Seth G. *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York, New York: W.W. Norton, 2009, 89.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 91.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 92.

¹¹⁶ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 96.

¹¹⁷ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 110.

¹¹⁸ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 112.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 113.

¹²⁰ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²¹ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²² Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²³ National Security Archive, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Donald Rumsfeld memo to President George W. Bush, Subject: "Afghanistan," August 20, 2002, not classified, 2 pp.*, ("Slow progress"), by Donald Rumsfeld. N/A, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2002, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/24551-office-secretary-defense-donald-rumsfeld-memo-president-george-w-bush-subject> (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

elevating government leadership echo the specific structure of advisory groups that permeated the Latin American revolutionary wars and were what contemporary military scholars indicate as leader-centric¹²⁴ COIN. Rumsfeld likely read the preceding decades as success stories for US intervention and foreign government aid systems.

Afghanistan, however, was not a COIN operation. As an explicit rejection of the population-centric model, Rumsfeld's argument for low-intensity warfare was based on reconstruction.¹²⁵ Rumsfeld articulated that the goal of ISAF and the US was to put in place the infrastructure for the Afghan government to provide itself security and for the US to leave.¹²⁶ Rumsfeld understood that establishing robust security would take significantly more resources than Washington was willing to commit. Rumsfeld thus recognized that even the 100,000 Soviet troops in years prior were insufficient because of the difficulty of risking political unpopularity, failure to control the population, and increasing instability.¹²⁷ In 2002, Rumsfeld's belief about Afghanistan was that population-centered stability was impossible without major resource allocation and small unit-based, centralized planning.

5.4. Iraq (2001–2007)

In Iraq, the debate around Afghanistan echoed. Once again, Rumsfeld's plan won out. The plan led to colossal failures in the US mission in Iraq, as the reconstruction plans post-invasion were weak and ineffective and created the conditions for a robust insurgency in Iraq. Simultaneously, US occupation and experimentation with COIN as military doctrine began. Military successes in Mosul showed the effectiveness of COIN on a city scale. At the end of 2006, COIN was again at the

forefront of the conversation. COIN became one of the only strategies that seemed to fit the bill. General David Petraeus had made a name for himself and, by 2007, was clothed in the veneer of academic legitimacy. To shore up his domestic failures and reverse the trend of Rumsfeld's low-footprint defeat, Bush chose COIN as the operating principle during the surge in early 2007.

5.4.1. Rumsfeld and Powell: An Enduring Debate (2001–2003)

After 9/11, the White House scrambled to find a culprit in Iraq. Before plans for an invasion began, Rumsfeld made his wishes known in the Pentagon. Even though Iraq was not the hotbed for Al Qaeda and the intelligence community did not believe it had a role in 9/11, Rumsfeld argued that the lack of intelligence about Iraq was enough to implicate it and justify intervention.¹²⁸ Rumsfeld's argument for the invasion was thus a symbolic show of American power. Planning for the invasion of Iraq began shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan.¹²⁹ Like Afghanistan, the proper number of troops was a contested topic. There was little doubt the US could crush the Iraqi military within a short timeframe. The central debate leading up to the war surrounded whether to invade in the first place and what should happen afterward. While war planning was underway in 2002, the plans for post-collapse Iraq stalled. Initial estimates indicated a force of 470,000 troops was necessary to stabilize the country,¹³⁰ but ultimately consensus was not achieved.¹³¹

While the future of stability operations was still in question, the US invaded Iraq on March 21st, 2003, with 145,000 troops.¹³² In less than a month,

¹²⁴ Leader-centric COIN is touted as a new development in COIN strategy but offers few innovations over numerous strategies already attempted. Moyer, Mark. "Leadership in Counterinsurgency." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34, no. 1 (2010): 135–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45289496>.

¹²⁵ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 1.

¹²⁶ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 2.

¹²⁷ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 1.

¹²⁸ Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2007, 32.

¹²⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 33.

¹³⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 79.

¹³¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 80.

¹³² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 117.

Baghdad had fallen.¹³³ With the capital gone, Iraq was thrown into disarray, and various groups looking to capitalize against the US presence began making themselves known. Within days, widespread looting of cities had started. Rumsfeld quickly dismissed the instability as people free to make mistakes and commit crimes,¹³⁴ refusing to take responsibility for the repercussions of a hasty invasion. Multiple insurgencies rose in Iraq, with most of the notable inciting events the direct result of US military action. Shortly after the US took Baghdad, it implemented a form of nation-building characterized by shortsighted policies.¹³⁵

5.4.2. The CPA Creates an Insurgency (2003)

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was the US-instituted interim government that took charge in the wake of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's rule. In May 2003, the CPA dissolved the Iraqi Army and began expelling any former Ba'athist members—members of Saddam's party—from the government.¹³⁶ The Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide made this transition incredibly violent. Prior to the US invasion, Sunni Muslims were a minority in Iraq but also the ruling party. The dissolution of the army pushed the Sunni leadership and already trained soldiers away from the central government directly into the hands of potential insurgent groups. A sectarian political conflict ignited from the collapsed central government in Baghdad. In accordance with the US goal of democracy promotion, the CPA sought to hold elections. Despite clear sectarian lines intensifying in 2003 and 2004, the US administration overwhelmingly believed in the

project, charging ahead with representative democracy. A series of votes led to increased Shi'a power under the CPA. As a result, Sunni insurgencies began to emerge and draw in former Ba'athists and other fighters under religious lines.¹³⁷ Because sectarian lines had given the Sunni minority control and demographically aligned elections threatened to disrupt Sunni leadership, Iraqi Sunnis boycotted a 2005 election.¹³⁸ With popular rule as a necessity for American nation-building, the CPA could do little to calm the political situation.

Despite the assessed need for almost 500,000 troops, the US believed wholeheartedly in low-footprint warfare. Some attribute this to Rumsfeld's need for control,¹³⁹ including Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz.¹⁴⁰ The focus on low resource allocation ultimately led to a decline in troop presence after the invasion as soldiers were pulled out in favor of governance over security operations. The dissolution of the Iraqi Army, de-Ba'athification, and failures to secure the economic issues with looting made Iraq ripe for multiple insurgencies to take hold.

On August 8, 2003, the CPA released a statement on the situation in Iraq, commenting that the road to freedom continued. The statement came one day after a car bomb outside the Jordanian embassy killed eleven and wounded over fifty people.¹⁴¹ Almost simultaneously, organized attacks on the embassy, the UN, the Red Cross, and the Iraqi police occurred. The timing, coordination, and sophistication of the attacks indicated a major insurgent element existing in Iraq.¹⁴² An Al Qaeda-aligned leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the

¹³³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 134.

¹³⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 136.

¹³⁵ Rumsfeld would eventually resign after significant disagreements with uniformed military members and midterm election failures. Young, Jim. "Rumsfeld Stepping Down." NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, November 8, 2006. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna15622266>.

¹³⁶ Fishman, Brian H. *The Master Plan: Isis, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2017, 40.

¹³⁷ Dawisha, Adeed. *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013, 251.

¹³⁸ Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 249.

¹³⁹ Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 2006, 148.

¹⁴⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 138.

¹⁴¹ Other sources indicate 17 deaths. Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 41. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 215.

¹⁴² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 216.

bombings.¹⁴³ Al Qaeda, gaining steam and personnel from former Saddam supporters, would become a major resistance against US occupation. While al-Zarqawi was largely alone in the early days of the insurgency, Iraq was a rich opportunity. Iraq was laden with weapons from across the country that were insufficiently guarded by American troops, allowing for the widespread arming of Zarqawi's men.¹⁴⁴ The borders were insecure, allowing funding from outside the country to flow in regularly.¹⁴⁵ Finally, the US attempt to rid the central government of sectarian Sunni elements gave Zarqawi access to already disillusioned and newly jobless Sunnis.¹⁴⁶ By 2004, the US was embroiled in a full-blown, Al Qaeda-supported¹⁴⁷ Sunni insurgency. The insurgency culminated in the second battle of Fallujah in November 2004, the single bloodiest battle of the conflict. The US was victorious and kicked Zarqawi out of the city. However, after ten months of occupation, Zarqawi was proven an effective insurgent leader in the Iraqi city centers.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the US methods were fundamentally ineffective against the growing insurgencies.

5.4.3. Mosul as a Proving Ground (2003–2005)

The turning point for COIN doctrine in Iraq was the city of Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq and host to hundreds of thousands of potential enemies of the US.¹⁴⁹ Mosul was the perfect opportunity to learn from the mistakes of COIN and implement a robust and effective strategy for combatting insurgencies. Major General David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne, implemented his version of COIN in Mosul in the

immediate aftermath of the invasion. Operating in conjunction with CIA and special operations units, Petraeus sought to minimize violence and, at one point, conducted a simultaneous raid on twenty-three high-value targets with only a single shot fired.¹⁵⁰ Petraeus had established a significant amount of control through the 101st as an individual leader and through the overwhelming firepower of his unit.¹⁵¹

Two aspects of Petraeus's campaign in Mosul are of note. First, establishing robust security was the central goal, and this goal was incredibly time-sensitive because of quickly spreading insurgent recruitment. The longer the US stayed in the region, the more resistance would emerge against it.¹⁵² Second, the legitimacy afforded to Petraeus with the guns of the US at his back allowed him to exert significant control over former government elements.¹⁵³ Petraeus's security focus and legitimacy meant that for Mosul to thrive after Petraeus's departure, a new form of credible legitimacy must exist in place of the US. That legitimacy had to be viewed as liberation and must avoid being viewed as occupational.

Despite these challenges, Petraeus successfully stabilized Mosul in late 2003. By January 2004, attacks on US forces and Mosul police were five times lower than other cities in Iraq.¹⁵⁴ Petraeus spent significant effort winning hearts and minds by assuring people that money was flowing to security forces¹⁵⁵ and that the US would quickly respond to Iraqi sentiment.¹⁵⁶ However, when Petraeus and the 101st Airborne left in the spring of 2004,¹⁵⁷ Mosul collapsed again. In November of 2004, most of Mosul's police force had abandoned post,¹⁵⁸ leading to instability and

¹⁴³ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 41.

¹⁴⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁷ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 59.

¹⁴⁸ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 55.

¹⁴⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 228.

¹⁵⁰ This follows the intelligence-military coordination in COIN operations in Latin America. This also indicates that even in Iraq, COIN was not a purely military tactic. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 229.

¹⁵¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 229.

¹⁵² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 231.

¹⁵⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 231.

¹⁵⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 232.

¹⁵⁸ Wong, Edward. "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, February 22, 2005.

insurgent opportunities. The 101st Airborne had been relieved by a much smaller military force. By late February 2005, northern Iraq had turned into a haven for insurgent groups, namely Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam.¹⁵⁹ Both groups had ties to Zarqawi and sought to forge strong ties to the central and southern-based networks.¹⁶⁰ The unit that replaced Petraeus had failed.

5.4.4. The Selection of Petraeus and the Surge Debate (2004–2006)

The failure of Mosul's endurance also mirrored a failure to secure the rest of Iraq. The US was committed to securing the country. With Mosul fresh in the memory of COIN advocates, the US Army began to work on its own strategic approach to COIN.

On October 6, 2004, COIN experts met in Quantico at the Irregular Warfare Conference.¹⁶¹ This conference emphasized the need for flexible, multidimensional forces rather than specialized units and an updated top-down strategy that improved the dialogue between the civilian leadership and the military.¹⁶² Experts in the field attended the conference, and recommendations from external sources—including David Kilcullen—were given on COIN's behalf.¹⁶³

Conferences about COIN continued, and in 2005, critics of the Iraq War joined the conversation, offering dissenting opinions from human rights activists and the Red Cross, who criticized ongoing occupation activities for human rights violations.¹⁶⁴ This integration of critics was part of Petraeus's strategy to sell a renewed push

for COIN and open the discussion space to grant legitimacy to the project.¹⁶⁵

The talks culminated in the circulation of an early version of FM 3-24 in June 2006 for open criticism and discussion among experts and military personnel.¹⁶⁶ Commentators included academics calling for more specific identification of potential enemies and emphasis on the internal politics of insurgencies.¹⁶⁷ Others, including former military officers, fully believed in the hearts and minds approach while simultaneously advocating for random searches, mandatory presentation of identity documents, and preventative detainment.¹⁶⁸ Although contested, the initial draft of the manual was published on December 15, 2006.

By 2006, Bush had overseen many failures in Iraq, Petraeus had gone home and ruminated extensively on Mosul, and a new strategy to secure Baghdad and the rest of the country was clearly necessary. The conference-driven academic review process of FM 3-24 was critical in granting legitimacy to COIN advocates, giving the appearance of a robust evaluation of capabilities and methodologies. Petraeus had cemented himself as a new, thoughtful leader who could evaluate and react to the contexts on the ground.

The Bush administration had three options to address the increasing violence.¹⁶⁹ The two scrapped options were a continuation of indigenous force training while decreasing US troop presence or pulling out US forces almost entirely. The third option was a surge modeled on Petraeus's operations in Mosul and similar

<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/world/middleeast/attack-s-by-militant-groups-rise-in-mosul.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Wong, "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul."

¹⁶⁰ Wong, "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul."

¹⁶¹ Ma, Jason. "Praise from Van Riper: U.S. MILITARY WRESTLES WITH IRREGULAR WARFARE, ASYMMETRIC THREATS." *Inside the Navy* 17, no. 45 (2004): 1-5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24838718>.

¹⁶² Ma, "Praise from Van Riper"

¹⁶³ Ruettershoff, Tobias. "Counterinsurgency as Ideology - the Evolution of Expert Knowledge Production in U. S. Asymmetric Warfare (1898-2011): The Cases of the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq." Thesis, University of Exeter, 2015, 282.

¹⁶⁴ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 286.

¹⁶⁵ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 289.

¹⁶⁶ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 291.

¹⁶⁷ Schultz, Richard H., and Andrea J. Dew. "Counterinsurgency, by the Book." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 7, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/opinion/07shultz.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Daly, Terence J. "Killing Won't Win This War." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/opinion/21daly.html>.

¹⁶⁹ Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. New York, New York: Crown Publishers, 2010, Chapter 12.

operations by Colonel McMaster in Tal Afar.¹⁷⁰ Bush, interested in the supposedly novel innovations of COIN, was eager to implement the new doctrine.

Ultimately, Bush chose Petraeus to lead the new era of US presence in Iraq. On February 10, 2007, Petraeus became commander of Multi-National Force, Iraq, and an additional 21,500 troops¹⁷¹ were deployed—totaling 153,000. Bush described the selection of Petraeus as akin to Lincoln discovering General Grant and General Sherman.¹⁷²

With Petraeus came a cast of other COIN advocates.¹⁷³ Notable among them was the return of John D. Negroponte as Deputy Secretary of State. Negroponte had been active during the 1980s as a US ambassador to Honduras and Regan's deputy national security advisor.¹⁷⁴ Negroponte oversaw the CIA arming and training of Contras in Nicaragua and other groups in Honduras and El Salvador.¹⁷⁵ Bush named Zalmay Khalilzad as an ambassador to the UN, giving up his former position of ambassador to Iraq to Ryan Crocker.¹⁷⁶ Khalilzad was a neoconservative who fully believed in the power of the US military.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Admiral William Fallon¹⁷⁸ became head of CENTCOM. The COIN advocates had gained substantial authority and were set to push their own brand of military doctrine.

5.4.5. The Baghdad Plan (2007)

Bush's plans took a population-centric hearts and minds approach. Instead of securing the country through kinetic operations, the focus would be on winning the support of the population. The center of the surge was the expansion of operations in Baghdad, with an additional 7,000 troops deployed to secure the city and advise Iraqi security forces.¹⁷⁹ These troops would be split up, aiding Iraqi police and army units by patrolling and bolstering numbers. In addition to being embedded within the security forces, the US was to target specific mixed Sunni-Shi'a neighborhoods. To reduce the Sunni-Shi'a conflict, an additional Kurdish brigade was deployed to Baghdad.¹⁸⁰ These provisions came straight from Petraeus's playbook, recognizing that additional troops were necessary and the transition from external security to internal security¹⁸¹ would require spending more time on the ground.

The changes implemented during the surge heeded the lessons perceived from other COIN operations. While the plan for Iraq was not a complete departure from the model of bolstering the government observed in years prior, it was, for all intents and purposes, a newer approach to COIN. Spilling outwards from Baghdad, US forces were to operate in conjunction with indigenous

¹⁷⁰ Bush, *Decision Points*, Chapter 12.

¹⁷¹ The number of troops was under heated debate within domestic circles and between the US and the Iraqi government. Abramowitz, Michael, and Robin Wright. "Bush to Add 21,500 Troops in an Effort to Stabilize Iraq." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 11, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011002437.html>.

¹⁷² Bush, *Decision Points*, Chapter 12.

¹⁷³ MarketWatch. "Bush to Seek Billions, 20,000 More Troops for Iraq." *MarketWatch*. MarketWatch, January 5, 2007. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/bush-to-ask-for-billions-20000-more-troops-for-iraq?dist=>.

¹⁷⁴ Cannon, Lou. "Negroponte to Be No. 2 at the NSC." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, November 19, 1987. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/11/19/negroponte-to-be-no-2-at-the-nsc/1ba390d3-cf52-44ec-97be-f71d5d55a3b0/>.

¹⁷⁵ Cannon, "Negroponte to Be No. 2 at the NSC."

¹⁷⁶ Crocker shows up later in Afghanistan and would support Obama's continuation of COIN. Sennott, Charles M. "Interview: Ambassador Ryan Crocker." *The World from PRX*, October 19, 2009. <https://theworld.org/stories/2009-10-19/interview-ambassador-ryan-crocker>.

¹⁷⁷ Borger, Julian. "Washington's Man in Baghdad Is Pulling off a High-Risk Balancing Act." *The Guardian*. *Guardian News and Media*, March 10, 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/10/usa.iraq>.

¹⁷⁸ Fallon resigned in 2008 and speculation of why included disagreements with Petraeus about redeploying troops to Afghanistan. Walker, Martin. "Why Admiral Fallon Resigned." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, April 8, 2008. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1079634.html>.

¹⁷⁹ Beehner, Lionel. "Bush's Baghdad Plan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 18, 2007. <https://www.cfr.org/background/bushs-baghdad-plan>.

¹⁸⁰ Beehner, "Bush's Baghdad Plan."

¹⁸¹ Transitioning from relying on US forces to relying on indigenous Iraqi forces trained by the US.

police. The plan also involved substantial expansion of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs),¹⁸² primarily used for infrastructural development and integration of civil-military affairs.

This plan received a mixed reaction from the Iraqi government. The Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, staunchly favored the withdrawal of 50,000 US troops by the end of 2007.¹⁸³ The surge was coming at a politically contentious time. Domestically, Democrats and Republicans disagreed about the continued need for a US presence in Iraq.¹⁸⁴ Internationally, the US government and Iraqi officials struggled to find common ground.¹⁸⁵ While the US insisted that it was operating with the Iraqi government and that misunderstandings resulted from communication failures,¹⁸⁶ the rift between the two governments was far from improving.

The insurgencies starting in 2001 and the consequent COIN campaign that occurred in Iraq were mired in heated debates and failing promises. Mosul's success transformed into a campaign that lost the support of Iraq's government. The US had experimented with COIN for decades and adopted COIN to achieve wider strategic goals in Iraq. However, the lessons learned from previous decades failed to create a successful COIN strategy in Iraq. Notably, the intense training necessary to embed troops within the population was inadequate,¹⁸⁷ and the paradox of requiring swift and decisive action to avoid an occupation while necessitating persistent troop presence was never resolved. However, COIN was

not a wholesale failure. Coinciding with the adoption of COIN, violence decreased in the Anbar province from 450 incidents per month to 100 in mid-2007, and US fatalities dropped 26% between 2006 and 2007.¹⁸⁸ The insurgency that arose from the invasion of Iraq and the failures of the CPA presented an opportunity for COIN implementation, and the decision to adopt COIN represents a choice made from organizational pressure.

6. Testing Theories of COIN

6.1. COIN as Rational Action

When evaluating rational action's application to COIN, the model of gathering information and choosing a rational set of actions to achieve a goal breaks down. The US understood the environment and gathered sufficient intelligence leading up to and during the surge. The US also had clearly defined goals and metrics that it could use to measure success—albeit with some ambiguity. However, the US implemented COIN to achieve those goals because it had failed to properly judge past implementations and inadequately evaluated the alternatives. Thus, COIN's adoption was largely irrational.

6.1.1. Information Gathering

COIN's adoption was partially a result of robust information gathering and goal setting. The historical review shows that the US used environmental observation, goal setting, and rational data collection. Insurgency outcomes and

¹⁸² Beehner, "Bush's Baghdad Plan."

¹⁸³ Londoño, Ernesto. "Pelosi, Maliki Discuss Timing of Drawdown 4 Slain GIS Were Abducted, U.S. Says." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 27, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/01/27/pelosi-maliki-discuss-timing-of-drawdown-span-classbankhead4-slain-gis-were-abducted-us-saysspan/6c652b8f-a3e6-4415-ad69-990ed5fedd4d/>.

¹⁸⁴ Londoño, "Pelosi, Maliki Discuss Timing of Drawdown."

¹⁸⁵ Fadel, Leila, and McClatchy/Tribune newspapers. "Al-Maliki Hits Back at Bush, Rice Criticism." *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 2021. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2007-01-18-0701180060-story.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Fadel & McClatchy. "Al-Maliki Hits Back at Bush, Rice Criticism."

¹⁸⁷ Eikenberry speaks on Afghanistan, but many of his criticisms stem from the wider COIN push Eikenberry, Karl W. "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan." *Foreign Affairs*, August 23, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2013-09-01/limits-counterinsurgency-doctrine-afghanistan>.

¹⁸⁸ West, Bing. "Counterinsurgency Lessons from Iraq." *army.mil*, March 5, 2009. https://www.army.mil/article/20621/counterinsurgency_lessons_from_iraq.

operating environments were measured and understood. Consequences were studied to rank options by their cost. COIN was also conceived as a larger top-down approach to strategy.

A. Environment Observation—A clear lineage of operating environments exists throughout the history of COIN's adoption. The process of rationally adopting COIN was on the radar of the intelligence community throughout the Cold War. Moreover, the US military worked very closely with the CIA and was involved with interpreting the intelligence reports after Vietnam. Throughout the '70s and '80s, the CIA and the military attempted to understand the reality of modern insurgencies. The CIA kept robust surveillance of other COIN operations, most notably of the Soviet Union. The Soviets were attempting a strategy similar to the US strategy. The CIA reported that the Soviet's use of COIN was data-driven but weak. The US was aware of its own COIN operations and was evaluating the use of COIN by other countries. Ultimately, the recommendation of over 400,000 troops before the invasion of Iraq indicates that the Bush administration knew the high costs of securing Iraq after Saddam's overthrow.

B. Goal Setting—Information gathering also relies on goal setting and clearly defined metrics for success. Information gathering was present in Vietnam. However, it was in a form unsuited to low-intensity and unconventional war. The strategic hamlet program was designed to take out insurgent strongholds, and COIN's goals were fundamentally about defeating the enemy. This strategy of defeating an insurgency and amassing a kill count would extend until the end of the war, even after the strategic hamlet program was proven a failure. In Latin America, the goals were

to train an indigenous force and defeat respective insurgencies. This meant attacking specific leaders and setting goals for how many security troops to train. Updating goals thus indicates a progression in information metrics.

The goals in Iraq were explicit because the US established its overall mission and had objective measurements of success. The US's long-term goal in Iraq was to leave after creating a stable security environment.¹⁸⁹ COIN was a method to establish security, so the number of attacks on civilian and US forces was the chosen objective measurement. The US also measured success based on the number of tips received about Al Qaeda,¹⁹⁰ indicating that the hearts and minds approach strove to establish a relationship between the US and the population. The US was consistent with rational information gathering because it evaluated success with specific metrics. In Mosul and Tal Afar, the US assessed the objective differences before and after the implementation of COIN. Thus, the environmental observation before the surge was clearly established and acted upon.

While the US also had significantly more nebulous goals, like attempting to transition the security to indigenous force without an objective measure,¹⁹¹ the attacks and tips metrics were well studied. The US was in a constant process of evaluation, ensuring that it understood the environment where it was operating. Outside of the political goals that backed the initial decision to invade, the US understood the necessity of a significant troop presence. The established goals were then used to calculate the necessary size of the US force. However, nation-building required a troop presence that was politically untenable. The US understood this issue, but there was

¹⁸⁹ "Americas | Progress Report on Iraq Benchmarks." BBC News. BBC, July 12, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6294694.stm>.

¹⁹⁰ Bush, George W. "U.S. Policy toward Iraq | c-Span.org." c-Span, April 10, 2008. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?204815-1/us-policy-iraq#>!

¹⁹¹ It was unit-dependent and relied on whether the Transition Readiness Assessment deemed mission-critical tasks able to be

performed independent of coalition support. House of Representatives. "Hearing Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services." U.S. Government Printing Office, May 22, 2007. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhr38110/html/CHRG-110hhr38110.htm>.

disagreement over how to engage with the environment. The plan was to use COIN to transition towards Iraqi indigenous security, and the US spent significant time evaluating this goal.

C. Irrational Information Gathering—Information gathering alone, however, does not constitute rational action. Understanding the environment is only the first step in rationally choosing actions. While the US might have had objective and rational metrics to assess its operations, many metrics made little sense in context.

The tips and attacks metrics are reasonable indicators of an insurgency's strength, but they do not establish a causal relationship between COIN and the defeat of an insurgency. This problem is highlighted by the centering of ideology in other conflicts. The US often fails to interpret ideological struggles as a primary cause of insurgencies, instead operating under the assumption that insurgencies arise from material conditions. This assumption poses two major problems. First, information gathering centers around the wrong metrics. As experienced in Vietnam after Kennedy, victory was defined by the ratio of killed enemies to killed allies. This body count approach fundamentally missed the ideological aspect of the Northern Vietnamese resistance. Second, COIN is an inadequate tool to solve the root causes of insurgencies because improving the security situation does not implicate an appreciable decrease in ideological power.

Additionally, the body count measurement generally favored the US in Vietnam. Advanced weaponry and high mobility warfare allowed the US to exact significant casualties on North Vietnamese forces. The US could easily claim victory in terms of casualties while still losing the political war. This mindset also failed to account for Ho Chi Minh's statement in 1946 that not even a ten-to-one kill ratio would diminish the ideological standings of the North Vietnamese.¹⁹² This metric issue was also present in Iraq. While

the objective measure of attacks indicates overall stability, those attacks were often unattributed, meaning the metric missed the ideological changes behind an increasingly stable security environment. Tips about Al Qaeda were a better indicator of an ideological shift, as it indicated that the population was more confident about resisting the insurgency and the capability to push out the insurgency—consistent with Kilcullen's description of an intervention. However, tips alone are insufficient and must be cross-referenced with other data. The number of tips must be corroborated against the potential insurgent numbers, as more tips alone could antithetically indicate a greater insurgent force.

6.1.2. Adaptation

Beyond goal setting and contextual understanding, rational action prescribes adaption and alternative testing. COIN's development does not follow these tenets of rational action. COIN worked in some places but failed to produce results for the US in important ways. Adaptation occurred but in ways that were incongruous with value maximization. Alternatives were also barely discussed. The conferences that led to the adoption of COIN were not conferences of genuine doctrinal debate but built around advocating for COIN. Within the military, the discussion revolved around selling COIN to Bush and creating the best version of COIN instead of engaging in outcome comparison between strategies. The spectrum of options was ultimately narrow and irrational.

Latin America is indicative of the attitudes around COIN before Iraq. COIN had become a governmental and military intelligence strategy that diverged from the geography-based COIN in Vietnam. Developments between the Cold War and Iraq indicate two rational conclusions about COIN. First, the US believed that COIN was a

¹⁹² Karnow, Stanley. "Ho Chi Minh." *Time*. Time Inc., April 13, 1998.

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988162,00.html>.

successful strategy, attributing the defeat of insurgents to COIN. Second, the US attempted to rectify failures in training. After Vietnam, there were tangible changes to COIN. The US abandoned the strategic hamlet program and understood that ideology was more important than material conditions. Government assistance became the primary mechanism of support, yet still failed to win the ideological war in Iraq.

A. Perceived Victory—After the collapse of the Soviet Union and many of the Soviet-backed insurgencies, the US saw right-wing governments successfully consolidate power. The victories of respective governments in Latin America are not attributed to US COIN. Instead, victory came from US conventional support and the collapse of wider leftist movements across the globe. At best, the US could derive a correlational conclusion about COIN and the collapse of insurgencies given the global contexts of the Cold War. Despite the unclear relationship between COIN and victory, advocates used Latin America to promote COIN.

The US knew that the governments it supported in Latin America were repressive, and it was unclear whether they were using US-sanctioned tactics. The attempt to rectify the training material from Project X indicates that the US sought to modify training. Some of the failures of COIN in Latin America were acted upon. Mainly, Petraeus sought to decrease the violence of his COIN campaign in Mosul, reacting to cultural differences instead of increasing violent crackdowns on insurgents. However, embedding into the population only went so far.

The US's disagreements with the Iraqi government before the surge in Iraq indicate a failure to integrate with the security forces. The US either had learned from Latin America and wanted to maintain control over the training of security forces or, more likely, wanted to maintain control over the country writ large for political reasons. The optimistic interpretation that the US had learned to maintain control over its training to avoid abuse is undermined by the US's actions in Iraq, especially the expansive use of independent

and clandestine special operations forces and the significant expansion of detention and torture. The human rights record of the US in Iraq shows that US oversight of the Iraqi forces was loose. That is not to say that the Iraqi government did not matter, as government assistance was still a cornerstone of the strategy in Iraq. The surge specifically focused on Baghdad. The focus on supporting the indigenous government indicates consistency in the top-down view of COIN present in El Salvador, Honduras, and other conflicts. This strategy most likely comes from perceptions of success in Latin America rather than lessons from failures.

B. Considering Alternatives—The other tenet of adaptation is the analysis of potential alternatives. The extent to which the White House debated alternative approaches for Iraq is unclear. However, it is clear that there was little resistance to COIN. By the time the surge was close to being implemented in January 2007, Rumsfeld had resigned, and the Bush administration had lost its most powerful champion of low-intensity warfare. Left in power were Bush and the neoconservatives, who were committed to securing Iraq and had realized Rumsfeld's plans were a failure. By the time the surge was being formulated, the Bush administration looking for a new tactic to cement the US as a liberating force, and there was little opposition to the rise of COIN advocacy.

In his memoir, Bush indicates that he looked at the other alternatives to COIN. However, the options discussed in his memoir both involved pulling out of Iraq, either slowly with a transition towards indigenous security or abruptly. These options were closed off from the beginning, as the cabinet surrounding Bush opposed lowering its commitment. Additionally, there were larger considerations for Bush, including the legacy of his presidency. Rumsfeld's resignation indicated that the Bush administration had failed regarding Iraq. In early 2007, after the midterms and halfway through his second term, Bush believed he could make a mark, and his advisors believed in the

mission of Iraqi freedom. In his memoir, Bush takes credit for the selection of Petraeus and recalls the selection of Petraeus as him discovering his version of Grant. Additionally, Bush claims that he chose COIN because of Petraeus's academic rigor, deferring to Petraeus's extensive education and practice.¹⁹³ The Bush administration thus sought the most rationally appearing strategy and, in the process, expedited a single opinion.

C. Scaling—After Mosul, it was infeasible to carry out many of the same practices that Petraeus implemented in the wider 2007 surge. Being so close to the ground, Petraeus could respond to specific changes within the city, including paying police through the existing treasury and sharing technology with local populations as a show of good faith. While these actions boosted morale among the population and elevated the US's status, they would not operate across the entire country.¹⁹⁴ Another hypothesis for failures after Mosul is that the surge was an unsuccessful attempt to implement small-scale strategies on a wider battlefield. This hypothesis is unlikely because Petraeus updated the methodology between Mosul and the surge. There is little evidence to support that the same provisions and tactics that allowed Petraeus to succeed in Mosul would succeed in Baghdad and spill outward.

D. Academic Rationality—Many experts who criticized the original draft of FM 3-24 were overshadowed and unrepresented in the final product. While it is impossible to implement every critic's wish, the published version of FM 3-24 failed to assuage many of the larger complaints about the manual—mainly that it read like an incomplete how-to guide instead of an overarching doctrine.¹⁹⁵ The supposed method of

academic rigor involving experts and critics had two major flaws. First, it operated under the assumption of COIN's effectiveness, discussing the merits of COIN in a vacuum rather than in relation to other strategies. While the discussion of COIN involved multiple viewpoints, Petraeus's decision was uninformed by a rejection of other strategies.

Second, according to Kilcullen—one of the often-cited experts who participated in those discussions—allowing dissenting opinions was a tool to show the media that the debate over COIN was bipartisan.¹⁹⁶ The discussions were more a way to sell the strategy than to create the best version of the strategy. Selecting the surge appears like the Bush administration adopted the strategy with the loudest advocates rather than the tried-and-true strategy that was favorable over alternatives.

6.1.3. Course Correction

Value calculations are fantastic predictors of what actions are likely to be taken. For COIN to be rational, it should follow models of cost-benefit analysis. An increase in the costs of an action should be accompanied by decision-makers shying away from said action. Conversely, a decrease in the cost of an action—either by an increase in value or the probability of completing the mission—should be accompanied by decision-makers readily adopting said action.¹⁹⁷ COIN is thus irrational, as these predictors are not present. Given the increased costs of COIN in Iraq, including troop requirements, oversight, and equipment, the strategy decreased value. Definitions are also an important indicator of irrationality in Iraq, as the definitions remained

¹⁹³ This begs the question of whether Petraeus's practice was a rational action. Bush's deferment to Petraeus could still be a rational decision if Petraeus had made the rational calculations for Bush. On the surface, Petraeus's COIN methodology looks rational, as his experiments in Mosul indicate that he knew a version of COIN could work and the investigations—including opening discussion to both critics and civilian experts—allowed for dissenting viewpoints to be heard before FM 3-24 was

published. However, beyond the surface, Petraeus's adoption of COIN does not support this view.

¹⁹⁴ This also necessitates the focus on Baghdad and the top-down approach.

¹⁹⁵ Schultz, & Dew, "Counterinsurgency, by the Book."

¹⁹⁶ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology."

¹⁹⁷ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 34.

too broad for rational actions. Broad definitions offered leeway for operations. The failure to create specific definitions was an easy way to increase the scope of COIN's capabilities. Finally, training—a way to increase the probability of attaining fixed consequences—was unimproved, and actions to increase COIN's value maximization were left behind.

A. Troop Organization—The most fundamental change in COIN was the shift from government-centric advisors to a boots-on-the-ground approach, with military units training and policing local populations. While the surge was a top-down approach and adhered to the principles of COIN from Latin America, the US finally recognized the necessity for a major increase in troops and the importance of embedding significant forces in the country. These strategies were a departure from Rumsfeld's failures. Significant disagreements within the uniformed forces and Rumsfeld's leadership pointed to Rumsfeld's resignation as a necessity for the mission in Iraq.¹⁹⁸ The US's shift in strategy involved a renewed focus on transitioning towards Iraqi security with coalition support and increasing security forces outside of Baghdad. This shift strongly indicates that the US learned from the previous failures of low-intensity warfare and an overall programmatic focus on advisor groups. Advisors embedded themselves within units, intimately connected to the units they trained and supported. This was also true of transition teams, as coalition units were paired with Iraqi units, allowing for a one-to-one exchange of tactical training. This integration of units coincided with a tangible decrease in

violence after the surge.¹⁹⁹ The US learned from its previous experience in troop organization. Placing troops in population centers is a more costly strategy but is necessary because of the limitations of advisor groups.

B. Irrational Definitions—An indicator that the military failed to rectify the issues COIN experienced years prior was its definitions of insurgency and COIN. Refined definitions would have shown that it used rational calculations of past success and failure in its decision-making process. Earlier definitions are outlined in FC 100-20, published in 1986. It includes insurgency under the umbrella of low-intensity warfare—along with counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and peacetime contingencies.²⁰⁰ FC 100-20 defines an insurgency as an “organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government.”²⁰¹ COIN is defined as “all military and other actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”²⁰² These interpretations are incredibly broad, only narrowing the definition of an insurgency by tying it to organizations and centering politics. Additionally, COIN is defined as any government action made to stop an insurgency. The broadness of this definition allows COIN proponents to attribute any government success to COIN operations.

FC 100-20 makes a critical error when characterizing the preconditions for COIN. COIN is defined as overt actions made to support a government with the understanding that appropriate change is possible without an

¹⁹⁸ Young, “Rumsfeld Stepping Down.”

¹⁹⁹ The transition itself, however, is another counterargument for excluding failed policies. FM 3-24 attempts to identify policies that worked within COIN and policies that failed. One such policy failure was training host-nation security forces in the US image. The transition towards Iraqi security, however, is very reminiscent of the US's organization. The process through which transitions were deemed a success was based on coalition unit organization and coalition mission success criteria. Despite the US using Sunnis to patrol parts of Iraq—a potential departure from US organizing principles—there is little evidence the organization, operations, or tactics

significantly differed between the US and Iraqi security forces. House of Representatives. “Hearing Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services.” Baghdad. “US Uses Sunnis to Patrol Streets.” *The Age*. The Age, August 20, 2007. <https://www.theage.com.au/world/us-uses-sunnis-to-patrol-streets-20070820-ge5mgp.html>.

²⁰⁰ *FC 100-20 Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict*. Arlington, Virginia: Department of the Army, 1986. 1-6

²⁰¹ *FC 100-20 2-0*

²⁰² *FC 100-20 2-7*

insurgency.²⁰³ COIN assumes that the radical overthrow of a government system is unnecessary. This definition characterizes COIN as operations that are visible and antithetical to insurgency. It also implies that the government forces can meet the demands of insurgent groups. This definition falls short of an adequate explanation of COIN for a few reasons. First, COIN operations are often covert, proven by the disappearance of suspected insurgents and the subsequent hiding of evidence prevalent in Latin America. Second, the assumption that governments can meet insurgent demands grants legitimacy to the standing government, implying that COIN is incapable of suppressing insurgent populations and must meet their demands.

The joint doctrine published for the strategy in Iraq, FM 3-24, changes the wording of the FM 100-20 definitions. FM 3-24 defines insurgency as the “organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government using subversion and armed conflict”²⁰⁴ and defines COIN as the “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”²⁰⁵ However, these FM 3-24 definitions only rearrange the definitions from FC 100-20 rather than refine them. The definition of insurgency is still too broad. While FM 3-24 defines COIN by specific categories of action, those actions remain just as broadly defined as in FC 100-20. FM 3-24 does identify six principles of government legitimacy,²⁰⁶ departing from FC 100-20’s flawed

assumption of absolute government legitimacy. However, the effect of the definition change is negligible, as it does not materially constrain COIN actions. Consequently, the failure to refine the definitions of COIN indicates that the US military believed every aspect of COIN outlined in the ’80s was necessary to the military process and was unaware of how to refine its operations.

C. Irrational Training—The other example of COIN’s irrational course correction is the training of US troops. Conventional wisdom from as far back as the British imperialist policing—corroborated by the Troubles and the initial troop requirement estimates—indicates that a highly trained force that could effectively integrate into the population was necessary.²⁰⁷ Training the troops on the local cultures, language, and customs was crucial for the surge to avoid the abuses of government overreach experienced in Latin America and ensure that the US troops could work with the government they were attempting to stabilize. However, the military did not expand the training programs. The US had training programs before the surge, including Operation Mojave Viper, a scenario-based training program that emphasized civilian engagement. However, specialized and optional programs like Mojave Viper highlighted the inefficiencies and training gaps for the soldiers, including language barriers and failures to identify insurgents.²⁰⁸ Despite these problems, Mojave Viper existed until it was

²⁰³ FC 100-20 2-0

²⁰⁴ Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²⁰⁵ The counterargument that COIN also includes operations that fail and expansive definitions account for those failed tactics makes little sense. As a military doctrine, FM 3-24 outlines the process for militaries to implement or understand COIN. However, including all government action spanning economic and civil action greatly increases the purview of the military’s operations. The primary justification for the military to be involved in economic and civic action is the protection of institutions and infrastructure. The definition of COIN stated in FM 3-24 greatly expands the military’s role. Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²⁰⁶ Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, 1-21.

²⁰⁷ The Troubles are an important development in COIN, as they are not an example of US COIN tactics but are often cited as the correct method, including by Porch. However, the application of the victories of the Troubles into US COIN in the Middle East is tenuous at best. The British had two major advantages the US did not have in Iraq: proximity and language. Since the languages are the same and many of the cultural practices similar, the British were also similarly able to integrate much better within the population. Imported British soldiers did not need specialized training to understand the language or culture.

²⁰⁸ Palmer, Brian. “Sensitivity Training and the War in Iraq.” NPR. NPR, December 13, 2006. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6618863>.

rebranded for training in Afghanistan in 2016.²⁰⁹ While some new programs were created to increase the operability within civilian populations, many programs were not mandatory, and units had to pay for training.²¹⁰ The training was not widely implemented and fell short in many relevant aspects.

At best, rational actor theory can be applied to COIN in Iraq insofar as the surge was based on falsehoods and failures to investigate past mistakes after Vietnam and during Iraq. To believe that rational actor theory explains the surge is to believe that the US government's narratives of COIN at face value. Repeated errors in government assistance and training indicate that rationality ends at goal setting and defining an overall strategic approach and does not extend into training, tactics, or historical analysis.

6.2. COIN as Organization

Unlike rational actor theory, organization theory predicts that COIN's implementation in Iraq resulted from preferences in the military organization. Organization theory holds true for COIN, explaining many aspects of COIN development. Organization theory fundamentally disagrees with rational actor theory, situating the political and military decision-making processes in organizations vying for autonomy as the driving force behind COIN's adoption. Organization theory is a more powerful theory for explaining the rise of COIN in 2007 and its selection in Iraq.

6.2.1. Organizational Power Preservation

Organizations tend towards actions that prioritize their own power. Given that decision-making authority is integral to that power, organizations will seek to prioritize their expertise and make

themselves necessary. Organizations and their sub-organizations should thus seek to preserve the power of the organization and identify the task that justifies the organization's existence.²¹¹ The organization will elevate narrow technical requirements and push specific operations against the wishes of civilian policy to maintain this power and task.²¹² However, military organizations cannot survive alone. For the organization to propagate and preserve its power, political-military integration is necessary. Political-military integration should coincide with civilian intervention in doctrinal matters.²¹³ Moreover, civilians allowed to intervene in military doctrine should be friendly to the organization.

The US military preserved its task and power by shaping its decision-making power around COIN. Proponents of COIN gained notoriety incredibly quickly. The technical operations for COIN were prioritized over civilian policy. Integration into the population through the hearts-and-minds campaign was incongruous with Iraqi politics. Further, COIN coincided with a strong political-military integration, with civilian leadership shaping around the doctrine.

A. Doctrinal Disconnect—Organizations tend to be insulated, creating a disconnect between military doctrine and overall political strategy. This disconnect between the doctrine and the political strategy was evident in Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's dislike of the COIN doctrine. Cooperation with the existing Iraqi security forces would have been of the utmost importance if the US was centering its political relationships. The tensions that the Iraqi government had with the COIN doctrine made the strategy ill-suited for overall political goals and long-term stability. However, because the surge briefly succeeded despite political tensions, the organizations

²⁰⁹ USMC Life. "Marines Take Part in ITX, Earlier Known as Mojave Viper, CAX." USMC Life, November 27, 2016. <https://usmclife.com/marines-take-part-itx-earlier-known-mojave-viper-cax/>.

²¹⁰ Thompson, Keith. "Arabic Cultural-Awareness Training Now Available." www.army.mil, November 28, 2007.

https://www.army.mil/article/6342/arabic_cultural_awareness_training_now_available.

²¹¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

²¹² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

²¹³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

pushing the COIN doctrine had more swaying power than those pushing for political reconciliation. Thus, the military convinced the Bush administration to engage in the surge.

B. Political Elevation—The surge coincided with increased military organizational power and decision-making powers among civilian COIN advocates. With John Negroponte advising Secretary of State Rice, there was an advocate of the Latin American style of COIN in Washington. The civilian leadership was influenced by those who had practiced COIN in previous decades. The elevation of neocons, including the appointment of Khalilzad to the UN, indicates the international perception of Washington emphasized military intervention at large. Low-footprint warfare advocates were pushed out of Iraq, and the newly appointed ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, signaled a major shift in strategy. Crocker would reject being labeled as a neoconservative because of his commitment to persistent forces. Crocker believed in the US's capability to promote peace and worked closely with Petraeus. From his tenure in Pakistan during years prior, Crocker's conclusion about the Middle East was that US firepower in the country was a necessity.²¹⁴ Through his tenure in Iraq, Crocker became known as America's Lawrence of Arabia because

of his commitment to and supposed understanding of the region.²¹⁵ Crocker was heavily committed to COIN. Because of the US's focus on Iraq at the time, Crocker's move from Pakistan to Iraq undoubtedly elevated his position and decision-making power.

By the time Bush decided on the surge strategy, the debate between the neoconservatives and the COIN advocates was less intense than during Rumsfeld's tenure. Rumsfeld was out, resigning on November 8th, 2006, after significant failures,²¹⁶ leaving open the direction of the war in Iraq. There was speculation that Rumsfeld was ousted to shift away from low-intensity warfare and make way for COIN, and two pieces of evidence point to the idea's truth. First, there was little opposition to COIN after Rumsfeld left. The neoconservatives²¹⁷ gained little power over the decision-making in Iraq as a result of the restructuring of leadership. Second, those less enthusiastic about COIN, including Admiral William Fallon, the new head of CENTCOM, also quickly left. A year after the surge, Fallon retired after clashing with Bush on key foreign policy decisions, having advocated for decreasing troops in Iraq.²¹⁸ The success of COIN advocates points to the strategy's power over the makeup of Washington's key decision-makers.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Crocker, Ryan C. "Why Biden's Lack of Strategic Patience Led to Disaster." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/opinion/us-afghanistan-pakistan-taliban.html>.

²¹⁵ Lawrence explained the motivation and usefulness of galvanizing the population to meet specific tactical and strategic goals, from stopping Turkish advances to destroying bridges. Lawrence also noted the importance of small-group tactics. In large groups, the Arabs were "not formidable, since they had no corporate spirit, nor discipline nor mutual confidence," however, only "three or four Arabs in their hills would stop a dozen Turks." Office of the Press Secretary. "President Bush Commemorates Foreign Policy Achievements and Presents Medal of Freedom to Ambassador Ryan Crocker." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, January 15, 2009. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090115.html>.

Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Penguin Modern Classics). London: Penguin Books, 2000, 97.

²¹⁶ Young, "Rumsfeld Stepping Down."

²¹⁷ There is debate about whether Rumsfeld was a neoconservative, but there is little evidence beyond his angering neocons for failures in Iraq. Novak, Robert. "Neocons vs. Rumsfeld." CNN. Cable News Network, December 23, 2004. <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/12/23/novak.rumsfeld/>.

²¹⁸ Shanker, Thom. "Mideast Commander Retires after Irking Bosses." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, March 12, 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/washington/12military.html>.

²¹⁹ While Bush was not part of the military organization that pushed COIN doctrinally, Bush's potential gains bear mentioning. Analysis of Bush's domestic intentions with the surge is largely speculation, but military action is often a way to increase domestic popularity and approval. Bush had already proven that the American public was widely in favor of responding to terrorism with a hardline stance. On September 20th, 2001, Bush announced the Global War on Terror, and the next day, Bush's approval rating spiked to 90%, the highest it

The most prominent key decision-maker was General Petraeus. Almost overnight, Petraeus was established in the canon of important US commanders. Petraeus was seen as a capable commander and portrayed as an academic who gained legitimacy from the rigorous study of COIN. Petraeus's biographer and pupil Paula Broadwell rose to fame alongside him.²²⁰ Broadwell wrote a book about Petraeus, *All In: The Education of David Petraeus*, with an advance of six figures.²²¹ Broadwell captured the public imagination through a unique and incredibly close account of Petraeus's career. COIN helped elevate Petraeus as a military leader, and fascination with his personal life followed. The people who advocated COIN served to gain standing and popularity after its adoption.

C. *Civilian Elevation*—Other leaders gained power alongside Petraeus, including David Kilcullen. As part of the team of experts who emerged before the writing of FM 3-24, Kilcullen was an influential voice in favor of COIN. Book deals, news stories, interviews, and other increases in private sector popularity were also common for those surrounding Petraeus. Kilcullen shows up in many interviews and talks across different forms of media speaking on COIN. Furthermore, his book, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* is a *Washington Post*, was a bestseller²²² and described as indispensable for every general in charge of

Afghanistan.²²³ Kilcullen's inside position was resulted from his integration with US military leadership during the conferences and talks preceding the surge.

D. *Institutional Protections*—Some argue that Petraeus gained more influence than Washington. However, Petraeus acted with support from Washington. Petraeus's credibility gained him significant backing from Washington. Bush shaped the military apparatus around the new strategy, selecting the leadership and advisors. Petraeus sold the COIN strategy to Bush, and Bush was eager to accept it. After the surge had begun, Bush's investment in Petraeus led Washington to push out dissident leaders in favor of Petraeus's plan and Congress to defend Petraeus. Petraeus was institutionally protected from public criticism. After liberal advocacy group MoveOn.org published a full-page ad smearing Petraeus in the *New York Times*, the Senate was quick to condemn MoveOn.org.²²⁴ The House followed suit, passing a resolution condemning the ad.²²⁵ Petraeus's leadership had full support from the President and Congress. Some might argue that opposing anti-war ads was not done to protect Petraeus but was important for patriotism and government cohesion. However, the unprecedented scale of the government response²²⁶ and the unique defense of a single individual show that the government supported Petraeus. COIN was a strategy backed by military

would ever be. George W. Bush Library. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror>. lup. "Presidential Approval Ratings - George W. Bush." Gallup.com. Gallup, October 18, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.

²²⁰ Lots of the fame comes from the extramarital affair between Petraeus and Broadwell, but Broadwell gained notoriety outside of the scandal.

²²¹ Shane, Scott, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg. "A Brilliant Career with a Meteoric Rise and an Abrupt Fall." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, November 10, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/11/us/david-petraeus-seen-as-an-invulnerable-cia-director-self-destructs.html>.

²²² Kilcullen, David. "The Accidental Guerrilla: Hurst Publishers." HURST, February 8, 2022. <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/accidental-guerrilla>.

²²³ Packer, George. "The Accidental Guerrilla." *The New Yorker*. *The New Yorker*, May 12, 2009. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/george-packer/the-accidental-guerrilla>.

²²⁴ Associated Press. "Senate Votes to Condemn Moveon.org's 'General Betray Us' Ad." KVIA, September 20, 2007. <https://kvia.com/news/2007/09/20/senate-votes-to-condemn-moveon-orgs-general-betray-us-ad/>.

²²⁵ Marre, Klaus. "House Overwhelmingly Condemns MoveOn AD." *TheHill*, February 4, 2016. <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/13168-house-overwhelmingly-condemns-moveon-ad>.

²²⁶ MacGregor, Hilary E. "Building a Buzz for Peace." *Los Angeles Times*. *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2003. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-feb-04-et-macgregor4-story.html>.

and civilian leadership. With tight civilian-military integration and COIN advocates pushing the doctrine elevated beyond political decision-makers, the organization pushing for COIN succeeded in preserving power.

6.2.2. Doctrinal Innovation

Organization theory makes predictions about the adaptation and innovation within doctrines. Organization theory, unlike rational actor theory, predicts that innovations are rare.²²⁷ When organizations are in power and have secured their existence, task, and environment, little motivates them to change. There are two predictions for when organizations will innovate their doctrines. The first prediction is when the organization suffers a defeat.²²⁸ Defeat puts the capability of the organization and its survival into question. The second cause for innovation is when civilians intervene in the mission²²⁹ due to the necessity of political-military integration. Innovation of the COIN doctrine was rare. COIN's defeat in Vietnam caused adaptation away from the use of strategic hamlets. Further, private advocacy and conferences caused COIN's adaptation between Mosul and the surge. Military figures designed these adaptations before the surge to advertise the COIN strategy to Washington, indicating political-military integration.

A. Persistence—COIN remained a strategy employed throughout the Cold War. The little adaptation that occurred was not solely for COIN's survival. With COIN being attempted multiple times in multiple forms, there are a few identifiable failures. The best example is Vietnam. By 1964,²³⁰ the US had turned to conventional tactics after COIN failed. The US continued its mission in Vietnam and pushed COIN to adapt. The use of COIN persisted in Latin America with

an increase in government advisors and a decrease in the reliance on stronghold tactics. The US government knew it was failing to bring the desired results, yet it adopted no new strategy to replace COIN. The process of government assistance was the prevailing theory of COIN for decades, as it was hardly challenged. Little adaptation occurred after the shift away from stronghold tactics, indicating that innovation was not a large part of the COIN doctrine during the 20th century.

B. Alternatives—The military organizations that pushed for adaptation in the mid-60s differed from those that advocated for COIN in Iraq. In Iraq, adaptation within the doctrine was limited. Bush believed the only alternative for Iraq was for the US to disengage. COIN was an easily pushed strategy because it allowed the administration an option to stay in Iraq. COIN was implemented with little resistance because few challenged the plan for the surge. The Bush administration wanted to justify the US presence in Iraq, and the surge was the one strategy that avoided withdrawal. COIN was implemented only after the mission in Iraq was at a standstill. Given the Bush administration's attitude at the end of 2006, Iraq was far from being abandoned for political reasons. The adoption of COIN represented a distinct shift in strategy pushed for by military organizations.

The adaptation of COIN was also less about the surge in Iraq and more important for selling the strategy. The expansion of COIN doctrine to a country-wide scale was indeed an adaptation, but this adaptation occurred specifically to allow COIN's implementation in a wider context. The expansion of the doctrine and the writing of FM 3-24 was to lend authenticity to the strategy. Petraeus and his team of experts changed COIN to sell it to the media and Bush. The adaptation of

²²⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 54.

²²⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²²⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²³⁰ Smith, Hendrick. "Vietcong Terrorism Sweeping the Mekong Delta as Saigon's Control Wanes." *The New York*

Times. *The New York Times*, January 12, 1964. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/01/12/archives/vietcong-terrorism-sweeping-the-mekong-delta-as-saigons-control.html>.

COIN was only a way to make it the more attractive option. COIN advocates knew they needed legitimacy to convince the government and the media of their strategy. In addition to Petraeus and the debate that preceded the surge, previous perceived victories granted COIN legitimacy. Success in Mosul and Tal Afar created the perception that COIN operations worked on a city scale. The necessity to sell the strategy to civilian decision-makers for COIN's survival caused innovation between small-scale COIN and the surge.

C. *The Anbar Awakening*—COIN's adaptation was fundamentally unnecessary for victories in Iraq. Many of COIN's successes can also be attributed to the Anbar Awakening of 2006. The Awakening was a unified response to the threats of Al Qaeda from local leadership in the Anbar province. On September 14th, 2006, the Sunni leader Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha announced the formation of the Sahawa al-Anbar, including a manifesto outlining the goals of the local leaders.²³¹ The manifesto included the exchange of power to a newly elected congress²³² and provisions for a unified resistance against Al Qaeda while maintaining existing religious power structures.²³³ This uprising consolidated much of the conflicting attitudes about tribal leadership and allowed the formation of a more centralized resistance. Forty-one tribes were involved, and with the addition of existing US forces and funding, Al Qaeda left its stronghold in Ramadi in March 2007.²³⁴ The primary cause of Al Qaeda's retreat was thus not the new strategy of COIN but the independent mobilization of local Iraqi leadership.

The US surge helped support the Awakening, primarily by establishing regular salaries for the police and increasing funds for the area.²³⁵

However, the US was in a supporting role and was not the primary cause of Al Qaeda's defeat. The morale and the cohesion between leaders were significantly more important.²³⁶ Ultimately, successful US involvement was separate from COIN for two reasons. First, the movement centered on local leadership. While Sunni leadership shifted away from calling for the US's removal, the manifesto indicated that working with the US was a beneficial goal parallel to keeping religious leadership intact and consolidating against Al Qaeda. Second, COIN was not the primary strategy during the Awakening. In September 2006, Rumsfeld was still in Washington and COIN was a small part of the overall strategy in Iraq. Sahawa al-Anbar's leadership and success were not caused by a shift in US strategy. COIN was able to operate as it did was the willingness of Iraqis to accept help from the US and the recognition and threat assessment from Abu Risha and other leaders.²³⁷ COIN doctrine was less important than the local contexts in 2006, and COIN advocates could claim success by attributing the indigenous and independent Iraqi movement to the COIN doctrine regardless of COIN's actual effectiveness.

COIN advocates used the Awakening as a justification for their strategy,²³⁸ although the decrease in violence would have likely occurred absent COIN operations and the surge. While US integration increased local capabilities and regular salaries boosted the effectiveness and recruitment of Iraqi police, the Awakening was more than likely the cause of the decrease in violence. Because the Awakening led to success, COIN's adaptations were an insignificant aspect of victory. COIN advocates smartly identified the unique timing of the Awakening as the moment

²³¹ Malkasian, Carter. *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, 112.

²³² Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 112.

²³³ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 113.

²³⁴ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 155.

²³⁵ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 148.

²³⁶ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 159.

²³⁷ Malkasian, Carter. *Illusions of Victory* pg. 159

²³⁸ Many post hoc studies have attributed success to the US and make little mention of the Awakening. Russell, James A. "Innovation in War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 595–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489715>.

COIN's adoption would experience the most success. COIN was not chosen after evaluating other tactics, indicating that it was not a rational action based on ruling out options. Rather, it was indicative of pulling the trigger on a new strategy likely to coincide with victory. The surge came at a unique time when COIN was perceived as capable in domestic spheres and when contexts were shifting in Iraq independent of the US.

D. Innovation Failures—Finally, the most significant indicator of failure to adapt was the identified challenges that Petraeus failed to correct during the surge. The vital problem the US faced after Mosul was that of US occupation. COIN never dealt with the US's contradictory position of integrating into the population while attempting to distance itself from the appearance of an occupation. This was the crux of the political battle that between Washington and al-Maliki regarding troop numbers. Every experience in COIN before Iraq indicated the necessity for expanded troops to keep a robust security partnership. The goal of transitioning security to Iraqis was liberatory, but the process of one-to-one advisement was occupational.

Without a novel and clear method for getting out of Iraq, COIN was doomed to fail. Absent an exit strategy beyond the complete eradication of all insurgent potential, the options in Iraq were either a perpetual occupation or the collapse of the security environment. Either way, violence would occur post-COIN operations. An occupation would drive more insurgencies, as proven by Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam, and collapse would strengthen already existing movements. Regular salaries for police and independent control of units failed as a strategy for US departure. Petraeus was reactive to the population in Mosul, setting up salaries with existing money, bolstering the police force, and ensuring that operations were slowly transitioned to indigenous security.

However, when Petraeus left Mosul in 2004, Mosul collapsed into violence relatively quickly. The argument that Petraeus did not have time to fully implement his strategy fails to identify a sufficient level of security. The US had experienced the problem years before the surge and did little to rectify it. FM 3-24 sets no new standards beyond a more robust role for advisory groups and a tighter integration into the population.

COIN was never seriously challenged, and the US never adequately reacted to the known issues of COIN.²³⁹ Washington's adoption of COIN resulted from organizational pressures from the military, and the military did little to adapt COIN doctrine.

6.2.3. Uncertainty Reduction

According to organization theory, an increased organization size should be observed²⁴⁰ because of the organizational drive to minimize uncertainty within the operating environment. Another way to minimize uncertainty is to define the task environment,²⁴¹ which means attempting to control the environment and identify aspects useful to the organization. Because the expansion of militaries is often tied to civilian and political systems, organization theory makes predictions about the role of civilians. Civilian intervention is predicated on trusting specific sources of credible military knowledge.²⁴² With minimal knowledge, policymakers are kept in the dark about operations and cannot contest operational practices. From the political perspective of doctrine, political strategy changes and force posture should not occur in accordance.²⁴³

COIN experienced a major increase in size and wealth. More troops were deployed, and procurement rules changed. Civil intervention was present but occurred only after Petraeus's academic process. Petraeus was Bush's source of military knowledge. Bush was not kept in the dark

²³⁹ This also points to Washington rather than Petraeus as the organizational unit that sought to stay in power.

²⁴⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

²⁴¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 47.

²⁴² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²⁴³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

but had enough faith in Petraeus that he did little to scrutinize the strategy. Bush's unflinching faith caused little shift in political changes or top-down changes to COIN doctrine.

A. Isolation—COIN operations have been observed repeatedly operating under the same principles. While one of the earliest explicit investments in COIN was Kennedy asking about its possibility in Vietnam, in the wake of Vietnam, the mission became incredibly insular. In Latin America, COIN was largely clandestine. The military was involved but worked closely with the CIA to develop programs and training material that were often overlooked and kept secret. This is highlighted by rampant abuses, like throwing dissidents from planes, within the governments that the US was advising. The secrecy surrounding COIN indicates that its investors controlled their operating environment, and political or other repercussions were unlikely to be levied. This also coincides with the expansion of the CIA's capabilities. The CIA was given a long leash and significant resources. The connection between COIN, psyops, and other CIA activities indicates that COIN existed with little oversight from political leadership in Washington. Project X also suggests that COIN was an insular and unique case. The training material was classified and edited, and its repercussions were difficult to evaluate. The assessment of Project X indicates that it was unclear whether Honduras was still operating under the problematic training material. This clearly shows that what little oversight existed did not extend very far.

B. Training—Organizations further attempt to consolidate control by maximizing their resources. The CIA's use of COIN indicates that expanded troop requirements and resource allocation to organizations are a common feature of the COIN doctrine. Intelligence reports about

activity in Latin America were almost always favorable to the mission of COIN. The CIA's assessment of Soviet COIN in Afghanistan indicated the necessity of expanded troop numbers. The expansion of troops as a tenant of COIN is useful for organizations invested in COIN because it is a rational conclusion derived from historical policing and population integration and drives investment into the strategy. Increased troop presence can be explained by rational actor theory and organization theory. This, however, does not invalidate the conclusion that organizations tend towards increased resource requirements, and as such, the CIA's, and later the military's, assessments place troop expansion and investment into the strategy into the hands of organizations.

C. Resource Expansion—Before the surge in Iraq, evidence of insular expansion and limited rationality is clear. First, the expansion of resources and troops was a necessity. The assessment that nearly 500,000 troops were needed to secure the country meant that pursuing COIN required increasing resources. Similarly, after the surge, so many vehicles were being procured that the Department of Defense resorted to handing out more contracts and drastically increasing suppliers.²⁴⁴ Washington was aware of the troop requirements accompanying COIN and decided to invest significant resources. Rhetoric of the Vietnam quagmire had stopped Rumsfeld and others from advocating for more troops and more resources. However, Bush decided that more money and time was the answer. Significant amounts of money had already been spent in Iraq. As early as 2003, critics of the war were pointing to Iraq as more than a quagmire;²⁴⁵ Iraq was a bottomless pit for resources. Reinvestment during the surge was driven either by ambivalence towards the financial and human costs of the Iraq

²⁴⁴ Erwin, Sandra I. Surge in vehicle orders calls for unconventional buying methods, March 1, 2007. <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2007/4/1/2007april-surge-in-vehicle-orders-calls-for-unconventional-buying-methods>.

²⁴⁵ Smith, Daniel. "Quagmire? What Quagmire?" Institute for Policy Studies, May 8, 2014. https://ips-dc.org/quagmire_what_quagmire/.

war or a deliberate increase in spending for other purposes consistent with the elevation of the military organizations pushing for the strategy.

D. Limited Rationality—COIN's adoption was motivated by successful examples of the doctrine seen in Mosul and Tal Afar. Small-scale success made COIN seem rationally attractive. The academic process leading to FM 3-24 also indicates rationality.

However, this rationality stretched beyond its limits. The small-scale success and academic process were ineffective justifications for adopting the COIN strategy writ large. The military failed to adapt COIN or evaluate alternatives after Mosul. However, the Bush administration was encouraged by the supposed rigor behind COIN's endorsement. Bush's memoir and much of the literature about Petraeus portray him as bookish, intelligent, and hardworking, implying his trustworthiness. Presenting Petraeus as an academic framed him as a rational actor. The narrative that Petraeus had worked to rationally choose a strategy implies that alternatives to the strategy in Mosul and FM 3-24 were unnecessary. For Bush, Petraeus's education was enough to legitimize the strategy. Rationality was limited because only advocates of COIN were in charge of its evaluation. Bush believed that putting advocates of COIN in charge was a rational action. However, the COIN advocates were simply justifying a strategy that benefitted themselves.

E. Task Definition—Finally, COIN, as it was adopted, was obsessed with defining the task environment. Defining the task environment is a necessary step for rational actions. However, defining the task environment to suit the needs of the strategy is indicative of organizational pressure. First, the context of the Anbar Awakening made the task environment ripe for

COIN to be effective. Transitioning towards indigenous security was easier when the surge occurred than it would have been a year prior. Second, the focus on Baghdad—consistent with the focus on government-based security of prior COIN leaders—and the adherence to an American-supported government defined the task environment within limited bounds.

The COIN strategy in Iraq ignored many of the associated issues with continued occupation. For instance, Syria was reportedly comfortable establishing diplomatic relations, but the strategy adopted in 2007 was a stance against increased diplomatic talks and involvement.²⁴⁶ COIN failed to account for these international contexts. Furthermore, defining the task environment as a security issue instead of a problem of a power vacuum in state capacity characterized by inept leadership²⁴⁷ set COIN to solve a problem that was not the root cause of the violence.

F. Offensive Doctrine—Organization theory predicts that organizations will tend towards offensive operations. Offensive operations can bolster an organization's control over the environment and ensure that militaries constantly need resources.²⁴⁸ While COIN seems defensive in nature,²⁴⁹ its offensive tendencies are unmistakable.

First, the strategic hamlets were meant to be strongholds for offensive operations. The strategic hamlets were meant for use as staging areas for populations and military operations. They were also a direct response to strongholds and bases operated by insurgents, and the strategic hamlets were implemented in conjunction with offensive operations against those bases. In El Salvador, the US advised the government during a bloody campaign characterized by death squads and disappearances. After the Cold War, the US

²⁴⁶ "World | Americas | Report 'Urges Iraq Policy Shift'." BBC News. BBC, December 6, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6212106.stm>.

²⁴⁷ Dodge, Toby. "The Causes of US Failure in Iraq." *Survival* 49, no. 1 (2007): 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701254545>.

²⁴⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

²⁴⁹ As revolutions are predicated on the overthrow of an existing system, they are offensive in nature.

learned defensive operations were more easily sold to the public.

After the surge, COIN was accompanied by a fivefold increase in air strikes.²⁵⁰ The air strikes were characterized as defensive because they constituted preemptive, life-saving measures.²⁵¹ However, military assets are fungible, meaning it is almost impossible to distinguish between a defensive and offensive air strike when the defense is preemptive. Furthermore, air power favors offensive maneuvers, as offensive operations correlate to more mobility and firepower. Even if COIN in Iraq was not explicitly offensive, the history of COIN points to offensive tactics as an inherent part of COIN. This offensive doctrine is consistent with what organization theory would predict as uncertainty minimizing.

Many of the tenets of organization theory, including expanded requirements and insular leadership, have been present throughout COIN's history. In Iraq, the US believed COIN was uniquely suited to deal with the instability in the security environment, only rationally evaluating COIN when it suited them and adopting a strategy that required significant investment. Organization theory can explain the decision-making process that existed to convince Bush that only COIN could meet the demands in Iraq.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Presenting A Complete Theory of COIN in 2007

COIN was adopted in the 2007 Iraq surge because of organizational pressures from the military and domestic pressures from the liberal internationalism in the Bush administration. COIN's adoption had two factors: the military's push for COIN as an overarching strategy and

Bush's willingness to accept the strategy for Washington's benefit.

Organization theory explains the military's push for COIN. Staying in Iraq would keep money flowing into the organization and secure its stability. For Washington, the need to stay was tied to the desire to remain internationally relevant. Organization theory does not account for the Bush administration's wider adoption because the organization does not exist with predetermined boundaries. The mission in Iraq and the Middle East was under fire from domestic forces by 2007, so there was a need to secure the administration's mission. Domestic factors must be considered to fully analyze the decision to adopt COIN.

The liberal internationalists ultimately won out. Bush was interested in staying in Iraq to preserve his image, and his team of advisors advocated for continued presence in Iraq and a departure from low-footprint warfare. The failures of Iraq prior to 2007 weighed heavy on his mind and the minds of those around him.

To boost his credibility, show the public that Iraq was not a lost cause, and please the people surrounding him, Bush worked with his close circles and adopted COIN. COIN was, at the time, a strategy of convenience. Petraeus and other military COIN advocates had used COIN on a small scale and supposedly had legitimacy from years of study and conversation.

Despite the intellectually tenuous goals of the conversations, Bush saw it as a perfect opportunity to adopt a new, stronger strategy. COIN was put forth by the military and quickly picked up by Bush. The domestic pressures on the Bush administration to increase approval and justify US presence in Iraq, combined with the organizational pressure from the military to present a strategy to secure the mission in Iraq, caused COIN to be adopted in 2007.

²⁵⁰ Smith, Thomas W. "Protecting Civilians...or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq." *International Studies Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (2008): 144-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44218539>.

²⁵¹ Shogol, Jeff. "Are the Recent Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria Really as 'Defensive' as the Pentagon Claims?" *Task & Purpose*, June 29, 2021. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/syria-iraq-pentagon-airstrikes-defensive>.

7.2. Discussion

Organization theory is the best explanatory model for the military's justification for COIN and Bush's subsequent adoption of COIN doctrine in 2007. COIN was a method put forth by the military to elevate its position and extend the mission in Iraq. Because the Bush administration had few individuals willing to resist COIN, its adoption in the wider mission was a foregone conclusion. Some of the developments of COIN seem like rational actions. COIN is a potentially useful method for decreasing insurgent influence and establishing security. However, the process of US COIN development before and in Iraq indicates that the decision was an organizational effort. Organization theory has more explanatory power for the development of COIN than rational actor theory. Organization theory explains military doctrine in wartime during conflicts of choice. The military's decision to engage in COIN and the investment into the surge was an attempt to keep the US involved in Iraq. Bush's decision was primarily influenced by a need to reverse the trend of Rumsfeld's failures and shore up any doubts about the US's capabilities.

The military's investment in COIN follows the pattern predicted by organization theory. COIN had existed for decades before the surge. COIN's popularity fluctuated over time, and different administrations operated COIN through multiple departments and organizations. The US used COIN operations in Vietnam. Afterward, it was a CIA strategy for many years. Ultimately, the military would use COIN in Iraq. COIN furthered the political and economic interests of government and military leadership. It was a shift away from low-footprint warfare and demanded significantly more time and money for effective implementation. Finally, COIN was a strategy of convenience. The military had attempted other strategies and needed another approach. Rumsfeld's resignation and the Anbar Awakening came at the perfect time, and the US military was

able to capitalize on COIN to extend its hand in Iraq.

While some theories speculate that General Petraeus was the driving force behind the surge, a more robust explanation of Bush's policy goals is necessary. Until he was selected by Bush, Petraeus did not have the decision-making power to implement COIN. Petraeus had to campaign for COIN through discussions and conferences for Bush to adopt it. Petraeus was not discovering a long-lost warfighting technique. The US was aware of COIN and had been measuring its success for decades. Petraeus was in the correct spot at the correct time. He did not influence the Anbar Awakening and was not part of ousting Rumsfeld, but expertly took advantage of these situations. Petraeus was one of many catalysts for COIN's adoption.

Rational actor theory offers insufficient explanations for COIN's adoption. COIN was not built on a rational analysis of all existing potential options. A precondition for COIN strategy is a stable government that COIN operators can integrate into. Such a government did not exist in the lead-up to the surge. Baghdad was riddled with conflict, and the Anbar Awakening occurred because of the failing central government. The decision to adopt COIN without a stable governance and little thought of the ideological conflict indicates that the readoption of COIN was fundamentally irrational. Further, COIN was not evaluated against conventional methods or options to reduce US presence. The debate about COIN versus the alternatives in Washington and COIN circles was mostly for show. Without advocates for conventional tactics and low-footprint warfare in Washington post-Rumsfeld, the debates always ended in COIN advocacy because critics either did not exist or were ignored. Rational actor theory fails to explain the lack of adaptation in Iraq and the failure to deal with the problem of occupation. Even after the surge occurred, rational actor theory dictates that the best course of action is following the lessons learned by other actors and other time periods,

including advanced language training and integration into the population beyond Baghdad. This did not occur, and much of the reduction in violence across the country can be tied to the Iraqi contexts like the Anbar Awakening.

The conclusion that organization theory is more explanatory than rational actor theory regarding COIN disagrees with the literature cited earlier, namely Jones and Metz. The surge needed a particular strategy that could be sold easily and promised results. While the historic notions of COIN's success in Malay and French Algeria influenced COIN, it was primarily the work in Mosul and more recent developments that granted COIN legitimacy. Another hypothesis is that COIN was a bureaucratically forced doctrine. This hypothesis is also inaccurate. Bush was not forced to adopt COIN, nor were the bureaucratic systems in place to push COIN from within. COIN advocates came from inside and outside the organization, indicating that the primary effort was not entrenched in the military prior to 2007. A pessimistic view of COIN claims that the failures in Vietnam were experienced in Iraq, showing that COIN remained the same between Vietnam and Iraq. However, COIN strategy changed throughout its use in Latin America and into the 21st century. While many of the issues seen in Vietnam continued to exist, the contemporary approach to COIN was fundamentally different. This argument misses many important developments in US strategic and tactical approaches.

Finally, COIN's adoption indicates that the overriding view that organizations determine military force posture during peace while rational actors determine military force posture during war is insufficient. Even during conflict, organizations can direct the adoption of strategies. Heads of state and commanders in chief are not locked into a simple cost-benefit analysis, and organizations exert substantial pressures based on their parochial interests. Political pressures on civilian leaders can cause them to defer rational decision-making. In conclusion, rational actor

theory is not a sufficient model during wars of choice.

7.3. Limitations

While organization theory can explain COIN better than rational actor theory, it is not a perfect test. First and foremost, the organization of COIN is nebulous and changing. Because COIN changed drastically over time—from a military strategy to aiding counterrevolutionary operations by the CIA in Latin America and back to a military strategy in Iraq—the organizations that advocated for COIN are not static. While the theory still applies to specific individuals and ideological groups within the military and the Bush administration, the boundaries of the organization that advocated for COIN are not well defined. In this case, organization theory is best suited to analyze COIN advocates in the military who wanted to stay in Iraq. This includes the civilians and external experts who wanted to codify the US presence in Iraq and make a name for themselves by attaching to Petraeus.

Organization theory is also not a perfect test of COIN. COIN cannot be accurately tested through this hypothesis because organization theory predicts that adaptation occurs when the mission and organization are threatened. COIN was never tested on the brink of being abandoned. While the mission in Iraq was almost abandoned, it is unclear whether Iraq would have been invested in absent COIN.

Another issue with organization theory is motivation. Organization theory assumes certain political goals that are fundamentally unknowable. Actors' motivations are impossible to identify with complete accuracy because public-facing motivations differ from privately driven strategies. Because there is an incentive to sell the strategy to the public and ensure that the media sees the strategy as rational, there is a disconnect between actual organizational motivations and those presented. Bush potentially did not see the surge as a method to increase his domestic

popularity or was pressured to continue the mission in Iraq. Whether these are true are untestable absent accounts that confirm these seemingly contradictory motivations. Organization theory, while explanatory, makes potentially ahistorical assumptions.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr. Jane Cramer and Dr. Priscilla Southwell for advising and supporting me through writing this thesis and being there every step of the way. I am also grateful to Dr. Alexander Dracoby for vital context and viewpoints on the matter. I would also like to thank my friends and family for pushing me to undertake such a huge project.

Bibliography

- Abramowitz, Michael, and Robin Wright. "Bush to Add 21,500 Troops in an Effort to Stabilize Iraq." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 11, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011002437.html>.
- Allison, Graham Tillet. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. London: HarperCollins, 1971.
- "Americas | Progress Report on Iraq Benchmarks." *BBC News*. BBC, July 12, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6294694.stm>.
- Associated Press. "Senate Votes to Condemn Moveon.org's 'General Betray Us' Ad." *KVIA*, September 20, 2007. <https://kvia.com/news/2007/09/20/senate-votes-to-condemn-moveon-orgs-general-betray-us-ad/>.
- Baghdad. "US Uses Sunnis to Patrol Streets." *The Age*, August 20, 2007. <https://www.theage.com.au/world/us-uses-sunnis-to-patrol-streets-20070820-ge5mgp.html>.
- Beck, Glen. "Offensive Air Power in Counter-Insurgency Operations: Putting Theory into Practice." *AIR POWER DEVELOPMENT CENTRE*. ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE, 2008. <https://airpower.airforce.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/WP26-Offensive-Air-Power-in-Counter-Insurgency-Operations.pdf>.
- Beehner, Lionel. "Bush's Baghdad Plan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, January 18, 2007. <https://www.cfr.org/background/bushs-baghdad-plan>.
- Borger, Julian. "Washington's Man in Baghdad Is Pulling off a High-Risk Balancing Act." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, March 10, 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/10/usa.iraq>.
- Bush, George W. "U.S. Policy toward Iraq | c-Span.org." *c-Span*, April 10, 2008. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?204815-1/us-policy-iraq#>.
- Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. New York, New York: Crown Publishers, 2010.
- Cannon, Lou. "Negroponte to Be No. 2 at the NSC." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, November 19, 1987. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/11/19/negroponte-to-be-no-2-at-the-nsc/1ba390d3-cf52-44ec-97be-f71d5d55a3b0/>.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. New York, New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004.
- Crocker, Ryan C. "Why Biden's Lack of Strategic Patience Led to Disaster." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/opinion/us-afghanistan-pakistan-taliban.html>.
- Daly, Terence J. "Killing Won't Win This War." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/opinion/21daly.html>.
- Dawisha, Adeed. *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Dodge, Toby. "The Causes of US Failure in Iraq." *Survival* 49, no. 1 (2007): 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701254545>.
- Eikenberry, Karl W. "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan." *Foreign Affairs*, August 23, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2013-09-01/limits-counterinsurgency-doctrine-afghanistan>.
- Erwin, Sandra I. Surge in vehicle orders calls for unconventional buying methods, March 1, 2007. <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2007/4/1/2007april-surge-in-vehicle-orders-calls-for-unconventional-buying-methods>.
- Fadel, Leila, and McClatchy/Tribune newspapers. "Al-Maliki Hits Back at Bush, Rice Criticism." *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 2021. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2007-01-18-0701180060-story.html>.
- Farah, Douglas. "Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, March 11, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/guatemala11.htm>.
- Farmer, J. A. "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963." *RAND Corporation*, January 1, 1978. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P2778.html>.
- FC 100-20 Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict*. Arlington, Virginia: Department of the Army, 1986.
- Fishman, Brian H. *The Master Plan: Isis, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2017.
- Gallup. "Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." *Gallup.com*. Gallup, October 18, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.
- "Global War on Terror." *George W. Bush Library*. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror>.
- Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.
- House of Representatives. "Hearing Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services." U.S. Government Printing Office, May 22, 2007.

- <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg38110/html/CHRG-110hhrg38110.htm>.
- Hunt, David. "Dirty Wars: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam and Today." *Politics & Society* 38, no. 1 (2010): 35–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329209357883>.
- Jones, Seth G. "Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare." In *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study--Volume 4*, 7–24. RAND Corporation, 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg595osd.10>.
- Jones, Seth G. *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York, New York: W.W. Norton, 2009.
- Karnow, Stanley. "Ho Chi Minh." Time. Time Inc., April 13, 1998. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988162,00.html>.
- Kilcullen, David. "The Accidental Guerrilla: Hurst Publishers." HURST, February 8, 2022. <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/accidental-guerrilla>.
- Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom (Penguin Modern Classics)*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Levy, Jack S., and William R. Thompson. *Causes of War*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Londoño, Ernesto. "Pelosi, Maliki Discuss Timing of Drawdown 4 Slain GIS Were Abducted, U.S. Says." The Washington Post. WP Company, January 27, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/01/27/pelosi-maliki-discuss-timing-of-drawdown-span-classbankhead4-slain-gis-were-abducted-us-saysspan/6c652b8f-a3e6-4415-ad69-990ed5fedd4d/>.
- Long, Austin. *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence -- The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960-1970 and 2003-2006: RAND Counterinsurgency Study -- Paper 6*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008. https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP200.html. Also available in print form.
- Ma, Jason. "Praise from Van Riper: U.S. MILITARY WRESTLES WITH IRREGULAR WARFARE, ASYMMETRIC THREATS." *Inside the Navy* 17, no. 45 (2004): 1–5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24838718>.
- MacGregor, Hilary E. "Building a Buzz for Peace." Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, February 4, 2003. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-feb-04-et-macgregor4-story.html>.
- Maechling, Jr., Charles. 1988. "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire." Pp. 21–48 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Malkasian, Carter. *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- MarketWatch. "Bush to Seek Billions, 20,000 More Troops for Iraq." MarketWatch. MarketWatch, January 5, 2007. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/bush-to-ask-for-billions-20000-more-troops-for-iraq?dist=>.
- Marre, Klaus. "House Overwhelmingly Condemns MoveOn AD." The Hill, February 4, 2016. <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/13168-house-overwhelmingly-condemns-moveon-ad>.
- Marshall, Alex. "Imperial nostalgia, the liberal lie, and the perils of postmodern counterinsurgency." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21 (2010): 233–258.
- Metz, Steven. "Not Your Grandfather's Counterinsurgency: The United States Must Prepare for Radically New Forms of Nonstate Violence." Modern War Institute, July 28, 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/not-your-grandfathers-counterinsurgency-the-united-states-must-prepare-for-radically-new-forms-of-nonstate-violence/>.
- Moyar, Mark. "Leadership in Counterinsurgency." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34, no. 1 (2010): 135–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45289496>.
- National Security Archive, *Concerns Over the Military*, by Department of State. NSAEBB No. 11 Doc. 29, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2017. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB11/docs/doc29.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022).
- National Security Archive, *Office of the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld memo to President George W. Bush, Subject: "Afghanistan," August 20, 2002, not classified, 2 pp., ("Slow progress")*, by Donald Rumsfeld. N/A, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2002. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/document/24551-office-secretary-defense-donald-rumsfeld-memo-president-george-w-bush-subject> (accessed March 8, 2022).
- National Security Archive, *USSOUTHCOM CI Training-Supplemental Information*, by Thomas Blanton and Peter Kornbluh. NSAEBB No. 122 Doc. 4, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2004. [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20\(U\).pdf](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20(U).pdf) (accessed March 8, 2022).
- Novak, Robert. "Neocons vs. Rumsfeld." CNN. Cable News Network, December 23, 2004. <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/12/23/novak.rumsfeld/>.
- Office of the Press Secretary. "President Bush Commemorates Foreign Policy Achievements and Presents Medal of Freedom to Ambassador Ryan Crocker." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, January 15, 2009. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090115.html>.
- O'Hanlon, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings. Brookings, June 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06_counterinsurgency_ohanlon.pdf.
- Packer, George. "The Accidental Guerrilla." The New Yorker. The New Yorker, May 12, 2009. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/george-packer/the-accidental-guerrilla>.
- Palmer, Brian. "Sensitivity Training and the War in Iraq." NPR. NPR, December 13, 2006. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6618863>.
- Papers of John F. Kennedy. *National Security Action Memoranda [NSAM]: NSAM 182, Counterinsurgency Doctrine*. JFKNSF-338-010. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Presidential Papers. National Security Files. Meetings and Memoranda (accessed March 8, 2022).
- Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan. "Moving beyond Population-Centric vs. Enemy-

- Centric Counterinsurgency." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 6 (2016): 1019–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1233643>.
- Petraeus, David Howell, and James F. Amos. *Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24 (2006)*. Boulder, CO: Paladin, 2009.
- Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Posen, Barry. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- Randolph, Stephen. "Foreign Policy and the Complexities of Corruption: The Case of South Vietnam." *American Foreign Service Association*, June 2016. <https://afsa.org/foreign-policy-and-complexities-corruption-case-south-vietnam>.
- Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2007.
- Ruettershoff, Tobias. "Counterinsurgency as Ideology - the Evolution of Expert Knowledge Production in U. S. Asymmetric Warfare (1898-2011): The Cases of the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq." Thesis, University of Exeter, 2015.
- Russell, James A. "Innovation in War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 595–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489715>.
- Sagan, Scott Douglas, and Kenneth Neal Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate: With New Chapters on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, and on the Prospects for Global Nuclear Disarmament*. New York, New York: Norton, 2013.
- Schultz, Richard H., and Andrea J. Dew. "Counterinsurgency, by the Book." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, August 7, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/opinion/07shultz.html>.
- Sennott, Charles M. "Interview: Ambassador Ryan Crocker." *The World from PRX*, October 19, 2009. <https://theworld.org/stories/2009-10-19/interview-ambassador-ryan-crocker>.
- Shane, Scott, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg. "A Brilliant Career with a Meteoric Rise and an Abrupt Fall." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, November 10, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/11/us/david-petraeus-seen-as-an-invincible-cia-director-self-destructs.html>.
- Shanker, Thom. "Mideast Commander Retires after Irking Bosses." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, March 12, 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/washington/12military.html>.
- Shogol, Jeff. "Are the Recent Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria Really as 'Defensive' as the Pentagon Claims?" *Task & Purpose*, June 29, 2021. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/syria-iraq-pentagon-airstrikes-defensive>.
- Siegel, Daniel and Joy Hackel. 1988. "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited." Pp. 112–35 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Smith, Daniel. "Quagmire? What Quagmire?" *Institute for Policy Studies*, May 8, 2014. https://ipsdc.org/quagmire_what_quagmire/.
- Smith, Hendrick. "Vietcong Terrorism Sweeping the Mekong Delta as Saigon's Control Wanes." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, January 12, 1964. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/01/12/archives/vietcong-terrorism-sweeping-the-mekong-delta-as-saigons-control.html>.
- Smith, Thomas W. "Protecting Civilians...or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq." *International Studies Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (2008): 144–64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44218539>.
- Thompson, Keith. "Arabic Cultural-Awareness Training Now Available." *www.army.mil*, November 28, 2007. https://www.army.mil/article/6342/arabic_cultural_awareness_training_now_available.
- U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, by N/A, CIA-RDP97R0069R000600020001-2, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022).
- U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022).
- USMC Life. "Marines Take Part in ITX, Earlier Known as Mojave Viper, CAX." *USMC Life*, November 27, 2016. <https://usmclife.com/marines-take-part-itx-earlier-known-mojave-viper-cax/>.
- Walker, Martin. "Why Admiral Fallon Resigned." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, April 8, 2008. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1079634.html>.
- Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press, 2010.
- West, Bing. "Counterinsurgency Lessons from Iraq." *army.mil*, March 5, 2009. https://www.army.mil/article/20621/counterinsurgency_lessons_from_iraq.
- Wong, Edward. "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, February 22, 2005. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/world/middleeast/attacks-by-militant-groups-rise-in-mosul.html>.
- "World | Americas | Report 'Urges Iraq Policy Shift'." *BBC News*. *BBC*, December 6, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6212106.stm>.
- Young, Jim. "Rumsfeld Stepping Down." *NBCNews.com*. *NBCUniversal News Group*, November 8, 2006. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna15622266>.
- Zedong, Mao. *On Guerilla Warfare*. Translated by Samuel Blair Griffith II. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.