HEADED THE WRONG WAY: THE BRITISH ARMY'S PAINFUL
RE-ACQUAINTANCE WITH ITS OWN COIN DOCTRINE
IN SOUTHERN IRAQ

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War

by

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2011-01

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)* 10-06-2011	2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)* AUG 2010 – JUN 2011

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Headed the Wrong Way: The British Army's Painful Re-Acquaintance with Its Own COIN Doctrine in Southern Iraq	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
Major Thomas E. Walton Sr.	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301	8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to obtain a historically rooted understanding of the development, application, and adaptation of the British COIN approach—one from which the US has borrowed heavily. It focuses upon those factors which interfere with timely, adaptive application of current COIN doctrine as soon as the warning signs of insurgency present themselves. The price of failing to do so in terms of blood and treasure has been widely proclaimed daily in the news media during the past decade of American and British involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Authors on both sides of the Atlantic have already made much of the US Army's failure to capture COIN lessons from Vietnam and its abandonment of COIN education in its schools after the 1970s. For this reason, most American commanders went into Iraq with no doctrinal guide for COIN, a deficiency corrected only after painful reflection on the characteristics of the environment and the inefficacy of the conventional methods they initially employed. The British Army, on the other hand, went into Iraq with a COIN doctrine revised five times since the completion of its successful operations in Malaya, 1948-1960, including a version published only two years prior to entry into Iraq. Why did the British Army struggle with identifying insurgency and application of its own corresponding doctrine?

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Doctrine, Application, Learning, Adaptation

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)	(U)	194	19b. PHONE NUMBER *(include area code)*

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Major Thomas E. Walton Sr.

Thesis Title: Headed the Wrong Way: The British Army's Painful Re-Acquaintance
                 with Its Own COIN Doctrine in Southern Iraq

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ABSTRACT

HEADED THE WRONG WAY: THE BRITISH ARMY'S PAINFUL RE-ACQUAINTANCE WITH ITS OWN COIN DOCTRINE IN SOUTHERN IRAQ, by Major Thomas E. Walton Sr., 194 pages.

The purpose of this research was to obtain a historically rooted understanding of the development, application, and adaptation of the British COIN approach—one from which the US has borrowed heavily. It focuses upon those factors which interfere with timely, adaptive application of current COIN doctrine as soon as the warning signs of insurgency present themselves. The price of failing to do so in terms of blood and treasure has been widely proclaimed daily in the news media during the past decade of American and British involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
BATT	British Army Training Team
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CotK	Charge of the Knights
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DDC	Dhofar Development Council
DLF	Dhofar Liberation Front
DWECs	District War Executive Committees
FLN	Front de Libération National
GOI	Government of Iraq
GOM	Government of Malaya
IA	Iraqi Army
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
JAM	Jaish al-Mahdi
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MiTT	Military Transition Team
MND (SE)	Multinational Division (SE)
MNF-I	Multinational Force-Iraq
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf
PIC	Provincial Iraqi Control

SAF	Sultan's Armed Forces
SAS	Special Administrative Sections (French, Used in Algeria)
SAS	Special Air Service (British, Used in Oman)
SEPs	Surrendered Enemy Personnel
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SWECs	State War Executive Committees
US	United States

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Question

The research question that guides this thesis is, ―Why did an army with a comprehensive counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, based on a wealth of practical experience and well-developed theory, struggle with the application of that doctrine in southeastern Iraq during Operation TELIC[1] in Iraq?"

Related questions include the following. Was the conflict in Iraq an insurgency? What reasons, if any, explain any delay in the identification of it as such by the British? Was current British COIN doctrine valid for insurgency in Iraq? If the doctrine was valid, what explanations are there for any lapse between the time the British characterized the conflict as an insurgency and the time they applied the corresponding doctrine?

Such questions follow from a curious dichotomy between the British Army and its United States (US) counterpart in their respective performances during recent operations in Iraq from 2003 to 2009. The US Army entered Iraq having expunged COIN doctrine from its operational doctrine by 1976, shortly after its humiliating involvement in Vietnam. On the other hand, the British Army was widely regarded as the consummate experts on this type of warfare. Though both armies entered Iraq unprepared for the insurgency that followed, the US adapted to it more quickly than did the British. One would have thought it would have been the other way around.[2]

Authors on both sides of the Atlantic have already made much of the US Army‗s failure to capture COIN lessons from Vietnam and its abandonment of COIN education in its schools after the 1970s. For this reason, most American commanders went into Iraq

with no doctrinal guide for COIN, a deficiency corrected only after painful reflection on the characteristics of the environment and the inefficacy of the conventional methods they initially employed.[3]

The British Army, on the other hand, went into Iraq with a COIN doctrine revised five times since the completion of its successful operations in Malaya, 1948-1960.[4] At the time they entered southern Iraq as part of the US led invasion in March of 2003, they had a version published only two years prior. Why did the British Army struggle not only with identifying the insurgency as such, but also with the actual application of its own corresponding doctrine?[5]

The irony is the US Army began to apply a version of COIN that was quite similar to British antecedents, while the British Army found itself headed in the opposite direction. This phenomenon caught the Americans by surprise, for they anticipated British prowess in this area from the outset of insurgency. The thesis will attempt to explain why the British struggled in spite of expectations to the contrary.[6]

What it will ultimately show is that the British Army in southern Iraq faltered due to a flawed institutional memory of past insurgencies coupled with an educational system that had gradually become distracted by other priorities—compounded by elements of conceit. Why should an American officer be interested in such lessons from another army? As of 2006, the US has its own COIN doctrine, the application of which deserves at least some credit for the Coalition's ability to turn what seemed like looming defeat into some semblance of victory beginning in the spring of 2007. Could complacency and arrogance have the same degrading effect on the US Army's retention of COIN expertise when dealing with future conflicts?[7]

<u>Approach</u>

Chapter 2 of this thesis will flesh out on the development of counterinsurgency theory within the context of the British experience during the Malayan Emergency and that of the French during the same period in Algeria. The British are regarded as having been successful in Malaya, albeit after a couple years of struggling to come to grips with insurgency there; the French are seen as having failed in Algeria. However, in both cases, the army involved developed some highly effective policies, programs, and tactics that contributed to the evolving understanding of countering insurgency.

Chapter 3 will detail the British Army's first deliberate application of its COIN theory—quite successfully—to insurgency in Oman. This insurgency, confined primarily to the Dhofar province of Oman, involved necessary adaptations to environmental and cultural factors very different from those they encountered in Malaya. Chapter 3 also touches upon doctrinal developments during the ensuing years, as well as contributions to that doctrine that the British could have drawn from experience in Oman but did not. As will be shown, this neglect of lessons learned was due to some extent to a shift in strategic focus away from COIN.

Chapter 4 will demonstrate the existence of insurgency in Iraq and the validity of British COIN doctrine, notwithstanding the existence of new complicating factors due largely to globalization, increased Islamic militancy, and widely available cheap technology. It will examine the various reasons why the British delayed proper implementation of a yet relevant COIN doctrine until the spring of 2008. The British Army's struggles in Iraq were the result of two factors related to their long history of COIN: first that they failed to fully capture it; second that their military education system

3

failed to retain an accurate memory of it within the force. Those two things, coupled with a misplaced confidence in their legacy of COIN were a prescription for near disaster.

The concluding chapter will come full circle in acknowledging that factors contributing to this debacle exist within institutional armies on both sides of the Atlantic. It will also discuss ways in which historically grounded and rigorously debated doctrine can contribute to quicker adaptation to future contingencies by both allies, thereby leading to quicker, more enduring results and decreased expenditure of resources, particularly the lives of brave, young men and women in uniform.

<u>Doctrine Defined</u>

This thesis ultimately focuses on the development of useful doctrine, the recognition of venues in which that doctrine is relevant, and the adaptive application of doctrine given the unique attributes of the situation at hand. It makes sense, therefore, to discuss at the outset what doctrine is.

> According to British military theorist Major General J. F. C. Fuller, doctrine is,
>
> the central idea of an army . . . which to be sound must be principles of war, and which to be effective must be elastic enough to admit mutation in accordance with change in circumstance. In its ultimate relationship to the human understanding this central idea or doctrine is nothing else than common sense-that is, action adapted to circumstance.[8]

Hence, doctrine is designed to provide that which is universally applicable concerning war and various types of operations to the military professional who must then create techniques which fit mission requirements and environmental factors.[9]

Concerning the need for doctrine, the forward to the 2010 British manual on military operations describes itself as, ―containing the enduring philosophy and principles

for our approach to operations." Furthermore, in discussing "the reluctance of some to read and apply doctrine," it asserts,

> [T]here is no place in today's Army for the gifted amateur. We must get better at studying the profession of arms and establishing greater coherence and consistency in how we operate, across our activities. While this doctrine emphasizes the importance of minimizing prescription, the land operating environment is just too dangerous and complicated to make it up as we go along.[10]

Thus, doctrine provides a base line understanding and a common lexicon for synchronizing efforts. However, both developers and consumers of doctrine must recognize, as the writers of the 2006 US Army/Marine Corps COIN manual did, that circumstances vary and that the proper application of doctrinal principles requires "a flexible, adaptive force led by agile, well-informed, culturally astute leaders."[11]

Methodology, Sources, and Data Collection

This thesis is based on basic qualitative research in analyzing a variety of literary sources to include works by recognized theorists, contemporary critiques of those theorists, historical analyses of various campaigns, and doctrinal publications. It capitalizes on case study research in order to ascertain the practical conditions under which the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine evolved. It incorporates oral history, which is a type of narrative analysis, to determine what British officers, non commissioned officers and soldiers going into Iraq knew about their own counterinsurgency doctrine, whether they perceived it to be valid, how that perception may have changed, and what learning and adaptation took place as a result.[12]

Primary sources include oral history interviews, official reports, written personal accounts, official documents, and doctrinal manuals. Secondary sources include

theoretical treatises, books, articles, and journal entries that analyze COIN theory or doctrine, case histories, and various works that examine case studies included. Selection of case histories was based upon two factors: first those those influenced the development of British COIN theory and doctrine, and second those that demonstrate appropriate versus inappropriate application of that doctrinal approach.

Collection of data from oral interviews involved designing a questionnaire jointly with other members of the 2010/11 Art of War Scholars Program at Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This group of eight US Army majors then interviewed active duty and retired military leaders, both American and British, during a six-week period from the end of February to mid-April 2011. Respondents also included academics and senior policy makers in both countries.

Group members interviewed in teams, made recordings, typed manuscripts and summaries, and posted the material in a repository accessible only by members and select faculty and staff (see note immediately preceding bibliography). Oral history interviews were catalogued for ease of reference within theses in a manner that preserved guarantees of non-attribution contained in consent agreements signed by interviewees. Each scholar then selected from those interviews information relevant to their topics, principally from those questions that person contributed to the joint questionnaire. The oral history information contained in this thesis came primarily from answers to the following questions:

1. Consider, for the moment, the evolution of a comprehensive theater-level strategy for Iraq from the summer of 2004 thru the formal cessation of combat operations (30 Apr 09 for UK; 31 Aug 10 for US). What were your perceptions of what the strategy

was, its relevance to your area of operations during the time you were there, and the consistency and/or inconsistency between that strategy and the operational approach taken by you and by other commanders in your area of operations?

2. What was your understanding of counterinsurgency doctrine and how did you feel about the validity of that doctrine at the start of your deployment. Did either change by the end of your rotation(s)? What was the source of any change?

3. What has your army learned about counterinsurgency operations during current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; do you believe the army has institutionalized these lessons; if so, how so; if not, why not? Was the army a learning organization beforehand; is it now?

The purpose of this research was to obtain a historically rooted understanding of the development, application, and adaptation of the British COIN approach—one from which the US has borrowed heavily. It focuses upon those factors which interfere with timely, adaptive application of current COIN doctrine as soon as the warning signs of insurgency present themselves. The price of failing to do so in terms of blood and treasure has been widely proclaimed daily in the news media during the past decade of American and British involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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[1]Operation TELIC is the name the British gave to their support of US led operations in Iraq beginning with the invasion on 20 March 2003.

[2]David Betz and Cormack, Anthony, ‒Iraq, Afghanistan and British Strategy," *Orbis* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 319; Peter Mansoor, ‒The British Army and the Lessons of the Iraq War," *British Army Review* 147 (Summer 2009): 11-12.

[3]For an example of an American author's observations of this, see Carter Malkasian, ‒Counterinsurgency in Iraq," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 288-89; for citation from the British, see Mansoor, ‒Lessons of the Iraq War," 11.

[4]War Office Code 9800, *Keeping the Peace* (London: The War Office, 1963); Army Code 70516 (Part 1), *Land Operations (Volume III–Counter-Revolutionary Operations)* (London: Ministry of Defense, 1969); Army Code 70516 (Part 1), *Land Operations (Volume III–Counter-Revolutionary Operations)* (London: Ministry of Defense, 1977); Army Code 71596 (Parts 3 and 4), Army Field Manual, Volume V Operations Other than War Section B *Counter Insurgency Operations* (London: Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, 1995); Army Code 71749, Army Field Manual, Volume 1, Combined Arms Operations, Part 10 *Counter Insurgency Operations* (*Strategic and Operational Guidelines*) (London: Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, July 2001).

[5]For citation of British COIN manual published two years before their involvement in Iraq see footnote above. For a chronological listing of doctrinal manuals for counterinsurgency and other related writings see the British Army's latest COIN manual, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (London: Ministry of Defense, January 2010), CS1-4.

[6]Daniel Marston, ―Adaptation in the Field: The British Army's Difficult Campaign in Iraq," *Security Challenges* 6, no. 1 (August 2010): 71.

[7]Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War," 11-12.

[8]J. F. C. Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1993), 254. Reprinted from the original 1926 edition.

[9]John McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* (Saint Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1966), 323.

[10]Army Doctrine Publication, *Operations*, London: Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, November 2010, iii.

[11]Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006).

[12]Sharon B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 21-48.

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION OF COIN THEORY

We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political discourse, carried on with other means.

— Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

Paraphrasing Clausewitz, we might say that ―Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means."

— David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*

There has never been much doubt that the main characteristic which distinguishes campaigns of insurgency from other forms of war is that they are primarily concerned with the struggle for men's minds, since only by succeeding in such a struggle with a large enough number of people can the rule of law be undermined and constitutional authorities overthrown. Violence may play a greater or lesser part in the campaign, but it should be used very largely in support of ideas. In conventional war the reverse is more usually the case and propaganda is normally deployed in support of armed might.

— General Sir Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five*

In order better to understand British counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine in existence at the outset of Operation Telic[1] this chapter surveys its historical and theoretic roots. These roots intertwined with those of other armies countering insurgencies during the 1950s and 60s, a period during which classic COIN theory emerged.[2] Classic COIN theorists whose works this study examines, in addition to their writing accomplishments, served within or alongside at least one of the three western armies: British, French, and American.[3]

Two British theorists included are Sir Robert Thompson and General Sir Frank Kitson. Thompson served as a civil servant during the Malayan Emergency, 1948 to 1960, and as Head of the British Advisory Mission to the American military in Vietnam,

from September 1961 to March 1965.[4] Kitson served as an army officer in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, and Oman.[5]

Colonel David Galula and Lieutenant Colonel Roger Trinquier are two French classic theorists. Galula served as an army officer during World War II in North Africa, Italy, and France, before his subsequent COIN experience in China, Greece, Indochina, and Algeria.[6] Trinquier also had a series of World War II postings before his COIN experience in Indochina and Algeria.[7] The lone American in the group, Colonel John McCuen, taught COIN as an army officer at the US Army War College, after overseas tours in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia that preceded the outbreak of the Vietnam War.[8]

These key individuals identified and systematized COIN principles from historical case studies with which they were intimately familiar. In the interest of providing a historical context from which classic COIN theory emerged, this chapter will be primarily concerned with a brief overview of two case studies, the British in Malaya (1948 to 1960) and the French in Algeria (1954 to 1962).[9] The next chapter will provide a detailed analysis of a subsequent British supported counterinsurgency in Oman focused on application of classic COIN theory and the development of British COIN doctrine.

Each of the two case studies within this chapter will begin with historical context, proceed through insurgent and counterinsurgent methods adopted and implemented, and conclude by identifying principles drawn out primarily by the theorists listed above. In each case, the identification of principles will begin with the theorist or theorists with the same national origin as the intervening power associated with that case. As will be seen in the examination of British involvement in Iraq presented in chapter 4, the link between

COIN principles and historical context is a crucial one, without which the principles can be misconstrued and misapplied.[10]

However, before progressing any further with an examination of COIN, it makes sense to examine first the activity that it was developed to counter. Toward this end, a brief examination of the historic and theoretical development of insurgency follows.

<u>Toward an Understanding of Insurgency</u>

According to the 2001 British Army Field Manual, *Counterinsurgency Operations (Strategic and Operational Guidelines)*, insurgency is —the actions of a minority group within a state who are intent on forcing political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of people to accept such a change."[11] This was the accepted definition going into Operation TELIC. The roots of this definition can be discerned in what various theorists referenced below had to say about it.

Galula sums up his view of insurgency succinctly in the second epitaph to the current chapter as the pursuit of aims by organized opposition within a country by every means. He further elaborates those means as political, economic, psychological, and military. Other beneficial appendages to this definition include that it is a protracted struggle that begins as what appears to be a non-violent, legal political movement seeking to build popular support for itself while subverting support for the current government. This can be difficult to spot, as it closely mimics the partisan politics of most democracies.[12]

What delineates insurgency from legitimate opposition is that at some point such movements adopt violent means to further their aims. Therefore, the problem becomes

how to identify them before they turn to violence. The fact that a problem of this nature is typically evident to officials and agencies of the government before the general populace perceives the threat further exacerbates the problem. For this reason, preliminary steps to stop an insurgency in its infancy may well be seen as infringing on civil liberties, exactly what the insurgency depends on to provide additional time to build up its organization and extend its control over the populace.[13]

Hence, Galula's subtle distinction the term ―every" versus ―other" draws attention to the fact that insurgency typically begins long before any visible manifestation of the violence associated with armed aggression to which Clausewitz refers.[14] This is most notably in some degree of political subversion to draw sympathy from the populace for insurgent complaints against the constituted government and their demands for change. It is also worth mentioning that, although Galula echoes Clausewitz in that insurgency occurs inside a country, this does not mean that outside countries are not involved.[15]

Trinquier refers to insurgency as a new kind of warfare, subversive or revolutionary in nature, introduced after World War II. In his view, practitioners of this new form of ―modern warfare" utilize all the ―interlocking systems" within a country— political, economic, psychological, and military—to exploit pre-existing tensions between the populace and the governing powers with the aim of ―the overthrow of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime."[16]

That insurgency is a ―new" form of warfare that surfaced after World War II is a bit dubious. The roots of insurgency can be traced to the increasing importance of revolutionary warfare exhibited in the Peninsular Wars—where Spanish guerillas fought the occupation forces of Napoleon—of the early nineteenth century and in both French

and American Revolutions of the late nineteenth century. During the early twentieth century, American's were busy putting down an insurrection in the Philippines and the Tsar was battling revolt by Bolsheviks in Russia.[17] Concerning these early roots, renowned historians William Shy and Thomas Collier describe them as —one of false starts, dead ends, [and] at most brief flashes of the future.”[18]

Such a position could lead to a view of —true” insurgency as a sort of modern epiphany. It may just be that insurgency, like all forms of warfare, evolved over time; though it is perhaps true that Mao provided aspiring leaders of insurgent movements the benefit of a comprehensive proven theory of insurgency only after the Second World War. With respect to this theory, it is important to note that even Mao cautioned against restricting oneself to a one-size-fits-all mentality of insurgency. According to Mao, an insurgency, —though historically of the same consistency, has employed varying implements as times, peoples, and conditions differ.”[19]

Trinquier's assertion that insurgency —of necessity” adopts the aim of overthrowing the established government is equally debatable. Kitson refers to the overthrow of —constitutional authorities, but then goes on immediately afterward to say that the insurgent aim with respect to the government may be more modest, such as to —force it to do something it does not want to do.”[20] As evidenced by transnational insurgent groups such as al Qaeda, activities directed against a constituted government may target an audience and see to achieve objectives far outside the boundaries of a particular country within which they choose to operate.[21]

However, Kitson does agree with Trinquier that insurgency exploits —pre-existing internal tensions,” as a means to accomplish its aims. In one of the chapter epitaphs, he

identifies the "main characteristic" of counterinsurgency as "the struggle for men's minds." He asserts that success in that struggle is essential to the insurgent in order to garner enough support to pose a viable threat to the constitutional authority of the standing government. As Kitson notes, subversive elements often exploit internal tensions, such as discrimination against an ethnic group within the population; although in reality they have little interest in actually improving the plight of the disenfranchised to which they appeal.[22]

Such an appeal, legitimate or otherwise, is an imperative of insurgent warfare. Mao speaks plainly on this; an insurgency not founded on "political objectives" is bound to fail. He forecasts the same dire consequence if those political objectives "do not coincide with the aspirations of the people." This focus on the support of the people is further underscored where Galula distinguishes between insurgencies—protracted, methodical struggle involving the masses—from a revolution—spontaneous, "accidental" uprising with leaders arising in due course—and plots—overthrow of the head of the government by a small clandestine group.[23]

It is interesting to note that the distinction cited above does not prevent Galula from using the terms "insurgency" and "revolutionary war" interchangeably throughout his writings. This may simply be a typical variation in terminology earlier noted or it could belay the manner in which insurgent leaders often take advantage of conditions that are already ripe for revolution, channeling that energy for their own covert partisan purposes.[24] For more on how insurgents co-opt, manage, and exploit support of the people the next section examines the theory of Mao found in *Yu Chi Chan* [On Guerilla Warfare].[25]

14

Maoist Insurgency

Mao clearly understood that the precise means of organizing an insurgency must be adapted to ―different peoples in different periods.‖ Nonetheless, his thinking diverged markedly from Russian revolutionaries such as Lenin, whose views and methods Mao studied as a librarian's assistant at Peking University between 1917 and 1921. Lenin and fellow Bolsheviks appealed to the needs and aspirations of the urban proletariat. In early twentieth century China, however, there simply was no urban proletariat for which to appeal. Hence, Mao targeted the rural peasants and co-opted their land-based grievances instead.[26]

There is reason to suspect that revolution in Russia was more a matter of a successful coup against a war-weakened government than it was a victorious revolution by the urban proletariat. Dashed expectations of duplicate revolutions in other nations and internal dissention that led to bloody purges are evidence of oppressive practices that diverged from a strategy of cultivating popular support.[27]

On the other hand, Mao left no doubt on the importance he placed on political strategy as a pre-requisite to armed revolt. He stated, ―[O]ur hostilities must have a clearly defined political goal and firmly established political responsibilities.‖[28] Whereas Lenin relied upon ―direct military action‖ to arouse the masses, unimpressed with the counsel of others within his own party who ―feared the effects of premature armed insurrection,‖ Mao advocated developing popular political support prior to taking armed action. According to John Shy and Thomas Collier, both professors of military history, this involves the central question of revolutionary war: when and how to undertake military action.[29]

Another Maoist principle was the necessity of base areas, which becomes clear in his detailed guidance on collecting, repairing, and distributing clothing, equipment, and supplies to insurgent fighters.[30] Thompson emphasizes the importance of insurgents to have ‒controlled areas" from which they can develop their political organization and train recruits.[31] Further highlighting advantages that safe base areas afford insurgents, Galula emphasizes the importance of not allowing insurgents to establish them.[32]

A further innovation of Maoist theory is the idea that guerilla forces can and must eventually evolve into conventional forces, rather than simply conduct defensive operations in the hope of outside intervention, as had been the case in the past.[33] As Thompson puts it, when faced with the critical question of how to achieve final victory, Mao's solution was to transition from guerrilla warfare to a more conventional form of warfare, once vast enough areas are under insurgent control and enough military hardware captured from government forces is in insurgent hands.[34]

An important tactical feature of Maoist insurgency was that guerilla forces utilized time and space as weapons. Over time, revolutionaries could wear down government and/or foreign interventionists. Leveraging vast tracts of difficult terrain, revolutionaries could demoralize their adversary with repeated surprise attacks over a prolonged period. After each attack, they could simply melt away into the surrounding countryside and/or into the surrounding populace, from whom they were indistinguishable.[35] If this should frustrate government forces, thereby causing them to react with large-scale attacks that inflict collateral casualties among non-combatants, this normally served to boost insurgent recruitment.[36]

Taken in conjunction with British experience with insurgents in Malaya that employed the Maoist model, what emerges is a concept of insurgency very much in keeping with that defined within British doctrine of 1969. Therein, insurgency is ―a form of rebellion in which a dissident faction that has the support or acquiescence of a substantial part of the population instigates the commission of widespread acts of civil disobedience, sabotage and terrorism, and wages guerilla warfare in order to overthrow a government.‖[37] As will become evident, this definition matures to include a hard-earned appreciation for grievance-based, propaganda-driven insurgency, along with the diversified aims its instigators might aim to achieve.[38]

The effective application of the principles of Maoist insurgency resulted in the establishment of The People‘s Republic of China in 1949. Mao accomplished this by arousing the masses and inspiring them to commit to a protracted struggle. Thompson says that, for the Communists in China, it took 40 years.[39] However, even if one were to opt to start counting from the official birth of the Communist Party in China in 1921, the point is still well taken: it took a long time.

The course of the conflict in China followed what later became the classic rural insurgency model of four phases. The first is a subversive stage in which insurgent leaders exploit grievances against the government and arouse public support for radical change. The second involves murders of potential rivals and selective acts of terrorism to undermine government authority and discourage support for governing authorities. The third is where insurgency actually gives way to military action. The fourth stage occurs when insurgent forces have employed guerilla tactics to weaken government forces to the point where they can now eliminate them using conventional methods of warfare.[40]

Insurgency in China completed this metamorphosis. Inspired by this success, and aided by the systematized written formula for its success, other would be revolutionaries would adopt Mao's strategy and test the political resolve and military prowess of Britain and France over the next three decades, in places such as Malaya and Algeria.[41] As this study turns to an analysis of insurgencies in these two locales, it is worth noting that Mao practiced truth in lending when he invoked Clausewitz in admonishing against the wholesale application of a theory derived from one period or setting of conflict to the next, since no two settings are the same.[42]

British Counterinsurgency in Malaya 1948-1960

This section will examine the historical context, the particulars of the Malayan insurgency, the methods adopted by the British in countering this insurgency, and aspects of emerging COIN theory relevant to this case.

Historical Context

Between 1786 and 1914, Britain gradually asserted dominion within the Malayan peninsula, ousting the Dutch from their settlements along the coastal areas bordering the Malacca Straights. They gradually convinced the Sultans of each of the nine states that came to be known as the Malayan Federation (see figure 1) to accept the advice of British ‗residents' in all matters except religion. While the British were expanding their influence, Indian and Chinese immigrated to Malaya drawn by economic opportunities provided by the emergence of tin mines and rubber plantations. Whereas native Malays were either unwilling or unable to run these industries, foreign entrepreneurs were

willing, able, and eager to do so. The result was a massive importation of laborers, predominantly Chinese, to work the plantations and mines.[43]

Figure 1.   The Federation of Malaya at the time of the Emergency
Source: Richard Stubbs, ―From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Limited, 2010), 105.

The Chinese were just as devoted to their secret societies, through which they maintained internal control, as the Malays were to their Sultans and Islam. Although the British administration was able to break up these secret societies by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), with its roots in the split of the Communists from the Nationalists back in China, capitalized on natural ethnic tendencies toward this type of control in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The worldwide recession of the 1930s exacerbated the ethnic alienation of the Chinese, escalating reliance on internal control afforded by the MCP, as a large number of Chinese thrown out of work by the poor economy dispersed into the jungle to become squatters, eking out an existence as best they could.[44]

Just as the Chinese relied on the MCP for internal control, the Sultans depended upon British administrative capabilities. Hence, when the Japanese invaded and defeated the British in 1942, the MCP was the only group left to mount organized resistance.[45] During the ensuing Japanese occupation, the MCP proved its value in organizing guerilla units, which the British subsequently trained and equipped to mount an even more effective resistance. With World War II ending in the defeat of Japan and its withdrawal from previously occupied territories, the MCP had no intention of disbanding and relinquishing exclusionary political control back to the Sultans and their British protectors.[46]

The Government of Malaya (GOM) compounded reliance on the MCP by excluding all groups other than ethnic Malays from political power in spite of the fact that the Chinese actually held a slight edge over the Malays in terms of percentage of the population (42 versus 40 percent). Indians and aborigines made up the rest.[47] A large

segment of the Chinese populace had lived outside the law as squatters in vast swaths of jungle. The global recession of the early 1930s further contributed to this. These squatters became a lucrative pool from within which the MCP's political action committee, the Min Yuen, could recruit a guerilla army and a network to support it.[48]

For too long the GOM had disregarded the needs and aspirations of the Chinese, many originally imported as labor in the tin mines and rubber plantations, from participation in political processes and civil service. Therefore, the Communists, now well organized and well armed from their days of fighting the Japanese, seized the opportunity afforded them by this large disenfranchised segment of the populace and decided it was time to expel the British and assert their own influence in the political arena. To do so, they would employ methods developed, tested, and promulgated by Mao.[49]

The MCP cultivated support among the Chinese populace through the subversive tactics of the Min Yuen, its political arm. It was able to gather recruits and material support, largely from among the squatters, for the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), its military arm, also referred to as Communist Terrorists.[50] They then organized and deployed units throughout the jungle, in preparation for a protracted armed struggle against the British backed government forces. However, before it was able to prepare its forces adequately, units not directly under control of the MCP initiated an unauthorized campaign of extortion and robbery that ended with the murder of three British planters on 16 June 1948. Between this event and the poorly orchestrated response to it by the government, the insurgency effectively started before either side was prepared.[51]

In October of 1948, attempts by the government to utilize its troops to establish a cordon and deprive the insurgents of access to the squatters failed. The following January, in a further attempt to tackle this problem, the British expanded the powers granted under its original Emergency declaration in June 1948 to provide a legal framework for a plan to resettle the squatters. However, the reckless, indiscriminate manner in which the GOM and British forces initially implemented this policy, along with the lack of due attention by the GOM to living conditions within resettlement camps, only served to alienate the Chinese even more, encouraging them to either join or support the insurgency.[52]

Insurgent Methods

The integration of political activism and military strategy, a hallmark of Maoist strategy, was as critical to the early successes of the insurgents as it would later become to the British and the GOM. Over the first three years, Min Yuen, co-opting grievances concerning food scarcity, inflation, corruption, and repressive labor practices, provided the MRLA with increasing numbers of recruits and access to both material support and information. Additionally, the Min Yuen produced the propaganda and procured the means to communicate effectively throughout the Malayan peninsula.[53]

As Min Yuen plied its subversive techniques in filling the ranks of the MLRA and providing it requisite forms of support, the MLRA became actively engaged in a campaign of violence against the GOM, which included intimidation of the people to discourage any popular support for government authorities. Starting small, activities were initially limited to acts of sabotage against the tin mills and rubber plantations. However, by February 1949 its attacks had increased in terms of frequency, ferocity, and boldness.

That month's activities included attacks that killed numerous constables and guards, along with some women and children. Other actions included burning a police station and torching an entire village, leaving its 1,000 inhabitants homeless.[54]

The MCP's campaign of terror and guerilla warfare worked well between 1948 and 1951. However, with an improved British strategy for isolating and targeting the guerillas coupled with reform measures that better secured populace so that they could support the authorities without threat of insurgent retribution, the tide gradually turned in the government's favor. The next section covers this shift in COIN approach and the success it brought in detail. By the point at which Britain fulfilled its promise of granting full independence to Malaya in 1957, the insurgency was all but defeated.[55]

Factors that hindered insurgents included that they largely belonged to one ethnic group that was easily distinguishable from those who belonged to all other ethnic groups, most of which were generally sympathetic to the government. Additionally, they received little outside aid and their protracted struggle against the Japanese had thinned their leadership. Furthermore, the Korean War and the massive demand thereby created for both tin and rubber provided the government additional revenues necessary to construct habitable resettlement camps that effectively isolated insurgents from the populace and hence denied them its support.[56]

Nonetheless, the insurgents, initially supported by a large segment of Chinese squatters living in the jungles outside of the sight and control of government authorities, enjoyed several advantages over the British led army. The insurgents were operating in a jungle environment and in a human environment with which they were intimately familiar. They had a willing pool of recruits, support, and intelligence. The initial

exclusion of the so-called Chinese minority from political participation provided an easily exploitable grievance against the government. Military surplus left over from their World War II fight against the Japanese, enabled them to arm and equip an army of 12,000 men and women. Following standard Maoist strategy, using small, elusive, and elite groups, they initiated a campaign of selective terrorism and guerilla warfare that defied conventional military tactics.[57]

Counterinsurgent Methods

The aim of this research is to focus on the army—its practices, how it adapted, and what it learned in the process. However, since the British approach to addressing the insurgency placed the army in the role of support to civil administration, one cannot examine the army's role without looking at the broader context of the government's plan to re-assert control.[58]

Between 1948 and 1951, British efforts to combat the insurgency were under the leadership of High Commissioner Sir Harold Gurney, who saw the problem as mere criminal behavior and therefore better left to the police. With the escalating violence in early 1949, Britain appointed Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, a retired officer with experience fighting in the jungles of Burma, as the Director of Operations. Briggs' job was thus to assist Gurney by shouldering responsibility for military operations, allowing Gurney to focus on the political side of things. Despite an innovative and comprehensive plan for enhancing security devised by Briggs, ultimately dubbed ―The Briggs Plan," the civil government to which he was subordinate undermined his efforts at implementing it simply by not taking the insurgency seriously enough.[59]

Briggs premised his plan on the fact that the strength of the insurgency lay in the hold the armed wing of the MCP held over Chinese squatters via the Min Yuen. Hence, it aimed to sever the link between the people and the insurgents through resettling Chinese squatters, strengthening of local administration, improving infrastructure, increasing police presence, and providing a proactive information campaign.[60]

In order to implement such an ambitious strategy, an effective method for meshing British and GOM efforts and integrating civil and military efforts together at federal, state, and district levels was critical. For this purpose, Briggs created a Federal War Council in April of 1950, presided over by the High Commissioner and including the General Secretary of Malaya, the Secretary of Defense, the Police Commissioner, the Director of Operations, the General Officer Commanding, and the Air Officer Commanding. He also created war executive committees along the same lines of operation at the state and district level, known as SWECs and DWECs respectively. At all levels, the senior civilian official of the Malayan government chaired the committee.[61]

Of note, this committee system of administration forced senior civil servants to become involved in a whole host of issues spanning the full spectrum of activities related to prying the population away from the insurgents. It also ensured that they were aware of the political implications of each related decisions. The activities formulated, prioritized, and coordinated thereby included administration, security, population and resource control, police and military operations, information management, and regular assessment of decisions made and their resultant effects.[62] However, for the plan to be effective, the GOM had to support it, fund it, and implement the resettlement piece judiciously. Sadly,

Briggs would not find such support during his term; full implementation would fall to his successor.[63]

In October 1951, an entirely accidental encounter with the MRLA resulted in Gurney's assassination and a change in the ruling party in Britain which ushered in Winston Churchill as Prime Minister. The stage was set for change in Britain's approach to Malaya. Churchill recognized a need to unify civil and military control in the hands of one person. Shortly thereafter, he appointed General Sir Gerald Templer to a position of enhanced authority, combining the two previously separate roles of High Commissioner and Director of Operations in the hands of one man who now had control of both civil administration and military operations.[64]

From Templer's appointment in early 1952, through appointment of successors occupying again separate roles after 1954, through independence in 1957, and onward to formal declaration of the end of the Emergency in 1960, the success of counterinsurgency efforts rested upon combined civil-military and joint British-Malayan efforts. The benefits of these coordinated efforts, along with the detrimental impact on the insurgency, increased dramatically once Britain united its administrative and military efforts under Templer. It is important to remember that it was a combination of Templer's leadership style and the unprecedented consolidation of civil-military power in his hands that allowed him to more effectively execute a plan that in large part had already been formulated by his predecessor, Briggs. The exact methods he employed in doing so affected every area of the social structure in Malays.[65]

In addition to this administration by committee, the British, utilizing special powers granted under the legal framework of the declared Emergency, implemented what

some would say were drastic control measures under. ―Formally spelled out and impartially applied," these measures included resettlement of squatters, control of food, powers of search, seizure, and indefinite detention, and collective punishments for communities aiding the insurgents. Stringent control over and vigilant observation of access to the population allowed officials to identify infiltrators and, through them, the collaborators both within the villages and within the jungle.[66]

Methods enacted within the area of local security were also critical to the success of Malayan COIN. These included reorganization and retraining of police, improved dissemination of information to the populace to aid them in understanding what the government was doing, and coordination of intelligence between the police, the army, the civil administration, and the Special Branch. Assisted by newly appointed Commissioner of Police Colonel Arthur Young, Templer was able to reverse the trend of too rapidly increasing numbers of police officers without providing them necessary training. The establishment of Special Branch as a separate intelligence branch of the police greatly enhanced collection efforts through its employment of Asian agents.[67]

Also important were initiatives by which the GOM finally acceded to pressure from the British to provide the formerly disenfranchised ethnic Chinese a stake in governance and security. This went a great ways toward legitimizing security efforts. Though the response to recruitment appeals into the army and the police was not enthusiastic enough to offset the racial imbalance within those forces, response to recruitment within the newly created Home Guard was far better and extremely beneficial. The Home Guard made the Chinese responsible for the security of their own

villages, gave them a sense of pride, and, most importantly, brought them into the government, ―making them part of the solution to the insurgency."[68]

In addition to Chinese recruitment into the civil administration and the security forces, Templer promoted an electoral process that encouraged formation of political parties to represent the interests of all ethnic groups. This greatly diminished the pool of aggrieved people to whom the MCP could appeal. Political accommodation was an important method by which the British convinced the Malayan people that the British were committed to the eventual independence of Malaya. From 1954 until the end of the Emergency, those who succeeded Templer, implemented gradual reforms designed to ensure that Malayans occupied key positions at all levels and that the entire committee system expanded to include elected Malayan officials.[69]

It should be clear by now that any part the army played in combating the insurgency was in support of a much broader program. Nevertheless, its role was critical in defeating the MRLA. In this regard, victory was attributable to their abilities to overcome a deficiency in jungle warfare capability, integrate and harmonize with other efforts, develop effective antiterrorist intelligence capabilities, and implement effective population and resource control measures. They were able to do all these things while at the same time generating trust and support within all segments of the affected populace. However, all of these developments came gradually and with much trial and error.[70]

Initial strength of the army included eleven battalions—six Gurkha, three British, and two Malay. The British component increased to twenty-three battalions by 1952. Efforts were successful in increasing the two Malay battalions to nine by 1956, with an emphasis placed on making it a multi-ethnic force. By March of 1956, the composite

force numbers peaked at 31,400. Along the way, it went from an under strength, poorly trained force oriented toward conventional style war to a full-strength one adapted to and specially trained for jungle warfare. A small remaining nucleus of its leaders who were well acquainted with this type of fighting from previous World War II campaigns against the Japanese in Burma aided in this retraining of the force.[71]

As the British led army shifted from a post-World War II conventional mindset to one of jungle warfare, it shifted operationally from large-scale seek and destroy missions to small unit tactics such as patrols and ambushes. The army's place, in support of the civil administration of Malaya, was in the jungle, interdicting lines of communication, denying the insurgents access to and supplies from the civilian populace, and thereby forcing them out in the open in order to kill or capture them. Two of the most important means developed in properly training soldiers to fulfill such a role were the Far East Land Forces Training Center, an intensive, in-theater jungle warfare training and retraining center, instituted soon after the Emergency began, followed later, within Templer's tenure, by the field manual, *Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya.*[72]

Aside from enhanced jungle warfare fighting skills, the army was also crucial in government mandated population and resource control measures. By relocating a large portion of the Chinese squatter population within fenced villages, the military was able, along with the police, to control the population. At the same time, they could deprive insurgents of using the population to provide them with arms and information on plans and movements of security forces. It also allowed them to establish checkpoints, thus regulating the flow of both people and resources, to include food. This forced insurgents

to choose between remaining in the jungle without sustenance or attempting contact with those inside the protected villages with the risk capture or extermination.[73]

No doubt, the least attractive job forced upon the army was that of taking responsibility for many of the pacification programs inside the villages that normally would have fallen to the police, while at the same time maintaining their offensive role against the insurgents. Templer found this temporary assignment of additional duties necessary in order to pull the police force off-line for 18 months for an intense retraining program. This was crucial, since their rampant corruption, abuse of power, and brutality actually aided MCP recruitment. The army did receive a return on its coerced investment in the end. A professional police force led to better public relations resulting in better intelligence from the people and, therefore, more productive military operations.[74]

Recapping effective methods contributing to a successful COIN campaign in Malaya, it all started with combined, joint efforts linked by an efficient command and control structure united at the top. This unity of command was further enhanced by an organizational structure that forced political, civic, local security, and military leaders to work together in order to deal with problems, find solutions, and share setbacks. Those who implemented decisions made by those committees did so impartially within a legal framework transparent to the people. These reforms climaxed with the provision of an inclusive political forum, effectively removing the original crux of the insurgency's subversive appeal.[75]

Within the area of security, police reform and retraining were crucial in establishing trust and good relations between the government and its entire people. Recruitment into the army and police, as well as an active role in the Home Guard, was

instrumental in making the Chinese partners of the government rather than collaborators with the insurgency.[76] Finally, a highly adaptive army with an active in-theater training program was critical both in its offensive operations and in its ability to fill non-traditional roles as needed.[77] The subsequent subsection will examine lessons fleshed out by previously identified classical theorists, beginning with British theorists, Thompson and Kitson.

Contributions to Classic COIN Theory

Thompson himself, in the preface to his book *Defeating Communist Insurgency,* sets forth his the twin goals of providing ―the theory of insurgency as applied on the ground [in Malaya and Vietnam]" and ―the basic theory of counter-insurgency as it should be applied to defeat the threat in those and similar situations." Though he reflects on experience as Head of the British Advisory Mission in Vietnam from 1961 to 1965 in his classic work on COIN, the focus here is to extract that which he directly relates to his experience in Malaya from 1948 to 1960.[78]

Thompson's chapter dedicated to ―Basic Principles of Counter-Insurgency contains two introductory pointers, five broad principles, and a concluding discourse on size and composition of forces, obviously more so focused on his experience in Vietnam. Prior to discussing his pointers and principles, two other comments from Thompson provide a frame of reference for his theory and his motive for writing it.[79]

The first comment is in the preface and has to do with a self-admitted bias toward administrative and other aspects of insurgency over military ones.[80] The space dedicated to administrative, economic, developmental, legal, and political aspects of counterinsurgencies within historical studies of the Malayan Emergency, as reflected in

in the preceding section, certainly seems to justify such a bias. Fellow British theorist

Kitson certainly agrees that COIN is about much more than the military actions taken; but

he also quite succinctly cautions the reader against not affording military measures the

importance they nonetheless merit.

> The first thing that must be apparent when contemplating the sort of action which a government facing an insurgency should take, is that there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity. At the same time there is no such thing as a wholly political solution either, short of surrender, because the very fact that a state of insurgency exists implies that violence is involved which will have to be countered to some extent by the use of legal force.[81]

Thompson's second comment is in the same chapter as the basic principles and

illuminates his motivation for writing. It has to do with the manner in which COIN

principles ―emerged" in Malaya, which is to say ―by a process of trial and error." This

observation underscores the importance of studying the lessons of past campaigns to

leaders and planners of COIN operations of today and tomorrow. It seems sensible to

adapt principles already in hand rather than to act blindly or to fail to act at all, while

waiting for them to re-emerge.[82]

Concerning Thompson's introductory pointers, the first has to do with the proper

timing of a government's response to a growing insurgency. Though it is possible to

respond too soon, before the signs are visible to innocent members of the public

adversely affected by seemingly unjustified restrictive measure, the far more likely

problem is that the government fails to see the signs or understand the seriousness until

the insurgency is already well along. This latter likelihood, as the reader will recall, well

defines Gurney's response in Malaya during the first year. The second pointer is an

admonishment ―to know [the] enemy and what that enemy is attempting to do at all

stages." The intent of this admonition is to make the counterinsurgent proactive, rather than reactive. [83]

Turning now to the core principles of Thompson's theory, the first underscores his previously stated bias. He writes, ―The government must have a clear political aim." There is a strong suggestion that this aim should be grandly stated, as the insurgent tends to do in a manifesto. Yet the actual attainment of it must focus on the government reforming its institutions, retraining its personnel, and eliminating existing corruption. This was certainly a challenge Templer faced, with respect to pressuring the GOM to be more inclusive and responsive.[84]

Thompson's second principle underscores the importance of the government operating within the law. He makes it clear that it is hypocritical to expect citizens to abide by laws flouted by the same government charged to enact them, amend them, and enforce them. Amending laws as necessary, then enforcing them impartially and transparently has the benefit of exposing the criminality of the insurgency, revealing any outside support for internal efforts, and demonstrating the government's resolve and ability to ensure public safety. Just as importantly, it highlights the accountability of public officials in the execution of their duties.[85]

Third, the government must have a proactive, prioritized, and flexible plan that balances civil measures intended to ensure public welfare and security with military ones focused on defeating the insurgency. This goes hand in hand with the fourth principle that the government must give priority to defeating the subversion over killing and capturing the insurgent. It is important here to note that this does not obviate the need to kill or capture insurgents. It does highlight the limited choices insurgents have once their

government forces sever the link between them and the populace. They can confront government forces deployed in their way and risk death or capture, they can surrender, or they can disperse back into the jungle, thereby facing progressively dire circumstance.[86]

Thompson's fifth and final principle is that ―government must secure its base areas first,‖ which are essentially its more developed areas. This presupposes that the situation has already progressed beyond the initial subversion and random acts of terrorism characteristic of the build-up phase. Conversely, during the subversion phase the emphasis should be on improving the lives of the people in more remote areas in order to take the steam out of the insurgency before it reaches the guerilla phase.[87]

Once the insurgency reaches the guerilla stage, however, it is critical to protect key infrastructure, resources, industry, business, and public institutions and figures, in order to instill and maintain public confidence and deny the insurgent the valuable propaganda inherent in successful attacks on such.[88]

In subsequent chapters of his *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Thompson fleshes out the details of the principles presented above. Three of those chapters— Administrative Structure, Intelligence, and Information Services—added to Thompson's fourth principle—operating within the law—constitute Kitson's four sides of the ―framework‖ for counterinsurgency, found in his work, *Bunch of Five*.[89]

The need for such a framework stems from the need for the government to tailor its measures to counter insurgency ―in the same way as insurgents tailor their campaign to the surroundings.‖ Kitson emphasizes the need to analyze all aspects of the terrain, the populace, and the politics of a country, along with methods employed by the enemy, in

determining a specific plan of action to address the situation. This plan must be properly ―framed‖ by considering four ―certain areas in which decisions have to be made.‖[90]

First, government must have a mechanism for planning, prioritizing, synchronizing, and implementing countermeasures to the insurgency. Second, it must have a propaganda machine aimed offensively at swaying public perception in its favor and defensively at monitoring and countering insurgent propaganda. Third, it must have an enlarged, decentralized apparatus for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence that is actionable at the operational level. Forth, it must have a legal manifesto within which to take all necessary actions and by which to hold all parties to the conflict accountable.[91]

Stressed throughout is the required recognition of the political, economic, and personal trade-offs required with any plan to fight insurgency and the need to assess and accept risk at each step along the way. Two other points Kitson makes in closing this chapter are that these four ―sides of the frame‖ are interdependent and that leadership must continuously assess and rebalance these relationships as conditions change.[92]

In a more strictly military vein, Thompson‘s chapter on operational concepts explains how the military fits into general principles of securing base areas and formulating a comprehensive plan that prioritizes squelching subversion over killing insurgents. The first half of this chapter presents the four stages of executing this plan as ―clearing, holding, winning, and won.‖ The focus of the military‘s effort is on the careful selection of areas to clear and on a well-planned execution based on thorough intelligence preparation appropriate to the terrain as well as to the size and composition of the enemy. The second half of the chapter deals with employing tactics appropriate to areas

dependent upon whether those areas are heavily or sparsely populated areas, with the aim of cutting the link between subversion and guerilla operations.[93]

Kitson's chapter on operations accords with Thompson's theme of striking a balance of offensive and defensive operations. Defensively, he lays special emphasis on the importance of protecting nodes of government, security, commerce, industry, transportation, communication, and agriculture from sabotage and terrorism. Offensively, Kitson underscores the importance of accepting risk in raising indigenous security forces, as indeed was of great benefit in Malaya, in order to create local buy-in into the overall government plan. He also emphasizes the role of Special Forces in developing contact information for conventional units to exploit in eradicating insurgents.[94]

In his concluding chapter entitled ―A Soldier's Lot,‖ Kitson briefly discusses challenges soldiers face in COIN. With the violence normally associated with insurgency, expectations of soldiers, officers in particular, are high. Officers should be prepared to lead military operations, advise civil leaders on how component efforts are related, negotiate a suitable ―framework‖ for operations, and direct subordinates on what they need to do and why. They must understand counterinsurgency and know the appropriate measures to take in accordance with the circumstances and understand when to adjust. They must exercise good judgment in deciding upon the right action rather even when that, as oft occurs, conflicts with what is expedient.[95]

In Summary, both Thompson and Kitson take great care to emphasize that insurgency is rooted deep within the political and economic fabric of society and therefore countering it is not a strictly military fight. Nonetheless, they make it equally clear that the role the military plays and the manner in which it carries out its

36

responsibilities is critical to a successful counterinsurgency, as the forgoing case history of Malaya reflects.

The unique factors that favored either the insurgents or the government mentioned in concluding comments under the earlier section on ―Insurgent Methods‖ have led some commentators to express skepticism regarding generalizing principles based on the success of both the British and the Malayan government in this case. However, this only underscores an oft-stated concession that every insurgency is different and any strategy for countering it needs to fully understand and adapt to the unique factors surrounding and influencing the current operating environment.[96]

French Counterinsurgency in Algeria 1954-1962

This section will examine the historical context, the particulars of the Algerian insurgency, the methods adopted by the French in countering this insurgency, and aspects of emerging counterinsurgency theory relevant to this case.

Historical Context

The history of the French Army‗s involvement in counterinsurgency operations in Algeria dates back to the first wave of French colonial expansion into northern Africa beginning around 1830. Yet, when Marshal Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, a veteran of the Peninsular Wars, arrived as commander in chief in 1840, he found that the French Army ten years into the current campaign was still operating in ways that had spelled its doom in Spain thirty years previously. Just as the Spanish peasants of days gone by had done, the Arab guerillas avoided conventional battle and chose rather to attack supply lines and

harass the flanks of columns. Seven years later, through some equally unconventional and somewhat brutal tactics of its own, the French were able to squelch Algerian resistance.[97]

Success against Algerian insurgency in 1847, however, came at a cost that would continue to have relevance into the more recent conflict under review. That cost included the simmering resentment of the indigenous populace toward both the army and the European mercenary settlers who exploited the natives under the army's protective umbrella. Furthermore, in large part due to the obvious discontinuity between the French narrative of bringing civilization to Africa and the barbarity with which they imposed it, the army's campaign in Algeria caused a rift with social, political, and military establishments back in France.[98]

Between their initial surge into northern Africa in 1830 and the advent of World War I, the French, along with all the other European powers, continued expansion throughout the continent in what historians refer to as ―the great African land rush.‖ During the latter part of this period, French generals leading the army in the colonies were portraying their colonial exploits as a means of promoting economic development within conquered territories, beneficial to conqueror and conquered alike, thereby bolstering France's image abroad and sense of prestige at home.[99]

This attractive narrative aside, however, the truth of the matter was that racist and exploitive immigrants prospered at the expense of tribal structures and local economies. Furthermore, publicity concerning the methods used by the army to pacify tribal uprisings by the aggrieved local populace served to alienate French forces even more from popular and political support at home.[100]

Between the First and Second World Wars, nationalism grew in North Africa. France's defeat in 1940 and the ensuing occupation of not only its colonial holdings but also its homeland through 1944 served as further reason to challenge France's continued right to rule over its colonies in spite of the ultimate victory of the Allies at the end of the war. The question of legitimacy from without, the widespread disdain for both French colonial pursuits and that portion of the military that supported them from within, and the bipolar nature of the world starting in the 1950s with the onset of the Cold War, were all dark clouds on the horizon signaling a gathering storm of insurgency.[101]

That storm broke in Algeria on 1 November 1954, less than five months after the declared end of another insurgency against the French by the Viet Minh in Indochina, that one culminating in a humiliating defeat for the French army at Dien Bien Phu and a divided Vietnam. In simple terms, the insurgency in Algeria was conducted by the Front de Libération National (FLN) against the French. At the beginning of this conflict, the FLN was no more united than the French political and military establishments. However, like the Viet Minh, the FLN had in its favor the political high ground of fighting a war of national independence.[102]

The causes of the conflict centered on the economic and political gap between the nine million indigenous Algerians and the one million European settlers by now known as *Pied Noirs*—translated ―black feet," perhaps a reference to having spent too much time shuffling around in the hot sand. The indigenous population had no real political power and the conservative *Pied Noir* lobby in Paris suppressed any attempts to pass reforms to ameliorate the growing sense of inequality.[103]

As the foregoing indicates, there was more to the conflict than an attempt by insurgents to topple what they perceived to be an oppressive foreign government. In order not to oversimplify the conflict, it is important to understand the multiple levels and arenas involved. Alistair Horne, a British historian of modern France, identified no less than seven:

1. The fighting war itself
2. The political war for the ‗middle-ground' in Algeria
3. A civil war between Algerians
4. A revolutionary struggle within the leadership of the Algerian FLN: *Front de Libération Nationale*
5. A struggle between the French Army in Algeria and the Government in Paris, leading in the first place to the overthrow of the Fourth Republic and the advent of de Gaulle, and later to a full-scale revolt against de Gaulle himself
6. A struggle between the *Pied Noir* settlers of Algeria and France, culminating in open warfare under the aegis of the OAS: *Organisation Armée Secrète* and finally, and perhaps most decisive
7. The external war fought on the platforms of the outside world.[104]

Having addressed the context, causes, and complexity of counterinsurgency in Algeria, this study now turns to the methods employed by the two principal combatants.

Insurgent Methods

Contrary to FLN expectations, the bombings of 1954 not only failed to draw a response from the French Army, but they also failed to pull together the different factions championing Algerian nationalism. In fact, other major factions were opposed to the FLN terrorist tactics. The second attack orchestrated by the FLN—a series of attacks in August 1955 that killed 123 and left 223 wounded—finally did solidify support for the FLN and its tactics, but mainly because of the indiscriminate brutality with which the French retaliated. In 1956, with its ranks swollen by many radicalized by this response, the FLN met secretly, devised a strategy, and refined it organization.[105]

As was the case in Malaya, that organizational structure included both a political arm, the FLN, and a military arm, the National Liberation Army. Both operated within clandestine political boundaries by which the city and suburbs of Algiers were divided into three regions—Algiers West, Central, and East. The regions were further broken down into districts, also known as *wilayas* (see figure 2). Within each district the political arm was a well-organized hierarchy of six distinct levels with a total strength of 127; each district also had a military arm with a four-tiered hierarchy and a total strength of thirty-five. Distinct from both of these groups, there was a network responsible for the manufacture, stockpiling, and placement of bombs. A four-member council consisting of a politico-military leader, a political assistant, a military assistant, and an external liaison and intelligence assistant provided a unifying command structure.[106]

Figure 2.   Algeria during French Counterinsurgency of 1954-1962
Source: Douglas Porch, ―French Imperial Warfare 1945-62,‖ in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Limited, 2010), 79.

The organization was complete with functional committees that synchronized efforts with respect to caring for the wounded, maintaining contact with trade unions, fund-raising, internal adjudication of civil and criminal matters, public relations with the UN and the press, information operations internally, and liaison with contacts in Tunisia, Morocco, and France. Finally, with respect to recruitment, the FLN was adept at supplementing its high-level Marxist indoctrinated staff and low-level criminal retainers with average citizens coerced into gradually escalating levels of support and/or direct action. They persuaded these otherwise law-abiding citizens into service to them through threats, reinforced by making examples of others who chose to resist recruitment.[107]

Counterinsurgent Methods

As mentioned earlier, the government was slow to respond to the growing problem indicated by the bombings of 1954. This, quite possibly, was due to its weak presence within Algeria, both administratively and militarily, although technically France governed Algeria as its southernmost province. Not until after the Philippeville massacres of 20 August 1955, which left 123 dead and 223 wounded, did the French respond. Albeit they did so with arbitrary brutality against moderates within the opposition simply because theirs were the only names the French had on file. This had the collateral effect of pushing large numbers of previously uncommitted into the radical FLN camp.[108]

Forces used to retaliate for the Philippeville massacres consisted of *Pied Noir* militias, along with seconded police and military units. The indiscriminate slaughter of somewhere between 2,000 and 12,000 Muslims was the beginning of a declared ―State of Emergency" and a massive military expansion. By 1959, French troops in Algeria

numbered around 450,000, supplemented by 200,000 Muslims who agreed to fight for France known as *harkis*.[109]

However, the French had learned from the humiliating defeat in Indochina that sheer numerical superiority was insufficient. What they needed was a coherent military approach aimed at neutralizing the psychological control over the population that Maoist style insurgencies mastered so well. Obsessed now with the Cold War view that all insurgencies were part of a Communist attempt to subvert the West, some French generals in the colonial army adopted an unofficial theory called *la guerre révolutionnaire*.[110]

Guided by the assumptions of *la guerre révolutionnaire* the French sought to cut off insurgent access to and control over the population. To deprive insurgents of outside support, it sealed off the borders with neighboring countries with wire, mines, floodlights and watchtowers. To deprive them of internal support, it resettled the indigenous populace in what turned out in many cases to be concentration camp type conditions. It supplemented these measures with the Constantine plan, which involved implementation of the Special Administrative Section (SAS) and aimed ostensibly at alleviating poverty among Muslims. Finally, it followed these measures to isolate insurgents from support both externally and internally by a joint military offensive, designed to go after the isolated insurgents in the seams between and around fortified and protected strategic hamlets.[111]

The SAS embodied France's attempt to establish contact with the people of Algeria. The four men SAS teams became an integral part of the resettlement program also known as *quadrillage*. Aside from being an attempt to re-establish contact with and

civil administration over the people, the SAS in conjunction with *quadrillage* served the purpose of isolating support for FLN and creating a no-man's-land within which mobile reserve units could hunt down and destroy the FLN. The intelligence gleaned by the SAS in interactions with the people helped to ensure accurate identification of FLN operatives, which mobile reserves could then accurately target. Another key component of this comprehensive approach was the formation of local indigenous security forces called *maghzen*.[112]

There were deficiencies within this system. These included inadequate funding to support development initiatives and a shortage of officers willing to volunteer for SAS duties. The eventual need to assign some officers involuntarily created uneven effectiveness and the likelihood of reversal of progress, since those coerced were less likely to work well with the locals. Ignorance of some of the more critical details of local customs sometimes inhibited even the best intentions—in one instance, the SAS painted street signs on the street, making it unavoidable to walk upon them. Walking upon the written word was an insult in Arab culture. More than anything else, however, resistance by European settlers (one tenth of population) to any reforms favorable to the indigenous population frustrated the efforts of the SAS.[113]

From a military point of view, Algeria was an admixture of success and failure. It demonstrated genius in the areas such as intelligence, population control, and offensives against the FLN. In the area of intelligence, it capitalized on FLN's internal divisions, sowing havoc with double agents that turned rivals factions against one another. In the area of population control, it effectively sealed off borders with FLN friendly nations—a challenge with which the British in Malaya did not need to content—thereby depriving

insurgents of thousands of desperately needed reinforcements. Offensively, General

Challe's brilliant technique of sweeping areas of FLN, then installing local forces to

prevent its return while moving on to sweep the next, was a classic example of COIN

best practices.[114]

However, in many ways the French Army seemed like its own greatest enemy. It

was an army out to prove something. Smarting from humiliating defeats in World War II,

Indochina, and Suez, Algeria was a war they had to win. It attributed humiliating defeats

in past campaigns and the struggles it faced in Algeria to politicians who ―not let them

win the war," failing to provide the material and human resources to succeed. However,

repressive tactics such as massive resettlement programs, collective punishments, and

torture inflamed adverse public opinion back home and abroad, and made political

support that much more difficult to maintain.[115]

Contributions to Classic COIN Theory

Perhaps the best COIN approach is to identify ―the prerequisites for a successful

insurgency" and then address any such conditions that currently exist. Toward this end,

Galula poses the following as being the essentials of a successful insurgency: a cause,

weakness of the counterinsurgent, [the right] geographic conditions, and outside support.

An insurgency's leadership need not sincerely embrace the adopted cause, and they can

change it or replace it as the insurgency progresses. Galula effectively demonstrates how

insurgent causes evolve using the Communist takeover in China as an example.[116]

As acknowledged by Galula, the British in Malaya provided an example of a

country that effectively robbed the MCP of its adopted cause—the independence of

Malaya—by setting its own deadline for granting it. However, no such recourse was

available to the French in Algeria. The FLN could rely on the fact that the minority Pied Noir populace, the colonial army that protected it, and the strong lobby that championed its cause in Paris, would vehemently oppose independence, even if the French government as a whole were ambivalent on the matter. Compounding the situation, a larger segment of the indigenous populace enthusiastically embraced the cause of independence in contrast to those who did so in Malaya.[117]

As for weaknesses of counterinsurgent forces, at the outset of hostilities in Algeria, the country's civil service and police force were undermanned and too thinly dispersed, and the French Army was ill prepared—organizationally, logistically, and doctrinally—for the conflict at hand. Furthermore, the FLN no doubt understood that most of the France's colonial troops were either returning from Indochina or tied up in Tunisia or Morocco. Politically, the government could ill afford to call out the reserves or to reposition elements of its metropolitan army stationed in France and Germany.[118]

Geographically, the main issues were long international borders with countries—Tunisia and Morocco—that were sympathetic to the Algerian insurgents and the fact that much of the populace was widely dispersed, necessitating sealing off international borders along with the same resettlement tactic employed by the British in Malaya.[119]

The issue of international borders also highlights the importance of outside support. Unfortunately for the French, even when physical barriers effectively prevented the provision by communist bloc and Arab countries of finances, weapons, and munitions to the FLN, outside support was still available via effective manipulation of international forums, as evidenced by the spikes in insurgent activity during times when the United Nations General Assembly was holding discussions concerning Algeria.[120]

Another feature of the conflict in Algeria underscores the evolving nature of insurgency and the need of counterinsurgents to quickly identify and adapt to new variants as they arise. The Algerian insurgency was a shortcut version of Maoist insurgency in that it rushed into ―blind terrorism‖ in November of 1954 before it had adequately formed its own party and before it had formed a united front with similarly minded parties. This initially did not have the desired effect of unifying opposition to the French that the fledgling insurgency had hoped for; but, fortunately for them, neither did it jolt the French government in Algeria out of a state of complacency, since they perceived it as ―ordinary banditry.‖[121]

Galula refers to the point at which a country orders its military forces to intervene as the dividing line between ―cold revolutionary war‖—legal, non-violent stage largely skipped by FLN—and ―hot revolutionary war‖—openly illegal and violent. Both he and Trinquier agree that in the ―cold‖ early stages of an insurgency, what governments typically lack are the special powers, through laws and in the courts, to confront insurgents without creating anti-establishment publicity, a fact well known by insurgents. A further point of agreement is the need to strengthen the political organization of the state either to prevent insurgency in the first place or to snuff it out in its early stages.[122]

Trinquier argues that ―the master concept‖ that must guide counterinsurgents in this new form of warfare is the fact that what they oppose is ―an armed clandestine organization.‖ He bemoans the fact that a numerically insignificant movement, through strength and complexity of organization, was handily defeating the armed might of France. According to him, COIN forces can only achieve victory by cultivating an equally cohesive and pervasive organization designed to detect and to purge insurgents

from the midst of the populace, seal off their access to protected villages, and then annihilate them in the seams between them. This organization must be built from the bottom up from within the populace—the people must have a stake in protecting themselves while supporting government efforts to root out and destroy the insurgency.[123]

Carefully selected indigenous leaders must occupy the ranks of this organization. Such persons will only be willing to stand with the government if they can be reasonably sure they and their families will be safe from insurgent retribution. Hence, the government must weave a tight net of security using bottom-up control measures such as a census, identification cards, and regulation of food, animals, and all other resources that the enemy can use against the government. The by-products of such measures include community leaders willing to support the government, local people comfortable with providing information on the insurgency, and the availability of critical enemy information from those whom the insurgency previously cowed into its ranks.[124]

Understanding the need for such an organization is an important part of clearly identifying the problem a government faces at the outset of an insurgency, much of which consists of inherent weaknesses incurred within an undeclared state of war. Once the government decides to employ force, the army must ensure that it understands that all areas are not alike—that some areas are ―red‖ (controlled by the insurgency); some are ―white‖ (not yet affected); and some are ―pink‖ (an area into which the insurgency is expanding). The question is where to start and how; Galula ultimately recommends the easy areas first for purposes of confidence building, since the population‗s perception that the government has the will, the means and the ability to win is important. Regardless of

the starting point, appropriate measures to take differ from those applicable in conventional war.[125]

Galula's ―Laws and Principles of Counterinsurgency Warfare‖ drive home the necessity of securing, organizing, and employing the populace as a means of depriving the insurgency of its sources of sustainment. They also provide direction for employing armed forces torn between competing priorities of defending key infrastructure, protecting populated areas, and pursuing the enemy. To tackle this dilemma he provides four laws.[126]

The first acknowledges that support of the population is as important to counterinsurgents as it is for insurgents. ―The population is . . . the real terrain of war.‖ It is important that the army understand the need to support and enhance political, security, and intelligence organizations that enable an area to remain insurgent-free once an area is secure, so that it can move on and employ its offensive capabilities to clear other areas.[127]

The second law, ―support is gained through an active minority,‖ builds on the idea that, whether the cause is that of the government or the insurgency, there will always be an active minority in favor, an active minority opposed, and a neutral majority. The government must lay a compelling case before the neutral majority by means of their own propaganda, while ―relying on the favorable minority . . . to rally the neutral majority and to neutralize or eliminate the hostile minority.‖ Methods employed in destroying that minority will of necessity exceed ―peacetime limitations‖ and be commensurate to the subversion and force employed by the insurgent.[128]

Trinquier is not nearly so subtle. He clearly implies torture when he speaks of forcing captured terrorists to reveal information about their organization. If one of them

fails to provide requested information, ―he must face the suffering, and perhaps the death, he has heretofore managed to avoid." He even invokes Clausewitz in support of his position: ―In such dangerous things as war, the errors which proceed from the spirit of benevolence are the worst." In spite of acknowledging earlier, that ―modern warfare" calls for the employment a different approach than that called for in conventional war, Trinquier contends, ―these basic principles of traditional warfare retain all of their validity."[129]

The advocacy of torture is certainly a point at which French COIN diverges from its British counterpart, as Thompson and Kitson are both firmly opposed to torture. For Thompson, willingness of the government to resort to the torture and execution of suspected terrorists served to erase the distinction between law-abiding support to good governance and the criminal activities of the guerilla. For Kitson, it is more a matter of creating an environment by which insurgents are willing to ―return to their proper allegiance."[130]

Galula's third law is that ―support from the population is conditional." The people will only provide its support to a government that clearly establishes and perseveres in its determination and ability to win. The fourth law calls for a ―large concentration of efforts, resources, and personnel" in demonstrating that determination, along with the successive application of such, area by area, throughout a vastness of a country, which defies saturation of all areas concurrently.[131]

According to Galula, an important principle involved in translating these four laws into strategy is that of seizing the initiative. The central idea is that, by the time COIN efforts begin in earnest, the insurgent has the initiative by means of established

influence within and/or over the populace. As Trinquier depicts it, the population is a requirement of the insurgency that can easily become its vulnerability. For this to happen, counterinsurgent forces must invest their vast superiority in resources not in chasing insurgents, since they have the freedom to evade such attempts, but rather to strengthening the defensive posture of the populace, thereby attacking in a manner by which the insurgent has no choice but to respond.[132]

Such measures in Algeria included the formation of fortified villages. This involved using ―static" army troops to enclose towns in tight, protected perimeters with strictly controlled access points, using identification cards and other measures outlined earlier. This is in concert with the relocation of remote individuals and inhabitants of small villages inside this enclosed perimeter, leaving barren areas wherein interval troops can more easily eradicate insurgent bands. In theory, the improved quality of life, to include enhanced security, provides an incentive for outlying peoples to relocate of their own free will.[133]

Ultimately, utilization of such practices runs counter to perceived civil liberties written into law by Western societies. It is these laws that insurgents often hide behind while building up their organization. Hence, it is essential to make necessary legal and judicial modifications justified by declaration of a state of emergency.[134] The utility of such Emergency Regulations was evident in the preceding case study of Malaya. Thompson points out that the acceptance of such measures rests on two things: the population must see that they accomplish their intended purpose of securing the people and that they be applied indiscriminately to all. When the people see that agents of the

government are held to account when operating outside the law they more readily accept their obligation to abide thereby.[135]

Concurrently, it is essential to inform the people concerning both the nature and necessity of the measures implemented. Above all, it should be transparent that the stringent steps are strictly for the public good and will be relaxed when the crisis has passed. This not only aids public understanding concerning the necessity of seemingly brutal actions taken to annihilate the enemy but also provides an incentive to assist in restoring normalcy. Throughout this process, it is essential to maintain discipline within the armed forces involved, especially with those in close contact with the populace.[136]

This last comment brings into focus the need in COIN for military personnel, or a portion thereof, to be capable of interacting with the populace, performing a wide range of tasks to include civic and police functions. This is because in the early stages of COIN, they are often the only ones available to perform such tasks. However, soldiers should shoulder these tasks only until they can identify local leaders and allow civilian agencies to reconstitute and resume control. At all times throughout this process, it is essential that the military understand the primacy of political over military power.[137]

Using the same coordinated political, economic, psychological, and military approach against an insurgency that it typically uses to subvert the government is what Trinquier saw as the guiding concept for a new kind of warfare. This requirement for a new way of thinking is echoed by Galula when he talks about ―Adaptation of Minds," referring comprehensively to ―the minds of leaders and men," both military and civilian. This encompasses everyone involved in some form or fashion in COIN—which in these days includes a fair share of women.[138]

In essence, requirements for successful COIN reverse the conventional stress on using maximum firepower, shunning of diplomacy, and rewarding those who kill or capture the largest number of the enemy. Governments facing insurgencies need military leaders who understand this kind of war. The challenge then becomes to select the right leaders to work with the populace and reassign those who cannot so adapt to mobile units not used in contact with the populace. Over time, it is essential to pervade the entire force with a reformed mindset through revised doctrine and training.[139]

The lack of doctrine appropriate to countering the persistent insurgency plagued the French after their forces initially crushing the FLN in 1956. Galula points out, however, that by the end of 1960, the ―period of muddling through‖ had passed. They had closed down cross-border infiltration, installed pro-government Moslem self-defense forces in most villages, and only needed reasonable time to eliminate the die-hard remnants of FLN‗s decimated ranks. In short, his claim is that the French turned things around and managed to achieve the same results as the British did in Malaya during a comparable period.[140]

His defense in this matter suggests that the French Army could have had the same successful result, had the government not cut short their timeline by a sudden shift to a policy of disengagement from Algeria. The flaw in his argument lies in the fact that the success of the British in Malaya in large part stems from the fact that they were working ―toward‖ Malayan independence, not ―against‖ it. Hence, they were able to conclude the conflict in a manner that provided for reconciliation among all segments of the populace, one that allowed for continued diplomatic and economic ties between them and the Government of Malaya.[141]

The bitter taste of defeat aside, the lessons learned by the French in Algeria, which influenced the writings of Galula and Trinquier, are equally valuable as are those of Malaya, which, leave their stamp on the writings of Thompson and Kitson. As the lone American classical COIN theorist, John McCuen, puts it, ―a glance at the hits, runs, and errors [regardless of the won/lost column] indicates many counter-revolutionary techniques which, if intelligently employed, can be combined into a cohesive strategy that will bring victory."[142] It is fitting that British theorist Thompson, in writing the forward to McCuen's book, acknowledges the effective use the author makes of French ―experiences and mistakes" in his attempt at providing ―a broad, unified counter-revolutionary strategy."[143]

The Best of British and French COIN Combined

Both of the case studies examined in this chapter portrayed insurgencies in which the initial stage was somewhat shortened. In Malaya, it was due to a loosely affiliated criminal group taking unauthorized action. In Algeria, the FLN itself was perhaps a bit too impatient. Insurgents in neither case were able to achieve Mao's fourth stage of revolutionary war: mobile warfare. In Malaya, they were not able to; in Algeria, they did not need to.[144]

The British, in large part, succeeded in Malaya, but not without some initial mistakes. The French, although they faltered at points and ultimately lost to the FLN, employed many effective techniques. McCuen strives to draw the cumulative strengths of their approaches into a coherent COIN strategy that allows governing authorities to learn from previous successes and mistakes in order ―to avoid the most inexcusable of all blunders, that of repeating the mistakes of other counter-revolutionaries."[145]

McCuen writes from the perspective of the indigenous governing authority, not that of an intervening power or a third party sponsor to a proxy war. This places the onus for the unaddressed, pre-existing conditions within a country that insurgents exploit squarely on the host government's shoulders. Setting aside failure to prevent creating the conditions for insurgency in the first place, McCuen states his hypothesis: ―[A] governing power can defeat any revolutionary movement if it adapts the revolutionary strategy and principles and applies them in reverse to defeat the revolutionaries with their own weapons on their own battlefield."[146]

The revolutionary strategy to which McCuen refers is the four-stage process perfected and codified by Mao whereby insurgencies progress through organization, terrorism, and guerilla warfare, culminating in mobile warfare and victory. In essence, insurgents use this process to reverse the power imbalance that exists at the outset of their campaign, whereby they are overmatched. They accomplish this reversal by wearing down their opponent through terrorist attacks and guerilla warfare, by mobilizing the populace in order to build up their own force structure and effectiveness, and by cultivating outside military and/or political support.[147]

After taking time to explore the strategy, it phases, and some variants thereof, McCuen proceeds to extract the guiding principles of that strategy in order to illuminate ways in which the counterinsurgent can employ the insurgency's own strategy to roll it back through its basic phases and thereby neutralize it. These five principles are: preserve oneself and annihilate the enemy; establish base areas; mobilize the masses; seek outside support; and unify the effort. The winner of the contest between insurgent and

counterinsurgent will likely be the side that most effectively applies ―and integrates‖ all five principles—the integration being in essence the sixth principle.[148]

An insurgent force capable of maintaining a protracted struggle will elicit a corresponding drain on government personnel, time, and resources. Over a protracted period, this can make continued COIN operations unpopular. If a government aggressively invests in the pursuit of insurgents while short-changing ―preservation of its own bases, populations, and forces,‖ it will soon find itself surrendering in the face of an unpopular war, as did the French in Algeria.[149]

Establishing base areas closely relates to self-preservation. However, the idea extends beyond the need to hold territory; McCuen refers to *strategic bases* ―built on populations as well as territory.‖ The classic Mao insurgency applies this by subverting the populace, turning formerly government-controlled areas first into contested areas and then into insurgent bases of operation. It thereby gradually encircles, shrinks, and attacks the government's protected bases. The government must apply this same strategy in reverse, concentrating its superior resources on gradually securing all populated areas forcing insurgents to retreat until there is no place left for them to go.[150]

In similar manner, mobilizing the masses relates to the establishment of strategic bases. Governing authorities must understand, as the insurgency surely does, that mobilizing the masses goes beyond making one's own cause attractive; it also involves making selection of the alternative untenable. This might require, as it did in Malaya and Algeria, draconian control measures, including censuses, identification cards, rationing, relocation of some remote pockets of population, and punishments for collaboration with insurgents. Importantly, after identifying those unpopular measures deemed essential, the

government must aggressively execute all of them early on, so that implementation is effective, brief, and unnecessary to repeat.[151]

The cultivation of popular support requires the indoctrination of forces that work directly with the populace so that they take measures necessary to provide a sense of security while at the same time cultivating friendship and demonstrating respect. This approach engenders cooperation and produces information to more accurately target infiltrating elements of the insurgency. As quickly as possible, counterinsurgent forces must organize local police and militia to provide their own security, which frees regular forces to expand into other yet contested areas.[152]

One way insurgents pursue to disrupt cooperation with authorities is to provoke excessive and indiscriminate uses of force, which produces disproportionate collateral damage and casualties. Restraint is a virtue in this environment, not just with the masses, but also with captured or surrendered enemy personnel. Torture and terror are two tools that frequently backfire on whatever force chooses to employ them. It served neither the interests of the MCP in Malaya nor those of the French authorities in Algeria.[153]

The forth principle, that of securing outside support, is as vital to the counterinsurgent as it is to the insurgent. Outside support takes a variety of forms to include additional ground forces, monetary and material support, advisory teams, and diplomatic support. Diplomatic support may include application of international pressure to curtail support to insurgents from sympathetic governments. Insurgents will attempt to exploit any government solicitation of outside support as an indication of their inability to secure their own people. Hence, it must be accepted and applied in ways that enhance, rather than infringe upon, the prestige of the government.[154]

Governing authorities and counterinsurgent forces in Malaya exemplified the fifth

principle, which calls for unity of effort. It is also a principle the FLN employed, for

which Trinquier gave due credit, providing a detailed analysis of their tightly woven

clandestine organization, complete with committee structure that synchronized all efforts.

The strength of that organization and the need for French counterinsurgent forces to

emulate it was a recurring theme throughout Trinquier's writings. One huge obstacle to

such unified efforts involves the tendency, within western democracies, for civilian and

military organizations to coordinate only to the extent necessary to avoid conflict or

duplicate efforts, a weakness that insurgents can and will exploit.[155]

McCuen drives home the importance of unifying civil-military efforts, regardless

of the obstacles and the difficulty of overcoming them.

> [R]evolutionaries use political, economic, educational, psychological and
> organizational concepts as much as military ones. [They are] trained, disciplined,
> professional . . . . capable of objective estimates, detailed planning, and selective
> employment of the right weapons at the right time. They must understand both
> military and political strategy and tactics. . . . From such a military-type
> philosophy comes the unit of effort that wins revolutionary wars! The governing
> authorities must not be deceived into thinking that they can win at counter-
> revolutionary warfare with any less unity of effort.[156]

Related to this need for unity of effort, McCuen advocates the need for a unified

doctrine.[157] In a similar vein, Kitson expresses a strong belief that army officers must take

the lead in synchronizing military efforts with those of ―politicians, civil servants,

economists, members of local government, and policemen" in any particular area of

operation. In today's conflict environments, other entities need to be included, such as

coalition partners, non-governmental organizations, and international relief agencies. The

increasing complexity only serves to magnify the importance of ―the educational function

of the army."[158]

Coming out of the period of colonial insurgencies, British Army doctrine for conducting unconventional types of warfare to include COIN began to capitalize on its experience. The case history of Malaya contained herein barely scratches the surface of the experience the British Army gleaned there and in other COIN operations in places such as Palestine, Kenya, Borneo, and Aden, though relevant doctrinal manuals published in 1957, 1963, and 1969 almost exclusively focused on Malaya.[159]

With respect to the developing concept of COIN, applicable doctrine in 1963, a revision of the 1957 edition of *Keeping the Peace*, uses the term insurgent for the first time. As alluded to earlier, their rewrite of COIN doctrine in 1969, titled *Counter Revolutionary Operations*, is actually the first such manual that defines insurgency.[160]

It also provides the first definition for ―Counter Insurgency.‖ It defines COIN as ―[t]hose military, para-military, political, economic, psychological and sociological activities undertaken by a government, independently or with assistance of friendly nations, to prevent or defeat subversive insurgency, and restore the authority of the central government.‖[161] This definition reflects significant advance in comprehension of the complexities of insurgency and how best to oppose it. It also provides a good point of departure for an examination British involvement in Oman beginning in 1970. However, the next case study will actually begin five years earlier.[162]

In 1966, Thompson, drawing upon his experience in both Malaya and South Vietnam wrote *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. In it he provided the five guiding principles that subsequently became ―the centerpiece for British Army thinking‖ on COIN when it rewrote its doctrine in 1969. A further improvement in the 1969 manual

was the inclusion of ―a synopsis" of previous operations that include Algeria, as well as those earlier mentioned that had previously been excluded from doctrine.[163]

Other notable enhancements in the 1969 manual included expanded sections on intelligence, psychological operations, and public relations. It also added an orientation to United Nations operational procedures. However, it contained a bent toward communist insurgencies in rural settings and, even after its revision in 1977, ―stll contained the heavy scent of the jungle."[164]

As the British entered the 1970s, their defense establishment focused on two things: maintaining conventional capabilities as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and operations in Northern Ireland, which it insisted on characterizing as Military Assistance to Civil Power, rather than insurgency, in spite of widespread views to the contrary.[165] Against this backdrop, Kitson wrote *Bunch of Five*, in which he underscores the importance of continually collecting and studying COIN.[166] Unfortunately, as the case study in the next chapter will demonstrate, the British Army, institutionally speaking, failed to take these words to heart.

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[1]Operation TELIC is the name give British support provided to the US led operation known as Operation Iraqi Freedom. This author adopts the same dates used by British Colonel Alexander Alderson, ―The Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine after the War in Iraq 2003-2009" (PhD diss., Cranfield University, 2009), 139.

[2]Referring the period of the 1950s and 1960s as the period out of which classical counterinsurgency doctrine emerged is in keeping with other scholars within this field. See Frank Hoffman, ―Neo-Classical Counter-Insurgency?" *Parameters* (Summer 2007): 71. Hoffman includes the works of Kitson, Galula, and Thompson among ―the classics." This thesis also includes works by Trinquier, a French contemporary of Galula, and McCuen, who Thompson credits as being a ―colleague" who ―made excellent use" of French experiences and mistakes together with the British experience in Malaya in devising a theory of insurgency, principles central to insurgency, and a method for countering insurgency based on using those principles in reverse order. See Thompson's comments in the forward to John McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*.

³As for theorists and the armies with which they served, Thompson is exceptional for having served alongside two armies, both British and American.

⁴Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (Saint Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1966), 9.

⁵Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), xi.

⁶David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), vii.

⁷Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964), vii.

⁸John McCuen, ―Hybrid Wars,‖ *Military Review* 88, no. 2 (March–April 2008): 107-08.

⁹Malaya is a central to Thompson's theory and an important touchstone of Kitson's. Likewise, Algeria is a crucial backdrop for the theories of Galula and Trinquier. These two streams of thought converge in McCuen, as reflected by Thompson in his forward to McCuen's *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, 16-17.

¹⁰See comments under ―Creating Useful Doctrine‖ in chapter 4, along with works therein referenced.

¹¹Ministry of Defense, *Countering Insurgency Operations* (2001), A-1-1.

¹²Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 3-6; Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 23-25.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976). The referenced quote is found in Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 24, ―War is Merely the Continuation of Policy by Other Means,‖ on page 87; a discussion of the requirements and characteristics of successful insurgency in Book 6, Chapter 26, ―The People in Arms,‖ 480.

¹⁵Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 1, 8-9.

¹⁶Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 5.

¹⁷COIN doctrine in place at the outset of Operation TELIC stated, ―In the past many terms have been used to describe those opposing the established authorities, terms such as guerilla, revolutionary, terrorist, dissident, rebel, partisan, native, and enemy all spring to mind.‖ See Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency Operations*, iii. In the same vein as that document, this thesis cites ―consistency‖ as

justification for hewing closely to the terms insurgency and insurgent, unless use references requires otherwise.

[18]John Shy and Thomas Collier, ─Revolutionary War," *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 838.

[19]Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, trans. by Samuel Griffith (Mineola, New Yort: Dover Publications, 2005), 49. Mao originally wrote this in 1937, twelve years before he and the Communist Party established the modern state of China.

[20]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 282.

[21]Hoffman, ─Neo-Classical Counter-Insurgency?" 81.

[22]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 282, 73-74.

[23]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 2.

[24]Though the exploitive nature of insurgent leaders is a theme woven throughout Galula's theory, the masterful way in which the insurgent selects, manipulates, and adapts causes as the insurgency progresses is detailed in Chapter 2 of his book. See Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 11-16.

[25]Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare*, 43 (necessity of popular support), 41-114 (full theory).

[26]Ibid., 17, 13, 49. Comments, regarding the influences and development of Mao's theory are within the introduction written by translator Samuel Griffith. Mao's theory, as translated by Griffith, begins on page 41.

[27]Condoleezza Rice, ─The Making of Soviet Strategy," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 648-49.

[28]Mao, *In Guerilla Warfare*, 42.

[29]Shy and Collier, ─Revolutionary War," 828, 820.

[30]Mao, *In Guerilla Warfare*, 82-85.

[31]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 32.

[32]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 57.

[33]Peter Paret and John Shy, ─Guerilla Warfare and U.S. Military Policy: A Study," *The Guerilla—Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette*, ed. T. N. Green (New York: Praeger, 1962), 45.

[34]Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 42-43; Mao, *In Guerilla Warfare*, 42.

[35]Shy and Collier, ―Revolutionary War," 839; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 34.

[36]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 34.

[37]Department of the Army, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1969), 6.

[38]By the time of Operation TELIC, insurgency was defined in British COIN doctrine as ―the actions of a minority group within a state who are intent on forcing political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of people to accept such a change." The same doctrine, published in 2001, also concedes, ―The causes of insurgency lie in unfulfilled aspirations and what are perceived to be legitimate grievances which may justify rebellion, or in less substantial complaints, which may be manipulated by insurgents who are generally working to a different agenda for their own reasons. See Ministry of Defense, *Countering Insurgency Operations* (2001), A-1-1. The motives and aims of the insurgency in Oman, as presented in chapter three, provide further evidence for this more sophisticated view of insurgency. Overthrow of the government was clearly not the aim, at least not initially. Likewise, al Qaeda in Iraq, one of the insurgent groups with which the coalition contended, were focused on objectives for which the collapse of the government would have been little more than a means to a greater end.

[39]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 24. Thompson emphasizes this point by saying it took communists in China forty years to achieve victory. This is only true as an approximation if you start with the initial Xinhau Revolution of 1911. Communists only became a formidable threat beginning in the 1920s. The Chinese are celebrating their ninetieth birthday in 2011.

[40]Ibid., 21-22, 24-25, 29-30, 41-42.

[41]Shy and Collier, ―Revolutionary War," 846. Shy and Collier extend this idea to a broader range of case histories than those presented in this thesis. However, the point is the same with respect to the instructive value of Mao‗s writings as well as the inspirational value of his success.

[42]Mao, *In Guerilla Warfare*, 49.

[43]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 69-70.

[44]Ibid., 70-71.

[45]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 14.

63

[46]James Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces in Counterinsurgency: A Tale of Two Insurgencies*, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub648.pdf (accessed 28 May 2011), 4-5.

[47]Ibid., 4. At slight variance from Corum, Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948-60," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 102-03, puts the ethnic Chinese population at 38 percent, to 44 percent for ethnic Malays. The main point is that the political subordination of the Chinese was grossly out of proportion to the virtual parity of demographics between them and the politically dominant Malays.

[48]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 86-88. The GOM exacerbated the problem by not ceding title of the land within these resettlement camps to the Chinese who they relocated there.

[49]Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces*, 4.

[50]Daniel Marston, "Lost and Found in the Jungle," in *Big Wars and Small Wars*, ed. Hew Strachan (London: Routledge, 2006), 96.

[51]Stubbs, "Hearts and Minds," 101.

[52]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 86-87.

[53]Stubbs, "Hearts and Minds," 101-02.

[54]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 80.

[55]Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces*, 4-5.

[56]Stubbs, "Hearts and Minds," 116.

[57]Riley Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-1960*, prepared for The Office of The Assistant Security of Defense on International Security Affairs as Memorandum RM-4170-ISA (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, September 1964), v-vi.

[58]Robert Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1972), http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R957.html (accessed 28 May 2011), 25-69.

[59]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 77-83. Coats noted the "official self-deception" of Gurney and others in not taking the insurgency seriously.

[60]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency,* 82.

[61]Komer, *The Malayan Emergency*, 27-28.

[62]Ibid., 29.

[63]Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency,* 88, 99-101.

[64]Komer, *The Malayan Emergency*, 30. For the story on the absurd circumstances under which Gurney's assassination, see account in Coats, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 109.

[65]Ibid., 30-33.

[66]Wade Markel, ―Draining the Swamp: The British Strategy of Population Control," *Parameters* (Spring 2006), http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/Parameters/ Articles/06spring/markel.pdf (accessed 28 May 2011): 38-39.

[67]Leon Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-1960: The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2009), 178, 189, 182-83, 201.

[68]Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces*, 21-23.

[69]Komer, *The Malayan Emergency*, 64-66, 31-32.

[70]Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya*, v.

[71]Komer, *The Malayan Emergency*, 46-50.

[72]Marston, ―Lost and Found in the Jungle," 96-101.

[73]Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya*, v-vi.

[74]Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces*, 16-17, 14, 37.

[75]Komer, *The Malayan Emergency*, 25-37, 64-68.

[76]Corum, *Training Indigenous Forces*, 16-17, 14, 37.

[77]Marston, ―Lost and Found in the Jungle," 96-101.

[78]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 9.

[79]Ibid., 50-58.

[80]Ibid., 10.

[81]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 283.

[82]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 58.

[83]Ibid., 50.

[84]Ibid., 50-51.

[85]Ibid., 52-54.

[86]Ibid., 55-57.

[87]Ibid., 57-58.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid., chapters 6, 7, 8, and 52-55; Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, chapter 23.

[90]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 282-84.

[91]Ibid., 284-91.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 111-20.

[94]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 292-98.

[95]Ibid., 299-303.

[96]Stubbs, ―Hearts and Minds," 116.

[97]Douglas Porch, ―Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 378-83. For additional information on the effective tactics of Spanish guerillas during the Peninsular War, see John Lynn, ―Nations in Arms," in *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 205-06.

[98]Ibid., 381-82.

[99]Ibid., 385-395.

[100]Ibid., 385-395.

[101]Douglas Porch, ―French Imperial Warfare 1945-62," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 79-80.

[102]Ibid., 79-80, 88.

[103]Alistair Horne, ―The French Army and the Algerian War 1954-62," in *Regular Armies and Insurgency*, ed. Ronald Haycock (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 70-71.

[104]Ibid., 69.

[105]Porch, ―French Imperial Warfare," 89-92.

[106]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 9-10.

[107]Ibid., 11-12.

[108]Porch, ―French Imperial Warfare," 89-91.

[109]Ibid., 92.

[110]Ibid.

[111]Ibid., 94-96.

[112]Alf Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1972), 188-191, 195.

[113]Ibid., 202-11.

[114]Horne, ―The French Army and the Algerian War," 80-81.

[115]Ibid., 76-78.

[116]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 11-28.

[117]David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 8-10. For comparison to Malaya and demographics on Pied Noir and Moslems in Algiera, see Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 13, 19-20.

[118]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 19-21; Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 10.

[119]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23-27.

[120]Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 5-6.

[121]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 39; Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 8-9, 14-16.

[122]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 47; Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 27-34, 53-54.

[123]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 4, 7, 9-13, 27-34, 53-54.

[124]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 27-34, 62-65; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 82-83.

[125]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 49-50, 55, 67-69.

[126]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 50; Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 246.

[127]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 52; Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 246.

[128]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 53-54.

[129]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 18-19. Regarding the need for the army ―to adapt itself to changed circumstances," refer back to pages 3-4. Trinquier's citation from Clausewitz actually comes from a different translation. In the translation referenced in this thesis (see footnote 11), the translator writes, ―war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst." See Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

[130]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 54; Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 290.

[131]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 54-55.

[132]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 57-58; Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 53-54.

[133]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 62-65; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 65.

[134]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 40.

[135]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 53.

[136]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 40-41.

[137]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 61-63.

[138]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 1-7; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 66.

[139]Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 66-67. It is clear that Galula believes that innovating new methods for counterinsurgency, trying them out in ―test areas," honestly assessing what goes right and what goes wrong—learning and adapting—is essential. See page 73. Galula also states clearly, at the bottom of page 68, that a ―lack of doctrine and experience in what to do after military operations, among other things, precluded a clear-cut French success (in Algeria)," even though they had effectively broken up the FLN in 1956.

[140]Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 243-44; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 68-69.

[141]Ibid.

[142]John McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* (Saint Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 1966), 315.

[143]Ibid., 16-17, 19.

[144]Refer back to historical backgrounds presented earlier in the chapter.

[145]McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, 319, 317-318, 315.

[146]Ibid., 28-29; restated on 77, 78.

[147]Ibid., 30, 40.

[148]Ibid., 50, 73.

[149]Ibid., 50-52.

[150]Ibid., 52-54.

[151]Ibid., 56-57.

[152]Ibid., 60-62.

[153]Ibid., 61-64, 57, 33.

[154]Ibid., 64-69.

[155]Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 4, 7, 9-13, 27-34, 53-54; McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, 70-71.

[156]McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, 70, 71.

[157]Ibid., 72.

[158]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 300.

[159]Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency*, London: Ministry of Defense, January 2010, CS1-3.

[160]See section on Maoist Insurgency.

[161]Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1969), 3.

[162]Officially, the insurgency in Oman under study in chapter 3 started in 1965, two years before the outbreak of that in Northern Ireland. However, as the ensuing case study will show, the British government and its army did not truly commit itself to assist Oman in defeating its insurgency until the summer of 1970.

[163]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 9; Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (2010), CS1-3; Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1969), 41-44, 86-88, 119-28.

[164]Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (2010), CS1-3; Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency,‖ 85.

[165]Alderson, ―British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine,‖ 85, 125-26.

[166]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 300-01; Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine,‖ 85.

CHAPTER 3

APPLICATION OF COIN DOCTRINE IN OMAN

> At the root of all insurgent wars is bad government and Sultan Said was completely out of touch with the aspirations of his people.
>
> — Ian Gardner, *In the Service of the Sultan*

> The subsequent uprising in Dhofar was a classic example of a nationalist rebellion, based on legitimate grievances, that was taken over by radical Marxists for their own purposes.
>
> — William Ladwig, *Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency*

> The way in which an ally's help is delivered is as important as the help itself. . . . If there is the slightest indication of the ally taking the lead, the insurgents will have the opportunity to say that the government has betrayed the people to an outside power, and that they, the insurgents, are the true representatives of the nation.
>
> — General Sir Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*

Insurgency in Oman officially began with a declaration of hostilities by the Dhofar Liberation Front on 9 June 1965 and ended with the Omani government's proclamation of victory on 11 December 1975. It had its roots in the backward, authoritarian rule of Sultan Said bin Taimur. It was defeated in large part because his son, Qaboos bin Said, removed him from power in a coup and instituted popular reforms. An appropriate application of force by the Sultans Armed Forces (SAF) enhanced the effectiveness of the new Sultan's reforms. In all of this, the Sultan owed much thanks to the British officers who advised him and who trained and mentored his military.[1]

In terms of the battlefield size and the number of forces that participated, this insurgency pales in comparison with earlier campaigns in places such as Malaya and Algeria.[2] However, its outcome had global implications in terms of the regions increasing

importance as a source and transit for world oil. With respect to instructional value,

Oman helps bridge the gap between the codification of COIN stemming largely from

Malaya and its application to current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan due to similarity in

terrain, climate, and culture, the last of which highlights important features such as

tribalism, sectarianism, and the Islamic faith.[3]

Importantly, the Oman operation was the first instance of a deliberate COIN

operation. By this is meant that the British, having systematized their lessons from

Malaya, recognized Oman as a COIN-suitable venue, and attacked the problem using that

framework; and this approach was successful.[4]

This chapter initially provides an outline of the insurgency. It then turns to a brief

examination of the insurgency in terms of the Maoist model. Observations on how the

British adapted classic COIN theory to the unique conditions of the insurgency in Oman

follows. The concluding section of the chapter will look at the evolution of British COIN

doctrine during this time and what the insurgency in Oman should have contributed,

along with factors that inhibited it from doing so.

<u>History of Dhofar Insurgency 1965-1975</u>

The insurgency against the Omani government of Sultan Said grew between 1965

and 1970 from a small band of dissidents with limited outside support. With the fall of

South Arabia next door along with a little help from Saudi Arabia and Iraq it then

developed into a ―mass popular movement‖ advised and equipped by China and the

Soviet Union. When it appeared the movement might indeed supplant the government,

Said's son, Qaboos bin Said deposed his father in a coup and radically altered the course

of the campaign.[5]

The more detailed outline in subsequent sub-sections will revisit the coup. However, it was certainly welcomed by the British who anticipated that Sultan Qaboos, who was educated at Britain's Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst[6] but had been under house arrest by his father since 1963, would provide the correct political leadership under which military victory would be attainable. It is also clear that the British at the very least knew of the planned coup in advance.[7]

Qaboos turned the tide against the insurgents with a broad developmental program to win the support of the populace coupled with a military campaign to defeat the insurgents. This integrated approach was reminiscent of the approach developed by the British in Malaya, though with appropriate modifications. From this point forward, the futility of the insurgents' military ambitions became increasingly obvious to them. There were three critical phases of the insurgency—its background and growth, the reversal of strategy and fortunes, and the steady march to government victory.[8]

Background and Growth of Insurgency

In his book, *We Won the War-The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975*, John Akehurst, a British brigadier general who commanded in Oman during the latter stages of the insurgency and later wrote a history of the campaign, provides an easy way to visualize the Arabian Peninsula. He likens it to the shape of a rhinoceros' head, ―with the Red Sea forming the neck, Aden the mouth, Muscat the nose, and the Musandam Peninsula the horn (see view of peninsula in top right corner of figure 6)."[9] The significance to the Western world, both then and now, is that the horn of the rhino, which in somewhat disjointed fashion falls within the Sultanate of Oman, overlooks the Straits of Hormuz between it and Iran, through which a significant portion of its oil flows. Hence,

overthrow of the Sultanate by a power hostile to the West could have disastrous consequences.[10]

Oman occupies the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. The Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea border it on the east and south. Saudi Arabia lies to the north and Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) forms the western border (see figure 3). About ninety percent of the nearly half million people that lived there in the 1960s dwelled in the fertile coastal plain in the northeast of the country that lies between the Gulf of Oman and the Al Hajar mountain range. The Sultinate's capital, Muscat, is located on this plain.[11]

The remaining tenth of the population lived in the province of Dhofar, 500 miles to the southwest, separated by a vast expanse of desert and connected to the north only by what was then an unpaved track called the Midway Road (see figure 4). Of that 30,000 to 50,000 people, roughly a third lived on the high mountainous plateau called the *jebel* that rises sharply to heights as high as 3,000 feet above the coastal plain.[12]

The people living on the *jebel* were tribal nomadic herders of sheep, goats, and cattle who frequently fought amongst themselves for water and grazing rights. They were ethnically and linguistically distinct from the predominantly Arab Omanis in the northeast part of the country and along the Dhofar coast. They had little regard for Said and he likewise for them. There was an old northern Omani saying, ―If your path is blocked by a snake and a Dhofari, kill the Dhofari first.‖ Hence, the *jebel* was a breeding ground for armed bands that opposed the Sultan known as the *adoo* (Arabic for enemy).[13]
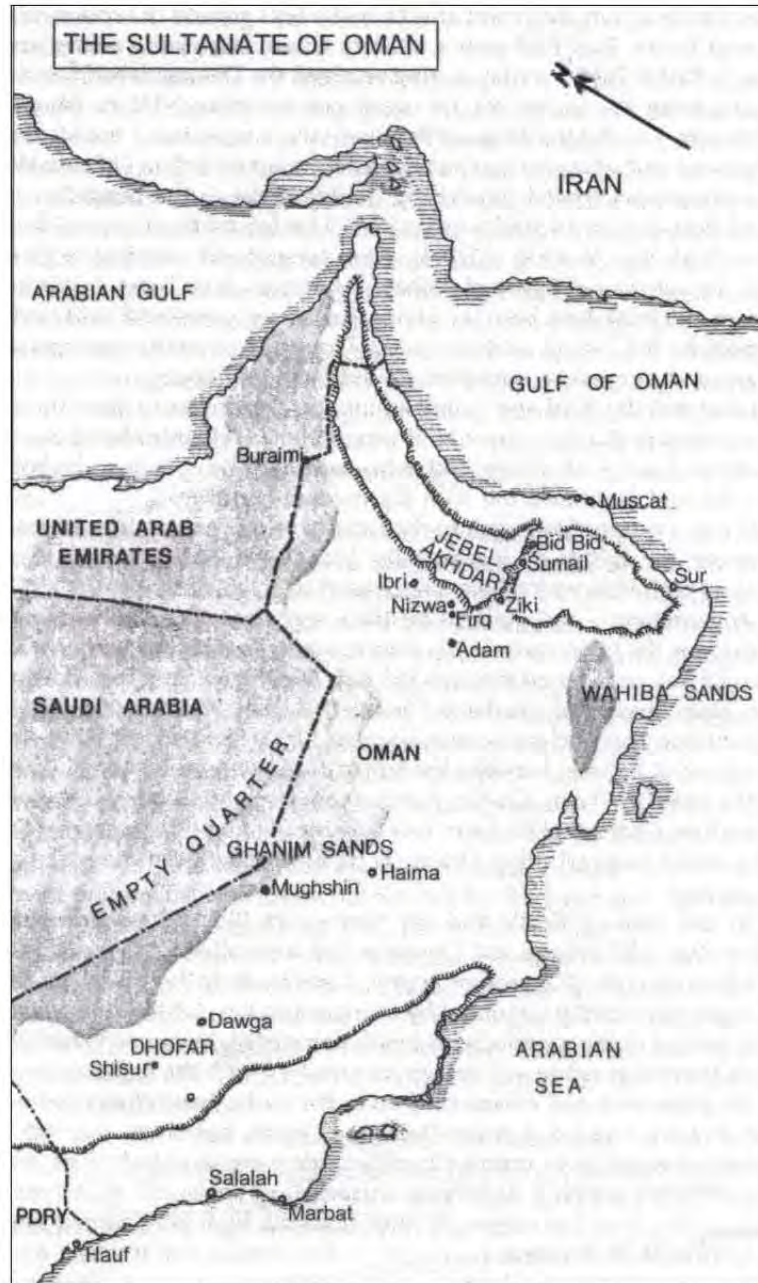
Figure 3.   The Sultanate of Oman
Source: Bryan Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers Campaigning in Somaliland & Oman* (South Yorkshire, Britain: Pen and Sword Military, 2008), 46.

The *jebel* was an ideal battlefield for the *adoo*. With its steep, boulder-strewn

gashes in the earth formed by millennia of erosion called *wadis*, it negated any

advantages that the conventionally oriented SAF might hope to gain in terms of tactical ground vehicles. The weather further enhanced the *adoo's* tactical advantages. The monsoon rains running June through September further hindered SAF's mobility and associated rough surf made resupply for government forces from the coast untenable. Finally, low clouds and perpetual mist made any kind of aerial reconnaissance or support dangerous.[14]

In short, the *jebel* was a forbidding place for the SAF to engage the insurgents. Dhofaris viewed the SAF, with its British officers and ranks of Northern Omanis and Baluchs, as an army of occupation. The only access to Dhofar during the monsoon was the Midway Road, which cut straight through the *jebel* and along which the *adoo* frequently ambushed SAF vehicles.

Major (later Major General) Tony Jeapes commanded a squadron of British 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (SAS)[15] in 1971 whose primary mission was to recruit and train Dhofaris to fight for Sultan Qaboos after the coup. Based on pre-deployment briefings and initial observations made upon arrival, he quickly came to understand why the British Commander of SAF, Brigadier John Graham, had requested a training team to help SAF overcome their fear of the *jebel* and to learn tactics necessary to fight the brave, elusive *adoo* in an environment perfectly suited to guerrilla warfare.[16]

Dhofaris which had been recruited into the ranks of the feared *adoo* did not oppose Sultan Said, without good reason. Ian Gardiner, who also served in Oman and later wrote the book, *In the Service of the Sultan-A First Hand Account of the Dhofar Insurgency*, on its background and history, put it succinctly in the quote used in the chapter's epigraph. Schools, hospitals, and paved roads were scarce or nonexistent partly

76

due to the Sultan's repressive determination to block what he saw as the corrupting influence of modernity and partly due at least initially to the meager budget with which he had to work.[17]

Try as he may, Sultan Said could not prevent the appearance of cheap transistor radios by which his people—particularly repressed in Dhofar—could learn of a better life elsewhere. The Sultan continued to withhold development even after newfound wealth came to Oman in the form of discovered oil reserves in the 1950s and 1960s. For him, any form of modernization, be it in terms of education, medicine, or agriculture, meant possible subversion of the conservative, autocratic *status quo*. It was only a matter of time before discontent boiled over into insurrection.[18]

Insurgency began as a small-scale rebellion in 1963[19] with isolated incidents of murder, sabotage to the oil industry, and sniping at SAF vehicles. This small band of about 50 insurgents, initially led by Saudi sponsored, Iraqi trained Musallim bin Nufl, officially declared itself the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) on 9 June 1965. Their slogan was —Dhofar for the Dhofaris." Theirs was mainly a separatist movement. In fact, Musallim conceded at one point that he would have been satisfied with a role in government and an end to discriminatory policies. Their initial effectiveness was likewise limited, due to poor material support, but this was soon to change.[20]

In 1967, Britain, under anti-colonialist pressures at home and abroad, withdrew from Aden and South Arabia, thereby making it possible for its former colony to become the PDRY. On Oman's western border and in close proximity to Dhofar, the Marxist Liberation Front in Yemen, having no oil of its own and seeing an opportunity to extend

its influence east, began providing material support to the DLF, which the Dhofari insurgents were quite happy to receive.[21]

Support did not come without a price. Along with the generous amounts of weapons smuggled across Oman's western border came advisors . . . and an enthusiastic cadre of true believers dedicated to spreading Marxist revolution throughout the Gulf."[22] It was not long before the Marxists pushed Musselim out of leadership and installed one of their own, Ahmad al-Ghassani, in his place.[23]

Original support also included safe haven for DLF headquarters just across the border in the Yemeni city of Hauf. Propelled by the ambitious aims of its communist backers, the PDRY transformed DLF by 1968 into the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG), with its headquarters in Aden. However, this caused rifts within the insurgent movement, since Marxist doctrine and methods espoused by PFLOAG were at odds with the Islamic faith and tribal ways of the *jebalis*.[24]

The new insurgent leadership tortured and murdered any *jebali* leaders who refused to renounce faith and tribe, kidnapped and indoctrinated their youths, and sent new *adoo* leaders to indoctrination and training in either Russia or China. What started as a separatist movement intent on bringing development to Dhofar became a classic revolutionary movement with much wider aims.[25]

Bryan Ray, a seconded[26] British officer who commanded a SAF regiment in Dhofar from 1972 to 74 and later wrote a book outlining the history of the campaign, put the eventual strength of enemy forces at 2,000 hard core PFLOAG aided by about 3,000 *jebeli* tribesman. The Marxist front provided a political organization, designating the three mountain ranges within the *jebel*—Jebel al Qamar in the west, Jebel Qara in the

center, and Jebel Samhan in the east (See figure 4)—as its principle areas of operations. They also established a supply route for weapons, ammunition, food, and medical supplies extending from Hauf along the narrow strip of coastline beneath the cliffs at Sarfait to a cave network in Shirashitti that provided a natural fortress from which the *adoo* distributed supplies via camel trains to central and eastern Dhofar.[27]

In addition to training for insurgent leaders, Moscow and Peking provided a broad range of high-powered weaponry to include rocket-propelled grenades and associated launchers, a variety of recoilless rifles, 75mm and 82mm mortars, 122mm Katyushka rockets and launchers, and the chosen weapon of insurgents the world over, the AK-47 rifle. The *adoo* were tactically skilled at employing firepower in tandem with flanking maneuvers. Many of them, discontented with the lack of economic opportunity on the *jebel*, had fought as mercenaries in the Trucial Oman Scouts[28] or other armies of the Gulf States. With a little help from PFLOAG, the insurgency became a formidable force—well trained, adequately equipped, and fighting in familiar terrain and conditions.[29]
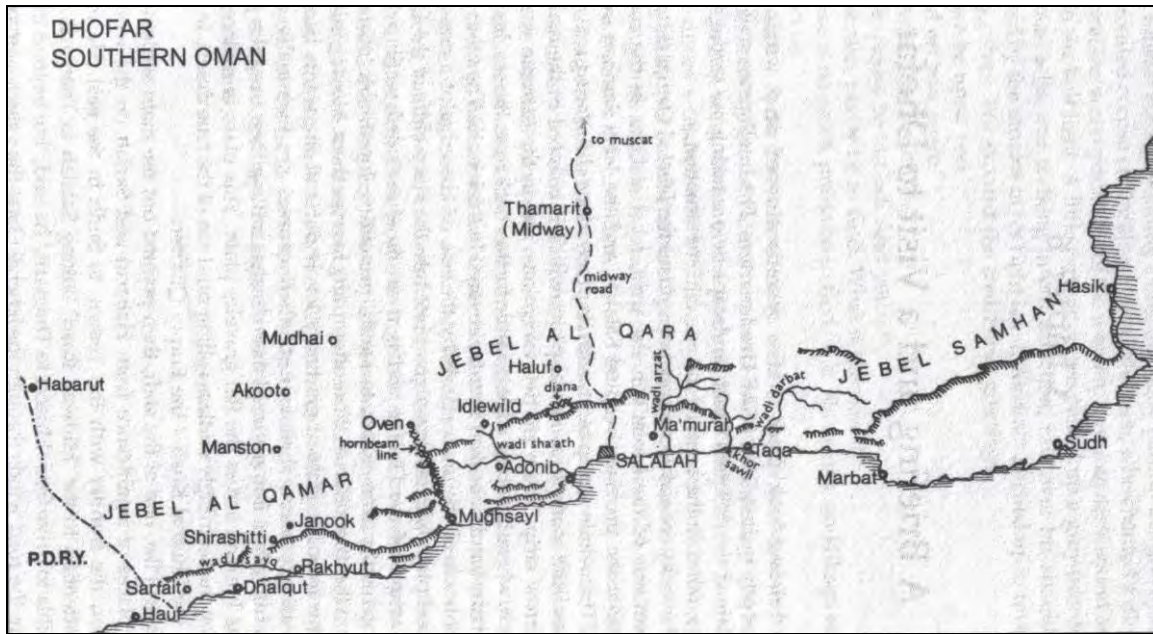
Figure 4.   Dhofar, Southern Oman
Source: Bryan Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers Campaigning in Somaliland & Oman* (South Yorkshire, Britain: Pen & Sword Military, 2008), 58.

A long history of support from Britain, covering a broad range of mutually beneficial political and economic matters, was insufficient of itself to stem the growing momentum of this insurgency. This was despite an arrangement made in 1958 providing a Royal Air Force base in the main Dhofar city of Salalah, training facilities for SAF, and approximately 500 seconded or contracted British officers and non-commissioned officers to work directly for the Sultan, to train and lead his forces, and to provide him advise as needed.[30]

The insufficiency of SAF, which included a modest navy in addition to the land and air assets indicated, was again in part the result of Said's frugality. Just as he refused British admonitions to implement economic reforms and amnesty to undercut the insurgency, he likewise resisted advice to expand his armed forces. The land component

consisted of two battalions, of which only two companies were in Dhofar. This was due to multiple reasons. First, the Sultan was not willing or able to support more than that; second, many of his forces were simply incapable of operating on the *jebel*; third, he was paranoid about the security of Northern Oman.[31]

His insecurities were not without reason. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, he had placed his son under house arrest upon return from instruction at Sandhurst. Apparently, the training intended to make him a warrior, as befitting an heir and future Sultan, had also corrupted him with modern ideas in the eyes of his father. Perhaps the old Sultan was wary of his son's modern notions and ambitions; Said himself had deposed his father. These facts may well explain why the Sultan did not have any senior Arab officers and had instead to rely on officers seconded or contracted from Britain.[32]

Regardless of his reasons, there were simply not enough troops to pursue and eliminate insurgents while at the same time providing static security throughout Oman. Inadequate logistics, intelligence, and technical expertise further added to an increasingly hopeless situation. This inability to identify, engage, and destroy the elusive *adoo* sometimes resulted in punitive raids against innocent civilians by the overstretched and ill-informed SAF. Jeapes cites a history of Sultan Said sending troops on punitive raids within tribal areas lining Midway Road whenever insurgents blew up the well that fed the his prized garden in Salalah. The people there had nothing to do with these acts of sabotage and the raids only served to push more Dhofaris into the rebel camp.[33]

It was clear by 1970 that without a radical departure from Sultan Said's style of leadership and inadequate methods of addressing the insurgency, Dhofar could be lost to

Communism. Said's fears of a northern uprising came true with attacks on several towns in the north in June of 1970. It was clear now someone had to remove Said, which Qaboos proceeded to do the following month in a near-bloodless coup.[34] It was an event celebrated by most people in Oman and welcomed by the newly elected conservative government of Edward Heath in London.[35]

The new Sultan was eager to implement the broad program of reform his father had resisted. The new government in London was prepared to provide additional support. In fact, there was ample evidence that they played an active role in the coup. As one Dhofar veteran observed, Said had made the "mistake" of allowing Qaboos the company of Captain Tim Landing, a British intelligence officer who spoke perfect Arabic. Aside from the fact that Qaboos had obviously lain the groundwork for the coup well in advance, the Dhofar vet riley mused that a Royal Air Force plane just happened to be standing by to whisk the old Sultan away to live out the remaining two years of his life at the Dorchester Hotel in London[36]

Reversing Momentum in Favor of the Government

Sultan Qaboos moved swiftly to implement construction plans for roads, hospitals, schools, and wells. He offered general amnesty for those who had supported insurgency under his father and declared a two-month cease-fire. The hardcore Marxists increased their efforts to subjugate the *jebalis*, realizing the threat to their plans of the new government's strategy. They also took advantage of the ceasefire to bring in additional supplies and heavy weapons. However, those who had long grown weary of the Marxist campaign to eradicate tribal structures and the Islam faith realized that their goals of development in Dhofar had been met and began a slow trickle of defection to the

Sultan. It was from these defections that the *firqa* (*jebalis* enlisted to fight for the Sultan) were born.[37]

The British had already determined that the most important aspect of reversing the progress of the insurgency would be civil development and that Oman itself had to lead in this effort. Hence, the urgent question for Brigadier John Graham, Commander of SAF, was how ―SAF could be helped to help itself.‖ He well understood that development would not be possible without first introducing genuine security on the *jebel*.[38] Graham immediately requested a British Army Training Team (BATT) from the SAS in part to help SAF battalions deploying to Dhofar to overcome their ―*jebelitis*‖ and to prove to them that it was possible to survive and fight on the *jebel*, even during monsoon season.[39]

In addition to identifying ways to shore up weaknesses within SAF, Lieutenant Colonel John Watts came up with a five-point plan for further employing the unique assets and experience of the four men BATTs, the basic building blocks of SAS squadrons. The plan included five areas of emphasis: basic medical and dental care for the people, veterinary assistance and water for *jebeli* cattle, an organized intelligence service to more accurately and efficiently target die-hard insurgents; a robust information plan to combat the distortions being broadcast from Radio Aden, and a plan for recruiting *jebelis* to supplement the SAF and participate in their own security.[40]

Watts‗ plan dovetailed with the twin aims of the Qaboos. The first was to encourage those who had joined the insurgency to defect and support the government, using aggressive development and generous amnesty to encourage them. The second was

to defeat the remaining hard-core *adoo*." Results were immediate. In the first month, there were 200 surrendered enemy personnel (SEPs).[41]

From these SEPs, the BATTs of the SAS raised and trained indigenous paramilitary security forces, named *firqas*, to assist in securing their own tribal areas. *Firqas* encouraged others to defect. They were instrumental in identifying hardcore enemy operatives, bases, and weapons caches. The SAS was also instrumental in forming Civil Assistance Teams, which quickly moved into secure areas and provided an essential government presence, its most visible manifestation being in the form of a well, a store, a clinic, and a mosque.[42]

Utilization of the two squadrons of SAS was an important component of an enlarged commitment of the new government in Britain to combating insurgency in Oman. Overall personnel numbers remained small.[43] Assistance in Oman remained focused on developing a winning strategy (Watts' 5-Point Plan), training and expanding SAF, providing leadership and technical expertise in areas such as engineering, intelligence, and aerial support missions, and providing the SAF the right tools to conduct counterinsurgency effectively.[44]

Between 1970 and 1972, SAF expanded from 3,000 to over 10,000 personnel. By the time Lieutenant Colonel Ray arrived in 1972 as the new commander of the Northern Frontier Regiment,[45] there were three other Omani regiments—Muskat, Jebel, and Desert Regiments—two of which remained in Dhofar at any one time. As these units rotated in, they became part of a permanent joint headquarters known as the Dhofar Brigade, established by Qaboos in 1970, while the other two refitted and retrained for their next Dhofar rotation, and ‗flew the flag' in the north. Two other units, the Dhofar

Gendarmerie and a battalion manned exclusively by soldiers from Baluchistan—later known as the Frontier Force—remained in Dhofar.[46]

In addition to these ground units, the commander of the Dhofar brigade also controlled all elements of the Sultan of Oman's Air Force and the Sultan of Oman's Navy, stationed at the British airfield at Salalah or nearby along the coast. The Sultan of Oman's Air Force consisted of Strike Squadron, Transport Squadron, and Helicopter Squadron. The Sultan of Oman's Navy consisted of a logistics ship, three patrol boats, and two in-shore booms. In addition, elements of an artillery regiment, an armored car squadron, a Field Surgical Team, a squadron of SAS, and elements of the Royal Engineers rotated through. The Wali of Dhofar (provincial governor) synchronized the efforts enabled by this multitude of assets through weekly meetings of the Dhofar Development Committee (DDC).[47]

As pointed out by Akehurst, the DDC ―evolved on lines familiar to those who had been in Malaya . . . and epitomized the essential ingredients of anti-terrorist operations – that the military is in support of Civil Power, never the other way around, and that it is as important to win the support of the civil population as to defeat terrorists."[48] However, under the DDC, development could not keep up with military operations in Dhofar, and its focus was eventually narrowed to long-term development in terms of wells and roads. The Civil Aid Department was created, supported by Civil Assistance Teams formed by the SAS, to ―fil the gap" and respond to the demand for immediate development at the local level.[49]

The *firqa*, formed largely from out of the SEPs, became a critical part of reversing the momentum that the insurgency had gained during Said's rule. However, recruiting,

training, and employing them required the flexible, culturally perceptive approach of the SAS, who understood their strengths and weaknesses. They knew how to motivate them and in what manner to employ them.

The best use of *firqa* was in small, tribally pure groups attached to SAF companies. Akehurst well understood both their strengths and their limitations. ―Their knowledge of the ground, tactical awareness, remarkable eyesight and recognition of tracks and people were all essential to success. . . . They were much too independent, excitable, argumentative and undisciplined to be gathered together into a large single fighting group.‖[50] As further reported by Akehurst, use of each company of *firqas* exclusively within its own tribal area rather than banding them together into larger homogenous groups had additional benefits, ―with the number of surrenders increasing dramatically and the flow of information from both Firqats and civilians providing invaluable intelligence.‖[51]

For some there was a concern—since *firqa* still had kin working for the other side—that such strong reliance on them could result in betrayal, with operational plans being leaked to the enemy. Interviews with veterans of the war indicate that British officers leading *firqas* took reasonable precautions by not briefing the tribal units on details of operations until associated troop movements were already underway. The fact that members of the *firqa* and the *adoo* were kin was by and large beneficial, though, as it resulted more often in further *adoo* defections than it did in compromised operations.[52]

In addition to the progress made through civil development and amnesty, the government was making great strides offensively against those insurgents which refused to turn. During 1972, two major developments helped to turn the tide in favor of the

government. The first of these, in April, was a helicopter born insertion of a SAF

battalion near Sarfait directly across the border from the Yemeni city of Hauf, which the

DR accomplished under command of Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Knocker.[53]

The initial intent, the achievement of which would be three years in the making,

was to extend control down to the sea, hence choking off the main supply route for the

adoo. The steep drop-offs between the position and the sea hindered immediate

realization of this intent, but the existence of the position remained enough of a concern

to the enemy for it to expend huge amounts of artillery from Hauf, which by Knocker's

account eventually proved instrumental in drawing international sympathy and assistance

to the Sultan's cause.[54]

The second event three months later was a crucial blow to the insurgency. The

adoo had already sensed that the Sultan's aggressive development and his expansion and

modernization of his forces were reversing their initial gains. In an attempt to regain the

initiative, they mounted an attack with 300 *adoo*, armed with RPGs, mortars, and

machine guns, to mount an assault on the lightly defended seaside garrison at Mirbat,

located on the Salalah plain. They may or may not have intended to seize and hold the

garrison; but they certainly wanted to demonstrate their power and the government's

weakness to a previously brutalized people who were just now beginning to feel secure.[55]

The battle was a close run affair. However, the result was a disastrous defeat for

the *adoo*. The near ten to one force ratio of the *adoo* to garrison defenders, coupled with

the shrouding mist of the monsoon should have spelled victory for the attackers.

However, the attack commenced later than planned, SAF sentries provided early warning,

and the *adoo* underestimated the impact of there being an eight man SAS detachment to orchestrate the defense; but the most significant factor was luck.[56]

On any other day, one squadron of SAS, scattered across the province in small teams, would be in Dhofar. However, on this day, a fresh squadron of SAS rotating in and making final preparations to disperse out was in Salalah in mass. As the battle in Mirbat was nearing a tragic end for its determined defenders, the incoming squadron loaded onto helicopters, providing an adequate force to mount a successful counterattack from the southern edge of the city. *Adoo* casualties amounted to one to two thirds of their initial assault force. The insurgency never mounted another major offensive.[57]

The End in Sight

A major development between 1972 and 74 was the installation of barriers designed to interdict PFLOAGs supply routes. The SAF spent much of 1972 trying to bring Dhofar back under government control from east to west. By the following year, they were able to establish a permanent presence on the *jebel*, even during the monsoon. SAF began looking for ways to block resupply across the *jebel* while at the same time eliminating the innumerable caches stashed in *wadis* and drawing the *adoo* into contact to deplete their on-hand supplies.[58]

The earliest attempt to install an effective barrier was the Leopard Line, directly west of Salalah. However, it was not until August of 1974 that Oman was able to assemble enough barbed wire to string between pickets, along with a sufficient over-watch force, to establish the more effective Hornbeam line, extending 33 miles north from Mugsayl. Nine platoon-size positions on commanding terrain existed at intervals along the line and SAF liberally mined the wire in-between. Later constructed lines

contributed as well, with the cumulative effect that new SEPs began reporting shortages of food and ammunition. In Ray's own words, ―The grape was withering on the vine."[59]

Another important development during this period was the Qaboos' reversal of the isolationist policies of his father and his exploitation of the Marxist takeover of the insurgency to solicit regional and international assistance. In addition to Britain's planning, training, and advisory role, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Iran helped defray the tremendous cost of expanding SAF and providing it the necessary weaponry and equipment. Additionally, Jordan provided engineers, officer training, and Special Forces, while Iran provided a battle group, composed of two battalions, an artillery battery, and numerous cargo helicopters and gunships, to assist in the construction and defense of the Damavand Line, further enhancing interdiction of enemy supply.[60]

Meanwhile, the SAF developed an effective pattern to secure the *jebel* for civil development. Ian Gardiner served as a company executive officer within the NFR, under Ray, at the same time as Akehurst's tenure as Brigadier in Dhofar. He regularly received visits from both. The clarity and unity of purpose encapsulated by the six-word mission statement: ―to secure Dhofar for civilian development," impressed him. In a quote taken from his book, the following encapsulates a military/civilian operations pattern reminiscent of the New Village concept in Malaya, which SAF adapted to Oman.[61]

1. A SAF operation in strength supported by Firqat secures a position of the Firqat's choice which dominated its tribal area.

2. Military engineers build a track to a position given road access, followed by an airstrip if possible.

3. A drill is brought down the track followed by a Civil Action Team with shop, school, clinic, and mosque.

4. SAF thins out to the minimum needed to provide security.

5. Water is pumped to the surface and into the distribution system prepared by military engineers to offer storage points for humans, and troughs for animals.

6. Civilians come in from miles around and talk to Firqat, SAF and Government representatives. They are told that enemy activity in the area will result in the water being cut off.

7. Civilians move out in the surrounding area and tell the enemy not to interfere with what is obviously _a good thing'.

8. Enemy, very dependent on civilians, stop all aggressive action and either go elsewhere or hide.

9. All SAF withdrawn.[62]

There was one very important modification to the way the government in Oman employed this approach versus the manner of implementation in Malaya, as a recent panel conducted with a mixed group of Dhofar veterans—some who led SAF and others who were SAS officers who worked primarily with the *firqa*—indicated. In Malaya, this concept involved creating a safe haven to which the people were then brought. In Oman, the government engaged instead in ―moving the safe haven to the people." This was a modification consciously made to accommodate the tribal nature of the people which made pockets of people tightly constricted geographically and therefore precluded resettlement.[63]

By early 1975, with development and local security gradually taking hold across the *jebel* and the increased availability of international forces to occupy static defenses, more SAF troops were available for offensive operations. Akehurst, the commander of the Dhofar Brigade, developed plans for an operation that would establish a fourth line west of the Hammer, Hornbeam, and Damavand lines, this one anchored at Dhalqut,

thereby pushing the *adoo* even farther back against the border with Yemen (See figure 5; the reason there is no line at Dhalqut will become apparent below.).[64]
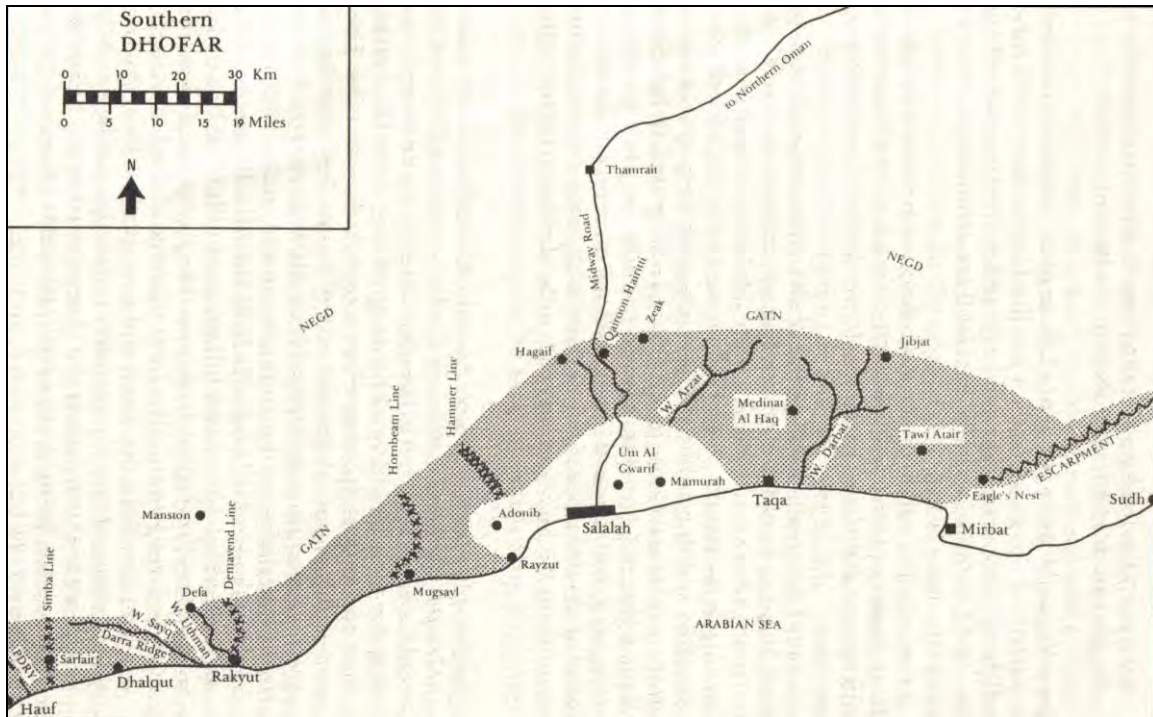
Figure 5.   Fortified Lines in Dhofar
Source: Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 1980), 19.

Even further west, the position at Sarfait, occupied now by Muscat Regiment, was still taking daily artillery, mortar, and rocket fire from the Yemeni city of Hauf. The commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Christie, was eager to take the fight to the enemy. SAF knew that the coastal strip out of sight just below them provided the *adoo* their one vital supply route from Yemen. The only position between it and the coastal strip, which would have provided adequate over-watch of this route was a 200-foot wide step jutting

91

out from the face of the cliff some 1,000 feet below the main battle position and too remote from it to be supported.[65]

In addition to having no view of the vital *adoo* supply route, the position at Sarfait was nearly inaccessible, much like a citadel. The enemy did not have adequate approaches by which to dislodge it; but neither did those occupying it have available avenues to patrol out of it. Indeed there were only two steep, narrow access routes providing access to the sea, one out the front down through a steep *wadi* and the other through a circuitous route through another *wadi* out the back—both heavily mined by the adoo.[66]

As a diversion, Christie had his men removing mines and gradually extending the path down from the front of the position during the day. These efforts attracted the intended attention, as evidenced by an increase of incoming rounds. However, unbeknownst to the vigilant albeit distracted *adoo*, each night another group of Christie's men were accomplishing the more important work of opening the route running out of the back of the position through the same painstaking removal of mines.[67]

It was Christie's plan that, once his men had fully opened the route down the back of the position, he would mount patrols through a *wadi* around and underneath the ledge previously blocking the view of the coastal area below, thereby providing a route to monitor and attack *adoo* resupply. Once the route was open, Akehurst approved the first of these aggressive patrols to occur on 14 October 1975, two days before execution of his planned operation to install the fourth line at Dhalkut, seeing it as a means of diverting attention away from the force he was assembling in the north at Defa for his own endeavor.[68]

As it turned out, the line planned by Akehurst, along with the operation to install it, became a moot point. Christie's operation was successful beyond all expectations. It caught the *adoo* completely by surprise; his men were able to establish positions all the way down to the sea. Akehurst scrapped what had been his principal ambition and threw his effort behind reinforcing the position already established from Sarfait. The *adoo*, unwilling to yield their vital lifeline quietly, pummeled the new positions with artillery from across the border in Hauf. As a result, for the first time since the beginning of the insurgency, Qaboos authorized targeted airstrikes by SOAF into Yemen with devastating results for the previously unchallenged positions.[69]

The new blocking position at Sarfait, the Simba Line, prevented the *adoo* from using the old route in the west for evacuation as well as resupply. In the meantime, the Iranian battle group was mounting operations east from the Damavand Line and SAF forces near Defa, which Akehurst had assembled for his now abandoned plan, began pushing south. With the Sultan's navy controlling the coast, PFLO, as it had now become,[70] saw SAF closing in from all directions. Subsequently, leaving all manner of weapons, ammunition, mines, and bombs behind, PFLO withdrew its forces north of Sarfait before forces moving south from Defa could effectively box them in.[71]

Though PFLO evacuated the majority of its forces, affiliated *adoo* bands still remained stranded in the interior of Oman, particularly in the east, and would be a continuing thorn in the side of the government for some time to come. The need to continue mop-up operations and further extend development in the months ahead notwithstanding, the Sultan officially declared victory over on 11 December 1975. Sarfait, the western most SAF outpost, continued to take incoming artillery, but

eventually diplomatic pressure from Saudi Arabia brought that to a halt. The guns of Hauf fell silent after the last round fired on 5 March of 1976.[72]

<center>Relevance of Maoist Model to Dhofar Insurgency</center>

PFLOAG adopted the model of a Maoist protracted struggle that progresses from political organization through gradually escalating violence to guerilla warfare and eventually, if unchecked, to attempts at engaging government forces conventionally, as exemplified by the battle at Mirbat in 1972. Bard O'Neil, retired US Army officer and former director of studies in insurgency at the US National War College in Washington, District of Columbia, identifies six variables—the environment, the insurgency's organization, its cohesion, its external support, its popular support, and the effectiveness of the opposed government—that help determine the outcome insurgencies that adopt this path. He then uses these six variables to evaluate the strategy and effectiveness of the insurgency in Dhofar, as summarized below.[73]

<center>The Environment</center>

The environment encompasses the physical location, terrain, and weather as well as the human terrain of respective groups, values, and interests. The physical terrain and weather of the *jebel*, with its deep-cut boulder-strewn *wadis* and its monsoon mists, initially provided a perfect insurgent hit-and-run environment. As for the human terrain, discriminatory practices of the government toward the Dhofaris during Sultan Said's reign afforded PLOAG powerful anti-government propaganda, by which they could garner popular support. However, both of these advantages were short-lived.[74]

<center>94</center>

The SAF under Qaboos, with advice and training from the SAS, established

permanent bases and adopted methods of communications and transport unavailable to

the *adoo*. They further dominated the terrain through the emplacement of fortified lines

reminiscent of the frontier barriers established by the French in Algeria, thereby

thwarting even the narrower modified aims when PFLOAG became PFLO.[75]

With respect to the people, PLFOAG committed an error similar to the MCP in

Malaya by relying for support on a small ethnic segment of the overall population. The

then compounded their error by misunderstanding the religious character of the Dhofaris,

a misstep that the SAS turned to government advantage through a potent psychological

campaign in order to drive a wedge between the Marxist leadership its indigenous

support base.[76]

Organization and Cohesion

After PFLOAG hijacked the insurgency from the DLF, its Marxist leadership

established a network of cells giving them total control across the *jebel*. The only place in

Dhofar that SAF maintained control was in the immediate environs of Salalah where the

Sultan had a palace and the British had their airfield. The Front subverted the Islamic

faith and tribal structure of the people through a combination of persuasion and terror.[77]

Through a collection of ―people‗s councils‖ the Marxists were successful in

establishing shadow government throughout Dhofar. However they were unable to

extend that parallel hierarchy to Northern Oman. One of the council of seven who ran

PFLOAG, Said Masud, admitted afterward that their strategy focused too much on the

military side and not enough on programs and policies to attract popular support. When

Qaboos' reforms began to bite into their support, PFLOAG responded with an increase in repressive measures that only eroded support further.[78]

Support from Abroad

The initial edge that PFLOAG had in terms of organization, tactics, and weaponry was a direct result of sponsorship from China, East Germany, Cuba, and, of course, Yemen. It had political offshoots in Syria, Iran, Algeria, and Libya, as well as ties to the Palestine Liberation Organization. When China withdrew its material support in 1973, Russia stepped in to fill the gap.[79] Other than the contracted officers from Britain who he hired to lead his military and mercenary forces from Baluchistan, Sultan Said was extremely isolationist, severely restricting contact with the outside world.[80]

However, Sultan Qaboos quickly moved to reverse this when he came to power. He ended the isolationist policy of his father and joined the United Nations and the Arab League. His improved relations brought him additional troops, helicopter, fighter aircraft, intelligence and engineer assets from Iran and Jordan. There was a wide array of specialized assistance engendered by Oman's long-standing relationship with Britain. Essentially, the two sides were on equal standing with respect to external support. Ultimately, it was popular support and the manner in which it shifted that determined the outcome of the insurgency in Dhofar.[81]

Popular Support and Government Response

It was not difficult for PFLOAG to capitalize on public discontent with Sultan Said in power, until the government under Qaboos addressed it. At that point, PFLOAG attempted to supplant lack of development as the initial source of DLF insurrection by

preaching anti-imperialism, attempting to exploit the presence of British, Iranian, and Jordanian troops. However, that message began to ring hollow when many initially supportive *jebelis* became increasingly desirous of the sort of life from which PFLO intended to liberate them. The ensuing flow of defections to the government signaled the draining of ―the water from PFLOAG‛s revolutionary fish.‖[82]

Popular support is combined with government response herein because it is difficult to discuss popular support without highlighting the contrast between PFLOAG‛s brutal, militaristic response to government progress versus the government‛s more balanced approach to confronting the insurgency. As an added note, the British provided wise counsel to Qaboos when it came to the kind of equipment needed to fight an insurgency while avoiding the kind of collateral damage that would only encourage increased support for the insurgency.[83]

It is clear that PFLOAG did much to harm its own cause. Yet, this alone does not explain how they lost. Indeed, for the first five years they were winning. However, when the people could see a permanent government presence on the *jebel* fully committed to development and undeterred by the *adoo*, the terrain, and the seasonal monsoons, they had no further need for PFLOAG. The government‛s ability to drill wells and complete other projects, and then protect these projects from sabotage using men from their own tribe, convinced people that the government had the will, the means, and the ability win. Ultimately, the government‛s response to insurgency pulled people onto its side while PFLOAG, by its counter-response, unwittingly pushed them away.[84]

The Sultan was clearly committed to reaching out to the people. The British, in supporting him, could rely on the experience gleaned from Malaya in properly aligning

military efforts to defeat the insurgency with civil development aimed at winning the popular support. Of course, this was all done on a much smaller scale than in Malaya and various aspects of the approach were amended to suit the conditions in Dhofar and Oman, as the subsequent section on COIN adaptation will show.[85]

Adaptation of Classic COIN to Oman

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, some disparage any value this insurgency might have as a model because of the small geographical area of the actual conflict, the tiny force numbers compared to such insurgencies as Malaya and Algeria, the sparseness of the population involved, and the lack of international media involvement.[86] These caveats aside, others argue, ―The lessons from this successful effort to provide security assistance to a Muslim nation in the midst of an insurgency could have value for US military leaders and policymakers alike.‖[87]

As indicated in the previous chapter, Thompson extracted five basic principles from his experience in, and analysis of, the Malayan Emergency. In brief summary, these five principles involve having a clear political aim, functioning within the law, embracing and overall—comprehensive, coordinated, integrated—plan, giving priority to defeating the [underlying] political subversion, and securing base areas first.[88]

The subsequent sub-sections evaluate British COIN in Oman using these principles. As Jeapes wrote, ―No two campaigns are ever the same . . . but it is worth observations on some of the principles used and how they were applied to this particular campaign.‖[89] This analysis will show that, in addition to its relevance in terms of parallels to current conflict settings and factors, this insurgency clearly demonstrates an adaptive

approach to applying classic COIN principles in a manner adjusted to the peculiarities of the operational environment involved.

<div align="center">Having a Clear Political Aim</div>

As one panel of Dhofar veterans put it, ―We were not there for democracy.‖[90] The aim was ―to defeat the Communist rebels in Dhofar so that civil development could take place, and that aim was maintained unswervingly throughout.‖ This aim was maintained through successive British governments, Commanders of SAF, and Dhofar Brigade commanders. ―There was no vacillation.‖[91] At the small unit level, Company Executive Officer Ian Gardiner was able to summarize it even more succinctly: ―to secure Dhofar for civilian development.‖ Concerning those six words, he went on to say,

> It would have been easy to have been distracted by the desire to ‗defeat the enemy' or ‗free Dhofar from Communism' and so on, but no. It gave the desired end-state that the Armed Forces in Dhofar were to achieve and the overall purpose behind it. There is an element of brilliance in those six words. . . . Moreover, our Commanding Officer [Ray] and our Brigade Commander [Akehurst] made sure . . . nobody was in any doubt about the goal to which their efforts were being directed [under the leadership of the Sultan and the Wali of Dhofar].[92]

The cohesion of the government response under Qaboos was bolstered by a unity of command whereby the reigns of both civil and military operations rested in the Sultan's hands. Unswervingly loyal to the Sultan, each British Commander of SAF enjoyed unified command of all military components—land, air, and sea. The commander of the Dhofar Brigade had a slice of each of those elements likewise under his direct command and was an attendee at the DDC meeting held weekly by the senior government representative in Dhofar, the Wali. The government, nationally and regionally, directed all efforts toward a clear consistent aim [the execution of it based on

the plan Watts provided to the Sultan] and, for the most part, conducted them in the time-proven technique of working methodically from easier areas toward the more hotly contested areas.[93]

It must be said, however, that necessary deviations were made from the ink-spot method employed in Malaya. The geographical diversity between the coastal plain and the *jebel* that rose steeply above it had an impact on how the clear-hold strategy was implemented. Ultimately, the only way "to secure Dhofar for civilian development" was to sever the *adoo* from their supply lines through installing a series of fortified lines east to west. This effort culminated when supplies were cut off at their westernmost access point below the cliffs of Sarfait.[94]

Functioning within the Law

Jeapes makes the point that there are certain things an insurgent can do that are simply off limits to the government and its forces if COIN is to succeed. He provides such examples as leaving behind sabotaged ammunition, booby-trapping the dead, or poisoning a water supply. Such measures often serve merely to harden the resolve of the enemy and to increase his base of support within the people, since the resultant death or mutilation will not discriminate between legitimate combatant and innocent civilian.[95]

Retaining the legitimacy of its acts and taking care to protect its own citizens from harm are measures that aid the government in prying the uncommitted from the enemy camp. One should not perceive this as weakness on the part of the government for it does not proscribe aggressive action to find, fix, and destroy the enemy. This point was driven home by one general officer interviewed when he said, "If you can do so within the law, kill them!"[96]

Likewise, acts of terrorism, one of the mainstays of insurgents, are not practicable by government forces. Jeapes argues that this explains why the insurgents were successful in grouping *jebalis* together in units irrespective of tribe and employing them outside their tribal areas while similar attempts by the BATTs failed. While PFLOAG was free to use any means to persuade or coerce shedding of tribal bonds, the government had no legal basis for doing likewise.[97] Respect for not only the law but also for the Arab and Dhofari way of doing things was another adaptation of COIN principles to Oman.[98]

This was a point stressed heavily by a wide assortment of Dhofar veterans during oral history interviews conducted as an integral part of research used in the writing of this thesis. One spoke of the importance of stressing, through the information program, that the Sultan was for Islam, those fighting for him were for Islam, and everything they were doing was in support of Islam. As another put it, ―We were part of *jihad*.‖[99]

In order to be successful, they had to accept a certain level of what to the Western mind was corruption and they had to operate under a different concept of time. With respect to the *firqa*, it was critical to understand their loyalty to their tribe above all else and, as one commanding officer there put it, to realize, ―If what we asked them to do would benefit the tribe, they would do it; if not, they would not.‖[100]

<center>Taking a Comprehensive Approach</center>

As previously mentioned, the Dhofar Brigade Commander attended weekly meetings of the DDC, modeled after the SWECs and DWECs of Malaya, presided over by the Wali. Though the overall structure was not nearly as large and complex, as in Malaya it combined the heads of all civil and military agencies involved in engineering a successful outcome to the war. The inclusive nature of these meetings facilitated

<center>101</center>

immediate implementation of the programs and policies therein discussed and approved. The reasoning behind measures taken was thereby universally understood and supported.[101]

The insurgency in Dhofar did introduce an important innovation to the committee system it inherited from Malaya. The Dhofar Development Department, one of the component agencies of the DDC, was ideal for deciding plans and priorities with respect to large projects such as roads and wells. However, it could not provide immediate civil development projects to cement the rapid progress the military was making in clearing areas of insurgency. In order to ―fill the gap" and provide the ―immediate bounty" that would encourage the people to come over to the government side and provide the information needed to target the insurgency, the Civil Aid Department was created.[102]

Supporting the Civil Aid Department were the Civil Assistance Teams. These consisted of a team leader, a shop keeper, a medical orderly, and a teacher. They arrived with prefabricated buildings in tow: a shop, a mosque, a school, and a clinic. The local Imam was given control of the mosque. With such bounty quickly in place, the people had a vested interest in their own security. Not surprisingly, insurgent attacks diminished.[103]

Veterans of this conflict make it abundantly clear, however, that this was a balanced, combined approach. One likened it to ―a mailed fist in a velvet glove." The idea he was driving home was that he and his colleagues had to establish a secure zone before they could implement a civil aid program.[104]

Prioritizing the Defeat of Political Subversion

In Oman, defeating political subversion meant undercutting PFLOAGs negative propaganda aimed at exploiting legitimate grievances and at the Sultan's reliance on foreign intervention. Restoring confidence in the government in both its willingness and ability to institute reforms was also important. On a more basic level, the people had to see that the government was actually able to secure its gains. They had to be convinced that the government had both the necessary will and the capacity to succeed.[105]

One of the most powerful illustrations that they were succeeding in this regard came when one of the Front's political commissars, Salim Said Dherdhir, surrendered. When asked what made him decide to switch sides, he replied with the following trail of logic.

> Because your are here–and you could not be here in the West unless the loyal firqats were with you. You would not have any firqats unless the people supported them and you would not have that support if the rumours (sic) of progress and development I have heard are true. If they are true, then the Front has told me lies. If they lied on that, they probably lied on other things. Therefore I have surrendered to you.[106]

The government also utilized an innovative information program to counter subversion. Qaboos allowed the sale of transistor radios on the open market, at minimal cost, in direct contrast to his father's earlier policy. An earlier attempt to provide the radios free met with failure, as they ended up stolen or destroyed at checkpoints manned by *adoo*. The *jebalis* were a bit more protective of that which they purchased. Because of this, enough radios survived to allow Radio Dhofar to provide credible broadcasts to the people as an alternative the blatant and somewhat obvious distortions coming out from Aden. It also allowed the government to focus the attention of the people on development projects, agricultural programs, and public services to improve health and education.[107]

The information service also printed leaflets portraying these positive efforts to assist the people against the backdrop of the enemy's hostile attempts to eradicate tribalism and Islam. Promotion of Islam and accommodation of tribalism together provided an effective wedge for the government to drive between the people and PFLOAG. In producing such products, those involved were careful to adhere to the guidance provided by Arab/Dhofari advisors so that distributed products appealed to an Arab rather than a western mindset. As with all other aspects of the COIN campaign in Dhofar, the British trained Omani officials to take over this vital program as soon as they were capable of doing so.[108]

One Dhofar vet who was employed as a civilian in support of psychological operations proudly cites how powerfully he co-opted the importance of the Islam faith to the people of Dhofar. He produced leaflets communicating in easily understood pictures and Arabic language, ―Freedom is our aim; Islam is our way." This message resonated with the people and stood them in stark contrast with the Marxist leadership of the Front and the barbaric methods they employed in an attempt to make them renounce their faith.[109]

<center>Securing Base Areas First</center>

Thompson admonishes the importance of the government ―securing its own base areas and working methodically outwards from them."[110] Royal Engineer Lieutenant Colonel John McKeown, in his 1981 master's thesis of the Dhofar War, concludes, ―A major lesson which should not have to be re-learnt so frequently is that bases need to be the source of aggressive fighting patrols, or much of their effectiveness is nullified."[111] Jeapes, in his analysis of the campaign, points to the same thing with regard to the

fortified lines. For SAF and its international allies, these served as their secure bases from which to patrol and became an effective means for extending government control.[112]

Ray details the manner in which SAF, patrolling from the Hornbeam Line, were able to vary ambush locations along known *adoo* resupply routes that had previously been safe. Such measures drove home the perception that the government had both the means and the will to win. Because of that, although some *adoo* still had to be hunted down and killed, ―others slipped quietly back into the obscurity of their *jebali* tribes. A great many took themselves and their rifles to Salalah and declared themselves to be men of Sultan Qaboos.‖[113]

<div align="center">Evolution of British COIN Doctrine</div>

Given the success of British COIN operations in Malaya it is no wonder that, in addition to its influence on the writings of British Classic COIN theorists Thompson and Kitson, it was captured in official military doctrine, standing as a guide for subsequent campaigns of similar nature. As early as 1957, the British Army‘s COIN doctrine combined Malayan innovations, such as the establishment of a director of operations and the institution of an in-theater training center, with previously formulated principles of COIN, in *Keeping the Peace*.[114] As concluded by British Colonel Alex Alderson, scholar and veteran of British COIN in Iraq during Operation TELIC,[115] who studied British COIN doctrine extensively,

> *Keeping the Peace* (1957) drew all the recognizable threads of counterinsurgency together: a co-ordinated cross-governmental, unified plan; sound, integrated intelligence; tactical adaptability; recognition of the psychological dimension; and the need to secure the population and isolate the insurgent. . . . By drawing the lessons from Malaya into general military doctrine, and by making clear the procedural and operational benefits of unified command, *Keeping the Peace* (1957) recorded and institutionalized validated best practice.[116]

<div align="center">105</div>

A retired British general who served in Oman claims to have read the second edition of this manual, published in 1963, extensively in advance of his tour in Oman, saying ―it was my Bible.‖ Having also served in Malaya, methods borrowed from that campaign and used successfully in Oman, albeit with some modification, seemed common sense to him. However, he conceded, ―someone had to put it on paper for the benefit of others.‖[117]

As pointed out by Alderson, though changes were more matter of added detail rather than any major conceptual changes, the 1963 version was the first to acknowledge the contribution of previous campaigns including Malaya and the first to introduce the term ‗insurgent‘. It also demonstrated an evolving appreciation for dealing with insurgents in terms that extend beyond the military means necessary to destroy them.[118]

With respect to military tasks, it includes such things as securing the public to restore confidence in the government, isolating the insurgent from the populace by ―disrupting all his contacts,‖ and opening up ―opportunities for deeper penetration‖ into the organizational leadership by focusing initially on ―rank and file.‖[119] These aims certainly seem to fit the policy of amnesty, the employment of SEPs as *firqa*, and the effective employment of the Civil Aid Department and its Civil Assistance Teams in Dhofar. This clearly demonstrates the adaptation of doctrine to unique characteristics and demands of the current operating environment.[120]

The section on Psychological Operations includes such tasks as isolating the insurgency by increasing public resistance to its ideology, bolstering public confidence in the government, and enlisting the people‘s participation in anti-terrorist activities.[121] Again, the information services in Oman were clearly pursuing these aims in their radio

broadcasts announcing new programs, services, and development, and its leaflets depicting the inherent disparity between Marxist ideology and Islamic faith.[122]

The forgoing case history shows ample evidence of the use in Oman of methods developed and/or refined in Malaya. Veterans of Oman, when interviewed in the Spring of 2011, repeatedly alluded to lessons from Malaya applied in Oman and frequently made use of the phrase popularized by Templer in that earlier conflict—winning the hearts and minds of the people—as the critical focus of operations that allowed them to achieve victory. In Oman, however, these were different hearts and different minds; hence it makes sense that previously derived doctrine would at times ―translate‖ into slightly different practices.[123]

Recruiting *jebalis* to fight for the Sultan contributed tremendously in garnering support from the people, in providing actionable intelligence on the enemy, and in enlisting the people's participation in their own security. Because of the stark differences in appearance between *jebalis* and the people of northern Oman, *jebalis* initially looked upon SAF in much the same way as they did people from outside countries—as foreign occupiers. The presence of *firqa* (*jebalis* loyal to the government) reassured the people it was okay to provide information on the *adoo* (*jebalis* opposing the government). It also served as an incentive for more of the *adoo* to switch sides.[124]

The use of tribally recruited and employed indigenous security forces to establish public confidence and diminish rank and file support for the insurgency was a necessary adaptation of the practice of recruiting Chinese as home guards in Malaya. An entirely new innovation was the introduction of the Civil Aid Department and its component Civil Assistance Teams. Given the contribution each of these made, one would expect to see

more emphasis placed on the proper recruitment, training, and employment of local security as well as an expanded use of quick impact civil aid programs in doctrinal manuals after Oman. One British Lieutenant Colonel writing his master's thesis in 1981 certainly seemed to think so.[125]

The question thus arises as to the impact these innovations had on subsequent rewrites of British COIN doctrine. Between the 1963 publication of *Keeping the Peace* and concerted efforts to defeat insurgency in Dhofar following the coup of 1970, COIN doctrine was re-written under the title of *Counter-Revolutionary Operations*. Its contribution to the evolution of COIN doctrine resided in its emphasis on the importance of good governance and the wide range of grievances that might need to be addressed in order to resolve an insurgency.[126]

In the case of Oman, it was of tremendous benefit to British support efforts that the government—most notably in the person of Sultan Qaboos—enthusiastically embraced its leading role in bringing about needed reforms, rather than having to be led to accept that role belatedly and reluctantly as was the case in Malaya.[127] Perhaps Malayan reticence in this matter is why the 1969 manual so stringently stressed,

> The legal government must be firmly established and be seen to govern. This is not always the case, and a weak government is frequently a contributing factor to the uprising. Outside military forces may well have to bolster up the central government, but it must always be made apparent that it is the government who run the country and not the outside military power. Measures taken must be issued in the name of the government and *all joint committees headed by a national official* [emphasis added].[128]

This doctrinal excerpt also underscores the importance of the manner in which intervening powers provide support to the host government. Kitson, in an epigraph to this chapter, succinctly explains. Equally important are the consistency and persistence to stay

the course. Even with a change in parties controlling government in 1974, Britain demonstrated its continued commitment to provide support to the Sultan until he no longer needed it. Further augmenting the manner of providing support, Britain tailored assistance precisely to the needs at hand—just enough of the appropriate types of assistance.[129]

Preceding observations concerning *Counter-Revolutionary Operations* provide no insight into the capture of insights collected from Oman, because they were not yet available. Perhaps there were some who actually gleaned these insights in preparing for their time in Oman. At the very least, experience in Dhofar reinforced points from that rewrite listed above. To determine whether the innovations in security or civil assistance resulted from operations in Oman, one has to look to the next publication of doctrine.

The first version to come out after the victory in Oman was a 1977 revision of the 1969 *Counter-Revolutionary Operations*. According to Alderson, it lacked even ―the tangible purpose of the earlier version." It contained nothing of Oman. The only post-1969 conflict referenced was Northern Ireland. Alderson cites Britain‗s 1975 Defense Review with its dual focus on the defense of North Atlantic Treaty Organization and continued commitments of the army in Northern Ireland as a contributing factor to the loss of COIN focus. This could well have contributed to an oversight of Oman contributions as well.[130]

The gist of this chapter is that significant lessons learned were lost simply because the British, at the time, did not deem it important to record them and/or were focused on other things. In addition to improving SAF and bolstering development, the SAS played a critical role in turning SEPs into well-trained units of *firqas*, which would then fight for

the Sultan in their tribal areas to defeat the remaining *adoo*. Critical to this effort was the emphasis on persuading the enemy to change sides rather than focusing solely on killing him, and on treating him humanely and with dignity once he surrendered. Cash rewards provided additional incentive. In the words of Tony Jeapes, ―Persuading a man to join you is far cheaper than killing him," particularly when you consider the cost of bullets, shells, and bombs, not to mention all the means needed to deliver them.[131]

This point pertains to current conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan. One retired general officer who served in Dhofar attended a talk given by a currently serving British general who had commanded in Southern Afghanistan. At the end of the talk, the retired general stood and asked what efforts had been taken to engage the Taliban, since, as he noted, ―it is self evident that this war is going to go on until the Taliban stop fighting." He was shocked that the currently serving general—a Major General, no less—insisted that such efforts were ―way above our level," but assured him that they were being done at the political level. The retired general noted that, even as a Major in Dhofar, such things were on his mind constantly and that in every decision he made he acted only after considering the effect it would have to persuade or dissuade the enemy to stop fighting and/or to change sides.[132]

Malaya was a tremendous victory for the British Army; hence, it is no surprise that it had a lasting impact on doctrine. However, capitalizing on the equally impressive success of Oman might have helped to air out some of the ―smell of the jungle" that still permeated doctrine in 1977 and beyond.[133]

Information on recruitment, training, and employment of local security forces is disappointingly slim in the 1977 manual. It describes such forces as ―wardens responsible

for liaison with the people living in their sectors." It confirms their value in terms of information from and influence upon the people, and cautions that they are the most vulnerable security forces to enemy attack and subversion. However, nowhere to be found is any emphasis on the need to embed properly trained and disposed mentors or any appropriate considerations—tribal, ethnic, or otherwise—necessary concerning how and where they should be employed.[134]

Scant emphasis is placed in civil assistance as well. Maintenance of essential services is clearly delineated as a civil responsibility. The doctrine does acknowledge that the military may be called upon to fulfill what would normally be civil functions. It also acknowledges the value of the army participating in public relations projects, paid for and completed by the military in coordination with the civil government –to create attitudes favourable (sic) to the achievement of political and military objectives." However, it provides little guidance on structuring and administering such a program, no reference to teams specifically formed and resourced for implementation. It is a consideration left entirely to the discretion of the commander.[135]

Looking specifically toward the next chapter, proper recruitment, training, and employment of local security forces turned out to be an area where in the British Army made costly mistakes that may have been avoided had they reflected on lessons lost from Oman. However, as one former US brigade commander in Iraq ruefully noted, even those lessons recorded are merely lessons noted—not lessons learned—unless and until they elicit action.[136] Hence, doctrine must be retained in the force through instruction in its principles as well as in the historical context from which it evolved. As will be seen in the next chapter, principles can be deceiving when divorced from context.

[1] Ian Beckett, ―The British Counterinsurgency Campaign in Dhofar 1965-75,‖ in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 176-177, 179-181, 190.

[2] At the height of hostilities in Algeria, there were 450,000 French forces with 200,000 Muslim *harkis* in support. British, Gurka, and Malayan armed forces in Malaya peaked at 31,400 in 1956, with an additional 150,000 home guards. In the Dhofar insurgency, the SAF peaked at roughly 10,000 troops, assisted by 450 seconded and contracted British officers, 1,200 Iranian troops, and 1,600 *firqas*. Porch, ―French Imperial Warfare,‖ 93, 89; Stubbs, ―Hearts and Minds,‖ 102, 110; Becket, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 185, 180, 186, 183.

[3] Walter Ladwig III, ―Supporting Allies in COIN: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion,‖ *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19, no. 1 (March 2008): 62-64.

[4] As Becket put it, ―It was a classic application of tried and tested British counterinsurgency techniques.‖ Beckett, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 180. This is a point confirmed by veterans of Dhofar who participated in a discussion panel attended by the author of this thesis. When asked what doctrine they went into Oman with, that Brigadier John Watts, the British regimental commander who ultimately drew up the operational framework for this insurgency, relied largely on his own personal experience in Malaya to do so. BI050, Dhofar Veterans, Interview by Mark Battjes, Ben Boardman, Robert Green, Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, Dustin Mitchell, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 28 March 2011, United Kingdom.

[5] D. L. Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development,‖ *The Institute for the Study of Conflict* 53 (London: The Eastern Press Ltd, 1975): see summary preceding article; Bard O‗Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ in *Insurgency in the Modern World*, ed. Bard E. O‗Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 216-17.

[6] This was Britain‗s prestigious military academy for officer training. The reasons for Qaboos‗ detention will follow later.

[7] Beckett, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 179.

[8] O‗Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 217; Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development,‖ Summary.

[9] John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975* (Wiltshire, Britain: Michael Russell Ltd, 1982), 3.

[10] The Musandam Peninsula is separated from the rest of Oman by the United Arab Emirates, as noted by Ian Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan: A First Hand Account of the Dhofar Insurgency* (South Yorkshire, Britain: Pen and Sword Military, 2006), 15.

[11] Walter Ladwig, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19, no. 1 (March 2008): 64; Gardiner, *In the Service*, 15.

[12] Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 64. *Jebel* means "mountain" or "hill" in Arabic. Within histories of the insurgency in Oman, the term commonly refers to the steeply elevated mountainous region that overlooks the coastal plain of Dhofar or the various sub-divisions thereof.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 64; Gardiner, *In the Service*, 5.

[15] In 1990, a retired British colonel wrote, "The Special Air Service Regiment (22 SAS) was founded by Major (now Colonel Sir David) Stirling as a strategic force to work and fight behind enemy lines in North Africa. Since World War II the Regiment has been used as a strategic force in many lands and in many roles." Bruce Niven, *Special Men Special War* (Singapore: Imago Productions (F.E.) Pte. Ltd., 1990), 77.

[16] Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, 1980), 11, 18-30.

[17] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 23; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 12.

[18] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 19, 17; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 12.

[19] An earlier insurgency occurred in the 1950s. Its roots were in the long-term Omani conflict between the Sultanate (secular leadership) and the Imamate (religious leadership). That stalemate was quickly resolved when Sultan Said requested and received British military support. Britain withdrew the troops sent to quell that disturbance in March 1959. Beckett, "Campaign in Dhofar," 176-77.

[20] Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 66; Price, "Oman: Insurgency and Development," 216.

[21] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 13; Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 21. For simplicity, this thesis refers to the PDRY, even though in 1967 the leadership of this newly formed country referred to it as the People's Republic of South Yemen and did not choose the shortened form until 1970, as pointed out by Gardiner in the citation given.

[22] Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 67.

[23] O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 216-17.

[24] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 14; Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 66-67. Ladwig underscores the point quite clearly: "The subsequent uprising in Dhofar was a classic example of a nationalist rebellion, based on legitimate grievances, that was taken over by

radical Marxists for their own purposes." The author of this thesis finds the modern day parallel to the hijacking of Sunni insurgency in Iraq by al Qaeda as striking. Another account of the PLOAG's takeover of DLF is provided by Bryan Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers: Campaigning in Somaliland and Oman* (South Yorkshire, Britain: Pen and Sword Military, 2008), 60-62.

[25]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 14.

[26]Seconded and contracted are two terms frequently found within writings on British counterinsurgency. With respect specifically to Dhofar, seconded officers were essentially on loan from the British Army to the Sultan. Their duty was to him, though they were still subject to British military law. Contracted officers were different. A British firm working on behalf of the Sultan contracted officers to supplement the seconded officers. The proportion at any one time in Dhofar was roughly fifty-fifty. Contracted officers were not subject to military law but were subject to the same Sharia Law as the rest of the people of Oman. Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 34-35; Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 29.

[27]Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 61-63.

[28]Trucial Oman was the name given given to the collection of sheikhdoms that occupied the area of today's Gulf States in the 19th century. The British and leading sheikhs signed a truce in order to suppress piracy along the gulf coast—what was then called the Pirate Coast—that was having a detrimental effect on shipping. See John McKeown, ―Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance" (Master's thesis, University of Cambridge, 1981), 8. This explains why Trucial Oman Scouts were actually not an Omani force; they were security forces for neighboring United Arab Emirates. Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 67.

[29]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 26-27; Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 22-24.

[30]Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development," 14.

[31]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 70.

[32]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 26-27.

[33]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 70, 68; Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 24.

[34]Sheikh Braik, soon to become Wali of Dhofar, aided in the coup and Said wounded him during the ensuing scuffle. The only other wound was self-inflicted when, in his excitement, Said shot himself in the foot. Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 63; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 16.

[35]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 71.

[36]BI070, Retired General Officer. Interview by Mark Battjes, Benjamin Boardman, Robert Green, Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, Dustin Mitchell, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 30 March 2011, United Kingdom.

[37]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 19. John McKeown another SAS officer who fought in the war and later wrote about it in a doctoral dissertation at the staff college, concluded that, though the cease fire in Dhofar was implemented "with the right intention of allowing Front members to respond to the amnesty," it was probably a mistake. For, as McKeown observes, "Taking the heat off the enemy gave them the chance to pour in men and equipment and enabled them to build up bigger groups and close their ranks against possible major defections." McKeown, "The Dhofar War and Its Significance," 52-53.

[38]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 28. Brad O'Neill provides an excellent summary of scope of Qaboos' program, to include all aspects of economic development, administrative reform, expansion of government services, and the "Omanization" of key military and administrative positions in O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 225-26.

[39]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 28-31.

[40]Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 72.

[41]Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 66.

[42]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 19, 77, 176-78; Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 72; Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 148. For a concise yet thorough summary of the roles and importance of Civil Assistance Teams, see O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 225.

[43]One reason for this was Britain's COIN campaign in Northern Ireland, which was a high priority for obvious reasons.

[44]Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 71.

[45]Ray also inherited three *firqa* companies.

[46]Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 72; Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 64, 153; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 33.

[47]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 32-37; Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 64-65. Participants in the weekly meetings of the DDC included the Dhofar Brigade Commander, Salalahs police chief and town clerk, and the heads of intelligence, development, and civil aid departments. Beckett, "Campaign in Dhofar," 181.

[48]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 53-54.

[49]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 164, 231.

[50]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 96; Ladwig, "Supporting Allies," 73.

[51] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 77.

[52] BI070, Interview; BI050 Interview.

[53] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 21.

[54] Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 66; BI050, Interview.

[55] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 66-67; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 21.

[56] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 67-69. For a detailed account of the battle, complete with the involvement of the SOAF, see Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 96-100. SAS officer Tony Jeapes dedicates an entire chapter to it in Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 143-58.

[57] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 69-71; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 21. See Beckett, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 188, for Qaboos' 1972-1973 campaign objectives.

[58] O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 226; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 20. Akehurst mentions how the ―SAF used to trail its coat deliberately,‖ a practice intended to initiate enemy contact. See Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 26. The Sultan was able ―to release [additional] SAF units for active service in the south,‖ in large part thanks to contributions of troops from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Iran to take up garrison duties in the north or to assist in installing and manning the fortified lines. See Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development,‖ 14.

[59] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 20-21; Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 147-148. Ian Becket provides additional detail on the countries that contributed the necessary materials along with the amount of wire, pickets, and mines consumed in the process of constructing the Hornbeam Line alone. Beckett, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 188-89.

[60] O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 226; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 36, 82; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 76. It is important to note that expansion of SAF involved more than merely increasing its numbers. The Sultan was aware of the disapproval with which other Arab states looked upon the British role in Oman and the British well understood the need to prepare Omanis for increasing levels of responsibility within SAF. Hence, the SAF became a well-trained force in terms beyond important soldiering skills, beginning with the rudiments of reading and writing, and extending all the way to advanced skills in medicine and engineering. Provision was also made for their professional development, so that Omanis could engage upon a career path that would one day take them into senior leadership positions. This was part of a process referred to as Omanisation. Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 140-41; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 72-73.

[61] Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 52; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 76.

[62] Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 63-64; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 76-77.

[63]BI060, Dhofar Veteran, Interview by Mark Battjes, Ben Boardman, Robert Green, Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, Dustin Mitchell, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 2 April 2011, United Kingdom.

[64]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 99, 139; Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 222.

[65]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 222, 211.

[66]Ibid., 212.

[67]Ibid., 222-23.

[68]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 223; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 139.

[69]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 223-24; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 156-57.

[70]A meeting of PFLOAG convened in January 1974 led to the abandonment, at least for the moment, of the wider aims of extending their influence over the Arabian Gulf. Increasing logistics and communications issues, along with continued defections, made it prudent to narrow the focus strictly to Oman. O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 217-18.

[71]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 224-25.

[72]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 225-26; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 175.

[73]O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 5-26, 218-26. The variables are ordered in accordance with the manner they are presented in this thesis.

[74]O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 219-20.

[75] Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 229. For parallel to barrier methods employed by French to prevent material support to the insurgency, see Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 77.

[76]O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 220; BI060, Interview.

[77]Peter Sibley, *A Monk in the SAS*, 2nd ed. (London: Spiderwize, 2011), 62.

[78]O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 223.

[79]Ibid., 223-24.

[80]Beckett, ―Campaign in Dhofar,‖ 176.

[81]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 76; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 31-38.

[82]O'Neill, ―Revolutionary War in Oman,‖ 220-22.

[83]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 81-82.

[84]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 164.

[85]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 54; Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 148.

[86]See chapter introduction and footnote two.

[87]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 82, 63.

[88]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 50-58.

[89]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 228.

[90]BI050, Interview.

[91]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 229.

[92]Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 72.

[93]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 228-29; Gardiner, *Service to the Sultan*, 52-53; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies,‖ 81.

[94]McKeown, ―The Dhofar War and Its Significance,‖ 102.

[95]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 233.

[96]BI070, Interview.

[97]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 234.

[98]BI080, Retired General Officer, Interview by Ben Boardman, Robert Green, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 3 April 2011, United Kingdom.

[99]BI050, Interview.

[100]BI070, Interview.

[101]Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 54.

[102]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 232.

[103]Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 148.

[104]BI050, Interview.

[105]Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development,‖ 11.

[106]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 234.

[107]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 74-75; Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 35. McKeown claims that the information service was ―scrupulous in broadcasting only the truth." McKeown, ―The Dhofar War and Its Significance," 99.

[108]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 232.

[109]BI060, Interview.

[110]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 57.

[111]McKeown, ―The Dhofar War and Its Significance," 102.

[112]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 229.

[113]Ray, *Dangerous Frontiers*, 189.

[114]War Office, *Keeping the Peace* (1957), 39, 31.

[115]See explanation of TELIC provided in section titled ―Chronological Overview" in next chapter.

[116] Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 112.

[117]BI070, Interview.

[118]Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 113; War Office, *Keeping the Peace* (1963), viii, 2.

[119]War Office, *Keeping the Peace* (1963), 31.

[120]See preceding case study.

[121]War Office, *Keeping the Peace* (1963), 66.

[122]See preceding case study.

[123]BI050, Interview; BI060, Interview; BI070, Interview; BI080, Interview; BI090, Retired General Officer, Interview by Ben Boardman, Robert Green, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 4 April 2011, Warminster, England.

[124]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 230-32; Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 73.

[125]McKeown, ―The Dhofar War and Its Significance," 98-99.

[126]Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 117.

[127]See ‚Counterinsurgent Methods' within analysis of ‚British Counterinsurgency in Malaya' in previous chapter of this thesis.

[128]Ministry of Defense, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1969), 42.

[129]Ladwig, ―Supporting Allies," 78.

[130]Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 85.

[131]Jeapes, *Operation Oman*, 36-37; Price, ―Oman: Insurgency and Development," 11; Akehurst, *We Won the War*, 61-62. Akhurst provides a good explanation of why it was necessary to employ firqas in their own tribal areas.

[132]BI070, Interview.

[133]Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine," 85.

[134]Ministry of Defense, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1977), 46-47; War Office Code 70516, *Counter Revolutionary Operations*, Part 2–Procedures and Techniquies, London: Ministry of Defense, August 1977, 133-34.

[135]Ministry of Defense, *Counter Revolutionary Operations* (1977), 30-31, 50-51.

[136]BG040, Former Brigade Commander. Interview by Nathan Springer and Thomas Walton, 15 March 2011, Fort Stewart, Georgia.

CHAPTER 4

REDISCOVERY OF COIN IN SOUTHERN IRAQ

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that a statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.

— Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The most brilliant plans will fail if they are badly carried out, whereas brave, efficient, well-motivated servicemen can achieve success despite the most indifferent orders or plans.

— John Akehurst, *We Won the War: The Campaign in Oman 1965–1975*

[T]he 2001 COIN doctrine was the most criticized and least read piece of doctrine in the British army. When we went into Iraq, we had a piece of doctrine, which wasn't great, but it certainly wasn't bad, but we failed to read it.

— British field grade officer, Oral History Interview

The chapter will begin with a chronological examination of British involvement in Iraq, focusing on what became their area of responsibility in southern Iraq while maintaining connectivity to key events in the north. These included US confrontations with al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Sunni militants in Fallujah, US operations against Shi'a militants in Najaf and Sadr City, and the al-Askari mosque bombing by AQI in Samarra.[1]

This overview will also examine the evolving nature of the conflict side by side with the gradual shift in the manner in which British commanders perceived their mission. Initially, conflicting opinions abounded ranging from peace support, to nation building to countering insurgency. The consensus that it was indeed a COIN operation all along came only after the situation had spun out of control, whereby wider coalition assistance was required.[2]

This chapter will focus on the delayed application of British COIN doctrine and experience in Southern Iraq during Operation TELIC.[3] The last chapter concluded that some innovative practices used in Oman, along with contextual similarities that could have suggested similar adaptations in Iraq, were not adequately represented in subsequent revisions of British COIN doctrine. This was due to some extent on the fact that the British very quickly turned their attention away from COIN during the period immediately following Oman. One thing this chapter reveals is that this loss of focus also affected how well that which was recorded was subsequently read, discussed, and debated within the force.[4]

The chapter will further aim to demonstrate the validity of British COIN doctrine relative to the situation in Basra beginning in the spring of 2004. It will examine the various reasons why the British delayed proper implementation of COIN until the spring of 2008. It will touch upon some of the British arrogance that surfaced in US/UK tensions as early as 2004/05 provided false confidence to the British as they headed down the dead-end of accelerated transition even as the US reversed direction in early 2007.[5]

Ultimately, the British Army's struggles in Southern Iraq were the result of two factors related to their long history of COIN: first, that they failed to fully capture its history (as evidenced in the preceding chapter); second, that their military education system had failed to retain an accurate memory of that knowledge within the force (as will be seen in this chapter). Those two factors, coupled with some arrogance were a prescription for near disaster. As one British officer speaking from personal experience noted, ―In 2003, Britain arrived in Iraq, started to do counterinsurgency with this arrogant

belief that we knew counterinsurgency; but we failed to refer back to how we did counterinsurgency [in past campaigns]."[6]

<div align="center">Chronological Overview</div>

Operation TELIC is the name the British gave to their support of US led operations in Iraq beginning with the invasion on 20 March 2003. After its initial support to the invasion consisting of 46,000 personnel from land, air, and sea forces, each rotation of TELIC primarily consisted of a division headquarters and a maneuver brigade from the army, though Whitehall drew down numbers precipitously to 9,000 by July 2003 and to 4,000 four years later. The British ran their last combat operation on 11 May 2009, bringing operation TELIC to its end, with the government of Iraq (GOI) and the Iraqi Army (IA) firmly in control of Iraq, though the road to that point was a rocky one indeed.[7]

<div align="center">Invasion through the Beginnings of Insurgency
(March 2003-April 2004)</div>

Carter Malkasian, a counterinsurgency advisor to the US 1st Marine Expeditionary Force during the invasion who spent a total of 24 months with them over the next three and a half years, places the advent of the insurgency in the summer of 2003. This is just a few months after Coalition forces defeated the military and political regime under Saddam Hussein in April.[8]

The insurgency initially started among the Sunni population, largely due to US efforts to establish democracy. The Sunni Arabs, previously dominant under Hussein politically but historically in a minority demographically, quickly saw their position and power slipping away. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), under US government

representative Paul Bremmer, further inflamed their fears by disbanding the heavily

Sunni officered Iraq Army, outlawing the Ba'ath Party, and forbidding anyone who had

been a member of that party from serving either in the emerging government of Iraq or in

any of its security forces.[9]

Militant Shi'a groups soon vying for power and/or influence in the vacuum

created by the collapsed regime included Moqtada al Sadr affiliated Jaish al-Mahdi

(JAM), the Iranian backed Badr Corps, and the Fadhila Party. Compounding problems,

foreign fighters fled across the borders into Iraq to fight under the banner of AQI.[10]

The military forces of the Coalition had no plan for confronting insurgency, either

from US Central Command, under General John Abizaid, or from the lead commander in

Iraq, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez. This left the five US division commanders to

determine how best to fight the growing insurgency within their own sectors of

responsibility. The predominant response was heavy-handed—with a liberal, sometimes

indiscriminate, use of firepower, further alienating the populace, particularly the Sunnis.

Major General David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, was one

notable exception, focusing his subordinates on protection of the population and precision

pursuit of the insurgents using detailed intelligence.[11]

With respect to the part the British played in this, senior military officers had

participated in plans formulated for the invasion at Central Command whereby it was

determined that the British would be responsible for southern Iraq, focusing initially on

securing Basra, an important port city in the south. After the invasion, the British Army

assumed responsibility for the four southern provinces of Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar, and

Muthuanna (See figure 6 below), collectively known as Multi-National Division –

Southeast (MND (SE)).[12]
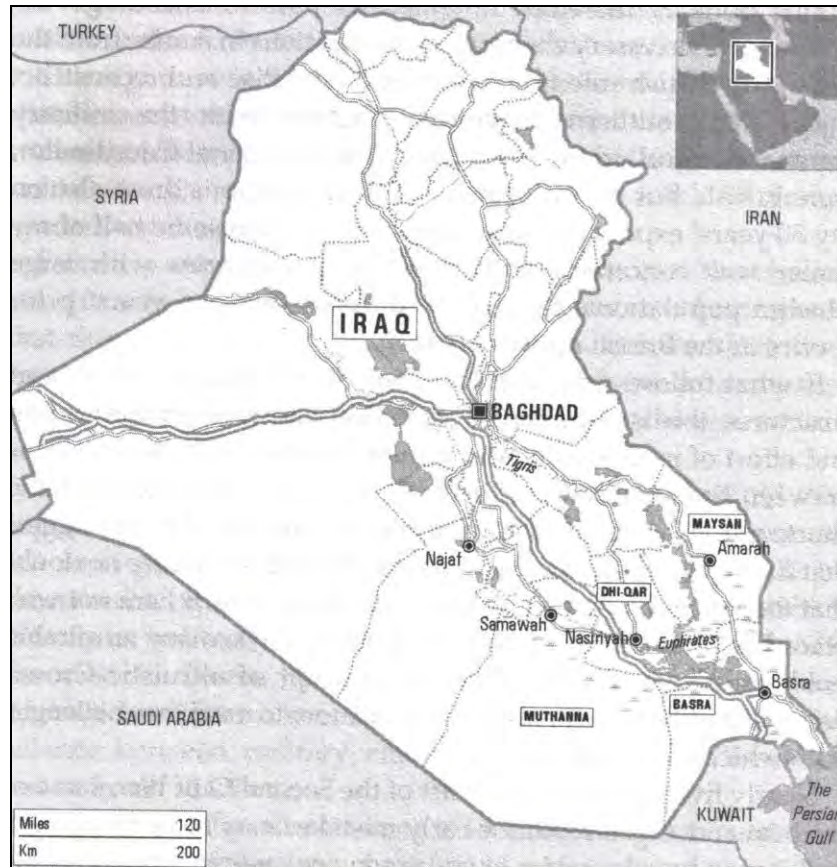
Figure 6.   Iraq
Source: Hilary Synnott, *Bad Days in Basra* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), xvi.

As such, it initially fell within the military command structure of Combined Joint

Task Force-7 headquartered in Bagdad, with government authority in Iraq temporarily

vested in CPA under Bremmer. Corresponding, MND (SE) was to work with CPA

(South) in conducting four lines of operation: security, economy, essential services, and

governance. Unfortunately, the British government provided CPA (South) with neither

the adequate numbers of civilian personnel nor the appropriate skill sets, thus setting the conditions for the British Army to become responsible to some degree for all lines.[13]

British forces focused early on intelligence collection and carefully considered how their operations might adversely influence people's perceptions. Because of this, they tried to maintain a small presence within the cities and focused very early on the formation of local security forces.[14] This seemed to be adequate until the initial euphoria of the Shi'a dominated south at having Saddam's regime overthrown gave way to the frustration of unfulfilled expectations. As one British officer serving as a brigade intelligence officer put it, the people anticipated ―a huge influx of improvements that did not come," at least not as rapidly as expected.[15]

Through the end of 2003, however, the environment in Basra and the rest of southern Iraq was benign compared to Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle within which the US was operating. Many attributed this to Britain's historically proven superior peacekeeping skills. ―The adaptability, social savvy, and restraint of the British soldiers were contrasted favorably with the heavy-handed and aggressive posture of the Americans."[16]

According to British Colonel Alexander Alderson, a member of the directing staff at the Joint Services Command and Staff College tasked to give a presentation on British COIN doctrine to the US led coalition headquarters in Baghdad called Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) in 2004, it was during this time that the insurgency took hold in southern Iraq, initially without notice of British commanders. The reason for this, as put forward by the brigade commander in Basra at the time, was a distorted perception of the mission as that of peacekeeping, modeled after the latter years of the conflict in Northern

Ireland and the concurrent campaign in the Balkans. They failed to see initial attacks with improvised explosive devices for what they were—signs of an emerging threat from Shi's militias, predominant among which was JAM.[17]

The British could have prevented this distortion by ensuring their forces were more familiar with current doctrine. Their 2001 COIN doctrine explicitly stated,

> The experience of numerous _small wars' has provided the British Army with a unique insight into this demanding form of conflict. Service in Northern Ireland provides the present generation of officers with it main first-hand source of basic experience at [the] tactical level but also tends to constrain military thinking on the subject because of its national context.[18]

What should have been clear was that there were minority groups within the populace vying for influence within the political process. The Shi'a militias in the south, as well as those groups confronting the US in central and northern Iraq, were armed groups within the state —intent on forcing political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of people to accept such a change."[19] Beginning with the spring of 2004, it became increasingly inescapable that the Coalition was indeed facing an insurgency.[20]

Sadrist Uprising through the Outbreak of Civil War
(April 2004-March 2006)

During the period covered herein, tensions increased between the US headquarters in Baghdad and MND (SE). From the US perspective, the British were too quick to take credit for the relative calm in the south as compared to the north, comprehending neither the intensity of violence in Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle, nor the sacrifice it demanded of US troops. Correspondingly, British commanders felt that their sector was being short-changed on resources because of an over-emphasis by CPA

on the importance of Baghdad. They also felt that their contributions outside their own sector, such as when they provided a battle group to assist US forces in their second battle of Fallujah in late 2004, were largely unappreciated.[21]

In the meantime, security in the south was deteriorating. Though in retrospect it appears that this was largely due to the British Army's own distorted perceptions and oversights, it was also partly due to factors outside their control. US actions during 2004 against AQI and Sunni insurgents in Fallujah, as well as those against JAM in Najaf and Sadr City, created subsequent surges in violence, some of which spilled over into the south. In June of 2004, in spite of escalating violence, the Coalition completed the United Nations mandated Transition of Authority to an Iraqi Interim Government and General George Casey assumed command in Iraq, with an immediate focus on transitioning security to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Lieutenant General David Petreaus returned to Iraq to oversee the formation of the ISF to include 10 IA divisions.[22]

British forces deployed to Iraq in November 2004 as part of TELIC 5 focused on security leading up to the January 2005 elections for a transition government. After elections, they shifted their focus to what they had come to refer to as Security Sector Reform (SSR). Though not yet codified in doctrine, the British saw SSR as their answer to the evolving theater transition strategy and the key to rapid withdrawal of British forces from Iraq. They were well aware, however, of attendant risks, such as a premature sense of independence by ISF and the need for Coalition forces to be postured to assist when needed.[23]

Rotations 6 and 7 of TELIC, operating in Iraq between April 2005 and April 2006 became increasingly preoccupied with force protection due to the increase in both

number and lethality of Improvised Explosive Devices. This development, along with the increasing refusal of the Basra Provincial Government and IA in their sector to cooperate brought British efforts at SSR to a near halt. The commanding officer of MND (SE) during TELIC 7, Major General John Cooper, pushed subordinate commanders to think through problems in their sectors in terms of COIN rather than peace support. Nevertheless, the campaign strategy remained focused on SSR and transition. Alongside transition, the British developed the concept of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), framing British efforts toward withdrawal in terms of Iraq's ability to assume responsibility for its own security and governance.[24]

Through the end of 2005, the target of all insurgent groups, be they Sunni, Shi'a, or foreign fighters affiliated with AQI, was primarily the coalition. In February of 2006, AQI blew up the al-Askira mosque in Samarra. The resulting sectarian violence kicked off between Shi'a and Sunni was the premeditated aim of this attack. The three Shi'a militias in Basra vying with one another for power now conducted a violent campaign against the sizable Sunni minority, causing many to flee. Prime Minister Maliki, newly elected in the December 2005 national election, now faced an escalating civil war.[25]

<div align="center">

Desire to Institute COIN Overcome by Premature Push
toward Transition (April 2006-September 2007)

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In April 2006, Major General Richard Shirreff replaced Cooper, agreed with his predecessor's characterization of the mission as COIN, but quickly assessed that British forces were still treating Iraq like Bosnia. He also bemoaned the uncoordinated agencies running amuck in Basra and throughout Iraq without one person to coordinate the effects of all their efforts.[26]

Transition continued throughout 2006, with PIC occurring in Muthana in July and Dhi Qar in September. In the more troublesome province of Maysan looting by the civilian populace immediately followed the turnover of the battle group's main base to the Iraqi Army.[27]

During the summer of 2006, Shirreff succeeded in reengaging the provincial council in Basra with the establishment of the Permanent Joint Coordination Center at Basra Palace. In the meantime, those tasked with providing oversight from Whitehall at the Permanent Joint Headquarters in London completed one of their periodic reviews and initiated a further drawdown of forces.[28]

Shirreff, ―running against the grain of the drawdown," initiated Operation SINBAD. The intent was to divide Basra into discreet areas and then to systematically isolate and ―pulse" forces into an area to root out death squads and militias. This was to be followed by a strong IA presence to provide security and the completion of quick-impact short-term projects to instill confidence in Iraqi progress toward securing and caring for their own people. In the meantime, the police were to receive retraining in preparation to take over from military forces, which would then move on to the next area.[29]

SINBAD was reminiscent of the operational design employed by Briggs and Templer in Malaya and later characterized by Sir Robert Thompson as clear, hold, winning, won.[30] It continued through the first few months of 2007 and, although it succeeded in having a detrimental impact on JAM leadership, the long-term effects were negligible ―due to the lack of resources, from both Whitehall and MNC-I [what was then

the US led coalition headquarters in Baghdad], and a lack of political will to see the operation through."[31]

Throughout most of the remainder of 2007, the British main effort continued to be moving toward PIC in the remaining two provinces, improving IA capabilities, and improving security by targeted strikes against JAM leadership. PIC took place in Maysan in April. Achieving PIC in Basra continued to present the British with the dilemma of how to effect transition to largely ineffective ISF and the withdrawal of their own forces on their own terms. As long as it was necessary for their own forces to maintain security, casualties would continue to mount, a reality increasingly unacceptable domestically and politically back home.[32]

Much of the problem with PIC had to do with the manner in which the British were transitioning security to the ISF. Historically, indigenous forces, such as the home guard in Malaya and the *firqa* in Dhofar, had been a huge force multiplier. However, the manner in which British officers lived with, worked with, and mentored these forces was critical. US Colonel Peter Mansoor, who served in Iraq as executive officer to MNF-I commander General Petraeus when he took over in February of 2007 observed during this period, ―[S]ecurity force weakness [in Basra] was compounded by the British refusal to embed advisors in Iraq units."[33]

In addition to problems with PIC, strategic dissonance began to surface between MND (SE) in Baghdad and MNF-I in Baghdad. The British strategy of working toward PIC by handing over security to ISF while pulling back to their Contingency Operating Base outside Basra was in synch with the accelerated transition policy of MNF-I through December 2006. However, it was ―out of kilter" with the new US strategy of pushing

small units off their giant Forward Operating Bases into Joint Security Stations and

Combat Outposts being implemented by now General David Petraeus, who assumed

overall theater command in February. Ironically, the newly adopted US approach

resonated with historic British COIN practice and theory. [34]

Even within their own ranks, many British officers questioned why MND (SE)

practices ran contrary to MNF-I COIN guidance provided in July 2007, reflecting the

updated population focused US strategy. This new guidance admonished forces within

Iraq to do each of the following.

1. Secure the people where they live
2. Give the people justice and honour
3. Integrate civilian/military efforts—this is an inter-agency, combined arms fight
4. Get out and walk—move mounted, work dismounted
5. We are in a fight for intelligence—all the time
6. Every unit must advise their Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) partners
7. Include ISF in your operations at the lowest possible level
8. Look beyond the Improvised Explosive Device—get the network that placed it
9. Be the first with the truth
10. Make the people choose[35]

Initial refusal to send their incoming commanders and key staff to the COIN Center of

Excellence the US established at Taji, modeled after similar in-theater training facilities

such as the Far East Land Forces Training Center in Malaya, served as further evidence

of a baffling resistance to practices the British were responsible for innovating.[36]

Concurrent to the US surge, the British announced further troop reductions, with

the US trying to play down this apparent disconnect by agreeing with British assessments

of a more secure environment in the south. Many commentators questioned both the

British view and the sincerity of the Americans in defending it.[37]

Another disparity between British practice and that of their US counterparts related to the manner in which each worked toward improving ISF capabilities. The Americans embedded a twelve-man Military Transition Team (MiTT) with every IA battalion. This team helped them plan operations and worked alongside them during execution. The British conducted what they called ―joint and centrally coordinated operations.‖ In reality, the British coordinated operations and monitored them through the Permanent Joint Coordination Center, periodically conducting ―mentoring visits‖ to IA manned vehicle checkpoints.[38]

British forces actually emulated then current US practice by embedding four-man teams in each of the two IA battalions it sent to assist US operations in Baghdad in February 2007. The promising results beg the question as to why they did not institute the same practice within battalions of the 14th IA Division in MND (SE). Such a shift in approach was clearly had its advocates. From the view of Dr. Daniel Marston, who holds the Ike Skelton Distinguished Chair of COIN at the US Command and General Staff College and who met with and debated with its officers and non commissioned officers of the British Army from 2006 through 2008 as an advisor, ―[M]any British commanders were perplexed and frustrated with the hands-off approach in general use in MND (SE) throughout 2007 and early 2008.‖[39]

Citing inadequate numbers to secure the population in a manner called for under COIN doctrine and failing to see how proper embedding could turn the IA into a powerful force multiplier, British commanders in theater concentrated on raids to weaken radical elements within JAM while trying to broker deals with those within the organization who were more moderate. This effort was successful in weakening JAM

enough to conduct a ―withdrawal in contact" of remaining troops within Basra Palace in September 2007. A ―skillful withdrawal" though it was, the consolidation of all British troops away from the populace who desperately needed security to their own COB was a tacit admission of defeat.[40]

<center>Snatching Victory from Defeat--A Re-Acquaintance
with Doctrine (October 2007-May 2009)</center>

Shi'a militias continued to pound the British Contingency Operating Base by the Basra Airport with increased frequency. The British responded by reaching an ―accommodation" with JAM whereby they agreed to cede the city to ISF control in exchange for cessation of attacks on its Contingency Operating Bases. Given that ISF were not prepared to secure the populace, JAM was now in control. In spite of this, and in spite of continued attacks against the COB, the British amazingly allowed PIC to occur in Basra in December 2007.[41]

The British could justify this decision by continuing to characterize incidents of violence in Basra as acts of criminality rather than a continuation of sectarian violence. Colonel Richard Iron, advisor to General Mohan, then commander of Iraqi forces in Basra, argued that the problem was not criminality but rather JAM asserting control over a weakened populace by executing their own brand of justice. Iraqi leaders became increasingly concerned about the situation in Basra.[42]

The failure of the British to adhere to the basic COIN dictum to secure and control the populace, whether because they were unwilling or unable, was at the root of the rise of militias as an alternate means of security beginning in the early days of post-invasion looting and chaos. This underscored a significant opportunity lost early on,

<center>134</center>

especially considering that the majority group within the population would have welcomed more aggressive efforts to enforce security given that, as Shi'a, they welcomed the overthrow of Saddam in contrast to predominantly Sunni center over which the US presided.[43]

Belatedly, Mohan, with Iron's assistance, drew up plan to build ―an effective counter-insurgent security infrastructure." Implementation required additional forces, money, and equipment. On 20 March 2008, Mohan briefed the plan to Petraeus, who then briefed it to the Prime Minister the next day. Maliki refused to adhere to the operational timeline in the plan, which called for commencement in May. He traveled to Basra to initiate Operation Charge of the Knights (CotK) personally on 24 March.[44]

The operation initially flopped due to inadequate planning of specifics; but Theater Command was determined that this GOI initiative to retake Basra not fail. The MNC-I commander moved his tactical operations center to Basra and provided additional assets: the 1st Iraqi Army Division with its US Marine Corps (USMC) Military Transition Teams (MiTTs), US Special Operations Forces, as well as air (fixed-wing), aviation (rotary-wing), and unmanned aerial vehicle (surveillance and reconnaissance) support. Concurrently, the British configured MiTTs and embedded them with IA already in Basra.[45]

Mohan launched the counterattack into Basra on 2 April. He initially secured access routes and then cleared pockets of resistance systematically. Alderson reports that thereafter,

> British forces in Basrah remained embedded with the IA until the end of Operation TELIC, and their position with the Iraqi Army was greatly enhanced as a result. . . . The tactical successes gained by the MiTTs were as notable as those

gained by the SAS and loan service officers working with the firqat and the Sultan's Armed Forces during the war in Dhofar in the 1970s.[46]

The success of CotK restored confidence to the IA and, perhaps more importantly, to the people of Basra. It conferred legitimacy to Maliki, who provided leadership, and the IA, which shouldered a substantial portion of the combat burden.[47]

Lest the wrong conclusion be drawn, the British within MND (SE) at the time of CotK were not consumed with embarrassment because they needed assistance from the GOI and MNC-I to make it work. Marston put it this way. ―[O]n the contrary, they welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate their professionalism and their ability to utilize the key ingredients in COIN warfare, learning and adapting." Without additional resources, the opportunity would have been lost.[48]

<u>The Applicability of British COIN Doctrine to the
Character of the Conflict Encountered</u>

As mentioned earlier, some cast doubt upon the applicability of past Britain COIN experience, theory, and doctrine to Iraq. Warren Chin, a senior lecturer at the Defense Studies Department at King's College in London details aspects of this debate but ultimately concludes that the doctrine was not obsolete. Political and military leaders simply failed to apply it.[49] As one field grade officer put it, the 2001 British COIN manual ―was the most criticized and lease read piece of doctrine in the British Army." This lack of understanding is further underscored by his charge that, beginning in 1997, ―the British failed to teach doctrine properly."[50]

James Wither, a faculty member in the Marshall Center's College of International and Security Studies, underscores this point by drawing attention to the fact that the British, who initially seemed to view their mission as peacekeeping, were not even

following prescribed doctrine for this COIN-like operation. As with COIN, peacekeeping doctrine recommends ―coordinated planning and execution across all relevant government departments." Wither agrees with Chin that the failure of British COIN in Iraq was due simply to the fact that it was ―never truly applied."[51]

Testing the opposing view, Chin cites two sides of the argument against British COIN doctrine's validity in Iraq. The first relates to ―the changing environment in which current COIN is conducted." Britain fought past insurgencies in places that it had administered colonially, such as in Malaya, and/or to which it had long cultural and social ties, as in Oman. In Iraq there was a vacuum in which there was no functioning government, not alone one to which Britain had previous ties, and it had little familiarity with the culture with which it was dealing. To make matters worse, because of the political vacuum, they were fighting not one insurgent group but many, all vying for their own influence and power.[52]

The second side of this argument relates to ―the nature of insurgent strategy." Such post-Cold War changes as urbanization, globalization, the increasing importance of religion and ethnicity in conflict, and the material constraints of having no super-power sponsor make for a much different insurgent than that of the Maoist insurgencies of the Cold War period. The insurgent groups that emerge under these conditions capitalize on new technologies that provide them inexpensive means of transport, communication, and fund transfer. Reliance on these technologies by state entities of government, commerce, essential services, and defense also provides targets for today's insurgent looking to undermine domestic support for governments struggling to re-assert control.[53]

Chin concludes that, while it is true that today's insurgent is operating in a globalized, urbanized environment, exploiting different themes, and working with far more technical finesse, British COIN still provides a model by which to coordinate the tasks of filling the vacuum of ungoverned or poorly governed spaces with security, essential services, development, and governance.[54]

In past campaigns, the British set up a system of committees operating at the national, provincial, district, and local levels of government, which included the police, intelligence services, military, and all principal civilian departments of state. The intent was to secure and protect the population; to win their active support via psychological, political, economic, and social programs; and to wage a discriminate and proportionate campaign against insurgents using information gleaned from a supportive populace.[55]

Chin attributes the British Army's failure to institute such methods in Iraq on a number of obstacles, some over which the army had little control, others that were self-inflicted. The former includes US decisions to focus on Baghdad, dissolve the Iraqi Army, ban former Ba'ath party members from leadership, and militarily oppose Sadr. The latter includes overlooking the importance of securing the populace, precipitous reduction in forces, failure to secure arms dumps immediately upon occupation, missteps due to neglect of cultural sensitivity, mischaracterization of the threat due to imposition of inappropriate models, and the lack of intelligence caused by inadequate contact with the populace.[56]

By Chin's estimate, complex environment aside, the main reason why the military in theater failed prior to 2008 to institute time-honored methods was the absence of support and guidance from officials back in Britain.[57] On the other hand, Marston

questions the value of what he sees as ―the blame game,‖ which is counter-productive to critical self-reflection.[58] Mansoor certainly deflects no blame when he writes, ―The British failure in Basra was . . . a failure by senior British civilian and military leaders to understand the political dynamics at play in Iraq, compounded by an arrogance that led to an unwillingness to learn and adapt.‖[59]

Marston cites a dozen characteristics of successful COIN gleaned from case studies of successful British campaigns of the past.

1. Comprehension of existing doctrine
2. Adaptation to local situations and learning from mistakes
3. Risk-taking organizations
4. Harmony of effort
5. Small-unit approach
6. Corporate memory within theatre HQs [headquarters]
7. Appropriate training
8. Reconciliation amongst their enemies
9. Ongoing education in COIN
10. Population security
11. Understand local perspectives—non-western metrics
12. Raise, mentor and fight with indigenous forces (army/paramilitary police/local auxiliaries[60]

Items on this list resonate with observations made in case studies of successful campaigns such as Malaya and Oman. Current US COIN doctrine found in FM 3-24 borrows heavily from this rich heritage. Many of these items were conspicuously missing in Southern Iraq prior to the spring of 2008.[61]

Interestingly, one senior British officer who worked in both General Casey‗s and General Petraeus‗ staff cited that the transition team concept developed by one of his subordinates during Casey‗s tenure used as a model the BATTs in Oman during the 1970s. He furthermore conceded that, while the US learned to employ what came to be called MiTTs successfully in mentoring ISF, the British did not embrace it and ―were

found wanting."[62] It bears clarifying, however, that both US MiTTs and the forces they embedded with were regular army units, certainly not identical to the SAS BATTs and the irregular *firqas*. British officered SAF might be a better analogy.

This somewhat awkwardly drawn parallel could be a clue as to one reason why British forces did not intuitively see the application of their doctrine to Iraq. An emphasis on the campaigns in Malaya and Northern Ireland at the neglect of earlier campaigns in the Middle East, like Oman, deprived the British Army of a cultural context for applying COIN principles that may have benefited them in Iraq. This could also reflect a broader problem of losing the adaptive approach that informed present doctrine by seeing defining characteristics and principles as a template rather than a starting point for further adaptation. With such an approach, it is too easy to dismiss doctrine simply because it does not conform to the peculiarities of the current situation.[63]

Nonetheless, the British Army's 2001 Field Manual, *Counter Insurgency Operations* clearly articulated time-tested, enduring COIN principles that evolved from past experiences:

1. Political Primacy and Political Aim
2. Coordinated Government Machinery
3. Intelligence and Information
4. Separating the insurgent from his Support
5. Neutralizing the Insurgent
6. Longer Term Post-Insurgency Planning[64]

These principles, along with a ―framework" involving a focus on the root economic, political, and social causes, a stress on ―discriminate use of force," and a genuine effort to win and maintain support of the people, comprise the ―winning formula" for Britain's past COIN successes.[65]

The same doctrinal manual cautions against an approach to future insurgencies constrained by experience, as pointed out earlier, particularly with respect to Northern Ireland. It warns of the increased degree of difficulty afforded by the pervasiveness of the media, the scrutiny of human rights organizations, and the increased involvement of international bodies. ―Thus whilst military planning should draw upon the lessons of the past, doctrine must evolve if it is to remain relevant.‖[66]

It is clear then that their doctrine itself warns of its own inadequacies in the face of a constantly changing environment. Nevertheless, that need did not invalidate existing doctrine. Field Manual 3-24, the US COIN doctrinal manual published in 2006 after three years of conflict in Iraq, ―[u]nsurprisingly . . . acknowledged the validity of enduring British counterinsurgency principles developed since 1945.‖ There is adequate evidence that the absence of a basic understanding of doctrine was far more relevant to initial failure in Iraq than was the datedness of the doctrine.[67] As the field grade quoted in the epitaph implies, military professionals should at least read doctrine before they disparage it as irrelevant.

<div align="center">Reasons for Resisting Application of Its Own Doctrine</div>

If the problem in Iraq was insurgency and if the British had a valid doctrine for addressing it, then the question remains as to why it took them so long to apply the appropriate remedy. Part of the problem had to do with a failure to maintain corporate consciousness of COIN, refining and revising it through discussion and debate within their staff college. This aspect will be addressed later. However, it was also partly due to the fact that it took a long time for them to identify the problem. British operational reviews variously characterized the mission in Iraq as one of nation building,

peacekeeping, and COIN. Inconsistency and confusion continued to plague operations nearly to the end.[68]

Neither the British nor the Americans considered the possibility of an insurgency going into Iraq. Pre-conflict planning focused only on the threat of AQI. The ability to identify it once it did surface may have been hindered by narrow doctrinal definitions of insurgency as an ―organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government" still found within some British doctrinal manuals at the time. This, however, only further underscores the doctrinal validity of the 2001 COIN manual, which takes a much more nuanced approach in its definition of insurgency as ―an organized armed political struggle, the goals of which may be diverse."[69]

Additionally most British soldiers, commissioned and enlisted alike, had no experience dealing with the type of ―hard insurgency" that emerged in Iraq. The army had faced nothing like it since the early stages of the Northern Ireland conflict in the 1970s. It would have served the British Army well to do a better job of maintaining an institutional memory within its force of the COIN doctrine gleaned from experience along with an appreciation for the historical contexts from which it came.[70]

Most memory that did exist was superficial. British Army officers and non-commissioned officers could list COIN principles when asked, but were unfamiliar with the details of past application. Many were unfamiliar with important theorists such as Thompson and Kitson. Ironically, many questioned the validity of their own 2001 COIN manual, along with past practice and theory that informed it, without adequately understanding it and without giving any consideration as to whether forces in theater had even tried to apply its prescribed approach. Some academics and civil servants who

―confirmed" that past COIN experience and current doctrine was inapplicable to the situation in Iraq further reinforced this subsequently debunked view.[71]

Part of the problem may have been that doctrine indeed did fail to maintain stride with the evolution of modern warfare. As indicated in the previous chapter, COIN doctrine remained fixated on Malaya even after subsequent campaigns revealed other useful adaptations. According to John MacKinlay, Head of the Insurgency Research Group in the War Studies Group of the King's College London, British doctrine at the start of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, also failed to account for impact of advances in communications, transport, and finance, as well as ―the concept of global culture," on the basic equation of COIN whereby the ―the key to success or failure was (and probably still is) the disposition of the population."[72]

However, doctrine, even when properly formulated and appropriated adjusted is still only a book of ideas. It has to be read, as the fine field officer points out at the outset of this chapter. The principles formulated based on past practice have to be set within the historical context from which they were drawn. Failure to do so could result in inaccurate interpretations of such principles as ―minimum force" and the inappropriate application of such practices as the formation of local security. Perhaps more importantly, as Ashley Jackson of Kings College London put is, ―received wisdom should be critically examined to ensure its continued validity."[73]

This brings us back to the subject of professional military education. One senior British officer who served on a brigade staff in Southern Iraq during 2005 cites multiple factors impacting the decline of education.

Part of it is rooted in the "psychology of the soldier." When soldiers are shot at they are instinctively drawn into a mindset that leads them to fire back—indiscriminately, in massive volume, and with all weapons systems available. This ingrained, aggressive approach ignores the complexity of the security environment in the 21st century. Fighting today's wars requires addressing what on the surface appears to be a conventional engagement—Fallujah in 2004, for example—while carefully considering ramifications of tactics used which ultimately could fuel insurgency. The aforementioned intellectually inhibiting psychology leads to pigeon-holing conflicts as conventional, simply because one is being shot at, while failing to sense the hybrid nature of conflict that characterizes the battlefield today.[74]

Reinforcing this psychology is the fact that education has not kept up with the increasing complexity of war. Subsequent to his brigade staff days, this same officer took command of a battalion preparing to go into Afghanistan. In mission readiness exercises, he made it a point to review decisions made and actions taken by his subordinate commanders in the training environment. He did so with them after each mock engagement. The point of these reviews, more often than not, was that actions taken because they are "safe," such as calling in an airstrike, are not necessarily the best actions to take. They could rather play into the adversaries hands, by strengthening his base of support within the populace (because of collateral damage). As he puts it, "We can do 101 safe things and win 101 engagements, and still lose [the war]."[75]

According to this same officer, the final part of this educational puzzle has to do with an increasingly "collegial, good-ole-boy approach to leadership from the battalion command level on up. Leaders who fail to permeate their troop formations with the kind

of smart thinking characterized above and whose units subsequently perform are not held accountable. He observes that poorly performing commanders were removed during the tough going early on in Northern Ireland, during the early to mid 1970s, but that somewhere along the way senior levels of command have lost sight of the fact that ―these campaigns matter and what happens at the tactical level matters at the theater level." In his opinion, when commanders of ―bits of the force" are not following sound theater-level dictates, ―find someone who will."[76]

Ultimately, both major coalition partners ―overran" Iraq in what seemed like a speedy victory, unprepared for the insurgency that followed. The US did so because its COIN doctrine was ―thin gruel" and failed to capture lessons from Vietnam, the British through relying too much on recent experience in Northern Ireland. However, Mansoor concludes they both had one thing in common: ―[T]he lack of formal professional military education in counterinsurgency operations resulted in over-reliance on faulty institutional memory, rather than on a more nuanced understanding of counterinsurgency warfare solidly grounded in historical study.[77]

Perhaps more quickly than their coalition counterparts, American combat leaders saw the relevance of British past practices in COIN environments. Some American officers and non commissioned officers embraced the British legacy of bottom up reform, examining case studies from previous campaigns of the British and other countries. Such officers embody the initiative and ingenuity implied by the quote from Akehurst captured in this chapter's epitaph. They examined theoretical treaties from the like of Thompson, Kitson, and Galula, among others. In all of this, they were seeking answers to problems they were encountering within the current operating environment of Iraq. Unfortunately,

even for the US, such reform was fragmentary at operational and tactical levels across the battle space and largely absent at the strategic level until early 2007.[78]

It should also be noted that not all British officers and non commissioned officers were resistant to adapting practices closer to their own legacy, from which the Americans were borrowing. Many ―agitated" for hewing to methods closer to MNF-I 2007 COIN guidance presented above. They also recognized that the COIN Center of Excellence that the Americans set up in Taji was modeled after such in-theater programs of their own and championed participation in it as soon as it was established in 2005. However, despite their efforts, as well as those their American counterparts, that involvement did not occur for two years, thereby delaying the mutual benefits of close collaboration.[79]

There were other areas where British combat leaders saw themselves falling short of best practices of the past. Six-month tour rotations did not afford time necessary to form productive relationships. There was no coordinated effort to capture departing unit information, thereby impairing intelligence collection. Each rotation started with revised campaign strategies and end states, resulting in shifting priorities and resource allocation. The lack of unity of effort and continuity reflected a command structure at odds with that perfected in places such as Malaya, Kenya, and Oman.[80]

A critical area in which many saw themselves falling short of successful practices adopted by the Americans fell in the area of partnering with locally recruited security forces. Americans set up joint security stations and combat outposts where they lived, trained, and operated alongside their Iraqi counterparts. British precedents for this included earlier case studies. Many within MND (SE) were frustrated with the hands-off approach adopted instead.[81]

Another important part of the part of the problem was that many in the army were blissfully unaware of their own ignorance. It appeared as though they had a better handle on southern Iraq than the Americans did further north, at least initially. In fact, failure to properly diagnose and address the problem helped perpetuate a misplaced sense of security while the overlooked insurgency was growing. It also did not help that the corporate memory of COIN that did exist was a bit selective and overly focused on restraint. Force in successful COIN historically had to be applied discriminately; but it was equally important that it be applied convincingly, often violently.[82]

To some extent, resistance was understandable. Indeed, by the summer of 2007 it is questionable whether there were adequate resources, personnel and otherwise, to execute the kind of aggressive measures needed to secure the populace and eliminate the insurgents. At that point, there were a mere 4,000 British troops available to secure Basra, a city of 2.5 million people and, without proper mentoring, ISF were not the force multiplier they had been in past conflicts. The lack of sufficient manpower was further compounded by the fact that Britain had already shifted its focus for troop deployments to Afghanistan. It is no wonder that in order to make the CotK successful, the British commander in Basra had to plead his case to MNF-I for additional assets.[83]

In all fairness, the British preoccupation with rapid transition of control to ISF—with seemingly little regard to whether they were actually ready to take it—was in keeping with the transition strategy of MNF-I through December 2006. The Iraqi Study Group commissioned by the US Congress recommended further speeding up that transition. It was not until the US administration of George W. Bush rejected the commission's recommendations in favor of the alternative troop-intensive surge strategy

championed by Petraeus that the British found themselves resisting a more comprehensive COIN strategy reminiscent of their own doctrine and past practice.[84]

This resistance ran contrary to time-honored practices of embedding with indigenous security forces, thereby among other things depriving ISF of quick access to necessary support such as air cover when required. It also ultimately ―abdicated" its responsibility to maintain security for the local populace, leaving that responsibility to the still weak IA, which was easily overmatched by the militias, which administered their own brand of justice in the city through 2007. In summation, in early 2007 when the US headed off their forward operating bases in small units to embed with local security and secure the populace, the British Army headed the other way, running backwards against the grain of its own COIN heritage and doctrine.[85]

This resistance, as indicated above, was not universal. Many British soldiers blamed the fact that they were lagging behind the adaptation of the Americans and flying fully in the face of their own COIN legacy on a lack of support, direction, and adequate resources from the defense establishment at Whitehall. In fact, many accused the Permanent Joint Headquarters of intentionally ―watering down" assessments from the field in order to make them more politically palatable back in London.[86]

In addition to externally imposed constraints and limitation, many leaders within the British Army readily admit to self-inflicted wounds. One officer with two tours in Iraq expressed frustration that ―we spent a hundred years doing counterinsurgency . . . but we forgot all of these lessons. In 2003, Britain started to do COIN arrogantly—assumed we knew COIN—but failed to look back at how we did COIN." This same officer was further frustrated by the fact that when the Americans, who had come into Iraq too heavy-

handed, began to adapt better COIN methods, ―we continued on our own little narrow-minded way."[87]

To an officer who just recently completed Intermediate Level Education at the US Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the deficiencies noted and frustrations expressed by British officers are eerily similar to those expressed by many colleagues in staff group discussions there—about the US Army. A soldier psychology that inhibits intellectual reflection, a system of professional education that does not adequately ground doctrine in history and subject it to rigorous debate, and a career management system reluctant to hold senior commanders to account for the failure of subordinates to learn, adapt, and perform well in today's complex security environment: these are clearly not factors confined to the British Army.[88]

A misplaced confidence in its innate COIN competency is what led the British Army to struggle in Southern Iraq. Some of its COIN heritage was not recorded; some of it was cherry-picked; much of it was just plain forgotten. To their credit, the US saw the value of more closely examining that history for ideas on handling the insurgency in Iraq before the British did themselves. The subsequent US turnabout in approach caught the British still headed in the wrong direction. The irony therein contained became the impetus for this thesis.

The end result however has been to come full circle to examine deficiencies that are more universal than probably most military professionals on either side of the Atlantic realize. At the end of the day, however, such critiques are meaningless, if mid-level officers who are tomorrow's senior commanders fail to accompany their critiques with viable solutions. This then is the aim of the next and final chapter of this thesis.

[1]The chronology used herein is based on that contained in chapter five of Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine‖139-176. Alderson was a member of the directing staff at the Joint Services Command and Staff College tasked to give a presentation on British COIN doctrine to Headquarters Multi-National Force-Iraq in 2004. As British involvement in Iraq wound down, he was largely responsible for the 2009 rewrite of that doctrine. His dissertation provides an excellent chronological overview of Operation TELIC, the details of which are amassed from research, oral history interviews with command and staff at all levels, and personal experience in Basra, particularly during 2007-2008. This was a period in which a dramatic turnaround in the security environment there took place.

[2]Daniel Marston, ―Smug and Complacent? Operation TELIC: The Need for Critical Analysis,‖ *The British Army Review* no. 147 (Summer 2009): 17.

[3]Explanation of TELIC provided in introduction to chronological overview.

[4]For an example of the candid admission of this stymied recollection of past COIN campaigns see Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 12. Mansoor, a US colonel, was the executive officer to General Petraeus when the latter was in command of MNF-I, 2007-2008.

[5]Much of this commentary arises from articles and interviews of military officers, academics, and policy makers from both the United Kingdom and the United States. Most of the sources cited within this chapter, to include already cited Alderson, refer frequently to factors involved in forestalling both the perception of insurgency and implementation of a doctrinally appropriate approach. Arrogance is an important factor (though only one) frankly admitted to by British authors and interview respondents. See, for example, Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 14.

[6]BI030, Field Grade Officer, Interview by Robert Green and Thomas Walton, 29 March 2011, United Kingdom.

[7]Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 141. For force numbers, see James Wither, ―Basra's not Belfast: the British Army, ‗Small Wars‗, and Iraq,‖ *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 20, no. 3-4 (September-December 2009), 624.

[8]Malkasian, ―Counterinsurgency in Iraq,‖ 9-10, 287.

[9]Ibid., 287-88.

[10]Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 142

[11]Malkasian, ―Counterinsurgency in Iraq,‖ 289.

[12]Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 141-42.

[13] Ibid., 142-43. Within a year, Combined Joint Task Force-7 morphed into a theater level corps command, Multi-National Corps-Iraq with subordinate division commands. See Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 149.

[14] Malkasian, ―Counterinsurgency in Iraq,‖ 290.

[15] BI030, Interview.

[16] Wither, ―Basra‗s not Belfast,‖ 613.

[17] Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 145-46.

[18] Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency Operations* (2001), B-2-1.

[19] Ibid., A-1-1.

[20] Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 139-40.

[21] Ibid., 150-51. An article written by British Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster for the *British Army Review* and subsequently reprinted in the November – December 2005 issue of the US journal *Military Review* unfavorably comparing US methods to those of its British counterpart helped highlight this tension.

[22] Malkasian, ―Counterinsurgency in Iraq,‖ 290-294.

[23] Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖148-50.

[24] Ibid., 151-53.

[25] Malkasian, ―Counterinsurgency in Iraq,‖ 301-03; Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 140, 155.

[26] Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 155.

[27] Ibid., 154.

[28] Ibid., 154, 156.

[29] Ibid., 157.

[30] See previous section on Malaya. See also Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 111-13.

[31] Marston, ―Adaptation in the Field,‖ 77.

[32] Alderson, ―Validity of British COIN,‖ 159, 161.

[33] Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 13.

[34] Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 159-60, 162.

[35] MNF-I COIN Guidance, July 2007; Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 75-76.

[36] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 76.

[37] Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 160.

[38] Ibid., 159-161.

[39] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 78.

[40] Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 162-63.

[41] Ibid., 163-64.

[42] Ibid., 164-65.

[43] Wither, "Basra's not Belfast," 620.

[44] Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 165-66.

[45] Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq,"308; Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 166-67.

[46] Alderson, "Validity of British COIN," 168.

[47] Ibid., 168.

[48] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 80.

[49] Warren Chin, "Why Did It All Go Wrong? Reassessing British Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Winter 2008): 132-33.

[50] BI030, Interview.

[51] Wither, "Basra's not Belfast," 613.

[52] Chin, "Reassessing British Counterinsurgency," 121. Concerning the complicating factor of multiple insurgent groups, Chin reminds the reader that there were times where Mao aligned with the Nationalists in China when it suited him. In the same manner, the three Shi'a groups the British faced joined forces when it suited their aims as well. Then when the common threat (the Coalition) was for the moment eliminated, the turned their attention once again to their internal power struggle (126-27).

[53] Ibid., 121-23.

[54] Ibid., 123-24.

[55]Case studies on Malaya and Oman herein contained attest to this.

[56]Chin, —Reassessing British Counterinsurgency," 128-33.

[57]Ibid., 124-25.

[58]Marston, —Need for Critical Analysis," 21.

[59]Mansoor, —Lessons of the Iraq War," 14.

[60]Marston, —Adaptation in the Field," 74-75.

[61]Ibid., 74.

[62]BI020, British General Officer, Interview by Aaron Kaufman and Thomas Walton, 31 March 2011, Warminster, England.

[63]Wither, —Basra's not Belfast," 618.

[64]Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency Operations* (2001), B-3-2.

[65]Chin, —Reassessing British Counterinsurgency," 120.

[66]Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency Operations* (2001), B-2-1.

[67]Wither, —Basra's not Belfast," 614, 619.

[68]Marston, —Adaptation in the Field," 71-72.

[69]Joint Warfare Publication 3-50, *The Military Contribution to Peace Support Operations*, 2nd ed. (London: Ministry of Defense, June 2004), Glossary-4; Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency Operations* (2001), B-2-1.

[70]Wither, —Basra's not Belfast," 616.

[71]Marston, —Adaptation in the Field," 71-72.

[72]John MacKinlay, —Is UK Doctrine Relevant to Global Insurgency?" *RUSI Journal* 152, no. 2 (April 2007): 35.

[73]Ashley Jackson, —British Counter-insurgency in History: A Useful Precedent?" *The British Army Review*, no. 139 (Spring 2006): 12-17, 19.

[74]BI110, Battalion Commander. Interview by Mark Battjes, Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, and Dustin Mitchell, 8 April 2011, United Kingdom.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 11-12.

[78]Marston, ―Need for Critical Analysis,‖ 17.

[79]Ibid., 18.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., 19.

[82]Wither, ―Basra‗s not Belfast,‖ 615, 617-18. Wither notes past research that indicated that experience in the Middle East should have taught the British that Arabs in particular respect the forceful application of power, ―especially when combined with magnanimity.‖ He goes on to point out that during the initial Sadrist uprisings in the spring of 2004 the British used armored forces to defeat JAM in Amara and to reoccupy Sadrist dominated portions of Basra. Such actions had support within the populace and many were subsequently disappointed at an inappropriate display of restraint when a growing insurgency called for a similarly forceful approach (622).

[83]Ibid., 624.

[84]Ibid., 624-25.

[85]Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 12-13.

[86]Marston, ―Adaptation in the Field,‖ 73-74.

[87]BI030, Interview.

[88]This thesis was written concurrently with the author‗s attendance at the staff college at Fort Leavenworth.

CHAPTER 5

KEEPING COIN IN MIND

> At the root of the problem lies the fact that the qualities required for
> fighting conventional war are different from those required for dealing with
> subversion or insurgency. . . . Gradually the more intelligent officers find
> themselves developing a new set of characteristics . . . . Those who are not
> capable of developing these characteristics are inclined to retreat into their
> military shells and try not to notice what is going on.
> — Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*

> [T]he commendable use of British counterinsurgency experience in developing
> military doctrine and education needs to be more firmly tethered to broader
> historical context if it is to form valuable guidance for future operations and
> contribute to the unrestricted thinking and debate that is considered so important
> in staff colleges today.
> — Ashley Jackson, *British Counterinsurgency in History: A Useful Precedent?*

As the above quote by Kitson argues, COIN requires a special adaptive approach that is much more nuanced than that required by other forms of military operations. As included case studies demonstrate, early detection of and appropriate responses to insurgency is crucial. Delayed recognition of the nature of the conflict and/or a clumsy response do not of themselves guarantee defeat; but they certainly make achieving ultimate success that much more painful.[1]

A delayed recognition of insurgency in Malaya, as evidenced within this thesis and attested to by others, caused the British Army to make ―initial military blunders that allowed the insurgents to become well established.‖[2] Other campaigns in Kenya and Cyprus were similar in this regard. It was certainly a factor in the French Army‗s demise in Algeria. That a preplanned, more deliberate approach was taken in Oman, once the political situation was suitable, actually set it apart from the norm.[3]

155

One aim of the Iraq case study was to identify causal factors for ineffective response by the British in southern Iraq, which included in large part a torturous re-acquaintance with the more intricate complexities of their own COIN doctrine and heritage. What emerges from a study of Operation TELIC is that, setting aside other factors over which British forces had no control, the army must take responsibility for misplaced confidence in its ability to execute COIN based on an incomplete and inaccurate recollection of it. Faulty memory and over reliance on recent experience adversely influenced both perceptions and prescriptions.[4]

This thesis goes beyond examining the problem and suggests possible ways to avoid painful relearning of lessons within the context of future COIN operations. The recommendations presented below do not follow from a belief that good doctrine is a placebo for this pain or the secret to success. Rather, it is this writer's belief that COIN doctrine—or any doctrine for that matter—if properly written, thoroughly disseminated, rigorously debated, and properly applied, can be an essential tool of many tools in achieving victory. This involves crafting useful doctrine well grounded in history, injecting it into the right kind of professional education system, and creating an environment in which criticism and debate is not only tolerated by encouraged.

<u>Creating Useful Doctrine</u>

Doctrine can be an important vehicle for retaining both depth and accuracy with respect to past campaigns. As indicated in the Iraq case study, a narrow focus on its application during post 1970s operations in Northern Ireland and on those of the 1990s in the Balkans hindered comprehensive understanding of the wider historical context of COIN. Remembrances of historical antecedents such as Malaya were limited to an

exaggerated image of ―minimum force" and ―hearts and minds."As Ashley Jackson, professor at King's College in London put it, ―the empire's opponents weren't defeated by berets and sweet reason alone."[5]

In addition to depth and accuracy, doctrine must have breadth. It should encompass the full range of experience. Concluding remarks in the Oman case study allude to its absence from the 1977 version of doctrine, which still contained the heavy scent of the jungle."[6] Subsequent rewrites in 1995 and 2001 failed to remedy this shortcoming adequately. The 2001 manual, which was in effect at the outset of TELIC, continued to be constrained in its historical context, both in terms of the diversity of cases examined and space afforded to each one. Not until the 2010 manual did case studies running multiple pages instead of mere paragraphs appear. It was also not until then that a case study of Oman surfaced.[7]

This latter point is of particular relevance concerning shortcomings indicated during the preceding chapter on Iraq. The 2010 manual's case study on Oman highlights the tremendous benefits of embedding British forces within both the SAF and the *firqat*, both in terms of the effectiveness of those forces and the increased intelligence obtained. It also emphasizes the importance of learning culture and language, as well as the need to apply non-western solutions, when providing support to foreign governments in putting down insurgency. Given the similarity of environmental, cultural, religious, and linguistic factors, Oman could have provided some useful practices for adaptation in Iraq.[8]

In further support to doctrinal inclusiveness, it is important not to allow useful lessons to fall by the wayside due to the narrow strategic focuses of the present. Referring again to Oman, the strategic focus of the mid-1970s had a detrimental impact on the

scope and focus of the 1977 manual. The 1995 COIN doctrine rewrite received scant attention because the strategic focus was still on ―major combat operations and peace support.‖[9]

More recent rewrites, particularly the latest one, show promise. In emphasizing the need for doctrine to cast a broad net in capturing all of past practice accurately, it should not be lost that the whole point of doctrine should be to recommend principles and practices for application in current and future conflicts. It therefore must anticipate new challenges created by emerging trends and technologies.

The 2001 COIN manual discussed the increasing role of such factors as international bodies, the media, and human rights organizations. It also forewarned of the rising danger of Islamism. The 2010 manual, using the Mozambique case as an example, alludes to the increases relevance of porous borders and ungoverned spaces—as is now the case in many areas of Africa—along with competition for increasingly scant resources as an underlying cause for insurgency.[10]

The applicability of doctrine must also provide a bridge across military services, governmental departments, governmental and non-governmental agencies, allied partners, and international bodies. A retired British officer who now writes and lectures on COIN speaks of the need for a ―global doctrine for counterinsurgency‖ in order to integrate governments, agencies, and armies into a ―genuinely international force.‖[11]

Finally, the actual application of doctrine is just as important as the principles adhered to in writing it. A recurring theme within discussions at the US Command and General Staff College has been the debate as to whether doctrine provides prescriptive rules that demand adherence or merely guidelines that beg consideration. Many of

students—comprised of mid-level officers—believe doctrine has become far too formulaic, reinforcing a checklist approach that may or may not fit emerging dynamics of current and future conflicts.[12]

Such an approach leads to doctrine that is both rigid and dry. Poorly written doctrine coupled with a shallow understanding COIN based only on recent experience likely contributed to the army's delayed perception of insurgency in Iraq. According to Wither, this shift from an adaptive to a formulaic approach to doctrine arose in the UK beginning in the 1990s.[13]

No matter how relevant, accessible, and amenable to adaptation doctrine is, left unread it is quite literally useless. The British Army's doctrinal 2010 rewrite of COIN demonstrates ways to enhance the appeal of reading or at least referencing doctrine. Increased historical context and footnotes leading to key historical works that further illuminate concepts are big plusses. Anecdotal illustrations from recent and/or ongoing operations help. Good illustrations and diagrams likewise contribute to its allure.[14]

<u>Educating the Force</u>

The institutional army cannot allow either COIN doctrine or the dissemination of it to atrophy due to a bitter aftertaste from Iraq. There is much to learn from failure as well as success. Recent interactions of this author with officers in England indicate a trend foreseen by Daniel Marston of ―moving on to Afghanistan‖ without taking the time to absorb fully the lessons of Iraq—the US Army must guard against this as well. He warns that the same misplaced desire to set aside a ―difficult, complex, and ultimately unsuccessful‖ campaign without extracting important lessons incurs the same risk as that experienced by the US Army in prematurely closing the book on Vietnam. The US

ultimately learned and adapted; but it paid the cost for many of the same lessons it should have already learned from Vietnam in a repeated and unnecessary loss of lives.[15]

Just as it is important to retain the knowledge and capabilities for fighting insurgency within the army, it is also critical to maintain an appreciation for the cross-governmental, multi-national, and inter-agency nature of COIN. To this end, military leaders must not only be prepared to lead their soldiers in executing COIN, but they must also ~~be~~ prepared to pass on their knowledge to politicians, civil servants, economists, members of local government and policemen where necessary."[16] In short, the military must be prepared to cross-pollinate its intimate knowledge of COIN in order to integrate effectively its efforts with the full range of political, economic, legal, and diplomatic measures essential to success.

In order to build the requisite breadth and depth of knowledge in today's leaders so that they are able to meet such demands, it is essential to link together the components of officer and non-commissioned officer education in a way that enhances logical progression, eliminates redundancy, and avoids mixed messages. Marston cites important improvements to COIN education at Sandhurst, where initial officer training takes place, as well as in programs at the staff college for mid-level officers. Yet, he notes that some British officers still bemoan a deficiency in the linkage between the two programs, as well as linkages with other proposed educational initiatives.[17]

All of this is not to say that COIN should now occupy a dominant place within military education. Today's armies must maintain the strategic, operational, and tactical dexterity to quickly adapt to and operate in a broad range of environments, oft times simultaneously within the same operational area. As the former British brigade staff

officer and battalion commander quoted in the last chapter so stringently stressed, COIN is not a type of war to be identified and appropriately addressed in isolation. It is an integral component of war in the 21st century.[18] There is ample evidence in earlier parts of this thesis to support the assertion that this has been the case throughout history.[19]

Neither is the intent in any way to sacrifice basic soldier training—there must be time set aside for the tactics, techniques, and procedures that allow soldiers to react quickly under fire. However, a historically-based education that provides officers and non commissioned officers with a proper frame of reference for doctrine covering the full range of demands they can expect to encounter is no less important than rifle marksmanship. It is the key to learning and preserving valuable lessons learned in order to avoid paying the price of re-learning them again.[20]

Taking Time to Reflect

Above all else, a learning and adaptive army must be willing to engage in critical self-reflection. It is easy to look at the situation in southern Iraq and find causes for failure over which the army had no control. The historical record references field assessments watered down by the military high command back in London, politicians more concerned with holding down casualty rates than in authorizing strategies that might make long-term success more likely, and resource shortages and troop reductions that constrained options in theater. However, it is important that the army examine its own part in failures that marred Operation TELIC.[21]

Patrick Little, a recently retired British Infantry officer with sixteen years of service and tours in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and Afghanistan, bemoans an absence of self-reflection, or at least a frustrating delay of such, especially in light of the analysis

that has already taken place from within some of the ranks of the US Army. Little

juxtaposes the tendency of some British officers, such as Aylwin-Foster in 2005, to rush

to judgment regarding its allies, with the thoughtful reflections of the US Army on itself.

While some senior British officers were looking outward in self-satisfied smugness, Little

credits US officers, such as Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl and Colonel Paul Yingling, for

authoring inward looking critiques. This institutional capacity to absorb such criticism

and respond constructively contributed to a substantial turnaround of US operational

methods in Iraq while the British Army was still plodding along in an inappropriate

manner reminiscent of the one the US abandoned.[22]

Peter Mansoor is a retired US colonel who served two tours in Iraq, one of them

as executive officer to then MNF-I commander General Petraeus. He mentions the US

failure to benefit from its previous failures in Vietnam in the COIN portion of that fight,

thereby painfully relearning its lessons early on in Iraq. He then compared that to the

British Army's over-reliance on a ―faulty institutional memory" of its successes such as

Malaya and Northern Ireland. The essence of the comparison is this: The US Army

started in a COIN knowledge deficit, yet more quickly learned and adapted, while the

British Army, complacently secure its own flawed memories, did neither until far later.[23]

Ironically, US commanders initially viewed the British Army as superior in terms

of COIN knowledge, experience, and capability, and sought out this expertise—the

British self-perception was likewise inflated. In actuality, the link between their doctrine

and its historical context had eroded due to inadequacies in the education system.

Remembrance of COIN was limited to its most recent operations that were bereft of

challenges of encountered in previous campaigns and which eventually surfaced in Iraq.

Their shallow and distorted memory allowed them to commit initial oversights of the initial signs of insurgency in much the same way as they had in Malaya.

It may be true that some US officers were ―over-generous‖ in their assessment of British retention of COIN expertise. However, the fact British officers such as Aylwin-Foster openly criticized the US military while their own army unknowingly went against some of its core principles smacked of ―an unattractive tendency toward smugness and a sense of arch superiority which was bound to rankle.‖[24] In the words of Ashley Jackson, ―Current British deployments . . . show that there is no room for complacency . . . and certainly no room for feint condescension towards the Americans and their conduct in such operations.‖[25] This American officer would sound the same note of caution regarding any reciprocated condescension directed toward the British.

It would be folly for any US Army officer to gloat over the acknowledgments made by senior and mid-level British officers that ―conceit led to a serious misunderstanding of the situation in southern Iraq.‖[26] Having been part of extensive interaction between US officers and British officers and non commissioned officers, it is this writer‘s impression that a great deal of mutual respect and appreciation exists. Now that Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation TELIC are officially ended, it is crucial that both allies continue ―evaluating operations and results, including admitting that mistakes were made, and learning lessons from them.‖[27] Future venues in which that collective wisdom can be applied to mutual benefit undoubtedly lie ahead.

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[1]Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 300. The epigraph quote is from Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 200.

[2]Wither, ―Basra‘s not Belfast,‖ 615.

³See earlier case studies herein presented.

⁴Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 12.

⁵ Jackson, ―British Counterinsurgency in History,‖ 12-22. As one US analysis put it, it is ―an enduring truth of counterinsurgency: that the lack of utility of conventional combat power should not be confused with a lack of utility of force in counterinsurgency.‖ Brian Burton and Nagl, John, ―Learning as we go: the US army adapts to counterinsurgency in Iraq, July 2004-December 2006,‖ *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 305.

⁶Gavin Bulloch, ―The Development of Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency–The British Experience,‖ *British Army Review* 111 (Winter 1995): 23. Brigadier Bullock (British Army, retired) was also the author of the 1995 COIN manual, the revision of the 1977 manual to which the quote refers.

⁷Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency Operations* (2001). Case studies include North Vietnam (A-2-A-1; 6 paragraphs), Columbian drug cartels (A-3-A-1; 6 paragraphs), Algeria (B-2-A-1; 6 paragraphs), and Thompson thoughts on Malaya and Vietnam (B-8-A-1; 4 paragraphs). This provides scant historical context. Contrast that with Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (2010). Case studies include Oman (CS3; 15 paragraphs), Aden (CS4; 17 paragraphs), Malaya (CS5; 18 paragraphs), and Mozambique (CS6; 9 paragraphs). Also includes expositions on the development of British COIN doctrine, the rise of Islamic extremism, and potential complicating features of future campaigns.

⁸Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (2010), CS3-1 through CS3-3. For British perspective on overlooked value of Oman, see James Wither, ―Basra‗s not Belfast: the British Army, ‗Small Wars‗, and Iraq,‖ 616.

⁹Alderson, ―Validity of British Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine,‖ 93.

¹⁰Ministry of Defense, *Counter Insurgency* (2001), B-2-1, A-1-G-1 through A-1-G-3; Ministry of Defense, Army Field Manual, *Countering Insurgency* (2010), CS6-4.

¹¹BI120, Retired Army Officer and COIN Author and Lecturer, Interview by Benjamin Boardman, Robert Green, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, 8 April 2011, King‗s College, London.

¹²Comments on discussion of doctrine at the US CGSC reflect the thesis writers own experience as a student during the period of July 2010 through June 2011.

¹³Wither, ―Basra‗s not Belfast,‖ 618.

¹⁴For increased historical context, see above footnote number five. For footnoting of key historical texts within the 2010 manual, see case studied referenced in note five. For the plethora of anecdotes and pictures, browse the manual.

[15]Daniel Marston, ―Adaptation in the Field,‖ 82.

[16]Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 300.

[17]Marston, ―Need for Critical Analysis,‖ 21.

[18]BI110, Interview. See footnote 74 of last chapter and associated portion of thesis.

[19]See, for instance, the earlier discussion in chapter 2 of the emergence of the concept of insurgency.

[20]This paragraph summarizes an appreciation gained for reading and discussing history within the context of this writer‘s year at CGSC. The drive to reduce doctrine to a list of principles provided on a laminated smart card or a power-point slide has the unintended consequence of encouraging laziness. It replaces critical reflection with memorization. What the army needs are leaders well read in history who can ensure their soldiers understand the relevance of those principles to the situation at hand.

[21]Wither, ―Basra‘s not Belfast,‖ 613.

[22]Patrick Little, ―Lessons Unlearned–A Former British Officer‘s Perspective on the British Army at War,‖ *Rusi Journal* 154, no. 3 (June 2009): 11.

[23]Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 11-12.

[24]Betz and Cormack, ―Iraq, Afghanistan and British Strategy,‖ 320. Introductory remarks indicate that, at the time of this article‘s writing, David Betz was a Senior Lecturer at King‘s College London and Anthony Cormack was a doctoral student there.

[25]Jackson, ―British Counterinsurgency in History,‖ 20, footnote 2.

[26]Mansoor, ―Lessons of the Iraq War,‖ 12.

[27]Marston, ―Adaptation in the Field,‖ 82.

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