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THESIS

**CONDUCTING THE SOFTER SIDE OF
COUNTERINSURGENCY**

by

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CONDUCTING THE SOFTER SIDE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

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requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In a counterinsurgency (COIN) the local population becomes the center of gravity. Over the past three years, the U.S. military has rewritten many field manuals that focus on COIN, to include a significant change to FM 3-0, *Operations*, and a complete revision of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. These changes in doctrine have forced the U.S. military's conventional force to reconsider its use of the kinetic force and begin to understand the use of more non-kinetic means, or the softer side of COIN, in order to reach sustainable peace. If non-kinetic actions are the way forward, how should units (battalion and below) be applying the softer side of COIN? This thesis considers through context and assessment the goals that are needed to achieve the right mix of kinetic and non-kinetic actions. Practitioners suggest that *information operations*, *situational awareness*, *cultural awareness* and *empathy* are key components of effective counterinsurgency. This thesis argues further that *network development* and *command influence* have vital multiplier effects on these components. Without command influence, none are likely to take hold. Therefore, the thesis argues that command influence is the key aspect in achieving a balance between kinetic and non-kinetic actions, in order to conduct effective COIN.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	CONDUCTING THE SOFTER SIDE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY	1
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	DEFINING THE COIN ENVIRONMENT.....	5
A.	WHAT IS COIN?	5
1.	Initial State Conditions.....	5
2.	Organization.....	7
3.	Initial Stages of an Insurgency	8
B.	HOW TO CONDUCT COIN OPERATIONS	10
1.	Diamond Model	12
C.	HOW TO CONDUCT COIN AT THE FIELD LEVEL	15
1.	Equivalent Response Model	16
2.	Importance of Balance	18
D.	COIN BASICS FOR THE PRACTITIONER	20
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	23
A.	GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH	23
B.	ARTICLE SELECTION PROCESS.....	25
C.	CONTENT ANALYSIS	27
D.	CONTENT THEMES	29
1.	Information Operations	29
2.	Situational Awareness	35
3.	Cultural Awareness	37
4.	Empathy	39
IV.	ASSESSMENT	43
A.	META ANALYSIS	43
1.	Balance	44
2.	Command Influence	47
3.	Developing Networks	48
B.	NEXT STEPS	51
1.	Counterinsurgent Development	51
2.	Pre-Commission Education	51
3.	Middle Leadership Development.....	52
V.	CONCLUSION	55
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	59
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	65

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Diamond Model	13
Figure 2.	Equivalent Response Model.....	17
Figure 3.	Counterinsurgency Framework	21

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Content Analysis Matrix.....	27
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I. CONDUCTING THE SOFTER SIDE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

Those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight. (Army) The hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends.

— Definition of Center of Gravity from Field Manual (FM) 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Graphics¹

A. INTRODUCTION

In conventional warfare, the center of gravity is usually derived from a specific enemy force or a decisive terrain feature. However, in a counterinsurgency (COIN), the local population becomes the center of gravity. This is a difficult and controversial concept to grasp, especially for a conventional force that has always trained according to the principle that the actions taken by each unit on the ground mold the environment — not civilians on the battlefield.² Although if one were to stop and think about the previous sentence, “the actions taken by each unit,” are exactly what will win or lose the counterinsurgent’s fight.

The U.S. military has conducted both COIN and reconstruction operations over the past one hundred years; however, we have not conducted both of these operations concurrently — as we are in Iraq and Afghanistan. To add to the U.S. hardships, the military has been preparing for the next conventional high intensity conflict, rather than a low intensity COIN. The lack of training and focus has caused a steep learning curve for both leaders and Soldiers. In an observation of GEN Petraeus, then 101st Airborne Division commander, by his Assistant Division Commander in reference to Iraq: “The commanding general found

¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1 Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1997) 7.

² Andrew F. Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, 2005: 2.

himself in a very violent, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment.”³ If a seasoned officer is making this observation, then what can we say about the young officers and Soldiers who have just joined the military and are fighting a COIN at the grassroots level?

Over the last three years, the U.S. military has rewritten many field manuals that focus on COIN, including a significant change to FM 3-0, *Operations*, which places stability and reconstruction operations on the same level as offensive operations.⁴ ⁵ In addition, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, has been completely revised. These changes send a clear message to Army leaders that they can no longer focus only on the kinetic and conventional side of conflicts. Unfortunately, these changes in the manuals are directed to senior military leaders who provide guidance in creating campaign plans. They are not aimed at the Soldier or junior company grade officers who are on the ground attempting to work through the difficulties of conducting non-kinetic operations, or the softer side of a COIN.

In 2005, The U.S. government was “gaug[ing] success in Iraq by such traditional indicators as the number of attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi police forces, and military members, oil production, and increases in basic services such as water and food.”⁶ CAPT Bole, USN, heard a very different answer when he conducted an interview with GEN Pace, then, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: “I can tell you how many bridges have been built, the progress of infrastructure programs, schools built, and a whole host of other conventional MOE [measures of effectiveness]. What I am most concerned with are the things we have a hard time measuring; the attitudes and moods of the Iraqi people. The

³ Kirsten Lundberg, *The Accidental Statesman: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq*, Case Study (Cambridge: Kennedy School of Government, 2006) 9.

⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-0 Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2008).

⁵ This change in the manual was a direct result from DODD 3000.05 being published, which also stated that stability operations should be given the same priority as combat operations.

⁶ Brian Bole CAPT, *Finding the right Measures of Effectiveness for Rebuilding the State of Iraq*, Thesis (Newport: Naval War College, 2005).

Iraqi people will decide the fate of their nation.”⁷ The conventional qualitative measures of effectiveness are a part of fighting a COIN, but not the *coup de grace*. How they are applied, used and managed in concert with other aspects when dealing with the local populace and their response is a better way to evaluate success. Overall, the objective in a COIN is to separate the insurgents from the “silent majority.”⁸

The conventional force and its use of the kinetic side of military operations is an important aspect of winning wars; however, in a COIN, the kinetic side becomes secondary, and the softer side of COIN becomes the main effort to reach sustainable peace.⁹

If non-kinetic actions are the way forward, how should units at the field level apply the softer side of COIN? To answer this question, the literature review in Chapter II focuses on understanding the COIN environment looking through the lens of three holistic paradigms: the Diamond model, Equivalent Response model, and the Counterinsurgency framework. Chapter III describes the content analysis methodology used to identify four fundamental themes derived from the literature and describe what is needed to implement the softer side of COIN. Chapter IV assesses the progress to date of the adaptations required to introduce COIN to field operations. The chapter also includes my recommendations for continued efforts in the future.

⁷ Bole, *Finding the right Measures of Effectiveness*.

⁸ The “silent majority” refers to the large percentage of the populace that does not support the insurgency, or the coalition forces. T.E. Lawrence also wrote, “rebellions can be made by two percent active striking force and ninety-eight percent passively sympathetic.” Additionally, “the reason for this passivity among populations is that, so long as their security is a risk, individuals [whom] take sides in an insurgency expose themselves to retribution.”

⁹ Negative Peace – absence of active armed conflict

Positive Peace – Negative Peace, plus root cause of conflict being addressed and locals have a sense of empowerment, participation, and accountability

Sustainable Peace – the ability of a society to resolve potential conflicts and infringements of the law on an impartial and transparent basis in accordance with the law.

Definitions from: Antonio Donini, Larry Minear, Ian Smillie, Ted van Baarda and Anthony and Welch, *Mapping the Security Environment: Understanding the perceptions of local communities, peace support operations, and assistance agencies*, Case Study (Medford: Feinstein International Famine Center, 2005).

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II. DEFINING THE COIN ENVIRONMENT

An insurgency is a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order.¹⁰

A counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency.¹¹

A. WHAT IS COIN?

The broadest definition of a COIN is any action that prevents an insurgency from attaining its objectives, thereby maintaining security, stability, and civil services within sovereign boundaries. In order to understand how to conduct an effective COIN operation, the counterinsurgent must understand the insurgents' cause, including their approach to advancing the insurgency.¹² "This information is essential to the counterinsurgent's development of effective programs that attack the insurgency's root cause."¹³ Before pursuing a COIN strategy, the counterinsurgent needs to understand the environment that allowed the insurgency to begin in the first place.

1. Initial State Conditions

The context for an insurgency is determined by the state government and the relationship it has with its population. This relationship has been described

¹⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006) 2.

¹¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1 Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1997).

¹² Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2007). Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2007): 9, 1-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*

as the social equilibrium of the population.¹⁴ The scale of social equilibrium has two extremes: utopia (positive) on one end and despotism (negative) on the other. The sufficient conditions necessary for a revolt lie closer to the negative end of the spectrum. An insurgency would be difficult to initiate under Utopian conditions, because the population is content with the current regime leaving little or no friction for an insurgency to exploit. The percentage of hardcore anti-government inhabitants would be very small, while the population that supports the government would be high. This would eliminate the ability of an insurgent organization to hide among the population. In addition, this pro-state environment would reduce the insurgency's ability to procure its basic requirements of guns, money and recruits. Any group attempting to change the equilibrium in this environment would not have popular support, and thereby lack some of the required elements for a revolt. (This point will be developed in greater depth when reviewing the "Mystic Diamond" approach to analyzing an insurgency). Although revolts conceivably could occur under Utopian conditions, to be successful they would need to overcome numerous obstacles.

A population moving toward the middle or the negative side of the social equilibrium spectrum would offer a better environment for a revolt. Under these conditions, a population would exhibit some form of hostility toward the government, since the assumption is that it fails to provide for basic human needs. The gap between the government and the population can stem from the government's incompetence or policies. The size of the gap would depend on the government. A heavier-handed government would more likely create greater dissension than an incompetent one; nonetheless, both conditions create opportunities for an insurgency.

Another issue is the government's use of force in maintaining control over the population. One or all of the following could apply force: the Army, police, or special units that work directly for the government. Should these forces be

¹⁴ Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982) 55.

incompetent, weak, or corrupt, it would provide additional conditions for exploitation. An incompetent government and a corrupt military force make the environment more attractive to a revolt leader.

2. Organization

However, a government with “flaws” is not the only element required for an insurgency. An insurgency must be organized and have leadership and direction. Revolt begins because the current government has greatly reduced or eliminated the ways that citizens can bring about change. When a single person or a small group of people understand the futility of their situation and decide to make a change by force, the next step in their chain of reasoning is to begin organizing people and putting resources to that end. J. Bowyer Bell in his paper, *Aspects of the Dragonworld*, states that, “Nothing can be done without organization. Ideas die in isolation: to be effective, they must be disseminated. And this requires organization.”¹⁵

However, balance and restraint are required in the nascent development of a counter-state group. From the beginning, the leadership needs to understand that its fight will be protracted and will require patience and time. Insurgent groups begin by probing the population and evaluating the situation to identify the best place and time to attract people to their cause. There are a number of ways to locate those in opposition to the government. The government’s policies could be alienating a portion of the population by class, ethnicity, or religion. The disaffected population could be isolated in certain locations within the state. Any of these possibilities could provide a target audience for the rebel leaders to garner support. However, for it to be viable, the support needs to be built from the bottom up — “build up the township, then the

¹⁵ J. Bowyer Bell, *Aspects of the Dragonworld: Covert Communications and the Rebel Ecosystem*, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence 3 (Spring 1989): 15-44, 23.

district...then the county...then the local Red Army troops, and all the way up to the regular Army troops; of spreading political power by advancing waves.”¹⁶

Thus, the insurgency must establish a base of diehards or converts to the cause. The base then continues to spread its influence to gain support from the rest of population. This plan of action is executed under the strictest secrecy in order to remain beyond the government’s scrutiny. The longer the revolt preparations go unnoticed, the harder it will be for the government to quell it. To be successful over time, the rebel leadership also must demonstrate that the cost benefit of the uprising is in the population’s favor. Financial donors and rebel propaganda must attract the populations, through either conversion or enlistment, to support the rebel cause.

External entities have a part to play in the rebellion against the State. The external source can be from another State (China in Vietnam), or from another organization (al Qaida). The external source can provide a wide range of assistance in terms of financial support, supplies, military manpower, guidance in leadership, tactics, and more to either the state or counter-state. Although the external support is not a requirement, an insurgent group can draw from this added cache. External support is not specific to the insurgent. External support can be a lifeline to the state, through either directed military support, or economic aid from members of the international members. The external actor is discussed more using the “Diamond” model later in this chapter.

3. Initial Stages of an Insurgency

As the insurgency garners strength, it is either large enough to actively oppose the state or has been recognized by the state as a threat. At this point, the insurgency and the counterinsurgency begin. Mao refers to this as “politics with bloodshed.”¹⁷ The insurgents then lean heavily on Mao’s idea to “support

¹⁶ Mao Tse-Tung, *The Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Tse-Tung, *The Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*.

whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports.”¹⁸ By supporting all that the government opposes, the insurgents can extend their opposition to the state. In addition, by opposing or attacking what the government supports, the insurgency can demonstrate the government’s lack of ability to protect its own interests. The opposition force can now adopt tactics of coercion to suppress areas of support for the government; in doing so, the opposition can also gather money or information, and force enlistment.

Previously, the collection of disgruntled citizens were organizing and preparing in a clandestine manner, unnoticed in the backdrop of daily life. Once the revolt surfaces, it faces the wrath of the state as the state attempts to smother the movement before it grows beyond control. The true test of an insurgency is whether it can withstand government opposition. The leadership must tend to the insurgency very closely, maintaining the correct ratio of positive and negative effects on the government and the population. This ratio greatly depends on the environment in which the revolt occurs.

A strong and competent government requires a competent insurgent leader to maintain the revolt over any length of time. The existence of a competent government forces the insurgents to attack in ways that make the government seem incompetent. By attacking government and social infrastructures, the insurgents influence the government to either move its forces to protect these infrastructures or face more scrutiny from the populace. This limits the amount of force available to search out and destroy the root cause of the insurgency. All the while, the insurgents “are circling beyond sight, ready to strike, introduce disorder, and benefit from secrecy.”¹⁹ Another insurgent tactic is to get the government to act more harshly in its treatment of the general population. It may even provoke the government to attack innocents. The end game of the insurgents is to get the people to see the futility of supporting this government and prepare for its impending fall.

¹⁸ Tse-Tung, *The Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*.

¹⁹ Bell, *Aspects of the Dragonworld: Covert Communications and the Rebel Ecosystem*.

A weak or incompetent government allows for some margin of error by the revolt. This margin creates possibilities for weaker revolts to succeed, or at least last longer. For example, if a revolt comes out too quickly, underestimating the state's forces and over-estimating the strength of the revolt,²⁰ it must regroup and find the balance between attacking the government force outright and using guerilla tactics against the government and the population. Accuracy is also crucial when gathering intelligence about the state's force and knowing the capabilities of the revolt forces. Misjudgment in either direction leads to negative consequences for the rebellion. If the state force is underestimated, it may destroy the insurgency on the field of battle. If the state force is overestimated, the insurgency may be viewed as incompetent and lose popular support.

Another issue the insurgency must contend with is a responsive government. If the government changes policies that are negatively affecting the populace, it may be able to retain the population's loyalty. The insurgents must be aware of these changes and adapt their strategies accordingly. Insurgent leaders must watch this cycle and adapt at all levels to ensure the revolt does not alienate a population. This dynamic between the State, counter-state (insurgent) and the population is illustrated in the "Mystic Diamond," discussed later.

B. HOW TO CONDUCT COIN OPERATIONS

A description of an insurgency is found in, David Kilcullen's article, "Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency." An Australian Veteran of COIN with direct application in East Timor, he describes an insurgency as:

a struggle for control over a contested political space, between a state (or group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers. Insurgencies are popular uprisings, which grow from and are conducted through pre-existing

²⁰ Tse-Tung, *The Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*.

social networks (village, tribe, family, neighborhood, political or religious party) and exist in a complex social, informational and physical environment.²¹

The opposition to the insurgency is a counterinsurgents' effort to conduct operations, which stabilize the state, increase security, and maintain civic services, all while conducting focused operations to kill or capture insurgents. A COIN is a balanced effort, by the state and supporting actors, using both kinetic and non-kinetic actions to maintain control of the state. Balance and the controlled use of force are critical in the COIN environment, because this conflict is not only between the insurgents and the state; it is also fought among and for the support of the state's populace.

Once one understands the COIN environment consists of at least three elements: the state, the counter-state, and the population, the next step is to describe the populations' role in the environment. As the insurgency has evolved from the population, it is there that the real battle is fought. This makes the population the center of gravity.^{22 23} In the beginning, the insurgents have a higher degree of intelligence, allowing them to strike at the time and location of their choosing. This intelligence advantage stems from the relationship the insurgents have with the populace. This relationship can be strong if it is built on established networks (tribal, family, ideology, etc.), or could be weak, but still effective, if it is established through coercion. The insurgencies grassroots development from the populace provides them with relative invisibility, placing the state at a disadvantage.²⁴ "While the insurgency, under these conditions, can engage any target that it is strong enough to hit, the state must first hunt down the opposition before it can be engaged."²⁵ This type of environment

²¹ David Kilcullen, Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency. IO Sphere, May 1, 2006: 29-35.

²² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*.

²³ Krepinevich, *How to Win in Iraq*.

²⁴ Gordon McCormick, Horton, S. B., & Harrison, L. A. (2007). "Things Fall Apart: the endgame dynamics of internal wars." *Third World Quarterly*, 28 (2): 321-367, 328.

²⁵ Ibid.

makes the population the true objective of every kinetic and non-kinetic engagement. The following two holistic models depict the environment, complexity, and aspects to take into consideration while conducting a COIN. These two paradigms illustrate the overall literature and philosophies of conducting a COIN.

1. Diamond Model

The first is the “Diamond” model developed by Gordon McCormick, department head of the Defense Analysis department at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS).²⁶ The diamond illustrates the dynamics among the three core actors in an insurgency—the state, the population, and the counter-state or insurgents. The model includes a fourth actor – the external or international actors. While it would appear logically to consider coalition COIN forces under the external actors heading, the model suggests they be included under the state since. The assumption is they are working by with and through a willing and legitimate partner nation to assist in that country’s COIN effort (Iraq and Afghanistan are COIN aberrations where an external force, the U.S., assumed the role of the state until a functioning legitimate government were established). In McCormick’s model, the external actor is meant to encompass the international community writ large (states, NGOs, IGOs, PVOs, etc).²⁷ In this regard, the state either tries to increase its legitimacy in the international arena in order to garner support, or attempts to minimize the insurgent group’s external support and sanctuaries.²⁸ The Diamond model helps to visualize the relationships and appropriate state action against the counter-state.

²⁶ Gordon McCormick is the Department Head for the Defense Analysis curriculum at the Naval Postgraduate School and teaches the Guerilla Warfare seminar that covers irregular, unconventional, guerilla, and insurgent warfare. The “diamond” model has been published in numerous articles. The following article best describes the “diamond” model, Eric Wendt, (2005). Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling. *Special Warfare*, 18 (2)., which I will use to reference the model.

²⁷ Wendt, Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling.

²⁸ Ibid.

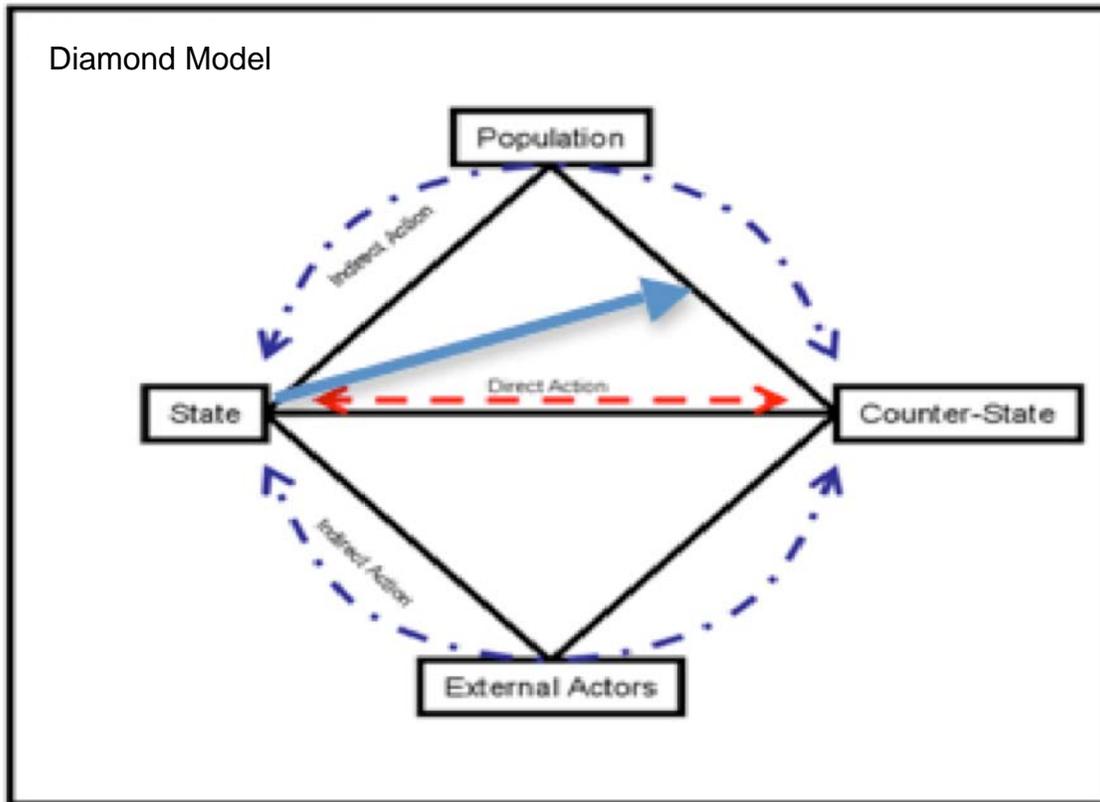


Figure 1. Diamond Model

According to the “Diamond” model, the state must first employ indirect action against the counter-state by working with or through the population, thus limiting the counter-state’s ability to move and act within or among society. The government can do this by increasing police presence, neighborhood watches, and community programs. When the relationship between the state and the population is stronger than the relationship between the counter-state and the population, the counter-state’s actions are limited and more visible. As the counter-state becomes more visible, the state can employ more direct action against them. One means to determine the population’s alignment is to conduct polls, surveys, and interviews.²⁹ If the measurement is high, then support for the government is high, thereby assisting in gaining actionable intelligence about the

²⁹ Craig Cohen, *Stabilization and Reconstruction*, Working Group Report (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006) 6.

insurgency. If the measurement is low, then stability will be generally low due to lack of confidence in the government's ability to provide basic services and security. The measurement may also indicate divisions within the population.

The counter-state has a reciprocal action to indirectly attack the state, while directly applying tactics of coercion or fear against the population in order to maintain their advantage. The actions of the counter-state are to disrupt the state's ability to influence the population by demonstrating their inability to provide security. The lack of security inhibits the population from assisting the state against the counter-state. The inability of the government to provide adequate security may require the state to increase their own use of force to suppress the insurgency. However, the use of force must be balanced and checked, to prevent the population from moving from the silent majority to insurgent. Ultimately, the state/counter-state conflict is about control or influence over the population to maintain domestic stability.

The bottom half of the diamond illustrates the relationship external actors have with both the state and counter-state. Both the state and counter-state attempt to garner support by demonstrating their capability and legitimacy. The counter-state may be able to gain support solely due to their ideology. While the state must demonstrate some degree of legitimacy in order to receive external support from some entities, while others provide support to aid or increase the states legitimacy. The state works through the external actors to apply external pressure upon insurgent supporters, in order to drive a wedge between the them and the insurgency. The counter-states objective is to either attack the external actors (NGO, IGO, PVOs, etc) directly, or indirectly (terrorist attacks against countries supporting the state). The counter-state's overall goal is to reduce or eliminate the support to the state due to the insecurity of the state, or through the external states citizens losing support for the effort.³⁰

³⁰ Mark Rigstad, *Jus Ad Bellum After 9/11: A State of the Art Report*, The International Public Theory Beacon (Oakland: IPT, 2007) 25.

The measure of stability is important to understand the environment within which the government must exercise control. In a stable state, control is more easily maintained, because a generally satisfied population gives control to the government via consensus. In an unstable society, the government must establish control via more coercive means, which may come at a higher cost and with the risk of further alienation. If a government fails to maintain depth and breadth of control, it creates a vacuum in which de-stabilizing factors can organize and grow. There is a delicate balance forces must maintain while fighting a COIN.

C. HOW TO CONDUCT COIN AT THE FIELD LEVEL

Understanding the insurgent atmosphere, the “Diamond” model provides the basic skeleton of the strategic implications nested within a COIN. Until recently, little had been published for the practitioner on the ground fighting an insurgency. This may be because since to the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the overall command philosophy has not changed much. Conventional units were doing what they did best, using kinetic force to dominate the battlefield. However, as discussed already, conventional tactics do not have the same result on an unconventional battlefield; instead, conventional tactics typically deepen the divide between local nationals and coalition forces, thereby allowing the insurgents to better manipulate the local populace. The military’s stagnant Iraq COIN strategy seems to have changed with the rotation of military leadership.

Within the rotation of new military leadership (e.g. Multi-National Coalition-Iraq (MNC-I) and CENTCOM commanders, and a new Secretary of Defense)

and new updates and publications (DOD 3000.5³¹, NSPD-44³² and military field manuals FM 1³³, 3-0³⁴, 3-24³⁵), a new strategy has evolved with greater emphasis on Stability, Security, Transition, Reconstruction (SSTR) for fighting a COIN in Iraq.

Unfortunately, there is a catch to this adjustment. Most changes were directed to or written for senior military leaders to provide guidance in creating strategic plans. These documents and manuals are helpful, but they leave a void for the Soldier and junior company grade officers on the ground who are attempting to work through the difficulties of conducting non-kinetic actions. These non-kinetic actions are essential in prosecuting a COIN operation. As we see below the use of violence in a COIN can have very detrimental effects on the overall COIN strategy.

1. Equivalent Response Model

Eric Wendt, discusses another model that depicts the use of force within a COIN environment. The Equivalent Response Model examines the effect that violence has on the level of support given by the population to either the

³¹ This Directive provides guidance on stability operations that will evolve over time as joint operating concepts, mission sets, and lessons learned develop; establishes DoD policy and assigns responsibilities within the Department of Defense for planning, training, and preparing to conduct and support stability operations pursuant to the authority vested in the Secretary of Defense under Sections 113 and 153 of title 10, United States Code and the guidance and responsibilities assigned in Strategic Planning Guidance, Fiscal Years 2006-2011; and Supersedes any conflicting portions of existing DoD issuances. Such instances shall be identified to the office of primary responsibility for this Directive as listed at web site www.dtic.mil/whs.directives.

³² The purpose of NSPD-44 was to create a plan for managing inter-agency coordination in reconstruction and stabilization situations. It establishes a Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) for Reconstruction and Stabilization to oversee and help integrate all DOD and civilian contingency planning. It specifies that the State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) should take the lead in integrating the efforts and capabilities of all departments and agencies, civilian and military, for reconstruction and stabilization purposes.

³³ Headquarters, Department of the Army. (2005). *FM 1 The Army*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army.

³⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army. (2008). *FM 3-0 Operations*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army.

³⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army. (2007). *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army.

insurgent or the counterinsurgent.³⁶ Violence is one of the key components of an insurgency. Therefore, the insurgent must use force in order to overthrow the government. Insurgent violence is instrumental in a wide variety of instances; however, it is particularly useful as a means of gaining, extending, and protecting power. Just as the use of violence is beneficial to the insurgent, it is also beneficial to the counterinsurgent, but in a different manner. For the counterinsurgent, violence must be measured, proportional and accurate.

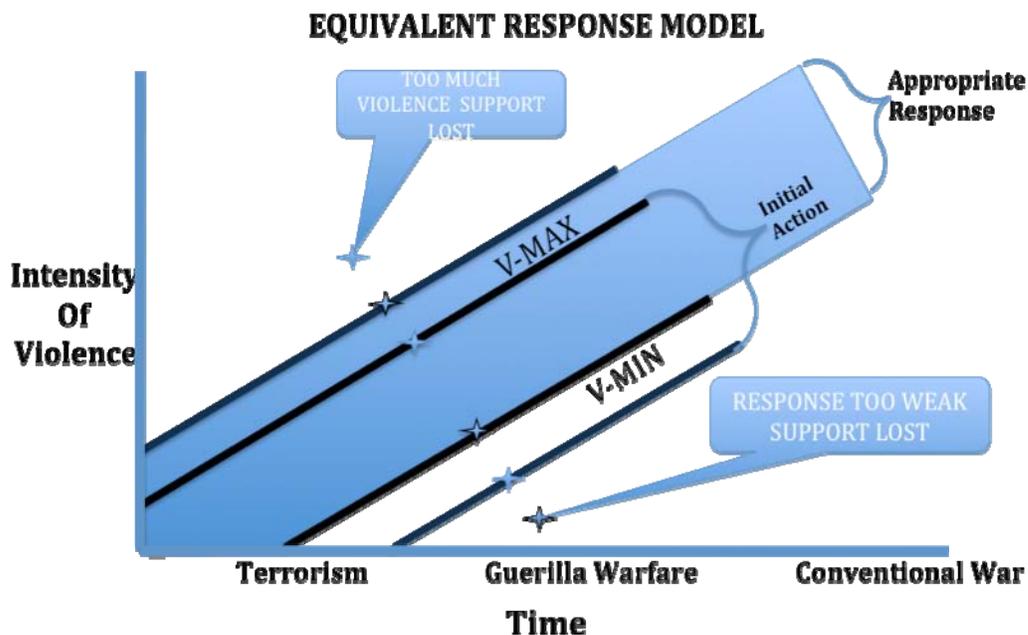


Figure 2. Equivalent Response Model

Measured and proportional responses are usually covered within the theater's Rules of Engagement (ROE)³⁷. An example of units adapting their use of force in accordance with the understanding of the measured and proportional response concept is changing weapon systems to create the desired effect.

³⁶ Wendt, Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling.

³⁷ (NATO) Directives issued by competent military authority which specify the circumstances and limitations under which forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered.

Originally, the thought was to fight against an insurgent firing from a building with the least damage-producing weapon, in this case the .50 caliber machine gun instead of a tank round. However, the rounds of the machine gun were penetrating through multiple walls causing excessive damage and casualties. Forces switched to the 120 mm High Energy Anti-Tank (HEAT) round. The tank round was more accurate and detonated upon impact to neutralize the area instead of additional surrounding areas. This moved the response to within the appropriate response area.³⁸

Measured and proportional responses are important, but accuracy is more critical. Proportionality does not matter if the response was not accurate in the first place. Accuracy not only pertains to the direction of a weapon system, but also to a unit's actions against the population to find and capture insurgents. This is a key point. For a unit to be successful in its targeting of insurgents, it must have accurate intelligence. In order to have good intelligence, it must receive good information from the local population. In order to receive good information, it must have established good relationships with the population. These three models demonstrate both the counterinsurgent's path and its difficulties. Although we must remember that these models are "simply theoretical models, and thus a brutal oversimplification of an infinitely complex reality," a key question must be addressed: How can we seek to operate in this environment?³⁹

2. Importance of Balance

Achieving balance on many different levels is a major part of a COIN. This includes the balance between levels of violence used by both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent; the balance between reconstruction efforts and security levels; the balance among military, government, and non-government

³⁸ LTC Pat White, "Task Force Iron Dukes Campaign for Najaf," *Armor* November-December (2004): 7-12.

³⁹ David J. Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*. U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C. (September 28, 2006).

organizations working together for stability and reconstruction; and the balance between kinetic and non-kinetic operations. GEN (ret.) Krulak, USMC, first introduced this concept in *Marine Magazine* article, titled “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War.” The following excerpt from GEN Krulak’s article provides a rich overview of the complexity and numerous issues that must be addressed by the counterinsurgent without relying solely on kinetic means.

The lines separating the levels of war, and distinguishing combatant from non-combatant, will blur and adversaries, confounded by our ‘conventional’ superiority, will resort to asymmetrical means to redress the imbalance. Further complicating the situation will be the ubiquitous media whose presence will mean that all future conflicts will be acted out before an international audience. The Corps has described such amorphous conflicts as -- *the three block war* -- contingencies in which Marines may be confronted by the entire spectrum of tactical challenges in the span of a few hours and within the space of three contiguous city blocks.⁴⁰

As previously discussed, the insurgent groups must also sustain balance. Expanding and growing too quickly would expose them to the state, remove their advantage of blending in with the population, and destine them for almost certain failure.⁴¹ This same guidance holds true for the counterinsurgent who moves too quickly from kinetic to non-kinetic means of combating the insurgency and establishing peace in a COIN environment. Security is an initial requirement, which must be maintained throughout the COIN. However, nothing prevents the counterinsurgent from establishing the foundation of nascent networks of support among the populace and in so doing building a divide between the population and the insurgency. “[The] functional objective is to impose a measure of control on the overall environment. But in such a complex, multi-actor environment,

⁴⁰ C. C. Krulak (1999). The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War. *Marines Magazine*, 11-23.

⁴¹ McCormick, et al., 2007, 328.

“control” does not mean imposing order through unquestioned dominance, so much as achieving collaboration towards a set of shared objectives.”⁴²

Just as Kilcullen did not want to marginalize the lethal struggle to control the population, I too, do not wish to marginalize the importance of security at the expense of Stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Areas with a high level of insurgent activity do not have the necessary levels of consensus or a dominant level of coercion to justify SSTR efforts. “But killing the enemy is not the sole objective — and in a counterinsurgency environment, operating amongst the people, force is always attended by collateral damage, alienated populations, feuds and other unintended consequences. Politically, the more force you have to use, the worse the campaign is going.”⁴³ This is where we find the units on the ground. They must find unconventional measures of effectiveness, maintain ‘control’ without increasing their enemies, and develop the infrastructure—government, security forces, and basic human services—to begin the rebuilding process.

D. COIN BASICS FOR THE PRACTITIONER

Kilcullen’s article points out a central tenet in COIN—a united effort by all organizations is needed to fight a COIN. All agencies, regardless of their desire for independence from government or military control, need to recognize the importance of operating within an overall COIN framework to ensure a unity of effort at best, collaboration, or deconfliction at the very least.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ To prevent wasted work and effort, the framework below is one attempt to model interagency interactions to support COIN and maintain control. The degree of control is dependent on the sum of the strength of each pillar. If one of the pillars were weak or nonexistent, then the ability to control the population would collapse.⁴⁶ Control depends on mutual

⁴² Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ GEN David Petraeus, (2008). Multi-National Forces-Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance. *Military Review*, 2.

⁴⁶ Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.

dependence among the pillars. They must work in concert with the appropriate support is spread across security, political, and economic concerns.⁴⁷

Figure 2 – Inter-agency Counterinsurgency Framework

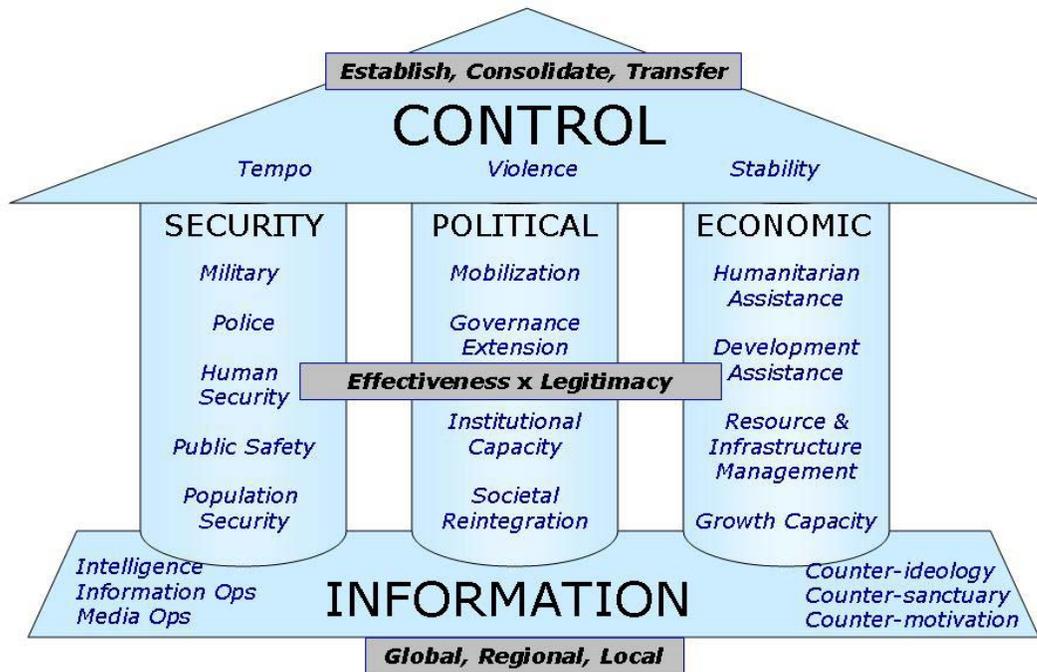


Figure 3. Counterinsurgency Framework

Although, the Counterinsurgency Framework in Figure 4 demonstrates the strategic and operational requirements, it is still lacking in one aspect. If information is the foundation then how does one gain the information dominance to successfully establish the three pillars? On this point, the model is silent. Ask soldiers how to clear a building, and they would simply state, “execute battle drill six”. In the same field manual (*The Infantry Platoon Handbook, FM 7-8*⁴⁸), one will also find how to react to or conduct an ambush. The supporting tasks

⁴⁷ Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.

⁴⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 7-8 The Infantry Rifle Platoon Handbook* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1992).

required to accomplish these tasks are listed in the STP 21-1-SMCT⁴⁹ ⁵⁰, which breaks the overall task down to individual common tasks. If clearing a building is one of the most difficult conventional tasks to accomplish, and there are systematic instructions on how to conduct the tactic, then where are the manuals that lay out how to conduct the non-kinetic side of a COIN? How does a unit go about winning popular support in a COIN? The next chapter will discuss the research method I used to identify the common tasks required to conduct the softer side of COIN.

⁴⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *STP 21-1-SMCT Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks, Skill Level 1* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1990).

⁵⁰ ARTEP 7-8-Drill & ARTEP 7-8-MTP also provide detailed steps and skills required to accomplish each conventional task. ARTEPs are used to evaluate units as they conduct training to ensure the tactics are being executed properly.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a game of wits and will. You've got to be learning and adapting constantly to survive.

General Peter Schoomaker

A. GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* manual has been a significant publication for practitioners to turn to for guidance. As stated in Chapter II there are numerous intangibles in conducting a COIN, which prevent the manual from addressing every aspect. Additionally, the manual is doctrine, which by default requires it to be written with big brush strokes rather than detailed descriptions for operations. Just as the manual for counterinsurgency is broadly written, so are the references that address some of the non-kinetic sides of COIN: Field Manuals for Stability and Support Operations (FM 3-07)⁵¹, Peace Operations (3-07.31)⁵², and Peace Building: A Field Guide⁵³. These references are not, by design, meant to be used during a COIN; however, the books provide insight into aspects that need to be taken into consideration to increase the legitimacy of the State through non-kinetic means.

A lack of guidance has promoted practitioners to search for techniques to fill the void and help them in conducting COIN in Iraq and Afghanistan operations. Leaders and Soldiers are turning to extant texts to gain better insight on COIN and explore how particular points of doctrine are applied in the field.

Furthermore, the military uses numerous organizations to assist in gathering and publishing lessons learned, best practices, Tactics, Techniques,

⁵¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-07 Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2003).

⁵² Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.31 Peace Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2003).

⁵³ Luc Reyhler and T. Paffenholtz, *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001).

and Procedures (TTPs), and personal experiences. The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), Battle Command Knowledge Center (BCKS), Consortium for Complex Operations (CCO), COIN Academy, Military Review, Small Wars Journal, and branch of service and operational specialty specific magazines (Armor, Field Artillery, Infantry Bugle, etc.), are just a few currently in use. There are more journals and data collection groups, which cater to more specific themes, developing all the time.

Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.⁵⁴

This definition of doctrine from the Department of Defense demonstrates the use of doctrine and explains the areas in which doctrine can be helpful. Unfortunately, it still leaves a void for Soldiers and junior company grade officers on the ground at the field level to work through the difficulties of conducting “war at the graduate level”⁵⁵. From my own experience as a company commander in Iraq, as well as other officers’ articles referencing their experiences in Iraq, a large component is missing in these more formal doctrinal statements. My intent in this thesis is to draw on practitioner insights and observations from the literature and add those of my own to create a “grounded theory” that informs junior leaders and their Soldiers on how to conduct the softer side of a COIN.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss first developed grounded theory in 1967.⁵⁶ Grounded theory methods consist of “collecting and analyzing qualitative

⁵⁴ Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/data/d/01744.html> (accessed November 10, 2008).

⁵⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2007).

⁵⁶ B. Glaser & A. Strauss (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves.”⁵⁷ Data are collected through personal observations and experiences, interactions, and subject specific materials.⁵⁸

Furthermore, in developing the grounded theory, I will use content analysis. This methodology analyzes text based on certain words or phrases within selected text. As the text is read, key words or phrases, which support the overall theme or themes within the article are identified. Content analysis has many diverse uses. For this thesis, I will use it to establish what practitioners determine are the most important aspects of fighting an insurgency, with the emphasis on the less tangible aspects of the softer side of a COIN. Within content analysis, there are two categories: conceptual and relational analysis. Conceptual analysis, which will be part of my delimiting process, determines the most prevalent themes throughout each article. Using conceptual content analysis of practitioner-written articles that discuss first-person experiences conducting operations within a COIN environment,⁵⁹ I will identify what key aspects of success to develop a more grounded approach to the softer side of conducting a COIN. In Chapter IV, I use relational analysis to determine the underlying efforts by leaders to adjust the methods that support better non-kinetic operations.

B. ARTICLE SELECTION PROCESS

The publication of articles from military leaders writing about their experience conducting a COIN began soon after the first Soldiers and Marines returned from their first tour in Iraq or Afghanistan. These articles focused on either the tactics and TTPs for fighting in an urban environment or difficulties of fighting a COIN. In 2004 and 2005, there were few discussions about the non-kinetic side of a COIN, other than a discussion about the need for reconstruction.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Charmaz, (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Los Angeles: Sage, 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 37.

This is the main reason I focused my literature review on articles written from 2006 to the present. During this time, a new COIN perspective began to emerge. In 2006, GEN David Petraeus and LTC John Nagl were writing and publishing drafts of FM 3-24. Lastly, at the end of 2006, when FM 3-24 was published, Secretary Gates took over as Secretary of Defense, and in January of 2007, GEN Petraeus took over MNF-I command. The addition of these new leaders provided increased senior level influence on COIN doctrine, which caused an adjustment to the COIN strategy. "Counterinsurgency [became] more and more an operational theme, overlapping counter-guerilla tactics, stabilization operations and counter-terrorism."⁶⁰

Originally, I wanted to limit my choice of articles to those close to the ground level written by officers at the rank of Major or below. However, I discovered numerous articles written by Lieutenant Colonels (LTC) or higher which led me to the conclusion that command influence is a key aspect in conducting a balanced COIN effort, a point to which I will return in my assessment. To balance the growing number of articles among the higher ranks, I delimited my search to articles that mentioned COIN, Iraq, or Afghanistan, specifically those that addressed issues concerning the softer side of a COIN.

In addition, to the dates and rank of the authors of the article, I decided to delimit the military journals to those that reach the Soldiers at the ground level, specifically *Armor*, *Field Artillery*, *Infantry Bugler*, *Small Wars Journal*, and *The Military Review*. This may seem narrowly focused, but these are the same journals that my past commanders have recommended, because they publish the latest ideas and perspectives on the military, tactics (currently for fighting a COIN), and lessons learned for a particular military specialty. Moreover, the journals' editorial policies of including rebuttals or further insights on previously published articles make them credible. The journal publisher or boards vet potential articles, and authors are required to provide source documentation and

⁶⁰ Thomas Renard and Stephane Taillat, "Between Clausewitz and Mao: Dynamic Evolutions of the Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2008)," *Small Wars Journal*, 2008: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/docs-temp/111-renard.pdf>.

their biographies. Other Army or branch-specific journals could have been selected; however, they tend to have fewer articles specific to COIN.

C. CONTENT ANALYSIS

A matrix of the articles selected for developing a theory on conducting the softer side of COIN appears below. This data set represents ideas and insights that, compounded together, establish the key aspects for conducting the non-kinetic side of COIN. The first four themes: *command influence*, *situational awareness*, *cultural awareness* and *empathy* were identified through content analysis. In addition, I found three rational themes that describe how leaders are expected to support the softer side of COIN. These rational themes are *command influence*, *developing networks*, and *balancing kinetic and non-kinetic military actions*. I have embedded the rational themes in Chapter IV, which provides an overall assessment of the results of the content analysis.

The following matrix identifies the articles use in this research and the initial four themes.

Table 1. Content Analysis Matrix

	Information Operation	Situational Awareness	Cultural Awareness	Empathy	Command Influence	Networks	Balance
ARMOR or The Armor & Cavalry Journal⁶¹							
Platoons of Action: An Armor Task Force's Response to Full-Spectrum Operations in Iraq (NOV-DEC 05)		X					X
Teaching and Learning Counterinsurgency at the Armor Captains Career Course (JAN-FEB 07)		X	X				X
Iraq and the young Maneuver Leader (JUL-AUG 08)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Be There: A Case Study in Counterinsurgency Warfare (JUL-AUG 08)	X	X					

⁶¹ ARMOR magazine changed the title to The Armor & Cavalry Journal in January of 2008.

Human Terrain mapping: A Critical first step in Winning the Counterinsurgency Fight (MAR-APR 08)	X	X	X			X	
How Information Operations enable Combatant Commanders to Dominate Today's Battlefield (MAR-APR 08)	X	X					X
Team Enabler: Combining Capabilities during the execution of Full-Spectrum Operations (MAR-APR 08)		X				X	X
Task Force Iron Dukes Campaign for Najaf (NOV-DEC 2004)		X			X		X
More than a Campaign of Platitudes: Effective Information Operations for the Battalion/Task Force and Company/Team (MAY-JUN 08)	X				X	X	X
Consequence Management during Counterinsurgency Operations (JAN-FEB 2008)	X	X		X	X		X
Field Artillery Journal							
The FA and Coin: Continuity and Adaptation (JUL-AUG 06)		X			X		X
3 rd ID: 1-10 FA as a Maneuver and Fires Task Force in OIF III (MAY-JUN 06)	X	X			X	X	X
Developing Cultural Understanding in Stability Operations: a Three Step Process (JAN-FEB 07)		X	X	X			X
How to visualize and Shape the Information Environment (NOV-DEC 06)	X	X					X
NGOs in CMO				X		X	X
Infantry Bugler							
Incorporating Civil Affairs Teams into Infantry Company Operations (Winter 2005)						X	X
Devil Chapter in Iraq: What does a National Guard BCT bring to the fight? (Winter 2006)		X				X	X
From the Chief of the Infantry (
Military Review							
Anatomy of a successful COIN operation: OEF-Philippines and indirect approach (NOV-DEC 2006)	X	X					X
Learning from Modern War (MAR-APR 2008)		X					X
Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point (MAR-APR 2008)		X				X	X
Human terrain mapping: a critical first	X	X	X		X		X

step to winning the COIN fight (MAR-APR 2008)							
Hybrid Wars (MAR-APR 2008)	X	X					
The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations (2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A Strategic Failure: American information control policy in occupied Iraq (MAR-APR 2008)	X	X				X	X
Ten ways Great leaders Lead (2003)		X			X		
Best practices in Counterinsurgency (MAY-JUN 2005)		X					X
Multi-National Forces-Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance (SEP-OCT 2008)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Small Wars Journal							
Rethinking IO: Complex Operations in the Information Age (2008)	X						
Taking Interagency Stability Operations to a new level: The integration of Special Operations Forces and USAID in Afganistan (2008)		X				X	X
Improving Information Operations in Iraq and the Global War on Terror (2008)	X	X					

D. CONTENT THEMES

1. Information Operations

information operations (IO) - Continuous military operations within the military information environment that enable, enhance, and protect the friendly force's ability to collect, process, and act on information to achieve an advantage across the full range of military operations. Information operations include interacting with the global information environment and exploiting or denying an adversary's information and decision capabilities.⁶²

This definition works for strategic information operations, but does not properly describe information operations at the field level. At the field level, information operations includes maintaining or improving a positive unit image, establishing the true story through local leaders and local and international media, managing crises; and managing the expectations of the local populations.

⁶² Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1 Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1997).

A new unit coming into a combat theater enjoys some advantages and disadvantages. The major disadvantage is that the unit is new to the area and knows very little about the area or the people. Paradoxically, the advantage is that the unit is new to the area and can establish its own image from the start. This task may be easy or difficult. It depends on the previous unit's status with the local population. No matter the situation, the unit's image begins with solid information operations (IO). COL Ralph Baker, Brigade (BDE) commander of 2nd BDE Combat Team (BCT), 1st Armored Division, echoed this perspective on IO when he said that he "could not hope to shape and set conditions" for his battalions (BN) and Soldiers to be successful without IO.⁶³ COL Baker saw that IO had two objectives: image development, and developing trust between the host country's government and the coalition forces. In that regard, a unit's image is important to both the Soldiers in the unit and the local population; it is critical to establish positive relationships with the locals in order to instill trust.

A diverse group of authors, both military leaders and civilian experts, concur that the U.S. Military, as a whole, was unprepared for the importance of IO in the current COIN environment.^{64 65 66 67} Furthermore, they viewed IO as "analogous to a political campaign; [which] revolves around putting together and

⁶³ COL Ralph O. Baker, "The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations," *Military Review*, 2006: 13-32.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ CPT Erin A. Mc Daniel and CPT Julio A. Perez, "How to visualize and shape the Information Environment," *Field Artillery* (U.S. Army), 2006: 26-33.

⁶⁶ Farook Ahmed and Oubai Shahbender, "Improving Information Operations in Iraq and the Global War on Terror," *Small Wars Journal*, 2008: 1-6.

⁶⁷ Cora S. Goldstein, "A strategic failure: American information control policy in occupied Iraq," *Military Review*, no. MAR-APR (2008).

conveying a coherent message that convinces the people..."⁶⁸ The right message and the resources behind it can sustain progress against an insurgency.⁶⁹

However, the message is not always solely intended for the local population and media, but can have relevance to home media as well.⁷⁰ COL Baker stated that the unit's image is also important to his own troops. Negative media reports on the 24-hour news stations made his Soldiers question their purpose. . COL Baker saw this as a flaw in the military's ability to tell the story, or instill the right narrative into the embedded media. This was caused by an inability to fully embrace the media as another enhancer on the battlefield.⁷¹ Media, both local and national, cannot tell the right story without the right information. MAJ Erin Mc Daniel also saw that the "slow and bureaucratic" means of disseminating information left gaps that were quickly filled by anti-coalition groups telling their side of the story first.⁷² All of the military journals saw the media as a group to be embraced and given the full story quickly to ensure the correct story was being told. Correspondingly, in order for the media to get the full story, the media representatives must also invest the time, about thirty days, with a unit to completely understand the situation.⁷³

Quick and accurate reporting is a counter to the insurgents' use of the media. David Galula points out in his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, insurgents are able to employ propaganda and disinformation throughout the media with great effect and minimal public backlash.⁷⁴ The counter to disinformation requires more than a press brief. Efforts must be made to ensure

⁶⁸ Goldstein, "A strategic failure."

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ John J. McCuen, "Hybrid Wars," *Military Review*, no. MAR-APR (2008).

⁷¹ White, Task Force Iron Dukes Campaign for Najaf.

⁷² Mc Daniel and Perez, How to visualize and shape the Information Environment, 28.

⁷³ Baker, *The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations*.

⁷⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* 9

accurate information reaches the people. A population's low literacy rates, limited television access, and irregular electricity require units to find influential stakeholders from within the population to continue to spread the right message.⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ The stakeholders improve the message's credibility; without the local middleman, the information is looked at as untrustworthy coalition propaganda. The ability to publish accurate information quickly helps gain trust.

This point is more critical when dealing with collateral damage, both structural and biological. MAJ Litynski from CALL stated in an article, "regardless of COIN conditions unintended consequences as a result of CF-led actions will undoubtedly occur on the battlefield. Unfortunately, these actions have the potential to influence a negative perception of CF by the populous, or even worse, exploitation of then unintended consequence via insurgent IO."⁷⁷ In this situation, we should employ a consequence management plan to disseminate information, engage local leaders, provide an explanation with local leaders, pay solatia payments if required, and incorporate humanitarian assistance and Civil Affairs (CA) to discuss rebuilding steps.⁷⁸ The situation is then confronted head on, not sidestepped as operational damage, thereby limiting second and third order effects.⁷⁹

Another tactic used not only by my unit, but also COL Baker and MAJ McDaniel's was a post operational phase, following a significant operation that had an IO specific purpose. This entailed leaders on the ground talking to locals and discussing both the situation and the reason why coalition and local forces had interrupted their daily lives. This use of nonlethal fires is integral to any campaign and includes "projecting a positive message with TPT (Tactical

⁷⁵ LTC Scott K. Fowler, "How Information Operations enable Combatant Commanders to dominate Today's Battlefield," *Armor & Cavalry Journal*, no. MAR-APR (2008): 19-21.

⁷⁶ Mc Daniel and Perez, How to visualize and shape the Information Environment, 28.

⁷⁷ MAJ Ernest Litynski, "Consequence Management during Counterinsurgency Operations," *Armor & Cavalry Journal*, no. JAN-FEB (2008): 13-17.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Psychological Operations Team); followed by CA teams, who developed projects on the ground; and Tactical HUMINT Teams (THT) and Civil Affairs (CA) teams during the 'mitigation phase' of operations to assess public sentiment and collect information on collateral damage."⁸⁰ ⁸¹ This phase allowed leaders to interact with locals and provide information not only about the operation, but also about the ways the locals could help prevent their lives from being interrupted again.

Another perspective of the unit's image that requires refining, in respect to the local populace, is expectation management. An example comes from my personal experience when I was in a small town East of Baqubah, Iraq. I was conducting an area reconnaissance to become more familiar with the region. My patrol stopped to talk to the locals. We met the village Sheik, handed out some toys and candy to the kids, and even tended to an old man's infected injury. While my medic was finishing up with the old man, a woman approached me with her infant and wanted me to fix its limp leg. When I told her there was nothing I could do, she began repeating, "You fix, you fix, America fix." Our military carries with it all the images of the U.S., including the social and economic ability to have whatever money can buy. This perception sometimes translates into the local expectation that our military can make things happen now. "You can do this because you are the U.S." or "If the Americans are capable of putting a man on the moon, why can't CF get the electricity to come on? If CF are not turning on the electricity, it must be because you don't want to and are punishing us."⁸² If U.S. forces fail to practice effective expectation management, the local population will perceive a lack of immediate responses to their needs and become disgruntled. .

An additional aspect of expectation management is the ability to fulfill promises made. I have never had a meeting with a local leader who did not ask

⁸⁰ White, Task Force Iron Dukes Campaign for Najaf.

⁸¹ CPT Dave C. Staffel, "Incorporating Civil Affairs Teams into Infantry Company Operations," *Infantry Bugler*, 2005: 13.

⁸² Baker, *The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations*.

for something during our conversation. No matter how trivial the request, do not say it can be fulfilled if it cannot. In order to establish the unit's image and gain the trust and confidence of the local stakeholders and populace, promises made must become promises kept. COL Baker wanted his units to demonstrate to the population that they were trustful and that they would "follow through on everything [they] said [they] would".⁸³ Sometimes this required trade-offs like the "need for effective economic solutions in the short-term while moving toward more efficient ones over time"⁸⁴ – a reason trash removal crews were among the most common rapid job-creating project. Furthermore, change and improvement should be visible, or at least have an effect on the targeted population. Expectation management, like information dissemination, requires the assistance of local stakeholders. Additionally, the stakeholders must represent the demographic of the population. A Shia Sheik carries little to no weight when talking to a Sunni audience. Therefore, we need diversification of the people who are spreading the wanted narrative to the population.

IO operations are only the beginning of developing trust and influence. Additionally, not just CFs are actively engaging in IO; "to limit discontent and build support, a counterinsurgent and host government must create and maintain realistic expectations among the populace, friendly forces, and even the international community."⁸⁵ Comprehension of the environment by the units, who interact with the populace, requires training and an understanding of COIN to fully appreciate, in turn, the small unit's purpose within the Army's overall campaign.⁸⁶

⁸³ Baker, *The Decisive Weapon*.

⁸⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development, *A guide to Economic Growth in Post-Conflict Countries*, Guide, Economic Growth Office (Washington D.C.: USAID, 2008). p. iii

⁸⁵ Eliot Cohen, et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, 2006: 49-53.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 50.

2. Situational Awareness

A critical aspect supporting IO is situational awareness. To better understand COIN, a unit needs to gain a situational awareness of its environment, which consists of much more than becoming familiar with the physical terrain. Moreover, the local population, identified as the center of gravity, requires the units to “take the necessary steps to really understand and know [the population].”⁸⁷ What do the people need? What are the demographics of the area? What are the local industries in the area? Are they operational, and if not, why not? What services are being provided and what is the quality of the service? These questions highlight just the beginning of what units must learn to develop situational awareness. The concept behind such knowledge acquisition is also called human terrain mapping (HTM).⁸⁸ HTM allows the leaders to have a basic understanding of the environment and provides some insight into conflicts within the region, as well as “identifying the needs of the people.”⁸⁹ ⁹⁰ If one were to look at just the HTM information, certain areas would stand out as possible conflict areas. Examples of possible contentious areas would include, but not necessarily be limited to, areas where minorities are located, areas without operational industries, areas without human services, and areas of religious or tribal boundaries. Understanding these aspects of the environment is necessary in order to succeed in a COIN: “the counterinsurgent must first understand the root cause of the insurgency [and] the underlying conditions that make the environment ripe for insurgent activity.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ Jack Marr, "Human terrain mapping: a critical first step to winning the COIN fight," *Military Review*, 2008: 1-7, 1.

⁸⁸ Marr, Human terrain mapping: a critical first step to winning the COIN fight, 2.

⁸⁹ CPT Jim Capobianco and 1LT John Dickson, "Be There: A case study in Counterinsurgency Warfare," *Armor & Cavalry Journal*, no. JUL-AUG (2008): 42-44, 43.

⁹⁰ Donini et al., *Mapping the Security Environment: Understanding the perceptions of local communities, peace support operations, and assistance agencies*, 3-4.

⁹¹ Gregory Wilson, "Anatomy of a successful COIN operation: OEF-Philippines and indirect approach," *Military Review*, 2008: 1-13, 5.

Another aspect of HTM identifies the stakeholders in each area. This identifies the local leader to address in the event of an incident, or in discussions of development of the area.⁹² Usually, there are Sheiks counsels and city counsels that automatically provide a source for identifying local leaders; however, like all societies and organizations, there are people in positions of authority, and then there are people who are not, but still have influence to get things done.

Incorporated into both IO and HTM is the intention of gaining actionable intelligence. Information gathered from IO and HTM is raw and requires analysis to determine its relevance. However, having a local provide information is more beneficial and requires far less analysis beyond credibility issues. "A very powerful indicator of [local] sentiment may be 'actionable intelligence' provided by the local population. The higher the percentage of such information, the greater the likelihood that the locals share our objective and feel secure enough to volunteer information."⁹³ An informant coming forward signifies the unit's positive image and its effect upon the populace, thus wedging the population from the insurgents.⁹⁴ The freer the population becomes with providing information, the better the environment will become for the counterinsurgent. Furthermore, as the level of information increases, the ability of the insurgents to hide among the population decreases, thus removing their information advantage and freedom to maneuver.

Building trust and confidence are daily tasks, requiring repeated contacts and integration into the area. Units living in combat outposts, or at least with the local indigenous security forces (ISF) can most effectively accomplish this. This provides the locals with confidence that CF's are there for their security, and, along with the ISF, that this is a common fight. Human Intelligence (HUMINT) gained through personal relationships developed by CF troops is critical to

⁹² Marr, Human terrain mapping: a critical first step to winning the COIN fight, 2.

⁹³ Bole, *Finding the right Measures of Effectiveness for Rebuilding the State of Iraq*, 10.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

identify enemy organizations as targets for future operations.⁹⁵ First Lieutenant Barry Naum writes about the effect his daily interaction had on the Iraqi locals. "It became evident that U.S. forces were concerned with the well-being and prosperity of the Iraqi people, it like wise [sic] became much easier to gain the support of those often skeptical of our motives."⁹⁶

Gaining specific demographic information is another way to get to know the area and the people. More importantly, gathering it in this manner presents an opportunity for units to begin to foster relationships with the locals. For the Soldier on the ground, this interaction is where cultural awareness, customs, and courtesies can have a major influence on the local population.

3. Cultural Awareness

An important part of this effort is cultural awareness and our ability to understand the social, economic and religious routine, and habits of the local community.⁹⁷

— MG Walter Wojdakowski, Chief of the Infantry

The use of a translator is an acceptable practice; however, the inability to meet and greet someone in his or her language is inexcusable for CFs. Learning the local's language, customs, and courtesies is instrumental in developing trust with the local populace. Shaking a man's hand, then touching your heart, is an Iraqi custom. When reciprocated, the gesture demonstrates respect for both customs and the individual.⁹⁸ ⁹⁹Understanding other countries' cultures is not a new idea, and is not used solely for COIN. Cultural awareness is taught to every Soldier, Sailor, Airmen, and Marine who is stationed abroad. FM-1, *The Army*,

⁹⁵ Capobianco and Dickson, *Be There: A case study in Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 42-44.

⁹⁶ 1LT Barry A. Naum, "Tankers without Tanks in Tuz: A National Guard Unit Experiences Full-Spectrum Operations," *Armor*, no. NOV-DEC (2005): 13-17.

⁹⁷ MG W. J. Wojdakowski, (2006). From the Chief of the Infantry. *Infantry Bugler* (Spring), 7.

⁹⁸ CPT Greg Tomlin, "More than a Campaign of Platitudes: Effective Information Operations for the Battalion/Task Force and Company/Team," *Armor*, no. MAY-JUN (2006): 20-25, 52.

⁹⁹ John R. P. JR French and Bertram Raven, "The Bases Of Social Power," in *The Negotiation Source Book*, 150-167 (unk: Human Resources Development Press, 2001).

also supports the need for cultural understanding. “Military professionals must be culturally aware—sensitive to differences and the implications those differences have on the operational environment.”¹⁰⁰

IO, HMT, and situational awareness are the basics of establishing relationships or a nascent network. Cultural understanding is the key to bridging cultures and is comprised of three aspects: the country’s history and culture, language, and practical application.¹⁰¹ Cultural understanding, as described by LTC Prisco Hernandez, an instructor at Command and General Staff College (CGSC), is more than awareness. It is all three aspects combined as one.¹⁰² Knowing there is a difference between Sunni and Shia is cultural awareness. Knowing why there is a difference is cultural understanding. “To truly get to know the population, you must really understand its culture.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, Paul Kimmel empathizes this point in reference to foreign troops providing security within a state: “The degree of cultural identification and ethnocentrism among the peacekeepers is a critical factor... The risk of violent confrontation between peacekeepers and combatants and among combatants is increased when trust and communication break down and cultural differences are emphasized.”¹⁰⁴

A language-proficient military is a difficult goal to achieve. However, learning key phrases to demonstrate familiarity with the language can create initial success when interacting with the local nationals. Moreover, language is more than just words; it too is part of cultural understanding. Understanding word usage and underlying meaning is more important than having words

¹⁰⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 1 The Army* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2005) 1-12.

¹⁰¹ LTC Prisco R. Hernandez, "Developing Cultural Understanding in Stability Operations," *Field Artillery Journal*, 2007: 5-10, 6.

¹⁰² Hernandez, *Developing Cultural Understanding in Stability Operations*, 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Paul R. Kimmel, "Cultural and Ethnic Issues of Conflict and Peacekeeping," in *The Psychology of Peacekeeping*, 57-71 (Westport: Praeger, 1998) 62.

translated by an interpreter.¹⁰⁵ For example, when asking an Iraqi person if they can accomplish a task. The most common two answers are either, “No” (la), or “God willing” (sha'a allah). Initially, this response can be very frustrating, but with an understanding of the religious culture, the meaning becomes familiar.

The practical application of cultural awareness involves taking the understanding of the language and culture, and applying it to daily customs and courtesies.¹⁰⁶ This implies using knowledge during social engagements, conducting oneself properly during an informal engagement, recognizing the formalities of meetings, understanding how daily activities change in accordance to religion, and practicing some personnel expectation management. An important concept for CF to grasp is that U.S. Soldiers are “guests” within a country. The most commonly stated means to acquire cultural awareness is to embed units into an ISF unit or live with them.¹⁰⁷ This action would quickly immerse everyone in the locals’ customs and culture. Additionally, the action would further demonstrate the unit’s support for the ISF and increase the trust with both the ISF and some locals.

4. Empathy

Empathy is an intangible aspect of a COIN and is developed through the combination of both situational and cultural understanding. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, defines empathy as “leaders feel[ing] the pulse of the local population, understand[ing] their motivations, and car[ing] about what the people want and need. Genuine compassion and empathy for the populace provides an effective weapon against insurgents.”¹⁰⁸ Conducting a COIN requires a different style of tactics, compared to conventional combat. A COIN requires Soldiers and

¹⁰⁵ S. Ting-Toomey, (1999). *Communicating Across Cultures*. New York: The Guilford Press, 100-113.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁷ GEN David Petraeus, (2008). Multi-National Forces-Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance. *Military Review*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 2007).

leaders to be adaptive and sensitive to the environment. It requires them to have a cultural understanding of their actions and the consequences of their actions and decisions. These instincts are not the usual or natural attributes the military attempts to instill in its basic training. This is why a unit and its Soldiers' attitudes are important when conducting operations in a COIN environment.

One instance of empathy for the local populace occurred when I sent an infantry platoon leader out to develop relations with a local village. The Lieutenant stated to me that this was not what his platoon was here to do. I gave him a box of shoes and some toys to distribute to the village during his engagement. When the platoon leader returned later that day, he came to me and said, "I now understand why we were here." This platoon leader showed me pictures of a dilapidated school with no desks in the rooms, and pictures of him and his Soldiers playing with the children, demonstrating how to use a jump rope.

However, just as there are examples of how leaders and Soldiers develop empathy for the populace, there are far more that demonstrate how quickly empathy is lost when a fellow Soldier is killed or a unit is under constant threat and attacks.

Another part of conducting a COIN mission involves assuming responsibility for everyone in the AO, including NGOs, State Department officials, contractors, and anyone else associated with the military. Additionally, leaders are guided by cultural understanding during operational planning to "consider political backlash from damaging holy sites and creating unnecessary collateral damage."¹⁰⁹ In a military culture built on kinetic effects and the overall purpose to destroy, empathy is a difficult task to press upon Soldiers and leaders, thus requiring significant command influence on this topic, a topic which forms the centerpiece of my assessment in Chapter IV.

Through practitioners, we see Information Operations, Situational Awareness, Cultural Awareness and Empathy as key components of effective COIN. In addition to these four themes I will illustrate, in the next Chapter, that

¹⁰⁹ White, Task Force Iron Dukes Campaign for Najaf.

Network Development and Command Influence have a vital multiplier effect on these components. Without command influence, none are likely to take hold. Furthermore, command influence is the key aspect in achieving a balance between kinetic and non-kinetic actions, in order to conduct effective COIN.

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IV. ASSESSMENT

Mistakes made now will haunt you for the rest of the tour, while early successes will set the tone for victory. You will look back on your early actions and cringe at your clumsiness. So be it: but you must act.¹¹⁰

A. META ANALYSIS

As stated in Chapter III, my initial goal was to delimit articles to Major and below. However, as I read these articles I began to understand that to have a positive unit image with the local populace and media, to have leaders who understand the situational and cultural environment, and to ultimately have a unit that has empathy for the local population, then other factors would be at play. Thus, I surfaced three meta themes from my analysis that I surmised were the necessary elements for successful implementation of the four concepts I derived from the content analysis. The three rational themes are: Balance between COIN and Kinetic Operations.

As illustrated in Chapter II by the first three models and my assessment of the practitioner articles, balance remains as a critical factor when conducting a COIN. There is a careful balance between kinetic operations and non-kinetic operations, and there can be significant impact if one or the other is extended too far or too quickly is a primary consideration in conducting successful COIN operations. Balancing a unit's mission focus between kinetic and non-kinetic, or hard knock and soft knock searches is a difficult task to be managed by the unit's commander.

Command Influence is a major factor in change. Even when COIN operations become part of conventional unit's training or more COIN type education is conducted during junior officers' development, command influence will remain a critical part of conducting a COIN. Without command influence the

¹¹⁰ David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counter-insurgency," *IO Sphere*, May 1, 2006: 29-35, 31.

four themes identified in Chapter III would be conducted in a marginal manner increasing the time in achieving success. Networks and linkages with other military specialty units, OGO and NGOs, and the local government and populace. Network development is part of human terrain mapping, but is also critical to develop infrastructure, or extend the correct narrative throughout the populations.

1. Balance

Balance is a major part of a COIN and must be achieved at many different levels within the COIN. This includes a balance between levels of violence used by both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent, the balance between reconstruction and security efforts, the balance among military, government, and non-government organizations working together for stability and reconstruction, and the balance between kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Retired USMC GEN (ret.) Krulak, wrote in *Marine* magazine, about a concept that demonstrated the difficulties of a COIN and the importance of understanding such an environment. He used the term “three block war” to best describe this environment:

The lines separating the levels of war, and distinguishing combatant from non-combatant, will blur and adversaries, confounded by our ‘conventional’ superiority, will resort to asymmetrical means to redress the imbalance. Further complicating the situation will be the ubiquitous media whose presence will mean that all future conflicts will be acted out before an international audience. The Corps has described such amorphous conflicts as -- the three block war -- contingencies in which Marines may be confronted by the entire spectrum of tactical challenges in the span of a few hours and within the space of three contiguous city blocks.¹¹¹

To paraphrase the “three block war” concept, military units prepare to engage and kill the enemy on one block, while conducting reconstruction efforts to improve the environment on the next, and simultaneously addressing the locals and the media.

¹¹¹ Krulak, *The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War*.

Mao Tse-Tung, considered one of the most significant insurgent theorists, pressed upon his people before his insurgency that conditions must be set within the environment for an insurgency to thrive and be successful.¹¹² So too must the counterinsurgent set the conditions for the transition from kinetic to non-kinetic means. Expanding and growing too quickly exposes the insurgents to the state, removes their advantage of blending in with the population, and thus they will be almost destined them for certain failure.¹¹³ This same paradigm holds true for the counterinsurgent that transitions too quickly from kinetic to non-kinetic means of combating the insurgency. Security is the primary requirement of the COIN; however, this does not prevent the counterinsurgent from establishing the foundation and establishing nascent networks to begin to increase relationships, and, thereby, begin to create the divide between the population and the insurgency. “[The] functional objective is to impose a measure of control on the overall environment. But in such a complex, multi-actor environment, ‘control’ does not mean imposing order through unquestioned dominance, so much as achieving collaboration towards a set of shared objectives.”¹¹⁴

The same sense of balance applies to reconstruction. For the insurgent, attacking and destroying local infrastructures too often could have the effect of alienating the insurgency from the local population. The same holds true for the counterinsurgent that is too ambitious in conducting reconstruction, allowing projects to be attacked and destroyed due to the lack of control. For example, in Iraq, some recurring trade-offs must be addressed when determining what aspects of the Iraqi infrastructure to rebuild.¹¹⁵ These trade-offs are made with the conscious effort to improve the local environment, while also increasing the local government’s legitimacy. Four aspects of reconstruction help determine the

¹¹² Mao Tse-Tung, *The Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968): 67.

¹¹³ McCormick, *Things Fall Apart: the endgame dynamics of internal wars*.

¹¹⁴ Kilcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Agency for International Development, *A guide to Economic Growth in Post-Conflict Countries*, Guide, Economic Growth Office (Washington D.C.: USAID, 2008) 13.

trade-offs. They are urgent vs. legitimate, effective vs. efficient, short term vs. long term, and windows of opportunity vs. absorptive capacity of the government.¹¹⁶ Urgent vs. Legitimate trade-offs are difficult for CF required to stand-by and witness unsatisfactory living conditions. However, any action taken quickly by CF to improve the environment automatically takes away from the government's legitimacy. Some balance is required between what a CF does quickly and what a local government accomplishes on its own. By working through the local leaders, we can achieve the appearance of government progress; furthermore, CF should take every opportunity to praise and reinforce the efforts the government is making to improve things.

Effective vs. Efficient trade offs are a part of increasing the trust in the local government. CF is choosing reconstruction efforts that have immediate effective capabilities, while, perhaps, sacrificing efficiency. As discussed earlier, word of mouth is the best possible means of spreading progress; therefore, the more visible and effective the solution, the more likely it will mitigate the risk of instability and a return to violence.¹¹⁷ An example of this in Iraq is the common illegal roadside fuel distributor. It is illegal, because fuel distribution is a government-controlled function, but the government is unable to meet the current demand.

Short-term vs. Long-term trade offs are similar to the two tradeoffs noted above. This trade-off also requires some short-minded thinking to identify the immediate needs of the local populace. As much as education and schools help develop the future Iraqi leadership, the accessibility to a water source is more important to a village without a well.¹¹⁸ Additionally, if the infrastructure cannot sustain a project, then the project becomes a waste of resources and time, left only to become dilapidated because of a lack of a supporting services.

¹¹⁶ USAID, *A guide to Economic Growth in Post-Conflict Countries*.

¹¹⁷ Mc Daniel and Perez, *How to visualize and shape the Information Environment*, 28.

¹¹⁸ Bole, *Finding the right Measures of Effectiveness for Rebuilding the State of Iraq*, 7.

Lastly, there are Window of Opportunity vs. Absorptive Capacity tradeoffs. The poor “quality of life” standards become apparent when the first Soldier walks through a village. Solutions are likely just as apparent and may only require financial resources to make them a reality. However, the window of opportunity for reform should only occur if it does not overwhelm the government’s capacity to manage the change or the society’s capacity to absorb it. Again, having too much initiative can do more harm than good. Project failure or the government’s inability to sustain a service can hurt the image of both the CF and the Iraqi government. Insurgents can exploit this failure with propaganda designed to illustrate CF and Iraqi government shortcomings.

Understanding these trade-offs and effectively managing the projects that are executed during reconstruction will increase the trust that the local populace has in both the Iraqi government and CFs. The ability to keep promises and maintain visible progress, while reducing the use of coercive means within the environment has a positive effect on the local populace.¹¹⁹ David Killcullen viewed the use of kinetic means as a measure of effectiveness for military units conducting a COIN. “Politically, the more force you have to use, the worse the campaign is going. Marginalizing and out-competing a range of challengers, to achieve control over the overall socio-political space in which the conflict occurs, is the true aim.”¹²⁰

2. Command Influence

As stated by GEN Petraeus earlier in the paper, COIN warfare is a difficult concept to understand and operation to conduct, which is why command influence is critical to guide the inexperienced junior leaders through the difficulties of conducting a COIN. In a COIN, the leaders that will have the biggest impact on the local environment are the junior leaders and their soldiers. However, these junior officers are also the least experienced in the military.

¹¹⁹ Baker, *The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations*.

¹²⁰ Killcullen, *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*.

Some entering Iraq have less than two years in the military as an officer. Without command influence to guide them, they muddle through fighting a COIN. To leave these junior officers to either figure it out or fall back on what they know—conventional warfare—is not an option. The commander must make his vision clear and concise for his subordinates to understand. Additionally, in an unfamiliar environment, the commander must ensure that his intent is being met.¹²¹ To leave junior leaders without oversight allows for improvisation, which does not help achieve the wanted outcome of developing trust and influence.

Command groups must ensure that their leaders and Soldiers understand their individual unit's purpose in country and that their actions are productive when dealing with the local populace. A case in point, violence of action against a positively identified (PID) enemy is justified, but when the enemy is not PID, or is fighting among civilians, troops must practice prudence and restraint to prevent collateral damage and a regression in CF and local relations. Some of this discernment comes from training, but the major influence is the command's message or the demeanor the commanders portray towards the Iraqi population. Not only can the command group influence their own Soldiers, they can also have an influence on the involvement of other command enhancers. They can ensure that subordinates are not only developing local networks, but are also networking through other organizations and units that can support their operations.¹²²

3. Developing Networks

All of the efforts using IO, SA, cultural understanding, and empathy are directed toward creating networks. Initially, a new unit has some standing networks to which they are introduced, but to have an impact in a COIN, these networks need to be expanded to encompass more and more of the population.

¹²¹ Baker, *The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations*, 21.

¹²² CPT David J. Smith and 1LT Jeffery Ritter, "Team Enabler: Combining Capabilities during the execution of Full-Spectrum Operations," *Armor & Calvary Journal*, no. MAR-APR (2008): 43-45.

In addition to the local networks, CFs need to ensure they are including other non-military networks within the country. Networks allow for a diverse amount of information sharing without any one node having all of the information. This concept is critical, especially with a large force and a complex environment.¹²³ If units are successful in building trusted networks, “[they] will grow into the population and displace the enemy’s networks. These networks include local allies, community leaders, local security forces, NGOs and other friendly or neutral non-state actors in [the] area, and the media.”¹²⁴

These other networks include the experts necessary to conduct effective reconstruction. Reconstruction of the country’s infrastructure is another step to move from conflict to sustainable peace. Combat units rarely have experts within their units who have any expertise in rebuilding an area. In that regard, National Guard and Reserve Units have an advantage based on the greater diversity of civilian professions within their ranks.¹²⁵ The remaining active duty units must rely on these other networks of experts to accomplish the right tasks for the right purposes. Without access to these networks, inexperienced leaders muddle through the process. These networks of experts not only provide information, they also provide channels to coordinate directly between BDE partners, PRTs, and the National Government.¹²⁶ Furthermore, CA teams are an essential node in the network, because of “their expertise in both assisting civil leaders in making community improvements using existing government structures, and in promoting efficiency in executing basic government tasks.”¹²⁷ ¹²⁸ However,

¹²³ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War: The most radical reinterpretation of armed conflict since Clausewitz* (New York: The Free Press, 1991): 109.

¹²⁴ David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *IO Sphere*, May 1, 2006: 29-35, 33.

¹²⁵ Naum, Tankers without Tanks in Tuz: A National Guard Unit Experiences Full-Spectrum Operations.

¹²⁶ CPT David J. Smith and 1LT Jeffery Ritter, "Team Enabler: Combining Capabilities during the execution of Full-Spectrum Operations," *Armor & Cavalry Journal*, March-April (2008): 43-45.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Staffel, Incorporating Civil Affairs Teams into Infantry Company Operations.

these networks are not effective unless there is a balance established between security and reconstruction. Too much of one, too early, will only cause the other to fail.

Furthermore, leaders and Soldiers at the grassroots level influence the population more than either middle or top-level leaders.¹²⁹ This lower-level influence comes from cultivating networks in direct contact with the population. These networks provide a greater opportunity to develop empathy for the people, and an appreciation for their “fears and suffering with which much of the population must live; they also [provide] expert knowledge of local politics and knowledge on a face-to-face basis of the local leaders of the government and its adversaries.”¹³⁰

As one can see, there are many intangible aspects of conducting the softer side of a COIN. This difficult environment requires that the inexperienced find guidance in simple and concise commander’s intentions or direct supervision from top or mid-level leaders. Furthermore, the commander’s influence on junior leaders and their Soldiers requires them to better understand their environment. This allows them to appreciate the impact of their actions upon the environment – both kinetic and non-kinetic. This process provides knowledge that helps counterinsurgents better prepare for developing relationships with, trust of, and influence over the local populace. The increased trust and confidence can only strengthen the security in the area, which creates conditions for increased reconstruction efforts. This improves the local environment, divides the populace from the insurgency, and achieves the objective of legitimizing the local leaders, security forces, and government. Without the means to conduct the softer side of a COIN in junior leaders’ “toolboxes”, leaders and their Soldiers are left to muddle through their tour having either little or negative influence upon the local

¹²⁹ John Paul Lederach, "Civil Society and Reconciliation," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenge of Managing International Conflict*, 841-854 (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2001) 843.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

nationals. Under these conditions, short-term objectives are likely to be unmet and the status quo maintained, rather than progressing to sustainable peace.

B. NEXT STEPS

1. Counterinsurgent Development

It is clear from all of the periodicals that a change is happening. All three branch-specific journals discuss the implementation of changes within the professional development courses for all levels of Soldiers. Even basic training courses are now implementing culture awareness training to help development the counterinsurgent Soldier. This is a positive adjustment, but we can do more. As discussed earlier, the influence of leadership in a COIN environment is crucial to a unit's ability to succeed. Furthermore, as stated previously, the most inexperienced leaders are conducting some of the most important missions in a COIN. The influence all the platoon leaders and company commanders have with local nationals is far greater than the influence of a higher ranking commander. They have the most influence over the "strategic corporal", interact with the locals, and directly or indirectly create both positive and negative social capital. This level of responsibility requires an increased focus on junior leadership developmental education. As much as the leadership courses have changed, some additional changes would benefit the leaders and the military.

2. Pre-Commission Education

Even though every officer who enters the military plans to stay in until retirement; however, it is too much to ask that they be required to take a few COIN-related classes from a list specified by the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or a United States Military Academy (USMA). Officer Candidate School (OCS) requirements could be waived, depending on the extent of the candidate's military experience. These courses would develop critical thinking skills to better understand the global environment. The areas of exact studies would vary at each institution; nevertheless, they would focus on ideas that support the softer

side of the military actions. This could include anthropology, mass communication, international relations, religion, culture, civics, regional studies, and language. These courses would introduce ways to think unconventionally. In May of 2008, the ROTC command released an incentive program for a ROTC language and culture project. According to the news release, "The ROTC Language and Culture Project provides opportunities for ROTC Cadets and Midshipmen to study the languages and cultures of world regions critical to U.S. national security, and prepares them to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century."¹³¹ Basic required classes or education incentive programs, like the Language and Cultural project, would produce officers better prepared for the full spectrum of military operations conducted over the last decade.

3. Middle Leadership Development

An officer's professional development must continue past the undergraduate level. The military as a whole has begun to understand the need to address the knowledge of unconventional operations and has made adjustments within officer and NCO basic and advanced leadership education.

One of the most important lessons of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that military success is not sufficient to win: economic development, institution-building and the rule of law, promoting internal reconciliation, good governance, providing basic services to the people, training and equipping indigenous military and police forces, strategic communications, and more -- these, along with security, are essential ingredients for long-term success. Accomplishing all of these tasks will be necessary to meet the diverse challenges I have described.¹³²

However, if the Army wants to quickly inject the COIN and SSTR doctrine into the system, it must force people to stop, think, and discuss unconventional

¹³¹ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), *Defense Link: News Release*, May 14, 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=11924> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹³² R. H. Gates, (2007, November 26). *Defense Link*. Retrieved February 16, 2008, from Defense Link Speeches: <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>.

warfare and stability operations. “As history has shown time and again, capable leaders are ‘force multipliers’: they greatly enhance the effectiveness of the troops under their command.”¹³³ The Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3) would be the perfect place for this training. Unfortunately, the school was discontinued in 2004, and the training was redirected to separate branch Advanced Captains Career Courses (AC3).

I recommend that CAS3 returns to Fort Leavenworth to teach COIN, SSTR, and best practices to conduct operations in an unconventional environment. Bring in academics to teach and discuss different aspects of COIN, SSTR, networks, social science, and cultural awareness. Introduce these leaders to government agencies and NGOs so they may understand their functions.

Another reason to bring CAS3 back to Fort Leavenworth is that the Army’s Intermediate Leadership Education School is also located there. Then newly promoted Majors’ with experience in the current unconventional environment could mentor, answer questions, and discuss their experiences on the current operational battlefield.

Whether the U.S. military strategy is “Clear, hold, build”, “oil spot”, or “winning hearts and minds”, the foundation for success requires leaders and warriors on the ground to understand the importance of identifying, understanding, and accomplishing the intangibles that gain the support of the population. The seven themes identified in this thesis through the content analysis are the foundation to complete Kilcullen’s Counterinsurgency Framework. With a positive identity, good relations with the local nationals through developed networks, and the balance of kinetic actions in response to actionable intelligence, coalition forces counteract the influence insurgents have over the population. Gaining the population’s support increases the information about possible insurgents. This eliminates the insurgents’ advantage and exposes them to be killed, captured, or detained.

¹³³ Krepinevich, *How to Win in Iraq*, 3.

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V. CONCLUSION

The doctrine developed for fighting in central Europe continues to have application against certain potential future threats. But, today the focus has shifted to developing, expanding, and refining our doctrine for counterinsurgency operations based on the experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq...This renewed emphasis on COIN is right, and appropriate, but it should not overshadow the need to think about, and prepare for, the full range of threats our Nation and our Army may face.

— General Ronald H. Griffith, U.S. Army, Retired

Having a conventional Army conducting a COIN places increased responsibilities on each Soldier conducting operations in country. To compound this pressure, we place Soldiers in a COIN with minimal training to understand the complexity and importance of the local population and their culture. We ask troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan to conduct operations unfamiliar to them, comprehend the rules of engagement (ROE) and apply them without hesitation, serve as personal ambassadors representing the Coalition Forces, and understand the environment and culture well enough to have empathy for the local nationals. David Kilcullen's, *28 Articles*, emphasizes this point, "Corporals and privates will have to make snap judgments with strategic impact. The only way to help them is to give them a shared understanding, then trust them to think for themselves on the day."¹³⁴

How do the "strategic corporal" and the junior lieutenant conduct the softer side of a COIN was the question for this thesis. I derived an answer through content analysis to develop a theory grounded in practitioner personal experiences. Through conceptual content analysis, I determined that four fundamental themes were important to develop a successful COIN strategy at the field level: information operations, situational awareness, cultural awareness, and empathy. I then identified three meta themes that drove the first four: Command Influence, Network Development and the Balance of Kinetic and Non-

¹³⁴ Kilcullen, *Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency*.

Kinetic Actions. These three are critical, due to the underdeveloped COIN education of junior leaders. Furthermore, I recommended that junior leader development expand beyond the current improvements. This will increase knowledge base knowledge before commissioning and taking a company command.

The four conceptual themes and the three relational meta themes identified in this thesis provide the foundation of Kilcullen's counterinsurgency framework discussed in Chapter II. Initially, the objective of this research was to develop a product similar to a checklist that practitioners could use at the field level; however, due to the complexity of a COIN environment, a checklist is not a plausible solution for improving the military's ability to fight a COIN. No simple solution is available. The environment is so complex; it requires different levels of both kinetic and non-kinetic force to win the trust and influence of the local nationals. The counterinsurgents' struggle for balance becomes an important aspect — maintain popularity among the populace while conducting necessary attacks against insurgents.

In fighting a COIN, the military also has to balance COIN operational skills with core conventional fighting skills. The branch chiefs each maintain a section in their respective journals to discuss pertinent branch specific information. They all have stated the necessity of preparation for both conventional and unconventional operations.^{135 136} The additional burden of preparing for both operations makes time a critical factor in training. Although, this need to train for both is understood, the time to conduct both is not available.

I recommend that follow-on research focus on ways to improve the U.S. military's ability to conduct a COIN. First, it would be helpful to determine if a new SSTR organization should be developed to assist conventional forces conducting a COIN. This organization could combine activities devoted to the softer side of COIN and reconstruction (e.g. CA, HTT, PRT, heavy and light

¹³⁵ MG Robert M. Williams, "Maintaining Armor Core Competencies." *Armor*, no. JAN-FEB 2007: 4.

¹³⁶ D. C. Ralston, (2006), The FA and COIN: Continuity and Adaptation. *Field Artillery* , 1.

construction engineers), while the conventional military continues to focus on establishing security and assisting in foreign internal defense. Additionally, the creation of such a unit would minimize the time constraints that no limit training for both conventional and unconventional tasks.

My second recommendation for follow-on research is the consideration of permanent units within a COIN environment. This option would allow troops to rotate through the units, instead of complete units rotating through the COIN environment. My reasoning is that each time a unit is rotated out of the country a large portion of the tacit and explicit knowledge is lost, making networks difficult to establish and reestablish on a yearly basis. By rotating individuals, or even platoons, through the permanent units, the organizational knowledge will remain behind. Currently, Human Terrain Teams, as well as service members in South Korea, are conducting this type of rotation to limit their loss of knowledge.¹³⁷ This experiment has the potential to expand to the COIN arena as well.

Fighting a COIN in Iraq, Afghanistan, and possible future conflicts is a burden to be borne by current and future service members. The mistakes and the steep learning curve required to fight a COIN in Iraq and Afghanistan should not be repeated. The changes in FM 3-0 have locked in the understanding that unconventional missions—COIN, SSTR, and Humanitarian support—are now a part of the military's future role in global security. COIN concepts and principles must be taught, learned and understood by the newest service member all the way up to the Joint Chief of Staff. The future of the Iraqi and Afghanistan people depends on it and so does our own.

¹³⁷ CPT Eric X.Schaner, "The Human Terrain System: Achieving a Competitive Advantage through Enhanced "Population-Centric" Knowledge Flows," *Thesis* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, September 2008).

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